# THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST



HELEN SIMPSON

'HOR OF *"BOOMERANG"*

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# THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST

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## *Also by Helen Simpson*

THE BASELESS FABRIC
CUPS, WANDS AND SWORDS
THE DESOLATE HOUSE*
MUMBUDGET
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# THE WOMAN ON THE BEAST

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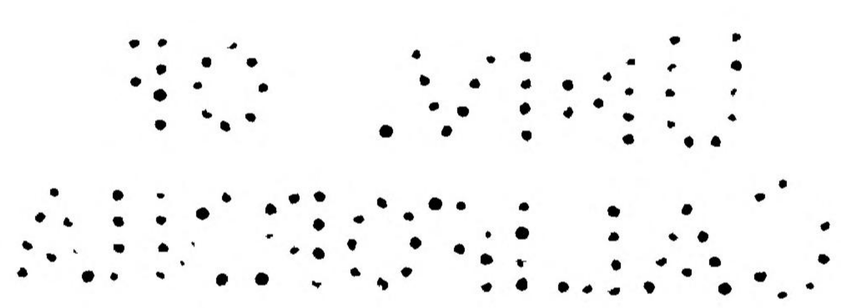
HELEN SIMPSON



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TO

DENIS BROWNE

Lo, is not a word better than a gift?
But both are with a gracious man.

—ECCLESIASTICUS

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# FOREWORD

THIS book tries to interpret a contradiction, that the most hateful actions are, as often as not, performed for the best of reasons. In the Prologue a Divine promise is made and, for good cause, broken. The three stories that follow have only this same idea in common, that men are driven to persecute and betray, not by malice or folly, but by the good they passionately wish their fellow men; that energy of which St. John speaks, sweet as honey in the mouth, bitter to the belly. The Epilogue shows Heaven defeated because divided against itself.

One personage needs explanation, the hermaphrodite who embodies this contradiction; Johannes of the first story, St. Esprit, the Grand Master, of the second, Mrs. Sopwith of the third. He-she is Antichrist, the false prophet of Revelation, who deceived with miracles all those having the mark of the beast on which the woman rode.

On another page I give some of St. John's terrific texts, but the chapter headings are taken from a lesser prophet, Nostradamus, whose book was Englished and annotated by Theophilus de Garancieres in 1692.

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## *From the Revelation of St. John the Divine*

So he carried me away in spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination and filthiness of her fornication. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.

. . . . . .

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said to him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth as sweet as honey.

. . . . . .

And lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as the fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind; and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

. . . . . .

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# PROLOGUE

## Between Earth and Heaven

By great discord, the Trumpet shall sound,
Agreement broken, lifting the head to Heaven,
A bloody mouth——

*Annotation:*

The words and sence are plain, and I cannot believe that there is any great mystery hidden under their words.

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(i)

IN THE YEAR that He-She was born a comet appeared which caused general wonder and some consternation in Europe. It showed suddenly after a week of clouded nights, its length a full third of the heavenly arc, its head more fiercely burning than any of the planets. For a week it lay across the heavens, then departed as it had come, to the relief of the unlettered, and even of some of the learned, who knew by many precedents that such invaders did not appear for nothing. The battle of Salamis, the fall of Carthage, Cæsar's death, and the destruction of Jerusalem: all these disasters had been heralded by such a portent, and it was not to be supposed that in the present case the nations would escape affliction. Others, more inclined to argument, presented another aspect of the matter. These misfortunes, they said, were not universal, but one-sided. True, Scipio was the scourge of Carthage, yet to Rome he was a hero; while the defeat of the Persians, though galling to Xerxes, represented triumph for the opposing Greeks, and so might be counted no more than half a calamity.

These were the speculations of wise and learned men, which meant little in the life of every day. To all women, and the greater number of men in cities, the comet brought fear. Astrologers found their calculations obscured by the bright visitant, and descended from their towers in anger. Sea captains would not put out while the strange light hung across their accustomed stars. It checked the advancing fury in the east,

that swore by Mahomet, and carried the emblem of the new moon into battle; the new moon showed palely through this fiery trail. In all countries births were difficult and untimely.

There were a few who counted the sign good. Men on the slopes of Rhenish and Burgundian and Tuscan hills looked up and were glad, for it was known that the grapes which ripen under such influence make memorable wine. Farmers, seeing how the comet hung like a full ear of wheat, looked forward to an abundant harvest. To soldiers' eyes it lay across the night like a sword, and they cuffed each other, laughing over their dice at the thought that there might be good wars before long.

(ii)

In a Western Kingdom, which he had usurped, an elderly ruler lay dying. He had adopted the Christian religion at the last moment, for the reason that men adopt children: because he had none of his own. He had spent six weeks very pleasantly in the intervals of pain matching his wits against those of the young Saint, his evangelist. He had bargained well, gaining a little each day; and whereas the Saint had begun with the mere assurance that all past sins would be forgiven, though they would still have to be paid for, he had ended, such was his eagerness and the old King's skill, with the unconditional promise of an eternal crown. In this he had gone beyond his authority, for while the incidents of the King's past life might, with good will, come to be overlooked, they were not of a nature to deserve reward. The Saint



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was a Bishop, in the direct line of apostolic succession; that which he bound on earth was bound also in heaven; and the arbiters felt that his thoughtless zeal had put them in a position of some delicacy. Already there was discontent among the blessed, who resented the leniency shown to eleventh-hour repentances; they asserted that some distinction should be made between those who all their lives had striven for virtue, and those who had fled from sin only when sin had no more to offer. The arbiters feared that there would be trouble if that old intolerant King were to show his face in heaven, and it was decided that one of them should descend to earth and reason with the saint.

The arbiter so appointed went out from the east gate, and stepping down the way that was used by souls ascending, came soon to that universe which is warmed by the sun, and to the planet of which his overlord delighted to have care. It was beautiful, he thought; and he smiled to see how, in spite of humanity, order reigned. The pulses of the world kept time, swayed by the moon; the seasons paced their round, bringing gifts of unrest, love, fruition and sleep; while human creatures, those noisy plaintiffs of free will, at the end of their lives became obedient, and submitted themselves without protest to the earth. He, the passionless, could wonder no longer at his lord's dotage when he watched the evening light die behind clouds, and saw how the rude texture of the grass showed colours more admirable than those assembled in the stormy foundations of heaven.

"This race," mused the arbiter, "may well be considered the spoilt child of creation. Untroubled by wisdom, indifferent to the concerns of the universe, these creatures know nothing of the burden of desire



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and wonder by which heaven is maintained; not theirs the lifting agony of spirit that for ever acknowledges perfection. They know nothing of the real, dwelling as they do within limitations which their own imaginations have made, but cannot comprehend. They set eternity aside in measured ells which they know as time. They rob love of immortality by putting on it the yoke of the flesh. When they choose they may draw their imaginings like a veil across their world, and see it otherwise than as it is; a gift which no doubt is for their peace, since from all accounts they have allowed matters to come to a pretty pass, as these microcosms go."

At this point in his meditation the arbiter observed a tall young man striding towards him, and knew that this was the saint on whose account he had come. Moving forward a little, he addressed him by name.

"Bishop Chilperic?"

"None other," the Bishop replied, and stared somewhat haughtily. Then, observing that the light about the other's head owed nothing to the dying sun, he understood that he was in the presence of a messenger, and abased himself. The arbiter blessed him, and without further enquiry came to the matter.

"My son," said he, "is it a fact that you have conceded an eternal mansion to this pagan who now wears the crown of the West?"

The Bishop admitted that this was so.

"In that case," the arbiter continued, "I may tell you that we cannot in conscience ratify the concession. Setting aside the lesser aspects—the discontent which such a promotion would undoubtedly arouse among the blessed—there is a larger question to be considered, that of the human attitude to virtue. Already, as a



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race, you look on her unfavourably. She is in the position of an unprepossessing virgin with a large dowry, while her younger sister, vice, has every attraction, but is portionless. Hitherto this plan has been successful, and has kept the scales level; but if the heavenly riches are to be evened between these two, the elder sister may despair of suitors. Such is humanity. Bishop, it will not do."

"My lord," said the Bishop without humility, though he still knelt, "I thought by securing the King to advance the glory of God upon earth. This man has been a scourge, dreaded by nations. No alliance of kings could subdue him; even now death stands aside, baulked by his will. To my mind such a conversion is worth more—being, as we are, among heathen—than a thousand miracles; more than a shower of blood, or a monster cast up out of the sea, or a woman possessed by the devil. For these people are apt to attribute such shows to the activity of their old gods, in whose time, they say, such things were common. Misinterpreted, miracles lose their value; but a plain fact, as the conversion of their redoubtable King, must compel them to believe and tremble. For this reason I pledged the word of God."

"You are very young," said the arbiter, "and so put your trust in reason rather than in faith. It is true that God promised your predecessors, the apostles, that they should have power to bind and loose; but it was understood that their function extended to the remission of guilt only, and not of punishment; still less had they power to make unconditional promise of rewards. You may not set the word of God against the nature of God; this is to split creation and set a term to the eternal. You lack, not zeal, but theology;



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and now you must find some way out of the tangle, or prepare for the coming of Anti-Christ."

Saying this, the arbiter withdrew, and the Bishop, groaning, fell forward until he lay flat against the earth, seeking help from that counsellor as the boy Chilperic had done, when he herded sheep and his father beat him at night for the loss of a lamb. Now, as then, he thought how remote was justice, how lonely each soul made guardian over others, how dreadful was authority, and how blind the rod; but at last, as long ago he had learned to account for a lamb lost, or a wether snatched by wolves from under his crook, he set his wits to work in this matter of the King's soul, his own bargain, and the honour of the Most High.

Bats wheeled above him. Light faded from the sky, and across it slowly appeared the arch of the comet. He lay still, his heart beating against the earth, his thoughts leaping back and forth as his mother's shuttle had used to do, until, like the shuttle, they made a web at last. He sat up, and at once, though he made no sound, the arbiter was by his side.

"Sir," said the Bishop to him, "if I could know what is a word, I might find the way out."

"You ask a wide question," the arbiter answered. "An earthly word may be a bond, an agony, a caress, or the shadow of thought. True thought, the thought of God, is rigid, so held by the furious energy that rages to sustain it; and this is the word, the light, which your darkness cannot comprehend."

"But, my lord," the Bishop insisted, "may it not be with the word of God as with our light? This comes to us white from the sun; but sift it through glass, some bevel of man's making, and it splits into colour."



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"Analogy——" The arbiter paused doubtfully upon the word.

"No, but parable," the Bishop corrected him swiftly, "and for parable we have authority."

The arbiter admitted the touch with a gracious gesture, as a fencer might; but immediately resuming: "Come, Bishop," said he, "your plan."

The Bishop wasted no more time in subtleties, but sat up, and gathering his gown about his feet, his thin boyish hands clasping his knees together, told of his decision.

"It is this," said he. "I have pledged the Infinite word that this King, when he puts off flesh, shall have an undying crown."

"Heaven will not receive him," the arbiter warned.

"Be it so," said the Bishop; and then dropping his voice, "Are there no principalities in hell?"

The arbiter looked at the Bishop, and was silent for a time; slowly he considered, and at last spoke:

"Hell," said the arbiter, "has its constitution as we have. I fear the established lords will not accept without protest a redistribution of power, be the newcomer's qualifications what they may."

The Bishop looked downcast, while the other took, in perplexity, a turn or two among the rocks, that by this time were almost one in colour with the grass. There was no sound of his steps; but his words came clear upon the air.

"We may look for trouble," said the arbiter, pondering. "It might mean war; yet even that is to be preferred to revolution. This suggestion of yours," said he, returning to where the Bishop sat, "though dangerous, may answer. On the whole we are obliged to you."



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He stood above Chilperic in radiance; and through his aureole of faint heavenly light an arc of deeper gold began to pulse and glow. The comet, that faithful attendant of the night, was close upon night's heels, and now lay athwart the arbiter's head like a sword, threatening: unperturbed, he made a gesture of blessing, and addressed final words to the Bishop.

"I will," said he, "at once interview the outlawed powers. They are open to reason, a fact which in part explains their present situation. Your sinner shall have a dukedom, if I can contrive it, and some infernal patronage; moreover, he shall be protected and assured against disturbance by conjuration."

With this he prepared to go; but the Bishop, whose first awe was passing, with outstretched hand stayed the ascent.

"One thing more," said he, and pointed to the hanging star; "is not this sent on the King's account, to warn the world of his passing? It is his whim to think so," went on the Bishop, a little shamefaced, "and perhaps I have lent the fancy some colour."

The arbiter shook his head, standing poised.

"The death of a man," said he, "even a king, needs no sign set in the sky; at such a time God has His will, even of the most stubborn."

"Then what may be its meaning, if not this, my lord?"

"None," tranquilly the arbiter replied. "It is part of the method of action imposed by His creatures upon their indulgent creator. Very rightly, they credit Him with preknowledge; but this brings terror, for it seems to them that their fates, being foreknown, must be foredestined. Therefore they demand that free-will, the power of choice, shall seem to be theirs. The



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working of such a seeming contradiction is excellently set forth in this star. For since God knows what is to come, men think it just that He should warn; yet He may not spell out His meaning—as was done in the past by the prophets—lest He should appear to fore-ordain. This star He sets up, a sign plain in the heavens for all to read; a portent; but what its meaning is, what it portends, each man must guess for himself."

At this the Bishop became silent, considering the mysterious ways of God; and the arbiter, having no more to hear or to tell, began smoothly to mount the air. Like smoke he seemed to be drawn upwards, quickening his drift as he ascended. Soon he came out of earth's shadow into the last beams of the sun, and there hung an instant, the merest speck, but glorious, and still seeming to bless; then the night mist hid him.

The Bishop rose from his knees to which he had respectfully fallen, and went back to his dying King, with no further delay than was needed to mark with a pile of stones the patch of grass last pressed by the arbiter's feet. This he did that there might be no after-confusion and therefore no unedifying disputes among the faithful as to the exact, the venerable spot. True, there remained always the test of miracle; authentic grass would heal, no doubt, blindness, and the scars of love. But the Bishop, with a dozen pebbles convenient to his hands, saw no reason to trouble omnipotence.

An hour's walking with his shepherd's stride brought him out of the hilly places to the town, whose lights lay, like gold-dust sprinkled, in the hollow below. He went forward praying; now and then a shiver took him, at the thought of the King's destiny after death, and the burning crown which a trick of words had set upon his forehead.



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(iii)

The King's room, when he came to it, was dark, and silent save for the guard's footsteps outside the door; only a sullen fire of damp and knotty wood showed him the bed, and skins where he might set his foot noiselessly. The King seemed to be sleeping. His beard was thrust up, and his breathing wavered, ceased and was renewed, as is the way with sleepers. The Bishop seated himself, and without thinking began to murmur that prayer with which the exorcist protects himself from the revengeful and assailing spirits of the damned.

"O Lord God Almighty, as Thou didst warn by Thine angel the three Kings of Cologne when they came towards Bethlehem, worshipping with gifts the High King of all the world, Jesus; at which time the holy angel Gabriel warned these three lords, that meekly sought our Saviour; as wittily and truly as these did turn for dread, and take another way; so wisely and truly, O Lord God, of Thy mercy bless us now at this time, and keep us from all evil, Thy holy angel defending."

His lips ceased their motion, but his mind spoke the tremendous names of God, Agla, Adonay, Tetragrammaton; and as the fire for no reason suddenly leaped, he perceived, looking up, that it was well he had done so.

There were figures in the room, insubstantial, he knew, bodiless, but real to the sight. Save one, they were not shaped like men; that is, not wholly. One, tall as the roof, had a raven's head, from whose beak flames were issuing. Another had the appearance of an angel, but obscure and filthy; he held, folded about



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his wrist, a viper. Another seemed like a leopard, but winged, another like a sea monster; yet another had a single horn starting from his ape's forehead. Only one had the complete form of a man; his face was womanish, and he wore an ugly crown, and seemed, by standing foremost, to be their chief. These beings, remaining motionless and silent, had in their bearing the same flaw. There was about them all a kind of twisted majesty, pride gone hideous. Their cold eyes, that knew no hope, stared in the one direction, towards where the King's beard showed, tilted in sleep. Despite their flames, and the light they cast about them, a kind of dim and murky glare, the Bishop knew them to be stiff and numbed with the dead cold of hell; this had invaded the room with them, and came about Chilperic as he crouched by the fire, so he could not obey his impulse, which was—for he had courage—to spring up and defend the King. He strove, but the cold held him. He could only watch, since night or death alone can take the sight from the living eye, and watch he did, with starting eyeballs, and hair lifting, and the powerful names of God pacing in turn through his mind.

The personages, it seemed, were content to bide their time. They waited, still as idols, until with a choking cough and an outflung arm the King woke. The light was sufficient; he saw them, and gave a cry. Outside the door the guard's step paused; then, as the sound was not repeated, its rhythm began once more, and the King, drawing himself up by the carved serpents on his bed, sat blinking. The Bishop saw him finger his wrist, and pinch his arm, and knew that the cold was upon him, and that the King was in two minds whether or no this was death.



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Observing his movement, the leader of the infernal party, he with the woman's face, began to speak in a voice becoming his appearance, at once hoarse and soft.

"King of the West," said he, "you are about to die."

The King could not answer, being in the chilly bondage of their presence, but his beard went defiantly up.

"And as the matter stands," the personage went on, "you go, according to promise, from a crown to a crown."

The Bishop shuddered in his corner by the fire.

"You have been appointed, by those whose concern is not with our affairs, to be prince and captain of seventy legions. These persons, in their arbitrary fashion, take from each one of us here ten legions, to set you up in your dominion. The command does not come with authority; we do not obey, and are here to warn you that should you come to us, you must not look to rule. You are to understand," went on the spokesman, deprecating, "that as a private individual you will be very welcome; but such an elevation as this is unprecedented, and not to be borne. I do not say that it is your fault; it is your misfortune that you are human, and therefore cannot have preserved such integrity in evil as is our privilege. Your life has been sullied by long periods of innocence, for example, your childhood; and even during these later days there have been impulses towards good. I repeat, that as a private citizen of our commonwealth you will receive consideration; but as for a peerage, I recommend you to dismiss the idea without delay from your mind."

At this the King's blood, defying the cold, climbed into his cheeks and set his eyes blazing.



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"My crown," said he, the words coming hardly, "has been promised, I would have you know."

"I regret," replied the personage with unyielding courtesy, "that we in hell cannot oblige you. Take your petition higher. Heaven"—there came a sidelong feminine smile—"has more room."

The King stuttered, and something clicked in his throat before he sank back upon the carved serpents; but as if his words had broken an enchantment, the Bishop made an upward lurch, and was upon his feet. From the fire he snatched two flaming faggots, and holding them crosswise before him, advanced, exhorting the assembly by name in a voice that, for all his effort, was no louder than a summer rustling of leaves:

"You seven infernal princes, by the word which Solomon used, and the power of his seal, the secret of secrets, go! Duke Vapula, go! Forneus, sea-monster knowledgeable in tongues, Ipos, Sitri, back to hell's marches! Amducias of the single horn, I command you; Eligor, and you. Prince Paimon, looking to the north-west I bid you return to that mansion in hell for which, silly lord, you changed a seat among the cherubim. I conjure you, by all the royal names of the living God, which, unworthy, I here pronounce; by Algramay, Sidonay, Saboath; by Planaboth, Panthon, Craton——"

The Bishop's mouth stood wide, there was blood on his lips, his robe was disordered; cinders and sparks from the burning wood fell upon his trembling hands, and singed his young beard. In short, the Bishop was a spectacle, and as such the princes of the air seemed to regard him, patiently waiting till he should have done. They displayed no signs of shame or panic, but bowed their heads courteously at each one of the names;



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and their behaviour was such that the Bishop, whose first exorcism it was, soon ceased, and with a final brandish of his cross, on which the flames were dying, lowered his hands and fell silent.

It was Paimon of the woman's face, commander of seventy legions, within whose knowledge lay the disposition of the world and the whereabouts of the winds, who spoke at last.

"And now," said he, "has your reverence done?"

The Bishop did not answer; the fallen cherub continued:

"But for your eloquence we should long since have been on our way. You have no cause, sir, to wear that air of chagrin. If this was your first exorcism, believe me, who am older and experienced, it was very well done. But we have other duties, and with your permission must now be going."

The Bishop answered, sullen under these compliments:

"What kind of fiends are you? Have you in your abysses forgotten that fear which is the beginning of wisdom? Have you forgotten Him whose heel is upon your necks?"

And once more, but with hope rather than faith, he began his recitation of the names. The seven powers listened, something of that discomfort apparent in their attitude with which men hear a solecism or breach of manners; and when for the second time, breathless, he ceased declaiming, the leader spoke with indulgence.

"I perceive," said he, "that you are ignorant of the manner in which the universe is ordered. You have, during the past few minutes, attempted to alarm us and speed our departure with a recital of the dignities of the ruler of heaven. You have yet to learn that his



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authority does not extend so far as his ministers may have boasted. Heaven and hell are two separate and magnificent creations. The intelligence which directs us is as sure, our spirits are as potent and as numerous, as those of the so-called overlord. How then, you may ask, does he occupy the position of credit, while we must content ourselves with such intractable lordships as darkness and fire? I will not weary you"—as the Bishop showed signs, having regained his breath, of setting out his formula a third time—"briefly, it is this. It is because, anticipating a commercial maxim of later ages, he has found honesty to be the best policy. He has, throughout the ages, kept faith. What he threatened, he also performed, though a whole city should suffer, or a whole generation. In the matter of rewards, his practice was the same: promise sparely, but perform entirely. Here was our weakness. We could not rid ourselves of the principle that a lie, being more ingenious than the truth, was better policy; whereas a lie is nothing more than a maze, in which force wanders and is spent. While he maintained this level of judgment, the struggle between us was unequal; but recently he has been nodding a little, has delegated to mankind certain powers which he had better have kept his hand upon; and the upshot of it is, in a little time you may find that the balance has tilted another way."

At this the Bishop could no longer contain indignation, and broke forth in the words of David the singer:

"Oh God, how long shall this adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?"

"No longer than is necessary," the lord of devils assured him. "Meanwhile I would guide your memory forward, to certain significant words in the psalm that



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follows: 'He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth.'" Then, with his womanish laugh and a civil gesture: "We must be going, Bishop Chilperic; nor do we take it unkindly that your penitent has preceded us."

At that, forgetful of their presence, and his own anger, the Bishop ran forward to the bed. As he went the sombre radiance was withdrawn from the room, the cold which had vanquished him passed from his heart and limbs; only in the King's hand and forehead as he touched them something of it remained. He knelt in the darkness, his fingers upon the unresponding pulse, stunned, empty of thought, unable to pray. As he knelt, a voice came to his ears, a lost and bloodless voice, wandering upon the air:

"My crown," it said. "Where's my crown?"

The Bishop sank down in utter wretchedness, beating his breast, and imploring with all his soul the boon of prayer; but the voice continued, thin, and like the tireless song of an insect:

"He whom I trusted has broken faith. I have no kingdom and no dwelling. My baptism was bought with lies. Give me my crown!"

It seemed to the Bishop as though, somewhere, the words echoed; another instant, and he was sure. Painfully up through the earth, swift through the air, thudding like a roar of blood in his ears, a cataract of sound grew, and filled the empty night.

"Keep faith, Eternal! Give him his crown!"

Then, as though to hear the answer, such a silence fell as could never before have been known. Trees and grasses stood still, all breathing ceased of animals and men; the waters paused. But there was no answer, no single trumpet blown in power



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and wrath for a sign. The challenge was ignored.

When this was understood by those who waited, the silence ended. Earth was shaken, the airs drove this way and that in fury; against the distant city quays could be heard the bellowing of the sea; while above, the comet's fires were dimmed all at once by an un-numbered host ascending. This the Bishop saw, looking up in fear, and knew that what the straying star portended was nothing less than the coming of Anti-Christ.



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# BOOK I

## The Indies, 1579

Lost, found again, hidden so great a while,
A pastor as Deme-God shall be honoured;
But before the Moon endeth her great Age
By other winds he shall be dishonoured.

*Annotation:*

The prophecie is concerning the body of a famous Churchman, which was lost and shall be found again, and worshiped as a Demy-God.



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(i)

THAT BLOODY but most religious piece of piracy, the affair of Adam's Tooth, has been neglected by historians; yet, for all that, it was a matter that sent echoes all through Asia, even into China, and those solitudes of Cambodia where the bones of another religious adventure lay whitening in the jungle. The Portuguese, who were most concerned in it, being loyal sons of Christendom and the Pope, necessarily took their Archbishop's side in the telling, and so there remain here and there only scattered hints of the truth, notably a paragraph in that excellent book of Thomas Herbert, his *Relation of Some Years Travaile*, published in London in the year 1634. I give almost the whole of the chapter, since it is short, but illuminating.

*Of the Isle Zeyloon*

This famous Isle is not far distant from the point of India called Cape Comrein, it elevates the Articke Pole seven degrees, by which we closely travelled, leaving the Asiaticall continent. It abounds with Cinamon, and other odoriferous and Aromaticall Spices. The people (for the greater part) are Paynims, and know no God. Some have a smacke of Christ, others of Mahomet, but those are very few. The people goe naked, not forced to it by poverty but heat, they are Owners of the best Smaragds, Rubies and Ambergreese through Asia. Yet want these inestimable stones



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that vertue in their Orient lustre, to lighten them the way to perfect glory (poor wretched creatures) they are too zealous (foolish zeale) in their bewitching cursed Idolatory. For it is apparent, that on the high peake (cald by the Europeans) Columbo, tis orthodoxally held by them that Adam was first Created and lived there, they beleeve it rather in regard his vestigatings are yet imprinted in the Earth, but generally the Inhabitants are egregious Paynims. As testifies the Ape's tooth, so highly, so generally esteemed, so fervently prayed to, which tooth was taken from them not long agoe by the adventurous Lusitanians and carried to Goa, where the Archbishop and Vice-Roy burnt it, although the people to redeem it offered an incredible masse of treasure, refused unwisely. For by a crafty Bannian (priest) an other like to the former was brought forth, which he protested was the same and recovered miraculously, thereby infinitely enriching himself, and joying not a little these credulous and well contented Zeylonians.

Pilgrims from remote parts apace flocke hither, where atop a high mount is conspicuously set the Idaea of a horrible Caco-demon, touching which the Syngales, their priests, Cronography, That once Iohna their King held this monstrous Daemon in derision, but entering the sacred Temple, he (in great agonie) beheld the Idoll Devill breath forth fury against him, shewing it by his fiery eyes and flaming Semiter (threatfully held against him) whereat the relenting King amazed returns, becomes penitentiary, and ecchoes sorrow for his former errours.

The Isle is repleate with innumerable Abominations, for in most corners are seen one ugly monstrous shape or other, which, as they are diverse, so doe they



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diversely infect the humors of divers men, and to which (as particular fancie feeds them) they bestow Orizons upon.

The place where the great Pagotha stands, is inveloped with a cloud of armes and as sedulously looked into (and good reason), for they verily beleeve that so soon as that tottering fabrique falls, the finall Ruine of the world shall immediately come after.

Thus far Thomas Herbert, an Englishman of immense respectability and related, as he insists rather naïvely throughout the course of his book, to the Earls of Pembroke and Powis. It is his practice in narration to give, while deploring, the very fullest possible account of such Abominations as met his eye or his alert ear, and from the fact that he relates no details of the Lusitanian raid, even when he comes to treat of Goa itself, it seems evident that neither side cared to boast of its share in the business. Goa is wealthy, he admits reluctantly; and has a struggle within his own mind to reconcile this lavishness of an all-wise Providence towards egregious Paynims with the self-evident fact of England's poverty in the matter of precious metals and stones. In the course of an argument wonderfully conceived he comes to the conclusion that these favours are bestowed in order to lull the heathen to a false security of hope, and conduct them the more surely to their undoing. "Notwithstanding, their wealth being mixt with unthankfulness, damnable Idolatory, and variety of carnall objects, turns to their greater destruction, and endlesse miseries." This comfortable doctrine, which seems seldom to have impeded either the English or the Portuguese in their quest for treasure and trade, makes the story of the refusal of ransom for



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Adam's Tooth all the more odd. The mind, with such scanty facts before it, tries over the situation this way and that. Possibly the Archbishop considered the Tooth a genuine relic and as such determined to rescue it from the hands of the idolatrous people of Ceylon; in that case, why, having acquired, burn it? Or did he take it at its face value as the tooth of an ape, stupidly revered by a people still in darkness; in that case, and if his object was conversion, why leave the Caco-demon? Or did he suppose it to be really a monkey's tooth, but blasphemously miscalled and miscredited to the first man, so that out of piety and reverence as grandson of the two hundred and twentieth generation (allowing four generations to a century) from humanity's common father, he could no longer permit the imposture to go on? Even in this case, why did he not accept the ransom and build magnificently with it, in the belief, which surely he must have held, that a cathedral equipped with genuine relics and a silver altar could comfortably outpray a mere heathen Pagotha built about one piece of unhallowed bone?

