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Author: Arthur Quiller-Couch

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BROTHER COPAS

By

ARTHUR THOMAS QUILLER-COUCH.

1911

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TO THE GENTLE READER.

In a former book of mine, *Sir John Constantine*, I expressed (perhaps extravagantly) my faith in my fellows and in their capacity to treat life as a noble sport. In *Brother Copas* I try to express something of that correlative scorn which must come sooner or later to every man who puts his faith into practice.. I have that faith still; but that:

He who would love his fellow men
Must not expect too much of them"

This is good counsel if bad rhyme. I can only hope that both the faith and the scorn are sound at the core.

For the rest, I wish to state that St. Hospital is a society which never existed. I have borrowed for it certain features from the Hospital of St. Cross, near Winchester. I have invented a few external and all the internal ones. My "College of Noble Poverty" harbours abuses from which, I dare to say, that nobler institution is entirely free. St Hospital has no existence at all outside of my imagining.

ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH.

The Haven, Fowey.
February 16th, 1911.

"And a little Child shall lead them."—ISAIAH xi. 6.

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BROTHER COPAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER OF ST. HOSPITAL.

'As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things...'

The Honourable and Reverend Eustace John Wriothlesley Blanchminster, D.D., Master of St. Hospital-by-Merton, sat in the oriel of his library revising his Trinity Gaudy Sermon. He took pains with these annual sermons, having a quick and fastidious sense of literary style. "It is," he would observe, "one of the few pleasurable capacities spared by old age." He had, moreover, a scholarly habit of verifying his references and quotations; and if the original, however familiar, happened to be in a dead or foreign language, would have his secretary indite it in the margin. His secretary, Mr. Simeon, after taking the Sermon down from dictation, had made out a fair copy, and stood now at a little distance from the corner of the writing-table, in a deferential attitude.

The Master leaned forward over the manuscript; and a ray of afternoon sunshine, stealing in between a mullion of the oriel and the edge of a drawn blind, touched his bowed and silvery head as if with a benediction. He was in his seventy-third year; lineal and sole-surviving descendant of that Alberic de Blanchminster (Albericus de Albo Monasterio) who had founded this Hospital of Christ's Poor in 1137, and the dearest, most distinguished-looking old clergyman imaginable. An American lady had once summed him up as a Doctor of Divinity in Dresden china; and there was much to be allowed to the simile when you noted his hands, so shapely and fragile, or his complexion, transparent as old ivory—and still more if you had leisure to observe his saintliness, so delicately attuned to this world.

"As having nothing, and yet possessing all things."—The Master laid his forefinger upon the page and looked up reproachfully. "*ὧς μὴδὲν ἔχοντες*—my good Simeon, is it possible? A word so common as *ὧς!* and after all these years you make it *perispomenon!*"

Mr. Simeon stammered contrition. In the matter of Greek accents he knew himself to be untrustworthy beyond hope. "I can't tell how it is, sir, but that *ὧς* always seems to me to want a circumflex, being an adverb of sorts." On top of this, and to make things worse, he pleaded that he had left out the accent in *ὧς πτωχοί*, just above.

"H'm—as poor, and yet thankful for small mercies," commented the Master with gentle sarcasm. He had learnt in his long life to economise anger. But he frowned as he dipped a pen in the ink-pot and made the correction; for he was dainty about his manuscripts as about all the furniture of life, and a blot or an erasure annoyed him. "Brother Copas," he murmured, "never misplaces an accent."

Mr. Simeon heard, and started. It was incredible that the Master, who five-and-twenty years ago had rescued Mr. Simeon from a school for poor choristers and had him specially educated for the sake of his exquisite handwriting, could be threatening dismissal over a circumflex. Oh, there was no danger! If long and (until the other day) faithful service were not sufficient, at least there was guarantee in the good patron's sense of benefits conferred. Moreover, Brother Copas was not desirable as an amanuensis.... None the less, poor men with long families will start at the shadow of a fear; and Mr. Simeon started.

"Master," he said humbly, choosing the title by which his patron liked to be addressed, "I think Greek accents must come by gift of the Lord."

"Indeed?"

The Master glanced up.

"I mean, sir"—Mr. Simeon extended a trembling hand and rested his fingers on the edge of the writing-table for support—"that one man is born with a feeling for them, so to speak; while another, though you may teach and teach him—"

"In other words," said the Master, "they come by breeding. It is very likely."

He resumed his reading:

"—and yet possessing all things. We may fancy St. Paul's actual words present in the mind of our Second Founder, the Cardinal Beauchamp, as their spirit assuredly moved him, when he named our beloved house the College of Noble Poverty. His predecessor, Alberic de Blanchminster, had called it after Christ's Poor; and the one title, to be sure, rests implicit in the other; for the condescension wherewith Christ made choice of His associates on earth has for ever dignified Poverty in the eyes of His true followers.'

"And you have spelt 'his' with a capital 'H'—when you know my dislike of that practice!"

Poor Mr. Simeon was certainly not in luck to-day. The truth is that, frightened by the prospect of yet another addition to his family (this would be his seventh child), he had hired out his needy pen to one of the Canons Residentiary of Merchester, who insisted on using capitals upon all parts of speech referring, however remotely, to either of the Divine Persons. The Master, who despised Canon Tarbolt for a vulgar pulpiter, and barely nodded to him in the street, was not likely to get wind of this mercenage; but if ever he did, there would be trouble. As it was, the serving of two masters afflicted Mr. Simeon's conscience while it distracted his pen.

"I will make another fair copy," he suggested.

"I fear you must. Would you mind drawing back that curtain? My eyes are troublesome this afternoon. Thank you."—

"Nevertheless it was well done of the great churchman to declare his belief that the poor, as poor, are not only blessed—as Our Lord expressly says—but noble, as Our Lord implicitly taught. Nay, the suggestion is not perhaps far-fetched that, as Cardinal Beauchamp had great possessions, he took this occasion to testify how in his heart he slighted them. Or again—for history seems to prove that he was not an entirely scrupulous man, nor entirely untainted by self-seeking—that his tribute to Noble Poverty may have been the assertion, by a spirit netted among the briars of this world's policy, that at least it saw and suspired after the way to Heaven. Video meliora, proboque—

*"O limèd soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engaged!"*

"But he is with God: and while we conjecture, God knows.

"Lest, however, you should doubt that the finer spirits of this world have found Poverty not merely endurable but essentially noble, let me recall to you an anecdote of Saint Francis of Assisi. It is related that, travelling towards France with a companion, Brother Masseo, he one day entered a town wherethrough they both begged their way, as their custom was, taking separate streets. Meeting again on the other side of the town, they spread out their alms on a broad stone by the wayside, whereby a fair fountain ran; and Francis rejoiced that Brother Masseo's orts and scraps of bread were larger than his own, saying, "Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of such treasure." "But how," asked Brother Masseo, "can one speak of treasure when there is such lack of all things needful? Here have we neither cloth, nor knife, nor plate, nor porringer, nor house, nor table, nor manservant, nor maidservant." Answered Francis, "This and none else it is that I account wide treasure; which containeth nothing prepared by human hands, but all we have is of God's own providence—as this bread we have begged, set out on a table of stone so fine, beside a fountain so clear. Wherefore," said he, "let us kneel together and pray God to increase our love of this holy Poverty, which is so noble that thereunto God himself became a servitor."

The declining sun, slanting in past the Banksia roses, touched the edge of a giant amethyst which the Master wore, by inheritance of office, on his forefinger; and, because his hand trembled a little with age, the gem set the reflected ray dancing in a small pool of light, oval-shaped and wine-coloured, on the white margin of the sermon. He stared at it for a moment, tracing it mistakenly to a glass of Rhône wine—a *Château Neuf du Pape* of a date before the phylloxera—that stood neglected on the writing-table. (By his doctor's orders he took a glass of old wine and a biscuit every afternoon at this hour as a gentle digestive.)

Thus reminded, he reached out a hand and raised the wine to his lips, nodding as he sipped.

"In Common Room, Simeon, we used to say that no man was really educated who preferred Burgundy to claret, but that on the lower Rhône all tastes met in one ecstasy.... I'd like to have your opinion on this, now; that is, if you will find the decanter and a glass in the cupboard yonder—and if you have no conscientious objection."

Mr. Simeon murmured, amid his thanks, that he had no objection.

"I am glad to hear it.... Between ourselves, there is always something lacking in an abstainer—as in a man who has never learnt Greek. It is difficult with both to say what the lack precisely is; but with both it includes an absolute insensibility to the shortcoming."

Mr. Simeon could not help wondering if this applied to poor men who abstained of necessity. He thought not; being, for his part, conscious of a number of shortcomings.

"Spirits," went on the Master, wheeling half-about in his revolving-chair and crossing one shapely gaitered leg over another, "Spirits—and especially whisky—eat out the health of a man and leave him a sodden pulp. Beer is honest, but brutalising. Wine—certainly any good wine that can trace its origin back beyond the Reformation—is one with all good literature, and indeed with civilisation. *Antiquam exquirite matrem*: all three come from the Mediterranean basin or from around it, and it is only the ill-born who contemn descent."

"Brother Copas—" began Mr. Simeon, and came to a halt.

He lived sparsely; he had fasted for many hours; and standing there he could feel the generous liquor coursing through him—nay could almost have reported its progress from ganglion to ganglion. He blessed it, and at the same moment breathed a prayer that it might not affect his head.

"Brother Copas—?"

Mr. Simeon wished now that he had not begun his sentence. The invigorating *Château Neuf du Pape* seemed to overtake and chase away all uncharitable thoughts. But it was too late.

"Brother Copas—you were saying—?"

"I ought not to repeat it, sir. But I heard Brother Copas say the other day that the teetotallers were in a hopeless case; being mostly religious men, and yet having to explain in the last instance why Our Lord, in Cana of Galilee, did not turn the water into ginger-pop."

The Master frowned and stroked his gaiters.

"Brother Copas's tongue is too incisive. Something must be forgiven to one who, having started as a scholar and a gentleman, finds himself toward the close of his days dependent on the bread of charity."

It was benignly spoken; and to Mr. Simeon, who questioned nothing his patron said or did, no shade of misgiving occurred that, taken down in writing, it might annotate somewhat oddly the sermon on the table. It was spoken with insight too, for had not his own poverty, or the fear of it, sharpened Mr. Simeon's tongue just now and prompted him to quote Brother Copas detrimentally? The little man did not shape this accusation clearly against himself, for he had a rambling head; but he had also a sound heart, and it was uneasy.

"I ought not to have told it, sir.... I ask you to believe that I have no ill-will against Brother Copas."

The Master had arisen, and stood gazing out of the window immersed in his own thoughts.

"Eh? I beg your pardon?" said he absently.

"I—I feared, sir, you might think I said it to his prejudice."

"Prejudice?" the Master repeated, still with his back turned, and still scarcely seeming to hear. "But why in the world?... Ah, there he goes!—and Brother Bonaday with him. They are off to the river, for Brother Copas carries his rod. What a strange fascination has that dry-fly fishing! And I can remember old anglers discussing it as a craze, a lunacy."

He gazed out, still in a brown study. The room was silent save for the ticking of a Louis Seize clock on the chimney-piece; and Mr. Simeon, standing attentive, let his eyes travel around upon the glass-fronted bookcases, filled with sober riches in vellum and gilt leather, on the rare prints in black frames, the statuette of *Diane Chasserresse*, the bust of Antinoüs, the portfolios containing other prints, the Persian carpets scattered about the dark bees'-waxed floor, the Sheraton table with its bowl of odorous peonies.

"Eh? I beg your pardon—" said the Master again after three minutes or so, facing around with a smile of apology. "My wits were wool-gathering, over the sermon—that little peroration of mine does not please me somehow.... I will take a stroll to the home-park and back, and think it over.... Thank you, yes, you may gather up the papers. We will do no more work this afternoon."

"And I will write out another fair copy, sir."

"Yes, certainly; that is to say, of all but the last page. We will take the last page tomorrow." For a moment, warmed by the wine and by the Master's cordiality of manner, Mr. Simeon felt a wild impulse to make a clean breast, confess his trafficking with Canon Tarbolt and beg to be forgiven. But his courage failed him. He gathered up his papers, bowed and made his escape.

CHAPTER II.

If a foreigner would apprehend (he can never comprehend) this England of ours, with her dear and ancient graces, and her foibles as ancient and hardly less dear; her law-abidingness, her staid, God-fearing citizenship; her parochialism whereby (to use a Greek idiom) she perpetually escapes her own notice being empress of the world; her inveterate snobbery, her incurable habit of mistaking symbols and words for realities; above all, her spacious and beautiful sense of time as builder, healer and only perfecter of worldly things; let him go visit the Cathedral City, sometime the Royal City, of Merchester. He will find it all there, enclosed and casketed—"a box where sweets compacted lie."

Let him arrive on a Saturday night and awake next morning to the note of the Cathedral bell, and hear the bugles answering from the barracks up the hill beyond the mediaeval gateway. As he sits down to breakfast the bugles will start sounding nigher, with music absurd and barbarous, but stirring, as the Riflemen come marching down the High Street to Divine Service. In the Minster to which they wend, their disused regimental colours droop along the aisles; tattered, a hundred years since, in Spanish battlefields, and by age worn almost to gauze—"strainers," says Brother Copas, "that in their time have clarified much turbid blood." But these are guerdon of yesterday in comparison with other relics the Minster guards. There is royal dust among them—Saxon and Dane and Norman—housed in painted chests above the choir stalls. "*Quare fremuerunt gentes?*" intone the choristers' voices below, Mr. Simeon's weak but accurate tenor among them. "*The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together...*" The Riflemen march down to listen. As they go by ta-ra-ing, the douce citizens of Merchester and their wives and daughters admire from the windows discreetly; but will attend *their* Divine Service later. This, again, is England.

Sundays and week-days at intervals the Cathedral organ throbs across the Close, gently shaking the windows of the Deanery and the Canons' houses, and interrupting the chatter of sparrows in their ivy. Twice or thrice annually a less levitical noise invades, when our State visits its Church; in other words, when with trumpeters and javelin-men the High Sheriff escorts his Majesty's Judges to hear the Assize Sermon. On these occasions the head boy of the great School, which lies a little to the south of the Cathedral, by custom presents a paper to the learned judge, suing for a school holiday; and his lordship, brushing up his Latinity, makes a point of acceding in the best hexameters he can contrive. At his time of life it comes easier to try prisoners; and if he lie awake, he is haunted less by his day in Court than by the fear of a false quantity.

The School—with its fourteenth-century quadrangles, fenced citywards behind a blank brewhouse-wall (as though its Founder's first precaution had been to protect learning from siege), and its precincts opening rearwards upon green playing-fields and river-meads—is like few schools in England, and none in any other country; and is proud of its singularity. It, too, has its stream of life, and on the whole a very gracious one, with its young, careless voices and high spirits. It lies, as I say, south of the Close; beyond the northward fringe of which you penetrate, under archway or by narrow entry, to the High Street, where another and different tide comes and goes, with mild hubbub of carts, carriages, motors—ladies shopping, magistrates and county councillors bent on business of the shire, farmers, traders, marketers.... This traffic, too, is all very English and ruddy and orderly.

Through it all, picturesque and respected, pass and repass the bedesmen of Saint Hospital: the Blanchminster Brethren in black gowns with a silver cross worn at the breast, the Beauchamp Brethren in gowns of claret colour with a silver rose. The terms of the twin bequests are not quite the same. To be a Collegian of Christ's Poor it is enough that you have attained the age of sixty-five, so reduced in strength as to be incapable of work; whereas you can become a Collegian of Noble Poverty at sixty, but with the proviso that misfortune has reduced you from independence (that is to say, from a moderate estate). The Beauchamp Brethren, who are the fewer, incline to give themselves airs over the Blanchminsters on the strength of this distinction: like Dogberry, in their time they have "had losses." But Merchester takes, perhaps, an equal pride in the pensioners of both orders.

Merchester takes an even fonder pride in St. Hospital itself—that compact and exquisite group of buildings, for the most part Norman, set in the water-meadows among the ambient streams of Mere. It lies a mile or so southward of the town, and some distance below the School, where the valley widens between the chalk-hills and, inland yet, you feel a premonition that the sea is not far away. All visitors to Merchester are directed towards St. Hospital, and they dote over it—the American visitors especially; because nowhere in England can one find the Middle Ages more compendiously summarised or more charmingly illustrated. Almost it might be a toy model of those times, with some of their quaintest customs kept going in smooth working order. But it is better. It is the real thing, genuinely surviving. No visitor ever finds disappointment in a pilgrimage to St. Hospital: the inmates take care of that.

The trustees, or governing body, are careful too. A few years ago, finding that his old lodgings in the quadrangle were too narrow for the Master's comfort, they erected a fine new house for him, just without the precincts. But though separated from the Hospital by a roadway, this new house comes into the picture from many points of view, and therefore not only did the architect receive instructions to harmonise it with the ancient buildings, but

where he left off the trustees succeeded, planting wistarias, tall roses and selected ivies to run up the coigns and mullions. Nay, it is told that to encourage the growth of moss they washed over a portion of the walls (the servants' quarters) with a weak solution of farmyard manure. These conscientious pains have their reward, for to-day, at a little distance, the Master's house appears no less ancient than the rest of the mediaeval pile with which it composes so admirably.

With the Master himself we have made acquaintance. In the words of an American magazine, "the principal of this old-time foundation, Master E. J. Wriothesley (pronounced 'Wrottesley') Blanchminster, may be allowed to fill the bill. He is founder's kin, and just sweet."

The Master stepped forth from his rose-garlanded porch, crossed the road, and entered the modest archway which opens on the first, or outer, court. He walked habitually at a short trot, with his head and shoulders thrust a little forward and his hands clasped behind him. He never used a walking-stick.

The outer court of St. Hospital is plain and unpretending, with a brewhouse on one hand and on the other the large kitchen with its offices. Between these the good Master passed, and came to a second and handsomer gate, with a tower above it, and three canopied niches in the face of the tower, and in one of the niches—the others are empty—a kneeling figure of the great cardinal himself. The passageway through the tower is vaulted and richly groined, and in a little chamber beside it dwells the porter, a part of whose duty it is to distribute the Wayfarers' Dole—a horn of beer and a manchet of bread—to all who choose to ask for it. The Master halted a moment to give the porter good evening.

"And how many to-day, Brother Manby?"

"Thirty-three, Master, including a party of twelve that came in motor-cars. I was jealous the cast wouldn't go round, for they all insisted on having the dole, and a full slice, too—the gentlemen declaring they were hungry after their drive. But," added Brother Manby, with a glance at a card affixed by the archway and announcing that tickets to view the hospital could be procured at sixpence a head, "they were most appreciative, I must say."

The Master smiled, nodded, and passed on. He gathered that someone had profited by something over and above the twelve sixpences.

But how gracious, how serenely beautiful, how eloquent of peace and benediction, the scene that met him as he crossed the threshold of the great quadrangle! Some thousands of times his eyes had rested on it, yet how could it ever stale?

"In the evening there shall be light."—The sun, declining in a cloudless west behind the roof-ridge and tall chimneys of the Brethren's houses, cast a shadow even to the sundial that stood for centre of the wide grass-plot. All else was softest gold—gold veiling the sky itself in a powdery haze; gold spread full along the front of the 'Nunnery,' or row of upper chambers on the eastern line of the quadrangle, where the three nurses of St. Hospital have their lodgings; shafts of gold penetrating the shaded ambulatory below; gold edging the western coigns of the Norman chapel; gold rayed and slanting between boughs in the park beyond the railings to the south. Only the western side of the quadrangle lay in shadow, and in the shadow, in twos and threes, beside their doors and tiny flower-plots (their pride), sat the Brethren, with no anxieties, with no care but to watch the closing tranquil hour: some with their aged wives (for the Hospital, as the Church of England with her bishops, allows a Brother to have one wife, but ignores her existence), some in monastic groups, withdrawn from hearing of women's gossip.

The Master chose the path that, circumventing the grass-plot, led him past these happy-looking groups and couples. To be sure, it was not his nearest way to the home-park, where he intended to think out his peroration; but he had plenty of time, and moreover he delighted to exchange courtesies with his charges. For each he had a greeting—

—"Fine weather, fine weather, Brother Dasent! Ah, this is the time to get rid of the rheumatics! Eh, Mrs. Dasent? I haven't seen him looking so hale for months past."

—"A beautiful evening, Brother Clerihew—yes, beautiful indeed.... You notice how the swallows are flying, both high and low, Brother Woolcombe?... Yes, I think we are in for a spell of it."

—"Ah, good evening, Mrs. Royle! What wonderful ten-week stocks! I declare I cannot grow the like of them in my garden. And what a perfume! But it warns me that the dew is beginning to fall, and Brother Royle ought not to be sitting out late. We must run no risks, Nurse, after his illness?"

The Master appealed to a comfortable-looking woman who, at his approach, had been engaged in earnest talk with Mrs. Royle—talk to which old Brother Royle appeared to listen placidly, seated in his chair.

—And so on. He had a kindly word for all, and all answered his salutations respectfully;

the women bobbing curtseys, the old men offering to rise from their chairs. But this he would by no means allow. His presence seemed to carry with it a fragrance of his own, as real as that of the mignonette and roses and sweet-Williams amid which he left them embowered.

When he had passed out of earshot, Brother Clerihew turned to Brother Woolcombe and said—

"The silly old '—' is beginning to show his age, seemin' to me."

"Oughtn't to," answered Brother Woolcombe. "If ever a man had a soft job, it's him."

"Well, I reckon we don't want to lose him yet, anyhow—'specially if Colt is to step into his old shoes."

Brother Clerihew's reference was to the Reverend Rufus Colt, Chaplain of St. Hospital.

"They never would!" opined Brother Woolcombe, meaning by "they" the governing body of Trustees.

"Oh, you never know—with a man on the make, like Colt. Push carries everything in these times."

"Colt's a hustler," Brother Woolcombe conceded. "But, damn it all, they *might* give us a gentleman!"

"There's not enough to go round, nowadays," grunted Brother Clerihew, who had been a butler, and knew. "Master Blanchminster's the real thing, of course..." He gazed after the retreating figure of the Master. "Seemed gay as a goldfinch, he did. D'ye reckon Colt has told him about Warboise?"

"I wonder. Where is Warboise, by the way?"

"Down by the river, taking a walk to cool his head. Ibbetson's wife gave him a dressing-down at tea-time for dragging Ibbetson into the row. Threatened to have her nails in his beard—I heard her. That woman's a terror.... All the same, one can't help sympathising with her. 'You can stick to your stinking Protestantism,' she told him, 'if it amuses you to fight the Chaplain. You're a widower, with nobody dependent. But don't you teach my husband to quarrel with his vittles.'"

"All the same, when a man has convictions—"

"Convictions are well enough when you can afford 'em," Brother Clerihew grunted again. "But up against Colt—what's the use? And where's his backing? Ibbetson, with a wife hanging on to his coat-tails; and old Bonaday, that wouldn't hurt a fly; and Copas, standing off and sneering."

"A man might have all the pains of Golgotha upon him before ever *you* turned a hair," grumbled Brother Dasent, a few yards away.

He writhed in his chair, for the rheumatism was really troublesome; but he over-acted his suffering somewhat, having learnt in forty-five years of married life that his spouse was not over-ready with sympathy.

"T'cht!" answered she. "I ought to know what they're like by this time, and I wonder, for my part, you don't try to get accustomed to 'em. Dying one can understand: but to be worried with a man's ailments, noon and night, it gets on the nerves...."

"You're *sure*?" resumed Mrs. Royle eagerly, but sinking her voice— for she could hardly wait until the Master had passed out of earshot.

"Did you ever know me spread tales?" asked the comfortable-looking Nurse. "Only, mind you, I mentioned it in the strictest secrecy. This is such a scandalous hole, one can't be too careful.... But down by the river they were, consorting and God knows what else."

"At his age, too! Disgusting, I call it."

"Oh, *she's* not particular! My comfort is I always suspected that woman from the first moment I set eyes on her. Instinct, I s'pose. 'Well, my lady,' says I, 'if you're any better than you should be, then I've lived all these years for nothing.'"

"And him—that looked such a broken-down old innocent!"

"They get taken that way sometimes, late in life."

Nurse Turner sank her voice and said something salacious, which caused Mrs. Royle to draw a long breath and exclaim that she could never have credited such things—not in a Christian land. Her old husband, too, overheard it, and took snuff with a senile chuckle.

"Gad, that's spicy!" he crooned.

The Master, at the gateway leading to the home-park, turned for a look back on the quadrangle and the seated figures. Yes, they made an exquisite picture. Here—

"Here where the world is quiet"—

Here, indeed, his ancestor had built a haven of rest.

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

As the lines floated across his memory, the Master had a mind to employ them in his peroration (giving them a Christian trend, of course) in place of the sonnet he had meant to quote. This would involve reconstructing a longish paragraph; but they had touched his mood, and he spent some time pacing to and fro under the trees before his taste rejected them as facile and even cheap in comparison with Wordsworth's—

"Men unto whom sufficient for the day,
And minds not stinted or untill'd are given,
—Sound healthy children of the God of heaven—
Are cheerful as the rising sun in May."

"Yes, yes," murmured the Master, "Wordsworth's is the better. But what a gift, to be able to express a thought just *so*—with that freshness, that noble simplicity! And even with Wordsworth it was fugitive, lost after four or five marvellous years. No one not being a Greek has ever possessed it in permanence...."

Here he paused at the sound of a footfall on the turf close behind him, and turned about with a slight frown; which readily yielded, however, and became a smile of courtesy.

"Ah, my dear Colt! Good evening!"

"Good evening, Master."

Mr. Colt came up deferentially, yet firmly, much as a nurse in a good family might collect a straying infant. He was a tall, noticeably well-grown man, a trifle above thirty, clean shaven, with a square and obstinate chin. He wore no hat, and his close black hair showed a straight middle parting above his low and somewhat protuberant forehead. The parting widened at the occiput to a well-kept tonsure. At the back the head wanted balance; and this lent a suggestion of brutality—of "thrust"—to his abounding appearance of strength. He walked in his priestly black with the gait and carriage proper to a heavy dragoon.

"A fine evening, indeed. Are you disengaged?"

"Certainly, certainly"—in comparison with Mr. Colt's grave voice the Master's was almost a chirrup—"whether for business or for the pleasure of a talk. Nothing wrong, I hope?"

For a moment or two the Chaplain did not answer. He seemed to be weighing his words. At length he said—

"I should have reported at once, but have been thinking it over. At Early Celebration this morning Warboise insulted the wafer."

"Dear, dear, you don't say so!"

—"Took it from me, held it derisively between finger and thumb, and muttered. I could not catch all that he said, but I distinctly heard the words 'biscuit' and 'Antichrist.' Indeed, he confesses to having used them. His demeanour left no doubt that he was insolent of set purpose.... I should add that Ibbetson, who was kneeling next to him and must have overheard, walked back from the altar-rail straight out of chapel; but his wife assures me that this was purely a coincidence, and due to a sudden weakness of the stomach."

"You have spoken to Warboise?"

"Yes, and he is defiant. Says that bread is bread, and—when I pressed him for a definition—asked (insolently again) if the Trustees had authorised our substituting biscuit for bread in the Wayfarers' Dole. Advised us to 'try it on' there, and look out for letters in the *Merchester Observer*. He even threatened—if you'll believe me—to write to the Press himself. In short, he was beyond all self-control."

"I was afraid," murmured the Master, flushing a little in his distress, "you would not introduce this—er—primitive use—or, I should say, restore it—without trouble. Brother Warboise has strong Protestant prejudices; passionate, even."

"And ignorant."

"Oh, of course, of course! Still—"

"I suggest that, living as he does on the Church's benefaction, eating the bread of her charity—"

The Chaplain paused, casting about for a third phrase to express Brother Warboise's poor dependence.

The Master smiled whimsically.

"'The bread'—that's just it, he would tell you... And Alberic de Blanchminster, moreover, was a layman, not even in any of the minor orders; so that, strictly speaking—"

"But he left his wealth expressly to be administered by the Church. ... Will you forgive me, Master, if I repeat very respectfully the suggestion I made at the beginning? If you could see your way to be celebrant at the early office, your mere presence would silence these mutineers. The Brethren respect your authority without question, and, the ice once broken, they would come to heel as one man."

The Master shook his head tremulously, in too much of a flurry even to note the Chaplain's derangement of metaphors.

"You cannot guess how early rising upsets me. Doctor Ainsley, indeed, positively forbids it.... I can sympathise, you see, with Ibbetson... and, for Brother Warboise, let us always remember that St. Hospital was not made, and cannot be altered, in a day—even for the better. Like England, it has been built by accretions, by traditions; yes, and by traditions that apparently conflict—by that of Brother Ingman, among others...."

"We who love St. Hospital," continued the Master, still tremulously, "have, I doubt not, each his different sense of the *genius loci*. Warboise finds it, we'll say, in the person of Peter Ingman, Protestant and martyr. But I don't defend his behaviour. I will send for him to-morrow, and talk to him. I will talk to him very severely."

CHAPTER III.

BROTHER COPAS HOOKS A FISH.

"Well," said Brother Copas, "since the fish are not rising, let us talk. Or rather, you can tell me all about it while I practise casting.... By what boat is she coming?"

"By the *Carnatic*, and due some time to-morrow. I saw it in the newspaper."

"Well?"—prompted Brother Copas, glancing back over his shoulder as Brother Bonaday came to a halt.

The bent little man seemed to have lost the thread of his speech as he stood letting his

gentle, tired eyes follow the flight of the swallows swooping and circling low along the river and over the meadow-grasses.

"Well?—" prompted Brother Copas again.

"Nurse Branscome will go down to meet her."

"And then?—"

"I am hoping the Master will let her have my spare room," said Brother Bonaday vaguely.

Here it should be explained that when the Trustees erected a new house for the Master his old lodgings in the quadrangle had been carved into sets of chambers for half a dozen additional Brethren, and that one of these, differing only from the rest in that it contained a small spare room, had chanced to be allotted to Brother Bonaday. He had not applied for it, and it had grieved him to find his promotion resented by certain of the Brethren, who let slip few occasions for envy. For the spare room had been quite useless to him until now. Now he began to think it might be, after all, a special gift of Providence.

"You have spoken to the Master?" asked Brother Copas.

"No: that is to say, not yet."

"What if he refuses?"

"It will be very awkward. I shall hardly know what to do.... Find her some lodging in the town, perhaps; there seems no other way."

"You should have applied to the Master at once."

Brother Bonaday considered this, while his eyes wandered.

"But why?" he asked. "The boat had sailed before the letter reached me. She was already on her way. Yes or no, it could make no difference."

"It makes this difference: suppose that the Master refuses, you have lost four days in which you might have found her a suitable lodging. What's the child's name, by the by?"

"Corona, it seems."

"Seems?"

"She was born just after her mother left me and went to America, having a little money of her own saved out of our troubles." Again Brother Copas, in the act of making a cast, glanced back over his shoulder, but Brother Bonaday's eyes were on the swallows. "In 1902 it was, the year of King Edward's coronation: yes, that will be why my wife chose the name.... I suppose, as you say," Brother Bonaday went on after a pause, "I ought to have spoken to the Master at once; but I put it off, the past being painful to me."

"Yet you told Nurse Branscome."

"Someone—some woman—had to be told. The child must be met, you see."

"H'm.... Well, I am glad, anyway, that you told me whilst there was yet a chance of my being useful; being, as you may or may not have observed, inclined to jealousy in matters of friendship."

This time Brother Copas kept his face averted, and made a fresh cast across stream with more than ordinary care. The fly dropped close under the far bank, and by a bare six inches clear of a formidable alder. He jerked the rod backward, well pleased with his skill.

"That was a pretty good one, eh?"

But clever angling was thrown away upon Brother Bonaday, whom preoccupation with trouble had long ago made unobservant. Brother Copas reeled in a few feet of his line.

"You'll bear in mind that, if the Master should refuse and you're short of money for a good lodging, I have a pound or two laid by. We must do what we can for the child; coming, as she will, from the other side of the world."

"That is kind of you, Copas," said Brother Bonaday slowly, his eyes fixed now on the reel, the whirring click of which drew his attention, so that he seemed to address his speech to it. "It is very kind, and I thank you. But I hope the Master will not refuse: though, to tell you the truth, there is another small difficulty which makes me shy of asking him a favour."

"Eh? What is it?"

Brother Bonaday twisted his thin fingers together. "I—I had promised, before I got this letter, to stand by Warboise. I feel rather strongly on these matters, you know—though, of

course, not so strongly as he does—and I promised to support him. Which makes it very awkward, you see, to go and ask a favour of the Master just when you are (so to say) defying his authority.... While if I hide it from him, and he grants the favour, and then next day or the day after I declare for Warboise, it will look like treachery, eh?"

"Damn!" said Brother Copas, still winding in his line meditatively. "There is no such casuist as poverty. And only this morning I was promising myself much disinterested sport in the quarrelling of you Christian brethren.... But isn't that Warboise coming along the path?... Yes, the very man! Well, we must try what's to be done."

"But I have given him my word, remember."

Brother Copas, if he heard, gave no sign of hearing. He had turned to hail Brother Warboise, who came along the river path with eyes fastened on the ground, and staff viciously prodding in time with his steps. "Hallo, Warboise! Halt, and give the countersign!"

Brother Warboise halted, taken at unawares, and eyed the two doubtfully from under his bushy grey eyebrows. They were Beauchamp both, he Blanchminster. He wore the black cloak of Blanchminster, with the silver cross *patté* at the breast, and looked—so Copas murmured to himself—"like Caiaphas in a Miracle Play." His mouth was square and firm, his grey beard straightly cut. He had been a stationer in a small way, and had come to grief by vending only those newspapers of which he could approve the religious tendency.

"The countersign?" he echoed slowly and doubtfully.

He seldom understood Brother Copas, but by habit suspected him of levity.

"To be sure, among three good Protestants! '*Bloody end to the Pope!*' is it not?"

"You are mocking me," snarled Brother Warboise, and with that struck the point of his staff passionately upon the pathway. "You are a Gallio, and always will be: you care nothing for what is heaven and earth to us others. But you have no right to infect Bonaday, here, with your poison. He has promised me." Brother Warboise faced upon Brother Bonaday sternly, "You promised me, you know you did."

"To be sure he promised you," put in Brother Copas. "He has just been telling me."

"And I am going to hold him to it! These are not times for falterers, halters between two opinions. If England is to be saved from coming a second time under the yoke of Papacy, men will have to come out in their true colours. He that is not for us is against us."

Brother Copas reeled in a fathom of line with a contemplative, judicial air.

"Upon my word, Warboise, I'm inclined to agree with you. I don't pretend to share your Protestant fervour: but hang it! I'm an Englishman with a sense of history, and that is what no single one among your present-day High Anglicans would appear to possess. If a man wants to understand England he has to start with one or two simple propositions, of which the first—or about the first—is that England once had a reformation, and is not going to forget it. But that is just what these fellows would make-believe to ignore. A fool like Colt—for at bottom, between ourselves, Colt is a fool—says 'Reformation? There was no such thing: we don't acknowledge it.' As the American said of some divine who didn't believe in eternal punishment, 'By gosh, he'd better not!'"

"But England *is* forgetting it!" insisted Brother Warboise. "Look at the streams of Papist monks she has allowed to pour in ever since France took a strong line with her monastic orders. Look at those fellows—College of St. John Lateran, as they call themselves—who took lodgings only at the far end of this village. In the inside of six months they had made friends with everybody."

"They employ local tradesmen, and are particular in paying their debts, I'm told."

"Oh," said Brother Warboise, "They're cunning!"

Brother Copas gazed at him admiringly, and shot a glance at Brother Bonaday. But Brother Bonaday's eyes had wandered off again to the skimming swallows.

"Confessed Romans and their ways," said Brother Warboise, "one is prepared for, but not for these wolves in sheep's clothing. Why, only last Sunday-week you must have heard Colt openly preaching the confessional!"

"I slept," said Brother Copas. "But I will take your word for it."

"He did, I assure you; and what's more—you may know it or not—Royle and Biscoe confess to him regularly."

"They probably tell him nothing worse than their suspicions of you and me. Colt is a vain person walking in a vain show."

"You don't realise the hold they are getting. Look at the money they squeeze out of the public; the churches they restore, and the new ones they build. And among these younger Anglicans, I tell you, Colt is a force."

"My good Warboise, you have described him exactly. He is a force— and nothing else. He will bully and beat you down to get his way, but in the end you can always have the consolation of presenting him with the shadow, which he will unerringly mistake for the substance. I grant you that to be bullied and beaten down is damnably unpleasant discipline, even when set off against the pleasure of fooling such a fellow as Colt. But when a man has to desist from pursuit of pleasure he develops a fine taste for consolations: and this is going to be mine for turning Protestant and backing you in this business."

"*You?*"

"Your accent is so little flattering, Warboise, that I hardly dare to add the condition. Yet I will. If I stand in with you in resisting Colt, you must release Bonaday here. Henceforth he's out of the quarrel."

"But I do not understand." Brother Warboise regarded Brother Copas from under his stiff grey eyebrows. "Why should Bonaday back out?"

"That is his affair," answered Brother Copas smoothly, almost before Brother Bonaday was aware of being appealed to.

"But—you don't mind my saying it—I've never considered you as a Protestant, quite; not, at least, as an earnest one."