The problem, one of extreme complexity, and of concern to all Christendom as will be shown, may be resolved thus:

(ii)

But first it may be as well to give some description of the Tooth itself, and thus, as the reconstructors of pterodactyls do, build up from this one bone some kind of image of the creature from which it came.

It was, to begin with, some two feet long, and proportionately heavy, the shape of a gigantic eye-tooth,



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observers say; and its prowess in self-defence against previous raids might reasonably be accounted something more than simian. It was a relic with a mind and semi-miraculous powers of its own. The Viceroy of Goa was by no means the first person to send an expedition in search of it; indeed, he might well have taken warning by the fate of previous ravishers of its temple who attempted, these too, to burn it, and failed pitiably; for they were not only frustrated in their purpose, but converted by its reasoning. It spoke, and made good Buddhists of them, so that very humbly they sent it back to its city of Dantapura, which older writers call Odontopolis, Toothtown.

In the year of Christ 1284, says Marco Polo, the great Khan of China, Kublai, sent envoys to obtain the relic of Adam, together with some of his hair, still preserved in the Cingalese temple. He paid for these, says Polo, a mighty great treasure, and made a mighty bad bargain, for they were teeth of God knows who, and the true tooth, the revered Dalada, stayed quiet in its temple to receive pilgrims as before. There was another rape in the fourteenth century, and the king of the island had to go in person to the King of the Tamils, and plead, and pay, the Tooth itself this time taking no active part in its own deliverance. It was returned, and revered in peace for another century and a half, until the Viceroy of Goa, Dom Constantino de Bragança, undertook this final, and, until now, unexplained expedition.

(iii)

The Inquisidor Mor, or Grand Inquisitor of Goa, was a personage owning no jurisdiction save that of the



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supreme council of the Inquisition of Portugal, a comfortable eight thousand miles or so away. The Archbishop might and did stand higher spiritually, might excommunicate, might wear the robes and mitre, while the Inquisidor Mor went about rustily in black, unheralded by children singing and censing him; for all that, every soul in Goa knew which of the two held the power. The Viceroy, the very noble Dom Constantino de Bragança, might ride about the streets in a palanquin with his arms and quarterings borne on a gilded banner before him, and men in armour following, while the Inquisidor went on foot, spoke peasant-fashion, and as a boy had trodden among the wine-pressers; but the Viceroy, for all the clash of arms about him, never felt comfortable under the eye of this unbeneficed priest. He was a man, the Inquisidor, who lived without display and without excess, perpetually revolving within his mind schemes for the greater glory of God, and for the propagation of truth.

For this he held his office, to impose truth upon the reluctant or unenlightened; this was his passion, he held it close to him day and night like the memory of some loved person lost, and it was his cross that truth, in the East, should be so hard to come by. When he had first arrived from Portugal, three years before, almost the first sight that met his eyes was a crowd of cheerful but indigent blacks squatting in the sun outside a building which he had been told was the court of justice. Asking idly what they did there, he was answered, as idly, that they were the professional witnesses waiting to be summoned; and as he paused in utter dismay two or three braver ones of the fraternity came sidling up to him, saying in their lingo, which he had studied on the voyage and could partly understand, that they hoped



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he would remember them, poor honest men, if ever he needed anything sworn to.

That scandal had not lasted long. The witnesses were forbidden, under penalties which were made very clear, to practise; they desisted, grumbling, and returned to agricultural labour, or to the fisheries, where their gift of imaginative embroidery was altogether wasted. The Inquisidor Mor found many such minor abuses in Goa, and stopped them without argument, somewhat to the alarm of the Archbishop, an excellent man, but timid, whose character was no match for the narrow sword-like intelligence of the Inquisidor. He trembled, the Archbishop, but he did not interfere; only watched while his zealous coadjutor drove all the incredulity and vice of Goa underground. But the bones of St. Thomas were quite another thing.

These relics had been rescued from the unbelievers at Meliapore by a previous Viceroy, Duarte Menezes, a man of his hands, and one neglectful if not actually contemptuous of books. This last was a pity; for had the Viceroy and the Archbishop, who was somewhat of his way of thinking, taken the trouble to make enquiry before beginning their crusade, they would have discovered that the bones of St. Thomas had already been translated, some thousand years before, to Edessa in Mesopotamia. Thus, the bones that were shrined in silver in the Sé Primacial were not those of the Apostle at all, but some quite unsanctified, and possibly even pagan bones fobbed off on the trusting Viceroy by the Nestorian Christians of Meliapore, masters of sharp practice, and heretics to a man.

All this the Inquisidor knew, being a scholar in things theological; had known from the moment of his arrival, and was not prepared to tolerate. These bones, so



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artlessly reverenced, so magnificently housed, were his plague-spot and his conscience's thorn. He knew them to be a fraud; he suspected them of being pagan, and a joke against Goa contrived by the insensitive Nestorians of Meliapore; but prove it he could not, and his fulminations beat like angry waves upon rock against the business of the pilgrimages.

The fact was, that although the fraud had been perpetrated, the perpetrators had kept the joke to themselves, and the whole coast of Coromandel, with that of the Persian Gulf and the Moluccas, believed in St. Thomas, and came yearly, and in prodigious numbers, on pilgrimages to his shrine. Their offerings enriched the Sé; and the dues they paid maintained in good order the harbour, the forts, and the Viceroy's own substantial purse. Almost daily, and with more earnestness as the pilgrim months approached, the Inquisidor Mor entreated both powers, clerical and lay, to remove this shame. In vain; the Viceroy, who took dues from all entering shipping, was not for spoiling the pilgrim trade of Goa. He approached the Archbishop, who thought that it was a delicate matter to interfere with faith, and once, greatly bold, reproached the Inquisidor for lacking it; but he soon got into a theological bog, and with that unwinking Inquisidorial eye on him found himself stuttering out such heresies as that the object believed in need not necessarily be worthy of belief; that an act of faith counted in God's sight whether a mere stick or stone were its occasion or a piece of the True Cross; until he became aware of the growing coldness of that eye, and pulled himself together to protest against any discrediting of the bones on a point of ecclesiastical policy. The relics, he said, gathering his wits as well as he could, had been



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authoritatively vouched for by wiser and holier investigators thirty years ago, when they were brought in triumph home. The blacks were restless at the present time, authority must be maintained; it was vital to the continued existence of the community that the pronouncements of the whites, and more particularly of the church, should not be called publicly in question. Authority—

"—and more especially, reverend father, your authority," said the Archbishop, timidly smiling, "backed as it is by great knowledge and special powers."

"It is my concern to preserve this people from false beliefs," returned the Inquisidor, standing, for humility would not allow him to be seated in the presence of his bishop. "The canonical test has not yet been applied to the bones."

"The canonical test!" repeated Dom Gaspar, starting.

The Inquisidor, who knew that he had heard, and knew, too, from the alarm tingeing his voice, that the Archbishop had perfectly well understood, stood silent, humbly folding his hands within his sleeves. But the disconcerted Archbishop had really nothing to say, and after waiting a respectful while the Inquisidor continued:

"Christendom presents just now a very scandalous spectacle. A dozen and a half of Saint Veronica's holy napkins are displayed, each one with the face on it, and six right hands of St. Paul; I say nothing of the innumerable phials filled with Our Lady's tears, for after all she must have wept much; but faith should not be tried too highly; and it is my opinion, subject always to your Grace's correction, that a Christian should not be obliged to picture in his devotions a Saint Paul having six arms a side, like any heathen idol."



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The Archbishop, disturbed, turned this way and that in his chair; crossed his legs, joined his finger-tips, looked as wise as he could; but after all these manœuvres could find nothing better to say than:

"The state of things—offerings, pilgrims, and so forth—is not unsatisfactory. The Viceroy had only yesterday a request from some Saracens further up the coast, asking for safe-conduct to come and worship at the Saint's shrine, referring to him very properly in their barbarous tongue as Hawariy, a very holy man. Not that I question your zeal, father; but there is just this to be considered, whether or not in the circumstances it is judicious——"

His sentence tailed away, uninterrupted by any word of the Inquisidor. That mild man knew his place much too well to break in upon the conversation of his spiritual superior; but his stilly eye, with purpose in it, stopped the words in Dom Gaspar's throat more surely than any noisy interjection could have done.

"I am the guardian, under your Grace and His Holiness, of this dark people's faith," repeated the Inquisidor Mor softly. "They have at last crept, after much persuasion, into the Church's bosom; if they are to find adders there they cannot be blamed for running out from it."

"Adders!" repeated the Archbishop, seizing with relief upon what seemed a personal reproach. "Do you apply that word to me, my son?"

The Inquisidor Mor lifted shocked hands.

"Most reverend father! By the similitude of an adder I meant to imply the false comfort which these poor pilgrims receive at the shrine of one whose soul may at this hour be blaspheming in hell."

"But," protested the Archbishop weakly, "if the



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people are comforted—there have been a number of miracles reported——"

"And by whom performed?" the Inquisidor asked.

"But—by the Apostle," answered the Archbishop, staring.

"By Satan, for his own purposes," the Inquisidor corrected grimly; and having raised his voice a little rebuked himself inwardly for impatience, touching the iron crucifix he wore hanging at his neck.

"Satan heal the sick!" The Archbishop was incredulous.

"Why not? That he can afflict, we know; that he can take away afflictions he himself has caused—but not God's—that, too, we know. His power is wide-flung. He is cunning. This would be a trick to his liking, taking away the sight of some unfortunate in Calicut, and restoring it in Goa, to give false credit to the bones of one of his damned flock."

"You are familiar, son, with the ways of the devil," said the driven Archbishop tartly.

"It is necessary, in a part of the globe which is his chosen habitation," answered the Inquisidor; and returned to his point. "Have I leave to prepare for a public test of the relics?"

"I must take advice of Dom Constantino," said the Archbishop, wavering. "He will have written by now to those Saracens. What is to be done with them?"

"Persuade them," said the Inquisidor Mor softly.

The Archbishop winced. He rarely paid a visit to the Aljube, the ecclesiastical prison; he shut his eyes in pious recollection during the triennial *auto-da-fé*. He was a man who liked life to go smoothly, and he knew, from what he had heard of previous experiments, that



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Saracens were hard to persuade. Happily, however, he had an answer.

"The Viceroy is to give a safe conduct."

"If by persuasion we can assure them of a safe conduct to heaven, they will have the best of the bargain."

"Dom Constantino must have the last word," said the Archbishop, and fairly turned tail at that, sketched a benediction, and moved with agility, considering his bulk and the heat, out of the room. The Inquisidor, fingering his iron cross, went out by a different door, and into the square, down the Strada Diretta, the street which is called straight, towards his own dwelling. He was not, on the whole, discontented with the interview, though his prudent mind told him that he would need to bring some pressure to bear upon the Viceroy; there were certain viceregal dues which strangers and pilgrims paid, and which, since Dom Constantino was human, it was not to be expected that he would abandon lightly. How to set about it? For the Inquisidor preferred not to command. He had no ambition to be dreaded as a tyrant, and he was genuinely abashed and dismayed when the blacks cringed from the fall of his long shadow as he walked at evening on the quay in the cool air, reciting his Compline. But his was not a spirit any too apt at persuasion, except when assisted by the tools of his office. He walked on in thought, hands tucked together within his sleeves, head bent; and though it was midday, and his shadow kept close to his heels, the dark people huddled away into their booths and huts at the sight of him, making signs as old as the hills, and none too Christian, that they might be protected from the afflictions at his command.



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(iv)

The Archbishop ran into the room where he slept, and stood with one hand on his breast, panting. The room was cool. Its windows were shuttered, and through the stillness came the beat of a contrivance pulled by slaves, which agreeably stirred the heavy air. The Archbishop felt under his fingers his own heart's quickened thudding and stood awhile until it slackened, and the feeling of breathlessness which had frightened him dwindled away. Then he sat down in his red chair, which had arms to it covered with velvet, and agreeable to stroke; there he drew the tips of his fingers backwards and forwards, his hands arched like a cat's spine to receive the full pleasure of the stroking. His monkey, Cristobal, which had been up aloft asleep on the tester of the bed, became aware of his presence and peeped at him, making a little calling noise like a whistle. Absorbed in his thought the Archbishop took no notice, but sat looking before him, and drawing his fingers backwards and forwards continually in rhythm over the velvet. Cristobal, unaccustomed to being ignored, for he had the run of his master's room, and was permitted to eat bananas upon the archiepiscopal pillow, began, after a moment's astonished silence, to chatter his tongue against his teeth very rapidly, to click and to scold. This too being ignored, and having the curiosity of his race very strongly developed, Cristobal came down the tall bedpost head first and swarmed up his master's robes to his shoulder, where, abandoning temper, he employed instead his unfailing endearment, a pretty laying of his small hideous head against his master's cheek, and a caressing sound from pursed lips—too—



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too—too; a sound like a whispered kiss. At this, but still mechanically, the Archbishop put up a hand, and with his forefinger smoothed the rough hair that frilled on Cristobal's neck. The finger smoothed, then scratched in a satisfying manner, the monkey cooing and bridling the while; then Dom Gaspar put up his other hand and held Cristobal away from him, as a man holds a woman before he kisses. The monkey pouted, absurdly sticking out his immensely long upper lip.

"And now what am I to do?" the Archbishop asked; and if it seems odd that he should thus ask counsel of a brute, remember that he could not be too familiar with the Viceroy, whose way of life was none too seemly; and as the spiritual superior and vicar of all that teeming coast he must appear in public to know his own mind. Often he worked out his thoughts in this way, aloud, to his monkey, and hit off a number of very reasonable decisions, quite as good as those he might have arrived at in council with half a dozen specimens of *homo sapiens*.

"What am I to do?" Dom Gaspar repeated. "The Inquisidor is a saint, we all know, but why, why must he turn us all upside down? Just when the people are forming good habits; saying their prayers so regularly, and giving as generously as their poor means allow to the shrine. Truth! Who knows what it is? Our dear Lord did not answer Pilate's question. Whether the bones are those of St. Thomas or another, what matter, Cristobal, so long as they bring the people to the Church?"

But this was too much like heresy, and Cristobal gave him a sudden steady glance which reminded the Archbishop so horridly of the Inquisidor that he caught his breath.



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"Ah! Well, that was only in joke—but the problem is troublesome. Eh, Cristobal?" The monkey nodded and blinked as wisely as any canon in a fur tippet. "It is, thank God, more the Viceroy's affair than mine. He will have to promise an expedition to find other relics, authentic ones that will content the Inquisidor. He will have to bestir himself, and that will not suit him; but I shall be out of it."

The monkey gave a warning cluck. He was tired of being held.

"What's that you say?" the Archbishop asked. "Oh, yes. Quite right. This business of the canonical test—the testing by miracle, that will be my affair. So it will. And it will fail, of course, if the bones are not authentic, and even, perhaps, if they are. And there will be a revolt, or at the best a falling off in pilgrims. I shall have the brunt of that to bear. Oh, Cristobal, what in this world or the next are we to do with this terrible man? Saints are all very well in heaven, which is the proper place for them; but they are, God forgive me, dreadfully mischievous on earth, among plain men."

Cristobal chattered, beginning now to be angry in the close grip; for like every monkey he could not bear to remain long in one place, even for sleeping. The Archbishop, once more lost in speculation, omitted to notice the danger signals, the tappings and clicks of Cristobal's small yellowish tongue, until a sudden pain in his left hand, and a semi-circle of red beginning to grow on the ball of that thumb, made him hastily exclaim and loosen his grasp. Cristobal fled, aware of sacrilege, to his eternal refuge of the bed-top, and his master, who with the involuntary movement of pain had risen, put his mouth to the wound and stood sucking it, looking



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angrily over his spread hand at the offender's muzzle that showed over the bed-top, peering down. The Archbishop sucked, and at last took the hand away from his mouth to investigate the bite. Blood welled again, but slowly, into the teeth-marks, so that on the under side of his thumb a red crescent gradually appeared—Mahomet's emblem. The Archbishop looked at it, was reminded by it inevitably of the Saracens, and felt once more that which in the moment of pain he had forgotten, the full weight of his problems, and the need for tackling them at once. He made a petulant gesture, and wrapping a towel quickly about the wounded hand beckoned the monkey to come down and be punished. But Cristobal possessed, happily for him, the unsparing common sense of the animal, so incomprehensible to humanity that humanity cannot find it congruous with the possession of a soul.

"Come down, silly fellow, good fellow," called the Archbishop, wheedling.

But Cristobal could not rid himself of the fear of violence to come, and remained up on high, king of his damask castle.

"Stay, then, misbegotten!" said the Archbishop, in a burst of temper, and went from the room after a violent gesture, a shake of his unhurt fist towards the monkey's lair.

Cristobal watched his exit with a round anxious stare, listened while the steps retreated, and fell to his toilet with intentness when the closing of a door shut out their sound. His master's last ejaculation had convinced him that discretion was safer, where humans were concerned, than mere blind confidence. He believed in forgetfulness; forgiveness, however, was something too irrational to be included in his



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brief working theories of the relation between cause and effect, and between monkeys and mankind.

(v)

The Viceroy, on whose account the Archbishop planned and the Inquisidor meditated, was by tradition a soldier, by inclination a country gentleman with some touch of letters and an interest in viticulture. The power of self-expression might have made a Montaigne of him, but this he lacked wholly; nor had he the power to conceive immense projects of conquest, which would have been another means of dissipating the boredom that continually oppressed him. He had accepted the position when it was offered, since no man in his senses would turn his back on the prospect of unlimited money; but he regretted exile, and daily, for he was pious, implored of heaven restoration, sound in health, to his pink-washed country castle outside Cadiz, and his sunny terraces of vines. In the first years of his rule he had attempted to bring the meek Goanese to some knowledge of cultivation as the West understood it, but though they might be biddable, the soil and the sun were not. The soil rejected or killed his grains, brought with such pain across seas, and deserts more trackless than seas; and while stinking fruits such as the mango flourished rankly in swamps, and horny pineapples throve upon sand, all the civilised vegetation, including such snippets of the vine as had reached Goa alive, parched under the insupportable sun or languished and drowned in the rains. And though Herbert says of these tropical fruits that between them they "cure the windy colicke, remove Melancholy, destroy



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Wormes, encreese Venerie, purge the Maw and stomacke and prevent hunger," the Viceroy, eating them, would sigh for the good grapes of his own soil, and oranges from Spain.

In one respect, the tropical fruits did undoubtedly fulfil their promise; they did increase venery in Dom Constantino to such a degree that one at least of the Church dignitaries had come to count upon this strength or weakness, however it may be reckoned, in his calculations for persuading him. The viceregal performances in this matter were the outcome of nothing but boredom, and produced, as a rule, little else in the bosoms of his ever-changing, ever-similar partners. The fact was that Dom Constantino had few gifts as a lover to offer, no zest, no bravado; his palace was kept full of women, since he was a companionable man, with a loathing for solitude; to do him justice, in Portugal he would have been ashamed of them, but then in Portugal he would have had other things to think of, and would have reared pigs or bloodstock with twice the imagination and tenderness he bestowed upon his collection of girls. This was his life in Goa; the amassing of money, the sighing after the west, and, by way of distraction when he had eaten of the east's insidious fruits, women.

It was the Archbishop, with a lazy man's impulse to get an irksome task over, who first approached him in the matter of St. Thomas's bones.

"The Inquisidor Mor," said the Archbishop, tapping the Viceroy's knee with a bandaged hand, "has got one or two very unacceptable notions. He is about to make us all very uncomfortable."

The Viceroy turned in his slow way and stared at the small bronze girl who expressionlessly waved a fan



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over the two of them in conference. She was dressed in a bright striped skirt, and from decorum wore a muslin bodice, transparent, it is true, but showing her sense of what was demanded by His Grace's presence.

"I have always found him reasonable," said the Viceroy, returning his slow gaze. "He smells out heresy, as his duty is; but I have not known him to plague the faithful unduly about——" his gesture indicated the girl—"other matters."

"He says our apostle is some pagan body fobbed off on us by the Evil One," said the Archbishop petulantly, "and that if we get miracles from it we are deceived by Satan; and he wants an investigation."

"Pooh!" said the Viceroy, as Montaigne might have said it. "Satan!"

More he did not dare to say, for even the thick walls of his palace might have ears, and he had no mind to make any appearance before the ecclesiastical enquirers. He was a sturdy, shrewd man, who believed in hell only sometimes, and in the personal intervention of the fiend in human affairs not at all, but his faith in the power of the Inquisidor was absolute. Well it might be; every three years there was held an *auto-da-fé* in Goa, where in the great square outside the Cathedral positive proof of that power was offered to eyes and ears that, however insensitive, could not escape some conviction; eyes and ears that against their will recorded the offered pattern of sights and sounds, and remembered both sometimes, lying awake in the ebb of the night. But this was broad daylight, and the Archbishop in his purple and cheerful jewelled cross was quite unlike those stern figures praying above the rattle of burning wood.

"Satan!" therefore repeated the Viceroy with a fine



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scorn. "Does the Inquisidor suppose that my predecessor would go voyaging off to Meliapore after these bones, spending men, and what's rarer, money, to oblige Satan?"

"He says we cannot be sure. He says that we should put the bones to the canonical test."

"And why not?"

There was a brief silence, during which the Archbishop looked down at his ring, the Viceroy steadily at him, and the little bronze girl with the fan blankly yet smilingly at the wall.

"Because, to put it briefly——" the Archbishop glanced swiftly at the girl, but she was impassive—"and frankly, you cannot expect the grace of God to be always obedient to beckoning, like a dog. Suppose we hold our yearly feast and let these Saracens come, as the Inquisidor suggests. Suppose we let them bring their sick and touch the Apostle's body; we should be tempting God, and there are plenty of warnings in the Scriptures against that."

"I don't know," said the Viceroy deliberately. "God is the Grand Master of all chivalry, and must know that a gentleman can't very well ignore a challenge."

"But," said the Archbishop, and halted. "But suppose nothing happens? These pagans, these easterners, are swayed by prestige. If nothing happens —for I maintain that this sort of wager with the Almighty can come to no good—we may both of us, you and I, look for trouble, and find it."

The Viceroy at that brought a heavy handclap on to the prelate's shoulder; one heavy eyelid drooped meaningly, while Dom Gaspar stared.

"Have faith, your Grace, and leave the works to me. If we don't see the scabs peeling off a dozen lepers,



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and twenty cripples running round the good St. Thomas in his tomb, may I never taste wine again."

The Archbishop, after one first gasp of astonishment, held his tongue. He thought he had caught the Viceroy's meaning, but did not care to put it into words in case there should be misapprehension. Dom Constantino, however, had no such scruples, and went on talking, outlining his plan.

"Am I to let the Inquisidor do away with half my revenue? Are we to lose the pilgrim trade for one doubter? You are right, Archbishop, we must not tempt God. There is no need to trouble the Almighty with the matter at all. He helps those that help themselves. Whether or no that is good theology, it is sound common sense. No, no"—as the Archbishop attempted an interruption—"ask no questions, but let me go my way. Only be sure of this: there'll be miracles and to spare for these pilgrims."

The Archbishop rose, and paced about. It was what he had hoped for, that the Viceroy should undertake the whole of the cheating; that he should find and fee the beggars to be cured and generally command the whole ecclesiastical manœuvre. All the same, now that the scheme was laid bare, it looked very like—he could not quite name the sin. However, the flash of fear passed; and reflecting that even if any part of it were to come to the Inquisidor's ears, the Viceroy must take the whole blame, and that he, Dom Gaspar, knowing nothing of the means must be innocent of the end, he held his tongue as he was bidden, except for one question.

"This child here," and his ringed hand indicated the fanbearer, "has she understood what we say?"

For answer the Viceroy beckoned her. She came obediently, still holding the tall feathered fan, and knelt



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in front of Dom Constantino. He spoke in her own tongue.

"You have heard?"

"Yes, lord."

"What have you heard?"

She looked bewildered, her bright eyes grew cloudy, the whole small face had the look of a dog that tries to make out an unfamiliar order.

"The Saracens are to come—and they are to pray——" she broke down, shook her head, and was silent, looking guilty.

"Is that all you can remember of what we spoke?"

She thought again, and in her clear eyes, raised like a dog's to guess her fate from the demeanour of the master, could be seen only trouble and the fear of a blow. She hunched up her shoulders, expecting it; instead, came fingers against her cheek for a moment, an affectionate pinch; then a patter of comfits thrown to her from the silver box on His Excellency's table. She looked up, still fearful, to find her master and the Archbishop both smiling at her, and the former with a gesture made her know that the sugar almonds were for her. Then the troubled small face changed and smiled—eyes, mouth, the very ears were involved in that smile, and she gathered the almonds quickly in her left hand with a gesture Cristobal might have employed, and stowed the lot in her cheeks, in the very way that he was accustomed to hide any surplus of food. The Archbishop laughed as she went back, ordered by a nod from the master, to her place, and once more lifted her great fan.

"We must believe, since it is a matter of faith," said Dom Gaspar, "that these creatures have souls. But for intelligence, Excellency, I would rather trust my monkey."



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"Some of the stories they tell are by no means bad," answered the Viceroy, "but for intelligence, you may rule them only in two ways—sugar or a slap. Are our western women so different?"

"You must not ask me that," said the Archbishop, looking demure. Then, after both had laughed: "The Inquisidor?"

"Give me a week," answered Dom Constantino, smiling.

"This is a relief to me," said the Archbishop, preparing to depart. "I was prepared to have to persuade your Excellency."

"You do not have to argue me into keeping my own. Good God, why do you suppose I broil here year after year in this infernal sun? I do it so that I may go home the sooner with a pocketful of gold, and grow bacon to prove myself a good Christian. I want money; and if I can continue to make it, and keep up the reputation of an Apostle into the bargain——" he broke off, and spoke the end of his sentence into the Archbishop's ear—"and diddle the Inquisidor, I shall not have done badly."

"He is a zealous man," said the Archbishop in duty bound, but very low. "Learned, ardent——"

"Ardour is a nuisance mostly," the Viceroy answered; "at least I know it is with wine. And when our Saint Thomas has brought off his *coup*, cured his sick as a saint should do, I shall have a letter ready for Portugal. A letter for his superiors in the Holy Office. It might be as well for you to sign it, too."

"No, no," said the timid Archbishop, starting back, "I have no complaint against the Inquisidor."

"As you please," the Viceroy returned indifferently; "but to my mind he is too much of a doubter; and when St. Thomas has proved himself I shall tell them so."



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"I disassociate myself," the Archbishop said quickly; then hesitated. "At least—well, in a week's time we shall see."

He bowed, blessed the Viceroy's unbending head, and went out to his litter. Dom Constantino, with a look which might have been contempt, turned back into his room, where the small bronze girl still swayed to and fro with her fan, stirring the air against the master's return.

"Upon God's body," said the Viceroy to her meditatively, "I'm at a loss to know which I hate most, a fire-eater or a sponge."

He was looking at her, and seemed to expect some sort of answer. She spoke at once, therefore, with a dog's timid eagerness.

"There are eaters of fire that live in the hills. My grandfather has seen them—very terrible. They have little beasts that live in the flames. They tame these, and send them wandering through the forests by night. Then we see the forests burn."

Dom Constantino laughed, beckoned, and pulled her down between his legs on the couch by the window; there, while he tweaked her ears and stroked her, she told him one of those stories he had commended to the Archbishop, a highly coloured and none too probable affair about salamanders; and so beguiled for an hour the tedium of his interminable leisure.

The Inquisidor returned to his small whitewashed room with the life-size crucifix in the great building that housed the activities of the protectors of the Faith. It was a room into which, during his reign, no woman had ever entered, nor any breath of the world's beauty; and the lay-brother who found next morning a white flower petal on the floor drew no such deductions from it as



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might have followed from a similar discovery in the bedroom of the Archbishop. The petal was from a camellia, which flowers delighted the Viceroy's nostrils, and were worn, while the season allowed, perpetually in his women's hair. The lay-brother, however, swept it up, knowing very well that the most scandalous tongue could never find ears to credit attribution of any single one of humanity's weaknesses to the Inquisidor Mor.

(vi)

The Viceroy allowed a day to pass, and then summoned the Inquisidor to settle the date of the ceremony of the testing of the bones. St. Thomas's own feast would have been appropriate, but that was not till December, too long to wait; and poring over the calendar, with one accord they fixed on the nineteenth of September, the feast of St. Januarius, that untiring worker of miracles, whose blood liquefies yearly in commemoration of his martyrdom, and for the confounding of incredulous Neapolitans.

"In ten days' time, then," said the Viceroy, standing up to close the interview, "and you may call upon me for such troops as may be needed."

"I foresee no trouble," the Inquisidor answered; "however, soldiers lend any ceremony a certain dignity. Provided always that they bear in mind which are the inappropriate moments to spit."

"I'll keep their mouths dry," the Viceroy promised. "Let me understand one thing. Is this affair free to all?"

"The reliquary will be opened," returned the



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Inquisidor, "and any afflicted person may touch the bones. No distinction will be made, except for the lepers, who must go up by themselves after the crowd has dispersed."

"Wise precaution," the Viceroy commended, "but any other affliction—running sores, twisted limbs, issues of blood——?"

"Dead persons, if they please," answered the Inquisidor, his lips smiling.

"Dead men? You're giving heaven every chance," said the Viceroy in his blunt way.

"It behoves all Christians to do so," the Inquisidor answered, and bowed himself out.

Thus reassured, the Viceroy began to bestir himself by proxy. He sent out servants with orders to gather in certain of the beggars whose custom it was to station themselves on the steps of the Cathedral and implore alms; they were licensed to solicit, since they afforded others an opportunity for gaining merit; save a decent appearance of wretchedness no conditions were made by the Cathedral authorities. It happened, however, to be known to Dom Constantino, ever seeking novelty amid sameness, that some of them were professional contortionists and conjurers, who found it a very easy matter to sit twelve hours with distorted limbs, if by so doing they could earn enough to be idle the remaining half of the day. There was one old man with a remarkable sore on his breast, like the galls on a horse rubbed by the collar; and this sore, which perpetually ran, and spread sometimes to a diameter of about six inches when offerings were falling off, had been his livelihood for a number of years. There was another who sat with his whole left leg hooked round his neck immovably, who gave it out that he had been born this way, and



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that his small son, aged five, was afflicted in a similar manner; it being a kind of family curse put on by some demon whom an ancestor had met face to face. Yet the fact was that this man was as supple as any man need be, and spent a good many of his nights thieving, his body coated with oil, taking his small son with him to creep through windows or openings which even a full-grown contortionist's bones could not manage. Altogether there were about five of these practitioners, who spent their days reclining, in such attitudes as were best calculated to affect compassionate passers-by, on the Cathedral steps, chewing betel and watching their world go by in the pleasant torpor induced by a great many degrees of sun; they never forsook their posts, except in the rains; they were skilled to idleness as to a trade. Accordingly, the Viceroy's servants went with confidence, very early in the morning before anyone was about, to look for them. At midday, the servants were still absent, and the Viceroy was in something of a temper, but towards two o'clock it was reported to him that a certain Gil, his personal servant, had returned, and this man was sent for.

"And what does this mean?" the Viceroy enquired of him. "Discretion, I told you; and here you go about the business in broad daylight so that the whole town gets wind of it."

"Excuse your servant, Excellency," said Gil in answer to this, standing up very straight, and speaking, as was his custom, man to man. "Nothing of your business has got abroad. The plain fact is these five men have disappeared, and where they are their own wives and their own mates don't know."

"Disappeared!" repeated the Viceroy, stupefied. "You're blind, man, in addition to being a fool."



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"If I'm a fool, that's in the blood," returned Gil unmoved, and stared at his master unwinking, for he was a half-brother of the Viceroy on the father's side, and they had the same rough edge to their tongues. "But whether or not, those five beggars are gone from the square, and have never been back to their homes since last night, and as for what's become of them, the talk is they were eaten by a dragon."

"Don't come to me with such nonsense," said the Viceroy, enraged. "Get out of here! Look for these people. Ask; you've got a tongue."

"I'll have them cried," retorted Gil, "and get up a search by torchlight, house to house. And then where's your secret?"

"The Saints rot you," the Viceroy answered, but more amiably: "Well, we must wait. Get out of here, and don't go talking."

Gil grinned and went, to warn his fellow-servants, and very inconspicuously to watch for any signs of the five charlatans returning; but they still were hidden next day, and the next; and at last, since the time for the test was drawing near, Dom Constantino was obliged to leave them altogether out of his reckoning and take other means to secure a resounding triumph for questioned St. Thomas.

The next object of his benevolence was a relative on the wrong side of the blanket, the respectable but impoverished and none too prepossessing uncle of the little bronze girl, Maria of the fan. This personage, after one foiled attempt at flight, had for a week sat motionless in his house with ashes on his forehead awaiting arrest for arrears of taxes; he was nothing less than surprised to find a couple of Dom Constantino's soldiers one evening at his door. Within, all the rooms



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were picturesquely denuded, and the defaulter himself was dressed in a manner calculated to arouse pity in a creditor while destroying in the same breast all hope of immediate payment. He bade a dramatic farewell to a number of weeping servants—all, it may be said, genuinely concerned for his safety, for it was common knowledge that he had buried a considerable treasure in the house and left an evil spirit on guard over it—and accompanied the soldiers, himself in tears. But even though darkness hindered all their steps and blotted out all landmarks, the uncle had his bearings sufficiently well to realise that he was not being taken to either of the prisons, ecclesiastical or lay. In and out they led him until he was thoroughly bewildered, and at last brought up outside a thick nailed door in an unfamiliar wall. A negro answered the rapping of the soldier's daggers, asked no questions, stood aside; but, as the uncle's alert alarmed ear noted, he locked the door noisily behind them. A space of garden was traversed, stumbling. They came to a further door, which, after more knocking, was opened by some hand unseen, and marched on darkling. The heart of the uncle, which had been stout enough at the beginning of the progress in the consciousness of his affecting poverty of appearance and his well-secreted hoard, began amid all this mystery to quake and fail him; and when at last a final door opened to reveal a dimly lighted room with the gaunt figure of the Viceroy's physician standing at a bare table fingering certain tools of his trade, there was no spirit left in him.

The physician stood silent for a few moments, motionless save for a brief gesture which sent the soldiers to the rightabout and out of the room, but not far; there was a military clanking as they stood at ease



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outside, and a scrape of steel which implied that they were keeping armed watch. His head sunk on his breast, he appeared to take no notice of the alarmed and voluble Christian before him; in the corner of the room a brazier stood, covered over, but glowing towards the floor, and diffusing through the already hot room a perfume by no means Arabian. Towards this went the doctor, after meditation, carrying two iron instruments of uneasy shape, twitched off the brazier's cover with tongs, and laid these upon the glow; the coals made him an ugly reddish aureole, and the uncle, who had witnessed a number of *autos-da-fé* in his lifetime, was uncomfortably reminded of smells and sights connected with these. Still nothing was answered, although the distracted man continued his wailings, and protests of innocence, until they died in his throat for fright, and he stood gurgling. Then the physician, Dom Baltasar, looked at him for the first time and spoke.

"You owe His Excellency money," said the physician.

These simple words, informing the uncle of a fact he already knew, did nothing to increase that unfortunate's confidence. He did owe it, and had been reckoning, stupidly, as he now saw, on His Excellency's attachment for his niece to bilk payment. Fool, to suppose that any man would overlook a debt for the sake of any woman born! And he reminded himself with despairing aptness of his own favourite proverb, "Gold never wrinkles," while his mouth was forming plaintive sounds eloquent of poverty, grey hairs, and the scanty total of years remaining to him. This outcry at last was checked by a movement of the other's hand towards the glow in the corner, on top of which those uncomfortably shaped instruments were reddening.



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"Listen to me. How would you like to oblige His Excellency before you die?"

The bewildered creature gave agreement to this, with reservations, which he kept to himself, about not parting with money if it could in any way be helped.

"His Excellency wants an experiment tried." The uncle looked with concern towards those red irons. "An experiment of physic, not surgery. I am to send you to sleep, and see what you can do in the way of dreaming. Sleep will be easy enough, with a drug I have; it is the dreams that you may not find so simple; those we shall have to take pains with. Eh? What about it? Do you feel yourself able to have the sort of dreams His Excellency wants?"

The uncle, who was shrewd, saw the alternatives very clearly. He was now in the Viceroy's power; niece Maria was evidently a broken reed. He had no idea what was expected of him, except the fairly evident fact that he was to swear to some lies for the Viceroy's convenience, which commission, knowing his own powers, he was willing enough to undertake.

"I am a good dreamer," said the uncle, reviving, and wagging his head knowledgeably. "My dear wife, while she was alive, used to pay much attention to this faculty of mine. Dreams that I had lying on my side she always declared were worthless. But on my back or on my face I was infallible. One way I dreamed easily and true, the other way with difficulty, very strange visions—which does His Excellency want?"

"That," said the doctor, "you must ask yourself," and he put his knuckles suddenly, twice, to a gong beside him. A soldier's head looked in round the door.

"Warn His Excellency," the physician ordered. The soldier withdrew.



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"And when this is done," said the uncle, dropping back into his plaintive tones, "I shall be at liberty, I suppose, to go back to my denuded house, and my faithful servants who will be wailing for me?"

But the physician would not be drawn.

"You would not detain me? I will oblige His Excellency to the height of my powers. I am a magnificent dreamer—superb. And afterwards I forget my dreams. That is a good thing, Dom Baltasar, isn't it? Yes, they go out of my mind, and nothing, not a memory, is left. Very useful. One does not want, nobody wants to be bothered by odds and ends of old dreams."

"Very discreet," the physician approved; "but as for detaining you, that is for His Excellency to decide."

"He would not hold me? This is not the Casa Santa," went on the uncle with a poor laugh, meaning the house of the Holy Office, "where the only escape from the frying pan is into the fire. His Excellency has a good heart, and there is my niece. Maria, my niece, a good girl——"

"You are afraid of the Holy Office, are you?" said the physician with a sharp look. "You would not care to cross the Inquisidor Mor?"

"What sane man, what good Christian would care to do that?" asked the uncle, spreading out his hands.

"That's true enough," said the physician, still surveying him in a calculating manner.

The uncle relapsed into terror.

"But I have done nothing against the faith, Dom Baltasar. I am not an eighth-day Christian,"—born one, that is to say; the Portuguese baptized their children on the eighth day—"but I am a believer for all that; I have been a good son to the Church. Why, the very silver candlesticks on St. Caterina's altar I gave.



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A man under St. Caterina's protection! The Holy Office has nothing to say to me——"

"Not if you stick to your story," the doctor admitted.

"What story?"

At which moment the soldier came back into the room, and with a nod of his head invited them to follow him. The doctor gathered his gown and prepared to obey; but Maria's uncle, in a wheedling voice, had something to say to him first, and pulled his ample sleeve.

"Those knives," said he, indicating the irons on the brazier, "you won't be needing them——"

"I can't tell that yet," returned the doctor coldly, striding forward.

"No! No!" protested Maria's uncle wildly, retaining his frantic hold. "I will have what dreams you think best. I am in your hands, Dom Baltasar. I would lie to St. Caterina herself for you. I would take a false oath on St. Thomas's bones, such is my respect for you and His Excellency. There is no need, believe me, to keep those irons on the fire."

The physician surveyed him a moment while the clamour continued, until the uncle showed signs of falling on his knees; then with a jerk of his head to the second soldier:

"Cover the brazier," said Dom Baltasar.

The uncle gave a quick audible sigh of relief.

"But keep the fire in."

The uncle cringed again; and, it being indicated by a jerk of the soldier's thumb that he should turn right along the passage, did so, walking straight enough; but the lantern swinging in the soldier's hand threw his shadow drunkenly before him, reeling from wall to wall, as though its dark shape represented, not his body, but his questing and terrified soul.



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All that day the Viceroy had gone about with clouds upon his brow. It was not an angry convulsed countenance, but a puzzled one, the face of a man confronted with an unfamiliar and troublesome task. The Viceroy had, in fact, to use his imagination, a thing he had not done for forty years, not since he had told the usual transparent schoolboy lies to his tutor. He was not a man of the pen, nor, had he been so, would it have been safe to set anything down on paper; and he could take no one into his confidence, for it was not beyond probability that there were spies in the palace. He carried his problem about with him, therefore, all day, and his lip had a droop to it that schoolmasters know; not all boys are deliberately idle, some are honest dolts, bewildered and unhappy travellers in the realms of gold. Such was the Viceroy. He had—here came the irony—set himself the task of deceiving the Inquisidor with a sham corpse, a corpse which should return to life magically at the touch of St. Thomas's bones, and thus by one stroke defend Viceroy and Archbishop against the need of further crusades, and retain the pilgrim dues in their pockets. But the corpse must tell some story, a sound yet fantastic story of things beyond the grave. This story plagued the unfortunate gentleman mosquito-like, all day, and his secretaries found him snappish.

A ship was sailing, and there were despatches to prepare. The Viceroy dictated a packet full of errors, which the secretaries, young men of family, but tactless, pointed out to his face instead of correcting behind his back. There were fireworks, submission, and after His Excellency had stamped his way out, conjectures, not one of which hit the mark. The whole palace, from secretaries to scullions, trembled at the



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tantrums of a middle-aged schoolboy grumbling at his task.

It was a relief to spend the hour after the evening meal listening to one of Maria's stories. She had a rare fund of these, magical mostly, spiced with an occasional ogre or ghost. As a rule the Viceroy was easily pleased; anything that she related in her patchwork language, half Portuguese, half Mahratta, he was accustomed to listen to, smiling and pulling her ear, and she had embarked upon the adventures of a mongoose who was really a prince with every confidence in his attention. But in the midst of a combat with a snake (who was really a god) His Excellency interrupted. He had been frowning as he lay, and moving restlessly, and now with a gesture and a question he arrested the mongoose-prince in mid-career.

"Maria," said the Viceroy, "what is your notion of hell?"

She shrank, a little frightened to see that his face was at last eager and interested.

"I do not mean," he went on, "the catechism stuff—what you have been taught." Then, since she still looked a little bewildered, he changed the form of his question. "What would you do, how would you punish, if you were God?"

At that, Maria's dark eyes opened a little, as though the words opened to her imagination some garden of delight; and in her fluent confusion of tongues she began to describe the torments the unrighteous should receive at her hands. But, as was her way, she gave it the form of a narrative.

"I went," said she, "down into a dark place, where there were smells, and great holes in the ground; and in the holes there was fire; and wheels were rushing



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through the fire, with souls hung on them. Sometimes the wheels would dash together, and there would be a noise like the cannon in the fort, and terrible loud crying."

"What souls were those?" the Viceroy asked, intent.

"The souls of men and women who were unbelievers," Maria answered, after a moment's thought.

"Good. What else?"

She caught her hands about both her knees with a rapturous gesture, and rocked back and forth, smiling.

"There was another place, filled with mud. And bubbles came out of it; in the bubbles were worms that ate the people wallowing in the mud like buffaloes. And there was another pit with smoke in it, and people hanging up by the tongue because they had not spoken the truth."

"A person who denied the power in old St. Thomas's bones would be there, would he?"

She nodded vigorously.

"And all the girls that tell lies about me. One of them said you had told her——"

"Never mind the other girls. What else in hell? What of the men who would not listen?"

She took up her story at once, flattered by his interest. "Then I went down a great number of steps, too many to count, and I saw some people, men, with fiery pivots turning in their ears; those were the men who would not listen."

"Did you see Satan there?"

She considered.

"I saw a person with a face like a wild beast. His right eye was like the star that rises in the morning; the



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other did not move. His mouth was huge, and his teeth each one as long as a hand—your hand. His fingers were like scythes; all round him was a terrible darkness——"

She stopped, with a little cry, for she had been absorbed in her own story; a knock sounded at the door, but when in answer to the Viceroy's call it opened, she was sitting up on the couch, and her fan was in her hand stirring gently above the sprawling figure of the master. Her body swayed with it, slightly, like the balancing of a snake to music, and her face was altogether expressionless as she listened to the exchange of words between the Viceroy and Gil entering.

"He's here, Excellency."

"Has Dom Baltasar spoken to him?"

"I don't know about 'spoken.' He's in a sweat, though. Shall I fetch him in?"

"When I strike."

A gong was always at his elbow. The Viceroy took up the ebony stick and gestured to Maria to go; she made as if she did not understand. The Viceroy's hand came heavily across her face in a slap, and pointed her out of the room; at that, no longer resisting, she laid down her fan and slipped away behind a hanging curtain that led to the women's rooms. There was a door, kept always open, which this curtain concealed; His Excellency went to it and turned the heavy key, and drew the folds of stuff across again to muffle all sound. It was not the kind of interview at which witnesses or eavesdroppers were to be desired; only the inevitable Gil must be present, in case of danger.

Then he struck his gong, and on the instant was bundled into the room the uncle, who retained presence of mind enough to fall on his face.



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"Get up," said the Viceroy, but not too roughly; his lesson was learnt, he had only to hand it on; the clouds of the day had departed, he was almost jovial. "So," as the suppliant raised an imploring face, "it's you again, you malingering old miser, is it? And have you brought my money with you?"

The suppliant indicated, with a pitiful smile and sweep of the hands, that such was not the case.

"I must take it out in kind, then. Have you got a memory? Not for debts, I know, but for other matters. You have? That's as well for you. Now, if you want to save your skin, listen to me."

Gil spurned the uncle's posterior, and jolted him to a listening but equally humble attitude. For five minutes, except for the Viceroy's rough voice speaking low, there was silence.

(vii)

Gil, stumping off to bed having stowed his charge in safety, discovered among his accustomed pile of coverings a small smooth bronze girl, whose coronet of flowers added a rich scent to the odours of leather and coffee in the room.

"What's this?" said he, and hauled her up by one slender arm. She did not answer in words; but she was really a very lovely bronze girl. He let her go, and she sank down, back among the cotton stuffs on the plaited pallet that served him for a bed.

"Won't go, eh?" She shook her head, burrowing down under the coverlet, where she seemed to scuffle awhile like a small lithe animal caught in a bag. When, laughing, he plucked it off her, he found that in its



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shelter she had removed all her clothes. He stood back. He had no fear of the Viceroy for himself; but the punishment for this indiscretion, discovered, would be visited on her.

"You'll catch it," said Gil, with a gesture of his thumb towards the northern, cooler rooms where His Excellency lay. She shook her head. "No? Well, you know best. After all"—unfastening his belt, and hanging it up with a campaigner's neatness "—it's all in the family." Maria smiled. "You bitch!" said the uncomprising Gil, tumbling down beside her.

(viii)

The south-west wind, blowing constantly during six months of the year, set a barrier of sand across the mouth of the river on which Goa is built; from May until late August, this barrier was impassable save for vessels of small draught, which could make their way up the river as far as the fortress of Mourmougon. The bigger ships, however, could not pass the bar, and this limited the pilgrim traffic to the latter end and beginning of the year, for the Persian and Arab and Siamese pirates were apt to combine business with religion, and come to pray equipped as for forays, on the chance of a victim or two on the way home. It will be seen that the date fixed by the Viceroy and the Inquisidor Mor in conclave was very suitable from every point of convenience, the sands being silted away, and the weather secure from monsoons.

News of the proposed test had somehow got about, and spread to places which appeared, from their distance and doggedness in error, to be remote from all



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ecclesiastical news. People came flocking in high-built boats from every place along the coast of Coromandel and beyond; pilgrims from Calicut, Tanor, and Cananor, betel and areca-eaters, and a number of innocent Singalese with tortoise-shell combs in their neatly dressed hair, little dreaming what the upshot of the Inquisidor's experiment was to cost them in humiliation. Goa could not accommodate all these souls; they lived on their ships, like a floating polyglot town, keeping the river free as a highway up which the rowing boats, and rafts, and smaller conveyances plied. All these visitors were, it is hardly necessary to say, men without exception, religion having turned head over heels in the East, and Goanese husbands kept a strict eye on their wives during such times of festival; quite without need, for the excitement that these ladies and the male pilgrims jointly wanted was provided for them daily, and sin-free, by the performances given in the Cathedral and square.

This square on the morning of St. Januarius's feast was ringed with people, who had slept or squatted there all night. The centre was filled with the sick, coughing on pallets, restless with pain, or—these were the blind—quite still, with uplifted faces and fingers busy at their beads. They took up that central space which at the *autos-da-fé* was given over to stakes and brushwood. Order was maintained night and morning by soldiers who stood in a double row guarding the Cathedral steps, stamping the shafts of their pikes on bare feet, good-humoured but dry-mouthed, as the Viceroy had promised. It was a curious sight to see this earnest assembly of men alert for a miracle, prepared with all their hearts to believe it if it came, confident in the magic of a dead man's skeleton to preserve the living



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from death, each with his belt full of deadly weapons and a roving eye for insult or profit.

The High Mass was long. Such as were Christians and could not get in to the ceremony knelt in the square, seeing through the wide-open west doors only darkness with a wall of candlelight at the far end of it, but hearing bells that gave the signal to kneel, and to sign themselves with the cross. The pagans squatted and told their beads patiently on the paynim equivalent of a rosary, knuckle-bones to the number of ten strung with a thong. Others took the opportunity to beg, and in the absence of the professional beggars—still unaccounted for—made not too bad a harvest. Through the crowd women thrust their way with water jars on their heads, going to the wells or returning, and eyed malevolently by the legitimate drink-sellers lest their monopoly should be infringed; but the more frugal of the strangers had brought their own water, knowing how a feast-day sent up the price.

High Mass drew to a close, with a shrill and tinny sound of boys' voices singing *Deo Gratias*. The soldiers at a brief word of command deployed on the steps, opposing a barrier of pikes to any devotional or other surge from the square; and at last, preceded by a row of black-jowled canons, another of small singing boys, a third of small censing boys, the silver shrine of St. Thomas appeared, borne on the shoulders of four priests with the Archbishop and his parasol directly behind it, and the Inquisidor Mor, in strictest black and white, folding hands in the rear. The Archbishop displayed no traces of emotion; his plump face had a natural reverence, and if his eyes showed some little trouble they were kept, for the most part, modestly bent upon the floor. The Inquisidor looked grim, as was his custom; at sight



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of him a murmur rose from the square, and fell as his eyes lifted and challenged it. Ten paces or so after him came the Viceroy in all his finery, the commandants of the two ports of Agoada and Montmourgon, followed by all the notabilities, visiting and resident, of Goa. It was a dignified and resplendent assembly that ranged itself upon the upper platform of the stairs, where on ordinary days beggars scratched themselves, and crows walked strutting.

An altar of repose had been prepared, a makeshift affair of leaves and flowers, with a tapestry spread on the stones in front, and to this the four priests brought the shrine, a box with glass sides, with a steeple of chased silver rising above. There was some singing; then the Archbishop advanced, his suffragans of Muscat and Ormuz holding back the folds of his cope, and with a gold key opened the front window of the reliquary, displaying the reverend bones and skull. He bowed to them, and the robed pagans implored with loud moaning sounds such blessings as vengeance upon brothers-in-law, success in the law courts, fertility in wives, and ardour in piracy. The Archbishop backed away, and was accommodated with a faldstool. The function, so far as he was concerned, was over. It was the turn now of the Inquisidor Mor.

He came forward, and with a bow to Dom Gaspar for leave—but, as was noticed by all, no bow to the shrine, from which Dom Gaspar had retreated backwards—spoke in his low carrying voice as follows:

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together to make enquiry, so far as men may examine these mysteries, into the truth of a relic which has been thirty years our pride. You have given largely for its proper housing; you have come many rough miles over desert,



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and that unkinder waste, the sea, to visit it and gain the indulgences the Church grants to pilgrims. All these alms and voyages; so much labour by land and sea; and yet, if it be not undertaken in the cause of truth, it is nothing."

The Archbishop gave a little groan, for here was condemnation of his own indolent opinion, that it was the spirit and not the letter of a penance that counted before God. The dark faces in the square showed only a candid interest, the Inquisidor's Portuguese speech went in at one ear and out the other; they listened civilly, and waited, with the patience to which climate and the hardness of their lives had schooled them, for the miracles to begin.

"For if it were not so," the Inquisidor went on, "of what use to send out our missionaries into paynim countries? Such people as the Chinese and the Mahometans also are devout, they endure much in the service of their gods. If this endurance and these pieties are to be reckoned in heaven, of what use is the truth of Christ? Since men in all countries and climes are religious, a prayer to Mumbo-Jumbo should go as direct to God's presence as the high intercession of the Mass. But we know this is not so. We know that the truth, which Christ revealed and the holy Apostles spread abroad, is that by which men are saved, and by that alone.

"Therefore, all you who come from the Kingdoms of Persia and Arabia, and the coasts beyond Comorin, we are concerned that you should not be the pilgrims of a lie. If you have come by land and sea, thirsting for the sight of a relic, and that relic is false, then in God's sight your journeys have been in vain. Those whose task is the protection of the Faith cannot allow



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such a thing. They must make sure. *Tantus labor non sit cassus.* And since it has been God's will in the past not to leave His children in darkness, but to show forth by miracles His purpose for humanity, we who have your faith in our charge, with humility and tears implore Him to-day for a sign."

He turned towards the shrine, and for the first time made a gesture. Some of the priests there had seen it before; he used it in the examination of heretics, and it came always at the moment when the wretch under torture was breaking; a sudden throwing out and deadly pointing of the thin hand.

"The Merciful will not cheat us. The Master of the Twelve will know His own. By our infirmities shall He show us the way and the truth. Bring your sick, bring your blind or your dead; and if these dry bones were indeed once God's Apostle, the blind shall see, and the sick be healed, and the dead live."

On that there was a movement in the crowd, a stirring and shouldering as when the Cambodian gods, the Devas, stirred the primeval sea of milk with a young mountain; a kind of shambling rush of the halt and the sick, with their supporters, towards the magic shrine. Priests took the bones, to each priest one, and came in line down the steps to meet the devotees, before whom the row of pikes opened, then shut; the pikemen judging numbers, and letting twenty or so in at a time. There were pitiful sights among them; and the Inquisidor Mor, standing with folded hands, his eyes intent and aflame, had a movement, not threatening as before, but of sorrow and disgust as though he saw some noble river of faith running into a cesspool.

The Archbishop looked benignantly on, from time to time sketching a blessing; and very occasionally,



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when no eye was on him, shot a look of enquiry towards the Viceroy, seated now on a companion stool and apparently quite unmoved by the scene, which was, however, curious and tragic enough.

For though the lame men were rubbed with the tibia of the saint, and though the blind men pressed their dead eyes against those hollows in his skull from which the saint had looked out on God in the flesh, there was no sign. St. Thomas's skeleton hand was laid on ulcers, on wounds, on swollen masses of tissue from which pains shot out, swift and treacherous as raiding Arabs; the ulcers sweated still, the wounds stank, and the cancer's growth went on. The bones were not wiped between visitations, and at the end of an hour they were foul with blood and the discharges of every Eastern sickness. Still no miracle, and no murmur, other than prayer, from the patient assembly, which found it reasonable that heavenly justice, like the earthly variety, should take its time. The only significant movement, apart from the shuffling of the sick people, and the hands of the priests laying on the bones, was a nervous twittering of the Archbishop's fingers as the ceremony dragged on, and his glances at the Viceroy became more frequent and more obviously troubled. When? asked His Grace's tormented look, which the Viceroy answered only by a stern nod which bade him be careful and have faith. The sick had nearly all been touched; the whole square burned like a furnace of prayer, and still no shout went up, no crutches were flung away. The assembled notables began to change position on their hard wooden seats, to beckon servants for drinks of lemon water, and though they did not dare talk, with the Inquisidor and his ministers so close, one or two gentlemen began, shaking ivories in



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their closed hands and surreptitiously showing them, to play at dice. If they had ever had much hope of St. Thomas an hour in the morning sun with no results was enough to dispel it. And the crowd in the square was changing its tune in the strangest way; the low murmur of prayers was becoming a clamour. His Grace beckoned a canon, who beckoned the choir-master, and hissed at him the one word:

"Sing!"

The choir-master in a flurry went back to his boys and started them off at random on a psalm he had recently drilled them in, the Gradual for the vigil of an Apostle:

> "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon,
> To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning: and thy truth by night."