"That," said Brother Copas, "I may be glad to remember, later on. But come; I offer you a bargain. Strike off Bonaday and enlist me. A volunteer is proverbially worth two pressed men; and as a Protestant I promise you to shine. If you must have my reason, or reasons, say that I am playing for safety."

Here Brother Copas laid down his rod on the grassy bank and felt for his snuff-box. As he helped himself to a pinch he slyly regarded the faces of his companions; and his own, contracting its muscles to take the dose, seemed to twist itself in a sardonic smile.

"Unlike Colt," he explained, "I read history sometimes, and observe its omens. You say that our clergy are active just now in building and restoring churches. Has it occurred to you that they were never so phenomenally active in building and rebuilding as on the very eve of the Reformation crash? Ask and inquire, my friend, what proportion of our English churches are Perpendicular; get from any handbook the date of that style of architecture; and apply the omen if you will."

"That sounds reassuring," said Brother Warboise. "And so you really think we Protestants are going to win?"

"God forbid! What I say is, that the High Anglicans will probably lose."

"One never knows when you are joking or when serious." Brother Warboise, leaning on his staff, pondered Brother Copas's face. It was a fine face; it even resembled the conventional portrait of Dante, but—I am asking the reader to tax his imagination—with humorous wrinkles set about the eyes, their high austerity clean taken away and replaced by a look of very mundane shrewdness, and lastly a grosser chin and mouth with a touch of the laughing faun in their folds and corners. "You are concealing your real reasons," said Brother Warboise.

"That," answered Brother Copas, "has been defined for the true function of speech.... But I am quite serious this time, and I ask you again to let Brother Bonaday off and take me on. You will find it worth while."

Brother Warboise could not see for the life of him why, at a time when it behoved all defenders of the reformed religion to stand shoulder to shoulder, Brother Bonaday should want to be let off.

"No?" said Brother Copas, picking up his rod again. "Well, those are my terms... and, excuse me, but was not that a fish over yonder? They are beginning to rise...."

Brother Warboise muttered that he would think it over, and resumed his walk.

"He'll agree, safe enough. And now, no more talking!"

But after a cast or two Brother Copas broke his own injunction.

"A Protestant!... I'm doing a lot for you, friend. But you must go to the Master this very evening. No time to be lost, I tell you! Why, if he consent, there are a score of small things to be bought to make the place fit for a small child. Get out pencil and paper and make a list.... Well, where do we begin?"

"I—I'm sure I don't know," confessed Brother Bonaday helplessly. "I never, so to speak, had a child before, you see."

"Nor I... but damn it, man, let's do our best and take things in order! When she arrives—let me see—the first thing is, she'll be hungry. That necessitates a small knife and fork. Knife, fork and spoon; regular godfather's gift. You must let me stand godfather and supply 'em. You don't happen to know if she's been christened, by the way?"

"No—o. I suppose they look after these things in America?"

"Probably—after a fashion," said Brother Copas with a fine smile. "Heavens! if as a Protestant I am to fight the first round over Infant Baptism—"

"There *is* a font in the chapel."

"Yes. I have often wondered why."

Brother Copas appeared to meditate this as he slowly drew back his rod and made a fresh cast. Again the fly dropped short of the alder stump by a few inches, and fell delicately on the dark water below it. There was a splash—a soft gurgling sound dear to the angler's heart. Brother Copas's rod bent and relaxed to the brisk whirr of its reel as a trout took fly and hook and sucked them under.

Then followed fifteen minutes of glorious life. Even Brother Bonaday's slow blood caught the pulse of it. He watched, not daring to utter a sound, his limbs twitching nervously.

But when the fish—in weight well over a pound—had been landed and lay, twitching too, in the grasses by the Mere bank, Brother Copas, after eyeing it a moment with legitimate pride, slowly wound up his reel.

"And I am to be a Protestant!... Saint Peter—King Fisherman— forgive me!"

CHAPTER IV.

CORONA COMES.

When Nurse Branscome reached the docks and inquired at what hour the *Carnatic* might be expected, the gatekeeper pointed across a maze of dock-basins, wharves, tramway-lines, to a far quay where the great steamship lay already berthed.

"She've broken her record by five hours and some minutes," he explained. "See that train just pulling out of the station? That carries her mails."

Nurse Branscome—a practical little woman with shrewd grey eyes— neither fussed over the news nor showed any sign of that haste which is ill speed. Scanning the distant vessel, she begged to be told the shortest way alongside, and noted the gatekeeper's instructions very deliberately, nodding her head. They were intricate. At the close she thanked him and started, still without appearance of hurry, and reached the *Carnatic* without a mistake. She arrived, too, a picture of coolness, though the docks lay shadeless to the afternoon sun, and the many tramway-lines radiated a heat almost insufferable.

The same quiet air of composure carried her unchallenged up a gangway and into the great ship. A gold-braided junior officer, on duty at the gangway-head, asked politely if he could be of service to her. She answered that she had come to seek a steerage passenger—a little girl named Bonaday.

"Ach!" said a voice close at her elbow, "that will be our liddle Korona!"

Nurse Branscome turned. The voice belonged to a blond, middle-aged German, whose gaze behind his immense spectacles was of the friendliest.

"Yes—Corona: that is her name."

"So!" said the middle-aged German. "She is with my wive at this moment. If I may ascort

you?... We will not then double Mister Smid' who is so busy."

He led the way forward. Once he turned, and in the faint light between-decks his spectacles shone palely, like twin moons.

"I am habby you are come," he said. "My wive will be habby.... I told her a dozen times it will be ol' right—the ship has arrived before she is agspected.... But our liddle Korona is so agscited, so imbatient for her well-belovèd England."

He pronounced "England" as we write it.

"So!" he proclaimed, halting before a door and throwing it open.

Within, on a cheap wooden travelling-trunk, sat a stout woman and a child. The child wore black weeds, and had—as Nurse Branscome noted at first glance—remarkably beautiful eyes. Her right hand lay imprisoned between the two palms of the stout woman, who, looking up, continued to pat the back of it softly.

"A friendt—for our Mees Korona!"

"Whad did I not tell you?" said the stout woman to the child, cooing the words exultantly, as she arose to meet the visitor.

The two women looked in each other's eyes, and each divined that the other was good.

"Good afternoon," said Nurse Branscome. "I am sorry to be late."

"But it is we who are early.... We tell the liddle one she must have bribed the cabdain, she was so craved to arr-rive!"

"Are you related to her?"

"Ach, no," chimed in husband and wife together as soon as they understood. "But friendts—friendts, Korona—*hein?*"

The husband explained that they had made the child's acquaintance on the first day out from New York, and had taken to her at once, seeing her so forlorn. He was a baker by trade, and by name Müller; and he and his wife, after doing pretty well in Philadelphia, were returning home to Bremen, where his brother (also a baker) had opened a prosperous business and offered him a partnership.

—"Which he can well afford," commented Frau Müller. "For my husband is beyond combetition as a master-baker; and at the end all will go to his brother's two sons.... We have not been gifen children of our own."

"Yet home is home," added her husband, with an expansive smile, "though it be not the Vaterland, Mees Korona—*hein?*" He eyed the child quizzically, and turned to Nurse Branscome. "She is badriotic so as you would nevar think—

"Brit-ons nevar, nevar, nev-ar-will be Slavs!"

He intoned it ludicrously, casting out both hands and snapping his fingers to the tune.

The child Corona looked past him with a gaze that put aside these foolish antics, and fastened itself on Nurse Branscome.

"I think I shall like you," she said composedly and with the clearest English accent. "But I do not quite know who you are. Are you fetching me to Daddy?"

"Yes," said Nurse Branscome, and nodded.

She seldom or never wasted words. Nods made up a good part of her conversation always.

Corona stood up, by this action conveying to the grown-ups—for she, too, economised speech—that she was ready to go, and at once. Youth is selfish, even in the sweetest-born of natures. Baker Müller and his good wife looked at her wistfully. She had come into their childless life, and had taken unconscious hold on it, scarce six days ago—the inside of a week. They looked at her wistfully. Her eyes were on Nurse Branscome, who stood for the future. Yet she remembered that they had been kind. Herr Müller, kind to the last, ran off and routed up a seaman to carry her box to the gangway. There, while bargaining with a porter, Nurse Branscome had time to observe with what natural good manners the child suffered herself to be folded in Frau Müller's ample embrace, and how prettily she shook hands with the good baker. She turned about, even once or twice, to wave her farewells.

"But she is naturally reserved," Nurse Branscome decided. "Well, she'll be none the worse for that."

She had hardly formed this judgment when Corona went a straight way to upset it. A tuft of groundsel had rooted itself close beside the traction rails a few paces from the waterside. With a little cry—almost a sob—the child swooped upon the weed, and plucking it, pressed it to her lips.

"I promised to kiss the first living thing I met in England," she explained.

"Then you might have begun with me," said Nurse Branscome, laughing.

"Oh, that's good—I like you to laugh! This is real England, merry England, and I used to 'spect it was so good that folks went about laughing all the time, just because they lived in it."

"Look here, my dear, you mustn't build your expectations too high. If you do, we shall all disappoint you; which means that you will suffer."

"But that was a long time ago. I've grown since.... And I didn't kiss you at first because it makes me feel uncomfortable kissing folks out loud. But I'll kiss you in the cars when we get to them."

But by and by, when they found themselves seated alone in a third-class compartment, she forgot her promise, being lost in wonder at this funny mode of travelling. She examined the parcels' rack overhead.

"*For light articles only,*" she read out. "But-but how do we manage when it's bedtime?"

"Bless the child, we don't sleep in the train! Why, in little over an hour we shall be at Merchester, and that's home."

"Home!" Corona caught at the word and repeated it with a shiver of excitement. "Home—in an hour?"

It was not that she distrusted; it was only that she could not focus her mind down to so small a distance.

"And now," said Nurse Branscome cheerfully, as they settled themselves down, "are you going to tell me about your passage, or am I to tell you about your father and the sort of place St. Hospital is? Or would you," added this wise woman, "just like to sit still and look out of window and take it all in for a while?"

"Thank you," answered Corona, "that's what I want, ezactly."

She nestled into her corner as the train drew forth beyond the purlieus and dingy suburbs of the great seaport and out into the country—our south country, all green and glorious with summer. Can this world show the like of it, for comfort of eye and heart?

Her eyes drank, devoured it.—Cattle knee-deep in green pasture, belly-deep in green water-flags by standing pools; cattle resting their long flanks while they chewed the cud; cattle whisking their tails amid the meadow-sweet, under hedges sprawled over with wild rose and honeysuckle.—White flocks in the lengthening shade of elms; wood and copse; silver river and canal glancing between alders, hawthorns, pollard willows; lichened bridges of flint and brick; ancient cottages, thatched or red-tiled, timber-fronted, bulging out in friendliest fashion on the high road; the high road looping its way from village to village, still between hedges. Corona had never before set eyes on a real hedge in the course of her young life; but all this country—right away to the rounded chalk hills over which the heat shimmered—was parcelled out by hedges—hedges by the hundred—and such hedges!

"It's—it's like a garden," she stammered, turning around and meeting a question in Nurse Branscome's eyes. "It's all so lovely and tiny and bandboxy. However do they find the time for it?"

"Eh, it takes time," said Nurse Branscome, amused. "You'll find that's the main secret with us over here. But—disappointed, are you?"

"Oh, no—no—no!" the child assured her. "It's ten times lovelier than ever I 'spected—only," she added, cuddling down for another long gaze, "it's different—different in size."

"England's a little place," said Nurse Branscome. "In the colonies— I won't say anything about the States, for I've never seen them; but I've been to Australia in my time, and I expect with Canada it's much the same or more so—in the colonies everything's spread out; but home here, I heard Brother Copas say, if you want to feel how great anything is, you have to take it deep-ways, layer below layer."

Corona knit her small brow.

"But Windsor Castle is a mighty big place?" she said hopefully.

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, I'm glad of that anyway."

"But why, dear?"

"Because," said Corona, "that is where the King lives. I used to call him *my* King over on the Other Side, because my name is Corona, and means I was born the year he was crowned. They make out they don't hold much stock in kings, back there; but that sort of talk didn't take me in, because when you *have* a King of your own you know what it feels like. And, anyway, they had to allow that King Edward is a mighty big one, and that he is always making peace for all the world.... So now you know why I'm glad about Windsor Castle."

"I'm afraid it is not quite clear to me yet," said Nurse Branscome, leading her on.

"I can't 'splain very well."—"The child could never quite compass the sound "ex" in words where a consonant followed.—"I'm no good at 'splaining. But I guess if the job was up to you to make peace for all-over-the-world, you'd want to sit in a big place, sort of empty an' quiet, an' feel like God." Corona gazed out of window again. "You can tell he's been at it, too, hereabouts; but somehow I didn't 'spect it to be all lying about in little bits."

They alighted from the idling train at a small country station embowered in roses, the next on this side of Merchester and but a short three-quarters of a mile from St. Hospital, towards which they set out on foot by a meadow-path and over sundry stiles, a porter following (or rather making a *détour* after them along the high road) and wheeling Corona's effects on a barrow. From the first stile Nurse Branscome pointed out the grey Norman buildings, the chapel tower, the clustering trees; and supported Corona with a hand under her elbow as, perched on an upper bar with her knees against the top rail, she drank in her first view of home.

Her first comment—it shaped itself into a question, or rather into two questions—gave Nurse Branscome a shock: it was so infantile in comparison with her talk in the train.

"Does daddy live there? And is he so very old, then?"

Then Nurse Branscome bethought her that this mite had never yet seen her father, and that he was not only an aged man but a broken-down one, and in appearance (as they say) older than his years. A great pity seized her for Corona, and in the rush of pity all her oddities and grown-up tricks of speech (Americanisms apart) explained themselves. She was an old father's child. Nurse Branscome was midwife enough to know what freakishness and frailty belong to children begotten by old age. Yet Corona, albeit gaunt with growing, was lithe and well-formed, and of a healthy complexion and a clear, though it inclined to pallor.

"Your father is not a young man," she said gently. "You must be prepared for that, dear.... And of course his dress—the dress of the Beauchamp Brethren—makes him look even older than he is."

"What is it?" asked Corona, turning about as well as she could on the stile and putting the direct question with direct eyes.

"It's a long gown, a gown of reddish-purple, with a silver rose at the breast."

"Save us!" exclaimed this unaccountable child. "'Seems I'd better start right in by asking what news of the Crusades."

In the spare room pertaining to Brother Bonaday he and Brother Copas were (as the latter put it) making very bad weather with their preparations. They supposed themselves, however, to have plenty of time, little guessing that the captain of the *Carnatic* had been breaking records. In St. Hospital one soon learns to neglect mankind's infatuation for mere speed; and yet, strange to say, Brother Copas was discoursing on this very subject.

He had produced certain purchases from his wallet, and disposed them on the chest of drawers which was to serve Corona for dressing-table. They included a cheap mirror, and here he felt himself on safe ground; but certain others—such as a gaudily-dressed doll, priced at 1s. 3d., a packet of hairpins, a book of coloured photographs, entitled *Souvenir of Royal Merchester*—he eyed more dubiously. He had found it hard to bear in mind the child's exact age. "But she was born in Coronation Year. I have told you that over and over," Brother Bonaday would protest. "My dear fellow, I know you have; but the devil is, that means something different every time."

—"The purpose of all right motion," Brother Copas was saying, "is to get back to the point from which you started. Take the sun itself, or any created mass; take the smallest

molecule in that mass; take the world whichever way you will—"

'Behold the world, how it is whirled round!
And, for it so is whirl'd, is namèd so.'

"(There's pretty etymology for you!) All movement in a straight line is eccentric, lawless, or would be were it possible, which I doubt. Why this haste, then, in passing given points? If man did it in a noble pride, as a *tour de force*, to prove himself so much the cleverer than the brute creation, I could understand it; but if that's his game, a speck of radium beats him in a common canter. I read in a scientific paper last week, in a signed article which bore every impress of truth, that there's a high explosive that will run a spark from here to Paris while you are pronouncing its name. Yet extend that run, and run it far and fast as you will, it can only come back to your hand.... Which," continued Brother Copas, raising his voice, for Brother Bonaday had toddled into the sitting-room to see if the kettle boiled, "reminds me of a story I picked up in the Liberal Club the other day, the truth of it guaranteed. Ten or eleven years ago the Mayor of Merchester died on the very eve of St. Giles's Fair. The Town Council met, and some were for stopping the shows and steam roundabouts as a mark of respect, while others doubted that the masses (among whom the Mayor had not been popular) would resent this curtailing of their fun. In the end a compromise was reached. The proprietor of the roundabouts was sent for, and the show-ground granted to him, on condition that he made his steam-organ play hymn tunes. He accepted, and that week the merry-makers revolved to the strains of 'Nearer, my God, to Thee.' It sounds absurd; but when you come to reflect—"

Brother Copas broke off, hearing a slight commotion in the next room. Brother Bonaday, kneeling and puffing at the fire which refused to boil the water, had been startled by voices in the entry. Looking up, flushed of face, he beheld a child on the threshold, with Nurse Branscome standing behind her.

"Daddy!"

Brother Copas from one doorway, Nurse Branscome from the other, saw Brother Bonaday's face twitch as with a pang of terror. He arose slowly from his knees, and very slowly—as if his will struggled against some invisible, detaining force—held out both hands. Corona ran to them; but, grasped by them, drew back for a moment, scanning him before she suffered herself to be kissed.

"My, what a dear old dress!... Daddy, you *are* a dude!"

CHAPTER V.

BROTHER COPAS ON RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE.

"Ah, good evening, Mr. Simeon!"

In the British Isles—search them all over—you will discover no more agreeable institution of its kind than the Venables Free Library, Merchester; which, by the way, you are on no account to confuse with the Free Public Library attached to the Shire Hall. In the latter you may study the newspapers with all the latest financial, police and betting news, or borrow all the newest novels—even this novel which I am writing, should the Library Sub-Committee of the Town Council (an austere moral body) allow it to pass. In the Venables Library the books are mostly mellowed by age, even when naughtiest (it contains a whole roomful of Restoration Plays, an unmatched collection), and no newspapers are admitted, unless you count the monthly and quarterly reviews, of which *The Hibbert Journal* is the newest-fangled. By consequence the Venables Library, though open to all men without payment, has few frequenters; "which," says Brother Copas, "is just as it should be."

But not even public neglect will account for the peculiar charm of the Venables Library. That comes of the building it inhabits: anciently a town house of the Marquesses of Merchester, abandoned at the close of the great Civil War, and by them never again inhabited, but maintained with all its old furniture, and from time to time patched up against age and weather—happily not restored. When, early in the last century, the seventh Marquess of Merchester very handsomely made it over to a body of trustees, to house a collection of books bequeathed to the public by old Dean Venables, Merchester's most scholarly historian, it was with a stipulation that the amenities of the house should be as little as possible disturbed. The beds, to be sure, were removed from the upper rooms, and the old carpets from the staircase; and the walls, upstairs and down, lined with bookcases. But a great deal of the old furniture remains; and, wandering at will from one room to

another, you look forth through latticed panes upon a garth fenced off from the street with railings of twisted iron-work and overspread by a gigantic mulberry-tree, the boughs of which in summer, if you are wise enough to choose a window-seat, will filter the sunlight upon your open book,

Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Lastly, in certain of the rooms smoking is permitted; some bygone trustee—may earth lie lightly on him!—having discovered and taught that of all things a book is about the most difficult to burn. You may smoke in 'Paradise,' for instance. By this name, for what reason I cannot tell, is known the room containing the Greek and Latin classics.

Brother Copas, entering Paradise with a volume under his arm, found Mr. Simeon seated there alone with a manuscript and a Greek lexicon before him, and gave him good evening.

"Good evening, Brother Copas!... You have been a stranger to us for some weeks, unless I mistake?"

"You are right. These have been stirring times in politics, and for the last five or six weeks I have been helping to save my country, at the Liberal Club."

Mr. Simeon—a devoted Conservative—came as near to frowning as his gentle nature would permit.

"You disapprove, of course," continued Brother Copas easily. "Well, so—in a sense—do I. We beat you at the polls; not in Merchester—we shall never carry Merchester—though even in Merchester we put up fight enough to rattle you into a blue funk. But God help the pair of us, Mr. Simeon, if our principles are to be judged by the uses other men make of 'em! I have had enough of my fellow-Liberals to last me for some time.... Why are you studying Liddell and Scott, by the way?"

"To tell the truth," Mr. Simeon confessed, "this is my fair copy of the Master's Gaudy Sermon. I am running it through and correcting the Greek accents. I am always shaky at accents."

"Why not let me help you?" Brother Copas suggested. "Upon my word, you may trust me. I am, as nearly as possible, impeccable with Greek accents, and may surely say so without vanity, since the gift is as useless as any other of mine."

Mr. Simeon, as we know, was well aware of this.

"I should be most grateful," he confessed, in some compunction. "But I am not sure that the Master—if you will excuse me—would care to have his sermon overlooked. Strictly speaking, indeed, I ought not to have brought it from home: but with six children in a very small house—and on a warm evening like this, you understand—"

"I once kept a private school," said Brother Copas.

"They are high-spirited children, I thank God." Mr. Simeon sighed. "Moreover, as it happened, they wanted my Liddell and Scott to play at forts with."

"Trust me, my dear sir. I will confine myself to the Master's marginalia without spying upon the text."

Brother Copas, as Mr. Simeon yielded to his gentle insistence, laid his own book on the table, and seated himself before the manuscript, which he ran through at great speed.

"H'm—h'm... ψυχή here is *oxyton*—here and always... and ἀνόητος proparoxyton: you have left it unaccented."

"I was waiting to look it up, having some idea that it held a contraction."

Brother Copas dipped pen and inserted the accent without comment.

"I see nothing else amiss," he said, rising.

"It is exceedingly kind of you."

"Well, as a matter of fact it is; for I came here expressly to cultivate a bad temper, and you have helped to confirm me in a good one.... Oh, I know what you would say if your politeness allowed: 'Why, if bad temper's my object, did I leave the Liberal Club and come here?' Because, my dear sir, at the Club—though there's plenty—it's of the wrong sort. I wanted a *religiously* bad temper, and an intelligent one to boot."

"I don't see what religion and bad temper have to do with one another," confessed Mr. Simeon.

"That is because you are a good man, and therefore your religion doesn't matter to you."

"But really," Mr. Simeon protested, flushing; "though one doesn't willingly talk of these inmost things, you must allow me to say that my religion is everything to me."

"You say that, and believe it. Religion, you believe, colours all your life, suffuses it with goodness as with a radiance. But actually, my friend, it is your own good heart that colours and throws its radiance into your religion."

'O lady, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live'—

"—Or religion either.... Pardon me, but a thoroughly virtuous or a thoroughly amiable man is not worth twopence as a touchstone for a creed; he would convert even Mormonism to a thing of beauty.... Whereas the real test of any religion is—as I saw it excellently well put the other day—'not what form it takes in a virtuous mind, but what effects it produces on those of another sort.' Well, I have been studying those effects pretty well all my life, and they may be summed up, roughly but with fair accuracy, as Bad Temper."

"Good men or bad," persisted Mr. Simeon, "what *can* the Christian religion do but make them both better?"

"Which Christian religion? Catholic or Protestant? Anglican or Nonconformist?... I won't ask you to give away your own side. So we'll take the Protestant Nonconformists. There are a good many down at the Club: you heard some of the things they said and printed during the Election; and while your charity won't deny that they are religious—some of 'em passionately religious—you will make haste to concede that their religion and their bad temper were pretty well inseparable. They would say pretty much the same of you Anglo-Catholics."

"You will not pretend that we show bad temper in anything like the same degree."

"Why should you?... I don't know that, as a fact, there is much to choose between you; but at any rate the worse temper belongs very properly to the under dog. Your Protestant is the under dog in England to-day; socially, if not politically.... Yes, and politically, too; for he may send what majority he will to the House of Commons pledged to amend the Education Act of 1902: he does it in vain. The House of Lords—which is really not a political but a social body, the citadel of a class—will confound his politics, frustrate his knavish tricks. Can you wonder that he loses his temper, sometimes inelegantly? And when the rich Nonconformist tires of striving against all the odds—when he sets up his carriage and his wife and daughters find that it won't carry them where they had hoped—when he surrenders to their persuasions and goes over to the enemy—why, then, can you wonder that his betrayed coreligionists roar all like bears or foam like dogs and run about the city?... I tell you, my dear Mr. Simeon, this England of ours stands in real peril to-day of merging its class warfare in religious differences."

"You mean it, of course, the other way about—of merging our religion in class warfare."

"I mean it as I said it. Class warfare is among Englishmen a quite normal, healthy function of the body politic: it keeps the blood circulating. It is when you start infecting it with religion the trouble begins.... We are a sane people, however, on the whole; and every sane person is better than his religion."

"How can you say such a thing?" "How can you gainsay it—nay, or begin to doubt it—if only you will be honest with yourself? Consider how many abominable things religion has taught, and man, by the natural goodness of his heart, has outgrown. Do you believe, for example, that an unchristened infant goes wailing forth from the threshold of life into an eternity of punishment? Look me in the face, you father of six! No, of course you don't believe it. Nobody does. And the difference is not that religion has ceased to teach it—for it hasn't—but that men have grown decent and put it, with like doctrines, silently aside in disgust. So it has happened to Satan and his fork: they have become 'old hat.' So it will happen to all the old machinery of hell: the operating decency of human nature will grow ashamed of it—that is all... Why, if you look into men's ordinary daily conduct—which is the only true test—they *never* believed in such things. Do you suppose that the most frantic Scotch Calvinist, when he was his *douce* daily self and not temporarily intoxicated by his creed, ever treated his neighbours in practice as men predestined to damnation? Of course he didn't!"

"But religion," objected Mr. Simeon, "lifts a man out of himself—his daily self, as you call it."

"It does that, by Jove!" Brother Copas felt for his snuff-box. "Why, what else was I arguing?"

"And," pursued Mr. Simeon, his voice gaining assurance as it happened on a form of words he had learnt from somebody else, "the efficacy of religion is surely just here, that it lifts the individual man out of his personality and wings him towards Abba, the all-fatherly—"

as I heard it said the other day," he added lamely.

"Good Lord!"—Brother Copas eyed him over a pinch. "You must have been keeping pretty bad company, lately. Who is it?... That sounds a trifle too florid even for Colt—the sort of thing Colt would achieve if he could... Upon my word, I believe you must have been sitting under Tarbolt!"

Mr. Simeon blushed guiltily to the eyes. But it was ever the mischief with Brother Copas's worldly scent that he overran it on the stronger scent of an argument.

"But it's precisely a working daily religion, a religion that belongs to a man when he *is* himself, that I'm after," he ran on. "You fellows hold that a sound religious life will ensure you an eternity of bliss at the end. Very well. You fellows know that the years of a man's life are, roughly, threescore and ten. (Actually it works out far below that figure, but I make you a present of the difference.) Very well again. I take any average Christian aged forty-five, and what sort of premium do I observe him paying—I won't say on a policy of Eternal Bliss—but on any policy a business-like Insurance Company would grant for three hundred pounds? There *is* the difference too," added Brother Copas, "that *he* gets the eternal bliss, while the three hundred pounds goes to his widow."

Brother Copas took a second pinch, his eyes on Mr. Simeon's face. He could not guess the secret of the pang that passed over it—that in naming three hundred pounds he had happened on the precise sum in which Mr. Simeon was insured, and that trouble enough the poor man had to find the yearly premium, due now in a fortnight's time. But he saw that somehow he had given pain, and dexterously slid off the subject, yet without appearing to change it.

"For my part," he went on, "I know a method by which, if made Archbishop of Canterbury and allowed a strong hand, I would undertake to bring, within ten years, every Dissenter in England within the Church's fold."

"What would you do?"

"I would lay, in one pastoral of a dozen sentences, the strictest orders on my clergy to desist from all politics, all fighting; to disdain any cry, any struggle; to accept from Dissent any rebuff, persecution, spoliation—while steadily ignoring it. In every parish my Church's attitude should be this: 'You may deny me, hate me, persecute me, strip me: but you are a Christian of this parish and therefore my parishioner; and therefore I absolutely defy you to escape my forgiveness or my love. Though you flee to the uttermost parts of the earth, you shall not escape these: by these, as surely as I am the Church, you shall be mine in the end.'... And do you think, Mr. Simeon, any man in England could for ever resist that appeal? A few of us agnostics, perhaps. But we are human souls, after all; and no one is an agnostic for the fun of it. We should be tempted—sorely tempted—I don't say rightly."

Mr. Simeon's eyes shone. The picture touched him.

"But it would mean that the Church must compromise," he murmured.

"That is precisely what it would not mean. It would mean that all her adversaries must compromise; and with love there is only one compromise, which is surrender.... But," continued Brother Copas, resuming his lighter tone, "this presupposes not only a sensible Archbishop but a Church not given up to anarchy as the Church of England is. Let us therefore leave speculating and follow our noses; which with me, Mr. Simeon—and confound you for a pleasant companion!—means an instant necessity to cultivate bad temper."

He picked up his volume from the table and walked off with it to the window-seat.

"You are learning bad temper from a book?" asked Mr. Simeon, taking off his spectacles and following Brother Copas with mild eyes of wonder.

"Certainly.... If ever fortune, my good sir, should bring you (which God forbid!) to end your days in our College of Noble Poverty, you will understand the counsel given by the pilot to Pantagruel and his fellow-voyagers—that considering the gentleness of the breeze and the calm of the current, as also that they stood neither in hope of much good nor in fear of much harm, he advised them to let the ship drive, nor busy themselves with anything but making good cheer. I have done with all worldly fear and ambition; and therefore in working up a hearty Protestant rage (to which a hasty promise commits me), I can only tackle my passion on the intellectual side. Those fellows down at the Club are no help to me at all.... My book? It is the last volume of Mr. Froude's famous *History of England*. Here's a passage now—

"The method of Episcopal appointments, instituted by Henry VIII, as a temporary expedient, and abolished under Edward as an unreality, was re-established by Elizabeth, not certainly because she believed that the invocation of the Holy Ghost was required for the completeness of an election which her own choice had already determined, not because the bishops obtained any gifts or graces in their consecration which she herself respected, but because the shadowy form of an election, with a religious ceremony following it, gave them the semblance of spiritual independence, the semblance without the substance, which

qualified them to be the instruments of the system which she desired to enforce. They were tempted to presume on their phantom dignity, till a sword of a second Cromwell taught them the true value of their Apostolic descent....

"That's pretty well calculated to annoy, eh? Also, by the way, in its careless rapture it twice misrelates the relative pronoun; and Froude was a master of style. Or what do you say to this?—

"But neither Elizabeth nor later politicians of Elizabeth's temperament desired the Church of England to become too genuine. It has been more convenient to leave an element of unsoundness at the heart of an institution which, if sincere, might be dangerously powerful. The wisest and best of its bishops have found their influence impaired, their position made equivocal, by the element of unreality which adheres to them. A feeling approaching to contempt has blended with the reverence attaching to their position, and has prevented them from carrying the weight in the councils of the nation which has been commanded by men of no greater intrinsic eminence in other professions."

"Yet another faulty relative!

"Pretensions which many of them would have gladly abandoned have connected their office with a smile. The nature of it has for the most part filled the Sees with men of second-rate abilities. The latest and most singular theory about them is that of the modern English Neo-Catholic, who disregards his bishop's advice, and despises his censures; but looks on him nevertheless as some high-bred, worn-out animal, useless in himself, but infinitely valuable for some mysterious purpose of spiritual propagation."

Brother Copas laid the open volume face-downward on his knee—a trivial action in itself; but he had a conscience about books, and would never have done this to a book he respected.

"Has it struck you, Mr. Simeon," he asked, "that Froude is so diabolically effective just because in every fibre of him he is at one with the thing he attacks?"

"He had been a convert of the Tractarians in his young days, I have heard," said Mr. Simeon.

"Yes, it accounts for much in him. Yet I was not thinking of that—which was an experience only, though significant. The man's whole cast of mind is priestly despite himself. He has all the priesthood's alleged tricks: you can never be sure that he is not faking evidence or garbling a quotation.... My dear Mr. Simeon, truly it behoves us to love our enemies, since in this world they are often the nearest we have to us."

CHAPTER VI.

GAUDY DAY.

In the sunshine, on a lower step of the stone stairway that leads up and through the shadow of a vaulted porch to the Hundred Men's Hall, or refectory, Brother Biscoe stood with a hand-bell and rang to dinner. Brother Biscoe was a charming old man to look upon; very frail and venerable, with a somewhat weak face; and as senior pensioner of the hospital he enjoyed the privilege of ringing to dinner on Gaudy Days—twenty-seven strokes, distinct and separately counted—one for each brother on the two foundations.

The Brethren, however, loitered in groups before their doorways, along the west side of the quadrangle, awaiting a signal from the porter's lodge. Brother Manby, there, had promised to warn them as soon as the Master emerged from his lodging with the other Trustees and a few distinguished guests—including the Bishop of Merchester, Visitor of St. Hospital—on their way to dine. The procession would take at least three minutes coming through the outer court—ample time for the Brethren to scramble up the stairway, take their places, and assume the right air of reverent expectancy.

As a rule—Brother Copas, standing on the gravel below Brother Biscoe and counting the strokes for him, begged him to note it—they were none so dilatory. But gossip held them. His shrewd glance travelled from group to group, and between the strokes of the bell he counted the women-folk.

"They are all at their doors," he murmured. "For a look at the dear Bishop, think you?"

"They are watching to see what Warboise will do," quavered Brother Biscoe. "Oh, I know!"

"The women don't seem to be taking much truck with Warboise or his Petition. See him over there, with Plant and Ibbetson only.... And Ibbetson's only there because his wife has more appetising fish to fry. But she's keeping an eye on him—watch her! Poor woman, for once she's discovering Rumour to be almost too full of tongues."

"I wonder you're not over there too, lending Warboise support," suggested Brother Biscoe. "Royle told me last night that you had joined the Protestant swim."

"But I am here, you see," Brother Copas answered sweetly; "and just for the pleasure of doing you a small service."

Even this did not disarm the old man, whose temper was malignant.

"Well, I wish you joy of your crew. A secret drinker like Plant, for instance! And your friend Bonaday, in his second childhood—"

"Bonaday will have nothing to do with us."

"Ah?" Brother Biscoe shot him a sidelong glance. "He's more pleasantly occupied, perhaps?—if it's true what they tell me."

"It never is," said Brother Copas imperturbably; "though I haven't a notion to what you refer."

"But surely you've heard?"

"Nothing: and if it concerns Bonaday, you'd best hold your tongue just now; for here he is."

Brother Bonaday in fact, with Nurse Branscome and Corona, at that moment emerged from the doorway of his lodgings, not ten paces distant from the steps of the Hundred Men's Hall. The three paused, just outside—the Nurse and Corona to await the procession of Visitors, due now at any moment. Brother Bonaday stood and blinked in the strong sunlight: but the child, catching sight of Brother Copas as he left Brother Biscoe and hurried towards her, ran to meet him with a friendly nod.

"I've come out to watch the procession," she announced. "That's all we women are allowed; while you—Branny says there's to be ducks and green peas! Did you know that?"

"Surely you must have observed my elation?"

Brother Copas stood and smiled at her, leaning on his staff.

"The Bishop wears gaiters they tell me; and the Master too. I saw them coming out of Chapel in their surplices, and the Chaplain with the Bishop's staff: but Branny wouldn't let me go to the service. She said I must be tired after my journey. So I went to the lodge instead and made friends with Brother Manby. I didn't," said Corona candidly, "make very good weather with Brother Manby, just at first. He began by asking 'Well, and oo's child might *you* be?'—and when I told him, he said, 'Ow's anyone to know *that*?' That amused me, of course."

"Did it?" asked Brother Copas in slight astonishment.

"Because," the child explained, "I'd been told that English people dropped their h's; but Brother Manby was the first I'd heard doing it, and it seemed too good to be true. *You* don't drop your h's; and nor does Daddy, nor Branny."

Brother Copas chuckled.

"Don't reproach us," he pleaded. "You see, you've taken us at unawares more or less. But if it really please you—"

"You are very kind," Corona put in; "but I guess that sort of thing must come naturally, to be any good. You can't think how naturally Brother Manby went on dropping them; till by and by he told me what a mort of Americans came here to have a look around. Then, of course, I saw how he must strike them as the real thing."

Brother Copas under lowered eyebrows regarded the young face. It was innocent and entirely serious.

"So I said," she went on, "that I came from America too, and it was a long way, and please would he hurry up with the bread and beer? After that we made friends, and I had a good time."

"Are you telling me that you spent the forenoon drinking beer in the porter's lodge?"

Corona's laugh was like the bubbling of water in a hidden well.

"It wasn't what you might call a cocktail," she confided. "The tiredest traveller wouldn't ask for crushed ice to it, not with a solid William-the-Conqueror wall to lean against."

Brother Copas admitted that the tenuity of the Wayfarer's Ale had not always escaped the Wayfarer's criticism. He was about to explain that, in a country of vested interests, publicans and teetotallers agreed to require that beer supplied *gratis* in the name of charity must be innocuous and unenticing. But at this moment Brother Manby signalled from his lodge that the procession was approaching across the outer court, and he hurried away to join the crowd of Brethren in their scramble upstairs to the Hundred Men's Hall.

The procession hove in sight; in number about a dozen, walking two-and-two, headed by Master Blanchminster and the Bishop. Nurse Branscome stepped across to the child and stood by her, whispering the names of the dignitaries as they drew near. The dear little gaitered white-headed clergyman—the one in the college cap—was the Master; the tall one, likewise in gaiters, the Bishop.