They shrilled the plainsong like birds on the wing, flying, hovering and dipping up and down for no reason in a lovely series of curving phrases. The priests standing among the sick began to slacken in their work; fewer suppliants came pushing through the now noisy crowd, and they were beginning to look up towards the Inquisidor for a sign that the test was over and had failed. But the Inquisidor was not to be hurried. Where the rest of the assembly upon the platform sat, he stood; the Archbishop was half fainting, despite his parasol, beaten down by the sun, ready to give in, to disassociate himself from St. Thomas for ever if the Inquisidor would release him and all of them from the merciless glare. The cool arches of the Cathedral, seen through its open west doors, had the look, to His Grace's tortured vision, of stony groves in



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Paradise. He was spiritual overlord of all the Indies, and the ceremony would cease at his word; but he could not make the signal while the Inquisidor stood bareheaded beside him, hands folded in his wide black sleeves.

"To show forth," shrilled the boys, "thy loving-kindness in the morning!" while the disappointed blacks, pirates and pilgrims, roared, in a masculine medley of quarter-tones, increasingly threatening tunes, and thudded out, upon the drums they had brought to celebrate the triumph of the saint, ironic and irreligious rhythms. Some of the sick were weeping; their sobs went unheard in the gathering storm of noise. At the northern corner of the square something like a riot was beginning; men were turning their heads and shouting; a stick or two appeared, and there was a cry taken up by a hundred throats, travelling, flowing from one to the other until it reached the notables on their platform:

"The lepers!"

These had been herded together in a street, the Strada San Caterina, with pikemen at either end to keep the square from the contagion of their diseased bodies. There they lay in the short shadows of the houses or went hirpling about on knobbed limbs the whole morning through; making no attempt to break into the undefended houses for loot or water, meekly accepting the rotting companionship of their fellows, the heat, the thirst, and the perpetual menace of the double line of soldiers. They could not see into the square.

When the clamour of disappointment began to reach them, they mistook its meaning; so nearly are the expressions of human emotion related, that one sense



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alone could not distinguish misery from triumph, or religious enthusiasm from secular fury. The sounds which came from the square were loud, and slow-growing, just such as might be expected to result from the dawning conviction that a marvel had occurred; the incredulous gradual growth of enthusiasm, expectation fulfilled and surpassed. The lepers tilted their unshapely heads, and crawled forward among the pikes to listen, while the pikemen, inquisitive too, and shrinking from the nearness of their charges, gave way a little. They heard the boys on the platform break into the Psalmist's triumphant song, there were shouts, and the noise of the drums. They heard, and believed. In a moment the eyeless, fingerless creatures had closed in upon the pikemen. Their contagion was their weapon. There was a spear-thrust or two, and a cry, but these assailants, dying, caught the soldiers about the knees, laid their knobbed and shining foreheads upon the hands holding the spear before it could be withdrawn. Panic took the pikemen. They broke, and the shapeless rabble flung itself without a sound into the square, where all at once the shouts rose to a yell of warning:

"The lepers!"

There was no room in the square. The crowd was in disorder with the going and coming of the sick and their bearers: no ways had been kept open; there was only the barest room to stand. That single cry, one word, turned rage into an agony. Men strove with others to be out of the way of the lepers, held others, screaming, as shields against the lepers, trampled their own brothers, their own sick; and down a wide lane blocked by an ugly trodden heap or two the lepers made their way towards the priests, standing white as



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the lepers themselves, with the stained and discredited bones in their hands.

The Archbishop had started half up from his chair, and more than one of the notables said a quick word to the servant behind him—they had left their swords in the church; the Viceroy stood, scowling, and made a step or two towards the pikemen with a shout that stiffened them. The Inquisidor Mor did not budge from his place, but he put up a hand with his iron crucifix in it. The foremost of the lepers was a blind man, who did not see it, but the next was young, with all his senses as yet, and a sword taken from a pikeman in his still strong right hand; he saw, and checked. Others blundered against him, there was confusion, an ebb of the tide of wretchedness, until at last the whole half-hundred invaders were at a stand, all staring one way like cattle, held so by the sight of one man entirely unafraid. The Inquisidor waited a moment in absolute silence, not looking at them, looking over their heads towards a certain window in the north-east corner of the square. As he stood, they turned, such as could see, and the other people with them, the belted pirates ashamed of their panic, the devotees ashamed of their lack of faith; the Inquisidor spun them about by the steady direction of his eyes, as the pressure of a helmsman's hands turns a ship. His voice sounded above their heads:

"You are rich in misery, princes of the afflictions of God. You have a right to be heard. But first comes one with a better claim than yours. Lepers, make way for the dead!"

For this was what, from an upper window of a house in the north-east corner, was being lowered in a sheet. That shape with the stiff feet was familiar and instantly



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recognised. In mere sickness the body keeps some natural pliancy, is limp, or horribly distorted to a semblance of energy. That stillness and stiffness had only one meaning. Now, as the crowd had drawn back before the lepers, the lepers drew back before the swathed thing from which the weight of life had gone; the bearers swung it to and fro easily with the swing of their own tread, and brought it up at a good pace to where the priests, with a tinge of colour on their cheek-bones now, stood ready to receive it.

For the first time the Inquisidor moved from his place. He had dropped his minatory hand, and hung the crucifix on his neck again; when he saw the face of the dead man, much sunken, the huge sticking-out ears curiously white, he gave a sigh and came forward down the steps. A priest, bowing, put the saint's skeleton hand into his, and as he advanced with his awkward stride towards the bier another priest flung a stole about his neck. At his back the Viceroy gave His Grace Dom Gaspar one steady glance. The duel was on.

First, however, with solemnity, the Inquisidor asked the dead man's name. The bearer gave it, half Christian, half pagan, absurd in its significance, which was something like Henry-Pride-of-Morning; on which the Inquisidor laid the skeleton hand upon the corpse's forehead, calling loudly:

"Enrique! Enrique! In the name of God, whose Apostle was Thomas, and in the presence of this people, let His will be done!"

But the Pride-of-Morning lay quite still. The Inquisidor put a hand to his breast for the iron crucifix, and held it under the dead pinched nostrils while he repeated his exhortation once more. There was no



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movement; but the Inquisidor, taking up the crucifix, saw that the surface of the iron, shiny with twenty years' rubbing, was dulled. At that he lifted his voice in such a shout as not one of the people assembled had ever heard, and which was shocking, coming from that calm and terrifying figure:

"Enrique! Back, back to this world in the name of God!"

At that the dead man stirred at last. His eyelids moved, fluttered as though they struggled with a weight, lifted, and revealed the eyes, their pupils drawn to pin-points. They stared with childish wonder at the dark robes round about the bier, downwards at his own crossed hands, then upwards to the wheeling kites and crows coming nearer, making patterns in the sky. He put up a hand to protect his eyes from the beaks, and his own scream brought him back to the world, wide awake.

That scream was followed by utter silence, into which an oath from the Viceroy dropped like a pebble into a still pool.

"By Peter's paunch," exclaimed Dom Constantino, "he's come round!" And with a laugh he took off his great plumed hat and waved it. "Give a shout for St. Thomas, men, can't you?"

Then came the noise of sea captains shouting, lepers grunting out praise with such faculties as they had left, priests whistling like schoolboys, and from some hysterical laughter. In its frenzy of hope and faith the crowd pressed in even upon the lepers, took their stubby hands, leaned upon them to see the better; for if God by His Apostle could bring back a man from the dead, what was leprosy, to be feared? They seized the lepers' wooden bells and rang them; notables, running back



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into the Cathedral, and bracing their feet into straps in the floor, set the bells of the Se rolling and rocking like cockboats in their steeple, until, frightened by the burst of noise, the kites and crows started up into the air and hung so high as to be invisible.

The Inquisidor allowed the frenzy, the Viceroy's laughter and the Archbishop's plump clapping hands. There was a ten minutes' tumult, during which time the man on whose account God had vouchsafed a miracle gave yet other signs of life; sat up, devoutly kissed the relics, and drank down a pint or so of lemon and water, offered gratis by a seller of such commodities, who was a changed man from that moment. But the best of the business was to come. For after this exuberance the first question in everyone's mind, and the one thing that every human being must instantly think to ask of a person in such a case was: What was it like over there? The Inquisidor knew exactly what the assembly wanted; it was his question too, and he put it, low at first, but those near, the bearers of the body and the priests, and such soldiers as were within earshot, sent it by whispers into the farthest corner of the square:

"He's asking where he's been. He's asking what it was like. Quiet!"

And quiet they were, straining to catch the low voices on the Cathedral steps, which the whispers repeated.

"Where have you been, Enrique?"

"In hell."

That went rustling over the square in an instant, and there was a hiss of breath drawn sharply in.

"He's been in hell! Enrique, the merchant! He was always a miser. Always shuffled out of his debts. What else does he say?"



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The merchant was standing now, holding his grave-clothes about him, speaking to the Inquisidor face to face, monotonously at first, and seeming still dazed and unsteady.

"I went down, and down. So many steps, uncountable. I went into a dark place that smelt. It was like a mine, deep and hot, and there were many holes in the ground with fire in them, coming up out of them, and wheels rushing through the fire."

"What were these wheels?"

"They were to punish souls. The souls of unbelievers were bound to them. Sometimes they would clash together with a most terrible noise—boum! And then a crackling as the souls burned."

The attentive people in the square were shuddering and whispering.

"He's been there. God keep us all from a place like that!"

"And was that your destined place?" the Inquisidor was asking.

"Not mine, father, no, no; not mine. Whatever my faults—and they are many, God knows—I was never a doubter. It was as if they were trying to show me what hell could do; just as sometimes—you know it yourself, father—they will give a heretic a sniff of fire in the Casa Santa."

There was another intake of breath at that; not a man, white or black, in the territory of Goa had dared give back the Inquisidor Mor such an answer, and it was sufficient proof to the listening townspeople that the bold merchant had lately spoken with devils. Strangely enough he was not rebuked. The notables looked at each other, the Archbishop's hands began once more to twitter, but the chief personage of them



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all remained unmoved, and bade the brand snatched from burning proceed with his tale.

"It was Satan's self that walked by me. (I was in a sweat of fear, I can tell you.) And he was worse than any picture that ever was drawn, worse than any devil described in a sermon. He had a face like a beast, with his right eye bright and restless like a star, and the other dull as mud. Oh, and there was mud in hell! Boiling mud coming up and breaking—plock! in bubbles; and worms in the bubbles; and people rolling and turning in the hot mud like water-buffaloes. Below, there was another pit, like a place for smoking mutton; the people there were hanging up by their tongues, because they had told lies——"

The crowd rocked and moaned as these images took shape in their minds, borne on whisperings; the lepers were abashed, for these were worse than their own torments; the genuine Christians were at once terrified and elated; the pirates pondered the adaptation of such tortures to business purposes, and shook their heads sadly, considering the superior resources of hell. The merchant was swaggering on with his story.

"And those who were stubborn had fiery pivots turning in their ears. These were the people, he told me, who set their own judgment up for a god, and would not be persuaded. It was the worst of all the pits of hell, that place where the stubborn people lay—worse than the adulterers, for an adulterer may be humble, and know himself a sinner, and get off with a toasting. So he told me."

"So who told you?"

That was the Inquisidor's voice, and certain of the priests knew it as they had recognised that other threatening gesture of the hand. The merchant,



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caught up suddenly in mid-story, began to stammer.

"He did—he—Satan."

"I can believe it."

That, and the tone, gave the merchant a shock. He had been trespassing within the bounds of licence, confident in his protectors on the dais, and insolent after the manner of the cur dog safe within its fence; he had not reckoned on that voice and those eyes at close quarters. He cast a quick glance at the Viceroy, who stared unwinkingly at him, and tapped—the motion may have been without significance—the small dagger which even in church he kept near his hand. The merchant looked back to the Inquisidor's face, which was still as the air before a storm; he was still slightly drunk from a blending of drugs, and reasoned all too lucidly as drunkards do. He had been dead, and there was no way of proving the contrary. He had been in hell, and that could not be disproved either. But for the life of him he could not say as much to the Inquisidor Mor, who stood eyeing him and fingering the sinister black crucifix about his neck. The merchant had seen that crucifix at the last *auto-da-fé*. A heretic twisting in flames cried out for the Cross of God to comfort him, and though the fire was so fierce that the executioners could hardly approach with their pitch-forks to throw on faggots, the Inquisidor in answer to that call had flung himself through it, and the poor creature had died blessing him, with that cross against his lips. The merchant looked at it, gulping, and had nothing to say, while the crowd wondered at the sudden ceasing of his recital, and edged forward, in default of hearing, to look at him.

"Satan told you this story," repeated the Inquisidor; "is that your defence?"



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"My defence?"

"His defence?"

And it went out over the whole square, shifting from one language to another as it travelled.

"For you must know," the Inquisidor lifted his voice, "that there is no such hell as this that you describe; and which you say you have visited."

The Viceroy intervened with a good bluff laugh.

"What's that, sir? Have you got hell mapped?"

"It was once done: but done"—the Inquisidor paused—"by a heretic; a heretic three times over, Gnostic, Docetist and Marcosian; a man spewed out by the Church; the writer of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Thomas."

That name went the rounds, but the significance of the previous words was not well understood.

"He says he was told about hell by St. Thomas himself. He says St. Thomas is a heretic. Shame! He'll have Our Lady in a san-benito next."

As for the pirates and seafarers, becoming aware that the whole recent miracle was beginning to be blown upon, they removed themselves with belated common sense from the neighbourhood of the lepers, and began to edge away out of the square, aware that once theologians began to discuss heresy there was not much left to hope for in the way of action. But they did not know the Inquisidor, and they turned at the sound of his voice, once more trumpeting.

"People," he was saying, "Christians, you have been witnesses this day to a trick; no true miracle, but a trick of the Father of Lies. See this man," and his hand went out in that fearful gesture towards the merchant; "he was dead, he says, and he comes here with a story straight out of an heretical book, called—



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for these Manichees and Gnostics are shameless—by the very name of St. Thomas himself. How does this come about? Let us say that this merchant died. God, to try our faith, as once He tried that of the patriarch Job, gives him over for a while into the hands of Satan; Satan instructs him in this story, and sends him back to earth. Why should the hunter of souls give up his prey? I can tell you that. To gain more souls for himself by it—my soul, His Grace's, His Excellency's, yours—all those souls that might believe in this devilish miracle and revelation. These bones which you have reverenced and implored serve Satan's purpose; they are his outpost here, which he defends daily with lies and more lies; last lie of all, this resurrection, and this silly story of hell, which is not true hell; not the hell to which, if we believe one word of this pretended revelation, we shall go down at our life's end and burn."

He paused. Behind him the Archbishop fingered his trembling lip, the Viceroy thrummed on his dagger, while the notables looked at each other and—for even with matters of life and death in progress the sun was still strong—signed to their gaping servants for more lemon-water. The square was murmurous and puzzled; but the Inquisidor did not care for the square.

"One of two things: either Satan by God's leave has played us a trick, to make us accept heresy for truth; or the deception is man-made. To earn notoriety, or to be stared at and reverenced as having spoken with Satan, one man has done this; and if it is so, if this happening comes from human vanity and folly—then, then, my sons, the merchant must explain how in this Christian city he came to have knowledge of that heretical book; where he procured it to study; and in whose hands it now is."



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The merchant, the uncle, more white than when an hour ago he had been let down in grave-clothes from a window, seeing the fate in store for him began to bubble and clamour.

"Reverend sir, I am not a guilty man. I knew of no book. I am a poor merchant. His Excellency there will speak for me."

And Enrique's two sweating palms came together in a clap, and were turned in prayer towards the Viceroy, and towards his doctor standing by him on the dais.

The Inquisidor did not heed him; went on as though he had merely been taking breath:

"But this is no place for investigation. We shall come at the truth better, not here among the shouting, but in the calm of the Holy House."

At that dread name the voice of the unhappy merchant rose to a yell, he forgot decorum, and the grave-clothes, slowly unwinding, fell about his feet, leaving him naked to the shimmering air.

"Father, I will tell the truth, the whole truth. I was taken one night——"

But his voice broke, as the Archbishop rose from his stool and came forward. He was no hero, the Archbishop, and no saint, but he could take upon him in emergency the look of both; and this was an emergency. Something terrifying was about to happen, a revelation which, though he was not directly concerned with it, knew nothing of what it might be, and was in fact altogether innocent of contriving whatever enormity it might refer to, might be awkward to handle with the assurance that comes from a flawless conscience. The Archbishop could take a decision when circumstances pressed. Now he came forward, the suffragans holding



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aside his cope, and lifted both hands above the empty glass box that had been the shrine.

"Assemble the bones!" called the Archbishop strongly; and the priests came scurrying up the steps, each with his scapula or patella, glad to be rid of the burden.

"Lay them together. Not in the shrine"—for the priests, too eager, were thrusting them back pell-mell through the glass window—"here, on the ground." They piled them obediently, and the next order was to the sacristan to bring one of the books least often used of the Liturgy. The Archbishop, manœuvring himself under the shade of his stately parasol, took off his mitre; took off, with a sigh of relief which did not betray itself, the heavy golden cope, and stood in his beautiful alb of lawn and lace with hands lifted and the stern face of one imploring fire from heaven. The astonished square was in a commotion of wonder until word came down from the steps, uttered behind a priest's hand, of what His Grace was about to do; then the lepers pressed forward, unopposed, into front places, the seafaring visitors squatted, trampled persons who had suffered in the lepers' raid were passed out, hand over hand, into neighbouring streets to make room, and the entire congregation, after a morning not devoid of excitement, settled down comfortably and with a sense of righteousness to hear a full-dress archiepiscopal curse.

The book was brought, a thin tall volume, bound in black; a bell from the sacristy was placed convenient to His Grace's hand; a brown candle made of old wax was fetched and set in his left hand, lighted. (It bowed, before the end of the curse, and dripped cloudy tears upon the discredited bones.) The choir was assembled



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and warned to be prompt with Amens. Priests gathered, taking off their white stoles of festival. Enrique the merchant was forgotten, and the cursing began, with a long and ominous jangling of the bell.

It began by calling upon the Trinity, the Apostles with special reference to St. Thomas, St. Stephen and all martyrs, St. Sylvester and all confessors; by whose aid, said the imprecation, "we do damn, excommunicate, curse, and do segregate from the bounds and lifts of our Holy Mother Church, all those thieves, sacrilegious persons, ravenous catchers and doers, with counsellors and coadjutors male and female that have committed this mischief—" namely, the fobbing off with false bones of those well-meaning Portuguese thirty years ago by the Christians of Meliapore.

With this preliminary the Archbishop started upon the curse proper, beginning with the curse of places. In fields, groves and woods; in house, chamber, and bed; in the law-court, in the road, in the water; in church and out of it, in the market-place and in battle, with a brief digression to the courts of kings, the unfortunates could count on no protection, but rather the reverse, from on high. Then he numbered their actions, no one of which was to be blessed, and their bodily members, one by one, in great detail and at last wholesale, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, with whatever might lie between those points; then their five senses; and lastly, predicted the end to which, with the help of God and His saints, those unworthy denizens of Meliapore should come; that they should be drowned or hanged, devoured by wild beasts, burnt, or slain by their enemies; and that until this time of release, they should live hated of all men.



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The Archbishop here drew a breath, and turned a page; worse was to come.

"So we accordingly," chanted the Archbishop, purpling beneath his parasol, "if they will not amend, do shut from them the gates of heaven, and deny unto them Christian burial, so as they shall be buried in asses' dung. Furthermore, cursed be the ground wherein they are buried, let them be confounded on Judgment Day, let them have no conversation among Christians, nor be houseled at the hour of death; let them be as dust before the face of the wind; and as Lucifer was expelled out of heaven, and Adam out of Paradise, so let them be expelled from daylight."

He signed; the bell renewed its jangling. Above it rose His Grace's voice, and his hand with the melting but still flaming candle was raised high.

"And as the candle which is thrown from my hand here is put out, so let their works and their souls be quenched in the stench of hell-fire——"

Down went the candle; but the flame being sturdy, and meeting the wax which had dripped down on to the stones, flared up as if in defiance of the Archbishop and his thunders. It was the Inquisidor's foot that stifled it.

"—and to this let all present, to the glory of God and the confusion of his enemies, say Amen!"

The choir gave it out heartily, the square murmured it, the Viceroy grumbled something under cover of the pious noise. His Grace, now wholly equal to the occasion, sent word for faggots, and these came in a moment from within the houses round the square, until there was a sufficient heap at whose centre lay the liquescent brown candle of the curse and on top the bones. The Archbishop turned to another page of his book, and



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was preparing to read when a gentle touch on his arm made him start and turn; for the touch, mild though it was, was authoritative, not the respectful fingering of suffragans.

"Your Grace," said the Inquisidor Mor, "with respect; will you delay a moment? I have sent for something from the Casa Santa."

"Something? What more do we need?" responded the Archbishop almost firmly. He could have moral courage where his own comfort was concerned, and the sun was pitiless. More waiting! Hours, perhaps, before he could find the comfort of cool shade——

"The conditions are all fulfilled," went on His Grace defiantly. "Enough time has been wasted this morning. It remains only to burn these sacrilegious bones."

And he cast up his eyes, mentally, to heaven at the thought of standing over them while they grilled. The Inquisidor did not budge; he had no parasol over him, no hat on his narrow head, his voice remained low, he was impregnable by any assault of the elements, or the Archbishop's temper. He neither moved nor answered, but stood with his thin hand still on the Archbishop's arm in the beseeching way he had with heretics sometimes, and Dom Gaspar made no protest, unless a petulant collapse on to his faldstool could be considered one. The Inquisidor did not explain, and the entire assembly waited, growing hot and more hot, for the return of the messenger from the Holy House.

He came at last, panting, and had under his arm a bundle of some grey stuff, at sight of which the townspeople set up a groan. It was a Samarra the messenger brought, the heretic's dress in which the contumacious were arrayed to meet their God; a grey tunic on which were painted in red upturned flames, devils, and at the



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bottom a few words: *Por hereje negativo*, for persisting in heresy. He had the cap, too, shaped like a mitre, with flames painted on it. These, with a curiously long, slender and dark wax candle, were handed up to the dignitaries on the steps; amid a curious and terrified silence the Inquisidor Mor took them, and with a "By your Grace's leave," approached the pitiful heap lying pell-mell upon the faggots. The arm-bones he thrust through the grey sleeves, arranging the leg-bones below; the finger-bones he closed round the candle; and finally on the skull, that mocked him and the whole square with its grin, he set the mitre on which devils curtsied and intertwined their tails.

"Now," said the Inquisidor with deference to Dom Gaspar, "if your Grace is ready, all is in order."

## (ix)

That evening the Viceroy sent for the Inquisidor Mor, who came walking through the green twilight, his rosary slipping through his fingers and his dreaded shadow departed with the sun. The children as usual fled from him, and there were swaggering visitors in the town, with wide belts and handsome weapons in them, who gave him sour looks, and protected themselves by heathen gestures as did the Goanese. For the Inquisidor had, with his scrupulousness, knocked on the head one of the major festivals of their year. Whence should come this loyalty to St. Thomas, no one could guess; but there it was, wide-spread and deep-rooted up and down the coast, and it had been for years the pirates' delight, and the joy even of inoffensive persons, to gather and sing and make mischief in his



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honour. Now that was ended, at least so far as Goa was concerned. Meliapore remained; but nobody, not even the most piratical, cared to venture within the net of those wily and too-businesslike Nestorians. Goa was well watered, Goa was gay, and a good anchorage, the people were mild; Goa was the very place for a pilgrimage, and now there was no excuse left to visit it. True, a rumour had been started, but had not found credence as yet, that this burning was to be repeated every year, the bones renewing themselves phœnix-like for that purpose, as the blood of St. Januarius once a year runs thin. But the rumour was not good enough to build on, and the pilgrims looked and walked disconsolate, solacing themselves with an occasional riot down by the quays. Those in the main streets were alert for mischief, and sullen. It is some tribute to the Inquisidor's courage and withdrawn habit of mind that he walked to the palace alone through the unfriendly crowds as he might have strolled through an olive grove in Portugal, and they moved aside to let him go. From heaven, it might be supposed that the Apostle himself regarded this member of the Church militant with amusement and approval, for St. Thomas himself had been none too credulous or tolerant of miracles in his time.

The Inquisidor, busy with his beads and his thoughts, hummed as he walked the Psalmist's tune of morning loving-kindness matched with evening truth. He was content with the day's proceedings, and yet for all that preoccupied, for the Inquisidor Mor had won a victory, which is a delicate thing, by no means easy to handle, and may break away into mere air like a bubble unless a man uses it rightly. He walked back and forth in front of the palace longer than was necessary, and his



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mind was still by no means made up when Gil was sent by His Excellency, who from a window had observed this restlessness and found it ominous, to bring him in.

The little bronze girl, Maria, was not present at this interview. The Archbishop might excuse her, provided her bodice was on, but the Inquisidor had an eye unimaginably cold, more troubling to the air of a room than her slow-moving fan. The Viceroy, who had not seen her all day owing to the direction of the ceremonies, supposed with a shrug that she would be behind the usual curtain.

"Well, your reverence," said he bluffly, "you gave us the devil of a morning. Sit down; you must have had enough of standing for the day."

The Inquisidor bowed and sat, composing his gown over his knees. He made no answer. The Viceroy had sent for him, the Viceroy presumably therefore had something to say.

"I've just had word there's trouble down by the waterside. Did you see anything of it as you came?"

"Nothing," said the Inquisidor. It was true.

"My soldiers will have to be up all night on the chance. There must be five or six thousand people out there in boats; all of them cheated. All of them wanting to know what we mean by it."

"They have not been cheated. They have been told the truth."

"And who the devil cares for that?" angrily asked the Viceroy. "They want their fun."

"They shall not have it at God's expense."

"No; only at mine. Mine and the Church's. Where's the money coming from now for silver altars and such? Tell me that. What am I to say in my next despatch?



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That the town's chief treasure, the thing which brought us in the easiest money, has been burned publicly because of some nonsense about a madman dreaming the wrong hell?"

"What would your Excellency have done?"

"Why, burned the madman."

"Ah!"

The Inquisidor lifted his eyes and saw before him the angry countenance of a man in the wrong. He had seen that look too often, on too many faces, to mistake it. It was time to strike.

"The madman, Excellency, may have had other dreams. It would not have done, I think, to have him telling them aloud in the square."

"Let him talk. Who'd believe him? What could he have said?"

"He could have said," the Inquisidor answered, "that he got his heretical story from your Excellency, here in this room."

The Viceroy stared, gave a stamping turn or two about the room, and suddenly burst out laughing.

"Devil rot you! Speaking with all respect, I give in; but it was your reverence led me into it." The Viceroy shook a large fist, clenched in mock menace. "What did you do with my beggars? Where did you stow them?"

"In the Aljube," the Inquisidor responded unhesitatingly. "The beggars, with their sham sores and their contorted limbs which function normally at night, were a temptation to your Excellency in the circumstances; and I thought it as well to remove them."

"Yes, yes; I understood that, and so I got hold of Enrique. I might as well have saved myself the trouble. But how the devil was I to know that story



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was dangerous?" He looked with sudden distrust at the Inquisidor. "It was heresy, I suppose?"

The Inquisidor lifted a hand.

"Did you see how His Grace looked? And His Grace's eagerness to have the ceremony done with? Heresy, yes; and known as such to all scholars."

"Dom Gaspar was not of this," said the Viceroy quickly. "He had no hand in it."

"He would have chosen an orthodox hell," said the Inquisidor, smiling. "And now, Dom Constantino, what is to be done about it?"

"No, wait awhile," the Viceroy told him; and again began pacing, frowning, thinking. "I gave Enrique the story; but the story wasn't mine; it was one of Maria's silly tales that she makes up of an evening. How came it she hit on something so unlucky?" The Inquisidor's face had become expressionless. "Was it chance?" The Inquisidor looked up at him for one instant, and His Excellency read his answer in the look. "By the five wounds! You primed her. I'll have the skin off her back for that, selling a man in his own bed. Maria! Maria!" He strode to the discreet curtain; the Inquisidor made no move to stay him, and His Excellency, warned by that very lack of movement, stopped with his hand on it.

"She's not there, I suppose? In the Aljube like the others? I haven't seen her since——"

"Last night."

"Last night. How did you get hold of her? Cristo, is this house full of spies?"

There was no need to answer that. The Inquisidor tucked his hands away as a cat does, and settled down to hear the man of action talk. But the words when they came were unexpected, and the Viceroy's manner



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was unexpected too. Bluster had died from it; there was neither laughter nor choler, the two most usual of his emotions, in his eyes, but instead a kind of country gentleman's dignity. He spoke heavily at first, standing like a servant before the priest's chair.

"Well, and what do you want me to do now? You're the master, you win the throw; I was a fool to wager against you. I shall be a week clearing up the mess; the people are angry; down at the ports they'll be standing to all night. I reckon to have half a hundred killed before we get those ships away. And two of the sick that were trampled were our own people. Well, you've got what you wanted, peeled away all the human side of their religion for them, and left them only God the Father up in the sky. What's the good of that? To these poor devils, poor children, for that's all they are; you can keep them happy all day with a toy. The Saint was like a doll to a child for them; there they were, saving their pennies to dress him up in solid silver, talking to him—but what's the good? You've forgotten how a child thinks, or talks. You've forgotten how poor men live."

"I have led oxen to the fields. I have sweated in the wine-press," said the Inquisidor, very white.

"More shame for you, then. A man that hasn't much to put in his belly needs to live by something else; something he can see, for choice, and play with. I was in love with a picture of St. Catherine when I was a boy, always in and out of church to look at her; and I don't suppose I gave a thought to God Almighty once in every ten times I went in. Spies or no spies"—for the Inquisidor had risen, and his gesture seemed to bid the Viceroy take warning—"I'll say my say to you now. Whose purpose have you served by this



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bonfire of yours? There's our own people discontented and some of them killed—God knows how many—trade lost, religion none the better. I say that flat; religion's none the better. By the time you've split all the hairs on St. Thomas's head, nobody knows what to believe. Burn all the bits of the true cross, all the relics you can lay hands on; burn the people who believe in them; burn the children at birth lest they should grow up heretics—what's left? And who'll do the work? The secular arm. You shake hell fire at the soldiers, and the soldiers shake their pikes at a lot of poor silly children and take away their toys—for God's sake, let them have their game out! You can do what you choose with me," said the Viceroy, "you can set your dogs on me for this trick with Enrique. I don't want to spend my life within four walls. I want to get back to my own grapes, and my own people that all have a good-day for me, and a new brat or a new calf to show me. I'm at your orders and the Church's. I must clean up the trouble you make, as best I can, and send a few of these poor devils to hell before their time; get the town quiet enough for you to say your prayers in. You're no coward, I know that, father. But—your Master knocked up Peter's sword; no secular arm for him. Well" —the Viceroy suddenly sat, and put up a sleeve to his forehead, where the sweat was starting—"that's my say."

(x)

The Archbishop lay in his great bed with the crimson hangings, staring upwards, reproaching himself aloud to the annoyance of drowsy Cristobal.



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"I was too prompt. I let myself be shaken at the thought of what that merchant might disclose. And now the bones are gone, there will be no pilgrimage next year; two of the lepers were killed, and three of the sick, they tell me; all because a man can't leave well alone."

Cristobal, losing all hope of sleep, took hold of the Archbishop's ear and investigated it.

"What are we to do with him? I might send him on a mission, a dangerous mission. He would make a good martyr. What's your apeship's advice?"

Cristobal tweaked one of the hairs that jutted temptingly from His Grace's ear, and leapt back a couple of feet as His Grace's angry hand came smacking towards him.

"You're no more fit for human society than he is," said the Archbishop, but with an amused tolerance singularly unlike the mixture of dignity and dread he used with the Inquisidor. "Come along, I won't hurt you." The monkey sidled behind the pillows towards his master, who put an arm round him and pulled him against his side. "Can't he see, Cristobal," enquired the Archbishop's voice, a few moments later, drowsily out of the darkness, "that there must be one religion for the rich and another for the poor?" The monkey clucked; a disapproving sound. "I mean, of course, one religion for the learned and another for the uneducated. The thing is, to get him out of the way and set up another relic from somewhere. It will not do to make the faith of these black children too stark. What shall it be? That tooth, now, that they keep at Kandy, is an object of great devotion. We might try that. But it means, first, getting the head of the Casa Santa out of the way. Oh God," suddenly prayed the Archbishop,



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with the childlike faith of the materialist, "I am poured out like water, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels when that man is near; kind Lord, deliver me!"

(xi)

Nor was sleep very peaceful, or readily come by, in the Aljube itself and the Holy House adjoining. The beggars were clamorous in their subterranean room, the girl Maria had been shut in with her uncle, late a corpse, still tremulous from the effects of Dom Baltasar's drugs, and querulous from continued fear. His reproaches to his niece continued far into the night, she kneeling silent and unresponsive by the window; it was not until he came behind her with a plan to recoup both their fortunes by blackmail if ever they got out of Casa Santa alive that she turned on him like a young angry cat.

"There are stories to be told," said Enrique, sidling to her. "I had my dream from His Excellency. If I tell his reverence the Inquisidor all about it, and he wants to do any bargaining, it might come in useful. What? Don't you think so?"

"You'd better hold your tongue," said she scornfully, "if you don't want it cut out."

The uncle was aghast.

"Yes, he'll cut your tongue out, and your hands off so that you can't write it, and your nose, too, so that you can't poke it into matters you don't understand."

"But," argued the uncle, recovering, "the Inquisidor wouldn't let him. Not if he knew my story."

"Son of a castrated scorpion," said the girl, "it is the



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Inquisidor who will do the cutting. So keep quiet, if you can; I want to be sleeping."

"The Viceroy told you, and who told the Viceroy? I did. And who told me?" She did not dare speak the name, but jerked with her smooth head towards the Casa Santa where the Inquisidor might be supposed to be sleeping. "He got it from a wrong book and taught it to me. And I taught it to the Viceroy, and he taught it to you, and you let the monkey out of the jar in the square. Now, do you see why you had better hold your tongue?"

Enrique saw, and sat down upon the inadequate pallet supplied by the Holy Office to its guest, where he moaned awhile, thinking of the tangle he was in, then slept and snored. Maria, used to waking, knelt still by the window, thinking with detachment of her prospects and her chances. She was no longer so very young; sixteen meant ripeness, and she was a month or two over that dangerous age. There was no chance now of a marriage, and not much inclination to it. She perceived that she had been used, in the matter of St. Thomas's bones, as a tool, and tools might expect to come in for a certain amount of rough handling. Since she could not write, she supposed that she might get off with the loss of her tongue; or else might remain in the prison until His Excellency was transferred back to Portugal, or died. At that, considering his occasional collapses after gluttony, she became cheerful, and began to turn over in her mind how she should procure somebody's help to doctor his rice; one hair threaded through a cooked grain, cut off so as not to show, and not more than half a dozen grains so treated to a meal, so that the ensuing illness should not come on too suddenly, nor look too suspicious. She gave a little



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clap of her hands which checked for a moment Enrique's snores, and scooping up a handful of rice off the supper plate squatted down in the slowly turning square of moonlight, with a pin taken from her hair, to practise her stitchery.



It is strange how news travels in silent places. Nobody talked in the Casa Santa, except certain heretics after treatment down in the distant stone-deaf cellars; nobody talks in the forest, but news travels all the same, on gusts of wind, on a new savour in the air. Somehow in that place of recollection, where the straining ear found nothing to break its loneliness but an occasional footstep, an occasional bell, the news of the Inquisidor's disappearance was known before midday. The wildest conjectures adorned it, as that the devil in person had been seen flying with him over the town, or the converse of this, that he had been rapt up to heaven in a chariot of fire; but the grand fact itself, the sum of other homely facts—his bed had not been slept in, he had not said his morning Mass, nor appeared in the refectory—was not to be disputed. He was gone. At first, though there was consternation, nothing was done. They were unaccustomed, in the Casa Santa, to questioning the movements of their director. But when enquiry had been made by means of runners at all the other churches, and down by the port; when there was no longer any hope of finding him in any accustomed place—then the understrappers of the Casa Santa went trembling to the Viceroy, breakfasting, and said:



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"Excellency, our reverend father the Inquisidor Mor has disappeared."

The Viceroy told them not to trouble him, that he was busy, and hungry, and the Inquisidor could look after himself.

"But," they protested, "Excellency, if he has been kidnapped by some of these violent strangers? These strangers who came for a miracle and were cheated? They are an ugly-looking lot, with more knives than scruples by the look of them."

The Viceroy heaved himself up from the table to the terror of the suppliants from the Casa Santa, who thought themselves menaced by the movement. But when he spoke, it was to a small round picture of St. Catherine on the wall.

"Saint Kate," said the Viceroy, "put up a prayer to your master to deliver us from zealots. We've got the quays and the ships pacified, at a cost of seven or eight lives; and now we must go down again and search through the whole hornets' nest for a man the colony would be better without. Why couldn't he disappear two days ago, till we'd got St. Thomas over?" The sub-Inquisidor, shocked at this, was for rebuking His Excellency, and took on his pulpit attitude; but that worthy, turning his back after a loud kiss thrown to St. Katherine, bawled for Gil and his top armour, and went, still bawling, out of the room. The group from the Casa Santa stood irresolute, until some small unclad brown girls came pattering in to clear away the break-fast; then they turned as one man, with pious ejacula-tions, and made their way to the palace of the Arch-bishop.

The news had already reached that prelate, who found it more than difficult to disguise his joy as



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philosophic resignation. He was at his great writing-table with a piece of vellum before him, from which the awed sub-Inquisidors deduced that he must be writing to the Pope. Cristobal sat by the ink, which from time to time, with grimaces of delight, he tasted off the point of a forefinger.

"A loss," said the Archbishop, sighing, "a loss we shall hardly repair. Another like him—that would be very hard to find." And his voice thanked God for it. He had his hand over some written words which he was copying and which read:

"—With all submission I would suggest that his successor should be a man of entirely different character, the sword in the velvet scabbard rather than, as in the case of our lamented Inquisidor Mor, a continual display of naked steel."

"But," said the deputation from the Casa Santa, impressed, "your Grace must not give up hope. The Viceroy is of opinion that he will be found down among the junks, kidnapped by some of these ill-intentioned pilgrims. He does not despair, the Viceroy. Your Grace should take courage."

"May it be so," said the Archbishop, sighing, "may your faith be justified."

And he looked with longing at the scroll of vellum, on which, when his letter to the Supreme Council of the Inquisidor was composed, one of his secretaries should set it down with all appropriate ceremony of penmanship.

The deputation prepared to retire, a little disconcerted at being thus forestalled, and the news taken out of their mouths. The Archbishop cuffed his monkey, which was sucking up ink through a quill, and with a brief gesture of blessing informed them that



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the Viceroy's search should have his prayers, and that they might be thinking out the procedure for the funeral while they waited.

"It will distract our minds," said the Archbishop, piously folding his hands and disregarding Cristobal's angry chatter, "thus to prepare to give effect to our grief."

And, in fact, his letter to the Grand Council of the Inquisition sketched out and ready, the Archbishop's next task was the preparation of a memorial sermon on the text "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." The house in question he made out to be the Casa Santa; the theory he followed was that the Inquisidor's passion for truth had now finally undone him. He was an excellent preacher, the Archbishop; he used his voice with skill and a convincing appearance of spontaneity, attained by long hours of practice before a certain square mirror framed in tortoise-shell. All that day and the next he wrote at his sermon, a labour of love, while down at the port the Viceroy's pikemen boarded boat after boat to search, sweating and with oaths, among the odds and ends of food and bedding and weapons that represented the flotsam of the pilgrims' private lives. There was some opposition to their activities; more than one had to swim for it, tumbled over the gunwale by a stealthy shove. But much as the pilgrim-pirates might dislike the visitation, they had to submit to it. The two forts, from whose enclosures white smoke, and a prodigious noise, and immense dangerous balls of stone came slowly lolloping out on provocation, maintained discipline until the search was over. And when at last it became evident that the Inquisidor was not upon any of the craft, or alternatively that if he had set foot on one he had been



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dropped overboard with a weight tied to him, the pikemen came tramping back into the town with their weary lieutenant at their head and made report to the effect that his reverence must have quitted Goa by land if he had ever left it at all. The lieutenant made a gesture with his hand, thumb downwards, as he offered this statement, by which the Viceroy understood him to mean that his reverence might be considered to be safely out of the way.

"He was a thorn in Dom Gaspar's side," the Viceroy mused to an inattentive brown girl. "I wonder. I wonder just how much Dom Gaspar knows about it."

And he sent a civil note relating the sad result of their search by Gil to the Archbishop, with a laugh as he gave it into that faithful serving-brother's hand.

"For His Grace; but I'd have a bet with you, Gil, he knows the tune of it already."

To which the other responded sourly:

"You never bet but when you're certain. I'll keep my money."

The Archbishop, sitting at his great table, putting the finishing touches, lovingly, to his sermon, read the note with sharp attention and a decent gravity; then sighed, which might mean anything—regret, relief—and ordered Gil a glass of good wine. That worthy was led out to the pantry to drink it, leaving Dom Gaspar alone with the precious report, which he read thirstily once again; it was more comfortable to him than wine. He looked from his own to the Viceroy's words.

"—it may therefore regretfully be taken as proven that his reverence is not:



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(i) in the town, upper or lower.
(ii) in any of the visiting vessels.
(iii) in the Casa Santa itself——"

So ran the neat script, a secretary's arrangement of the Viceroy's blare—"say we can't find the God-confounded mischief-maker anywhere." As for the Archbishop's final sentence, it was nicely pendant to the secretarial viceregal lament. "But if in the fullness of time we discover him; if in a year's time, or a century, he should return to us as a handful of bones, a little dust; then we shall take, as the old Israelites did, the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and rejoice before the Lord our God seven days. For this, my children, was a saint."

When he had read that paragraph again, savouring it, and turning it like sweet liquor upon his tongue, the Archbishop sat back in his great chair and beckoning to Cristobal, who came hirpling, he took both the monkey's paws in his fine white hands and asked that familiar a question.

"Cristobal," said Dom Gaspar, "I should like to know just how much Dom Constantino knows about it all. The disappearance of his reverence comes pat. There might have been complaint to the Holy Office about this last exploit with Enrique. It is convenient for the Viceroy that no report should be made. What do you think, Cristobal? Shall we not ask any more questions? We might get answered if we did; that is the worst of being men. Monkeys don't answer. Monkeys are not awkward companions, save for the superficial annoyance caused by some of their habits. No, no; we'll ask no more questions, but sing our requiem, and



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give out our sermon later on, and thank the good God for his mercies with all our hearts."

And, the monkey nodding, down slipped the Archbishop to his knees and gave thanks that by means into which he did not propose to enquire the thorn of strict righteousness would no more afflict his flesh.

(xiii)

The fact was that his reverence the Inquisidor Mor had been kidnapped on the land side of Goa. He had set out in the cool of the evening to walk towards the wooded foothills, intending, if necessary, to be gone all night; for the Viceroy's words, and his illustration from the Gospels of Christ striking up Peter's sword, had stuck in the Inquisidor's mind like burrs, and the thoughts that played about Dom Constantino were red and angry. The Inquisidor permitted himself to feel no hatred; he would not even hate a heretic, but would pray himself into a kind of stern benevolence before he went down to the question-room. He was accustomed to rule himself. The unbiddable nature of his present thoughts, therefore, was shocking. He set out along the paths he knew, a stout stick for snakes in his right hand, and in the pocket of his black robe a discipline with seven tails, with which, if reason could not prevail, he proposed to scourge out the intolerant murmurs that prevented all tranquil contemplation.

He set out. There was a sufficient moon, but the Inquisidor relied on it not at all. He was a great walker, a man whose solid peasant limbs not even long hours of prayer could tame; he had been born up in the hills, and the strong sinews of the hills accompanied him to this



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lax lazy place, where the great moved in palanquins when they must, and a thirsty poor man would do without water rather than stir out of the shade to draw it from his well. Of the town inhabitants of Goa, perhaps the Inquisidor Mor was the only man who knew his way ten miles inland.

He set out, therefore, troubled in mind, swinging his stick, through a black and silver world. As he walked he debated:

"The death of the body is nothing; the death of the soul everything. A sword kills only in time, a lie in eternity. A murderous blow hurts the striker more than the stricken; this was the reason why Christ made Peter put up his sword, so that the rock of the church might not be split by its own violence. Violence must be suffered, not inflicted, if it is to bring riches to the soul. Yet a religion must persecute or be persecuted in order to survive."

Saying this, and reflecting upon those contradictions in the Gospels which cannot be reconciled but must be believed in, the Inquisidor came to a quiet glade where he knew that two paths diverged, the one leading up towards a thin and straggling cataract of water known as the Prophet's Beard, the other winding off in no particular direction, but less rugged, more suited to quick walking. Here the Inquisidor paused to consider and make his decision which of the two ways to follow; he stood still for a moment, while above his head the silent golden heavenly Balance showed through the trees; when at last he turned to the right towards the cataract, it did not perceptibly tilt. Nevertheless, at that moment the matter was irrevocably settled of the Inquisidor's soul.

He took the right-hand path, striding along, plagued



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by the texts as by gadflies about his flanks, and troubled still with the remembrance of His Excellency's lecture. Scents came up to his nose as he trod, sweet, some of them, others like the summer stench of beasts. A certain dry swift rustle once made him grasp his stick, but it passed, and he resumed his marching through the shadows, with tags of three learned and more or less dead languages contradicting each other in his mind. So blindly engrossed was he that he did not notice a light flaring up through the trees to his left; no forest fire, but a controlled flame that glowed and sank under the thrusts of a man's hand stoking. He was obsessed, his whole mind was alert to guard against the subtle attacks of those irreconcilable texts, into which intruded Old Testament phrases with which he would, on his return to Goa, smite the Archbishop and the makers of miracles. "For he built up again the high places and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them." So Menasseh in the Chronicles; so now His Grace, Archbishop of Goa and the Indies of the East. The host of heaven, God's saints, were to be reverenced as examples, not set up for puppet shows, and compelled to do miracles for the strengthening of unbelief. Thus ran the Inquisidor's thoughts as he walked, blindly, yet with unthinking surefootedness, over the rough path, until a voice at his ear, and hand at his shoulder brought him to his senses and halted him.

"Hey!" said the voice in one of the lingoes of the Coromandel coast, with which the Inquisidor was by this time familiar. "This is no time of night to be walking alone, terrifying poor men."

"I have nothing to lose," answered the Inquisidor drily, "if by poor men you mean robbers."



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"Robbers," the voice answered, "we are not, but a kind of pious poor wanderers that go about to shrines. Would you make us a little offering, so that at the next place we go the gods won't forget you?"

"Let me sit by your fire awhile," the Inquisidor asked; for he had a kind of prudence, in that he saw no reason to lose his life sooner than need be. To be killed in a brawl with brigands was no way, to his mind, of furthering God's Kingdom, though he would have stood up and testified in the mouth of the dragon of Baal. He was aware that these heathen had codes of their own, and that to drink from a man's water-skin or to sit by his fire was in a sense to become his brother; conversely either of these acts might defile him for a hundred avatars; but these men were not Brahmins, so far as he could tell, and accordingly he made his request. It was granted, and he moved forward to the flames into which, by way of a peaceable gesture, he threw his stick, and stood wholly unarmed before the small company gathered about the logs.

They were poor men only, a wild elf-locked lot, certainly pilgrims. He had seen the dark young man in the cloak striped like a tiger, black and brown, standing among the suppliants during the test of St. Thomas's bones; and the blind man next to him was one of those whom their failure had cheated. They knew him too. The boy's bold stare met his glance, half smiling, and when he spoke to bless God before he sat down, the old man turned his head away from the voice as blind people do, the better to hear; then said something in an unknown tongue to the boy, who took his hand to fondle it, looking directly at the Inquisidor Mor, and made a brief sound like an affirmation. The man who had accosted him first spoke to translate.



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"These two were at Goa during the trial of the bones." He spat, but from need, not by way of insult. "The old man says it was a very incompetent magic. He could work one worth two of that, he says. He is a good magician, but his magic is no use for eyes."

"All magic is useless and criminal," said the Inquisidor uncompromisingly, but stretching his hands to the flames.

"Now sharks," said the man, disregarding, "he has a first-rate magic for them. The pearl fishers could not get on without him; the sharks would take them as they dived if the hai-banda did not stop their mouths with his charming. But the fishing goes on only till the end of spring. Then we travel north, to the ruby mines."

The Inquisidor now began to see his companions a little more clearly. He had been astonished to find, in the company of these young men, a greybeard who must certainly hamper them in their journeys. Now he perceived that the old man with his magic was the chief support of the party; he had heard of the hai-banda, the shark-binders, and knew that they commanded a good price for their exertions. The reference to the northern mines puzzled him, for he supposed that the old man would ply his trade only round the coast, or possibly that he might go south as far as Ceylon, where at Trincomalee they fished soon after the monsoon.

"And so we go about," the first man interrupted his thoughts, "and pay our respects to a shrine here, and a shrine there, for though we are not all of the same faith, we like to see life. It is the first time that we come to Goa. You have there a very fine shrine."

This politeness was cut across by the old man scornfully laughing; the Inquisidor, who had been watching him, made a note that he understood the



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language, which indeed was a strange jumble, that his talkative companion spoke. He laughed, showing a toothless mouth, and made a difficult lisping speech to the young man, who nodded respectfully from time to time.

"He says," the interpreter volunteered, "that your shrine is nothing. He says there are places to the east, where he has been, where a shrine like yours would be forgotten in a forest, the people would think so little of it. They worship a woman, he says, just like you do. But they never set eyes on her, and she has a man's name. They do not have her picture on the walls, only pictures of her dancing girls. Your dancing girls, he says, have wings. How can they dance with wings?"

The Inquisidor, with something of a shock, realised that this was a reference to the angels which in the Sé Primacial adorned the sanctuary.

"He, you see," explained the spokesman apologetically, "is a saint. He has been to many pilgrimage places, and can tell many religious stories. We keep him with us and revere him, but he is troublesome sometimes. It is hard work travelling with a holy man."

The Archbishop of Goa, wholly unaware of this dirty and ill-smelling rapscallion's existence, was at that hour echoing his very sentiments.

"What is this place?" asked the Inquisidor immediately. A chapel of Our Lady in a forest? And since the answer was not immediately forthcoming he asked again.

"Where is this chapel where they worship a woman?"

The companions interrogated the old man, who answered briefly, with a thin crooked finger pointed towards the Inquisidor.



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"He says he lost his sight there, so that he should not tell the wonders that they do. Dances, he says, and plays they have, for the woman. It is splendid, but he never wants to go back there. He came to Goa because he supposed this woman worship was the same magic and might give him back his sight. But it was not the same, only some of the words sounded the same." He tried them, "Kriskus, Anti Kriskus——"

"Some of the words?" The Inquisidor was eager. "Was it like this?"

And he recited in Latin first, and then in Portuguese, the Hail Mary, to which the old man listened with a kind of sharp, yet dubious attention, and at the end shook his head and gave his unpleasing laugh.

"He says that he knows your voice, that you are the priest who would not let the miracle be done to-day."

At that the Inquisidor took fire.

"Can he understand me? No matter, I see that he does. Old man, you who have visited so many shrines, do you not know that the priest is only the mouthpiece of the god?"

To this the old man answered in rusty Tamil:

"That he is. The god's mouth, and the god's belly, too. And what he bids the god do, that the god does."

"You talk of your heathen images," the Inquisidor answered, "I speak of Christ."

And with such eloquence as his stumbling tongue allowed in the unfamiliar language, he set forth the principles of Christianity; how God had done sufficient wonders, giving men breath, and agility of mind, and the whole floor of the earth to walk upon; that now all He required was an acknowledgment of His power. All the time he looked steadily at the young boy rather than at the interpreter or the old man; and the boy, after



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darting his eyes about, seemed to accept this domination, and listened unwinking, his hand lying on the old man's, still as a frightened bird. The Inquisidor spoke, never moving his eyes, from which, in fact, all sight of the fire and the faces had departed; he was seeing the morning of the world, with the singing stars above it, and feeling a presence walking. He had come to Adam and Eve, and was relating, very simply, the history of the Fall, when there was a noise and a shower of sparks from the burning logs. He came back from Eden to see the boy lying insensible, face downwards upon the glow of the lighted splinters. The old man gave a wail and pulled him roughly upwards by the hand, but the slim body fell sideways again like a log, and the Inquisidor saw that a red coal stuck sizzling to one cheek. He was up in an instant, and flicked it away from the danger place near the eye, an instinctive movement, but one which he could have justified from St. Paul, who has it that suffering can do none but Christians good. As he looked about among the scattered food for a drop of oil or butter to rub on the angry scar, the fourth man of the party, who had not yet spoken, and whose face he had not yet seen, put a gentle hand upon his sleeve, and saying nothing, took command. He was, the firelight now discovered, a shortish prognathous man, with large outstanding ears and a smooth face. He had something of a Chinese look, and yet not the Chinese tilted eye; the colour of his skin, too, seemed deeper than the Middle Kingdom's yellow.

First, he sat the boy upright, and by a word or two seemed to order the old man to hold him; the boy staring meanwhile, and breathing like a person asleep. Then he began to ask questions. The Inquisidor, who had asked so many questions in his time, could not be



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mistaken as to the tone; but it was not that which surprised him. What made him start to his feet and catch at his crucifix as though he felt devils about him, was the sound of the boy's answers, which came from his mouth that hung ajar in good Portuguese. The Inquisidor could understand one side only of the conversation, but from the first moment he knew that it had reference to himself.

Question from the smooth-faced man, unintelligible.

Answer: "I am a priest of the cross. I have the power of the eye, to make my will done. But this is not my desire."

Question.

Answer: "I will not go back into the town; my labour there is the work of a man catching water in a sieve."

Question.

Answer: "I will go where I am to die. I will die where I am to be exalted."

Question.

Answer: "In the name of——" the sure voice halted, the words struggled in the boy's throat. The Inquisidor waited, breathless, for it was one of the signs of witchcraft that the practitioner could not pronounce the name of God. But something was coming out, trickling stupidly from sticky lips, some phrase like a name—"Johannes." A sharp question evidently asked for a repetition, but it was no use, the boy was rolling his head, tossing his hands, waking. The yellow man smoothed his forehead with one hand, and tilting the boy's face upwards, questioned him again. This time the answer came with no possibility of mistake; one word in Portuguese:

"Martyrio."

Martyrdom.



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At that with a shudder the boy came to, looking very sickly, and at once stretched out his hand for a drink, which the short man gave him, watching. The boy drank avidly, blinked, rolled sideways; the Inquisidor could see that he was now, beyond any doubt, and all in a moment, actually asleep. With his left hand on the crucifix, he stooped suddenly and picked up a lighted stick from the fire.

"I am going now," said he in the Tamil, which tongue they seemed to understand best.

The two men threw each other a quick look and were at once on their feet.

"Will you stop me?" said the Inquisidor Mor, and lifted his flaming weapon. The interpreter explained, not meeting his eyes, very carefully keeping his glance at about the level of his interlocutor's mouth.

"You have great power. You put the boy to sleep with your eyes. None of us can do that, though the old man can make him prophesy by stroking his head, and Chau-Nong can make him be obedient at certain times of the moon." Curiosity overcame argument. "What did he prophesy?" asked the man slyly.

The Inquisidor did not answer, for the boy's words were still singing unexplained in his head, and he had not yet solved the extraordinary riddles they offered; one that they were spoken in Portuguese, with the accent, the trailing slurring speech of his own hill country; the other that they represented his very heart's inmost thoughts, of which in the speaking, and then only, he had become aware.

The interpreter began his explanations once more. He said that together they would make the best band of magicians ever encountered; that they could live well by their wits combined; that there were things to be



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seen, temples, peoples, of which no man that stayed at home could ever dream; that honest magic was rare.

"It is deadly sin," the Inquisidor answered uncompromisingly, "and if I had you in Goa, within my jurisdiction, you should learn how Christianity regards it."

"Why, you are a magician yourself," said the man, puzzled, and pointed to the slumbering boy. The Inquisidor said nothing to that, but still stood on guard, summing up his interlocutors as opponents, and from their general appearance reckoning his chances against the two of them; but they made no move, and would not meet his eyes. For some few seconds there was silence, then the first man spoke.

"Well, if we cannot persuade you, let us part in peace, and take no advantage of each other. Will you eat?"