"—and the gentleman behind him is Mr. Yeo, the Mayor of Merchester. That's the meaning of his chain, you know."

"Why, is he dangerous?" asked Corona.

"His chain of office, dear. It's the rule in England."

"You don't say!... Over in America we've never thought of that: we let our grafters run loose. But who's the tall one next to him? My! but can't you see him, Branny, with his long legs crossed?"

Branny was puzzled.

"—on a tomb, in chain armour, with his hands *so*." Corona put her two palms together, as in the act of prayer.

"Oh, I see! Well, as it happens, his house has a private chapel with five or six of just those tombs—all of his ancestors. He's Sir John Shaftesbury, and he's pricked for High Sheriff next year. One of the oldest families in the county; in all England, indeed. Everyone loves and respects Sir John."

"Didn't I say so!" The small palms were pressed together ecstatically. "And does he keep a dwarf, same as they used to?"

"Eh?... If you mean the little man beside him, with the straw-coloured gloves, that's Mr. Bamberger; Mr. Julius Bamberger, our Member of Parliament."

"Say that again, please."

The child looked up, wide-eyed.

"He's our Member of Parliament for Merchester; immensely rich, they say."

"Well," decided Corona after a moment's thought, "I'm going to pretend he isn't, anyway. I'm going to pretend Sir John found him and brought him home from Palestine."

Branny named, one by one, the rest of the Trustees, all persons of importance.

Mr. Colt and the Bishop's chaplain brought up the rear.

The procession came to a halt. Old Warboise had not followed in the wake of the Brethren, but stood at the foot of the stairway, and leaned there on his staff. His face was pale, his jaw set square to perform his duty. His hand trembled, though, as he held out a paper, accosting the Bishop.

"My lord," he said, "some of the Brethren desire you as Visitor to read this Petition."

"Hey?" interrupted the Master, taken by surprise. "Tut—tut—my good Warboise, what's the meaning of this?"

"Very sorry, Master," Brother Warboise mumbled: "and meaning no disrespect to you, that have always ruled St. Hospital like a gentleman. But a party must reckon with his conscience."

The Bishop eyed the document dubiously, holding it between finger and thumb.

"Some affair of discipline?" he asked, turning to the Master.

"Romanisers, my lord—Romanisers: that's what's the matter!" answered Brother Warboise, lifting his voice and rapping the point of his staff on the gravel.

Good Master Blanchminster, shocked by this address, lifted his eyes beyond Warboise and perceived the womenkind gathered around their doorways, listening. Nothing of the sort had happened in all his long and beneficent rule. He was scandalised. He lost his temper.

"Brother Warboise," he said severely, "whatever your grievances—and I will inquire into it later—you have chosen a highly indecorous and, er, offensive way of obtruding it. At this moment, sir, we are going together to dine and to thank God for many mercies vouchsafed to us. If you have any sense of these you will stand aside now and follow us when we have passed. His lordship will read your petition at a more convenient opportunity."

"Quite so, my good man." The Bishop took his cue and pocketed the paper, nodding shortly. The procession moved forward and mounted the staircase, Brother Warboise stumping after it at a little distance, scowling as he climbed, scowling after the long back and wide shoulders of Mr. Colt as they climbed directly ahead of him.

Around their tables in the Hundred Men's Hall the Brethren were gathered expectant.

"Buzz for the Bishop—here he comes!" quoted Brother Copas, and stood forth ready to deliver the Latin grace as the visitors found their places at the high table.

St. Hospital used a long Latin grace on holy-days; "and," Brother Copas had once observed, "the market-price of Latinity in England will ensure that we always have at least one Brother capable of repeating it."

"... *Gratias agimus pro Alberico de Albo Monasterio, in fide defuncto*—"

Here Brother Copas paused, and the Brethren responded "*Amen!*"

"*Ac pro Henrico de Bello Campo, Cardinali.*"

As the grace proceeded Brother Copas dwelt on the broad vowels with gusto.

"...*Itaque precamur; Miserere nostri, te quæsumus Domine, tuisque donis, quae de tua benignitate percepturi sumus, benedicito. Per Jesum Christum, Dominum nostrum. Amen.*"

His eyes wandered down to the carving-table, where Brother Biscoe stood ready, as his turn was, to direct and apportion the helpings. He bowed to the dignitaries on the dais, and walked to his place at the board next to Brother Warboise.

"Old Biscoe's carving," he announced as he took his seat. "You and I will have to take a slice of *odium theologicum* together, for auld lang syne."

Sure enough, when his helping of duck came to him, it was the back. Brother Warboise received another back for his portion.

"Courage, Brother Ridley!" murmured Copas, "you and I this day have raised a couple of backs that will not readily be put down."

Nurse Branscome had been surprised when Brother Warboise accosted the Bishop. She could not hear what he said, but guessed that something unusual was happening. A glance at the two or three groups of women confirmed this, and when the procession moved on, she walked across to the nearest, taking Corona by the hand.

The first she addressed happened to be Mrs. Royle.

"Whatever was Brother Warboise doing just now?" she asked.

Mrs. Royle hunched her shoulders, and turned to Mrs. Ibbetson.

"There's worse scandals in St. Hospital," said she with a sniff, "than ever old Warboise has nosed. Eh, ma'am?"

"One can well believe that, Mrs. Royle," agreed Mrs. Ibbetson, fixing an eye of disapproval on the child.

"And I am quite sure of it," agreed Nurse Branscome candidly; "though what you mean is a mystery to me."

CHAPTER VII.

LOW AND HIGH TABLES.

"This," said Brother Copas sweetly, turning over his portion of roast duck and searching for some flesh on it, "is not a duck at all, but a pelican, bird of wrath. See, it has devoured its own breast."

Beside the dais, at the eastern end of the Hundred Men's Hall, an ancient staircase leads to an upper chamber of which we shall presently speak; and on the newel-post of this staircase stands one of the curiosities of St. Hospital—a pelican carved in oak, vulning its breast to feed its young. Brother Copas, lifting a pensive eye from his plate, rested it on this bird, as though comparing notes.

"The plague take your double meanings!" answered Brother Warboise gruffly. "Not that I understand 'em, or want to. 'Tis enough, I suppose, that the Master preached about it this morning, and called it the bird of love, to set you miscalling it."

"Not a bit," Brother Copas replied. "As for the parable of the Pelican, the Master has used it in half a dozen sermons; and you had it by heart at least as long ago as the day before yesterday, when I happened to overhear you pitching it to a convoy of visitors as you showed them the staircase. I hope they rewarded you for the sentiment of it."

"Look here," fired up Brother Warboise, turning over *his* portion of duck, "if it's poor I am, it don't become you to mock me. And if I haven't your damned book-learning, nor half your damned cleverness, maybe you've not turned either to such account in life as to make a boast of it. And if you left me just now to stand up alone to the Master, it don't follow I take pleasure in your sneering at him."

"You are right, my dear fellow," said Brother Copas; "and also you are proving in two or three different ways that I was right just now. Bird of love—bird of wrath—they are both the same thing. But, with all submission, neither you nor the Master have the true parable, which I found by chance the other day in an old book called the *Ancren Riwle*. *Ancren*, brother, means ' anchoresses,' recluses, women separated, and living apart from the world pretty much as by rights we men should be living in St. Hospital; and *riwle* is 'rule,' or an instruction of daily conduct. It is a sound old book, written in the thirteenth century by a certain good Bishop Poore (excellent name!) for a household of such good women at Tarrent, on the River Stour; and it contains a peck of counsel which might be preached not only upon the scandal-mongering women who are the curse of this place—yes, and applied; for it recommends here and there, a whipping as salutary—but even, *mutatis mutandis*, upon us Brethren—"

"We've had one sermon, to-day," growled Brother Warboise.

"I am correcting it. This book tells of the Pelican that she is a peevish bird and so hasty of temper that, when her young ones molest her, she kills them with her beak; and soon after, being sorry, she moans, smites her own breast with the same murderous beak, and so draws blood, with which (says the Bishop) 'she then quickeneth her slain birds.' But I, being no believer in miracles, think he is right as to the repentance but errs about the bringing back to life. In this world, Brother, that doesn't happen; and we poor angry devils are left wishing that it could."

Brother Warboise, playing with knife and fork, looked up sharply from under fierce eyebrows.

"The moral?" pursued Brother Copas. "There are two at least: the first, that here we are, two jolly Protestants, who might be as comfortable as rats in a cheese—you conscioous of a duty performed, and I filled with admiration of your pluck—and lo! when old Biscoe annoys us by an act of petty spite, we turn, not on him, but on one another. You, already more angry with yourself than with Biscoe, suddenly take offence with me because I didn't join you in standing between a good man and his dinner; while I, with a spoilt meal of my own for a grievance, choose to feel an irrational concern for the Master's, turn round on my comrade who has spoilt *that*, and ask, What the devil is wrong with Protestantism, that it has never an ounce of tact? Or why, if it aims to be unworldly, must it always overshoot its mark and be merely inhuman?"

Brother Warboise put nine-tenths of this discourse aside.

"You think it has spoilt the Master's dinner?" he asked anxiously, with a glance towards the high table.

"Not a doubt of it," Brother Copas assured him. "Look at the old boy, how nervously he's

playing with his bread."

"I never meant, you know—"

"No, of course you didn't; and there's my second moral of the Pelican. She digs a bill into her dearest, and then she's sorry. At the best of her argument she's always owing her opponent an apology for some offence against manners. She has no *savoir-faire*." Here Brother Copas, relapsing, let the cloud of speculation drift between him and Brother Warboise's remorse. "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—I reverence the pluck of a man who can cut himself loose from all that; for the worst loss he has to face (if he only knew it) is the inevitable loss of breeding. For the ordinary gentleman in this world there's either Catholicism or sound Paganism; no third choice."

In truth Master Blanchminster's dinner was spoilt for him. He sat distraught, fingering his bread between the courses which he scarcely tasted, and giving answers at random, after pauses, to the Bishop's small-talk. He was wounded. He had lived for years a life as happy as any that can fall to the lot of an indolent, unambitious man, who loves his fellows and takes a delight in their gratitude. St. Hospital exactly suited him. He knew its history. His affection, like an ivy, clung about its old walls and incorporated itself in the very mortar that bound them. He loved to spy one of its Brethren approaching in the street; to anticipate and acknowledge the deferential salute; to see himself as father of a happy family, easily controlling it by good will, in the right of good birth.

He had been a reformer, too. The staircase beside the dais led to an upper chamber whence, through a small window pierced in the wall, former Masters had conceived it their duty to observe the behaviour of the Brethren at meals. In his sixth year of office Master Blanchminster had sent for masons to block this window up. The act of espial had always been hateful to him: he preferred to trust his brethren, and it cost far less trouble. For close upon thirty years he had avoided their dinner-hour on all but Gaudy Days.

He had been warming a serpent, and it had bitten him. The wound stung, too. Angry he was at Warboise's disloyalty; angrier at the manner of it. If these old men had a grievance, or believed they had, at least they might have trusted him first with it. Had he ever been tyrannical, harsh, unsympathetic even, that instead of coming to him as to their father and Master they should have put this public affront on him and appealed straight away to the Bishop? To be sure, the Statutes provided that the Bishop of Merchester, as Visitor, had power to inquire into the administration of St. Hospital and to remedy abuses. But everyone knew that within living memory, and for a hundred years before, this power had never been invoked. Doubtless these malcontents, whoever they might be—and it disquieted Master Blanchminster yet further that he could not guess as yet who they were or how many—had kept to the letter of their rights. But good Heaven! had *he* in all these years interpreted his rule by the letter, and not rather and constantly by the spirit?

Brother Copas was right. Warboise's action had been inopportune, offensive, needlessly hurting a kindly heart. But the Master, while indignant with Warboise, could not help feeling just a reflex touch of vexation with Mr. Colt. The Chaplain no doubt was a stalwart soldier, fighting the Church's battle; but her battle was not to be won, her rolling tide of conquest not to be set going, in such a backwater as St. Hospital. Confound the fellow! Why could not these young men leave old men alone?

Thus it happened that the Master, immersed in painful thoughts, missed the launching of the Great Idea, which was to trouble him and indeed all Merchester until Merchester had done with it.

The idea was Mr. Bamberger's.

("Why, of course it was," said Brother Copas later; "ideas, good and bad, are the mission of his race among the Gentiles.")

Mr. Bamberger, having taken his seat, tucked a corner of his dinner-napkin between his collar and the front of his hairy throat. Adaptable in most things, in feeding and in the conduct of a napkin he could never subdue old habit to our English custom, and to-day, moreover, he wore a large white waistcoat, which needed protection. This seen to, he gazed around expansively.

"A picture, by George!"—Mr. Bamberger ever swore by our English patron saint. "Slap out of the Middle Ages, and priceless."

(He actually said "thlap" and "pritheless," but I resign at the outset any attempt to spell as Mr. Bamberger pronounced.)

"—Authentic, too! To think of this sort of thing taking place to-day in Merchester, England's ancient capital. Eh, Master? Eh, Mr. Mayor?"

Master Blanchminster awoke so far out of his thoughts as to correct the idiom.

"Undoubtedly Merchester was the capital of England before London could claim that honour."

"Aye," agreed his Worship, "there's no end of antikities in Merchester, for them as takes an interest in such. Dead-and-alive you may call us; but, as I've told the Council more than once, they're links with the past in a manner of speaking."

"But these antiquities attract visitors, or ought to."

"They do: a goodish number, as I've told the Council more than once."

"Why shouldn't they attract more?"

"I suppose they would, if we had more of 'em," answered his Worship thoughtfully. "When I said just now that we had no end of antikities, it was in a manner of speaking. There's the Cathedral, of course, and the old Palace—or what's left of it, and St. Hospital here. But there's a deal been swept away within my recollection. We must move with the times."

At this point the inspiration came upon Mr. Bamberger. He laid down the spoon in his soup and hurriedly caught at the rim of his plate as a vigilant waiter swept a hand to remove it.

"Hold hard, young man!" said Mr. Bamberger, snatching at his spoon and again fixing his eye on the Mayor. "You ought to have a Pageant, Sir."

"A what?"

"A Pageant; that's what we want for Merchester—something to advertise the dear old place and bring grist to our mills. I've often wondered if we could not run something of the sort."

This was not a conscious falsehood, but just a word or two of political patter, dropped automatically, absently. In truth, Mr. Bamberger, possessed by his inspiration, was wondering why the deuce it had never occurred to him until this moment. Still more curious, too, that it had never occurred to his brother Isidore! This Isidore, after starting as a *croupier* at Ostend and pushing on to the post of *Directeur des Fêtes Périodiques* to the municipality of that watering-place, had made a sudden name for himself by stage-managing a Hall of Odaliskues at the last Paris Exposition, and, crossing to London, had accumulated laurels by directing popular entertainments at Olympia (Kensington) and Shepherd's Bush. One great daily newspaper, under Hebrew control, habitually alluded to him as the Prince of Pageantists. Isidore saw things on a grand scale, and was, moreover, an excellent brother. Isidore (said Mr. Julius Bamberger to himself) would find all the History of England in Merchester and rattle it up to the truth of music.

Aloud he said—

"This very scene we're looking on, f'r instance!"

"There would be difficulties in the way of presenting it in the open air," hazarded his Worship.

Mr. Bamberger, never impatient of stupidity, opined that this could be got over easily.

"There's all the material made to our hand. Eh, Master?—these old pensioners of yours—in a procession? The public is always sentimental."

Master Blanchminster, rousing himself out of reverie, made guarded answer that such an exhibition might be instructive, historically, for schoolchildren.

"An institution like this, supported by endowments, don't need advertising, of course—not for its own sake," said Mr. Bamberger. "I was thinking of what might be done indirectly for Merchester. But—you'll excuse me, I must ride a notion when I get astride of one—St. Hospital would be no more than what we call an episode. We'd start with Alfred the Great—maybe before him; work down to the Cathedral and its consecration and Sir John, here—that is, of course, his ancestor—swearing on the Cross to depart for Jerusalem."

Sir John—a Whig by five generations of descent—glanced at Mr. Bamberger uneasily. He had turned Unionist when Mr. Gladstone embraced Home Rule; and now, rather by force of circumstance than by choice, he found himself Chairman of the Unionist Committee for Merchester; in fact he, more than any man, was responsible for Mr. Bamberger's representing Merchester in Parliament, and sometimes wondered how it had all come about. He answered these rare questionings by telling himself that Disraeli, whose portrait hung in his library, had also been a Jew. But he did not quite understand it, or what there was in Mr. Bamberger that personally repelled him.

At any rate Sir John was a pure Whig and to your pure Whig personal dignity is everything.

"So long," murmured he, "as you don't ask me to dress up and make myself a figure of fun."

The Bishop had already put the suggestion, so far as it concerned him, aside with a tolerant smile, which encouraged everything from which he, *bien entendu*, was omitted.

Mr. Bamberger, scanning the line of faces with a Jew's patient cunning, at length encountered the eye of Mr. Colt, who at the farther end of the high table was leaning forward to listen.

"You're my man," thought Mr. Bamberger. "Though I don't know your name and maybe you're socially no great shakes; a chaplain by your look, and High Church. You're the useful one in this gang."

He lifted his voice.

"You won't misunderstand me, Master," he said. "I named the Cathedral and the Crusades because, in Merchester, history cannot get away from the Church. It's *her* history that any pageant of Merchester ought to illustrate primarily—must, indeed: *her* past glories, some day (please God) to be revived."

"And," said Mr. Bamberger some months later, in private converse with his brother Isidore, "that did it, though I say it who shouldn't. I froze on that Colt straight; and Colt, you'll allow, was trumps."

For the moment little more was said. The company at the high table, after grace—a shorter one this time, pronounced by the Chaplain— bowed to the Brethren and followed the Master upstairs to the little room which had once served for espial-chamber, but was now curtained cosily and spread for dessert.

"By the way, Master," said the Bishop, suddenly remembering the Petition in his pocket, and laughing amicably as he dropped a lump of sugar into his coffee, "what games have you been playing in St. Hospital, that they accuse you of Romanising?"

The Master's ivory face flushed at the question.

"That was old Warboise," he answered nervously. "I must apologise for the annoyance."

"Not at all—not at all! It amused me, rather, to be reminded that, as Visitor, I am a person in St. Hospital, and still reckoned an important one. 'Made me feel like an image in a niche subjected to a sudden dusting. Who is this—er, what-d'-ye-call-him? Warboise? An eccentric?"

"I will not say that. Old and opinionated, rather; a militant Protestant—"

"Ah, we know the sort. Shall we glance over his screed? You permit me?"

"I was about to suggest your doing so. To tell the truth, I am curious to be acquainted with the charge against me."

The Bishop smiled, drew forth the paper from his pocket adjusted his gold-rimmed eyeglasses and read—

"To the Right Rev. Father in God, Walter, Lord Bishop of Merchester.

"My Lord,—We the undersigned, being Brethren on the Blanchminster and Beauchamp foundations of St. Hospital's College of Noble Poverty by Merton, respectfully desire your lordship's attention to certain abuses which of late have crept into this Society; and particularly in the observances of religion.

"We contend (1) that, whereas our Reformed and Protestant Church, in Number XXII of her Articles of Religion declares the Romish doctrine of purgatory inter alia to be a fond thing vainly invented, etc., and repugnant to the Word of God, yet prayers for the dead have twice been publicly offered in our Chapel and the practice defended, nay recommended, from its pulpit.

"(2) That, whereas in Number XXVIII of the same Articles the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is defined in intention, and the definition expressly cleared to repudiate several practices not consonant with it, certain of these have been observed of late in our Chapel, to the scandal of the Church, and to the pain and uneasiness of souls that were used to draw pure refreshment from these Sacraments—"

The Bishop paused.

"I say, Master, this Brother Warboise of yours can write passable English."

"Warboise? Warboise never wrote that—never in his life."

Master Blanchminster passed a hand over his forehead.

"It's Copas's handwriting!" announced Mr. Colt, who had drawn close and, unpermitted, was staring over the Bishop's shoulder at the manuscript.

The Bishop turned half about in his chair, slightly affronted by this offence against good manners; but Mr. Colt was too far excited to guess the rebuke.

"Turn over the page, my lord."

As the Bishop turned it, on the impulse of surprise, Mr. Colt pointed a forefinger.

"There it is—half-way down the signatures! 'J. Copas,' written in the same hand!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A PEACE-OFFERING.

"Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week!"

Quoted Brother Copas from one of his favourite poems. This was in the kitchen, three days later, and he made one of the crowd edging, pushing, pressing, each with plate in hand, around the great table where the joints stood ready to be carved and distributed. For save on Gaudy Days and great festivals of the Church, the Brethren dine in their own chambers, not in Hall; and on three days of the week must fend for themselves on food purchased out of their small allowances. But on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays they fetch it from the kitchen, taking their turns to choose the best cuts. And this was Thursday and, as it happened, Brother Copas stood first on the rota.

The rota hung on the kitchen wall in a frame of oak canopied with faded velvet—an ingenious and puzzling contrivance, somewhat like the calendar prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer, with the names of the Brethren inserted on movable cards worn greasy with handling. In system nothing could be fairer; but in practice, human nature being what it is, and the crowd without discipline, the press and clamour about the table made choosing difficult for the weaker ones.

"Brother Copas to choose! Brother Clerihew to divide!"

"Aye," sang out Brother Copas cheerfully, "and I'll take my time about it. Make room, Woolcombe, if you please, and take your elbow out of my ribs—don't I know the old trick? And stop pushing—you behind there!... 'Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty, wasps in a bottle.'—Mrs. Royle, ma'am, I am very sorry for your husband's rheumatism, but it does not become a lady to show this indecent haste."

"Indecent?" shrilled Mrs. Royle. "Indecent, you call me?—you that pretend to ha' been a gentleman! I reckon, if indecency's the matter in these times, I could talk to one or two of ye about it."

"Not a doubt of *that*, ma'am.... But really you ladies have no right here: it's clean against the rules, and the hubbub you provoke is a scandal."

"Do you mean to insinuate, sir—"

"With your leave, ma'am, I mean to insinuate myself between your person and the table from which at this moment you debar me. Ah!" exclaimed Brother Copas as the cook whipped off the first of the great dish-covers, letting loose a cloud of savoury steam. He sniffed at it.

"What's this? Boiled pork, and in June! We'll have a look at the others, please... Roast leg of mutton, boiled neck and scrag of mutton—aha! You shall give me a cut of the roast, please; and start at the knuckle end. Yes, Biscoe—at *the knuckle end*."

Hate distorted Brother Biscoe's patriarchal face. He came second on the rota, and roast knuckle of mutton was the tit-bit dearest of all to his heart, as Brother Copas knew. Brother Biscoe also had a passion for the two first cutlets of a mutton-neck; but he thought nothing of this in his rage.

"Please God it'll choke ye!" he snarled.

"Dear Brother," said Copas amiably, "on Monday last you helped me to the back of a duck."

"Hurry up there!" shouted Brother Woolcombe, and swung round. "Are we all to get cold dinner when these two old fools have done wrangling?"

"Fool yourself, Woolcombe!" Brother Biscoe likewise swung about. "Here's Copas has brought two plates! Isn't it time to speak up, when a rogue's caught cheating?"

One or two cried out that he ought to lose his turn for it.

"My friends," said Brother Copas, not at all perturbed, "the second plate is for Brother Bonaday's dinner, when his turn arrives. He has a heart-attack to-day, and cannot come for himself."

"A *heart-attack*!" sniggered Mrs. Royle, her voice rising shrill above the din. "Oh, save us if we didn't all know *that* news!"

Laughter crackled like musketry about Brother Copas's ears, laughter to him quite meaningless. It was plain that all shared some joke against his friend Bonaday; but he had no clue.

"And," pursued Mrs. Royle, "here's his best friend tellin' us as 'tis a scandal the way women push themselves into St. Hospital—'when they're not wanted,' did I hear you say, sir? Yes, 'a scandal' he said, and 'indecent'; which I leave it to you is pretty strong language as addressed to a woman what has her marriage lines I should hope!"

Brother Copas, bewildered by this onslaught—or, as he put it later, comparing the encounter with that between Socrates and Gorgias the Sophist—drenched with that woman's slop-pail of words and blinded for the moment, received his portion of mutton and drew aside, vanquished amid peals of laughter, of which he guessed only from its note that the allusion had been disgusting. Indeed, the whole atmosphere of the kitchen sickened him; even the portion of mutton cooling on his plate raised his gorge in physical loathing. But Brother Bonaday lay helpless in his chamber, without food. Remembering this, Brother Copas stood his ground and waited, with the spare plate ready for the invalid's portion.

The babel went on as one after another fought for the spoil. They had forgotten him, and those at the back of the crowd had found a new diversion in hustling old Biscoe as he struggled to get away with his two cutlets of half-warm mutton.

Brother Copas held his gaze upon the joints. His friend's turn came all but last on the rota; and by perversity—but who could blame it, in the month of June?—everyone eschewed the pork and bid emulously for mutton, roast or boiled. He knew that Brother Bonaday abhorred pork, which, moreover, was indigestible, and by consequence bad for a weak heart. He stood and watched, gradually losing all hope except to capture a portion of the mutton near the scrag-end. As for the leg, it had speedily been cleaned to the bone.

At the last moment a ray of hope shot up, as an expiring candle flames in the socket. Brother Inchbald—a notoriously stingy man—whose turn came immediately before Brother Bonaday's, seemed to doubt that enough of the scrag remained to eke out a full portion; and bent towards the dish of pork, fingering his chin. Copas seized the moment to push his empty plate towards the mutton, stealthily, as one forces a card.

As he did so, another roar of laughter—coarser than before—drew him to glance over his shoulder. The cause of it was Nurse Branscome, entering by way of the refectory, with a hot plate held in a napkin between her hands.

She paused on the threshold, as though the ribaldry took her in the face like a blast of hot wind.

"Oh, I am late!" she cried. "I came to fetch Brother Bonaday's dinner. Until five minutes ago no one told me—"

"It's all right," called back Brother Copas, still looking over his shoulder while his right hand extended the plate. "His turn is just called, and I am getting it for him."

Strange to say, his voice reached the Nurse across an almost dead silence; for the laughter had died down at sight of a child—Corona— beside her in the doorway.

"But your plate will be cold. Here, change it for mine!"

"Well thought upon! Wait a second!"

But before Brother Copas could withdraw the plate a dollop of meat had been dumped upon it.

"Eh? but wait—look here!—"

He turned about, stared at the plate, stared from the plate to the dish of scrag. The meat on the plate was pork, and the dish of scrag was empty. Brother Inchbald had changed his mind at the last moment and chosen mutton.

The Brethren, led by Mrs. Royle, cackled again at sight of his dismay. One or two still hustled Brother Biscoe as he fought his way to the foot of the refectory steps, at the head of which Nurse Branscome barred the exit, with Corona holding fast by her hand and wondering.

"But what is it all about?" asked the child.

"Hush!" The Nurse squeezed her hand, meaning that she must have courage. "We have come too late, and the dinner is all shared up—or all of it that would do your father good."

"But"—Corona dragged her small hand loose—"there is plenty left; and when they know he is sick they will make it all right.... If you please, sir," she spoke up, planting her small body in front of Brother Biscoe as he would have pushed past with his plate, "my father is sick, and Nurse says he must not eat the meat that's left on the dish there. Won't you give me that on your plate?"

She stretched out a hand for it, and Brother Biscoe, spent with senile wrath at this last interruption of his escape, was snatching back the food, ready to curse her, when Brother Copas came battling through the press, holding both his plates high and hailing cheerfully.

"I forgot," he panted, and held up the plate in his left hand. "Bonaday can have the knuckle. I had first choice to-day."

"He ought not to eat roasted meat," said Nurse Branscome slowly. "I am sorry. You are good and will be disappointed. The smallest bit of boiled, now—were it only the scrag—"

"Why," bustled Brother Copas, "Brother Biscoe has the very thing, then—the two best cutlets at the bottom of the neck. And, what's more, he'll be only too glad to exchange 'em for the roast knuckle here, as I happen to know."

He thrust the tit-bit upon Brother Biscoe, who hesitated a moment between hate and greed, and snatched the cutlets from him before hate could weigh down the balance.

Brother Biscoe, clutching the transferred plate, fled ungraciously, without a word of thanks. Nurse Branscome stayed but a moment to thank Brother Copas for his cleverness, and hurried off with Corona to hot-up the plate of mutton for the invalid.

They left Brother Copas eyeing his dismal pork.

"And in June, too!" he murmured. "No: a man must protect himself. I'll have to eke out to-day on biscuits."

CHAPTER IX.

BY MERE RIVER.

Brother Bonaday's heart-attacks, sharp while they lasted, were soon over. Towards evening he had so far recovered that the Nurse saw no harm in his taking a short stroll, with

Brother Copas for *socius*.

The two old men made their way down to the river as usual, and there Brother Copas forced his friend to sit and rest on a bench beside the clear-running water.

"We had better not talk," he suggested, "but just sit quiet and let the fresh air do you good."

"But I wish to talk. I am quite strong enough."

"Talk about what?"

"About the child.... We must be getting her educated, I suppose."

"Why?"

Brother Bonaday, seated with palms crossed over the head of his staff, gazed in an absent-minded way at the water-weeds trailing in the current.

"She's an odd child; curiously shrewd in some ways and curiously innocent in others, and for ever asking questions. She put me a teaser yesterday. She can read pretty well, and I set her to read a chapter of the Bible. By and by she looked up and wanted to know why God lived apart from His wife!"

Brother Copas grunted his amusement.

"Did you tell her?"

"I invented some answer, of course. I don't believe it satisfied her—I am not good at explanation—but she took it quietly, as if she put it aside to think over." "The Athanasian Creed is not easily edited for children.... If she can read, the likelihood is she can also write. Does a girl need to learn much beyond that? No, I am not jesting. It's a question upon which I have never quite made up my mind."

"I had hoped to find you keener," said Brother Bonaday with a small sigh. "Now I see that you will probably laugh at what I am going to confess.... Last night, as I sat a while before going to bed, I found myself hearkening for the sound of her breathing in the next room. After a bit, when a minute or so went by and I could hear nothing, a sort of panic took me that some harm had happened to her: till I could stand it no longer, but picked up the lamp and crept in for a book. There she lay sleeping, healthy and sound, and prettier than you'd ever think.... I crept back to my chair, and a foolish sort of hope came over me that, with her health and wits, and being brought up unlike other children, she might come one day to be a little lady and the pride of the place, in a way of speaking—"

"A sort of Lady Jane Grey, in modest fashion—is that what you mean?" suggested Brother Copas—

'Like Her most gentle, most unfortunate,
Crowned but to die—who in her chamber sate
Musing with Plato, tho' the horn was blown,
And every ear and every heart was won,
And all in green array were chasing down the sun.'

—"Well, if she's willing, as unofficial godfather I might make a start with the Latin declensions. It would be an experiment: I've never tried teaching a girl. And I never had a child of my own, Brother; but I can understand just what you dreamed, and the Lord punish me if I feel like laughing."

He said it with an open glance at his friend. But it found no responsive one. Brother Bonaday's brow had contracted, as with a spasm of the old pain, and his eyes still scrutinised the trailing weeds in Mere river.

"If ever a man had warning to be done with life," said Brother Bonaday after a long pause, "I had it this forenoon. But it's wonderful what silly hopes a child will breed in a man."

Brother Copas nodded.

"Aye, we'll have a shot with her. But—Oh, good Lord! Here's the Chaplain coming."

"Ah, Copas—so here you are!" sung out Mr. Colt as he approached with his long stride up the tow-path. "Nurse Branscome told me I should find you here. Good evening, Bonaday!"

He nodded.

Copas stood up and inclined his body stiffly.

"I hope, sir," was his rebuke, "I have not wholly forfeited the title of Brother?"

The Chaplain flushed.

"I bring a message," he said. "The Master wishes to see you, at half-past six."

"That amounts to a command."

Brother Copas pulled out his watch.

"I may as well warn you," the Chaplain pursued. "You will be questioned on your share in that offensive Petition. As it appears, you were even responsible for composing it."

Brother Copas's eyebrows went up.

"Is it possible, sir, that you recognised the style?... Ah, no; the handwriting must have been your index. The Bishop showed it to you, then?"

"I—er—have been permitted to glance it over."

"Over his shoulder, if I may make a guess," murmured Brother Copas, putting his watch away and searching for his snuff-box.

"Anyway, you signed it: as Bon—as Brother Bonaday here was too sensible to do: though," added Mr. Colt, "*his* signature one could at least have respected."

Brother Copas tapped his snuff-box, foreseeing comedy.

"And why not mine, sir?"

"Oh, come, come!" blurted the Chaplain. "I take you to be a man of some education."

"Is that indeed the reason?"

"A man of some education, I say."

"And I hear you, sir." Brother Copas bowed. "'Praise from Sir Richard Strahan is praise indeed'—though my poor friend here seems to get the backhand of the compliment."

"And it is incredible you should go with the ignorant herd and believe us Clergy of the Church of England to be heading for Rome, as your Petition asserts."

Brother Copas slowly inhaled a pinch.

"In England, Mr. Chaplain, the ignorant herd has, by the admission of other nations, a practical political sense, and a somewhat downright way with it. It sees you reverting to many doctrines and uses from which the Reformation cut us free—or, if you prefer it, cut us loose; doctrines and uses which the Church of Rome has taught and practised without a break. It says—this ignorant herd—'If these fellows are not heading for Rome, then where the dickens *are* they heading?' Forgive this blunt way of putting it, but the question is not so blunt as it looks. It is on the contrary extremely shrewd; and until you High Anglicans answer it candidly, the ignorant herd will suspect—and you know, sir, the lower classes are incurably suspicious—either that yourselves do not know, or that you know and won't tell."

"You say," answered Mr. Colt, "that we revert to many doctrines and uses which, since the Romish clergy preach and practise them, are ignorantly supposed to belong to Rome. But 'many' is not 'all'; nor does it include the most radical doctrine of all. How can we intend Romanising while we deny the supreme authority of the Pope?—or Bishop of Rome, as I should prefer to call him."

"Fairly countered," replied Brother Copas, taking another pinch; "though the ignorant herd would have liked better an answer to its question. You deny the supreme authority of the Pope? Very well. Whose, then, do you accept?"

"The authority of Christ, committed to His Church."

"Oh, la, la, la!... I should have said, Whose authoritative interpretation of Christ's authority?"

"The Church's."

"Aye? Through whose mouth? We shall get at something definite in time.... I'll put it more simply. You, sir, are a plain priest in holy orders, and it's conceivable that on some point of use or doctrine you may be in error. Just conceivable, hey? At all events, you may be accused of it. To whom, then, do you appeal? To the King?—Parliament?—the Court of

Arches, or any other Court? Not a bit of it. Well, let's try again. Is it to the Archbishop of Canterbury? Or to your own Diocesan?"

"I should appeal to the sanction of the Church Catholic as given in her ancient Councils."

"And again—as nowadays interpreted by whom? Let us pass a hundred possible points on which no Council bothered its head, and on which consequently it has left no decision. Who's the man, anywhere, to take you by the scruff of the neck and chastise you for an error?"

"Within the limits of conscience I should, of course, bow to my Diocesan."

"Elastic limits, Mr. Colt! and, substituting Brother Warboise's conscience for yours, precisely the limits within which Brother Warboise bows to you! Anarchy will obey anything 'within the limits of conscience'—that's precisely what anarchy means; and even so and to that extent will you obey Bishop or Archbishop. In your heart you deny their authority; in speech, in practice, you never lose an occasion of flouting them and showing them up for fools. Take this Education Squabble for an example. The successor to the Chair of Augustine, good man—he's, after all, your Metropolitan—runs around doing his best to discover a way out, to patch up a 'concordat,' as they call it? What's the effect, upon any Diocesan Conference? Up springs subaltern after subaltern, fired with zeal to give his commander away. 'Our beloved Archbishop, in his saintly trustfulness, is bargaining away our rights as Churchmen'—all the indiscipline of a middle-class private school (and I know what that is, Mr. Colt, having kept one) translated into the sentimental erotics of a young ladies' academy!"

Mr. Colt gasped.

"And so, believe me, sir," concluded Brother Copas, snapping down the lid of his snuff-box, "this country of ours did not get rid of the Pope in order to make room for a thousand and one Popelings, each in his separate parish practising what seems right in his own eyes. At any rate, let us say, remembering the parable of the room swept and garnished, it intended no such result. Let us agree, Mr. Chaplain, to economise in Popes, and to condemn that business of Avignon. So the ignorant herd comes back on you with two questions, which in effect are one: 'If not mere anarchists, what authority own you? And if not for Rome, for what in the world *are* you heading?' You ask Rome to recognise your Orders.—*Mais, soyez consequent, monsieur.*"

It was Mr. Colt's turn to pull out his watch.

"Permit me to remind you," he said, "that you, at any rate, have to own an authority, and that the Master will be expecting you at six-thirty sharp. For the rest, sir, you cannot think that thoughtful Churchmen have no answer to these questions, if put by anyone with the right to put them. But *you*—not even a communicant! Will you dare to use these arguments to the Master, for instance?"

"He had the last word there," said Brother Copas, pocketing his snuff-box and gazing after the Chaplain's athletic figure as it swung away up the tow-path. "He gave me no time to answer that one suits an argument to the adversary. The Master? Could I present anything so crude to one who, though lazy, is yet a scholar?—who has certainly fought this thing through, after his lights, and would get me entangled in the Councils of Carthage and Constance, St. Cyprian and the rest?... Colt quotes the ignorant herd to me, and I put him the ignorant herd's question—without getting a reply."

"You did not allow him much time for one," said Brother Bonaday mildly.

Brother Copas stared at him, drew out his watch again, and chuckled.

"You're right. I lose count of time, defending my friends; and this is your battle I'm fighting, remember."

He offered his arm, and the two friends started to walk back towards St. Hospital. They had gone but a dozen yards when a childish voice hailed them, and Corona came skipping along the bank.

"Daddy! you are to come home at once! It's past six o'clock, and Branny says the river fog's bad for you."

"Home?" echoed Brother Bonaday inattentively. The word had been unfamiliar to him for some years, and his old brain did not grasp it for a moment. His eyes seemed to question the child as she stood before him panting, her hair dishevelled.

"Aye, Brother," said Copas with a glance at him, "you'll have to get used to it again, and good luck to you! What says the pessimist, that American fellow?—"

'Nowhere to go but out,
Nowhere to come but back '—

"Missy don't agree with her fellow-countryman, eh?"

His eye held a twinkle of mischief.

"He *isn't* my fellow-countryman!" Corona protested vehemently. "I'm English—amn't I, Daddy?"

"There, there—forgive me, little one! And you really don't want to leave us, just yet?"

"Leave you?" The child took Brother Bonaday's hand and hugged it close. "Uncle Copas, if you won't laugh I want to tell you something—what they call confessing." She hesitated for a moment. "Haven't you ever felt you've got something inside, and how awful good it is to confess and get it off your chest?"

Brother Copas gave a start, and eyed his fellow-Protestant.

"Well?" he said after a pause.

"Well, it's this way," confessed Corona. "I can't say my prayers yet in this place—not to get any heft on them; and that makes me feel bad, you know. I start along with 'Our Father, which art in heaven,' and it's like calling up a person on the 'phone when he's close at your elbow all the time. Then I say 'God bless St. Hospital,' and there I'm stuck; it don't seem I want to worry God to oblige beyond that. So I fetch back and start telling how glad I am to be home—as if God didn't know—and that bats me up to St. Hospital again. I got stonewalled that way five times last night. What's the sense of asking to go to heaven when you don't particularly want to?"

"Child," Brother Copas answered, "keep as honest as that and peg away. You'll find your prayers straighten themselves out all right."

"Sure?... Well, that's a comfort: because, of course, I don't want to go to hell either. It would never do.... But why are you puckering up your eyes so?"

"I was thinking," said Brother Copas, "that I might start teaching you Latin. Your father and I were discussing it just now."

"Would he like me to learn it?"

"It's the only way to find out all that St. Hospital means, including all it has meant for hundreds of years.... Bless me, is that the quarter chiming? Take your father's hand and lead him home, child. *Venit Hesperus, ite capellae.*"

"What does that mean?"

"It's Latin," said Brother Copas. "It's a—a kind of absolution."

CHAPTER X.

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER.

Although the month was June and the evening warm, Master Blanchminster sat huddled in his armchair before a bright fire. A table stood at his elbow, with some books upon it, his untasted glass of wine, and half a dozen letters—his evening's post. But the Master leaned forward, spreading his delicate fingers to the warmth and, between them, gazing into the core of the blaze.

The butler ushered in Brother Copas and withdrew, after a glance at the lights. Two wax candles burned upon the writing-table in the oriel, and on the side-table an electric lamp shaded with green silk faintly silhouetted the Master's features. Brother Copas, standing a little within the doorway, remarked to himself that the old gentleman had aged of late.

"Ah, Brother Copas? Yes, I sent for you," said the Master, rousing himself as if from a brown study. "Be seated, please."

He pointed to a chair on the opposite side of the hearth; and Brother Copas, seating himself with a bow, spread the worn skirt of his Beauchamp robe, and arranged its folds over his knees. The firelight sparkled upon the Beauchamp rose on his breast, and seemed to hold the Master's eye as he looked up after a pause.

"You guess, no doubt, why I sent for you?"

Brother Copas inclined his head.

"It concerns the Petition which Brother Warboise presented to the Bishop last Monday. I am not complaining just now of his fashion of procedure, which I may hazard was not of your suggesting."

"It was not, Master. I may say so much, having warned him that I should say it if questioned."

"Yet you wrote out and signed the Petition, and, if I may hazard again, composed it?"

"I did."

"I have," said Master Blanchminster, studying the back of his hands as he held his palms to the fire, "no right to force any man's conscience. But it seemed to me, if I may say so, that while all were forcibly put, certain of your arguments ignored—or, let me rather say, passed over—points which must have occurred to a man of your learning. Am I mistaken?"

"You understand, Master," said Brother Copas, slightly embarrassed, and slightly the more embarrassed because the Master, after asking the question, seemed inclined to relapse into his own thoughts, "the Petition was not mine only. I had to compose it for all the signatories; and that, in any public business, involves striking a mean."

"I understand even more," said the Master, rousing himself, and reaching for a copy of the Petition, which lay among his papers. "I understand that I have no right to cross-question a man on his share in a document which six or eight others have signed. Shall it be further understood"—he looked up with a quick smile of goodness, whereat Brother Copas felt ashamed—"that I sent for you as a friend, and that you may speak frankly, if you will so honour me, without fear of my remembering a word to your inconvenience?"

"And since you so honour me, Master," said Brother Copas, "I am ready to answer all you ask."

"Well, then, I have read with particular interest, what you have to say here about the practice of Confession. (This, by the way, is a typed copy, with which the Bishop has been kind enough to supply me.) You have, I assume, no belief in it or in the efficacy of the Absolution that follows it."

The Master, searching for a paragraph, did not perceive that Brother Copas flushed slightly.

"And," he continued, as he found the passage and laid his finger on it, "although you set out your arguments with point—with fairness, too, let me add—I am perhaps not very far wrong in guessing that you have for Confession an instinctive dislike which to your own mind means more than any argument you use."

The Master looked up with a smile; but by this time Brother Copas's flush had faded.

"You may say that, Master, of the whole document. I am an old man—far too old to have my beliefs and disbeliefs quickened by argument. They have long since hardened into prejudices; and, speaking generally, I have a prejudice against this setting of old men by the ears with a lot of Neo-Catholic stuff which irritates half of us while all are equally past being provoked to any vital good."

The Master sighed, for he understood.

"I, too, am old," he answered, "older even than you; and as death draws nearer I incline with you, to believe that the fewer our words on these questions that separate us the better. (There's a fine passage to that effect in one of Jowett's Introductions, you may remember—the *Phædo*, I think.) Least said is soonest mended, and good men are too honest to go out of the world professing more than they know. Since we are opening our minds a little beyond our wont, let me tell you exactly what is my own prejudice, as you would call it. To me Confession has been a matter of happy experience—I am speaking now of younger days, at Cuddesdon—"

"Ah!" breathed Copas.

"And the desire to offer to others what has been a great blessing to myself, has at times been very strong. But I recognised that the general English mind—yes, I'll grant you, the general *healthy* English mind—had its prejudice too; a prejudice so sturdy against Confession, that it seemed to me I should alienate more souls than I attracted and breed

more ill-temper than charity to cover it. So—weakly perhaps—I never spoke of it in sermons, and by consequence no Brother of St. Hospital has ever sought from me that comfort which my conscience all the while would have approved of giving."

Brother Copas bowed his head for sign that he understood.

"But—excuse me, Master—you say that you found profit in Confession at Cuddesdon; that is, when I dare say your manhood was young and in ferment. Be it granted that just at such a crisis, Confession may be salutary. Have you found it profitable in later life?"

"I cannot," the Master answered, "honestly say more than that no doubt of it has ever occurred to me, and for the simple reason that I have not tried. But I see at what you are driving—that we of St. Hospital are too old to taste its benefit?... Yet I should have thought that even in age it might bring comfort to some; and, if so, why should the others complain?"

"For the offence it carries as an infraction of the reformed doctrine under which they supposed themselves to order their lives and worship. They contend, Master, that they are all members of one Society; and if the doctrine of that Society be infringed to comfort A or B, it is to that extent weakened injuriously for C and D, who have been building their everlasting and only hope on it, and have grown too old to change."

"But," answered Master Blanchminster, pinning his finger on the paragraph, "you admit here that even the reformed Church, in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick, enjoins Confession and prescribes a form of Absolution. Now if a man be not too old for it when he is dying, *a fortiori* he cannot be too old for it at any previous time."

Brother Copas rubbed his hands together softly, gleefully. He adored dialectic.

"With your leave, Master," he replied, "dying is a mighty singular business. The difference between it and growing old cannot be treated as a mere matter of degree. Now one of the points I make is that the Church, by expressly allowing Confession on this singular occasion, while saying nothing about it on any other, thereby inferentially excludes it on all others—or discountenances it, to say the least."

"There I join issue with you, maintaining that all such occasions are covered by the general authority bestowed at Ordination with the laying-on of hands—'Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven,' etc. To construe an open exhortation in one of her offices as a silent denunciation in all the rest seems to me—"

For the next few minutes the pair enjoyed themselves to the top of their bent; until, as the Master pushed aside some papers on the table to get at his Prayer Book—to prove that No. XXV of the Articles of Religion did not by its wording disparage Absolution—his eye fell on a letter which lay uppermost. He paused midway in a sentence, picked the thing up and held it for a moment disgustfully between forefinger and thumb.

"Brother Copas," he said with a change of voice, "we lose ourselves in logomachy, and I had rather hark back to a word you let drop a while ago about the Brotherhood. You spoke of 'setting old men by the ears.' Do you mean it seriously—that our Brethren, just now, are not dwelling in concord?"

"God bless your innocent old heart!" murmured Brother Copas under his breath. Aloud he said, "Men of the Brethren's age, Master, are not always amiable; and the tempers of their womenfolk are sometimes unlovely. We are, after all, failures in life, and to have lived night and day beside any one of us can be no joke."

The Master, with his body half-turned towards the reading-lamp, still held the letter and eyed it at arm's length.

"I observed," he said after a while, "that Brother Bonaday did not sign your Petition. Yet I had supposed him to be an Evangelical, and everyone knows you two to be close friends." The Master mused again. "Pardon me, but he has some reason, of course?"

"He has."

—"Which you are not at liberty to tell me?"

"That is so."

"Ah, well," said the Master, turning and facing about on Brother Copas with a sudden resolve. "I wonder if—to leave this matter of the Petition—you can tell me something else concerning your friend; something which, if you can answer it so as to help him, will also lift a sad weight off my mind. If you cannot, I shall equally forget that the question was ever put or the answer withheld.... To be candid, when you were shown in I was sitting here in great distress of mind."

"Surely not about Bonaday, Master?" said Brother Copas, wondering.

"About Bonaday, yes." The Master inclined his head. "Poison—it has been running

through my thoughts all the while we have been talking. I suppose I ought not to show you this; the fire is its only proper receptacle—"

"Poison?" echoed Brother Copas. "And about Bonaday? who, good soul, never hurt a fly!"

"I rejoice to hear you say it," said the Master, plainly relieved, and he appeared half-minded to withdraw and pocket the scrap of paper for which Copas held out a hand. "It is an anonymous letter, and—er—evidently the product of a foul mind—"

Brother Copas took it and, fumbling for his glasses, gazed around in search of the handiest light by which to read it. Master Blanchminster hurried to catch up the electric lamp and set it on the mantel-shelf above his shoulder. Its coil of silk-braided wire dragging across the papers on the table, one or two dropped on the floor; and whilst the Master stooped to collect them Brother Copas read the letter, first noting at a glance that the paper was cheap and the handwriting, though fairly legible, at once uneducated and painfully disguised.

It ran—

"Master,—This is to warn you that you are too kind and anyone can take you in. It wasn't enough Bonaday should get the best rooms in S. Hospital but now you give him leave for this child which every one in S. Hospital knows is a bastard. If you want to find the mother, no need to go far. Why is Nurse B—hanging about his rooms now. Which they didn't carry it so far before, but they was acquainted years ago, as is common talk. God knows my reasons for writing this much are honest, but I hate to see your goodness put upon, and a scandal which the whole S. Hospital feels bitter about—such lechery and wickedness in our midst, and nobody knowing how to put a stop to it all.

"Yours obdtly.,

"A Well Wisher."

"The handwriting," said Brother Copas, "is a woman's, though disguised."

The Master, erect again, having collected his papers, eyed Brother Copas as if surprised by his calm tone.

"You make nothing of it, then?"

"P'st!"

"I—I was hoping so." The Master's voice was tremulous, apologetic. "It came by this evening's post, not half an hour ago.... I am not used to receive such things: yet I know what ought to be done with them—toss them into the fire at once and dismiss them from your mind. I make no doubt I should have burnt it within another ten minutes: as for cleansing one's mind of it so quickly, that must be a counsel of perfection. But you were shown in, and I—I made certain that you could contradict this disgraceful report and set my mind at rest. Forgive me."

"Ah, Master"—Brother Copas glanced up with a quick smile— "it almost looks as if you were right after all, and one is never too old to confess!" He bent and held the edge of the paper close to the blaze. "May I burn it?"

"By all means."

"Nay, then, I won't. But since you have freely parted with it, may I keep it?... I have had some little experience with manuscripts, and it is just possible I may trace this to the writer—who is assuredly a woman," added Brother Copas, studying the letter again. "You have my leave to do so." "And you ask no further question?"

The Master hesitated. At length he said firmly—

"None. I have no right. How can so foul a thing confer any right?"

Brother Copas was silent for a space.

"Nay, that is true, Master; it cannot.... Nevertheless, I will answer what was in your mind to ask. When I came into the room you were pondering this letter. The thought of it—pah!—mixed itself up with a thought of the appointment you had set for me—with the Petition; and the two harked back together upon a question you put to me just now. 'Why was not Brother Bonaday among the signatories?' Between them they turned that question into a suspicion. Guilty men are seldom bold: as the Scots say, 'Riven breeks sit still.'... Was not this, or something like it, in your mind, sir?"

"I confess that it was."

"Why then, Master, I too will confess—I that came to you to denounce the practice. Of what this letter hints Bonaday is innocent as—as you are. He approved of the Petition and

was on the point of signing it; but he desired your good leave to make a home for his child. Between parent and Protestant my friend was torn, and moreover between conscience and loyalty. He could not sue for this favour from you, his soul weighted with an intention to go straightway and do what must offend you."

Master Blanchminster faced Brother Copas squarely, standing of a sudden erect. It seemed to add inches to his stature.

"Had he so poor a trust in me, after these years?"

"No, Master." Brother Copas bent his head. "That is where I come in. All this is but preparatory.... I am a fraud—as little Protestant as Catholic. I found my friend in straits, and made a bargain with those who were pressing him—"

"Do I understand, Brother Copas, that this Petition—of which all the strength lies in its scholarship and wording—is yours, and that on these terms only you have given me so much pain?"

"You may put it so, Master, and I can say no more than 'yes'—though I might yet plead that something is wrong with St. Hospital, and—"

"Something is very wrong with St. Hospital," interrupted the Master gravely. "This letter—if it come from within our walls—But I after all, as its Master, am ultimately to blame." He paused for a moment and looked up with a sudden winning smile. "We have both confessed some sins. Shall we say a prayer together, Brother?"

The two old men knelt by the hearth there. Together in silence they bowed their heads.

CHAPTER XI.

BROTHER COPAS ON THE ANGLO-SAXON.

"You ought to write a play," said Mrs. Simeon.

Mr. Simeon looked up from his dinner and stared at his wife as though she had suddenly taken leave of her senses. She sat holding a fork erect and close to her mouth, with a morsel of potato ready to be popped in as soon as she should finish devouring a paragraph of *The People* newspaper, folded beside her plate. In a general way Mrs. Simeon was not a reader; but on Mondays (washing-days) she regularly had the loan of a creased copy of *The People* from a neighbour who, having but a couple of children, could afford to buy and peruse it on the day of issue. There is much charity among the working poor.

"I—I beg your pardon, my dear?" Mr. Simeon murmured, after gently admonishing his second son (Eustace, aged 11, named after the Master) for flipping bread pills across the table. "I am afraid I did not catch—"

"I see there's a man has made forty thousand pounds by writing one. And he did it in three weeks, after beginning as a clerk in the stationery.... Forty thousand pounds, only think! That's what I call turning cleverness to account."

"But, my love, I don't happen to be clever," protested Mr. Simeon.

His wife swallowed her morsel of potato. She was a worn-looking blonde, peevish, not without traces of good looks. She wore the sleeves of her bodice rolled up to the elbows, and her wrists and forearms were bleached by her morning's work at the wash-tub.

"Then I'm sure I don't know what else you are!" said she, looking at him straight.

Mr. Simeon sighed. Ever on Mondays he returned at midday to a house filled with steam and the dank odour of soap-suds, and to the worst of the week's meagre meals. A hundred times he had reproached himself that he did ungratefully to let this affect him, for his wife (poor soul) had been living in it all day, whereas his morning had been spent amid books, rare prints, statuettes, soft carpets, all the delicate luxuries of Master Blanchminster's library. Yet he could not help feeling the contrast; and the children were always at their most fractious on Mondays, chafed by a morning in school after two days of freedom.

"Where are you going this afternoon?" his wife asked.

"To blow the organ for Windeatt."

Dr. Windeatt (Mus. Doc. Oxon.) was the Cathedral organist.

"Has he offered to pay you?"

"Well—it isn't *pay* exactly. There was an understanding that if I blew for him this afternoon—old Brewer being laid up with the shingles—he would take me through that tenor part in the new *Venite Exultemus*. It's tricky, and yesterday morning I slurred it horribly."

"Tc'ht! A man of your education blowing an organ, and for nothing! If there was any money in it one wouldn't mind so much.... But you let yourself be put upon by anybody."

Mr. Simeon was silent. He knew that to defend himself would be to court a wrangle, reproaches, tears perhaps, all unseemly before the children; and, moreover, what his wife said was more than half deserved.

"Daddy, why *don't* you write a play?" demanded the five-year-old Agatha. "And then mammy would have a carriage, and I'd go to a real boarding-school with canaries in the window like they have at Miss Dickinson's."

The meal over, Mr. Simeon stole away to the Cathedral. He was unhappy; and as he passed through Friars' Gateway into the Close, the sight of the minster, majestic above its green garth, for once gave no lift to his spirit. The great central tower rose against a sky of clearest blue, strong and foursquare as on the day when its Norman builders took down their scaffolding. White pigeons hovered or perched on niche and corbel. But fortitude and aspiration alike had deserted Mr. Simeon for the while. Life—hard life and poverty—had subdued him to be one of the petty, nameless crowd this Cathedral had seen creep to their end in its shadow.... "What should such creatures as I do, crawling between earth and heaven?" A thousand thousand such as Mr. Simeon had listened or lifted their voice to its anthems—had aspired for the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest. Where now were all their emotions? He entered by a side-door of the western porch. The immense, solemn nave, if it did not catch his thoughts aloft, at least hushed them in awe. To Mr. Simeon Merchester Cathedral was a passion, nearer, if not dearer, than wife or children.

He had arrived ten minutes ahead of the appointed time. As he walked towards the great organ he heard a child's voice, high-pitched and clear, talking behind the traceries of the choir screen. He supposed it the voice of some irreverent chorister, and stepping aside to rebuke it, discovered Corona and Brother Copas together gazing up at the coffins above the canopy.

"And is King Alfred really up there?—the one that burnt the cakes?— and if so, which?" Corona was asking, too eager to think of grammar.

Brother Copas shrugged his shoulders.

"What's left of him is up there somewhere."

'Here are sands, ignoble things
Dropped from the ruined sides of kings.'

"—But the Parliament troopers broke open the coffins and mixed the dust sadly. The Latin says so. '*In this and the neighbouring chests*' (or caskets, as you say in America), '*confounded in a time of Civil Fury, reposes what dust is left of—*' Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Simeon! This young lady has laid forcible hands on me to give her an object-lesson in English history. Do you, who know ten times more of the Cathedral than I, come to my aid."

"If you are looking for King Alfred," answered Mr. Simeon, beaming on Corona through his glasses, "there's a tradition that his dust lies in the second chest to the right... a tradition only. No one really knows."

Corona shifted her position some six paces to the right, and tilted her gaze up at the coffer as though she would crick her neck.

"Aye, missie"—Mr. Simeon still beamed—"they're up there, the royal ones—Dane and Norman and Angevin; and not one to match the great Anglo-Saxon that was father of us all."

Brother Copas grunted impatiently.

"My good Simeon, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! God forbid that one should decry such a man as Alfred was. But the pedantry of Freeman and his sect, who tried to make 'English' a conterminous name and substitute for 'Anglo-Saxon,' was only by one degree less offensive than the ignorance of your modern journalist who degrades Englishmen by writing them down (or up, the poor fool imagines) as Anglo-Saxons. In truth,

King Alfred was a noble fellow. No one in history has struggled more pluckily to rekindle fire in an effete race or to put spirit into an effete literature by pretending that both were of the prime."

"Come, come," murmured Mr. Simeon, smiling. "I see you are off upon one of your hobbies.... But you will not tell me that the fine rugged epic of *Beowulf*, to which the historians trace back all that is noblest in our poetry, had lost its generative impulse even so early as Alfred's time. That were too extravagant!"

"*Brekekekèx, ten brink, ten brink!*" snapped Brother Copas. "All the frogs in chorus around Charon's boat! Fine rugged fiddlestick—have you ever read *Beowulf*?"

"In translation only."

"You need not be ashamed of labour saved. I once spent a month or two in mastering Anglo-Saxon, having a suspicion of Germans when they talk about English literature, and a deeper suspicion of English critics who ape them. Then I tackled *Beowulf*, and found it to be what I guessed—no rugged national epic at all, but a blown-out bag of bookishness. Impulse? Generative impulse?—the thing is wind, I tell you, without sap or sinew, the production of some conscientious Anglo-Saxon whose blue eyes, no doubt, watered with the effort of inflating it. I'll swear it never drew a human tear otherwise.... That's what the whole Anglo-Saxon race had become when Alfred arose to galvanise 'em for a while—a herd of tall, flabby, pale-eyed men, who could neither fight, build, sing, nor enforce laws. And so our England—wise as Austria in mating—turned to other nuptials and married William the Norman. Behold then a new breed; the country covered with sturdy, bullet-headed, energetic fellows, who are no sooner born than they fly to work—hammers going, scaffolds climbing; cities, cathedrals springing up by magic; and all to a new song that came with some imported workmen from the Provence—"

'Quan la douss' aura venta
Deves vostre paÿs'—

"And so—pop!—down the wind goes your pricked bladder of a *Beowulf*: down the wind that blows from the Mediterranean, whence the arts and the best religions come."

Mr. Simeon rubbed the side of his jaw thoughtfully.

"Ah," said he, "I remember Master Blanchminster saying something of the sort the other day. He was talking of wine."

"Yes—the best religions and the best wine: they go together. Could ever an Anglo-Saxon have built *that*, think you?" demanded Brother Copas with a backward jerk of the head and glance up at the vaulted roof. "But to my moral.—All this talk of Anglo-Saxons, Celts, and the rest is rubbish. We are English by chemical action of a score of interfused bloods. That man is a fool who speaks as though, at this point of time, they could be separated: had he the power to put his nonsense into practice he would be a wicked fool. And so I say, Mr. Simeon, that the Roundheads—no pure Anglo-Saxon, by the way, ever had a round head—who mixed up the dead dust in the caskets aloft there, were really leaving us a sound historical lesson —"

But here Mr. Simeon turned at the sound of a brisk footstep. Dr. Windeatt had just entered by the western door.

"You'll excuse me? I promised the Doctor to blow the organ for him."

"Do people blow upon organs?" asked Corona, suddenly interested. "I thought they played upon them the same as pianos, only with little things that pulled out at the sides."

"Come and see," Mr. Simeon invited her, smiling.

The three went around to the back of the organ loft. By and by when Mr. Simeon began to pump, and after a minute, a quiet *adagio*, rising upon a throb of air, stole along the aisles as though an angel spoke in it, or the very spirit of the building, tears sprang into the child's eyes and overflowed. She supposed that Mr. Simeon alone was working this miracle.... Blinking more tears away, she stared at him, meeting his mild, half-quizzical gaze as he stooped and rose and stooped again over the bellows.

Brother Copas, touching her elbow, signed to her to come away. She obeyed, very reluctantly. By a small doorway in the southern aisle she followed him out into the sunshine of the Cathedral Close.

"But how does he do it?" she demanded. "He doesn't look a bit as if he could do anything like that—not in repose."

Brother Copas eyed her and took snuff. "He and the like of him don't touch the stops, my dear. He and the like of him do better; they supply the afflatus."

O ye holy and humble Men of heart, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever!

Mr. Simeon worked mechanically, heaving and pressing upon the bellows of the great organ. His mind ran upon Master Copas's disparagement of *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxons. It was ever the trouble that he remembered an answer for Brother Copas after Brother Copas had gone. ... Why had he not bethought him to cite Cædmon, at any rate, against that sweeping disparagement? How went the story?—

Cædmon was a lay brother, a tender of cattle at the Abbey of Whitby under the Abbess Hilda who founded it. Until somewhat spent in years he had never learnt any poems. Therefore at a feast, when all sang in turn, so soon as he saw the harp coming near him, he would rise and leave the table and go home. Once when he had gone thus from the feast to the stables, where he had night-charge of the beasts, as he yielded himself to sleep One stood over him and said, greeting him by name, "Caedmon, sing some song to me." "I cannot sing," he said, "and for this cause left I the feast." "But you shall sing to me," said the Vision. "Lord, what shall I sing?" "Sing the Creation," said the Vision. Caedmon sang, and in the morning remembered what he had sung...

"If this indeed happened to Caedmon, and late in life" (mused Mr. Simeon, heaving on the bellows of the great organ), "might not even some such miracle befall me?"

Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.

"I might even write a play," thought Mr. Simeon.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. ISIDORE TAKES CHARGE.

"Uncle Copas," said Corona, as the two passed out through the small doorway in the southern aisle and stood blinking in the sunshine, "I want you next to show me what's left of the old Castle where the kings lived: that is, if you're not tired."

"Tired, child? 'Tis our business—'tis the Brethren's business— to act as guides around the relics of Merchester. By fetching a very small circuit we can take the Castle on our way, and afterwards walk home along the water-meads, my favourite path."

Corona slipped her hand into his confidentially. Together they left the Close, and passing under the King's Gate, turned down College Street, which led them by the brewhouse and outer porch of the great School. A little beyond it, where by a conduit one of the Mere's hurrying tributaries gushed beneath the road, they came to a regiment of noble elms guarding a gateway, into which Brother Copas turned aside. A second and quite unpretentious gateway admitted them to a green meadow, in shape a rough semicircle, enclosed by ruined walls.

"You may come here most days of the month," said Brother Copas, holding the gate wide, "and never meet a soul. 'Tis the tranquillest, most forsaken spot in the city's ambit."

But here, as Corona caught her breath, he turned and stared. The enclosure was occupied by a squad of soldiers at drill.

They wore uniforms of khaki, and, dressed up with their backs to the gateway, were performing the simple movements of foot drill in face of a choleric sergeant-major, who shouted the words of command, and of a mounted officer who fronted the squad, silent, erect in saddle, upon a strapping bay. Some few paces behind this extremely military pair stood a couple of civilian spectators side by side, in attire— frock-coats, top-hats, white waistcoats—which at a little distance gave them an absurd resemblance to a brace of penguins.

"Heavens!" murmured Brother Copas. "Is it possible that Bamberger has become twins? One never knows of what these Jews are capable...."

His gaze travelled from the two penguins to the horseman in khaki. He put up a shaking hand to shade it.

"Colt? Colt in regimentals? Oh, this must be vertigo!"

At a word from the sergeant-major the squad fell out and stood in loose order, plainly awaiting instructions. Mr. Colt—yes, indeed it was the Chaplain—turned his charger's head half-about as the two frock-coated civilians stepped forward.

"Now, Mr. Bamberger, my men are at your disposal."

"I t'ank you, Reverent Mr. Major—if zat is ze form to address you—" began Mr. Bamberger's double.

"'Major,' *tout court*, if you please," Mr. Colt corrected him. "One drops the 'reverend' while actually on military duty."

"So? Ach, pardon!—I should haf known. . . Now Ze first is, we get ze angle of view, where to place our Grandt Standt so ze backgrount mek ze most pleasing picture. At ze same time ze Standt must not tresbass—must not imbinge, *hein?*—upon our stage, our what-you-call-it area. Two t'ousand berformers—we haf not too mooch room. I will ask you, Mr. Major, first of all to let your men—zey haf tent-pegs, *hein?*—to let your men peg out ze area as I direct. Afterwards, with your leaf, you shall place z'em here—z'ere—in groups, zat I may see in some sort how ze groups combose, as we say. Himmel! what a backgrount! Ze Cathedral, how it lifts over ze trees—Bar-fect! Now, if you will follow me a few paces to ze right, here... Ach! see yonder, by ze gate! Zat old man in ze red purple *poncho*—haf ze berformers already begon to aszemble zemselves?..."

Mr. Colt slewed his body about in the saddle.

"Eh?... Oh, that's Brother Copas, one of our Beauchamp Brethren. Mediaeval he looks, doesn't he? I assure you, sir, we keep the genuine article in Merchester."

"You haf old men dressed like *zat?*... My dear Julius, I see zis Bageant retty-made!"

"It was at St. Hospital—the almshouse for these old fellows—that the notion first came into my head."

"Sblendid!... We will haf a Brocession of them; or, it may be, a whole Ebisode.... Will you bid him come closer, Mr. Major, zat I may study ze costume in its detail?"

"Certainly." Mr. Colt beckoned to Brother Copas, who came forward still holding Corona by the hand. "Brother Copas, Mr. Isidore Bamberger here—brother of Our Member—desires to make your acquaintance."

"I am honoured," said Brother Copas politely.

"Ach, so!" burst in Mr. Isidore. "I was telling the major how moch I admire zat old costume of yours."

"It is not for sale, however." Brother Copas faced the two Hebrews with his ironical smile. "I am sorry to disappoint you, sirs, but I have no old clothes to dispose of, at present."

"No offence, no offence, I hope?" put in Mr. Julius. "My brother, sir, is an artist—"

"Be easy, sir: I am sure that he intended none. For the rest," pursued Brother Copas with a glance at Mr. Colt and a twinkle, "if we had time, all four of us here, to tell how by choice or necessity we come to be dressed as we are, I dare say our stories might prove amusing as the Calenders' in *The Arabian Nights*."

"You remind me," said Mr. Isidore, "zat I at any rate must not keep zese good Territorials standing idle. Another time—at your service—"

He waved a hand and hurried off to give an instruction to the sergeant-major. His brother followed and overtook him.

"Damn it all, Isidore! You might remember that Merchester is my constituency, and my majority less than half a hundred."

"*Hein?* For what else am I here but to helb you to increase it?"

"Then why the devil start by offending that old chap as you did?"

"Eh? I offended him somehow. Zat is certain: zough why on earth he should object to having his dress admired—" Mr. Isidore checked his speech upon a sudden surmise. "My goot Julius, you are not telling me he has a Vote!"

"You silly fool, of course he has!"

"Gott in himmel! I am sorry, Julius.... I—I sobbosed, in England, that paupers—"

"State-paupers," corrected his brother. "Private paupers, like the Brethren of St. Hospital, rank as tenants of their living-rooms."

"I shall never gombrehend the institutions of zis country," groaned Mr. Isidore.

"Never mind: make a Pageant of 'em," said his brother grimly. "I'll forgive you this time, if you'll promise me to be more careful."

"I'll do more, Julius. I'll get aroundt ze old boy somehow: mek him bivot-man in a brocession, or something of the sort. I got any amount of tagt, once I know where to use it."

"Smart man, Our Member!" commented Mr. Colt, gazing after the pair. "And Mr. Isidore doesn't let the grass grow under his feet, hey?"

"Has an eye for detail, too," answered Brother Copas, taking snuff. "See him there, upbraiding his brother for want of tact towards a free and independent elector.... But—excuse me—for what purpose are these two parcelling out the Castle Meadow?"

"You've not heard? There's a suggestion—and I may claim some share in the credit of it, if credit there be—to hold a Pageant here next summer, a Merchester Pageant. Mr. Bamberger's full of it. What's your idea?"

"A capital notion," said Brother Copas slowly. "Since *jam pridem Syrus in Tamesin defluxit Orontes*, I commend any attempt to educate Mr. Bamberger and his tribe in the history of this England they invade. But, as you say, this proposed Pageant is news to me. I never seem to hear any gossip. It had not even reached me, Mr. Chaplain, that you were deserting St. Hospital to embrace a military career."

"Nor am I.... At Cambridge I ever was an ardent volunteer. Here in Merchester (though this, too, may be news to you) I have for years identified myself with all movements in support of national defence. The Church Lads' Brigade, I may say, owed its inception to me; likewise the Young Communicants' Miniature Rifle Association; and for three successive years our Merchester Boy Scouts have elected me President and Scoutmaster. It has been a dream of my life, Brother Copas, to link up the youth of Britain in preparation to defend the Motherland, pending that system of compulsory National Service which (we all know) must eventually come. And so when Sir John Shaftesbury, as Chairman of our County Territorial Force Association, spoke to the Lord-Lieutenant, who invited me to accept a majority in the Mershire Light Infantry, Second Battalion, Territorial—"

"I can well understand, sir," said Brother Copas, as Mr. Colt drew breath; "and I thank you for telling me so much. No wonder Sir John enlisted such energy as yours! Yet—to be equally frank with you—I am sorry."

"You disapprove of National Service?"

"I approve of it with all my heart. Every young man should prepare himself to fight, at call, for his country. But the devotion should be voluntary."

"Ah, but suppose our young men will not? Suppose they prefer to attend football matches _"

"That, sir—if I may respectfully suggest it—is your business to prevent. And I might go on to suggest that the clergy, by preaching compulsory military service, lay themselves open, as avowed supporters of 'law and order,' to a very natural suspicion. We will suppose that you get your way, and every young Briton is bound, on summons, to mobilise. We will further suppose a Conservative Government in power, and confronted with a devastating strike—shall we say a railwaymen's strike? What more easy than to call out one-half of the strikers on service and oblige them, under pain of treason, to coerce the other half? Do you suppose that this nation will ever forget Hounslow Heath?"

"Let us, then," said Mr. Colt, "leave arguing this question of compulsory National Service until another occasion, when I shall hope to convince you. For the moment you'll allow it to be every man's duty, as a citizen, to carry arms for his country?"

"Every man's, certainly—if by that you exclude priests."

"Why exclude priests?"

"Because a priest, playing at warfare, must needs be mixing up things that differ. As I see it, Mr. Colt, your Gospel forbids warfare; and if you consent to follow an army, your business is to hold a cross above human strife and point the eyes of the dying upward, to rest on it, thus rebuking men's passions with a vision of life's ultimate peace."

"Yet a Bishop of Beauvais (as I read) once thought it not unmeet to charge with a mace at the head of a troop; and our own dear Archbishop Maclagan of York, as everyone knows,

was once lieutenant in a cavalry regiment!"

"Oh, la, la!" chuckled Brother Copas. "Be off, then, to your Territorials, Mr. Chaplain! I see Mr. Isidore, yonder, losing his temper with the squad as only an artist can.... But—believe an old man, dear sir—you on your horse are not only misreading the Sermon but mistaking the Mount!"

Mr. Colt rode off to his squad, and none too soon; for the men, startled by Mr. Isidore's sudden onslaught of authority and the explosive language in which he ordered them hither and thither, cursing one for his slowness with the measuring-tape, taking another by the shoulders and pushing him into position, began to show signs of mutiny. Mr. Julius Bamberger mopped a perspiring brow as he ran about vainly trying to interpose.

"Isidore, this is damned nonsense, I tell you!"

"You leave 'em to me," panted Mr. Isidore. "Tell me I don't understand managing a crowd like this! It's part of *ze method*, my goot Julius. Put ze fear of ze Lord into 'em, to start wiz. Zey gromble at first; Zen zey findt zey like it: in the endt zey lof you. *Hein?* It is not for nozzing zey call me ze Bageant King!..."

The old man and the child, left to themselves, watched these operations for a while across the greensward, over which the elms now began to lengthen their shadows.

"The Chaplain was right," said Brother Copas. "Mr. Isidore certainly does not let the grass grow under his feet."

"If I were the grass, I shouldn't want to," said Corona.

CHAPTER XIII.

GARDEN AND LAUNDRY.

"The nasty pigs!"

Nurse Branscome's face, usually composed and business-like (as a nurse's should be), was aflush between honest shame and equally honest scorn.

"To be sure," said Brother Copas soothingly. He had met her by chance in the ambulatory on her way from Brother Bonaday's rooms. On a sudden resolve he had told her of the anonymous letter, not showing it, but conveying (delicately as he might) its substance. "To be sure," he repeated. "But I am thinking—"

"As if I don't know your thoughts!" she interrupted vigorously. "You are thinking that, to save scandal, I had better cease my attendance on Brother Bonaday, and hand over the case to Nurse Turner. That I could do, of course; and if *he* knows of it, I certainly shall. Have you told him?"

Brother Copas shook his head.

"No. What is more, I have not the smallest intention of telling him."

"Thank you.... Oh, but it is vile—vile!"

"So vile that, believe me, I had great difficulty in telling you."