"Willingly," said the Inquisidor, but he still held his club in his right hand, and stretched out his left for the food, standing. The man at once squatted down by the fire to gather together the scraps of fish and rice, which he shovelled from the palm of his hand on to a broad leaf like a plate, and sprinkled, as was the custom, with half a dozen powders, condiments which he took from a belt round his waist. When the dish was ready he held it out, saying that white people had no caste to be offended by the touch of an honest man's hand. Keeping the two mountebanks together under his eye, the Inquisidor tasted the food. It was good, and he had fasted all day, except for water. He finished the savoury scraps, eating always with one hand, and when the leaf no longer held any grain of rice he dropped it, with a Latin thanks to God for His bounty as though he had been at the head of his refectory table in the Casa Santa.



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The men, self-confessed sorcerers, he would not bless, but he made a sign of leave-taking, and turned, safe in the protection of their bread and salt, to make his way again towards the town. They saluted him as gravely, and made no attempt to stop his going. He strode off, among the uncertain shadows thrown by the moon, and soon had turned a corner and was out of their sight; they did not, however, seat themselves again, but stood listening. The sound of the steps retreating began gradually to change its quality; there were pauses, stumblings; a voice loudly lifted, praying in an unknown tongue; silence at last, broken without warning by the thud of a falling body. At that the two sorcerers nodded at each other, and leisurely went forward together down the path.

Not so very far round the corner the Inquisidor lay, one hand at his crucifix as though he had clung to that for help when he felt his senses going, the other thrown out before his face. The yellow man said, in his language that only the other could understand, that the priest had had perhaps too large a dose; the whites, he said, were not used to those drugs. But the other, with a finger to the fallen man's eyelid, saw by the silver light that the eyeball was turned up, but fluttering.

"He will do," said the interpreter. "Carry him back, Chau-Nong. He will be money in our pockets; people are getting tired of the old tricks."

Chau-Nong said, in a flood of singing syllables, that they would never keep him.

"We shall keep him," the other answered significantly, "while they brew poppies in the Khan's country."

They carried him back to their camp, and disposed him decently to sleep; then lay down themselves by the



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fire, where for a while they were kept awake by the old man's grumbling.

"What do you want," the old man asked petulantly, "with another? Am I not the shark-charmer employed by rajahs? How would the northern kings get rubies for their treasure-chambers if I did not with my spells keep the demons at bay that lurk in mines? This man will bring you nothing but trouble, and how are you to keep him from his own people? He has the eye; he will make you do what he wants."

"We have other things, ancestor," said the interpreter. "The eye is not so strong as the poppy-cup."

"I don't know about that," said the old man. "How can he do his miracles unless you leave him his will? I am a sorcerer employed by princes, and I know. If the will is stolen he can do nothing, and you will see that my words are true."

They told him to be quiet, that he knew nothing and was garrulous. He persisted in his jeremiads, reckoning aloud the amount that the stranger would cost to keep, predicting misfortune.

"Why, you antique spawn of a fornicating one-clawed crab," said the interpreter at last, losing his temper. "What if he is no use? He is a strong man enough, look at his muscles, look at his legs. When we have got him far enough inland, away from pursuit, we can sell him, if he is no use at conjuring. There are plenty of rulers who would jump at the chance of such a slave."

The old man muttered a little, but eventually was silenced by this consideration, which had not occurred to him, and which he found pleasing. He had no mind to play second fiddle to a performer come by chance.



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(xiv)

The path which the wanderers took led them into wild country where the villages were built about a holy place as was usual; but this holy place, when they, in their quality of travelling saints, came to investigate, was never anything more or less than a dairy. The villagers justified themselves by saying that the gods were all very well, but what they lived by was milk, which substance they found more worthy of divine honours than some many-armed or headed personage up beyond the stars. In each place that the travellers came to it was proclaimed that the Inquisidor, whom his kidnappers called cousin to whatever god was most popular in that part, would give a display of the power of the mind; but not once did this performance succeed. The old man's prophecy was completely fulfilled. They had to drug him to quiescence; and when he was thus in the power of the poppy even the boy Abdul could withstand his glances. As a show he was useless, and the others had to take as before the whole burden of performance on themselves, which they did with noisy competence, telling fortunes, predicting where lost animals were to be found, juggling, and making a whole-hearted clamour with the wooden rattles they carried to scare away demons. There was a religious song, sung by the boy while standing on his hands with his legs twisted about his neck.

"Once there was a goddess, Ila,
She had no concern for her mother-in-law,
Unwisely, for this mother-in-law was Parvati,
Who keeps the cup of all sweetness, and whose head



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Wears a green sun round it.
So what did Parvati do?
Parvati baked a cake, tossing it from hand to hand,
And when it was baked, she gave it to Ila,
Her son's rebellious wife, to eat.
What a transformation! Ila's breasts shrunk up,
Hair grew on her lip, and with one thing and another
She turned into a man.
What a surprise for her husband! But at the end of
a month
Her breasts swelled, the hairs fell from her lip,
And there she was, a woman again.
So on, month by month, first man, then woman,
She went on changing, till her husband grew tired
of it.
'I'll find a wife,' says he, 'that's more reposeful.'
With that he took her in his hand,
And threw her into the sky, where she stuck for a
star.
This he showed his next wife for a warning.
And she was most submissive,
Saying; 'It will be a lesson to me, and all wives,
Not to believe all we hear of the delicious harm-
lessness
Of our husband's mother's cakes.' "

But for all this, not much food and hardly any money came into the begging bowl. The old man grew restless, and grudged the money spent to keep the useless mouth in their midst; however, the two would not sell their acquisition. They could not get it out of their heads that the man whom they had seen commanding the crowd and the sworded dignitaries and the vested priests in the square of Goa was no ordinary man. He



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would come to reason, they said, in time, and they quieted the old man with promises; in their hearts they were afraid that his kidnapping must have made a noise all over India, and that if he were allowed to speak with his own voice and his own mind, unclouded by the stuff they gave him, they would instantly be apprehended and put to the torture. But the cost of keeping him subdued was terrific, and they were at their last dose of the necessary drug when they came to the small town of Kshira.

Here the band remained, as was their practice, outside the town while the interpreter went in to the main street, to cry in two or three languages the wares of entertainment they had to offer.

"And you must buy more poppy-stuff too," said Chau-Nong; "he has been talking."

In fact the Inquisidor had been looking about him with eyes that seemed to be blinking away a film cast over them; and had been fingering his crucifix, which they had not dared take from him, with something of his old gesture.

"How can I buy?" asked the interpreter scornfully, "unless the people of these parts will exchange goods for air?"

Chau-Nong said flutingly that either he must buy—or sell. And a gesture, a lift of the shoulder, indicated the Inquisidor, in no such good condition as they had found him weeks ago, and rapidly losing that appearance of being impermeable to illness so desirable in a slave. The interpreter grumbled, but said that he would see, and went off into Kshira to offer predictions as to crops and a somersault or two in exchange for rice and a handful of hot spices.

He was an excellent crier, but on this occasion the



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people did not crowd about him. They were preoccupied, busy, it seemed, in preparation for some feast. What feast it might be the interpreter could not conjecture. At last, finding that nobody would listen, he ventured to pull the sleeve of a passing gentleman who looked like a merchant, and to ask him why there was such a turmoil, and where all the people were going that hurried past. The merchant replied that he was himself in haste, but that it was all on account of a sacrifice, and he did not suppose that the mountebanks would get much attention from anybody that day. More he would not tell, and the interpreter, who could get no other answer from any of the throng, returned to his comrades to report that they had better, so far as a performance was concerned, leave the place alone. Chau-Nong and the old man concurred; the boy was for walking in and seeing the show.

They argued with the boy, who in his sixteen years of religious wanderings ought, they told him, to have seen enough of such things. But he was impudent, wanted to go, twitted the interpreter with being a bad magician and worse beggar.

"If I can do nothing else," said the boy Abdul, "I can sell myself to some old woman, I suppose, and do a day's work and slip back to you here with a piece of her jewellery. A feast? There will be pickings. Men with their eyes on the gods don't look to their belts."

The old man scolded him.

"Such talk is derogatory. You should always remember that it is your privilege to care for an old man who has spoken to rajahs, and who was elected by his peers chief of the hai-banda of the Coromandel coast. I will not have my son by adoption, my right hand and my two eyes, going about among the crowds



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like a gutterling, to pick and steal."

"Let him go," said the interpreter, nettled by the taunt of being a bad beggar, "let him go, and see how he can make these people part with their money. He will as soon get lice from the Ganges."

"I'll please myself," said the boy, swaggering. "I am as strong as any of you. None of you can throw me except Chau-Nong, with his wrestling."

"Except the foreign priest," said the old man offensively, "that can roll you up, my friend, with a glance of his eye."

"The foreign priest is worth two of you," said the boy rudely. "Do you think you could keep him a minute if it were not for what you give him in his food? And now you have not even any more of that left, such indifferent beggars as you are. And when that's done, you'll see, he'll go, and stir trouble up from here to Calicut. He'll go, he'll go——"

The yellow man, who had lain without speaking, now chuckled a word or two that set both their heads turning, and after a moment sent up a screech of laughter from the old man. For the fact was, that without any of them observing him, while they were absorbed in their dispute, the Inquisidor had indeed gone.

"A good riddance," said the old man.

And he prevented the others, who would have gone into the town to bring him back.

"What have you had of him?" the old man insisted. "Nothing; not the value of a grain of rice. But he has eaten, oh yes, he has eaten, and been given the best place, and daily doses that have cost all we others earned to buy. Now that he is himself again, you will see, he will make trouble. I know these white people,



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and these foreign priests, they are more cruel than any others in their sober way. Let him go. Am I not here to get money for you, by my incantations keeping the evil spirits from pearl divers and ruby mines? You will do better to stick to me, my sons. Otherwise I will quit you, I with my good magician's employments, and see how you do when you have to fend for yourselves."

His petulance had sense behind it; only the interpreter was averse to let the chance of good money go, and to see three months' food and expensive poppy liquor go walking off in the Inquisidor's person, with no attempt made to reclaim it. The placid juggler, having accepted the old man's decree, began again his eternal practising with the coloured balls that were his stock-in-trade. The others, caught from their argument as ever by his skill, watched him obtain entire obedience from shaped wood, so that he seemed to be able to recall the falling balls into his hand as though they were animals that went their own way and came back from any angle at his whistle.

"Chau-Nong is in practice to be a god," said the boy, sprawling idly. "Look, there are the four of us in his hands. I am the gold ball, and you," to the old man, "are the white. The green can be our foreign priest because his face is that colour, or near it."

"And the blue one mine," said the interpreter, rolling over to watch. "Faster, spin up our fates."

They watched, and the old man, amused and happy to think of the incubus, his rival, gone, turned his head to catch the click of the balls as they met in Chau-Nong's supple hand. He began to vary the juggling, to play tricks, sending one ball higher while he transposed the others, tossing one up from under his thigh.

"There I go!" clamoured the boy. "I am a great man,



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a rajah!" The gold ball dropped, and he groaned. "Ah, that's better!" The golden ball shot up again with a flick of the wrist, ten feet into the air, while white and green and blue twirled about bewilderingly fast between the waiting fingers.

"Down I come! It was fun while it lasted. Whose turn now?"

The green ball was flicked upwards. The old man spat. "There he goes!" chattered the boy, "higher than any of us, up beside Siva in the temple, by the look of him. Up once more. Don't spit, ancestor, he has power. Hey!"

The boy's quick hand shoved the yellow man backward, off his balance and instinctively tucking up his legs. From under the stone by which they sat, a stone warm with morning sun, but now cooling by reason of the shade, a snake came slowly unfolding. They got out of its way, and let it go with a prayer, for to all of them such creatures were sacred.

But the green ball, unheeded, suddenly dropped from its height and bounced on a stone in the snake's path; the dappled length paused, the head rose open-mouthed, poised, and struck down, all in the space of a very few seconds; then the body had drawn itself under a rock and the green ball was gone.

"She has got it! She thinks the ball is her egg," said the boy, bursting with laughter, and suddenly stood up.

The yellow man was looking grave; the blind man plagued the others to be told what had happened, and when he had heard:

"He will not escape from the town," said the blind man cheerfully.

"But this is not the serpent-feast," worried the interpreter, "and we are not near any Nag-temple.



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Still, I suppose the omen is clear enough; we must let him go. The snake is Siva's, the snake has taken him."

The old man agreed, nodding and spitting, and gave it as his opinion that the god had made a bad bargain.

"But there is some pleasure in breaking a stiff neck," he concluded, sighing; and his old hands knotted upon each other for a moment, before he put one out to the place where Abdul had lain, feeling with sensitive fingers until the very shape where the boy had curled round was plain to him. He called; there was no answer. The old man, who had endured many emotions that day, burst into tears.

"Slipped away," he lamented, "my right hand, my eyes, gone into the town after that cheating priest. He will be killed into the bargain, and then, when my staff is gone, you two will leave me one day in the bush with a squeezed throat."

They comforted him, and Chau-Nong threw the white ball, his ball, up to remarkable heights; but it was a full half hour before they could calm his jealous anxiety sufficiently to let him sleep.

## (xv)

The boy had, in fact, as his master guessed, slipped away into the town of Kshira, following the Inquisidor. Religion was his trade and his study, he had half a dozen calendars by heart, and accordingly, knowing that this could be no very special feast day, he rightly concluded that it must be the public devotions of some singular and interesting penitent that drew the crowds, sucking them this way and that as tides draw the moon. By dint of asking, and slipping about unhampered



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where the throng was thickest, he at last came to perceive a cart, drawn by bullocks in their best head-dresses. It was a high cart, painted and hung with ornamental grasses and plaited mats, on which sat several persons fully dressed, with garlands, and one quite naked, with not so much as a flower about his person, who held on his knees a bundle of short swords and a crescent-shaped thing like a sickle. From time to time one of the dressed personages rose, and steadying himself against the rocking of the cart, made an oration, which, so far as the boy could interpret, seemed to be a dithyramb in praise of the one who sat naked.

"Who is he in the middle?" the boy asked a neighbour.

"Well," said the neighbour, "he is a rich man that suddenly took it into his head to cheat the rajah about some matter; he did it, not so much for gain, as to match his wits, and test himself, to see if he were as wily as it is necessary to be for commerce. But he was not, you see; he was caught. But being so rich, he was allowed to make an offering of himself to whichever god he preferred to honour, and he has chosen the Destroyer. Those are his relations, up on the cart."

"They look cheerful enough."

"Why not? If the rajah has taken his money, there is always something to be said for being related to a saint."

The cart progressed, the crowd accompanying it in a gay but reverent manner. There was no sign of the Inquisidor. The procession arrived at a small shrine with a gilded apron over it, and there stopped. The victim rose and handed his bundle of weapons to a near-by relative, who took them reverently, and held



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them while the naked man spoke a prayer and made offerings, one after the other, of water, sandal-wood, rice, flowers, milk, curds, leaves, a piece of red cloth, a pinch of red powder, saffron, incense, a garland, parched grain, sweetmeats, betel leaves, five candles, and a sum of money; all of which were received by the guardian of the little shrine and laid within it at the feet of whatever image it concealed. The suppliant got up and took a sword from the bundle, which he bowed over, then triumphantly thrust through his own arm, calling on Siva; the crowd yelled, the relatives laughed for joy; but the boy, alert and delighted as he was with the blood, had an eye for other things, and it seemed to him that in that part of the crowd nearest to the cart a disturbance was beginning. There was a turning of heads such as the devout moment should not have permitted; there were remonstrative noises, and an eddying, as leaves rise and whirl, obedient to a sudden wind. The penitent took another sword, and with a whoop thrust it through the calf of his left leg; the confusion about the cart redoubled, nobody except his relatives paid him any attention, heads were turned, voices were raised, and some laughter, until at last through the good-tempered crowd burst the form of the Inquisidor Mor, ragged from rough handling. He climbed on to the cart, disregarding the shocked and angry protests of the family party; even the penitent stood with his mouth open, blood spurting unmarked from his leg, to disapprove the intrusion; and found himself in a moment being harangued. The crucifix that still hung about his interlocutor's neck was seized and thrust in his face with an unintelligible stream of words, which conveyed to him no more than might the mooing of one of the bullocks.



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"He wants to share," shouted the people, "he wants to kill himself too, the pious man. Let him do it; lend him your knives, you can surely spare a couple."

But the penitent clung to his bundle of weapons and would not give up a single one. He was heard shouting to the priest that this was his own penance, that he had paid for it, and to call off the interloper. The Inquisidor plucked the crucifix from his neck and held it before the penitent's eyes, exhorting him to confess this supreme sufferer his master, and to refrain from suicide, that deadliest of all sins. Nobody understood; worse, they misunderstood. For the penitent, seeing the nails, and supposing the figure held up to him for emulation, with rapid skill speared both his feet and his left hand, retaining the right unwounded to inflict further torments upon himself. The boy started forward, crying out that the man with the green face was a mad saint from the south, a prophet gone addled, not to heed him. The crowd called upon the priest of the shrine to hear the poor stranger's prayers, and accept him as a sacrifice, and became so insistent in their clamour—for their proposition, by doubling the bloodshed, and introducing an element of competition into the death agonies, would have lengthened and rendered more satisfying their own pious act of participation—that the priest darted inside his little temple and returned with a number of sacrificial knives which he handed with a civil bow to the madman; who, however, cast them all down and continued to rave.

This left the performers and spectators bewildered. For the life of them they could not imagine what he wanted, for that he was attempting to stop the performance never entered any one of their minds. The boy by this time had got himself across somehow



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to the vicinity of the cart, and was proclaiming at the top of his voice that the madman was his master, begging them to pull him down, that he meant no harm, but loved to hear himself speak; reluctantly they obeyed him; and, the boy's hands foremost, caught him by the rags of his cassock and pulled the Inquisidor backwards off the cart.

The crowd parted to let him fall, murmuring compassionately, and two men unselfishly gave up good places to lend a hand with him, frog-marching him out of harm's way, and soothing him when he shrieked that he was come to preach Christ Jesus, to spit upon idols——

A woman leant out from a window.

"Carry him in here," said she. "Bring him in, and let us have no more unseemly noise. I am a midwife"—as they hesitated—"and this is a respectable house."

They carried him in, sobbing with humiliation and the aftermath of the drug, and with extreme gentleness laid him on the floor, previously tying him with strips of his own garments to prevent him doing himself a mischief; for it was their belief, as it was his, that for a man to slaughter himself, except for the love of God, was a crime; then they crowded to the window and over the kindly woman's shoulder witnessed the end of the show.

The penitent, taking advantage of the respite from interruption, had succeeded in sticking four more knives into his flesh. But he had lost blood in great quantities; he sank upon a cousin's knee, and there was a murmuring and a wondering among the people as to whether he would have strength left for the final act of submission to Siva. They began to shout encouragement, and musicians started a wailing hymn of incite-



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ment. The relatives on the cart were busily arranging a kind of wooden horse, a barrel with a support stuck at each corner; they wreathed it with the flowers from their own necks, blood-sprinkled some of them, and held a consultation with the priest, who after some grave talking put with his own hand something into the victim's mouth. It was chewed languidly; the man was almost insensible. Still, the effect was immediate. He staggered up, and two male relatives took him on their shoulders to set him astride the wooden horse. There one steadied him, while the other picked up the sickle-shaped sharp instrument from which two stirrups hung by straps, and arranged this upon the back of his neck, settling his feet in the dangling stirrups, whose leathers they shortened till the man was doubled like a jockey riding; they fixed his thumbs in two upper loops of the same leathers, he gasping the while and attempting to sing. The priest climbed in the cart and stood in front of him, his hands above his head; there was an increase of noise, a thudding of feet and palms and drums like pulses in a fever, and at a supreme shout, with a sudden horribly automaton-like movement, the victim jerked his knees straight, and the razor-sharp knife on his nape cut through the cord of the spine. The head did not fall, the neck was by no means cut through; there was very little blood. The man, however, was dead, and by a method which, in the minds of all the onlookers, entirely eclipsed all his sins; scarlet though these may have been, they had become, by the sublime effort of cutting off his own head, whiter than wool. Only a few carpers, men of the old time, were dubious because the neck had not been entirely severed, and seemed to consider this in some way humbling to the relations. Sacrifices were sacrifices in the old days, they agreed,



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but nowadays there was no religion to speak of.

"Look," said one as they moved away, "at the treatment accorded that holy man who wishes to die. There he is now; a sick man by the look of him, and a stranger. A stranger!"

On that word the middle-aged onlooker stood stock-still, with a beatific expression; then resumed his pious reminiscence.

"When I was a young man, there were none of these selfish rules, whereby the offering is restricted to the family. This person also wished to die in honour of Siva; he was ready. Another time he may not wish it, the destroyer cannot always be inspiring. I am sorry for the poor man, and, if he is not an untouchable, he shall have refreshment in my house, for by his coming he has done me a service."

With that he came forward and spoke to the boy, who had a smattering of his tongue, and reassured him as to the Inquisidor's status. He was a priest of the white people, the boy explained, a good magician and a holy person, whose conduct at the sacrifice had been due to zeal rather than any wish to interrupt the ceremony. He was on a pilgrimage, said the boy, to a place unknown. Questioned about the nature of the religion of which this priest was a practitioner, it was explained to the interested theologians that it had something to do with burning bones after they were dead, but that was the procedure for saints. Ordinary persons were consumed by fire in their lifetime, so many a year, in order that the city should not grow too full. Thus was the *auto-da-fé* fused with the false St. Thomas and his exorcism into an impressive and totally new faith which caused the Samaritans of Kshira to look on the Inquisidor, now after his exertions



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fainted, with respect and approval. They were all for sternness in religion, approved of suttee; and here was a faith that gave up living bodies of all ages and both sexes to the cleansing fire.

Thus the Inquisidor came to his senses to find himself an honoured guest among heathens, lying on a comfortable string bed, and being offered sweetmeats the moment he was seen to revive. The boy sat beside him, holding his hand and soothing it, as he had been accustomed to do for the blind man, his master. The Inquisidor woke to ask:

"What is this house?"

But he spoke in Portuguese, being not yet fully in command of himself, and the boy could only take the meaning from the tone. He answered in the Tamil that they were with friends, gentlemen of the town, who would not see harm come to either of them; on which, delicately lifting a curtain, the host arrived himself to assure the Inquisidor of his delight at this recovery, and to give him welcome through the interpreter, the boy Abdul.

"I take it," said the merchant, plunging at once into theology, "that your devotion is not only to Nag-Bushan." He gave Siva his title as the snake-wearer, to whom the small shrine of the sacrifice was consecrated. "It was most unlucky that you could not have your wish to-day. I am concerned for the honour of the town, being a considerable person in it, and I come now, if you are in a condition to hear me, with a proposition which may please you."

The Inquisidor out of his physical weakness, and the horrible unsureness which afflicted him, made an answer in which he explained that his one object as a Christian priest was to bring light to the town whatever it might



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be, and glory to all its souls; and he was beginning to preach when his host, civilly thrusting a sweetmeat into his mouth to stop the words, again took command of the situation.

"You agree with me," said the dignitary, "that the people must be stirred to devotion by ceremony; they need it for the stimulation of their sense of duty and reverence to the gods. The complaint here, however, is always lack of money: and when that is dealt with, lack of volunteers. In my young days the Karavat, the sickle, was in use perhaps two or three times in a season; now things are altered, this morning's attempt was the only one we have had these three years."

The Inquisidor interrupted with a groan.

"We are agreed," interrupted the dignitary smoothly continuing, "that this town needs example. Now, while you slept, I have arranged with the keeper of the shrine of Pauchamuki, Siva the Five-Faced, for you to sacrifice there at your convenience. If you prefer the Serpent-Wearer, of course, I can go to the guardian there; but in religion it is good to keep money in as many hands as possible, and not let one shrine take all the plums in the way of offerings."

The Inquisidor at first doubted the sense of this; and hearing that he was being offered, in the civillest way, the chance of sacrificing himself to a pagan image, supposed that one or other must be mad. The dignitary, however, went on, with every appearance of sanity:

"It shall be done in style, I promise you. Eight bullocks, the gold hangings from my own travelling carriage, and a dozen men walking with instruments of music. That is my way. Nothing is too good for the gods. And a considerable gift of money, and a feast, with which, of course, you will not by then be concerned.



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It is shameful to the town that a stranger should set the example—for I do not count this morning's sacrifice; he was obliged to it by misfortune—but it is all the more creditable to you. What do you say to that offer, holy man? I don't think you can find much amiss with it."

And the dignitary sat back, sucking some sweet stuff, and wearing a benevolent expression to which his generosity undoubtedly entitled him.

The Inquisidor at this, casting back his thoughts through a haze of days and nights, seeing his past three months of life not as time spent in the body, but as pictures, irrelevant pictures of coloured balls dancing and a shifting succession of places, could not summon his old energy nor his old faith to answer. The drug troubled his mind. He could not remember how he had come to this house, nor what was his purpose there; he only knew beyond question that he was among heathen, and that he must stir himself to convert them. But to preach, a man must feel the ground beneath his feet. He asked therefore—giving no answer to the question of sacrifice—where he was; and was told that this town lay across the peninsula, a great many hundred miles from Goa; the dignitary drew for him on the floor a map in coloured sands, half-impressed, half-scornful of this holy man whose chief present concern seemed to be geography. The Inquisidor pondered it, put a hand to his head and asked:

"Was I preaching a while ago?"

"That you were."

"Did they not kill me?"

"Why should they kill you?" the dignitary answered reproachfully. "This is a town by no means pious, it is true; still, we are not so lost to all decency as not to know a holy man when we see one."



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"Were any converted?" the Inquisidor asked. "Did any follow Christ?"

At that the dignitary stared.

"Why should our people leave their own? We are not dissatisfied with our gods, by any means. A little extravagant, sometimes; a little absent at others. But on the whole they fill our bellies, and what more can any deity do?"

The Inquisidor groaned out that it was a matter of the life of the soul; that without truth the flesh was but walking death.

"Truth," repeated the dignitary wonderingly; then put all such speculations aside. "You will not do for Siva, I see that clearly," said he, not without a shade of disappointment at the thought of such a promising penitence coming to nothing, "and your own god's writ does not run here. I think you had better try to make your way back to the place where you come from and are respected."

The Inquisidor would not have this. He insisted that since he had been led, by ways of which he had no memory, to this remote place, it must be because God had designs for him to fulfil there; and once more he announced his intention of preaching. The dignitary agreed very fully with this idea that he was God-sent.

"When I saw you this morning," said he, "a stranger, coming on the left, and weeping, I said to myself that this was an answer to prayer. Let me explain matters, so that you can see just where we stand to each other." He took another sweetmeat, and, faithfully interpreted by the boy Abdul, gave his explanation.

"You have learning; you know, therefore, that there is an inauspicious hour in every day, of which the astrologers keep us informed; but since the hour changes with



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the moon, and is different daily, it is no easy matter to bear it in mind. This morning, preoccupied with business, I forgot it; perhaps the thought of the ceremony was uppermost in my mind, and I was hurrying to that. At any rate, before the deplorable hour was past, I had set my foot over the threshold. Now, as you know, this need not be fatal; precautions must be taken; but if the proper omens are observed within the next hour or two, business may prosper as well as if the troublesome period had never existed. I had business on hand, delicate business too, when I made this unlucky mistake. The sacrifice, as I say, drove it out of my mind for a while; and when I remembered—there was the counter-omen coming out of that woman, the midwife's door."

The Inquisidor could make nothing of this.

"There are no such things as omens," said he.

The old man looked at him reproachfully.

"A dog coming on the left, howling; yes, indeed it is a good omen; the very best. Our word for stranger, you see, means dog."

The Inquisidor started up, for this word is an insult all the world over, and it is one thing to humble oneself for the love of God, another to endure such things from a heathen confirmed in idolatry.

"When I tell you that it was a bargain of importance," the old man, with a soothing gesture, proceeded, "the buying of two young virgins cheap from their father. The price was low, and when I had that misadventure this morning I supposed, naturally, that when they arrived it would be found that they were virgins no longer. That was what I expected; and I had paid the price down, too. But when I found you I hoped otherwise. While you were sleeping, they arrived, and I



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could make my investigations. The bargain stands; it was a good one. You understand that I am grateful, for they came from twenty miles off, and if I had not met you, there is no doubt about it they would have been deflowered on the way."

He sat back contentedly. The Inquisidor dropped his face into his hands, groaning and perceiving irrevocably the damnation of this soul.