"I am sure you had.... I can hand over the case to Nurse Turner, of course; in fact, it came on her *rota*, but she asked me as a favour to take it, having her hands full just then with Brother Royle and Brother Dasent's rheumatics. It will be hard, though, to give up the

child." Nurse Branscome flushed again. "Oh, yes—you are a gentleman, Brother Copas, and will not misunderstand! I have taken a great liking for the child, and she will ask questions if I suddenly desert her. You see the fix?... Besides, Nurse Turner—I hope I am not becoming like one of these people, but I must say it—Nurse Turner has not a nice mind."

"There we get at it," said Brother Copas. "As a fact, you were far from reading my thoughts just now. They did not (forgive me) concern themselves with you or your wisest line of conduct. You are a grown woman, and know well enough that honesty will take care of its own in the end. I was thinking rather of Corona. As you say, she has laid some hold upon the pair of us. She has a pathetic belief in all the inmates of St. Hospital—and God pity us if our corruption infects this child!... You take me?"

Nurse Branscome looked at him squarely.

"If I could save her from that!"

"You would risk appearances?"

"Gladly.... Will you show me the letter?"

Brother Copas shook his head.

"You must take it on faith from me for a while... at any rate until I find out who in St. Hospital begins her 'w's' with a curl like a ram's horn. Did you leave the child with her father?"

"No; she had run out to the kitchen garden. Since she has discovered it she goes there regularly twice a day, morning and evening. I can't think why, and she won't tell. She is the queerest child."

The walled kitchen garden of St. Hospital lies to the south, between the back of the "Nunnery" and the River Mere. It can be reached from the ambulatory by a dark, narrow tunnel under the nurses' lodgings. The Brethren never went near it. For years old Battershall, the gardener, had dug there in solitude—day in, day out—and had grown his vegetables, hedged in from all human intercourse, nor grumbling at his lot.

Corona, exploring the precincts, had discovered this kitchen garden, found it to her mind, and thereafter made free of it with the cheerfullest *insouciance*. The dark tunnel, to begin with, put her in mind of some adventure in a fairy tale she could not recall; but it opened of a sudden and enchantingly upon sunshine and beds of onions, parsley, cabbages, with pale yellow butterflies hovering. Old Battershall, too, though taciturn, was obviously not displeased by her visits. He saw that while prying here and there—especially among the parsley beds, for what reason he could not guess—the child stole no fruit, did no harm. She trampled nothing. She lifted no leaf to harm it. When she stopped to speak with him her talk was "just nonsense, you know." Unconsciously, by the end of the third day he had looked up twice or thrice from his delving, asking himself why she was late.

And what (do you suppose) did Corona seek in the kitchen garden? She too, unknowing, was lonely. Unknowing, this child felt a need for children, companions. Uncle Copas's doll—well meant and priced at 1s. 3d.—had somehow missed to engage her affections. She could not tell him so, but she hated it.

Like every woman-child of her age she was curious about babies. She had heard, over in America, that babies came either at early morning or at shut of eve, and were to be found in parsley beds. Now old Mr. Battershall grew parsley to make you proud. At the Merchester Rural Gardening Show he regularly took first prize; his potting-shed, in the north-east angle of the wall, was papered with winning tickets from bench to roof. At first when he saw Corona moving about the bed, lifting the parsley leaves, he had a mind to chide her away; for, as he put it, "Children and chicken be always a-pickin'—the mischief's in their natur'." Finding, however, that she did no damage, yet harked back to the parsley again and again, he set her down for an unusually intelligent child, who somehow knew good gardening when she saw it.

"Glad to see you admirin' it, missie," he said one morning, coming up behind her unperceived.

Corona, in the act of upturning a leaf, started and drew back her hand. Babies—she could not tell why—made their appearance in this world by stealth, and must be searched for furtively.

"A mort o' prizes I've took with that there parsley one time and another," pursued Mr.

Battershall, not perceiving the flush of guilt on her face (for his eyesight was, in his own words, not so young as it used to be). "Goodbody's Curly Mammoth is the strain, and I don't care who knows it, for the secret's not in the strain, but in the way o' raisin' it. I grows for a succession, too. Summer or winter these six-an'-twenty years St. Hospital's ne'er been without a fine bed o' parsley, I thank the Lord!"

Six-and-twenty years.... It was comforting in a way to know that parsley grew here all the seasons round. But—six-and-twenty years, and not one child in the place save herself, who had come over from America! Yet Mr. Battershall was right; it *seemed* excellent parsley.

"You don't find that anything comes and—and takes away—" she hazarded, but came to a full stop.

"There's slugs," answered Mr. Battershall stolidly, "and there's snails. Terrible full o' snails the old wall was till I got the Master to repaint it."

"Would snails—"

"Eh?" he asked as she hesitated.

"They might take away the—the flowers, for instance."

Old Battershall guffawed.

"You wasn' sarchin' for flowers, was you? Dang me, but that's a good 'un!... I don't raise my own seed, missie, if that's your meanin'; an' that bein' so, he'd have to get up early as would find a flower in my parsley."

Ah, this might explain it! As she eyed him, her childish mind searching the mystery, yet keeping its own secret, Corona resolved to steal down to the garden one of these fine mornings very early indeed.

"Now I'll tell you something about parsley," said Mr. Battershall; "something very curious, and yet it must be true, for I heard the Master tell it in one of his sermons. The ancients, by which I mean the Greeks, set amazin' store by the yerb. There was a kind of Athletic Sports—sort of Crystal Palace meetin'—*the* great event, as you might say, and attractin' to sportsmen all over Greece—"

"All over what?"

"Greece. Which is a country, missy, or, at any rate, was so. The meeting was held every four years; and what d'ye suppose was the top prize, answerin', as you may say, to the Championship Cup? Why, a wreath o' parsley! 'Garn!' says you. And 'Parsley!' says you. Which a whole wreath of it might cost fivepence at the outside...."

Now Corona, whose mind was ever picking up and hoarding such trifles, had heard Uncle Copas two days before drop a remark that the Greeks knew everything worth knowing. Plainly, then, the parsley held some wonderful secret after all. She must contrive to outwit old Battershall, and get to the garden ahead of him, which would not be easy, by the way.

To begin with, on these summer mornings old Battershall rose with the lark, and boasted of it; and, furthermore, the door of her father's bedroom stood open all night. To steal abroad she must pass it, and he was the lightest of sleepers. She did not intend to be beaten, though; and meanwhile she punctually visited the parsley morning and evening.

Heaven knows how the day-dream came to take possession of her. She was not consciously lonely. She worshipped this marvellous new home. Sometimes in her rambles she had to pinch herself to make sure this was all really happening. But always in her rambles she saw St. Hospital peopled with children—boys, girls, and little toddlers—chasing one another across the lawns, laughing at hide-and-seek in the archways, bruising no flower-bed, filling old souls with glee. They were her playmates, these innocents of her fancy, the long day through. At evening in her prayers she called them home, and they came reluctant

No, no, let us play, for it is yet day
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly
And the hills are all covered with sheep.

The tunnel was populous with them as she passed through it from the garden to the ambulatory, and at the end of the tunnel she came plump upon Branny and Uncle Copas in converse. They started guiltily.

"I've been looking for you this half-hour," said Brother Copas, recovering himself. "Didn't a certain small missy make an appointment with me to be shown the laundry and its wonders? And isn't this Tuesday—ironing day?"

"You promised to show it to me *some time*," answered Corona, who was punctilious in small matters; "but you never fixed any time in p'tic'lar."

"Oh, then I must have made the appointment with myself! Never mind; come along now, if you can spare the time."

Nurse Branscome nodded and left them, turning in at the stairway which led to her quarters in the Nunnery. At the foot of it she paused to call after them—

"Mind, Corona is not to be late for her tea! I've invited myself this evening, and there is to be a plum cake in honour of the occasion."

Brother Copas and Corona passed down the ambulatory and by the porter's lodge to the outer court. Of a sudden, within a few paces of the laundry, Brother Copas halted to listen.

"You had better stop here for a moment," he said, and walked forward to the laundry door, the hasp of which he lifted after knocking sharply with his staff. He threw the door open and looked in, surveying the scene with an angry disgust.

"Hallo! More abominations?" exclaimed Brother Copas.

The quarrel had started in the forenoon over a dirty trick played by Brother Clerihew, the ex-butler. (Brother Clerihew had a name for underhand practice; indeed, his inability to miss a chance of it had cost him situation after situation, and finally landed him in St. Hospital.) This time he had played it upon poor old doddering Brother Ibbetson. Finding Ibbetson in the porter's gateway, with charge of a lucrative-looking tourist and in search of the key of the Relique Room, he noted that the key, usually handed out by Porter Manby, hung on a hook just within the doorway; but old Ibbetson, being purblind, could not see it, or at all events could not recognise it, and Manby happened to be away at the brewhouse on some errand connected with the Wayfarers' Dole. Brother Clerihew, who had left him there, sent Ibbetson off on a chase in the wrong direction, loitered around for a couple of minutes chatting about the weather, and then, with a remark that it was shameful to keep gentlefolks waiting so, looked casually in at the doorway.

"Why the key is here all the time!" he exclaimed. "If you are in any hurry, sir, permit me to take brother Ibbetson's place, and show you round. Oh," he added falsely, seeing the visitor hesitate, "it won't hurt *him* at all! I don't like to mention it, but any small gratuities bestowed on the Brethren are carried to a common fund."

Ibbetson, harking back from a vain search to find his bird had flown, encountered Porter Manby returning with Brother Warboise from the brew-house, and tremulously opened up his distress.

"Eh?" snapped Warboise, after exchanging glances with the Porter. "Clerihew said Manby was in the kitchen, did he? But he'd left us at the brewhouse not a minute before."

"And the key! gone from the hook!" chimed in Porter Manby, "where I'll swear I left it. This is one of Clerihew's monkeyings, you bet."

"I'll monkey him," growled Brother Warboise.

The three kept sentry, knowing that Clerihew must sooner or later return with his convoy, there being no other exit. When at length he hove in sight with his convoy his face wore an uneasy, impudent smile. He was the richer by half a crown. They stood aside and let him brazen it past them; but Manby and Ibbetson were still waiting for him as he came back alone. Ibbetson was content with a look of reproach. Manby told him fair and straight that he was a swindling cur. But meanwhile Warboise had stumped off and told Ibbetson's wife. This done, he hurried off, and catching Clerihew by the steps of the Hundred Men's Hall, threatened the rogue with his staff. Manby caught them in altercation, the one aiming impotent blows, the other evading them still with his shameless grin, and separated them. Brother Ibbetson looked on, feebly wringing his hands.

But Mrs. Ibbetson was worth three of her husband, and a notorious scold. In the laundry, later on, she announced within earshot of Mrs. Clerihew that, as was well beknown, Clerihew had lost his last three places for bottle-stealing; and Mrs. Royle, acknowledged virago of St. Hospital, took up the accusation and blared it obscenely. For a good five

minutes the pair mauled Mrs. Clerihew, who, with an air of high gentility, went on ironing shirts. She had been a lady's maid when Clerihew married her, and could command, as a rule, a high-bred, withering sneer. Unhappily, the united attack of Mrs. Ibbetson and Mrs. Royle goaded her so far beyond the bounds of breeding that of a sudden she upped and called the latter a bitch; whereupon, feeling herself committed, this ordinarily demure woman straightened her spine and followed up the word with a torrent of filthy invective that took the whole laundry aback.

Her success was but momentary. Mrs. Royle had a character to maintain. Fetching a gasp, she let fly the dirtiest word one woman can launch at another, and on the instant made a grab at Mrs. Clerihew's brow.... It was a matter of notoriety in St. Hospital that Mrs. Clerihew wore a false "front." The thing came away in Mrs. Royle's clutch, and amid shrieks of laughter Mrs. Royle tossed it to Mrs. Ibbetson, who promptly clapped down a hot flat-iron upon it. The spectators rocked with helpless mirth as the poor woman strove to cover her bald brows, while the thing hissed and shrivelled to nothing, emitting an acrid odour beneath the relentless flat-iron.

"Ladies! ladies!" commanded Brother Copas. "A visitor, if you please!"

The word—as always in St. Hospital—instantly commanded a hush. The women fled back to their tables, and started ironing, goffering, crimping for dear life, with irons hot and cold. Brother Copas, with a chuckle, leant back and beckoned Corona in from the yard.

At sight of her on the threshold Mrs. Royle broke into a coarse laugh. It found no echo, and died away half-heartedly. For one thing, there might yet be a real visitor behind the child; for another, these women stood in some little awe of Brother Copas, who paid well for his laundry-work, never mixed himself up with gossip, and moreover had a formidable trick of lifting his hat whenever he passed one of these viragoes, and after a glance at her face, fixing an amused stare at her feet.

"Pardon me, ladies," said he; "but my small laundry-work has hitherto gone, as you know, to old Mrs. Vigurs in St. Faith's Road. Last week she sent me word that she could no longer undertake it, the fact being that she has just earned her Old Age Pension and is retiring upon it. I come to ask if one of you will condescend to take her place and oblige me."

He paused, tasting the fun of it. As he well knew, they all feared and hated him for his trick of irony; but at least half a dozen of them desired his custom, for in St. Hospital (where nothing escaped notice) Brother Copas's fastidious extravagance in body-linen and his punctuality in discharging small debts were matters of common knowledge. Moreover, in their present mood each of these women saw a chance of spiting another by depriving her of the job.

Brother Copas eyed them with an amiable smile.

"Come," he said, "don't all speak at once!... I'll not ask you to bid for my little contract just now when I see you are all so busy. But seriously, I invite tenders, and will ask any one of you who cares for my custom to send me (say by to-morrow evening) a list of her prices in a sealed envelope, each envelope to bear the words 'Washing List' in an upper corner, that I may put all the tenders aside and open them together. Eh? What do you say, ladies?"

"I shall be happy for one," said Mrs. Clerihew, laying stress on the aspirate. She was always careful of this, having lived with gentlefolks. She burned to know if Brother Copas had heard her call Mrs. Royle a bitch. Mrs. Royle (to do her justice) when enraged recked neither what she said nor who overheard. But Mrs. Clerihew, between her lapses, clung passionately to gentility and the world's esteem. She was conscious, moreover, that without her false "front" she must be looking a fright.... In short, the wretched woman rushed into speech because for the moment anything was more tolerable than silence.

"I thank you, ma'am."

Neither voice nor look betrayed that Brother Copas had overheard or perceived anything amiss.

Mrs. Clerihew, baffled, began desperately to curry favour.

"And you've brought Brother Bonaday's pretty child, I see.... Step over here, my dear, and watch me—when I've heated this iron. 'Crimping,' they call it, and I've done it for titled folks in my time. One of these days, I hope, you'll be going into good service yourself. There's nothing like it for picking up manners."

She talked for talking's sake, in a carneying tone, while her bosom still heaved from the storm of battle.

Mrs. Royle attempted a ribald laugh, but it met with no success, and her voice died down under a disapproving hush.

Mrs. Clerihew talked on, gaining confidence. She crimped beautifully, and this was the

more remarkable because (as Corona noted) her hand shook all the while.

In short, the child had, as she put it, quite a good time.

When it was time to be going she thanked Mrs. Clerihew very prettily, and walked back with Brother Copas to her father's room. They found Nurse Branscome there and the table already laid for tea; there was a plum cake, too.

After tea Branny told them all very gravely that this must be her last visit. She was giving over the care of Corona's father to Nurse Turner, whose "case" it had really been from the first. She explained that the nurses, unless work were extra heavy, had to take their patients in a certain order, by what she called a *rota*.

"But he's bettering every day now, so I don't mind." She nodded cheerfully towards Brother Bonaday, and then, seeing that Corona's face was woebegone, she added: "But you will often be running across to the Nunnery to see me. Besides, I've brought a small parting gift to console you."

She unwrapped a paper parcel, and held out a black boy-doll, a real Golliwog, with white shirt buttons for eyes and hair of black Berlin wool.

"Oh, Branny!"

Corona, after holding the Golliwog a moment in outstretched hands, strained it to her breast.

"Oh, Branny! And till this moment I didn't know how much I've wanted him!"

CHAPTER XIV.

BROTHER COPAS ON THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

All love being a mystery, I see no reason to speculate how or why it came to pass that Corona, who already possessed two pink and waxen girl-dolls, and treated them with the merest contempt, took this black manikin of a Golliwog straight to her heart to share its innermost confidences.

It happened so, and there's no more to be said. Next morning Corona paid an early call at the Nunnery.

"I'm afraid," she said in her best society manner, "this is a perfectly ridiklous hour. But you are responsible for Timothy in a way, aren't you?"

"Timothy?" echoed Nurse Branscome.

"Oh, I forgot!" Corona patted the red-trousered legs of the Golliwog, which she held, not as little girls usually hold dolls, but tucked away under her armpit. "Timothy's his name, though I mean to call him Timmy for short. But the point is, he's becoming rather a question."

"In what way?"

"Well, you see, I have to take him to bed with me. He insists on it, which is all very well," continued Corona, nodding sagely, "but one can't allow it in the same clothes day and night. It's like what Uncle Copas says of Brother Plant's linen; it positively isn't *sanitary*."

"I see," said Branny, laughing. "You want me to make a change of garments for him?"

"I've examined him," answered Corona. "There's a stitch here and there, but on the whole he'll unbutton quite easily; only I didn't like to do it until I'd consulted you.... And I don't want you to bother about the clothes, if you'll only show me how to cut out. I can sew quite nicely. Mamma taught me. I was making a sampler all through her illness—*Corona Bonaday, Aged Six Years and Three Months*; then the big and little ABC, and the numbers up to ten; after that the Lord's Prayer down to *Forgive us our trespasses*. When we got to that she died.... I want to begin with a suit of pajamas—no, I forgot; they're *pyjamas* over here. Whatever happens, I *do* want him to be a gentleman," concluded Corona earnestly.

The end was that Nurse Branscome hunted up a piece of coloured flannel, and Master Timothy that same evening was stripped to indue a pyjama suit. Corona carried him thus

attired off to her bed in triumph—but not to sleep. Brother Bonaday, lying awake, heard her voice running on and on in a rapid monotone. Ten o'clock struck, and he could endure the sound no longer. It seemed to him that she must be rambling in delirium, and slipping on his dressing-gown, he stole to her chamber door.

"Cannot you get to sleep, little maid?"

"Is that you, daddy?" answered Corona. "I am so sorry, but Timmy and I have been arguing. He's such a queer child; he has a lingering belief in the House of Lords!"

"Now I wonder how she gets at that?" mused Brother Bonaday when he reported the saying to Copas.

"Very simply we shall find; but you must give me a minute or so to think it out."

"To be sure, with her American up-bringing there might naturally grow an instinctive disrespect for the hereditary principle."

"I have not observed that disrespect in Americans," answered Brother Copas dryly. "But we'll credit it to them if you will; and there at once you have a capital reason why our little Miss Bull should worship the House of Lords as a fetish—whereas, it appears, she doesn't."

"It's the queerer because, when it comes to the King, she worships the 'accident of birth,' as you might call it. To her King Edward is nothing less than the Lord's Anointed."

"Quite so.... But please, my dear fellow, don't clap into *my* mouth that silliest of phrases. 'Accident of birth!' I once heard parturition pleaded as an accident—by a servant girl in trouble. Funny sort of accident, hey? Does ever anyone—did she, your own daughter, for example—come into this world fortuitously?"

Brother Copas, taking snuff, did not perceive the twitch of his friend's face. His question seemed to pluck Brother Bonaday up short, as though with the jerk of an actual rope.

"Maybe," he harked back vaguely, "it's just caprice—the inconsequence of a child's mind—the mystery of it, some would say."

"Fiddlestick-end! There's as much mystery in Corona as in the light of day about us at this moment; just so much and no more. If anything, she's deadly logical; when her mind puzzles us it's never by hocus-pocus, but simply by swiftness in operation.... I've learnt that much of the one female child it has ever been my lot to observe; and the Lord may allow me to enjoy the success towards the close of a life largely spent in misunderstanding boys. Stay a moment—" Brother Copas stood with corrugated brow. "I have it! I remember now that she asked me, two days ago, if I didn't think it disgusting that so many of our English Peers went and married American heiresses merely for their money. Probably she supposes that on these means our ancient nobility mainly finances itself. She amused me, too, by her obvious reluctance to blame the men. 'Of course,' she said, 'the real fault is the women's, or would be if they knew what's decent. But you can't expect anything of *them*; they've had no nurture.' That was her word. So being a just child, she has to wonder how Englishmen 'with nurture' can so demean themselves to get money. In short, my friend, your daughter—for love of us both maybe—is taking our picturesqueness too honestly. She inclines to find a merit of its own in poverty. It is high time we sent her to school."

It was high time, as Brother Bonaday knew; if only because every child in England nowadays is legally obliged to be educated, and the local attendance officer (easily excused though he might be for some delay in detecting the presence of a child of alien birth in so unlikely a spot as St. Hospital) would surely be on Corona's track before long. But Brother Bonaday hated the prospect of sending her to the parish school, while he possessed no money to send her to a better. Moreover, he obeyed a lifelong instinct in shying away from the call to decide.

"But we were talking about the House of Lords," he suggested feebly. "The hereditary principle—"

Brother Copas inhaled his snuff, sideways eyeing this friend whose weakness he understood to a hair's-breadth. But he, too, had his weakness—that of yielding to be led away by dialectic on the first temptation.

"Aye, to be sure. The hereditary—principle, did you say? My dear fellow, the House of Lords never had such a principle. The hereditary right to legislate slipped in by the merest slant of a side wind, and in its origin was just a handy expedient of the sort so dear to our Constitution, logically absurd, but in practice saving no end of friction and dispute."

"You will grant at any rate that, having once adopted it, the Lords exalted it to rank as a principle."

"Yes, and for a time with amazing success. That was their capital error.... Have you never observed, my good Bonaday, how fatally miracles come home to roost? Jonah spends

three days and three nights in the whale's belly—why? Simply to get his tale believed. *Credo quia impossibile* seldom misses to work well for a while. He doesn't foresee, poor fellow, that what makes his fortune with one generation of men will wreck his credit with another.... So with the House of Lords—though here a miracle triumphantly pointed out as happening under men's eyes was never really happening at all. That in the loins of every titled legislator should lie the germ of another is a miracle (I grant you) of the first order, and may vie with Jonah's sojourn in the whale's belly; nay, it deserved an even longer run for its money, since it persuaded people that they saw the miraculous succession. But Nature was taking care all the time that it never happened. Actually our peerages have perished, and new ones have been born at an astonishing rate; about half of them at this moment are younger than the great Reform Bill. A shrewd American remarked the other day, that while it is true enough a son may not inherit his father's ability, yet if the son of a Rothschild can keep the money his father made he must in these days of liquid securities be a pretty able fellow. Weaklings (added my American) don't last long, at any rate in our times. 'God and Nature turn out the incompetents almost as quickly as would the electorate.'... But my point is that the House of Lords, having in the past exploited this supposed miracle for all it was worth, are now (if the Liberals have any sense) to be faced with the overdraft which every miracle leaves to be paid sooner or later. The longer-headed among the Peers perceived this some years ago; they all see it now, and are tumbling over each other in their haste to dodge the 'hereditary principle' somehow. It is for the Liberals to hold them firmly to the dear old miracle and rub their noses in it. So, and so only, will this electorate of ours rid itself, under a misapprehension, of a real peril, to which, if able to see the thing in its true form and dimensions, it would in all likelihood yield itself grovelling."

"Eh? I don't follow—"

"I tell you, Bonaday, the House of Lords is in fact no hereditary curse at all. What the devil has it to do with the claims of old descent? Does it contain a man whose ancestor ever saw Agincourt? Bankers, brewers, clothiers, mine-owners, company-promoters, journalists—our Upper House to-day is a compact, fairly well-selected body of men who have pushed to success over their fellows. Given such a body of supermen, well agreed among themselves, and knowing what they want, supplied with every temptation to feed on the necessities of the weak, armed with extravagant legal powers, even fortified with a philosophy in the sham Darwin doctrine that, with nations as with men, the poverty of one is the wealth of another—there, my dear sir, you have a menace against which, could they realise it, all moderate citizens would be fighting for their lives.... But it is close upon dinner-time, and I refuse to extend these valuable but parenthetical remarks on the House of Lords one whit farther to please your irresolution.... It's high time Corona went to school."

"I have not been well lately, as you know, Brother. I meant all along, as soon as I picked up my strength again, to—"

"Tilly vally, tilly vally!" snapped Brother Copas. "Since we are making excuses shall we add that, without admitting ourselves to be snobs, we have remarked a certain refinement—a delicacy of mind—in Corona, and doubt if the bloom of it will survive the rough contact of a public elementary school?... Come, I've thought of that, as a godfather should. You're aware that, a couple of years ago, a small legacy dropped in upon me—a trifling windfall of ten guineas a year. Well, I've been wasting it on luxuries—a few books I don't read, a more expensive brand of tobacco, which really is no better than the old shag, some extra changes of body-linen. Now since the Education Act of 1902 the fees in the public secondary day schools have been cut down to a figure quite ridiculously low, and the private day schools have been forced to follow suit. I dare say that seven pounds a year will send Corona, say, to Miss Dickinson's genteel seminary—nay, I'll undertake to beat the lady down to that sum—and I shall still be left with three pounds and ten shillings to squander on shirts. Now if you start thanking me—Ah, there goes the dinner-bell! Hurry, man—you're first on the roster!"

CHAPTER XV.

CANARIES AND GREYCOATS.

So Corona was sent to school; but not, as it befell, to Miss Dickinson's.

Brother Copas, indeed, paid a visit to Miss Dickinson, and, warned by some wise instinct, took the child with him.

Miss Dickinson herself opened the front door, and explained with an accent of high refinement that her house-parlourmaid was indisposed that morning, and her cook busy for the moment.

"You have some message for me?" she asked graciously; for the Brethren of St. Hospital pick up a little business as letter-carriers or *commissionaires*.

On learning her visitor's errand, of a sudden she stiffened in demeanour. Corona, watching her face intently, noted the change.

"Dear me, what a very unusual application!" said Miss Dickinson, but nevertheless invited them to step inside.

"We can discuss matters more freely without the child," she suggested.

"As you please, ma'am," said Copas, "provided you don't ask her to wait in the street."

Corona was ushered into an apartment at the back—the boudoir, its mistress called it—and was left there amid a din of singing canaries, while Miss Dickinson carried off Brother Copas to the drawing-room.

The boudoir contained some scholastic furniture and a vast number of worthless knick-knacks in poker-work, fret-work, leathern *appliqué*-work, gummed shell-work, wool-work, tambour-work, with crystoleum paintings and drawings in chalk and water-colour. On a table in front of the window stood a cage with five canaries singing in it. Corona herself felt a sense of imprisonment, but no desire to sing. The window looked upon a walled yard, in which fifteen girls of various ages were walking through some kind of drill under an instructress whose appearance puzzled her until she remembered that Miss Dickinson's cook was "busy for the moment."

Corona watched their movements with an interest begotten of pity. The girls whispered and prinked, and exchanged confidences with self-conscious airs. They paid but a perfunctory attention to the drill. It was clear they despised their instructress. Yet they seemed happy enough in a way.

"I wonder why?" thought Corona. "I don't like Miss Dickinson; first, because she has the nose of a witch, and next because she is afraid of us. I think she is afraid of us because we're poor. Well, I'm not afraid of her—not really; but I'd feel mighty uncomfortable if she had dear old daddy in there alone instead of Uncle Copas."

Meanwhile in the drawing-room—likewise resonant with canaries—Miss Dickinson was carefully helping Brother Copas to understand that as a rule she excluded all but children of the upper classes.

"It is not—if you will do me so much credit—that I *look down* upon the others; but I find that the children themselves are not so happy when called upon to mix with those of a different station. The world, after all, is the world, and we must face facts as they are."

"You mean, ma'am, that your young ladies—or some of them—might twit Corona for having a father who wears the Beauchamp robe."

"I would not say *that*.... In fact I have some influence over them, it is to be hoped, and should impress upon them beforehand that the—er—subject is not to be alluded to."

"That would be extremely tactful," said Brother Copas.

He rose.

"Pray be seated.... As I dare say you know, Mr.—"

"Copas."

"—As I dare say you know, Mr. Copas, higher education in England just now is passing through a—er—phase: it is (to use a forcible, if possibly vulgar, expression) in a state of flux. I do not conceal from myself that this must be largely attributed to the Education Act of 1902."

"Ah!"

Brother Copas dived finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket in search of his snuff-box, but, recollecting himself, withdrew them hastily.

"Mr Balfour, whether he meant it or no, hit the private-venture schools beyond a doubt."

"One may trust that it is but a temporary blow. I have, let me say, the utmost confidence in Mr. Balfour's statesmanship. I believe— far-sighted man that he is, and with his marvellous apprehension of the English character—"

"'Tis a Scotchman's first aptitude," murmured Brother Copas, nodding assent.

"—I believe Mr. Balfour looked beyond the immediate effect of the Act and saw that, after the Municipalities' and County Councils' first success in setting up secondary schools

of their own, each with its quota of poor, non-paying children, our sturdy British independence would rise against the—er—contact. The self-respecting parent is bound to say in time, 'No, I will *not* have my son, still less my daughter, sitting with Tom, Dick and Harry.' Indeed, I see signs of this already—most encouraging signs. I have two more pupils this term than last, both children of respectable station."

"I congratulate you, ma'am, and I feel sure that Mr. Balfour would congratulate himself, could he hear. But meantime the private-venture schools have been hit, especially those not fortunate enough to be 'recognised' by the Board of Education."

"I seek no such recognition, sir," said Miss Dickinson stiffly.

Brother Copas bowed.

"Forgive, ma'am, the intrusive ghost of a professional interest. I myself once kept a private school for boys. A precarious venture always, and it required no Education Act to wreck mine."

"Indeed?" Miss Dickinson raised her eyebrows in faint surprise, and anon contracted them. "Had I known that you belonged to the scholastic profession—" she began, but leaving the sentence unfinished, appeared to relapse into thought.

"Believe me, ma'am," put in Brother Copas, "I mentioned it casually, not as hinting at any remission of your fees."

"No, no. But I was thinking that it might considerably soften the—er—objection. You are not the child's parent, you say? Nor grandparent?"

"Her godparent only, and that by adoption. In so much as I make myself responsible for her school fees, you may consider me her guardian. Her father, Brother Bonaday, is a decayed gentleman, sometime of independent means, who married late in life, and, on top of this, was indiscreet enough to confide his affairs to a trusted family solicitor."

"Dear, dear! Why did you not tell me all this to begin with?" demanded Miss Dickinson, rising. "Shall we consider it agreed, then?—the child to come to me as soon as you wish."

"I think we must first discover if she's willing," answered Brother Copas, rubbing his chin.

"We will go to her."

They found Corona at the window of the boudoir. As the door opened she turned, ran to Brother Copas, and clung to him.

"Take me home! Oh, please take me home!"

"Hey?" Brother Copas soothed her, patting the back of her head. "Why, what is the matter, little maid? Who has been frightening you?"

"She turns them all into canaries—I know she does!" the child asserted, still shaking pitiably, but facing Miss Dickinson with accusation in her eyes. "You can tell it by her nose and chin. I—I thought you had gone away and left me with her."

"You did not tell me she was hysterical," said Miss Dickinson.

"It's news to me, ma'am. I'd best get her out into the fresh air at once."

Without waiting for permission, he swept Corona out into the passage, and forth into the street. It is a question which felt the happier when they gained it, and stood drawing long breaths; but, of course, Brother Copas had to put on a severe face.

"All very well, little maid!"

"Oh, I know you're disappointed with me," gasped Corona. "I'm disappointed with myself. But it was all just like *Jorinda and Jorindel*; and if she's not a witch, and doesn't turn them into canaries, why does she keep all those cages?" She halted suddenly. "I hate to be a coward," she said. "If you'll come with me, Uncle Copas, I'll start back right here, and we'll go in and rescue them. It was the waiting I couldn't stand."

"Canaries?" Brother Copas stood and looked down on her. Some apprehension of the absurd fancy broke on him, and he chuckled. "Now you come to mention it, I dare say she *does* turn 'em into canaries."

"Then we ought to go straight back and set them free," insisted Corona. "If only we had the magic flower!"

"I think I know who has it.... Yes, you may take it from me, little one, that there's someone charged to put an end to Miss Dickinson's enchantments, and we may safely leave

it to him."

"Who is he?"

"The deliverer's name is County Council.... But look here, child— if you make a fuss like this whenever I try to find a school for you—"

"I won't make a fuss. And I *do* want to go to school," interrupted Corona. "I want to go to the Greycoats."

"The Greycoats?" This was an ancient foundation in the city, in origin a charity-school, but now distinguished from the ordinary Elementary Schools in that its pupils paid twopence a week, and wore a grey uniform provided *per contra* from the funds of the charity. "The Greycoats?" repeated Brother Copas. "But I had a mind for you to fly higher, if you understand—"

Corona nodded.

"And so I shall; that is, uncle, if you'll teach me Latin, as you promised."

She was easy in mind, since Miss Dickinson's canaries would be delivered. The name "County Council" meant nothing to her, but it had affinity with other names and titles of romance—Captain Judgment, for instance, in *The Holy War*, and County Guy in the poetry book—

Ah! County Guy, the hour is nigh—

Since Uncle Copas had said it, Miss Dickinson's hour was assuredly nigh.

"This is not the way, though," Corona protested. "We are walking right away from the Greycoats!"

Brother Copas halted.

"I supposed that I was taking you back to St. Hospital."

"But you came out to put me to school, and I want to go to the Greycoats."

He pondered a moment.

"Ah, well, have it your own way!"

They turned back toward the city. The Greycoats inhabited a long, single-storeyed building on the eastern boundary of the Cathedral Close, the boys and girls in separate schools under the same high-pitched roof. As our two friends came in sight of it, Corona—who had been running ahead in her impatience—hesitated of a sudden and turned about.

"Uncle Copas, before we go in I want to tell you something.... I was really frightened—yes, really—in that wicked house. But I wanted to be a Greycoat all the time. I want to wear a cloak that means I belong to Merchester, same as you and daddy."

"Lord forgive me, she's proud of us!" murmured Brother Copas. "And I set out this morning to get her taught to despise us!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECOND LETTER.

Meanwhile certain small events not unconnected with this history were happening at St. Hospital.

At ten o'clock punctually Mr. Colt waited on the Master. This was a part of the daily routine, but ninety-nine times in a hundred the Chaplain's report resolved itself into a chat on the weather, the Master's roses, some recent article in the *Church Times* or the *Guardian*. The talk was never very strenuous; for whereas Mr. Colt could never learn to distinguish one rose from another, on Church affairs or on politics the Master was hopelessly tolerant, antiquated, incurious even. What could one do with a dear old gentleman who, when informed of the latest, most dangerous promotion to a bishopric, but responded with "Eh? 'So-and-so,' did you say? ... Yes, yes. I knew his father... an excellent fellow!"

This morning, however, the Chaplain wore a grave face. After a few words he came to business.

"It concerns a letter I received this morning. The writer, who signs himself 'Well Wisher,' makes a disgusting allegation against old Bonaday—an incredibly disgusting allegation. You will prefer to read it for yourself."

Mr. Colt produced the letter from his pocket-book, and held it out.

"Eh?" exclaimed Master Blanchminster, receding. "Another?"

"I beg your pardon—?"

The Master adjusted his glasses, and bent forward, still without offering to touch the thing or receive it from Mr. Colt's hand.

"Yes, yes. I recognise the handwriting.... To tell the truth, my dear Colt, I received just such a letter one day last week. For the moment it caused me great distress of mind."

Mr. Colt was vexed, a little hurt, that the Master had not consulted him about it.

"You mean to say it contained—"

"—The same sort of thing, no doubt: charges against Brother Bonaday and against one of the nurses: incredibly disgusting, as you say."

"May I be allowed to compare the two letters?... I do not," said Mr. Colt stiffly, "seek more of your confidence than you care to bestow."

"My dear fellow—" protested the Master.

"I merely suggest that, since it concerns the discipline of St. Hospital—for which in the past you have honoured me with some responsibility—"

"My dear fellow, you should see it and welcome; but the fact is—" Here the Master broke off. "I ought, no doubt, to have put it straight into the fire."

"Why?" asked Mr. Colt.

"But the fact is, I gave it away."

"Gave it away!... To whom, may I ask?"

"To Brother Copas, of all people," confessed the Master with a rueful little chuckle. "Yes, I don't wonder that you stare: yet it happened very simply. You remember the day I asked you to send him to me for a talk about the Petition? Well, he found me in distress over this letter, which I had just received, and on an impulse I showed it to him. I really wanted his assurance that the charge was as baseless as it was foul, and that assurance he gave me. So you may with an easy mind put your letter in the fire."

"It would at any rate be a safer course than to give it away," said the Chaplain, frowning.

"A hit—a palpable hit!... I ought to have added that Brother Copas has a notion he can discover the writer, whom he positively asserts to be a woman. So I allowed him to take the thing away with him. I may as well confess," the old man added, "that I live in some dread of his making the discovery. Of course it is horrible to think that St. Hospital harbours anyone capable of such a letter; but to deal adequately with the culprit—especially if she be a woman—will be for the moment yet more horrible."

"Excuse me, Master, if I don't quite follow you," said the Chaplain unsympathetically. "You appear to be exercised rather over the writer than over Brother Bonaday, against whom the charge lies."

"You have hit on the precise word," answered Master Blanchminster, smiling. "Brother Copas assures me—"

"But is Brother Copas an entirely credible witness?"

The Master lifted his eyebrows in astonishment.

"Why, who should know better? He is Brother Bonaday's closest friend. Surely, my dear fellow, I had thought you were aware of *that!*"

In the face of this simplicity the Chaplain could only grind his teeth upon a helpless inward wrath. It took him some seconds to recover speech.

"On my way here," he said at length, "I made some small inquiries, and find that some days ago Nurse Branscome ceased her attendance on Bonaday, handing over the case to our excellent Nurse Turner. This, of course, may mean little."

"It may mean that Brother Copas has taken occasion to warn her."

"It means, anyhow, that—whether prudently or by accident—she has given pause to the scandal. In this pause I can, perhaps, make occasion to get at the truth; always with your leave, of course."

"There can be no question of my giving leave or withholding it. You have received a private letter, which you perceive I have no desire to read. You must act upon it as directed by your own—er— taste. And now shall we talk of something else?"

He said it with a mild dignity which effectively closed the discussion and left Mr. Colt raging. In and about St. Hospital nine observers out of ten would have told you that the Chaplain held this dear, do-nothing old Master in the hollow of his hand, and on nine occasions out of ten the Chaplain felt sure of it. On the tenth he found himself mocked, as a schoolboy believes he has grasped a butterfly and opens his fingers cautiously, to find no prisoner within them. He could never precisely understand how it happened, and it never failed to annoy him heavily.

After bidding the Master good morning he went straight to Brother Bonaday's lodging. Brother Bonaday, now fairly convalescent, was up and dressed and seated in his arm-chair, whiling away the morning with a newspaper. In days of health he had been a diligent reader of dull books; had indeed (according to his friend Copas—but the story may be apocryphal) been known to sit up past midnight with an antiquated *Annual Report of the Registrar-General*, borrowed from the shelf of Brother Inchbald, whose past avocations had included the registering of Births, Deaths and Marriages somewhere in Wiltshire. But of late, as sometimes happens in old age, books had lost their savour for him, and he preferred to let his eyes rest idly on life's passing show as reflected in the *camera obscura* of a halfpenny paper.

He rose respectfully as the Chaplain entered.

"Be seated, please," said Mr. Colt. Declining a chair for himself, he planted his feet astraddle on the worn hearthrug.

Standing so, with his back to the grate, his broad shoulders blocking out the lower half of a picture of the Infant Samuel above the mantel-shelf, he towered over the frail invalid, concerning whose health he asked a few perfunctory questions before plunging into business.

"You're wondering what brings me here. Fact is," he announced, "I've come to ask you a plain question—a question it's my duty to ask; and I think you're strong enough to answer it without any beating about the bush on either side. For six months now I haven't seen you at Holy Communion. Why?"

Brother Bonaday's face twitched sharply. For a moment or two he seemed to be searching for an answer. His lips parted, but still no answer came.

"I know, you know," said the Chaplain, nodding down at him. "I keep a record of these things—names and dates."

Brother Bonaday might have answered—

"Quite so—and *that* is why."

Some churchmen—of the type for which Mr. Colt adequately catered— revel in professing their faith, and will parade for its holiest sacrament with an unabashed and hail-fellow sociability; and doubtless for these 'brass-band communicants' (as Brother Copas called them) a great deal may be said. But Brother Bonaday was one of those others who, walking among mysteries, must hush the voice and bow the head; to whom the Elements are awful, and in whom awe begets a sweet and tender shame. To be docketed as having, on such and such a day at such and such an hour, partaken of them was to him an intolerable thought. To quote Brother Copas again, "These Neo-Catholics may well omit to fence the tables, confident in the protection of their own vulgarity."

Yet Brother Bonaday had another reason, on which the Chaplain hit— though brutally and by accident—in his next question.

"Haven't anything on your conscience, hey?"

Brother Bonaday had something on his conscience. His face twitched with the pain of it; but still he made no answer.

"If so," Mr. Colt pursued, "take my advice and have it out." He spoke as one recommending the extraction of a tooth. "You're a Protestant, I know, though you didn't sign that Petition; and I'm not here to argue about first principles. I'm come as a friend. All I suggest is, as between practical men, that you just give the thing a trial. It may be pretty bad," suggested Mr. Colt, dropping his air of authority and picking up his most insinuating

voice. "I hear some pretty bad things; but I'll guarantee your feeling all the better for a clean breast. Come, let me make a guess.... It has something to do with this child of yours!"

Mr. Colt, looking down from his great height, saw the invalid's face contracted by a sharp spasm, noted that his thin hands gripped upon the arms of the chair so tightly that the finger-nails whitened, and smiled to himself. Here was plain sailing.

"I know more than you guessed, eh? Well, now, why not tell me the whole truth?"

Brother Bonaday gazed up as if appealing for mercy, but shook his head.

"I cannot, sir."

"Come, come—as to a friend, if you won't as to a priest?... Hang it all, my good man, you might give me credit for *that*, considering the chance I'm holding out! You don't surely suppose that St. Hospital will continue to suffer this scandal in its midst?" Still as Brother Bonaday shook his head, the Chaplain with a sign of impatience enlarged his hint. "Copas knows: I have it on the best authority. Was it he that dropped the hint to Nurse Branscome? or did she herself scent the discovery and give over attending on you?"

"You won't—send her—away!" pleaded Brother Bonaday, thinking only of Corona.

His voice came in a whisper, between gasps for breath.

Mr. Colt stared.

"Well, of all the calm requests—!" he began.

But here the sound of a light running footstep cut him short. The door was pushed open, and on the threshold stood Corona, flushed, excited.

"Daddy, guess! Oh, but you'll never! I'm a real live Greycoat, and if I don't tell Timmy before you ask a single question I shall burst!"

She came to a halt, her eyes on Mr. Colt.

"'Tis the truth," announced Brother Copas, overtaking her as she paused in the doorway. "We shot at a canary, and—Good God!" he exclaimed, catching sight of Brother Bonaday's face. "Slip away and fetch the nurse, child!"

Corona ran. While she ran Brother Copas stepped past Mr. Colt, and slid an arm under his friend's head as it dropped sideways, blue with anguish. He turned on the tall Chaplain fiercely.

"What devil's game have you been playing here?"

CHAPTER XVII.

PUPPETS.

Throughout the night Brother Bonaday hovered between life and death, nor until four days later did the doctor pronounce him out of danger—that is to say, for the time, since the trouble in his heart was really incurable, and at best the frail little man's remaining days could not be many. Nurse Turner waited on him assiduously, always with her comfortable smile. No trouble came amiss to her, and certainly Nurse Branscome herself could not have done better.

In a sense, too, Corona's first experiences of school-going befell her most opportunely. They would distract her mind, Brother Copas reflected, and tore up the letter he had written delaying her noviciate on the ground of her father's illness. They did; and, moreover, the head mistress of the Greycoats, old Miss Champernowne, aware that the child's father was ill, possibly dying, took especial pains to be kind to her.

Corona was dreadfully afraid her father would die. But, in the main most mercifully, youth lives for itself, not for the old. At home she could have given little help or none. The Brethren's quarters were narrow—even Brother Bonaday's with its spare chamber—and until the crisis was over she could only be in the way. She gave up her room, therefore, to Nurse Turner for the night watching, and went across to the Nunnery to lodge with Nurse Branscome. This again was no hardship, but rather, under all her cloud of anxiety, a

delightful adventure; for Branny had at once engaged with her in a conspiracy.

The subject—for a while the victim—of this conspiracy was her black doll Timothy. As yet Timothy knew nothing, and was supposed to suspect nothing, of her goings to school. She had carefully kept the secret from him, intending to take him aback with it when she brought home the Greycoat uniform—frock and cloak and hood of duffle grey—for which Miss Champernowne had measured her. Meanwhile it was undoubtedly hard on him to lie neglected in a drawer, and be visited but twice in the twenty-four hours, to have his garments changed. Corona, putting him into pyjamas, would (with an aching heart) whisper to him to be patient for a little while yet, and all would come right.

"It *is* hard, Branny," she sighed, "that I can't even take him to bed with me.... But it's not to be thought of. I'd be sure to talk in my sleep."

"He seems to be a very unselfish person," observed Branny. "At any rate, you treat him as such, making him wait all this while for the delight of seeing you happy."

Corona knit her brow.

"Now you're talking upsi-downly, like Uncle Copas," she said. "You don't mean that Timmy's unselfish, but that I'm selfish. Of course, you don't *realise* how good he is; nobody does but me, and it's not to be expected. But all the same, I s'pose I've been thinking too much about myself."

Corona's was a curiously just mind, as has already been said.

Nurse Branscome had a happy inspiration.

"Couldn't we make new clothes for Timmy, and surprise him with them at the same time?"

Corona clapped her hands.

"Oh, Branny, how beautiful! Yes—a Beauchamp gown, just like Daddy's! Why-ever didn't we think of it before?"

"A *what?*"

"A Beauchamp gown.... Do you know," said Corona gravely, "it's a most 'stonishing thing I never thought of it, because— I'll tell you why. When I first came to St. Hospital often and often I couldn't get to sleep for thinking how happy I was. Daddy got worried about it, and told me it was a good cure to lie still and fancy I saw a flock of sheep jumping one after another through a hedge.... Well, that didn't answer—at least, not exactly; for you see I wanted to be *coaxed* off, and I never took any partic'lar truck in sheep. But one night—you know that big stone by the gate of the home-park? the one Uncle Copas calls the Hepping-stone, and says the great Cardinal used to climb on to his horse from it when he went hunting?" (Nurse Branscome nodded.) "Well, one night I closed my eyes, and there I saw all the old folks here turned into children, and all out and around the Hepping-stone, playing leap-frog.... The way they went over each other's backs! It beat the band.... Some were in Beauchamp gowns and others in Blanchminster—but all children, you understand? Each child finished up by leap-frogging over the stone; and when he'd done that he'd run away and be lost among the trees. I wanted to follow, but somehow I had to stand there counting.... And that's all there is *to* it," concluded Corona, "'cept that I'd found the way to go to sleep."

Nurse Branscome laughed, and suggested that no time should be lost in going off to call on Mr. Colling, the tailor, and begging or borrowing a scrap of the claret-coloured Beauchamp cloth. Within ten minutes—for she understood the impatience of children—they had started on this small expedition. They found in Mr. Colling a most human tailor. He not only gave them a square yard of cloth, unsoiled and indeed brand-new, but advised Nurse Branscome learnedly on the cutting-out. There were certain peculiarities of cut in a Beauchamp gown: it was (he could tell them) a unique garment in its way, and he the sole repository of its technical secret. On their way back Corona summarised him as "a truly Christian tradesman."

So the miniature gown was cut out, shaped, and sewn, after the unsuspecting Timothy had been measured for it on a pretence of Corona's that she wanted to discover how much he had grown during his rest-cure. (For I regret to say that, as one subterfuge leads to another, she had by this time descended to feigning a nervous breakdown for him, due to his outgrowing his strength.) Best of all, and when the gown was finished, Nurse Branscome produced from her workbox a lucky threepenny-bit, and sewed it upon the breast to simulate a Beauchamp rose.

When Corona's own garments arrived—when they were indued and she stood up in them, a Greycoat at length from head to heel—to hide her own feelings she had to invent another breakdown (emotional this time) for Timothy as she dangled the gown in front of him.

"Be a man, Timmy!" she exhorted him.

Having clothed him and clasped him to her breast, she turned to Nurse Branscome, who had been permitted, as indeed she deserved, to witness the *coup de théâtre*.

"If you *don't* mind, Branny, I think we'll go off somewhere— by ourselves."

She carried the doll off to the one unkempt corner of Mr. Battershall's garden, where in the shadow of a stone dovecot, ruined and long disused, a rustic bench stood deep in nettles. On this she perched herself, and sat with legs dangling while she discoursed with Timothy of their new promotion.

"Of course," she said, "you have the best of it. Men always have." Nevertheless, she would have him know that to be a Greycoat was good enough for most people. She described the schoolroom. "It's something like a chapel," she said, "and something like a long whitewashed bird-cage, with great beams for perches. You could eat your dinner off the floor most days; and Miss Champernowne has the dearest little mole on the left side of her upper lip, with three white hairs in it. When she looks at you over her glasses it's like a bird getting ready to drink; and when she plays 'Another day is done' on the harmonium and pitches the note, it's just the way a bird lifts his throat to let the water trickle down inside. She has the loveliest way of putting things, too. Only yesterday, speaking of China, she told us that words would fail her to describe one-half the wonders of that enchanted land.... After that there's going to be no rest for me until I've seen China for myself. Such a nice lot of children as they are, if it weren't for Marty Jewell. She sits next to me and copies my sums, and when I remind her of it she puts out her tongue; but she has a sister in the infant class at the end of the room with the same trick, so I s'pose it runs in the family.... I'm forgetting, though," she ran on. "You're Brother Timothy now, a Beauchamp Brother, and the Lord knows how I'm to make you sensible of it! I heard Brother Clerihew taking a party around yesterday, and played around close to hear what he had to tell about the place. All he said was that if these old walls could speak what a tale might they not unfold? And then a lady turned round and supposed that the child (meaning me) was following them on the chance of a copper. So I came away.... I've my belief," announced Corona, "Brother Clerihew was speaking through his hat. There's nobody but Uncle Copas knows anything about this place—him and the Lord Almighty; and as the chief engineer told me aboard the *Carnatic*, when I kept asking him how soon we should get to England, He won't split under a quart. The trouble is, Uncle Copas won't lay up for visitors. Manby, at the lodge, says he's too proud.... But maybe he'll take me round some day if I ask him nicely, and then you can come on my arm and pretend you're not listening.... No," announced Corona, after musing awhile, "that would be deception. I'll have to go to him and make a clean breast of it."

It occurred to her that Brother Manby was a friend of hers. He didn't know much, to be sure; but he was capable of entering into a joke and introducing Timothy to the Wayfarers' Dole. She tucked the doll under her arm and wended towards the porter's lodge, where, as it happened, she met Brother Copas coming through the gateway in talk with the Chaplain.

The Chaplain in fact had sought out Brother Copas, had found him in his customary haunt, fishing gloomily and alone beside the Mere, and had opened his purpose for once pretty straightly, yet keeping another in reserve.

"The Master has told me he gave you an anonymous letter that reached him concerning Brother Bonaday. I have made up my mind to ask you a question or two quite frankly about it."

"Now what in the world can he want?" thought Copas, continuing to whip the stream. Aloud he said: "You'll excuse me, but I see no frankness in your asking questions before telling me how much you know."

"I intended that. I have received a similar letter."

"I guessed as much.... So you called on him with it and bullied him into another attack of *angina pectoris*? That, too, I guessed. Well?"

The Chaplain made no answer for a moment. Then he said with some dignity—

"I might point out to you—might I not?—that both your speech and the manner of it are grossly insubordinate."

"I know it.... I am sorry, sir; but in some way or another—by showing him your letter, I suppose—you have come near to killing my only friend."

"I did not show him the letter."

"Then I beg your pardon." Brother Copas turned and began to wind in his line. "If you wish to talk about it, I recognise that you have the right, sir; but let me beg you to be brief."

"The more willingly because I wish to consult you afterwards on a pleasanter subject.... Now in this matter, I put it to you that— the Master choosing to stand aside—you and I have some responsibility. Try, first, to understand mine. So long as I have to account for the discipline of St. Hospital I can scarcely ignore such a scandal, hey?"

"No," agreed Brother Copas, after a long look at him. "I admit that you would find it difficult." He mused a while. "No," he repeated; "to be quite fair, there's no reason why you—who don't know Bonaday—should assume him to be any better than the rest of us."

"—While you, on your part, will naturally be eager to clear your friend."

"If I thought the accusation serious."

"Do you mean to say that you have simply ignored it?"

Now this happened to be an awkward question; and Brother Copas, seeking to evade it, jumped (as they say) from the frying-pan into the fire.

"Tut, sir! The invention of some poisonous woman!"

"You are sure the letter was written by a woman?"

Brother Copas was sure, but had to admit that he lacked evidence. He did not confess to having laid a small plot which had failed him. He had received no less than eleven tenders for his weekly laundry, but not one of the applicants had written the 'W' in 'Washing List' with that characteristic initial curl of which he was in search.

"Then you *have* made some investigations?... Nay, I don't wish more of your confidence than you choose to give me. So long as I know that you are not treating the business as negligible—"

"I don't promise to inquire one inch farther."

"But you will, nevertheless," concluded Mr. Colt with the patronising laugh of one who knows his man.

"Damn the fellow!" thought Copas. "Why cannot he be always the fool he looks?"

"And now," pursued Mr. Colt blithely, "I want to engage your interest in another matter—I mean the Pageant."

"Oh!" said Brother Copas. "Is that still going forward?"

"Settled, my dear sir! When Mr. Bamberger once puts his hand to the plough.... A General Committee has been formed, with the Lord-Lieutenant himself for President. The guarantee fund already runs to £1,500, and we shall get twice that amount promised before we've done. In short, the thing's to come off some time next June, and I am Chairman of the Performance Committee, which (under Mr. Isidore Bamberger) arranges the actual Pageant, plans out the 'book,' recruits authors, performers, *et cetera*. There are other committees, of course: Finance Committee, Ground and Grand Stand Committee, Costume Committee, and so on; but ours is the really interesting part of the work, and, sir, I want you to join us."

"You flatter me, sir; or you fish with a narrow mesh indeed."

"Why, I dare swear you would know more of the past history of Merchester than any man you met at the committee-table."

Brother Copas eyed him shrewdly.

"H'm! ... To be sure, I have been specialising of late on the Reformation period."

"I—er—don't think we shall include any episode dealing specially with that period."

"Too serious, perhaps?"

"Our—er—object is to sweep broadly down the stream of time, embodying the great part our city played for hundreds of years in the history of our nation—I may say of the Anglo-Saxon race."

"I shouldn't, if I were you," said Brother Copas, "not even to please Mr. Bamberger.... As a matter of fact, I *had* guessed your object to be something of the sort," he added dryly.

"As you may suppose—and as, indeed, is but proper in Merchester— special stress will be laid throughout on the ecclesiastical side of the story: the influence of Mother Church, permeating and at every turn informing our national life."

"But you said a moment ago that you were leaving out the Reformation."

"We seek rather to illustrate the *continuity* of her influence."

Brother Copas took snuff.

"You must not think, however," pursued the Chaplain, "that we are giving the thing a sectarian trend. On the contrary, we are taking great care to avoid it. Our appeal is to one and all: to the unifying civic sense and, through that, to the patriotic. Several prominent Nonconformists have already joined the Committee; indeed, Alderman Chope—who, as you know, is a Baptist, but has a remarkably fine presence—has more than half consented to impersonate Alfred the Great. If further proof be needed, I may tell you that, in view of the coming Pan-Anglican Conference, the Committee has provisionally resolved to divide the proceeds (if any) between the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel."

"Ah!" murmured Brother Copas, maliciously quoting Falstaff. "It was always yet the trick of our English nation, if they have a good thing, to make it too common."

The Chaplain did not hear.

"I earnestly hope," said he, "you will let me propose you for my Committee."

"I would not miss it for worlds," said Brother Copas gravely.

He had disjointed and packed up his rod by this time, and the two were walking back towards St. Hospital.

"You relieve me more than I can say. Your help will be invaluable."

Brother Copas was apparently deaf to this compliment.

"You'll excuse me," he said after a moment, "but I gather that the whole scheme must be well under weigh, since you have arrived at allocating the proceeds. Experience tells me that all amateurs start with wanting to act something; when they see that desire near to realisation, and not before, they cast about for the charity which is to deserve their efforts.... May I ask what part you have chosen?"

"I had thoughts of Alberic de Blanchminster, in an Episode of the 'Founding of St. Hospital.'"

"Alberic de Blanchminster?"

They had reached the outer court of the hospital, and Brother Copas, halting to take snuff, eyed the Chaplain as if taking his measure.

"But the Committee, in compliment to my inches, are pressing me to take William the Conqueror," said Mr. Colt almost bashfully.

"I, too, should advise it, if we are to adhere to history; though, to be sure, from the sole mention of him in the chronicle, our founder Alberic appears to have been a sportsman. '*Nam, quodam die, quia perdiderat accipitrem suum cum erat sub divo, detrexit sibi bracas et posteriora nuda ostendit caelo in signum opprobrii et convitii atque derisionis.*'—You remember the passage?"

He paused mischievously, knowing well enough that the Chaplain would laugh, pretending to have followed the Latin. Sure enough, Mr. Colt laughed heartily.

"About William the Conqueror, though—"

But at this moment Corona came skipping through the archway.

"Uncle Copas!" she hailed, the vault echoing to her childish treble. "You look as though you had mistaken Mr. Colt for a visitor, and were telling him all about the history of the place. Oh! I know that you never go the round with visitors; but seeing it's only me and Timmy— look at him, please! He's been made a Beauchamp Brother, not half an hour ago. If only you'd be guide to us for once, and make him *feel* his privileges.... I dare say Mr. Colt won't mind coming too," she wound up tactfully.

"Shall we?" suggested the Chaplain, after asking and receiving permission to inspect the doll.

"Confound it!" muttered Brother Copas to himself. "I cannot even begin to enjoy a fool nowadays but that blessed child happens along to rebuke me."

Aloud he said—

"If you command, little one.... But where do we begin?"

"At the beginning." Corona took charge of him with a nod at the Chaplain. "We're pilgrims, all four of us, home from the Holy Land; and we start by knocking up Brother Manby and just perishing for a drink."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PERVIGILIUM.

'Now learn ye to love who loved never—now
ye who have loved, love anew!
It is Spring, it is chorussing Spring: 'tis the
birthday of earth, and for you!
It is Spring; and the Loves and the birds
wing together, and woo to accord
Where the bough to the rain has unbraided
her locks as a bride to her lord.
For she walks—She our Lady, our Mistress
of Wedlock,—the woodlands atween,
And the bride-bed she weaves them, with
myrtle enlacing, with curtains of green.
Look, list ye the law of Dione, aloft and
enthroned in the blue:—
Now learn ye to love who loved never—now
ye who have loved, love anew!'

"H'm, h'm—tolerable only! '*Aloft and established in blue*'—is that better?"

"Uncle Copas, whatever are you doing?"

Corona looked up from her page of irregular verbs, and across to her preceptor as he sat muttering and scribbling.

"The idlest thing in the world, child. Translating."

"But you told me that next week, if I learned these verbs, you would let me begin to translate."

"To be sure I did. You must go on translating and translating until, like me, you ought to know better. Then you throw it all away."

"I suppose I shall understand, one of these fine days," sighed Corona. "But, uncle, you won't mind my asking a question? I really do want to find out about these things.... And I really do want to learn Latin, ever since you said it was the only way to find out all that St. Hospital means."

"Did I say that? I ought, of course, to have said that Latin was worth learning for its own sake."

"I guess," said Corona sagely, "you thought you'd take the likeliest way with me."

"O woman! woman!... But what was your question?"

"Sometimes I wake early and lie in bed thinking. I was thinking, only yesterday morning, if people are able to put into English all that was ever written in Latin, why don't they do it and save other people the trouble?"

"Now I suppose," said Brother Copas, "that in the United States of America—land of labour-saving appliances—that is just how it would strike everyone?"

He knew that this would nettle her. But, looking up hotly, she caught his smile and laughed.

"Well, but why?" she demanded.

"Because the more it was the same thing the more it would be different. There's only one way with Latin and Greek. You must let 'em penetrate: soak 'em into yourself, get 'em into your nature slowly, through the pores of the skin."

"It sounds like sitting in a bath."

"That's just it. It's a baptism first and a bath afterwards; but the more it's a bath, the more you remember it's a baptism."

"I guess you have that right, though I don't follow," Corona admitted. "There's *something* in Latin makes you proud. Only yesterday I was gassing to three girls about knowing *amo, amas, amat*; and, next thing, you'll say, 'I'd like you to know Ovid,' and I'll say, 'Mr. Ovid, I'm pleased to have met you'—like what happens in the States when you shake hands with a professor. All the same, I don't see what there is in *amo, amas, amat* to make the gas."

"Wait till you come to *cras amet qui nunquam amavit*."

"Is that what you were translating?"

"Yes."

"Then translate it for me, please."

"You shall construe for yourself. *Cras* means 'to-morrow.' *Amet*—"

"That's the present subjunctive. Let me see—'he may love.'"

"Try again."

"Or 'let him love.'"

"Right. 'To-morrow let him love.' *Qui*?"

"Who."

"*Nunquam*?"

"'Never'—I know that too."

"*Amavit*?"

"Perfect, active, third person singular—'he has loved.'"

"*Qui* being the subject—"

"'Who—never—has loved.'"

"Right as ninepence again. 'To-morrow let him love who has never loved.'"

"But," objected Corona, "it seems so easy!—and here you have been for quite half an hour muttering and shaking your head over it, and taking you can't think what a lot of nasty snuff."

"Have I?" Brother Copas sought for his watch. "Heavens, child! The hour has struck these ten minutes ago. Why didn't you remind me?"

"Because I thought 'twouldn't be manners. But, of course, if I'd known you were wasting your time, and over anything so easy—"

"Not quite so easy as you suppose, miss. To begin with, the original is in verse; a late Latin poem in a queer metre, and by whom written nobody knows. But you are quite right about my wasting my time.... What troubles me is that I have been wasting yours, when you ought to have been out at play in the sun." "Please don't mention that," said Corona politely. "It has been fun enough watching you frowning and tapping your fingers, and writing something down and scratching it out the next moment. What is it all about, Uncle Copas?"

"It—er—is called the *Pervigilium Veneris*; that's to say *The Vigil of Venus*. But I suppose that conveys nothing to you?"

He thrust his spectacles high on his forehead and smiled at her vaguely across the table.

"Of course it doesn't. I don't know what a Vigil means; or Venus— whether it's a person or a place; or why the Latin is late, as you call it. Late for what?"

Brother Copas laughed dryly.

"Late for *me*, let's say. Didn't I tell you I was wasting my time? And Venus is the goddess of Love: some day—alas the day!—you'll be proud to make her acquaintance.... *Cras amet qui nunquam amavit*."

"Perhaps if you read it to me—"

He shook his head.

"No, child: the thing is late in half a dozen different ways. The young, whom it understands, cannot understand it: the old, who arrive at understanding, look after it, a thing lost. Go, dear: don't let me waste your time as well as an old man's."

But when she had gone he sat on and wasted another hour in translating—

Time was that a rain-cloud begat her,
impregning the heave of the deep.
'Twixt hooves of sea-horses a-scatter, stam-
peding the dolphins as sheep,
Lo! born of that bridal Dione, rainbowed
and bespent of its dew:—
Now learn ye to love who loved never—now
ye who have loved, love anew!

She, she, with her gem-dripping finger
enamels the wreath of the year;
She, she, when the maid-bud is nubile and
swelling, winds—whispers anear,
Disguising her voice in the Zephyr's—'So
secret the bed! and thou shy?
'She, she, when the midsummer night is
a-hush draws the dew from on high;
Dew bright with the tears of its origin, dew
with its weight on the bough,
Misdoubting and clinging and trembling—
'Now, now must I fall? Is it now?'

Brother Copas pushed the paper from him.

"What folly is this," he mused, "that I, who have always scoffed at translations, sit here trying to translate this most untranslatable thing? Pah! Matthew Arnold was a great man, and he stood up to lecture the University of Oxford on translating Homer. He proved excellently well that Homer was rapid; that Homer was plain and direct; that Homer was noble. He took translation after translation, and proved—proved beyond doubting—that each translator had failed in this or in that; this or that being alike essential. Then, having worked out his sum, he sat down and translated a bit or two of Homer to encourage us, and the result was mere bosh."

—"The truth being, he is guilty of a tomfoolery among principles at the start. If by any chance we could, in English, find the right way to translate Homer, why should we waste it on translating him? We had a hundred times better be writing Epics of our own."

—"It cannot be done. If it could, it ought not.... The only way of getting at Homer is to soak oneself in him. The average Athenian was soaked in him as the average Englishman is in the Authorised Version of the Psalms...."

—"Yet I sit here, belying all my principles, attempting to translate a thing more difficult than Homer."

—"It was she, this child, set me going upon it!"

Brother Copas pulled the paper towards him again.

By the end of another hour he had painfully achieved this:—

"'Go, Maidens,' Our Lady commands, 'while
the myrtle is green in the grove,
Take the Boy to your escort.' But 'Ah!'
cry the maidens, 'What trust is in Love
Keeping holiday too, while he weareth his
archery, tools of his trade?'
—'Go: he lays them aside, an apprentice
released—you may wend unafraid:
See, I bid him disarm, he disarms. Mother-
naked I bid him to go,
And he goes mother-naked. What flame
can he shoot without arrow or bow?'
—Yet beware ye of Cupid, ye maidens! Be-
ware most of all when he charms
As a child: for the more he runs naked,
the more he's a strong man-at-arms."

CHAPTER XIX.

MERCHESTER PREPARES.

I must not overload these slight pages by chronicling at length how Merchester caught and developed the Pageant fever. But to Mr Colt must be given his share of the final credit. He worked like a horse, no doubt of it; spurred constantly on his tender side—his vanity—by the hard riding of Mr. Julius Bamberger, M.P. He pioneered the movement. He (pardon this riot of simile and metaphor) cut a way through the brushwood, piled the first faggots, applied the torch, set the heather afire. He canvassed the Bishop, the Dean and Chapter, the Sunday Schools, the Church Lads' Brigade, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Boy Scouts. He canvassed the tradespeople, the professional classes, the widowed and maiden ladies resident around the Close.

In all these quarters he met with success—varying, indeed, but on the whole gratifying. But the problem was, how to fan the flame to reach and take hold of more seasoned timber?—opulent citizens, county magnates; men who, once committed, would not retract; ponderable subscribers to the Guarantee Fund; neither tinder nor brushwood, but logs to receive the fire and retain it in a solid core. For weeks, for a couple of months, the flame took no hold of these: it reached them only to die down and disappoint.

Nor was Mr. Isidore, during this time, the least part of our Chaplain's trial. Mr. Julius might flatter, proclaiming him a born organiser: but this was small consolation when Mr. Isidore (an artist by temperament) stamped and swore over every small hitch.

"Sobscriptions? Zat is your affaire, whad the devil!"

Or again: "Am I a dog to be bozzered by your General Committees or your influential batrons?... You wandt a Bageant, *hein?* Var'y well, I brovide it: It is I will mek a sogcess. Go to hell for your influenzial batrons: or go to Julius. He can lick ze boot, not I!"

On the other hand, Mr. Julius, while willing enough to spend money for which he foresaw a satisfactory return, had no mind to risk it until assured of the support of local 'Society.' He could afford some thousands of pounds better than a public fiasco.

"We must have the County behind us," he kept chanting.

Afterwards, looking back on the famous Merchester Pageant, Mr. Colt accurately dated its success from the hour when he called on Lady Shaftesbury and enlisted her to open the annual Sale of Work of the Girls' Friendly Society. Sir John Shaftesbury, somewhat late in life, had married a wife many years his junior; a dazzling beauty, a dashing horsewoman, and moreover a lady who, having spent the years of her eligible maidenhood largely among politicians and racehorses, had acquired the knack and habit of living in the public eye. She adored her husband, as did everyone who knew him: but life at Shaftesbury Court had its *longueurs* even in the hunting season. Sir John would (he steadily declared) as lief any day go to prison as enter Parliament—a reluctance to which Mr. Bamberger owed his seat for Merchester. Finding herself thus headed off one opportunity of making tactful little public speeches, in raiments to which the Press would give equal prominence, Lady Shaftesbury had turned her thoughts to good work, even before Mr. Colt called with his petition.

She assented to it with a very pretty grace. Her speech at the Sale of Work was charming, and she talked to her audience about the Empire; reminded them that they were all members of one body; called them her "dear Girl Friendlies": and hoped, though a new-comer, in future to see a great deal more of them. They applauded this passage *de bon coeur*, and indeed pronounced the whole speech "So womanly!" At its close Mr. Colt, proposing a vote of thanks, insinuated something "anent a more ambitious undertaking, in which (if we can only engage Lady Shaftesbury's active sympathy) we may realise a cherished dream. I fear," proceeded Mr. Colt, "that I am a sturdy beggar. I can only plead that the cause is no mere local one, but in the truest sense national—nay imperial. For where but in the story of Merchester can be found the earliest inspiration of those countless deeds which won the Empire?"

Later, when Lady Shaftesbury asked to what he alluded, he discoursed on the project of the Pageant with dexterity and no little tact.

"What a ripping idea!... Now I come to remember, my husband *did* say casually, the other day, that Mr. Bamberger had been sounding him about something of the sort. But Jack is English, you know, and a Whig at that. The mere notion of dressing-up or play-acting makes him want to run away and hide.... Oh, my dear sir, I know all about pageants! I saw one at Warwick Castle—was it last year or the year before?... There was a woman on horseback—I forget what historical character she represented: it wasn't Queen Elisabeth, I know, and it couldn't have been Lady Godiva because—well, because to begin with, she

knew how to dress. She wore a black velvet habit, with seed-pearls, which sounds like Queen Henrietta Maria. Anyway, everyone agreed she had a perfect seat in the saddle. Is that the sort of thing—'Fair Rosamund goes a-hawking with King, er, Whoever-he-was?'"

Mr. Colt regretted that Fair Rosamund had no historical connection with Merchester.... No, and equally out of the question was Mary, Queen of Scots laying her neck on the block.

"Besides, she couldn't very well do that on horseback. And Maseppa was a man, wasn't he?"

"If," said Mr. Colt diplomatically, "we can only prevail upon one or two really influential ladies to see the thing in that light, details could be arranged later. We have not yet decided on the Episodes. ... But notoriously where there's a will there's a way."

Lady Shaftesbury pondered this conversation while her new car whirled her homewards. She had begun to wish that Jack (as she called her lord) would strike out a bolder line in county affairs, if his ambition confined him to these. He was already (through no search of his own) Chairman of the County Council, and Chairman of Quarter Sessions, and was pricked to serve as High Sheriff next year. He ought to do something to make his shrievalty memorable... and, moreover, the Lord-Lieutenant was an old man.

In the library that evening after dinner she opened fire. The small function at the Girls' Friendly had been a success; but she wished to do something more for Merchester—"where we ought to be a real influence for good—living as we do so close to it."

She added, "I hear that Mr. Bamberger's seat is by no means safe, and another General Election may be on us at any moment.... I know how little you like Mr. Bamberger personally; but after all, and until *you* will consent to take his place—Mr. Bamberger stands between us and the rising tide of Socialism. I was discussing this with Mr. Colt to-day."

"Who is Mr. Colt?" asked Sir John.

"You must have met him. He is Chaplain of St. Hospital, and quite a personality in Merchester... though I don't know," pursued Lady Shaftesbury, musing, "that one would altogether describe him as a gentleman. But ought we to be too particular when the cause is at stake, and heaven knows how soon the Germans will be invading us?"

The end was that Sir John, who loved his young wife, gave her a free hand, of which she made the most. Almost before he was aware of it, he found himself Chairman of a General Committee, summoning a Sub-Committee of Ways and Means. At the first meeting he announced that his lady had consented to set aside, throughout the winter months, one day a week from hunting, and offered Shaftesbury Hall as head-quarters of the Costume Committee.

Thereupon it was really astonishing with what alacrity not only the "best houses" around Merchester, but the upper-middle-class (its damsels especially) caught the contagion. Within a week "Are you Pageantising?" or, in more condensed slang, "Do you Padge?" became the stock question at all social gatherings in the neighbourhood of the Close. To this a stock answer would be—

"Oh, I don't know! I suppose so." Here the respondent would simulate a slight boredom. "One will have to mix with the most impossible people, of course"—Lady Shaftesbury had won great popularity by insisting that, in a business so truly national, no class distinctions were to be drawn—"but anyhow it will fill up the off-days this winter."

Lady Shaftesbury herself, after some pretty deliberation, decided to enact the part of the Empress Maud, and escape on horseback from King Stephen of Blois. Mr. Colt and Mr. Isidore Bamberger together waited on Brother Copas with a request that he would write the libretto for this Episode.

"But it was only last week you turned me on to Episode VI—King Hal and the Emperor Charles the Fifth," Copas protested.

"We are hoping you will write this for us too," urged Mr. Colt. "It oughtn't to take you long, you know. To begin with, no one knows very much about that particular period."

"The less known the better, if we may trust the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. A few realistic pictures of the diversions of the upper classes—"

"Hawking was one, I believe?" opined Mr. Colt.

"Yes, and another was hanging the poor by their heels over a smoky fire, and yet another

was shutting them up in a close cell into which had been inserted a few toads and adders."

"Her ladyship suggests a hawking scene, in the midst of which she is surprised by King Stephen and his, er, myrmidons—if that be the correct term—"

"It is at least as old as Achilles."

"She escapes from him on horseback.... At this point she wants to know if we can introduce a water-jump."

"Nothing could be easier, in a blank verse composition," assented Brother Copas gravely.

"You see, there is very little writing required. Just enough dialogue to keep the thing going.... Her ladyship is providing her own riding-habit and those of her attendant ladies, for whom she has chosen six of the most beautiful maidens in the neighbourhood, quite irrespective of class. The dresses are to be gorgeous."

"They will form a pleasing contrast, then, to King Stephen, whose riding-breeches, as we know, 'cost him but a crown.'... Very well, I will 'cut the cackle and come to the hosses.' And you, Mr. Isidore? Do I read in your eye that you desire a similar literary restraint in your Episode of King Hal?"