"So you see," said the old man, willing to comfort, but mistaking the cause of his trouble, "I have cause to be grateful. They are enchanting little girls. Would you not like, as a thinker, to take something of the kind with you which would preserve your mind from distraction upon the voyage? For no man can think illuminatingly unless his flesh is kept quiet," said the dignitary of the town of Kshira, benevolently folding his hands.

## (xvi)

The Inquisidor slept in the street that night; he would not spend another hour under the roof of an old personage so confirmed in sin, so bound to the flesh. Abdul the boy lay with him, huddled under the wall of a house, from time to time fluently cursing the parents of the town dogs who came snuffing and snapping at their rags. In the morning, the Inquisidor would have set off, hungry, on the road that led, as he remembered from the old man's map of sand, towards the sea. For it appeared to him that the best thing he could do would be to get back to Goa as soon as possible; he saw from the look of the shadows that went before him, and by the feel of the air, that this was two seasons away from



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the time when he had been his own man, testing the bones in the presence of Archbishop and Viceroy in the Cathedral Square. He knew nothing of the lie of the land between this place and his own, having only a vague memory of hills, and men that ate strange foods, or went naked or worshipped their cows; but by that map and his own recollection of the coast he knew that he could not be far from the sea, where there were always traders passing up and down; even some that might know him, having called in at the port of Goa for worship or water.

Abdul the boy came with him, fortunately for the expedition, for he was an accomplished beggar. Abdul was tired of the companionship of the mountebanks, and he revered the Inquisidor, whose glance had been able to send him to sleep; he welcomed, besides, the chance of learning a new religion, for it was his conviction that devotion, rightly used, could be made to supply all a man's wants from silence to women. The Inquisidor accepted his companionship, being bribed with the prospect of his conversion; and, wrapped in meditation and plans for the furthering of the faith, God's Kingdom, neglected wholly to enquire whence came the food that supported them both on the journey across the flat plains to the port of Nagore at the head of a great muddy delta.

Here, their troubles began; for the port of Nagore was renowned as a place of good business, hard drivers of bargains lived there in a tangle of shipping, and how to get a passage of some seven or eight hundred miles for nothing was a problem beyond even the predatory wits of the boy. The Inquisidor had no such qualms. He went down to the quay, to a place where ship captains met and talked while their vessels were loading or



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waiting for loads, and there, spreading wide his arms to call their attention, pronounced in the Hindu language as follows:

"I am a priest of the white people of Goa, low in my own esteem, high, by the grace of God, in theirs. I was taken by marauders and brought away from my own people. Who will bring me back to that place and be rewarded?"

They stared. It must be remembered that the Inquisidor had been some months absent from all the amenities; his beard was dirty, his clothes were the merest rags of black, his feet bare; he had the very appearance of a sullen and filthy beggar, but that there were no sores or wilted limbs by which to compel pity. The sea captains looked their fill, then laughed, until one of them, a person with a dyed beard, stepped forward and said:

"I know this man."

And he told, angrily, but well, the story of the Cathedral Square, and the burning of St. Thomas's bones.

"And this," his peroration ended, "is the irreligious and wholly execrable monk that put the holy man on the fire."

He spat; the other captains, however, were not convinced.

"This is not a persecutor," said one, "he has both legs the same size."

For it was a tradition along that coast that the persecutors of St. Thomas had one leg double the thickness of the other; a mark which enabled all honest men to know them on sight, and to flee from them.

"He is a holy man," said the boy Abdul, taking his part, "and what he says is true, that he was taken away."



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"Holy!" said the man with the beard, scoffing; "why can he not get a boat from his god then, if he is as saintly as that?"

"Look out!" said the boy sharply, to keep up his master's prestige. "He has the eye. He can blast you with his eye."

"Let him try," said the scoffer, sticking his thumbs in his belt, "and if he can so much as singe my beard I'll carry him home free."

And he put up his chin and eyed the Inquisidor; walked round him, scratching with his feet in an insulting way, so as to cover the other's legs with dust. The Inquisidor had not understood this last quick rally of words, heard nothing of the boy's claim on his behalf, but he supposed that the bearded one meant mischief, and turned all the while to face him; he saw a couple of daggers in the man's belt, and gripped the stick he walked with, prepared to play quarter-staff for his life. In this way he kept face to face with the insolent captain, and since warning of attack is given first in the eyes of a fighter, kept his look fixed. They were in a ring of men, surrounded by jeering faces, like a pair of gamecocks set upon each other in a pit; the one spurning with the feet, and snapping his fingers in a repertory of offensive gestures, the other watchfully turning. The noise of the watchers, backing, encouraging, contemptuous, was loud in the first few moments; there were cat-calls, yelps of sudden laughter. But as the adversaries continued to go about, this died down; something was happening which was not within their calculations. The scoffing man all of a sudden stood, his hands still twitching, gaping stupidly and swaying.

"It is a trick," said his friends, chuckling over their shoulders to each other. But he continued to stand and



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stare and sway. The Inquisidor lowered his stick, and ejaculated a brief *Deo Gratias*, having, as he supposed, been miraculously delivered from insult and the fear of death.

"Do you confess the power of God?" he asked, striking while the iron was hot.

"I do confess the power of God," returned the truculent captain, in a thin wavering voice.

"Will you assist His servant?"

"I will assist His servant."

"Which ship is yours?"

At that the captain turned, and made for a distant part of the quay, walking like a person in sleep, steadily and purposefully, but without the swing of a waking man. The crowd, which had been quiet, yelled at him, yet dubiously; knowing him for a joker, they had some idea that he was leading the Inquisidor on.

"He will push the green man into the water as soon as they get near enough," said his friends confidently.

But he did not get to his ship, and the boy Abdul, strutting at his master's back, knew why. The eyes were no longer on his, commanding him; so that his body, the soul being still bound for a time, tacked here and there like a ship with no steersman, faltered, and at last fell. Where he fell he sighed, stretched, and immediately slept.

The fame of the exploit was through the town in an hour. The Inquisidor, baffled, but uplifted by reason of this instance of God's particular care, could have had his choice of captains to convey him to Goa; one and all, they would have welcomed so accomplished an enchanter to their vessels; but when he learned the reason of their sudden friendliness, and had some inkling of what they would expect of him—shark-charming,



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astrology, and divination by means of grains of rice—he rebuked them all sharply, and held his original enemy to his bargain. That captain, having come to his senses, bore no malice, and was proud of his commission to conduct such a practised magician to his home, besides being assured, by this passenger's powers, of good weather; the Inquisidor meanwhile being equally certain that this captain was designated for his purpose by the very finger of God.

They set out in company with two other ships, after no more than a week's delay. It had been arranged that each one of the consorts should carry a letter from the Inquisidor to His Grace the Archbishop, which would assure them safe harbourage at Goa in case of separation by storms or other causes; and carrying good provision of arms with which to encounter pirates, they set off in the sway of a favouring wind, through the straits which separate Ceylon from the mainland.

The crew had, to the Inquisidor's eye, the look of being none too trustworthy. He was familiar, from the yearly visits of the devotees, with the aspect of those who made their living by robbery at sea, and the appearance of the sailors on this richly laden craft—for the ship carried pearls and spices to be exchanged for the wine of Ormuz—was altogether too similar to theirs to permit of entire confidence. But the shipmaster pointed out that this distrust was unreasonable, and that it was not the least use attempting to foil pirates by milksops.

"There are three ways," said he, "of defeating violence. One they do in Japan, when a man's own strength is used to defeat him, and that is all very well for land, but you cannot pull one ship over another ship's bulwarks and break her back so. Another is to



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run away, but to do that you must be built for running, your ship must be oiled and thin like a thief, not round-bellied as we have to be that carry goods. The third way is to employ weapons, and to choose your sailors from among those born under the more quarrelsome stars. It is less than no use to choose a man born in the year of the Blue Ox; what you want is a Red Tiger man, or a White Snake man. I would never take on a sailor without a certificate from his astrologer that something martial might be expected of him."

This remnant of paganism had its rebuke, as was natural. The backsliding of the captain, after his confession of faith upon the quay, remained mysterious to the Inquisidor; did Saul slide back after the light had shined? But he persisted in instruction, which the captain amiably, but with a good deal of head-scratching, permitted; and he allotted to the evangelizing of the forecastle many hours daily, with little success. He could comfort himself with the thought that the means of persuasion were lacking; and thought with pious joy of how in Goa he could reach their souls by the only sure means, affliction, judiciously administered, of the body.

However, it was his duty first to try persuasion; and so, day by day, the Inquisidor, with no weapon but his crucifix, went down among them. The boy, who had made some little progress towards conversion, in that he would listen with interest to the more miraculous relations, accompanied him as interpreter, mysteriously grinning, with a kind of good-natured and childish enjoyment of once more appearing in public. He was beginning the mountebank's summons—a clap, a stamp, a backward spring, and the programme delivered with a face appearing horribly from between the legs—when the Inquisidor with a tap on the shoulder



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told him to have done, that the devil as like as not was aboard to join battle at any moment for the souls of these seafarers. The boy at this resumed his ordinary posture at once, looked admirably grave, and sank down on his heels behind his master, among certain impedimenta with which he inexplicably burdened himself, baskets and jugs such as the mountebanks used.

The Inquisidor had begun his course of instruction, suiting his subject to the intelligences before him, with relation of the miracles of the Gospels. The stilling of the storm pleased them, the miraculous draft of fishes still more; and when it came to the feeding of thousands of persons with the scantiest imaginable store of provisions, and the changing of water into wine, they showed enthusiasm. His sermons were an hour long, and it seemed to him that the end was always restlessly awaited; but this did not disturb him, being a characteristic even of enlightened congregations. It was the boy's practice to stay after him, and report upon the effect of the preaching. The sailors, according to him, were very well-disposed, the miracles, homely and nearer to their ken than the performances of Hindu gods, whirling mountains about their heads by a rope of snakes, or sending miraculous cows on flights through the air, had not been without effect.

This was good hearing, and consoled the Inquisidor for much. He had visions of bringing a cargo of converts into port. For a week the seamen listened, the captain not objecting, glad that someone else should have a dose of the Inquisidor's medicine; and the boy always remaining behind to discover and report the effect upon the men.

It was on the ninth day out from the port of Nagore



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that the captain in a rage came to his passenger.

"I'd have you know, reverend sir," said he, striving to be temperate, "that that boy of yours is a thief."

The Inquisidor, who owed his continued existence to Abdul's gifts in this profession, was horrified; enquired for the boy, and would remonstrate; but the captain told him that all things necessary had already been done.

"I have him tied up, and with or without your permission he is to get a dozen lashes; if he comes near the pantry again he shall have twenty."

The Inquisidor asked what had been stolen.

"Food and wine and coffee; the best of everything. How he can have put away so much in the time would be a marvel, but that we all know what boys' stomachs can do. Now we in the cabin will have to go short, for I will not waste this wind calling in at Cail for delicacies. Keep your eye on him. He is a very convenient kind of follower for a holy man, but a curse on a ship."

The Inquisidor, after a brief homily on the unimportance of temporal goods, and a recommendation to seek spiritual rather than bodily nourishment, went in search of the boy, whom he found couched sobbing in a malodorous quarter of the ship. He had had his beating, and his back was swelling already along the lines of the stripes; he would confess nothing. Over and over again he repeated that he had only tried to be of use.

"They were not wasted. They were given."

"How can you give what is not yours?"

"God did it." And he instanced the loaves and fishes.

This blasphemy enraged the Inquisidor so that he lifted his hand; but seeing the boy cringe, and that the wales on his back were still angry, he contented himself



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with telling the boy that there could be no forgiveness while he was obstinate; and the sun being at midday height, when the watches were changed, he went forward and below to deliver his customary sermon.

A number of men had assembled in the fore-deck, but their attitudes were not those of church-goers; they sprawled, spitting betel, or playing games with small pieces of bone pushed here and there among charcoal squares. They made way for him civilly enough, however; allowed him to sit in his accustomed place, and put away their games and betel cuds to listen. Pitying their simplicity, he kept to narrative, and gave them the Sermon on the Mount, at the end of which they put to him their childish but pertinent questions.

"If a pirate hails us, and tried to board, are we not to fight?"

"As idolators," the Inquisidor answered, "your doings are of no concern to God. But I, as a Christian, must only strike in love."

This was too hard a saying for the sailors; however, they were used to holy men speaking unintelligibly, and were glad enough to hear one word in every dozen that they could understand. One of their number found an explanation.

"You'll do a magic for us, you mean, and keep them off."

The Inquisidor refused to accept the imputation of sorcery, which, he said for the hundredth time since they set out, was the most to be detested of all crimes. The sailors gaped at him, and laughed again. One, the bos'n, said wisely, and as one understanding the ways of the learned:

"Ah, it doesn't do to be too free, or the common fellows will always be at you to get things done for



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them, and save themselves trouble. There's sailors that would like to lie on their backs and press a handle and see the ship go along of itself. But you mustn't blame them. It was your being so free with the wine in the first place made them presumptuous, and turned their heads."

"I? With the wine?"

"Your boy, then. He's been doing what he calls miracles every day down here. Said you couldn't be troubled, but he knew all about it, and with that he poured good wine and good water out of the same jug, just like at the marriage feast. We drank them both. He did wonders, too, with a scrap of bread and a couple of flying fish that came aboard. But I said at the time it seemed a small thing to trouble his god about, full bellies for a dozen lousy loafing seamen."

"Abdul!" cried the Inquisidor, furious and enlightened, "spawn of Beelzebub, nephew of Belial——"

And he was making for the ladder which led up out of the forecastle, not staying to undo the horrid reputation his follower's zeal had provided for him, troubled at the literalness of the heathen, determined to scourge out the devil then and there from the boy, when there was a commotion and a stir on the little platform above their heads where by day a man watched the horizon, and by night kept their course, threading the ship's way among the wheeling stars. He sat there by the hour, quiescent, forgotten, like Saint Simon on his pillar, only from time to time giving news of the world, by them unseen. Now his voice suddenly sounded loudly:

"Sail! Sail astern!"

The men crowded to the side, spitting and guessing; all that could be seen, by reason of the horizon's veil



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drawn across the hull, was a mast with one square sail, the rig and size of which excited a good deal of comment and contradiction.

"She's not a merchantman. Might be; in Cipangu they use that rig. What would yellow men be doing down here? Why not? They trade with the Kaveri ports, don't they? Yes, but they use a ribbed sail." There was a silence a few minutes long, during which it became evident that the stranger ship was overhauling them; her hull appeared, a narrow serpent-like affair, without the high stern of ships from Japan, and assisted in her flight across the sea by a single bank of oars. There was another shout, this time from the poop:

"Tumble up! Get your arms. That's no merchantman."

They tumbled up, some grumbling, some delightedly, enjoying the prospect of action. Short weapons they most of them wore already, going about their work, which they used for the peeling of fruit, the splicing of ropes, any job that needed a blade: but to repel pirates there were spears in a rack; and on the poop, pride of the captain's heart, an old bamboo cannon bound with strips of brass, into whose maw scraps of old iron and oyster shells had been crammed in preparation for just such an emergency. The Inquisidor was offered a weapon, a tall halberd with a blade shaped like the beak of some heraldic bird, but put it aside.

"You stick to your magic, do you?" said the shipmaster, passing. "I wish you had learned it in Socotra, they have sorcerers there that can do what they please with the winds. But try if you can eye them off." And he went to look to hanging fenders over the bulwarks,



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having noticed that the troublesome ship seemed to be beaked and might begin the assault by ramming them.

Standing by the bamboo weapon the Inquisidor sent up a confused and angry prayer that he might be preserved in battle; that if these sailors were to die their blood might be accounted to them for baptism; that he himself might shed no blood. And he looked towards the sinister following ship that leapt after them over the waves, hoping against hope that it was some innocent vessel gone astray from the pearl fishery of Trincomalee, and requiring perhaps to exchange news or beg for water. This illusion, if indeed so brief and unfounded a wish could be called an illusion at all, was dispelled by his first sight of the raider's prow, on which was carved, he first thought, the outstretched shape of a man, like a figurehead; but in a moment, recalling that these Eastern peoples used no such symbols, he was able to perceive that the figure was that of an actual man, lashed under the bowsprit; whether alive or not he could not tell. The shipmaster, who had sight like a falcon, at once settled the matter with a long stare, and a curse that sounded, for all its ferocious content, like an exclamation of fear.

"It's Alauddin, and alive! That's what comes of going to sea with a dirty ship, a foul bottom that keeps you slow. They've got him, and they'll get us, if we don't fight for it."

It was the captain of one of their consorts that lay under the bowsprit, thirsting, with gushes of salt water rising to his mouth as the pirate's bow drove through the waves; and the sight of him there gave the Inquisidor a pang of rage. He had watched women burn, had himself questioned broken and stammering men under the rack's turning; but pain unsupported



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by the hope of eternity, pain absolute, angered him, and he put a hand on the smooth surface of the bamboo cannon instinctively, as a soldier's right hand goes left to his hilt.

Men were hurrying up the masts to the watcher's crow's-nest with weapons like arquebuses; and there was a great tree, like a second mast, lying along the deck of the raider which was being trussed and hoisted on to a wooden frame. The wind was the same for both ships, there was no doubling. It was pursuit, speed against speed, and the round-bellied merchantman had no chance against the other, driven by straining muscles and a north-east breeze upon its lean flank. They came nearer; there was shouting, a summons which was disregarded; then activity round the trussed and weighted tree-trunk.

"What are they at?" called the shipmaster to his eyes in the crow's-nest; but the eyes could make nothing at all of their movements, except that they were working at a capstan as though to up anchor; but this was deep water, no anchor was down. The noise was continuous, a yelling by which attackers and attacked alike kept up their spirits in preparation for the assault. The march round the capstan ceased. A man—the din was too great even for shouted orders—gave command with his hand. At that, round whirled the weighted butt of the tree-trunk, the whole ship reeling as it swung; and through the air came doubling a curious missile, the body of a man. He was flung perhaps some forty feet, and if he had not died in the transit, at least was dead when he dropped, for the skull came against a mast full force, and he landed with an ugly yet comical dent in it in among the sailors. Some of them knew him. He was the mate, as the man spread-



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eagled on the pirate's bows was the captain, of the second of their consorts.

But there was no time to be terrified by his onset through the air. The raider's ship drew back, the oars on one side lashing like an alligator's tail, then came at the victim astern, and drove her beak, with the living man for a buffer, into the stern-post. Men standing with hooks reeled with the shock, but struck down their grappling weapons and held fast, while past them, over them, came a flood of brown and black men.

By the bamboo cannon the Inquisidor stood, his crucifix gripped in both hands, motionless, praying. The gun's crew of the bamboo cannon soon dropped down on to the middle deck to join the main fighting, leaving their matches burning palely and without wavering in the sun. The fight swayed across into the space amidships over the hatches where there was room for it; on the packed stern no man could lift his arms to strike, all the wounds were thrusts in the stomach or groin. The noise had changed its quality, there was pain under the exultation, but no abating of energy in the actual combat. Each man of the merchantmen knew that it was better to die drunk with action than slowly under the whip or the oar. A bunch of raiders came laughing, sticky-handed, up the ladder towards the motionless figure, at whose feet the matches flickered. The Inquisidor made no move to pick up one, though there was time, and at that distance the ancient cannon must have done some execution. The secular arm might be vanquished, that did his striking for him; he at least would not kill. It was not martyrdom, that would have been too high an honour, but it was death, at the other side of which waited God.

*"In manus tuas, domine——"*



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## (xvii)

They did not kill him. The priestly look is something the same the world over, and a priest is an enchanter, and enchanters in those parts, as the sailors had said, were rare and costly. These were civil raiders, gentlemanly as far as their trade, and a certain gloomily jocular cast of mind on the part of their captain, would allow. They did not even kill all the crew. Those remaining, after resistance had been quelled, were bound and set all together out of the way, while they ravished the hold; but having transferred to their own ship such treasures as were readily saleable and not too cumbrous, they stood off, and set the sailors, including the captain, free to find their own way with a broken tiller to the nearest coast.

The raiders, however, took into their piratical vessel the Inquisidor. His steadfastness had awed them, as it had silenced the yelling crowd on the steps of the Sé Primacial, as it had controlled the Archbishop, and, at shorter range, sent the boy Abdul to sleep. This latter, seeing the victors bustling his master over the narrow bridge of the bowsprit, came out from the hiding-place where he had lurked during the fight, and with lamentations implored them to give the Inquisidor back. In half a dozen languages, by twice as many gods he implored them; but the only result of his insistence was to convince the raiders of the value of their prize.

"He will blast you!" screamed the boy Abdul, "he has the ear of all the gods, of all the devils; he will strike you all blind; he is the very holiest of men; restore him!"



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The raiders paid no heed, but loosed their grappling irons, and with their oars threshing, pulled away, leaving a hole in the merchantman's stern into which water rushed noisily. The beaten sailors forgot their misfortunes in their duty; men leapt down and stood waist-deep thrusting bales of cloth, a sail, their own clothing into the rent, and the ships drew away from each other, the one faltering sideways, making little darts and stoopings as the wind took her, like a wounded bird; the other driving ahead surely, and leaving a straight lane of white water behind her.

The Inquisidor was fed with rice, and watched reverentially by the pirates as he ate; he could understand no word of their lingo, but later the captain came to him with a few instruments, one something in the nature of an astrolabe, but with different signs for the divisions of the heavens. He saw a phœnix among them, and a double-tailed dragon; but after examining these for a while he was obliged to shake his head, and by gesture to indicate that he knew nothing of their meaning, and could not use them. He offered, however, to bind the wounds of such men as remained—for they had thrown the worst of the wounded overboard, being practical as well as piratical men; this was welcomed, and the sufferers ceased their groaning to watch inquisitively as he tore strips of clothing for bandages and made a prayer, with the sign of the cross, over each wound, asking God to heal these unruly children and give them time to turn their slant eyes towards His holy truth. There followed many gestures of approval and the ship's company seemed to be congratulating itself on thus acquiring so cheaply that first necessary of successful voyaging, a skilled and not ill-disposed enchanter.



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By this time it was night; and it became apparent soon that the captain was apprehensive of trouble from some quarter. He sniffed the air; he gave orders to hoist more sail, while the unfortunates at the oars were spurred to further efforts instead of being allowed, as was usual, to sleep as soon as the stars came out. But no stars came. The day which had been so sunny, with a clean wind blowing, went down in a dead calm, out of which came now and then gusts from a different quarter, hot and short, like a sick man sighing. The sailors did not like it, and even the men at the oars, frightened by some threat of the weather which they recognised, bent to their work with such forces as they had left, and struck up a song to keep rhythm by. It had a wailing swing to it that reminded the Inquisidor of some of the Church tunes. One man sang, while the rest came in on the chorus, a nonsense-shout.

As I went up the Me-Kong River
(Heya, banaloi, banadou.)
A girl like a lotus-bud, she was crying.
(Heya, ban, don, dou.)
I asked the girl; what sets you crying?
(Heya, banaloi, banadou.)
I've lost the keys of my girdle in the river.
(Heya, ban, don, dou.)
I dived once, but could not touch them,
(Heya, banaloi, banadou.)
I dived again, and set them all a-jingling,
(Heya, ban, don, dou.)
I dived thrice, and never came up again,
(Heya, banaloi, banadou.)
So sailors keep clear of the girl like a lotus-bud——
(Heya, ban, don, dou.)



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This was their song, of which the Inquisidor could not understand one word, but which seemed to cause amusement among such sailors as were not too busy to listen. It was a melancholy tune, but the ship was thrust forward fast by it, and the little frills of water grew wider at her bow. They were travelling due west, the sun had gone down just opposite the steersman's eyes; and seemed to be making at speed for the coast of Cape Comorin, so far as their position could at that moment be told. The captain came again to the place on the deck by the mainmast where the Inquisidor lay, with a hand lifted indicated the signs of bad weather to come, and once more seemed to ask him for help, pointing to the astrological instruments. The Inquisidor was forced once again to shake his head, and say in his own language, very earnestly, that he was not competent in such matters, but that he would pray. He touched his crucifix at that, a gesture which, combined with his grave mode of speaking, led the captain to suppose that the iron image represented a very powerful god who had been angered by the day's goings-on. He went away, and brought back a little fine incense, with a small brazier, and indicated that the Inquisidor should reason with the deity, and by a gift of sweet scent turn away the oncoming storm.

"If your prayers have brought it on," said the captain in his unintelligible tongue, "tell him that we will bring him some flowers for his shrine the moment we get ashore, and remember his goodness in our prayers, whenever we next say them. I am not afraid of a storm in the ordinary way, and with a full crew, but that shipload of devils gave us a lot of trouble to quiet; I am, one way and another, something like



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seven men short, and that counts when you have to try and weather out a strong blow. So do your best."

To this the Inquisidor replied, at cross-purposes:

"I know nothing whatever of the art of sailing ships. My prayers you shall have, but if God in His justice sees fit to overwhelm you because of your barbarity to defenceless men, my voice shall not question His decree."

The captain, taking this for assent, went off satisfied, to see that the rowers were given a dose of strong liquor and a cut of the whip to keep them alert on their benches, telling the rest of the crew meanwhile that they would have the best of supernatural assistance, and that he thought they might rely on the new sorcerer getting the better of his infuriated god.

But the heaviness of the air did not lift; the water parted with hardly a bubble to the slash of their oars; and their wake, instead of being a line of light in the darkness, was a trough that filled oilily; there was no gay smack and rattle of small waves to be heard against the hull. No stars showed, and the moon was too young to give any light from behind the clouds; but it was not the darkness, it was the quiet that was terrifying. The captain walked restlessly here and there, sniffing; at last he shouted to the rowers to hold their oars, whose creaking made the only accompaniment to the boat's swift running; they might have been making their flight through air and not through water, the sound of the oars was as rhythmic and as rusty as the movement of a wild swan's wings. The rowers halted, glad of a respite, and began to talk among themselves; the captain shouted to them to be quiet, and stood still



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himself by the tiller, listening. Nothing came to his ears in the first few seconds. After that there was a murmur, that might have been the drumming of his blood, which increased very slightly with every heart-beat. It was the sound which wind makes advancing on water, and yet not quite that, a larger sound than that, dwindled by distance. There came a sigh or two of the wind. The captain looked about his deck, upon which everything that might break loose, or make for a list, had been stowed and lashed safely, except the tree-trunk catapult; this he now ordered to be thrown overboard, and while bare feet pattered about obeying him, and voices rose in a shout as the men heaved at the prodigious weight of wood, he listened to the noise gathering behind him, and bent a turn or two of rope round his body, lashing it to the strong plank of the tiller.

There was a splash at last and a disturbance of water that set the ship rocking; the tree-trunk was overboard, making a patch of foam round it, whose bubbles soon sank down, so that by the time it was ten yards behind it was invisible. A few strokes of wind came after them to set rope-ends twittering here and there, and give a playful slap to the stern; then with none of the accompaniment of storm except noise, no lightning, rain or thunder, the full shock of the following weather met them.

The rowers laboured; under bursts of spray the captain clung to his tiller, which swung him this way and that as the waves smote it. With no single point of light anywhere, invisible to each other, and inaudible, the ship's company swept north on their spinning cockleshell, finding themselves broadside on, then facing the waves that leapt at them like mad creatures



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out of the dark, then with the wind on their heels as at first. Oars were broken, and those that still were dipped kept no rhythm and encountered each other as often as they gripped water; sometimes they scooped air only as the ship reeled on to her side; sometimes waves buried them, so that they came tugging and staggering up out of water too deep to give them leverage. At last no attempt was made to give them any motion, to steady the ship's forward rush by means of them; but the rowers clung to them still, for they were solid, and though they smashed a limb or two lashing back and forwards out of control, they were a reminder in that sea-fury of the earth to which, if the gods did not forget them, the rowers hoped to return.

The Inquisidor, with a rope about him, and douches of sea beating him flat against the deck, found, to his astonishment, no prayers running through his mind, but a fragment of heathen learning which must have come his way during some examination of heretical books; some Greek lines describing how the battering rams of King Agamemnon shook the walls of Troy. The sea came like that, drew off, swung and shocked them. And it was only after this comparison had gone through his head that he was able to assemble his thoughts as a Christian, to see waves breaking on the shallow waters of Galilee, and hear the voice of his master, newly woken from sleep, commanding the storm.