"Ach, yes," grinned Mr. Isidore. "*Cut ze caggle*—cabital! I soggest in zat Ebisode we haf a Ballet."

"A Ballet?"

"A Ballet of Imberial Exbansion—ze first English discofferies ofer sea—ze natives brought back in brocession to mek sobmission—"

"Devilish pretty substitute for Thomas Cromwell and the Reformation!"

"It was *zere* lay ze future of Englandt, *hein*?"

"I see," said Brother Copas thoughtfully; "provided you make the ballets of our nation, you don't care if your brother makes its laws."

These preparations (he noted) had a small byproduct pleasantly affecting St. Hospital. Mr. Colt, in his anxiety to enlist the whole-hearted services of the Brethren (who according to design were to serve as a sort of subsidiary chorus to the Pageant, appearing and reappearing, still in their antique garb, in a succession of scenes supposed to extend over many centuries), had suddenly taken the line of being 'all things to all men,' and sensibly relaxed the zeal of his proselytising as well as the rigour of certain regulations offensive to the more Protestant of his flock.

"You may growl," said Brother Copas to Brother Warboise: "but this silly Pageant is bringing us more peace than half a dozen Petitions."

Brother Warboise was, in fact, growling because for three months and more nothing had been heard of the Petition.

"You may depend," said Copas soothingly, "the Bishop put the thing away in his skirt pocket and forgot all about it. I happen to know that he must be averse to turning out his skirt pockets, for I once saw him surreptitiously smuggle away a mayonnaise sandwich there. It was at a Deanery garden party; and I, having been invited to hand the ices and look picturesque, went on looking picturesque and pretended not to see.... I ought to have told you, when you asked me to write it, that such was the invariable fate of my compositions."

Meanwhile, it certainly seemed that a truce had been called to the internal dissensions of St. Hospital. On the pageant-ground one afternoon, in the midst of a very scratchy rehearsal, Brother Copas found himself by chance at the Chaplain's side. The two had been watching in silence for a full five minutes, when he heard Mr. Colt addressing him in a tone of unusual friendliness.

"Wonderful how it seems to link us up, eh?"

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"I was thinking, just then, of the St. Hospital uniform, which you have the honour to wear. It seems—or Mr. Isidore has the knack of making it seem—the, er, *foil* of the whole Pageant. It outlasts all the more brilliant fashions."

"Poverty, sir, is perduring. It is in everything just because it is out of everything. We inherit time, if not the earth."

"But particularly," said Mr. Colt, "I was thinking of the corporate unity it seems to give us, and to pass on, through us, to the whole story of Merchester."

"Aye, we are always with you."

Afterwards Brother Copas repented that he had not answered more graciously: for afterwards, looking back, he perceived that, in some way, the Pageant had actually helped to bring back a sense of "corporate unity" to St. Hospital.

Even then, and for months later, he missed to recognise Corona's share in it. What was she but a child?

"Is it true what I hear?" asked Mrs. Royle, intercepting him one day as he carried his plate of fast-cooling meat from the kitchen.

"Probably not," said Brother Copas.

"They tell me Bonaday's daughter has been singled out among all the school children—Greycoats and others—to be Queen of the May, or something of the kind, in this here Pageant."

"Yes, that is a fact."

"Oh!... I suppose it's part of your sneering way to make little of it. *I* call it an honour to St. Hospital."

"The deuce you do?"

"And what's more," added Mrs. Royle, "she mustn't let us down by appearing in rags."

"I hope we can provide against that."

"What I meant to say," the woman persisted, "was that you men don't probably understand. If there's to be a dance, or any such caper, she'll be lifting her skirts. Well, for the credit of St. Hospital, I'd like to overhaul the child's under-clothing, and see that she goes shipshape and Bristol fashion."

Brother Copas thanked her. He began to perceive that Mrs. Royle, that detestable woman, had her good points—or, at any rate, her soft spot.

It became embarrassing, though, when Mrs. Clerihew accosted him next day with a precisely similar request.

"And I might mention," added Mrs. Clerihew, "that I have a lace stomacher-frill which was gove to me by no less than the late honourable Edith, fifth daughter of the second Baron Glantyre. She died unmarried, previous to which she used frequently to honour me with her confidence. This being a historical occasion, I'd spare it."

Yes; it was true. Corona was to be a Queen, among many, in the Mercheater Pageant.

It all happened through Mr. Simeon.

Mr. Simeon's children had, one and all, gone for their education to the Greycoats' School, which lies just beyond the west end of the Cathedral. He loved to think of them as growing up within its shadow.... One Tuesday at dinner the five-year-old Agatha popped out a question—

"Daddy, if the Cafederal fell down while we were in school, would it fall on top of us?"

"God forbid, child. But why ask such a question?"

"Because when we went to school this morning some workpeople had dug a hole, close by that end—quite a big pit it was. So I went near the edge to look down, and one of the men said, 'Take care, missy, or you'll tumble in and be drowned.' I told him that I knew better, because people couldn't build cafederals on water. He told me that was the way they had built ours, and he held my hand for me to have a look. He was right, too. The pit was half-full of water. He said that unless we looked sharp the whole Cafederal would come down on our heads.... I don't think it's safe for me to go to school any more, do you?" insinuated small Agatha.

Now it chanced that Mr. Simeon had to visit the Greycoats that very afternoon. He had written a little play for the children—boys and girls—to act at Christmas. It was not a play of the sort desiderated by Mrs. Simeon—the sort to earn forty thousand pounds in royalties; nor, to speak accurately, had he written it. He had in fact patched together a few artless scenes from an old Miracle Play— *The Life of Saint Meriadoc*—discovered by him in the Venables Library; and had tinkered out some rhymes (the book being a prose translation from the Breton original). "A poor thing," then, and very little of it his own—but Miss Champernowne opined that it would be a novelty, while the children enjoyed the rehearsals, and looked forward to the fun of "dressing-up."

Rehearsals were held twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in the last hour of the afternoon session. This afternoon, on his way to the school, Mr. Simeon found that Agatha had indeed spoken truth. Five or six men were busy, digging, probing, sounding, around a large hole close under the northeast corner of the Lady Chapel. The foreman wore a grave face, and in answer to Mr. Simeon's inquiries allowed that the mischief was serious; so serious that the Dean and Chapter had sent for a diver to explore the foundations and report. The foreman further pointed out certain ominous cracks in the masonry overhead.

Just then the great clock chimed, warning Mr. Simeon away.... But the peril of his beloved Cathedral so haunted him that he arrived at the school-door as one distraught.

Rehearsal always took place in the girls' schoolroom, the boys coming in from their part of the building to clear the desks away and arrange them close along the walls. They were busy at it when he entered. He saw: but—

"He heeded not—his eyes
Were with his heart,"

And that was in the Close outside—*αὐθι, φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.*

From the start he allowed the rehearsal to get hopelessly out of hand. The children took charge; they grew more and more fractious, unruly. Miss Champernowne chid them in vain. The schoolroom, in fact, was a small pandemonium, when of a sudden the door opened and two visitors entered—Mr. Colt and Mr. Isidore Bamberger.

"A—ach so!" intoned Mr. Isidore, and at the sound of his appalling guttural Babel hushed itself, unable to compete. He inquired what was going forward; was told; and within five minutes had the children moving through their parts in perfect discipline, while with a fire of cross-questions he shook Mr. Simeon back to his senses and rapidly gathered the outline of the play. He terrified all.

"Bardon my interference, ma'am!" he barked, addressing Miss Champernowne. "I haf a burbose."

The scene engaging the children was that of the youthful St. Meriadoc's first school-going; where his parents (Duke and Duchess of Brittany) call with him upon a pedagogue, who introduces him to the boys and girls, his fellow scholars. For a sample of Mr. Simeon's version—

PEDAGOGUE—

"Children look on your books.
If there be any whispering
It will be great hindering,
And there will be knocks."

FIRST SCHOLAR (*chants*)—

"God bless A, Band C!
The rest of the song is D:
That is all my lore.
I came late yesterday,
I played truant by my fay!
I am a foul sinner.
Good master, after dinner
I will learn more."

SECOND SCHOLAR—

"E, s, t, that is *est*,
I know not what comes next—"

Whilst the scholars recited thus, St. Meriadoc's father and mother—each with a train of attendants—walked up and down between the ranks 'high and disposedly,' as became a Duke and Duchess of Brittany.

Mr. Isidore of a sudden threw all into confusion again. He shot out a forefinger and screamed—yes, positively screamed—

"Ach! zat is ze child—ze fourt' from ze end! I will haf her and no ozzer—you onderstandt?" Here he swung about upon the Chaplain. "Ob-serf how she walk! how she carry her chin! If I haf not her for ze May Queen I will haf non.... Step vorwards, liddle one. Whad is your name?"

"Corona."

Seeing that Mr. Isidore's finger pointed at her, she stepped forward, with a touch of defiance in her astonishment, but fearlessly. The touch of defiance helped to tilt her chin at the angle he so much admired.

"Cohrona—zat must mean ze chrowned one. Cabital!... You are not afraid of me, *hein?*"

"No," answered Corona simply, still wondering what he might mean, but keeping a steady eye on him. Why should she be afraid of this comic little man?

"So?... I engage you. You are to be ze May Queen in ze great Merchester Bageant.... But you must be goot and attend how I drill you. Ozzerwise I dismees you."

It appeared that Mr. Isidore had spent the afternoon with Mr. Colt, hunting the schools of Merchester in search of a child to suit his fastidious requirements. He had two of the gifts of genius— unwearying patience in the search, unerring swiftness in the choice.

Mr. Simeon, the rehearsal over, walked home heavily. On his way he paused to study the pit, and look up from it to the threatened mass of masonry. '*Not in my time, O Lord!*'

And yet—

"From low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail...
Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date... drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time."

But Corona, breaking away from her playfellows and gaining the road to St. Hospital, skipped as she ran homeward, treading clouds of glory.

CHAPTER XX.

NAUGHTINESS, AND A SEQUEL.

"She has behaved very naughtily," said Brother Copas.

"I don't understand it at all," sighed Brother Bonaday.

"Nor I."

"It's not like her, you see."

"It was a most extraordinary outburst.... Either the child has picked up some bad example at school, to copy it (and you will remember I always doubted that her sex gets any good of schooling)—"

"But," objected Brother Bonaday, "it was you who insisted on sending her."

"So I did—in self-defence. If we had not done our best the State would have done its worst, and put her into an institution where one underpaid female grapples with sixty children in a class, and talks all the time. Now we didn't want Corona to acquire the habit of talking all the time." Here Brother Copas dropped a widower's sigh. "In fact, it has hitherto been no small part of her charm that she seldom or never spoke out of her turn."

"It has been a comfort to have her company," put in Brother Bonaday, eager to say a good word for the culprit.

"She spoke out of her turn just now," said Brother Copas sternly. "Her behaviour to

Nurse Turner was quite atrocious.... Now either she has picked this up at school, or—the thought occurs to me—she has been loafing around the laundry, gossiping with the like of Mrs. Royle and Mrs. Clerihew, and letting their evil communications corrupt her good manners. This seems to me the better guess, because the women in the laundry are always at feud with the nurses; it's endemic there: and 'a nasty two-faced spy' smacks, though faintly, of the wash-tub. In my hearing Mrs. Clerihew has accused Nurse Branscome of 'carrying tales.' 'A nasty two-faced spy'—the child was using those very words when we surprised her, and the Lord knows what worse before we happened on the scene."

"Nurse Turner would not tell, and so we have no right to speculate."

"That's true.... I'll confine myself to what we overheard. Now when a chit of a child stands up and hurls abuse of that kind at a woman well old enough to be her mother, two things have to be done. ... We must get at the root of this deterioration in Corona, but first of all she must be punished. The question is, Which of us will undertake it? You have the natural right, of course—"

Brother Bonaday winced.

"No, no—" he protested.

"I should have said, the natural obligation. But you are frail just now, and I doubt if you are equal to it."

"Copas!... You're not proposing to *whip* her?" Brother Copas chuckled grimly. But that the child was in the next room, possibly listening, he might have laughed aloud.

"Do they whip girls?" he asked. "I used to find the whipping of boys disgusting enough.... I had an assistant master once, a treasure, who remained with me six years, and then left for no reason but that I could not continue to pay him. I liked him so much that one day, after flogging a boy in hot blood, and while (as usual) feeling sick with the revulsion of it, I then and there resolved that, however much this trade might degrade me, this Mr. Simcox should be spared the degradation whilst in my employ. I went to his class-room and asked to have a look at his punishment-book. He answered that he kept none. 'But,' said I, 'when you first came to me didn't I give you a book, and expressly command you, whenever you punished a boy, to write an entry, giving the boy's name, the nature of his offence, and the number of strokes with which you punished him?' 'You did, sir,' said Simcox, 'and I have lost it.' 'Lost it!' said I. 'You but confirm me in my decision that henceforth, when any boy in this school needs caning, I will do it with my own hands.' 'Sir,' he replied, 'you have done that for these five years. Forgive me, but I was pleased to find that you never asked to see the book; for I really couldn't bring myself to flog a boy merely for the sake of writing up an entry.' In short, that man was a born schoolmaster, and almost dispensed with punishments, even the slightest."

"He ruled the boys by kindness, I suppose?"

"He wasn't quite such a fool."

"Then what was his secret?"

"Bad temper. They held him in a holy terror; and it's all the queerer because he wasn't even just."

Brother Bonaday shook his head.

"I don't understand," he said; "but if you believe so little in punishment, why are we proposing to punish Corona?"

"Obviously, my dear fellow, because we can find no better way. The child must not be suffered to grow up into a termagant—you will admit that, I hope?... Very well, then: feeble guardians that we are, we must do our best."

He knocked at the bedroom door and, after a moment, entered. Corona sat on the edge of her bed, dry-eyed, hugging Timothy to her breast.

"Corona!"

"Yes, Uncle Copas?"

"You have been extremely naughty, and probably know that you have to be punished."

"I dare say it's the best you can do," said Corona, after weighing this address or seeming to do so. The answer so exactly tallied with the words he had spoken a moment ago that Brother Copas could not help exclaiming—

"Ah! You overheard us, just now?"

"I may have my faults," said Corona coldly, candidly, "but I am not a listener."

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered Brother Copas, somewhat abashed. "But the fact remains that your behaviour to Nurse Turner has been most disrespectful, and your language altogether unbecoming. You have given your father and me a great shock: and I am sure you did not wish to do that."

"I'm miserable enough, if that's what you mean," the child confessed, still hugging her golliwog and staring with haggard eyes at the window. "But if you want me to say that I'm sorry—"

"That is just what I want you to say."

"Well, then, I can't.... Nurse Turner's a beast—a *beast*—a BEAST!"

Corona's face whitened, and her voice shrilled higher at each repetition.

"—She hates Branny like poison, and I hate *her*.... There! And now you must take and punish me as much as you please. What's it going to be?" She rocked her small body as she looked up with straight eyes, awaiting sentence.

"You are to go to bed at once, and without any supper," said Brother Copas, keeping his voice steady on the words he loathed to utter.

Again Corona seemed to weigh them.

"That seems fair enough," she decided. "Are you going to lock me in?"

"That had not occurred to me."

"You'd better," she advised. "And take the key away in your pocket. ... Is that all, Uncle Copas?"

"That is all, Corona. But as for taking the key, you know that I would far sooner trust to your honour."

"You can trust to *that*, right enough," said she, getting off the edge of the bed. "I was thinking of daddy.... Good night, Uncle Copas!—if you don't mind, I am going to undress."

Brother Copas withdrew. He shut and locked the door firmly, and made a pretence, by rattling the key, of withdrawing it from the lock. But his nerve failed him, and he could not actually withdraw it. "Suppose the child should be taken ill in the night: or suppose that her nerve breaks down, and she cries for her father.... It might kill him if he could not open the door instantly. Or, again, supposing that she holds out until he has undressed and gone to bed? He will start up at the first sound and rush across the open quadrangle—Lord knows if he would wait to put on his dressing-gown— to get the key from me. In his state of health, and with these nights falling chilly, he would take his death."

So Brother Copas contented himself with turning the key in the wards and pointing to it.

"She is going to bed," he whispered. "Supperless, you understand. ... We must show ourselves stern: it will be the better for her in the end, and some day she will thank us."

Brother Bonaday eyed the door sadly.

"To be sure, we must be stern," he echoed. As for being thanked for this severity, it crossed his mind that the thanks must come quickly, or he would probably miss them. But he muttered again, "To be sure— to be sure!" as Brother Copas tiptoed away and left him.

On his way back to his lonely rooms, Brother Copas met and exchanged "Good evenings" with Nurse Branscome.

"You are looking grave," she said.

"You might better say I am looking like a humbug and a fool. I have just been punishing that child—sending her to bed supperless. Now call me the ass that I am."

"Why, what has Corona been doing?"

"Does it matter?" he snarled, turning away. "She has been naughty; and the only way with naughty children is to be brutal."

"I expect you have made a mess of it," said Nurse Branscome.

"I am sure I have," said Brother Copas.

Corona undressed herself very deliberately; and, seating herself again on the edge of the bed, as deliberately undressed Timothy and clothed him for the night in his pyjamas.

"I am sorry, dear, that *you* should suffer.... But I can't tell what isn't true, not even for your sake; and I can't take back what I said. Nurse Turner is a beast, if we starve for saying it—which," added Corona reflectively, "I don't suppose we shall. I couldn't answer back properly on Uncle Copas, because when you say a thing to grown-ups they look wise and ask you to prove it, and if you can't you look silly. But Nurse Turner is a beast.... Oh, Timmy! let's lie down and try to get to sleep. But it *is* miserable to have all the world against us."

She remembered that she was omitting to say her prayers, and knelt down; but after a moment or two rose again.

"It's no use, God," she said. "I'm very sorry, and I wouldn't tell it to anyone but *You*—and perhaps Uncle Copas, if he was different: but I can't say 'forgive us our trespasses' when I can't abide the woman."

She had already pulled down the blind. Before creeping to bed she drew the curtains to exclude the lingering daylight. As she did so, she made sure that her window was hasped wide. Her bedroom (on the ground floor) looked out upon a small cabbage-plot in which Brother Bonaday, until warned by the doctor, had employed his leisure. It was a wilderness now.

As a rule Corona slept with her lattice wide to the fullest extent: and at any time (upon an alarm of fire, for example) she could have slipped her small body out through the opening with ease. To-night she drew the frame of the window closer than usual, and pinned it on the perforated bar; so close that her small body could not squeeze through it even if she should walk in her sleep. She was a conscientious child. She only forbore to close it tight because it was wicked to go without fresh air.

She stole into bed and curled herself up comfortably. For some reason or other the touch of the cold pillow drew a tear or two. But after a very little while she slept, still hugging her doll.

There was no sound to disturb her; no sound but the soft dripping, now and again, of a cinder in the grate before which Brother Bonaday sat, with misery in his heart.

"Corona!"

The voice was low and tremulous. It followed on the sound of a loud sneeze. Either the voice or the sneeze (or both) aroused her, and she sat up in bed with a start. Like Chaucer's Canace, of sleep "She was full mesurable, as women be."

"Corona!"

"Is that you, Daddy?" she asked, jumping out of bed and tiptoeing to the door.

What the hour was she could not tell: but she knew it must be late, for a shaft of moonlight fell through a gap in the window-curtains and shone along the floor.

"Are you ill?... Shall I run and call them up at the Nunnery?"

"I was listening.... I have been listening here for some time, and I could not hear you breathing."

"Dear Daddy... is that all? Go back to your bed—it's wicked of you to be out of it, with the nights turning chilly as they are. I'll go back to mine and try to snore, if that's any comfort."

"I haven't been to bed at all. I couldn't... Corona!"

"You are not to turn the key!" she commanded in a whisper, for he was fumbling with it. "Uncle Copas pretended he was taking it away with him: or that was what I understood, and if he breaks an understanding it's *his* affair."

"I—I thought, dear, you might be hungry."

"Well, and suppose I am?"

Corona, now she came to think of it, was ravenous.

"I've a slice of bread here, and a cold sausage. If you'll wrap yourself up and come out, we can toast them both: the fire is still clear."

"As if I should think of it!... And it's lucky for you, Daddy, the key's on your side of the door. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, out of bed at—what *is* the time?"

"Past ten o'clock."

"You are not telling me a fib, I hope, about keeping up a clear fire?" said Corona sternly.

"If you like, I will open the door just a little: then you can see for yourself."

"Cer—tainly not. But if you've been looking after yourself properly, why did you sneeze just now?"

"Sneeze'? I never sneezed."

Silence, for a moment—

"*Somebody* sneezed... I 'stinctly heard it," Corona insisted. "Now I come to think, it sounded—"

There was another pause while, with a question in her eye, she turned and stared at the casement. Then, as surmise grew to certainty, a little laugh bubbled within her. She stepped to the window.

"Good night, Uncle Copas!" she called out mischievously. No one answered from the moonlit cabbage-plot. In fact, Brother Copas, beating his retreat, at that moment struck his staff against a disused watering-can, and missed to hear her.

He objurgated his clumsiness and went on, picking his way more cautiously.

"The question is," he murmured, "how I'm to extort confession from Bonaday to-morrow without letting him suspect..."

While he pondered this, Brother Copas stumbled straight upon another shock. The small gate of the cabbage-plot creaked on its hinge... and behold, in the pathway ahead stood a woman! In the moonlight he recognised her.

"Nurse Branscome!"

"Brother Copas!... Why, what in the world are you doing—at this hour—and here, of all places?"

"Upon my word," retorted Copas, "I might ask you the same question. ... But on second thoughts I prefer to lie boldly and confess that I have been stealing cabbages."

"Is that a cabbage you are hiding under your gown?"

"It might be, if this place hadn't been destitute of cabbages these twelve months and more.... Pardon my curiosity: but is that also a cabbage you are hiding under your cloak?"

"It might be—" But here laughter—quiet laughter—got the better of them both.

"I might have known it," said Brother Copas, recovering himself. "Her father is outside her door abjectly beseeching her to be as naughty as she pleases, if only she won't be unhappy. And she— woman-like—is using her advantage to nag him."

'But if ne'er so fast you wall her—'

"Danæ, immured, yet charged a lover for admission. Corona, imprisoned, takes it out of her father for speaking through the keyhole."

"You would not tell me what the child did, that you two have punished her."

"Would I not? Well, she was abominably rude to Nurse Turner this afternoon—went to the extent of calling her 'a nasty two-faced spy.'"

"Was that all?" asked Nurse Branscome.

"It was enough, surely?... As a matter of fact she went farther, even dragging your name into the fray. She excused herself by saying that she had a right to hate Nurse Turner because Nurse Turner hated you."

"Well, that at any rate was true enough."

"Hey?"

"I mean, it is true enough that Nurse Turner hates me, and would like to get me out of St. Hospital," said Nurse Branscome quietly.

"You never told me of this."

"Why should I have troubled to tell? I only tell it now because the child has guessed it."

Brother Copas leaned on his staff pondering a sudden suspicion.

"Look here," he said; "those anonymous letters—"

"I have not," said Nurse Branscome, "a doubt that Nurse Turner wrote them."

"You have never so much as hinted at this."

"I had no right. I have no right, even now; having no evidence. You would not show me the letter, remember."

"It was too vile."

"As if I—a nurse—cannot look at a thing because it is vile! ... I supposed that you had laid the matter aside and forgotten it."

"On the contrary, I have been at some pains—hitherto idle—to discover the writer.... Does Nurse Turner, by the way, happen to start her W's with a small curly flourish?"

"That you can discover for yourself. The Nurses' Diary lies in the Nunnery, in the outer office. We both enter up our 'cases' in it, and it is open for anyone to inspect."

"I will inspect it to-morrow," promised Brother Copas. "Now—this Hospital being full of evil tongues—I cannot well ask you to eat an *al fresco* supper with me, though"—he twinkled—"I suspect we both carry the constituents of a frugal one under our cloaks."

They passed through an archway into the great quadrangle, and there, having wished one another good night, went their ways; she mirthfully, he mirthfully and thoughtfully too.

Next morning Brother Copas visited the outer office of the Nunnery and carefully inspected the Nurses' Diary. Since every week contains a Wednesday, there were capital W's in plenty.

He took tracings of half a dozen and, armed with these, sought Nurse Turner in her private room.

"I think," said he, holding out the anonymous letter, "you may have some light to throw on this. I have the Master's authority to bid you attend on him and explain it."

He fixed the hour—2 p.m. But shortly after mid-day Nurse Turner had taken a cab (ordered by telephone) and was on her way to the railway station with her boxes.

CHAPTER XXI.

RECONCILIATION.

"I am not," said the Bishop, "putting this before you as an argument. I have lived and mixed with men long enough to know that they are usually persuaded by other things than argument, sometimes by better. ... I am merely suggesting a *modus vivendi*—shall we call it a truce of God?—until we have all done our best against a common peril: for, as your Petition proves you to be earnest Churchmen, so I may conclude that to all of us in this room our Cathedral stands for a cherished monument of the Church, however differently we may interpret its history."

He leaned forward in his chair, his gaze travelling from one to another with a winning smile. All the petitioners were gathered before him in the Master's library. They stood respectfully, each with his hat and staff. At first sight you might have thought he was dismissing them on a pilgrimage.

Master Blanchminster sat on the Bishop's right, with Mr. Colt close behind him; Mr. Simeon at the end of the table, taking down a verbatim report in his best shorthand.

"I tell you frankly," pursued the Bishop, "I come rather to appeal for concord than to discuss principles of observance. If you compel me to pronounce on the points raised, I shall take evidence and endeavour to deal justly upon it: but I suggest to you that the happiness of such a Society as this is better furthered by a spirit of sweet reasonableness than by any man's insistence on his just rights."

"*Fiat Caelum ruat justitia*," muttered Brother Copas. "But the man is right nevertheless."

"Principles," said the Bishop, "are hard to discuss, justice often impossible to deal... 'Yes,' you may answer, 'but we are met to do this, or endeavour to do it, and not to indulge in irrelevancy.' Yet is my plea so irrelevant?... You are at loggerheads over certain articles of faith and discipline, when a sound arrests you in the midst of your controversy. You look up and perceive that your Cathedral totters; that it was *her* voice you heard appealing to you. Leave your antagonisms and help one another to shore me up—me the witness of past generations to the Faith. Generations to come will settle some of the questions that vex you; others, maybe, the mere process of time will silently resolve. But Time, which helps them, is fast destroying us. You are not young, and my necessity is urgent. Surely, my children, you will be helping the Faith if you save its ancient walls.' I bethink me," the Bishop went on, "that we may apply to Merchester that fine passage of Matthew Arnold's on Oxford and her towers: '*Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?*'" He paused, and on an afterthought succumbed to the professional trick of improving the occasion. "It may even be that the plight of our Cathedral contains a special lesson for us of St. Hospital: '*If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand*'"

"Tilly vally!" muttered Brother Copas, and was feeling for his snuff-box, but recollected himself in time.

"You may say that you are old men, poor men; that it is little you could help. Do not be so sure of this. I am informed, for instance, that the proceeds of our forthcoming Pageant are to be devoted to the Restoration Fund, and not (as was originally intended) to missionary purposes."

Here Mr. Simeon, bending over his shorthand notes, blushed to the ears. It was he, good man, who had first thought of this, and suggested it to Mr. Colt; as it was Mr. Colt who had suggested it to the Committee in the presence of reporters, and who, on its acceptance, had received the Committee's thanks.

"I am further told"—here the Bishop glanced around and caught the eye of the Chaplain, who inclined his head respectfully—"that a—er—representation of the Foundation Ceremony of St. Hospital may be included among the—er—"

"Episodes," murmured Mr. Colt, prompting.

"Eh?—yes, precisely—among the Episodes. I feel sure it would make a tableau at once impressive and—er—entertaining—in the best sense of the word.... So, you see, there are possibilities; but they presuppose your willingness to sink some differences and join heartily in a common cause.... Or again, you may urge that to re-edify our Cathedral is none of your business—as officially indeed it is none of mine, but concerns the Dean and Chapter. I put it to you that it concerns us all." Here the Bishop leaned back in his chair, on the arms of which he rested his elbows; and pressing his finger-tips together, gazed over them at his audience. "That, at any rate, is my plea; and I shall be glad, if you have a spokesman, to hear how the suggestion of a 'truce of God' presents itself to your minds."

In the pause that followed, Brother Copas felt himself nudged from behind. He cleared his throat and inclined himself with a grave bow.

"My lord," he said, "my fellow-petitioners here have asked me to speak first to any points that may be raised. I have stipulated, however, that they hold themselves free to disavow me here in your lordship's presence, if on any point I misrepresent them."

The Bishop nodded encouragingly.

"Well then, my lord, it is peculiarly hard to speak for them when at the outset of the inquiry you meet us with a wholly unexpected appeal ... an appeal (shall I say?) to sentiment rather than to strict reason."

"I admit that."

"As I admit the appeal to be a strong one.... But before I try to answer it, may I deal with a sentence or two which (pardon me) seemed less relevant than the rest?... *If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand*. True enough, my lord: but neither can it aspire."

The Bishop lifted his eyebrows. But before he could interpose a word Brother Copas had mounted a hobby and was riding it, whip and spur.

"My lord, when a Hellene built a temple he took two pillars, set them upright in the ground, and laid a third block of stone a-top of them. He might repeat this operation a few times or a many, according to the size at which he wished to build. He might carve his pillars, and flourish them off with acanthus capitals, and run friezes along his architraves: but always in these three stones, the two uprights and the beam, the trick of it resided. And his building lasted. The pillars stood firm in solid ground, into which the weight of the cross-beam pressed them yet more firmly. The whole structure was there to endure, if not for ever, at least until some ass of a fellow came along and kicked it down to spite an old religion, because he had found a new one.... But this Gothic—this Cathedral, for example, which it seems we must help to preserve—is fashioned only to kick itself down."

"It aspires."

"Precisely, my lord; that is the mischief. When the Greek temple was content to repose upon natural law—when the Greek builder said, 'I will build for my gods greatly yet lowly, measuring my effort to those powers of man which at their fullest I know to be moderate, making my work harmonious with what little it is permitted to me to know'—in jumps the rash Christian, saying with the men of Babel, *Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven*; or, in other words, 'Let us soar above the law of earth and take the Kingdom of Heaven by storm.'... With what result?"

"Sed quid Typhœus et validus Mimas
Contra sonantem Palladis ægida... ?"

"The Gothic builders, like the Titans, might strain to pile Pelion on Olympus. *Vis consili expers*, my lord. From the moment they take down their scaffolding—nay, while it is yet standing—the dissolution begins. All their complicated structure of weights, counterweights, thrusts, balances, has started an internecine conflict, stone warring against stone, the whole disintegrating—"

"Excuse me, Brother—"

"Copas, my lord."

"Excuse me, Brother Copas," said the Bishop with a smile, "if I do not quite see to what practical conclusion we are tending."

"There is a moral ahead, my lord.... Thanks to Mr. Colt's zeal, we have all begun to aspire along our different lines, with the result that St. Hospital has become a house divided against itself. Now, if I may say it modestly, *I* think your lordship's suggestion an excellent one. We are old poor men—what business have we, any longer, with aspiration? It is time for us to cease from pushing and thrusting at each other's souls; time for us to imitate the Greek beam, and practise lying flat.... I vote for the truce, my lord; and when the time comes, shall vote for extending it."

"You have so odd a way of putting it, Brother—er—Copas," his lordship mildly expostulated, "that I hardly recognise as mine the suggestion you are good enough to commend."

Brother Copas's eye twinkled.

"Ah, my lord! It has been the misfortune of my life to follow Socrates humbly as a midwife of men's ideas, and be accused of handing them back as changelings."

"You consent to the truce, at any rate?"

"No, no!" muttered old Warboise.

Copas turned a deaf ear.

"I vote for the truce," he said firmly, "provided the one condition be understood. It is the *status quo ante* so far as concerns us Protestants, and covers the whole field. For example, at the Sacrament we receive the elements in the form which life-long use has consecrated for us, allowing the wafer to be given to those Brethren who prefer it. Will the Master consent to this?"

Master Blanchminster was about to answer, but first (it was somewhat pitiful to see) turned to Mr. Colt. Mr. Colt bent his head in assent.

"That is granted," said the Master.

"Nor would we deny the use of Confession to those who find solace in it—"

"Yes, we would," growled Brother Warboise.

"—Provided always," pursued Copas, "that its use be not thrust upon us, nor our avoidance of it injuriously reckoned against us."

"I think," said the Master, "Brother Copas knows that on this point he may count upon an honourable understanding."

"I do, Master.... Then there is this new business of compulsory vespers at six o'clock. We wish that compulsion removed."

"Why?" snapped Mr. Colt.

"You would force me to say, sir, 'Because it interferes with my fishing.' Well, even so, I might confess without shame, and answer with Walton, that when I would beget content and increase confidence in the power and wisdom and providence of Almighty God I will walk the meadows by Mere, 'and there contemplate the lilies that take no care, and those very many other various little living creatures that are not only created but fed (man knows not how) by the goodness of the God of nature, and therefore trust in Him.'... But I am speaking here rather on behalf of Brother Warboise—if he will leave off nudging me in the small of the back. It happens that for a number of years Brother Warboise has daily, at this hour, paid a visit to a sick and paralysed friend—"

"He is not a friend," rasped out Brother Warboise. "On the contrary—"

"Shall we," interposed the Master, "agree to retain the service on the understanding that I am willing to hear any reasonable plea for non-attendance? I need hardly say, my lord, that visiting the sick would rank with me before any formal observance; and," he added, with the hint of a smile which Brother Copas caught, "even to less Christian excuses I might conceivably be willing to listen."

So, piece by piece, the truce was built up.... When the petitioners had thanked his lordship and withdrawn, and Mr. Simeon, having gathered up his notes, presently followed them out, the Bishop, the Master, and the Chaplain sat for half an hour talking together.

The time came for Mr. Colt to take his leave, being due at a Pageant rehearsal. When he was gone the Bishop suggested a quiet stroll in the home-park, and the two old divines fared forth to take the benediction of evening, still keeping good grave converse as they paced side by side.

"My dear Eustace," said the Bishop (they were friends of long standing, and in private used Christian names in place of titles), "confess, now that this business is over, it was not so bad as you feared."

The Master respired the cool air with a quiet sigh.

"No, Walter, it was not so bad as I feared. But having ruled all these years without question, you understand—"

"You have certainly not ruled all these years for nothing. They were honest fellows, and made it pretty plain that they loved you. It does not rankle, I hope?"

"No." Master Blanchminster drew another deep breath and emitted it as if expelling the last cloudy thought of resentment. "No," he repeated; "I believe I may say that it rankles no longer. They are honest fellows—I am glad you perceived that."

"One could read it in all of them, saving perhaps that odd fellow who acted as spokesman. Brother—er—Copas?... He lectured me straightly enough, but there is always a disposition to suspect an eccentric."

"He was probably the honestest man in the room," answered Master Blanchminster with some positiveness.

"I am the more glad to hear it," said the Bishop, "because meeting a man of such patent capacity brought so low—"

"I assure you, he doesn't even drink—or not to excess," the Master assured him.

They were passing under the archway of the Porter's Lodge.

"But hallo!" said the Bishop, as they emerged upon the great quadrangle, "what in the world is going on yonder?"

Again, as the Master had viewed it many hundreds of times, the sunset shed its gold across the well-kept turf between long shadows cast by the chimneys of the Brethren's lodgings. As usual, in the deep shadow of the western front were gathered groups of inmates for the evening chat. But the groups had drawn together into one, and were watching a child

who, solitary upon the grass-plot, paced through a measure before them 'high and disposedly.'

"Brayvo!" shrilled the voice of Mrs. Royle, champion among viragoes. "Now, at the turn you come forward and catch your skirts back before you curtchey!"

"But what on earth does it all mean?" asked the Bishop, staring across from the archway.

"It's—it's Bonaday's child—he's one of our Brethren: as I suppose, rehearsing her part for the Pageant."

Corona's audience had no eyes but for the performance. As she advanced to the edge of the grass-plot and dropped a final curtcsey to them, their hands beat together. The clapping travelled across the dusk of the quadrangle to the two watchers, and reached them faintly, thinly, as though they listened in wonder at ghosts applauding on the far edge of Elysian fields.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. SIMEON MAKES A CLEAN BREAST.

"I won't say you sold the pass," snarled Brother Warboise, "though I might. The fact is, there's no trusting your cleverness. You see a chance of showing-off before the Bishop, and that's enough. Off you start with a lecture on architecture (which he didn't in the least want to hear), and then, when he finds a chance to pull you up, you take the disinterested line and put us all in the cart."

"You hit it precisely," answered Brother Copas, "as only a Protestant can. His eye is always upon his neighbour's defects, and I never cease to marvel at its adeptness.... Well, I do seem to owe you an apology. But I cannot agree that the Bishop was bored. To me he appeared to listen very attentively."

"He affected to, while he could: for he saw that you were playing his game. His whole object being to head off our Petition while pretending to grant it, the more nonsense you talked, within limits, the better he was pleased."

Brother Copas pondered a moment.

"Upon my word," he chuckled, "it was something of a feat to take a religious cock-pit and turn it into an Old Men's Mutual Improvement Society. Since the Wesleyans took over the Westminster Aquarium—"

"You need not add insult to injury."

"'Injury'? My good Warboise, a truce is not a treaty: still less is it a defeat.... Now look here. You are in a raging bad temper this evening, and you tell yourself it's because the Bishop, with my artless aid, has—as you express it—put you in the cart. Now I am going to prove to you that the true reason is a quite different one. For why? Because, though you may not know it, you have been in a raging bad temper ever since this business was broached, three months ago. Why again? I have hinted the answer more than once; and now I will put it as a question. *Had Zimri peace, who slew his Master?*"

"I do not understand."

"Oh yes, you do! You are in a raging bad temper, being at heart more decent than any of your silly convictions, because you have wounded for their sake the eminent Christian gentleman now coming towards us along the river-path. He has been escorting the Bishop for some distance on his homeward way, and has just parted from him. I'll wager that he meets us without a touch of resentment.... Ah, Brother, you have cause to be full of wrath!"

Sure enough the Master, approaching and recognising the pair, hailed them gaily.

"Eh? Brother Copas—Brother Warboise—a fine evening! But the swallows will be leaving us in a week or two."

For a moment it seemed he would pass on, with no more than the usual nod and fatherly smile. He had indeed taken a step or two past them as they stood aside for him in the narrow path: but on a sudden thought he halted and turned about.

"By the way—that sick friend of yours, Brother Warboise.... I was intending to ask about him. Paralysed, I think you said? Do I know him?"

"He is not my friend," answered Brother Warboise gruffly.

"His name is Weekes," said Brother Copas, answering the Master's puzzled look. "He was a master-printer in his time, an able fellow, but addicted to drink and improvident. His downfall involved that of Brother Warboise's stationery business, and Brother Warboise has never forgiven him."

"Dear, dear!" Master Blanchminster passed a hand over his brow. "But if that's so, I don't see—"

"It's a curious story," said Brother Copas, smiling.

"It's one you have no right to meddle with, any way," growled Brother Warboise; "and, what's more, you can't know anything about it."

"It came to me through the child Corona," pursued Brother Copas imperturbably. "You took her to Weekes's house to tea one afternoon, and she had it from Weekes's wife. It's astonishing how these women will talk."

"I've known some men too, for that matter—"

"It's useless for you to keep interrupting. The Master has asked for information, and I am going to tell him the story—that is, sir, if you can spare a few minutes to hear it."

"You are sure it will take but a few minutes?" asked Master Blanchminster doubtfully.

"Eh, Master?" Brother Copas laughed. "Did you, too, find me somewhat prolix this afternoon?"

"Well, you shall tell me the story. But since it is not good for us to be standing here among the river damps, I suggest that you turn back with me towards St. Hospital, and where the path widens so that we can walk three abreast you shall begin."

"With your leave, Master, I would be excused," said Brother Warboise.

"Oh, no, you won't," Brother Copas assured him. "For unless you come too, I promise to leave out all the discreditable part of the story and paint you with a halo.... It began, sir, in this way," he took up the tale as they reached the wider path, "when the man Weekes fell under a paralytic stroke, Warboise took occasion to call on him. Perhaps, Brother, you will tell us why."

"I saw in his seizure the visitation of God's wrath," said Warboise. "The man had done me a notorious wrong. He had been a swindler, and my business was destroyed through him."

"Mrs. Weekes said that even the sight of the wretch's affliction did not hinder our Brother from denouncing him. He sat down in a chair facing the paralytic, and talked of the debt: 'which now,' said he, 'you will never be able to pay.'... Nay, Master, there is better to come. When Brother Warboise got up to take his leave, the man's lips moved, and he tried to say something. His wife listened for some time, and then reported, 'He wants you to come again.' Brother Warboise wondered at this; but he called again next day. Whereupon the pleasure in the man's face so irritated him, that he sat down again and began to talk of the debt and God's judgment, in words more opprobrious than before.... His own affairs, just then, were going from bad to worse: and, in short, he found so much relief in bullying the author of his misfortunes, who could not answer back, that the call became a daily one. As for the woman, she endured it, seeing that in some mysterious way it did her husband good."

"There was nothing mysterious about it," objected Brother Warboise. "He knew himself a sinner, and desired to pay some of his penance before meeting his God."

"I don't believe it," said Copas. "But whether you're right or wrong, it doesn't affect the story much.... At length some friends extricated our Brother from his stationery business, and got him admitted to the Blanchminster Charity. The first afternoon he paid a visit in his black gown, the sick man's face so lit up at the sight that Warboise flew into a passion—did you not, Brother?"

"Did the child tell you all this?"

"Aye: from the woman's lips."

"I was annoyed, because all of a sudden it struck me that, in revenge for my straight talk, Weekes had been wanting me to call day by day that he might watch me going downhill; and that now he was gloating to see me reduced to a Blanchminster gown. So I said, 'You blackguard, you may look your fill, and carry the recollection of it to the Throne of Judgment, where I hope it may help you. But this is your last sight of me.'"

"Quite correct," nodded Copas. "Mrs. Weekes corroborates.... Well, Master, our Brother trudged back to St. Hospital with this resolve, and for a week paid no more visits to the sick. By the end of that time he had discovered, to his surprise, that he could not do without them—that somehow Weekes had become as necessary to him as he to Weekes."

"How did you find that out?" asked Brother Warboise sharply.

"Easily enough, as the child told the story.... At any rate, you went. At the door of the house you met Mrs. Weekes. She had put on her bonnet, and was coming that very afternoon to beseech your return. You have called daily ever since to talk about your debt, though the Statute of Limitations has closed it for years. ... That, Master, is the story."

"You have told it fairly enough," said Warboise. "Now, since the Master knows it, I'd be glad to be told if that man is my friend or my enemy. Upon my word I don't rightly know, and if he knows he'll never find speech to tell me. Sometimes I think he's both."

"I am not sure that one differs very much from the other, in the long run," said Copas.

But the Master, who had been musing, turned to Warboise with a quick smile.

"Surely," he said, "there is one easy way of choosing. Take the poor fellow some little gift. If you will accept it for him, I shall be happy to contribute now and then some grapes or a bottle of wine or other small comforts."

He paused, and added with another smile, still more penetrating—

"You need not give up talking of the debt, you know!"

By this time they had reached the gateway of his lodging, and he gave them a fatherly good night just as a child's laugh reached them through the dusk at the end of the roadway. It was Corona, returning from rehearsal; and the Chaplain—the redoubtable William the Conqueror—was her escort. The two had made friends on their homeward way, and were talking gaily.

"Why, here is Uncle Copas!" called Corona, and ran to him.

Mr. Colt relinquished his charge with a wave of the hand. His manner showed that he accepted the new truce *de bon cœur*.

"Is it peace, you two?" he called, as he went past.

Brother Warboise growled. *What hast thou to do with peace? Get thee behind me*, the growl seemed to suggest. At all events, it suggested this answer to Brother Copas—

"If you and Jehu the son of Nimshi start exchanging rôles," he chuckled, "where will Weekes come in?"

Master Blanchminster let himself in with his latchkey, and went up the stairs to his library. On the way he meditated on the story to which he had just listened, and the words that haunted his mind were Wordsworth's—

"Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning."

A solitary light burned in the library—the electric lamp on his table beside the fire-place. It had a green shade, and for a second or two the Master did not perceive that someone stood a pace or two from it in the penumbra.

"Master!"

"Hey!"—with a start—"Is it Simeon?... My good Simeon, you made me jump. What brings you back here at this hour? You've forgotten some paper, I suppose."

"No, Master."

"What then?"

By the faint greenish light the Master missed to observe that Mr. Simeon's face was deadly pale.

"Master, I have come to make confession—to throw myself on your mercy! For a long time—for a year almost—I have been living dishonestly.... Master, do you believe in miracles?"

For a moment there was no answer. Master Blanchminster walked back to an electric button beside the door, and turned on more light with a finger that trembled slightly.

"If you have been living dishonestly, Simeon, I certainly shall believe in miracles."

"But I mean *real* miracles, Master."

"You are agitated, Simeon. Take a seat and tell me your trouble in your own way—beginning, if you please, with the miracle."

"It was that which brought me. Until it happened I could not find courage—"

Mr. Simeon's eyes wandered to this side and that, as though they still sought a last chance of escape.

"The facts, if you please?"

The Master's voice had of a sudden become cold, even stern. He flung the words much as one dashes a cupful of water in the face of an hysterical woman. They brought Mr. Simeon to himself. His gaze shivered and fixed itself on the Master's, as in a compass-box you may see the needle tremble to magnetic north. He gripped the arms of his chair, caught his voice, and went on desperately.

"This afternoon it was.... On my way here I went around, as I go daily, by the Cathedral, to hear if the workmen have found any fresh defects.... They had opened a new pit by the south-east corner, a few yards from the first, and as I came by one of the men was levering away with a crowbar at a large stone not far below the surface. I waited while he worked it loose, and then, lifting it with both hands, he flung it on to the edge of the pit.... By the shape we knew it at once for an old gravestone that, falling down long ago, had somehow sunk and been covered by the turf. There was lettering, too, upon the undermost side when the man turned it over. He scraped the earth away with the flat of his hands, and together we made out what was written."

Mr. Simeon fumbled in his waistcoat, drew forth a scrap of paper, and handed it to the Master.

"I copied it down then and there: no, not at once. At first I looked up, afraid to see the whole building falling, falling upon me—"

The Master did not hear. He had unfolded the paper. Adjusting his spectacles, he read: "*God have Mercy on the Soul of Giles Tonkin. Obiit Dec. 17th, 1643. No man can serve two masters.*"

"A strange text for a tombstone," he commented. "And the date—1643? That is the year when our city surrendered in the Parliament wars. ... Who knows but this may have marked the grave of a man shot because he hesitated too long in taking sides... or perchance in his flurry he took both, and tried to serve two masters."

"Master, I am that man.... Do not look at me so! I mean that, whether he knew it or not, he died to save me... that his stone has risen up for witness, driving me to you. Ah, do not weaken me, now that I am here to confess!"

And leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, his hands spread to hide his face, Mr. Simeon blurted out his confession.

When he had ended there was silence in the room for a space.

"Tarbolt!" murmured the Master, just audibly and no more. "If it had been anyone but Tarbolt!"

There was another silence, broken only by one slow sob.

"For either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. . . Simeon, which was I?"

Mr. Simeon forced himself to look up. Tears were in his eyes, but they shone.

"Master, can you doubt?"

"I am sorry to appear brutal," said Master Blanchminster, coldly and wearily, "but my experiences to-day have been somewhat trying for an old man. May I ask if, on taking your resolution to confess, you came straight to me; or if, receiving just dismissal from my service, you yet hold Canon Tarbolt in reserve?"

Mr. Simeon stood up.

"I have behaved so badly to you, sir, that you have a right to ask it. But as a fact I went to Canon Tarbolt first, and said I could no longer work for him."

"Sit down, please.... How many children have you, Mr. Simeon?"

"Seven, sir.... The seventh arrived a fortnight ago—yesterday fortnight, to be precise. A fine boy, I am happy to say."

He looked up pitifully. The Master stood above him, smiling down; and while the Master's stature seemed to have taken some additional inches, his smile seemed to irradiate the room.

"Simeon, I begin to think it high time I raised your salary."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CORONA'S BIRTHDAY.

The May-fly season had come around again, and Corona was spending her Saturday—the Greycoats' holiday—with Brother Copas by the banks of Mere. They had brought their frugal luncheon in the creel which was to contain the trout Brother Copas hoped to catch. He hoped to catch a brace at least—one for his sick friend at home, the other to replenish his own empty cupboard: for this excursion meant his missing to attend at the kitchen and receive his daily dole.

There may have been thunder in the air. At any rate the fish refused to feed; and after an hour's patient waiting for sign of a rise—without which his angling would be but idle pains—Brother Copas found a seat, and pulled out a book from his pocket, while Corona wandered over the meadows in search of larks' nests. But this again was pains thrown away; since, as Brother Copas afterwards explained, in the first place the buttercups hid them, and, secondly, the nests were not there!—the birds preferring the high chalky downs for their nurseries. She knew, however, that along the ditches where the willows grew, and the alder clumps, there must be scores of warblers and other late-breeding birds; for walking here in the winter she had marvelled at the number of nests laid bare by the falling leaves. These warblers wait for the leaves to conceal their building, and Winter will betray the deserted hiding-place. So Brother Copas had told her, to himself repeating—

*"Cras amorum copulatrix inter umbras arborum
Implicat casas virentes de flagello myrteo...."*

Corona found five of these nests, and studied them: flimsy things, constructed of a few dried grasses, inwoven with horsehair and cobwebs. Before next spring the rains would dissolve them and they would disappear.

She returned with a huge posy of wild flowers and the information that she, for her part, felt hungry as a hunter.... They disposed themselves to eat.

"Do you know, Uncle Copas," she asked suddenly, "why I have dragged you out here to-day?"

"Did I show myself so reluctant?" he protested; but she paid no heed to this.

"It is because I came home here to England, to St. Hospital, just a year ago this very afternoon. This is my Thanksgiving Day," added Corona solemnly.

"I am afraid there is no turkey in the hamper," said Brother Copas, pretending to search. "We must console ourselves by reflecting that the bird is out of season."

"You didn't remember the date, Uncle Copas. Did you, now?"

"I did, though." Brother Copas gazed at the running water for a space and then turned to her with a quick smile. "Why, child, *of course* I did!... And I appreciate the honour."

Corona nodded as she broke off a piece of crust and munched it.

"I wanted to take stock of it all. (We're dining out of doors, so please let me talk with my mouth full. I'm learning to eat slowly, like a good English girl: only it takes so much time when there's a lot to say.) Well, I've had a good time, and nobody can take *that* away, thank the Lord! It—it's been just heavenly."

"A good time for all of us, little maid."

"Honest Indian?... But it can't last, you know. That's what we have to consider: and it mayn't be a gay thought, but I'd hate to be one of those folks that never see what's over the next fence.... Of course," said Corona pensively, "it's up to you to tell me I dropped in on St. Hospital like one of Solomon's lilies that take no thought for to-morrow. But I didn't, really: for I always knew this was going to be the time of my life."

"I don't understand," said Copas. "Why should it not last?"

"I guess you and I'll have to be serious," she answered. "Daddy gets frailer and frailer.... You can't hide from me that you know it: and please don't try, for I've to think of—of the *afterwards*, and I want you to help."

"But suppose that I have been thinking about it already—thinking about it hard?" said Brother Copas slowly. "Ah, child, leave it to me, and never talk like that!"

"But why?" she asked, wondering.

"Because we old folks cannot bear to hear a child talking, like one of ourselves, of troubles. That has been our business: we've seen it through; and now our best happiness lies in looking back on the young, and looking forward for them, and keeping *them* young and happy so long as the gods allow.... Never search out ways of rewarding us. To see you just going about with a light heart is a better reward than ever you could contrive for us by study. Child, if the gods allowed, I would keep you always like Master Walton's milkmaid, that had not yet attained so much age and wisdom as to load her mind with any fears of many things that will never be, as too many men too often do. But she cast away care—"

"I think she must have been a pretty silly sort of milkmaid," said Corona. "Likely she ended to slow music while the cows came home. But what worries me is that I'm young and don't see any way to hurry things. Miss Champernowne won't let me join the cookery class because I'm under the age for it: and I see she talks sense in her way. Even if I learnt cookery and let down my skirts, who's going to engage me for a cook-general at *my* time of life?"

"Nobody, please God," answered Brother Copas, copying her seriousness. "Did I not tell you I have been thinking about all this? If you must know, I have talked it over with the Master... and the long and short of it is that, if or when the time should come, I can step in and make a claim for you as your only known guardian. My dear child, St. Hospital will not let you go."

For a moment Corona tried to speak, but could not. She sat with her palms laid on her lap, and stared at the blurred outline of the chalk-hills—blurred by the mist in her eyes. Two great tears welled and splashed down on the back of her hand.

"The years and years," she murmured, "before I can begin to pay it back!"

"Nay"—Brother Copas set down his half-filled glass, took the hand and gently wiped it with the sleeve of his frayed gown; and so held it, smoothing it while he spoke, as though the tear had hurt it—"it is we who are repaying you. Shall I tell you what I told the Master? 'Master,' I said, 'all we Brethren, ever since I can remember, have been wearing gowns as more or less conscious humbugs. Christ taught that poverty was noble, and such a gospel might be accepted by the East. It might persevere along the Mediterranean coast, and survive what St. Paul did to Christianity to make Christianity popular. It might reach Italy and flame up in a crazed good soul like the soul of St. Francis. It might creep along as a pious opinion, and even reach England, to be acknowledged on a king's or a rowdy's death-bed—and Alberic de Blanchminster,' said I, '(saving your presence, sir) was a rowdy robber who, being afraid when it came to dying, caught at the Christian precept he has most neglected, as being therefore in all probability the decentest. But no Englishman, not being on his death-bed, ever believed it: and we knew better—until this child came along and taught us. The Brethren's livery has always been popular enough in the streets of Mercheester: but she—she taught us (God bless her) that it can be honoured for its own sake;

that it is noble and, best of all, that its *noblesse oblige*!... Ah, little maid, you do not guess your strength!"

Corona understood very little of all this. But she understood that Uncle Copas loved her, and was uttering these whimsies to cover up the love he revealed. She did better than answer him in words: she nestled to his shoulder, rubbing her cheek softly against the threadbare gown.

"When is your birthday, little one?"

"I don't know," Corona confessed. "Mother never would tell me. She would get angry about birthdays, and say she never took any truck with them.... But, of course, everyone ought to have a birthday, of sorts, and so I call this my real one. But I never told you that—did I?"

"I heard you say once that you left a little girl behind you somewhere in the States, but that you only came to yourself the day you reached England."

"Yes; and I *do* feel sorry for that other little girl sometimes!"

"You need not. She'll grow up to be an American woman: and the American woman, as everybody knows, has all the fun of the fair. ... To-day is your birthday, then; and see! I have brought along a bottle of claret, to drink your health. It isn't—as the Irish butler said—the best claret, but it's the best we've got. Your good health, Miss Corona, and many happy returns!"

"Which," responded Corona, lifting her cupful of milk, "I looks towards you and I likewise bows.... *Would* you, by the way, *very* much object if I fetched Timothy out of the basket? He gets so few pleasures."

For the rest of the meal, by the clear-running river, they talked sheer delightful nonsense.... When (as Brother Copas expressed it) they had "put from themselves the desire of meat and drink," he lit a pipe and smoked tranquilly, still now and again, however, sipping absent-mindedly at his thin claret.

"But you are not to drink more than half a bottle," Corona commanded. "The rest we must carry home for supper."

"So poor a vintage as this, once opened, will hardly bear the journey," he protested. "But what are you saying about supper?"

"Why, you wouldn't leave poor old Daddy quite out of the birthday, I hope!... There's to be a supper to-night. Branny's coming."

"Am I to take this for an invitation?"

"Of course you are.... There will be speeches." "The dickens is, there won't be any trout at this rate!"

"They'll be rising before evening," said Corona confidently. "And, anyway, we can't hurry them."

From far up stream, where the grey mass of the Cathedral blocked the vale, a faint tapping sound reached them, borne on 'the cessile air.' It came from the Pageant Ground, where workmen were hammering busily at the Grand Stand. It set them talking of the Pageant, of Corona's 'May Queen' dress, of the lines (or, to be accurate, the line and a half) she had to speak. This led to her repeating some verses she had learnt at the Greycoats' School. They began—

"I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers."

And Corona was crazy over them, because (as she put it) "they made you feel you were smelling all England out of a bottle." Brother Copas told her of the man who had written them; and of a lovelier poem he had written *To Meadows*—

"Ye have been fresh and green,
Ye have been filled with flowers,
And ye the walks have been
Where maids have spent their hours.

"You have beheld how they
With wicker arks did come
To kiss and bear away
The richer cowslips home....

"But now we see none here—"

He broke off.

"Ah, there he gets at the pang of it! Other poets have wasted pity on the dead-and-gone maids, but his is for the fields they leave desolate."

This puzzled Corona. But the poem had touched her somehow, and she kept repeating snatches of it to herself as she rambled off in search of more birds' nests. Left to himself, Brother Copas pulled out book and pencil again, and began botching at the last lines of the *Pervigilium Veneris*—

"Her favour it was filled the sail of the Trojan
for Latium bound;
Her favour that won her Æneas a bride on
Laurentian ground;
And anon from the cloister inveigled the
Vestal, the Virgin, to Mars,
As her wit by the wild Sabine rape recreated
her Rome for its wars
With the Ramnes, Quirites, together
ancestrally proud as they drew
From Romulus down to our Ceesar—last,
best of that bone and that thew.—
Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye
who have loved, love anew!"

Brother Copas paused to trim his pencil, which was blunt. His gaze wandered across the water-meadows and overtook Corona, who was wading deep in buttercups.

"Proserpine on the fields of Enna!" he muttered, and resumed—

"Love planteth a field; it conceives to the
passion, the pang, of his joy.
In a field was Dione in labour delivered of
Cupid the Boy:
And the field in its fostering lap from her
travail receiv'd him: he drew
Mother's milk from the delicate kisses of
flowers; and he prospered and grew.—
Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye
who have loved, love anew!"

"Why do I translate this stuff? Why, but for the sake of a child who will never see it—who if she read it, would not understand a word?"

"Lo! Behold ye the bulls, with how lordly a
flank they bespawl on the broom!
—Yet obey the uxorious yoke and are tamed
by Dione her doom.
Or behear ye the sheep, to the husbanding
rams how they bleat to the shade!
Or behear ye the birds, at the Goddess'
command how they sing unafraid!—
Be it harsh as the swannery's clamour that
shatters the hush of the lake;
Be it dulcet as where Philomela holds
darkling the poplar awake,
So melting her soul into music, you'd vow
'twas her passion, her own,
She chanteth—her sister forgot, with the
Daulian crime long-agone.
Hush! Hark! Draw around to the circle...
Ah, loitering Summer, say when
For me shall be broken the charm, that I
chirp with the swallow again?
I am old: I am dumb: I have waited to
sing till Apollo withdrew.
—So Amyclæ a moment was mute, and for
ever a wilderness grew.—
Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye
who have loved, love anew!"

"*Perdidi musam tacendo*," murmured Brother Copas, gazing afield. "Only the young can speak to the young.... God grant that, at the right time, the right Prince may come to her over the meadows, and discourse honest music!"

Splash!

He sprang up and snatched at his rod. A two-pound trout had risen almost under his nose.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

The great day dawned at last: the day to which all Merchester had looked forward for months, for which so many hundreds had been working, on which all must now pin their hopes: the opening day of Pageant Week.

I suppose that never in Merchester's long history had her citizens so frequently or so nervously studied their weather-glasses.

"Tarbolt, of all people!" murmured Brother Copas one afternoon in the Venables Free Library.

He had just met the Canon coming down the stairs, and turned to watch the retreating figure to the doorway.

"I am suffering from a severe shock," he announced five minutes later to Mr. Simeon, whom he found at work in Paradise. "Did you ever know your friend Tarbolt patronise this institution before?"

"Never," answered Mr. Simeon, flushing.

"Well, I met him on the stairs just now. For a moment I knew not which alternative to choose—whether your desertion had driven him to the extreme course of reading a book or two for himself, or he had come desperately in search of you to promise that if you returned, all should be forgiven.... No, you need not look alarmed. He came in search of a newspaper."

"But there are no newspapers in the Library."

"Quite so: he has just made that discovery. Thereupon, since an animal of that breed cannot go anywhere without leaving his scent behind him, he has scrawled himself over half a page of the Suggestion' Book. He wants this Library to take in *The Times* newspaper, 'if only for the sake of its foreign correspondence and its admirable weather-charts.' Signed, 'J. Tarbolt.' What part is the humbug sustaining, that so depends on the weather?"

"He takes Bishop Henry of Blois in the Fourth Episode. He wears a suit of complete armour, and you cannot conceive how much it—it—improves him. I helped him to try it on the other day," Mr. Simeon explained with a smile.

"Maybe," suggested Brother Copas, "he fears the effect of rain upon his 'h's.'"

But the glass held steady, and the great day dawned without a cloud. Good citizens of Merchester, arising early to scan the sky, were surprised to find their next-door neighbours already abroad, and in consultation with neighbours opposite over strings of flags to be suspended across the roadway. Mr. Simeon, for example, peeping out, with an old dressing-gown cast over his night-shirt, was astounded to find Mr. Magor, the contiguous pork-seller, thus engaged with Mr. Sillifant, the cheap fruiterer across the way. He had accustomed himself to think of them as careless citizens and uncultured, and their unexpected patriotism gave him perhaps less of a shock than the discovery that they must have been moving faster than he with the times, for they both wore pyjamas.

They were kind to him, however: and, lifting no eyebrow over his antiquated night-attire, consulted him cheerfully over a string of flags which (as it turned out) Mr. Magor had paid yesterday a visit to Southampton expressly to borrow.

I mention this because it was a foretaste, and significant, of the general enthusiasm.

At ten in the morning Fritz, head waiter of that fine old English coaching-house, "The Mitre," looked out from the portico where he stood surrounded by sporting prints, and

announced to the young lady in the bar that the excursion trains must be "bringing them in hundreds."

By eleven o'clock the High Street was packed with crowds that whiled away their time with staring at the flags and decorations. But it was not until 1.0 p.m. that there began to flow, always towards the Pageant Ground, a stream by which that week, among the inhabitants of Merchester, will always be best remembered; a stream of folk in strange dresses—knights in armour, ladies in flounces and ruffs, ancient Britons, greaved Roman legionaries, monks, cavaliers, Georgian beaux and dames.

It appeared as if all the dead generations of Merchester had arisen from their tombs and reclaimed possession of her streets. They shared it, however, with throngs of modern folk, in summer attire, hurrying from early luncheons to the spectacle. In the roadway near the Pageant Ground crusaders and nuns jostled amid motors and cabs of commerce.

For an hour this mad medley poured through the streets of Merchester. Come with them to the Pageant Ground, where all is arranged now and ready, waiting the signal!

Punctually at half-past two, from his box on the roof of the Grand Stand, Mr. Isidore gave the signal for which the orchestra waited. With a loud outburst of horns and trumpets and a deep rolling of drums the overture began.

It was the work of a young musician, ambitious to seize his opportunity. After stating its theme largely, simply, in sixteen strong chords, it broke into variations in which the audience for a few moments might read nothing but cacophonous noise, until a gateway opened in the old wall, and through it a band of white-robed Druids came streaming towards the stone altar which stood—the sole stage "property"—in the centre of the green area. Behind them trooped a mob of skin-clothed savages, yelling as they dragged a woman to the sacrifice. It was these yells that the music interpreted. The Pageant had opened, and was chanting in high wild notes to its own prelude.

Almost before the spectators realised this, the Arch-Druid had mounted his altar. He held a knife to the victim's throat. But meanwhile the low beat of a march had crept into the music, and was asserting itself more and more insistently beneath the disconnected outcries. It seemed to grow out of distance, to draw nearer and nearer, as it were the tramp of an armed host.... It *was* the tramp of a host.... As the Arch-Druid, holding his knife aloft, dragged back the woman's head to lay her throat the barer, all turned to a sudden crash of cymbals; and, to the stern marching-tune now silencing all clamours, the advance-guard of Vespasian swung in through the gateway....

So for an hour Saxon followed Roman, Dane followed Saxon, Norman followed both. Alfred, Canute, William—all controlled (as Brother Copas cynically remarked to Brother Warboise, watching through the palings from the allotted patch of sward which served them for green-room) by one small Jew, perspiring on the roof and bawling orders here, there, everywhere, through a gigantic megaphone; bawling them in a *lingua franca* to which these mighty puppets moved obediently, weaving English history as upon a tapestry swiftly, continuously unrolled. "Which things," quoted Copas mischievously, "are an allegory, Philip."

To the waiting performers it seemed incredible that to the audience, packed by thousands in the Grand Stand, this scolding strident voice immediately above their heads should be inaudible. Yet it was. All those eyes beheld, all those ears heard, was the puppets as they postured and declaimed. The loud little man on the roof they saw not nor heard.

"Which things again are an allegory," said Brother Copas.

The Brethren of St. Hospital had no Episode of their own. But from the time of the Conquest downward they had constantly to take part in the moving scenes as members of the crowd, and the spectators constantly hailed their entry.

"Our coat of poverty is the wear to last, after all," said Copas, regaining the green-room and mopping his brow. "We have just seen out the Plantagenets."

In this humble way, when the time came, he looked on at the Episode of Henry the Eighth's visit to Merchester, and listened to the blank verse which he himself had written. The Pageant Committee had ruled out the Reformation, but he had slyly introduced a hint of it. The scene consisted mainly of revels, dances, tournaments, amid which a singing man had chanted, in a beautiful tenor, Henry's own song of *Pastime with good Companye*.—

"Pastime with good Companye,
I love and shall until I die:
Grudge who lust, but none deny,

So God be pleased, thus live will I.
For my pastance,
Hunt, sing and dance,
My heart is set.
All goodly sport
For my comfort
Who shall me let?"

With its chorus—

"For Idleness
Is chief mistress
Of vices all.
Then who can say
But mirth and play
Is best of all?"

As to the tune of it their revels ended, Henry and Catherine of Aragon and Charles the Emperor passed from the sunlit stage, one solitary figure—the blind Bishop of Merchester—lingered, and stretched out his hands for the monks to come and lead him home, stretched out his hands towards the Cathedral behind the green elms.

"Being blind, I trust the Light.
Ah, Mother Church! If fire must purify,
If tribulation search thee, shall I plead
Not in my time, O Lord? Nay let me know
All dark, yet trust the dawn—remembering
The order of thy services, thy sweet songs,
Thy decent ministrations—Levite, priest
And sacrifice—those antepasts of heaven.
We have sinn'd, we have sinn'd! But never yet went out
The flame upon the altar, day or night;
And it shall save thee, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem!"

"And I stole that straight out of Jeremy Taylor," murmured Brother Copas, as the monks led off their Bishop, chanting—

*"Crux, in cælo lux superna,
Sis in carnis hac taberna
Mihi pedibus lucerna—*

*"Quo vexillum Dux cohortis
Sistet, super flumen mortis,
Te, flammantibus in portis!"*

—"While I wrote that dog-Latin myself," said Brother Copas, musing, forgetful that he, the author, was lingering on the stage from which he ought to have removed himself three minutes ago with the rest of the crowd.

"Ger' out! Get off, zat olt fool! What ze devil you mean by doddling!"

It was the voice of Mr. Isidore screeching upon him through the megaphone. Brother Copas turned about, uplifting his face to it for a moment with a dazed stare.... It seemed that, this time, everyone in the Grand Stand must have heard. He fled: he made the most ignominious exit in the whole Pageant.

The afternoon heat was broiling.... He had no sooner gained the green-room shade of his elm than the whole of the Brethren were summoned forth anew; this time to assist at the spousals of Queen Mary of England with King Philip of Spain. And this Episode (Number VII on the programme) was Corona's.

He had meant—and again he cursed his forgetfulness—to seek her out at the last moment and whisper a word of encouragement. The child must needs be nervous....

He had missed his chance now. He followed the troop of Brethren back into the arena and dressed rank with the others, salaaming as the mock potentates entered, uttering stage cheers, while inwardly groaning in spirit. His eye kept an anxious sidewise watch on the gateway by which Corona must make her entrance.

She came. But before her, leading the way, strewing flowers, came score upon score of children in regiments of colour—pale blue, pale yellow, green, rose, heliotrope. They conducted her to the May Queen's throne, hung it with wreaths, and having paid their homage, ranged off, regiment by regiment, to take their station for the dance. And she, meanwhile?... If she were nervous, no sign of it betrayed her. She walked to her throne with the air of a small queen.... *Vera incessu patuit—Corona*; walked, too, without airs or *minauderies*, unconscious of all but the solemn glory. This was the pageant of her beloved

England, and hers for the moment was this proud part in it. Brother Copas brushed his eyes. In his ears buzzed the verse of a psalm—

She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work: the virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company...

The orchestra struck up a quick-tripping minuet. The regiments advanced on curving lines. They interwove their ranks, making rainbows of colour; they rayed out in broadening bands of colour from Corona's footstool. Through a dozen of these evolutions she sat, and took all the homage imperially. It was not given to her, but to the idea for which she was enthroned; and sitting, she nursed the idea in her heart.

The dance over—and twice or thrice as it proceeded the front of the Grand Stand shook with the clapping of thousands of hands, all agitated together as when a wind passes over a wheatfield—Corona had to arise from her throne, a wreath in either hand, and deliver a speech before Queen Mary. The length of it was just a line and three-quarters—

"Lady, accept these perishable flowers
Queen May brings to Queen Mary...."

She spoke them in a high, clear voice, and all the Grand Stand renewed its clapping as the child did obeisance.

"First-class!" grunted Brother Warboise at Copas's elbow. "Pity old Bonaday couldn't be here to see the girl!"

"Aye," said Copas; but there was that in his throat which forbade his saying more.

So the Pageant went on unfolding its scenes. Some of them were merely silly: all of them were false to fact, of course, and a few even false to sentiment. No entry, for example, received a heartier round of British applause than did Nell Gwynn's (Episode IX). Tears actually sprang to many eyes when an orange-girl in the crowd pushed forward offering her wares, and Nell with a gay laugh bought fruit of her, announcing "*I was an orange-girl once!*" Brother Copas snorted, and snorted again more loudly when Prebendary Ken refused to admit the naughty ex-orange-girl within his episcopal gates. For the audience applauded the protest almost as effusively, and again clapped like mad when the Merry Monarch took the rebuke like a sportsman, promising that "the next Bishopric that falls vacant shall be at this good old man's disposal!"

Indeed, much of the Pageant was extremely silly. Yet, as it progressed, Brother Copas was not alone in feeling his heart lift with the total effect of it. Here, after all, thousands of people were met in a common pride of England and her history. Distort it as the performers might, and vain, inadequate, as might be the words they declaimed, an idea lay behind it all. These thousands of people were met for a purpose in itself ennobling because unselfish. As often happens on such occasions, the rite took possession of them, seizing on them, surprising them with a sudden glow about the heart, sudden tears in the eyes. This *was* history of a sort. Towards the close, when the elm shadows began to stretch across the green stage, even careless spectators began to catch this infection of nobility— this feeling that we are indeed greater than we know.

In the last act all the characters—from early Briton to Georgian dame—trooped together into the arena. In groups marshalled at haphazard they chanted with full hearts the final hymn, and the audience unbidden joined in chorus—

"O God! our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home!"

"Where is the child?" asked Brother Copas, glancing through the throng.

He found her in the thick of the press, unable to see anything for the crowd about her, and led her off to a corner where, by the southern end of the Grand Stand, some twenty Brethren of St. Hospital stood shouting in company—

"A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun."

"She can't see. Lift her higher!" sang out a voice—Brother Royle's.

By happy chance at the edge of the group stood tall good-natured Alderman Chope, who had impersonated Alfred the Great. The Brethren begged his shield from him and mounted Corona upon it, all holding it by its rim while they chanted—

"The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their hopes and fears,
Are carried downward by the flood
And lost in following years.

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

"O God! our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Be Thou our guard while troubles last
And our perpetual home!"

Corona lifted her voice and sang with the old men; while among the excited groups the swallows skimmed boldly over the meadow, as they had skimmed every summer's evening before and since English History began.

CONCLUSION.

Brother Copas walked homeward along the river-path, his gaunt hands gathering his Beauchamp robe behind him for convenience of stride. Ahead of him and around him the swallows circled over the water-meads or swooped their breasts close to the current of Mere. Beside him strode his shadow, and lengthened as the sun westered in a haze of potable gold. In the haze swam evening odours of mints, grasses, herbs of grace and virtue named in old pharmacopœias as most medicinal for man, now forgotten, if not nameless.

The sunset breathed benediction. To many who walked homeward that evening it seemed in that benediction to enwrap the centuries of history they had so feverishly been celebrating, and to fold them softly away as a garment. But Brother Copas heeded it not. He was eager to reach St. Hospital and carry report to his old friend.

"Upon my word, it was an entire success.... I have criticised the Bambergers enough to have earned a right to admit it. In the end a sort of sacred fury took hold of the whole crowd, and in the midst of it we held her up—Corona—on a shield—"

Brother Bonaday lay panting. He had struggled through an attack sharper than any previous one—so much sharper that he knew the end to be not far distant, and only asked for the next to be swift.

"—And she was just splendid," said Brother Copas. "She had that unconscious way of stepping out of the past, with a crown on her head. My God, old friend, if I had that child for a daughter—"

Brother Bonaday lay and panted, not seeming to hear, still with his eyes upturned to the ceiling of his narrow cell. They scanned it as if feebly groping a passage through.

"I ought to have told you," he muttered.—"More than once I meant— tried—to tell you."

"Hey?"

Brother Copas bent lower.

"She—Corona—never was my child.... Give me your hand.... No, no; it's the truth, now. Her mother ran away from me... and she, Corona, was born... a year after... in America... Coronation year. The man—her father—died when she was six months old, and the woman... knowing that I was always weak—"

He panted, very feebly. Brother Copas, still holding his hand, leaned forward.

"Then she died, too.... What does it matter? Her message.... 'Bluff,' you would call it.... But she knew me. She was always decided in her dealings... to the end. I want to sleep now.... That's a good man!"

Brother Copas, seeking complete solitude, found it in the dusk of the garden beyond the Ambulatory. There, repelling the benediction of sunset that still lingered in the west, he lifted his face to the planet Jupiter, already establishing its light in a clear space of sky.

"Lord!" he ingeminated, "forgive me who counted myself the ironëist of St. Hospital!"

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