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The intolerable wind persisted for days, and left waves behind it that threw themselves skywards to gulp the cockleshell; which, however, being made of sound



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wood by good craftsmen was not in too bad a case. Her crew had diminished; and at the remains of the oars, among the live men two or three dead swung back and forth. The captain, that man of bloody fancies, had been carried overboard on the first night, and his practical joke, the corpse on the bowsprit, with him. There remained nothing of the masts except a splintered foot or two, of the spars nothing, and the spare sails stowed in the hull were useless, since there was no wood tall enough to hoist them on. The rudder was gone. Nine pirates and the Inquisidor drifted, caught in some prodigious sweeping current, always north-east, for many days. Food ended, sweet water was eked out painfully, and there had been talk of finishing off a dying man to fill the live men's larder, when in the night, after a day's travelling through mist, they heard a sound familiar and of good omen; the thudding splash of sea breaking on a coast. Their current sported with them, pulled them along the skirts of the land whose shape they could see very dimly as a darkness against the sky; one of the older sailors was of opinion that they must be at the mouth of a great river, whose waters, debouching, pushed them again towards the open sea. All night they travelled like this, swirling sideways, and in the morning saw by the water, where reddish silty floods discoloured the clear shallow green, that his guess had been a good one. They tore planks from the stern deck to make oars, and swaying against these, using their weight only, for strength none of them possessed any longer, they brought their craft into the surf, and leaping outwards stumbled through it to the shore.

Some fell when they came to the sand, and lay like dead creatures among the weeds and driftwood; others



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sprang about, and caught the sand in their fingers, and shouted with such voice as they had left; but the Inquisidor stopped their capering, and with a word or two, accompanied by the lifting of his crucifix, made them understand that they must give thanks for their delivery from the sea. They knelt, some of them; others squatted, and bowed with their palms together; others again stood, but faced towards their sacred quarter of the sky. For this diverse and naked congregation the Inquisidor sent up a prayer without reservations, as though it had been for a gathering of the baptized, joy and gratitude for deliverance being a spontaneous and pure emotion, into which the clashing of creeds might not enter. This done, there was leisure to think of procuring their first necessity, water. The river was tidal, these its first waters were brackish with the influx of sea, and the banks too thickly grown with jungle to permit much penetration by exhausted men. Night was falling, the dews were heavy; they set out such rags of cloth as still remained upon their bodies, and squeezed from these enough moisture to take them through the dark hours.

Next day they were able, on a raft which they had made of lashed oars and limbs of trees, to venture inland along the river until they found fresh water, some miles up. Then, as life flooded back into them, and thirst was forgotten, they began to dispute, just as animals that prey upon each other will run side by side from a forest fire and take up their killing again when the danger is over.

The pirate mate was noisiest. He gave it as his opinion that the storm and its consequences might be traced directly to the Inquisidor; true, they now were safe, but much of their booty had been thrown over-



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board, and the best of the gold lost with their captain's body. If he had called up the storm, he had not controlled it; if it had come without calling, then he had been unable to defend them from it. In either case, as a sorcerer and weather-man, he had failed; and it was his, the mate's advice, that they should leave him here on this wild shore, and after cutting down a tree or two by way of masts, themselves set out for some more habitable region.

There was argument concerning this decision which the Inquisidor could not follow; nor could he, except by the angry sound of the words, gather the mate's intention, though he knew the man was not friendly to him, and no leader. He was himself, by character and training, the best qualified of all these men to lead; but because his tongue had not their speech his wisdom was cut off from their minds as surely as though they had been born deaf or he dumb. But he humbled himself to suppose that the eternal purpose might be served without understanding, and obeyed the brutally gestured orders of the mate, taking for granted that when they set out again to nose the coast in search of human habitation he would be one of the ship's company still.

They remained a week on that shore, refurbishing their craft, gathering in a provision of fish, filling the water-bags; then, a favourable wind rising, each man gathered his rags about him and stepped into the surf to swim out and board the anchored ship. The Inquisidor went with them, pushing a log in front of him to support his shoulders; he could not swim.

There was timber enough on the shore, a new mast had been stepped, new oars roughly hacked; and it was one of these latter wielded by the mate shoved him



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back as he made to haul himself aboard by the rope hanging down over the stern. He could not believe that men who had suffered with him could show such careless inhumanity; but just as the mariners of Joppa had no pity on Jonah, whom they accused of fostering the heavenly anger, so these pirates had no mercy on their companion. There were shark fins cutting the water not far off; he pointed to these, and made another attempt to come aboard. They spat on him, and thrust him off, shoved him under water with their poles, until he was half-drowned; then, with the new and raw mast creaking under its weight of sail, they gathered way and began slowly to travel outside the line of surf eastwards into the Gulf.

The Inquisidor, half-drowned, found his log of wood and paddled back through the surf, which blinded and tumbled him about most mercilessly, to the beach, where now only trodden sand and the unclean smell of human habitation remained to remind him of his miraculous escape. This, he told himself, was how St. Paul's companions had come ashore, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship; and St. Paul himself had been saved because he was to be brought before Cæsar. In the half-delirium of his disappointment and solitude this phrase of the saint came back to him, but he drove that thought away, and brought himself to a consideration of what next to do; the alternative being, if he did not bestir himself, to die there on the sand for lack of food, if the beasts did not get him. His peasant common sense came to his aid, telling him that in all countries a river is like a road; villages occur along its length, it serves to keep cattle alive and to transport goods. The raft used in their first exploration was still moored half a mile upstream, provi-



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dentially forgotten by the departing pirates. He made his way to it, providing himself, from the wood which they had cut and left, with a pointed stick like a spear, and a half-branch flattened like an oar. With these for his sole tools and weapons, and having neither the means of making fire nor any knowledge where the river led, he embarked on a slow flood that ran through woody darkness; where, he neither guessed nor cared; he was beginning to loosen the ties of the west, which bound the soul close to time and such known things; he was forgetting theology; and while he could not entirely forget the savagery of his fellow men, it left no weight upon him. He perceived them as bodies rather than souls; and he was beginning to know the extravagances to which bodies could be moved by fear. Out of terror comes truth, had been one of his maxims when he directed his assistants in the torture-room; he applied it now, and saw the fright and fury of the pirates as something stronger than themselves, out of which, perhaps, God's purpose would be born. God's purpose? And with that the promise of martyrdom rang in his ears almost as if an angel with a brazen tongue had spoken it.

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It was a long way to the first village. He had kept alive by water and some crabs which tasted earthy; and he was close to the end of his strength, though his faith still burned clear as a light in a closed room, when he came on a clearing with people, and saw with astonishment that the men coming out of their houses were very like the juggler Chau-Nong. They had decent



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square faces, the chins jutting a little, and grew a thin hair on their lips. He had learned a word or two of Chau-Nong's language; *angba*, he knew, rice, and a word that meant strong drink. Hearing these scraps of their tongue called out falteringly, the people became suddenly friendly, hauled his raft ashore and gave him food, rice tinted red and yellow. But his vocabulary was not great enough to permit of sustaining conversation. He was obliged, when they questioned him, to shake his head. They understood this at last, and left him alone to eat. He was ravenous for the food, but said his grace as though he had been in his own refectory before he set hand to it. After that, careless of danger, thankful for the companionship of human voices about him, though their meaning was still hidden, he lay back on the ground and slept. The people crowded about, whispering, to watch the yellow-faced stranger sleeping, and to wonder at the iron image that still hung at his neck, threaded on a green thin withy of some plant that he had found by the shore. When he woke, his first action, watched by them all, was to go to the river bank and pick up ten small pebbles there, and one large one; with these in one hand he knelt down and began to recite, in thanksgiving for these further mercies, the glorious mysteries of the rosary, saying, as was his custom, the words of the Hail Mary in Latin. He had not got beyond the third repetition when he heard other voices, mumbling behind him, joining in. The words sang in Chau-Nong's manner, some were not recognisable, but the rhythm of the prayer, the words *ora pro nobis* and the final Amen were not to be mistaken.

This had at first the authentic air of a miracle, and he had some ado to keep his mind fixed on mysteries



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fifteen hundred years old, while this present-day living one knocked at his apprehension. He observed, from the corner of his eye, that a number of the villagers were fingering shells strung on some kind of string, and following the prayer as on a proper rosary. When the fifty Hail Marias and five Our Fathers were done, a thought, an inspiration, visited the Inquisidor's mind, and brought him to his feet.

"Does any one of you here speak the language of those prayers?" said he, in Latin.

At once there was an answer; it came from the oldest man of the village, and he gave it in a whisper:

"The sacred talk—I speak."

It was odd Latin, with none of the Inquisidor's Lusitanian harshness; Latin chipped and smoothed, softened to this brown people's indolent tongues; but the syllables were unmistakable. The wonder of it set him shaking at the knees, and his first exultation was as though at last, after long dumbness, his tongue had been loosed.

"Have you had here," he asked, "men preaching Christ?"

He touched his crucifix and repeated the question; but they all shook their heads at that, and the old spokesman answered:

"No man. Woman."

The Inquisidor did not know how to counter this, and supposed that he had been misunderstood; but repetition of the question only gained for him the same answer, with gesticulations pointing north, into the forest. He pressed the headman, bewildered. A woman had taught them these prayers? A living woman or one long ago? To this the answer was unsatisfactory the two, said the old man. She was alive? Yes. Living



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where? They indicated the jungle. In a town? In a temple. A temple?

To that the old man made a long formless answer, whose chief meanings were that this person had come to their country in the time of the great King, and had put it into his head to start building temples. They had built and built, and so many men had died that when the temples were completed there was no one left to worship in them or to fight invaders. The temples had drained the blood of a nation, said the old man with pride.

This answer set other questions moving. In what faith were the temples built? The old man knew nothing of that, only one person knew; and that person—

Another unsatisfying explanation followed, from which it appeared that this personage still lived, tended by animals, but had no human company, and was never seen. The name? They seemed shy to speak it, or perhaps did not know it. At last the old man came close to the Inquisidor's ear, and gave him a word which sounded like one of their own water-dropping names; Yo-Hong-Se. The Inquisidor made him repeat it, so that it should be fixed in his own memory, till his heart was thudding, and his whole body striving like a climber's nearing the top of a peak. He spoke it again and again, until with his Western pronouncing the syllables ran together and made a name that was recognisable: Johannes!

He said it loudly and joyfully, for this was undoubtedly some Christian person, some lost missionary living here out of the world, content to baptize these simple people and teach them their prayers. The question of the two sexes did not trouble him; it was some unlucky androgyne, perhaps. He had known



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cases; they had come before him in his official capacity, since according to the sex an action might be either laudable or sinful, as, for example, the removal of head-coverings in church. He was elated, and saw in his wanderings, delusions and misfortunes of the past six months, the finger of God steering him towards this lost island of Christianity, set in a forest so thick that no vulture hovered above it; the sound of an accustomed language set understanding suddenly free. For he had suffered from his powerlessness; faith beat the air when all communication of it had to be made in tongues which offered Christ no harbour of words, though they had little niches of phrase all ready for their own terrifying or complacent deities. He perceived all at once, and dimly, he the evangelist, something of the perplexities of the evangelized which led to backsliding, and from backsliding—in Goa at least—to the flames. Their language had to re-mould itself, to accommodate the new ideas; their behaviour execute a right-about-face; their daily life, before preoccupied with the idea of fertility in all its aspects, had to adapt itself to loin-cloths and a heaven where there was neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but only gods proceeding from each other, coldly, in the deeps of unthinkable time. All this, which had been lurking in his consciousness like a herd of night animals, now rushed out upon him, was recognised with horror, and driven back into its retreat by means of prayer. But the elation persisted.

Next day, although there was a beginning of fever in his bones, he insisted upon being set on the road to the temple where Johannes lived; the old man, smiling secretly, would not tell him; but after teasing him for a while, took him into the midst of the clearing between the trees and showed him, high up in the sky that was



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almost white with heat, a gross gold day-moon hanging, only half full, looking somehow larger than western moons, and ripe.

"The full is the time," said the old man.

The Inquisidor made impatient calculation; it meant ten days to wait.

At that the old man's hand, which had been on his arm, slid to his pulse.

"Time for fever to go," said he, and beckoned to one of the women, who took some order from him and went back to her house, where the Inquisidor could see her putting dried herbs together in an earthen pot to steep. He persisted; but the old man had been headman for long enough to understand how to say no. The Inquisidor was baffled, and thought for a moment, madly, of venturing alone along some of the tangled forest ways, but that would have been suicide as surely as though he had jumped into the stirrups of the karavat. His legs saved him the trouble of continuing in obstinacy by giving under him, and he returned to his couch made of leaves sewn together, where the woman brought him a potion; whether she had brewed in it other things than febrifuges, or whether the fever itself was responsible, certainly the Inquisidor was more tractable after its administration, and lay daily in a kind of stupor, only asking now and then for news of the moon.

As it grew, and gave more light, the forest animals became restless. There were, happily, no tigers in those parts, but there were other creatures, monkeys and snakes chiefly; the former spent these lighter nights hallooing, and occasionally setting off on wild swinging tree-top flights from some imaginary danger; the latter came into the village and drank from the bowls of



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milk that were set out for them, leaving their traces in the dust, half-arcs whose less or greater radius showed the size of the visitor. This restlessness invaded the village itself, in which, for two days before full moon, the only tranquil person was the Inquisidor, staring out from the lassitude of fever on activity hardly apprehended, fingering his pebbles and saying his prayers. His fever cooled, thanks to the brew that kept him passive, and a day came when he could understand what the old man was saying, bending over him.

"It is for to-day."

The Inquisidor, still dazed, came to his feet and tried a step or two. He was neither stiff nor weak; the woman had rubbed his legs daily while he lay in the shade of her wooden house. He could stand and go well enough. When they saw this, the women—who were much more kempt than usual, with small fresh flowers in their hair—came forward and brought him solid food; a strange fishy-fleshy meat that might have been lizard, and some strong-tasting milk. That milk was reviving, and set his blood running as used, in old days, the thick wine of the Douro. They put flowers on him, too, and brought a bamboo comb for his hair and beard, trimming him almost as though he had been the victim appointed for sacrifice to their god; but his curiosity was too eager for any such comparison to be made.

"Johannes?" said he to the headman, giving that name, however, the singing drop of their speech.

The old man nodded, gave him a stick to fend dropping trails of foliage from his eyes, and calling the people together, set out at the head of them through a forest path masked with green.



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It was a narrow, but well-trodden path, over which, for the first hundred yards, the growth was thick, but easily to be pushed aside; a living screen; and the expedition went silently along it, recollectedly, as in Western countries the Sunday congregation goes to Mass. There was a little talk, but not in the sacred tongue, which, in fact, very few could speak, though they used it for prayer.

They trod softly along the path, stinking and smoking with the fume of long dead leaves disturbed, until the weight of the air, under a green canopy that hid the sun, told them that it was midday. Then the word was given, they took drink, but no food, and at once slept, lying one pillowed on another, curved about each other prettily, and with the unselfconsciousness of animals.

This the Inquisidor would not stand, and he went about among them with his stick like a shepherd with his crook, arranging them according to their sex in two parties, beating the fat flanks of women who would not budge, and rattling his stick between the legs of men who tended to defy him. The villagers, uncertain, looked to their headman, who indulgently signalled them to obey the stranger; when he had them arranged to his liking the Inquisidor sat down between the drowsy groups with his stick ready to flick at any transgressor. They gave no trouble, however, once their headman's nod had licensed the interference, though why any such segregation should be necessary they could not, in their primal innocence, make out.

The sun began to slant. The headman woke from his old man's light sleep and blew on a twisted shell, giving out a bellow that sent unseen monkeys careering in the tree-tops from which leaves pattered down. His people woke and uncomplainingly took up their march.



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After a time the Inquisidor felt an unwonted firmness under his bare feet and looked down. The carpet of leaves was thick as ever, but it seemed to lie upon some level substratum, and once he heard the unmistakable hollow sound of a rocking stone. They were on a paved path, that was certain; as they advanced, further and unmistakable evidences of the nearness of a city took his eyes; a tall broken gateway, a chapel swarmed over with creeper, unroofed, and the round head of a well. All at once the forest opened upon a lake, by which cormorants stood fishing; the birds turned their heads, but were tolerant of this human invasion, quite unafraid. The headman gave directions, and from among bamboos fringing the lake the young men brought out a raft, kept there under a thatched roof; this they launched, and paddled some eight or nine persons across on it. The reason why they did not proceed by swimming was evident; as the raft splashed into the water armoured shapes of crocodiles slipped in from the banks less noisily; to these the headman pointed, saying unconcernedly that their bellies, roasted in ashes, were a delicious meat. Four times the raft was ferried across, then tethered; and the whole company went on together as before, up a magnificent paved way, green with mosses, but lying firmly as when it was first set; even growing stuff had not been able to force its way through the ancient mortar.

But the Inquisidor had no eyes for the ground under his feet, though he felt its evenness; his eyes were fixed upon five prodigious pointed towers that climbed above the palm trees; towers that were almost domes, but larger than any dome he had ever known, whether on this side of the earth or his own. Roofs joined them, which could be seen through the interstices of en-



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croaching trees, and so far as he could judge the building, if it were all one and not a colony or town of chapels, must cover a space larger than the city of Goa. He checked, and appealed to the headman, placidly viewing the enormous scene; the name of the place meant nothing, but his assurance that this was where the lost missionary lived was another matter.

"Johannes lives here?" repeated the Inquisidor, amazed.

"This is the temple that was built," returned the old man unmoved.

The Inquisidor remembered his story of the nation which had poured its life into its sacred buildings and then died. He did not believe it entirely, knowing how short were the memories of black people, so that an event of their grandfather's time could become legend without contradiction. But he was troubled by the shapes of the towers, which had about their symmetry something sensuous and unholy. His instinct detested and mistrusted the place, while his peasant's common sense saw the gigantic building transformed to Christian uses, as the temples of the gods in Rome had in the beginning of the reigns of the Popes been so transformed. The silence and size of the linked towers were ominous; he could not conceive, except by reason of the sudden wrath of God, how so much magnificence could have been struck dead.

They went up a staircase, whose handrail was the body of a snake, that terminated in a snake's head flaring out in seven hoods, and came on to a broad terrace. Here, all the people flung themselves down, first reverentially kissing the ground, and began at once to eat.

"But Johannes?" said the Inquisidor, refusing the food that was offered him.



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"You will not see her," said the headman, "but she will see you."

And he, too, sat down with every appearance of satisfaction to deal with his rice. The Inquisidor looked at him angrily, hesitated, and set off by himself up a second staircase; for the temple was laid out in terraces, with the main dome, or tower, springing from the topmost. He was no more than half a dozen steps past the terminal fan of snakes when feet came pattering behind him; two young men, at the headman's nod, secured him, twisting his arms so that he could struggle only at the cost of breaking both. He was reminded, even in his pain and fury, of a trick he had sometimes seen Chau-Nong play with challenging wrestlers, and lay quiet, letting them carry him down; he had heard more than one crack of a bone when men struggled in that particular hold.

He was, however, angry. It was the first hint of roughness he had experienced from this douce people; and as they set him down, very civilly but firmly, in the place of honour on the old man's right, he thought he saw in the glances of the assembled men and women that expression of pity combined with eagerness with which mankind looks on a victim. There were such glances in Goa, every third year, in the Square. He discounted it, however. These people were Christians.

Their frugal eating over, the people divided; the younger men went into a cloister, where they seemed to busy themselves with planks of wood and painted properties that were stowed there, while the women unwrapped the ceremonial dresses they had brought, and bore these away very carefully into a further small corridor of patterned stone, on whose walls sculptured smiling women, with bare breasts and head-dresses



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pointing upwards like flames danced disposedly. The whole demeanour of these girls and that of the men was calm and knowledgeable, as though they were about some very familiar and morally excellent business. He supposed that they were preparing to perform an edifying play after the manner usual in Europe, wherein some incident of the Gospel or battle of the virtues and vices should be set forth for the ignorant in such a guise as they could best understand. The headman agreed that it was so.

"But Johannes?" asked the Inquisidor again.

"Will see us," the headman reassured him, and pointed upwards with his first finger.

"He is dead? in heaven?" the Inquisidor tried to interpret the gesture, and would almost have been glad to have so simple an end put to his puzzle. For that a man could exist in the body for centuries was not in accordance with reason or faith; but that he should come on this forgotten place; live and teach and die; and at last be celebrated, his memory be kept alive by ritual dances and phrases, and the remnants of a speech, was not only likely, but had precedent in Prester John. He asked no further questions, instinct warning, but took this explanation into his unreasoning uneasy mind to quiet it, while his eyes followed with attention the behaviour of a troop of monkeys that came swinging hand over hand down from the topmost tower towards the terrace on which now he and the headman sat alone. All the food had not been cleared. Some, indeed, had not been touched, but lay spread as though waiting for other feasters to come. On this the monkeys descended, and as the Inquisidor rose to drive them off, not caring to see Christian food thus misapplied, the old man caught his arm strongly; he, too, had that heathen



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knack of the grip. The Inquisidor stood chafing, constrained by the old man's frail but knowing muscles, while the grey creatures, whose mournful faces contrasted so oddly with their gambolling movements, descended to seize upon the good food. He had seen something of monkeys and knew their greed in eating, their childish rage to spoil and quarrel; but these beasts, though they were quick, and in a moment had cleared everything, even to the platters of clean leaves, put no single morsel to their mouths. Holding the fruit and cooked stuffs grotesquely, they swung up again, scaling the snakes' bodies, ascending past windows barred by spirals of stone, until their grey shapes came into the last red light of the sun that still adorned the nipple of the tower, and there were lost to sight.

The headman surveyed their flight, tolerantly smiling, with none of the Inquisidor's dislike of the clambering soulless manikins, but offered no explanation of their behaviour. Night came suddenly; the tower flushed, paled, and at last grew dark against the blue evening sky. Sounds ran with curious incidence down the slanting corridors; sometimes a whisper from the inner court was thrown so close that they turned their heads, or a shout grew ghostly, and its echo reached them before itself. Lights began to show in some of the stone rooms; and with their sideways-falling beams the sculptural people came to life, battling, dancing, or contemplating in entire repose their stone adorers. The twisted shell was blown, a strangled sound three times repeated. The headman rose and gave his right hand to his guest.

"What now?" the Inquisidor asked.

The old man smiled, beckoning with his left hand



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politely, inviting him to pass through a corridor like a chapel, on whose walls was figured a battle between monkeys and gods. A light had been left here to guide them, but no single one of the villagers was in sight.

"Where are they?" the Inquisidor asked.

"Through, through," the old man responded, civilly urging him.

Ten minutes later they came out into a central square, safe as yet from the forest which slowly was overcoming the temple's outer courts and balustrades; these columns stood upright, the flagstones lay level; but for the dirt of bird and monkey droppings the place might have been alive. At the foot of the tower, built against a gallery of twisted pillars, was a wooden erection spread with a cloth, with thick misshapen candles flaring on it already; it was like an altar; there was a great red-covered book ready, and a yellow cup; but where the central crucifix should have been was a tall wooden cross, some eight feet high, with no figure on it. The people were quietly kneeling before this, absorbed in devotion, and two acolytes stood ready with a red garment shaped like a vestment. The Inquisidor halted.

"Mass at this hour?"

The old man nodded and smiled at him, with a gesture as though to say, Pray indulge us.

"I have broken my fast. After midnight, when the new day begins, I will say Mass for you."

But the old man was deprecatory. The guest was not to be asked to say Mass.

"Who, then? And what are these preparations?"

That question the old man did not answer except that once again he pointed up to the tower. The Inquisidor followed the gesture. At the top, above the balcony



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where the monkeys had disappeared, a light showed, and just behind the tower, sailing on a wind which in their enclosure did not reach the devotees, a full moon came in sight, notched with the beaks and wings of carved stone creatures two hundred feet up.

He looked at the light; it was steady; at the gathered people; they were respectfully squatted in absolute quiet, and he saw that among them some of the monkeys too were seated, patiently, wistfully waiting for something to happen.

At that, for no reason, terror came over the Inquisidor. So quiet! What could come? What was written in that book on the altar? He took a step forward, meaning to stand up before them all, to denounce this waiting on the moon, this harbouring of the truth in a dwelling of the antique lying gods, but two young men were at his side, and he perceived with another gust of fear that two more were unstepping the high wooden cross.

"People," he shouted in Latin, a sudden furious appeal, "you are Christians!"

All the people bent their heads, and the headman, now dressed in his red garment, smiled again and beckoned gently. The two young men took the Inquisidor's elbows, brought him to the foot of the altar, and, with a little pressure on his shoulders, bade him kneel down. But he would not. He sprang up and faced the people, as he had faced the turbulent square, the swaggering captain—he fought best with his eyes on the danger—and held up his crucifix before their eyes. Again they bowed their heads respectfully, and the old man soothed him.

"Yes, yes. Soon."

There was a sudden clamour among the people, all



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their heads suddenly tilted upwards. The light in the tower had blinked.

"Amen!" said the old man, with a gesture; at which the two men very gently took the Inquisidor and without any but the most necessary roughness laid him on the cross, which had been brought down from behind the altar, to which they bound his hands and feet. He cried out a prayer; they joined in it reverently, and he could hear the young men busy with his bonds repeating the words in their sing-song, but with here and there a change which sent the whole sense spinning.

"De profundis clamavi ad te, domine," clamoured the Inquisidor. "Out of the deeps have I cried to thee, Lord!"

("Domina," said the people, "Lady.")

"Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If thou, oh Lord, shalt mark iniquity, Lord, who shall endure it?"

("If thou, oh Lady," sang the people, "shalt mark iniquity, who shall perform it? For with thee there is no mercy, and because of thy law for which we have waited strife shall come upon us and the reign of Antichrist.")

That last word he heard clearly, and struggled in his bonds so madly that the cross, which the four men were lifting, rocked and swung like a tree in a storm.

"Antichristus!"

He screamed it, and the people with a mockery of recollection bowed their heads to their knees at the sound. The men hoisted their burden into the sockets behind the altar that held it; and there above that unholy place the Inquisidor hung, with the moon in his eyes. The Mass began.



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But there was no visible celebrant. The headman performed all the offices of a deacon, shifting the book, reading such parts of it aloud as would fall within a deacon's duty, but the central place in front of the gold cup was left empty for an unseen presence. There was no mockery. Responses were made, the ritual of the ceremony was complete; a gong rang for the unspoken Sanctus, and fifty dark hands went to their breasts.

The Inquisidor, hanging above it all, saw himself at the end of his pilgrimage. He knew that for forty years he had faithfully served; he had followed the finger of God wherever it pointed. Now he saw clearly that he was to die, not for Christ, but to blaspheme Christ; that his dying would serve no purpose of reclaiming souls, but rather confirm those lost people in their wickedness. The bitterness of death was in his mouth, and for a moment he saw himself, this people, and the whole world betrayed.

"There is no God!" he shouted upwards towards the deepening blue of the sky.

There was a horrified murmur from the congregation, and the old man, turning a face benevolent and sane, put out a hand to one of his acolytes; a knife was slipped into it. He lifted his arm with a prayer, the blade shone a moment and was hidden. From the Inquisidor's heart, as the knife was withdrawn, blood came pouring, which the old man swiftly caught in his gold cup. He made signs over this, turned, and beckoned, whistling; the largest of the monkeys came up to him on all fours and received the cup from him, clasping its cold hand carefully round the stem. Then it sprang on to the hand of a carved hero, thence to a window, and went climbing carefully up and up, surrounded by a rout of supporters, until the kneeling



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men and women saw its silhouette, grown tiny, darken the square of light in the tower. Then they struck their breasts again, and moaned in a passion of devotion, while the unseen celebrant, man-woman, God's adversary, blessed and partook of the cup.

## (xx)

At the same hour that the Inquisidor hung in fear, denying God in the lost dwelling of Antichrist, the Viceroy of Goa was in conference with the Archbishop concerning Adam's Tooth. This relic had been successfully filched from its defenders and believers in a raid to which the dwindling revenues of the town obliged its governor; an embassy was now at his doors, sent from Kandy, to offer ransom in a very handsome manner, but the question whether or no to pocket this was difficult of solution.

The sum offered by the Cingalese was a large one, to be paid in gold and those sapphires for which their island was famed; but though large, it would not renew itself. It was a capital sum, which when spent was gone, whereas by keeping and judiciously using the Tooth, the stream of pilgrims' wealth would flow again, and need never cease. The Cingalese, good bargainers, had brought with them their treasure, the Dalada's ransom, and the heavy table at which the Viceroy laboriously wrote his despatches had that morning been deep in sapphires, some deep-sea blue, some starry. He had the memory of them before his eyes as he spoke, at the end of his conference, with Dom Gaspar, reluctantly, to the effect that the ambassadors had better be sent home.

"We are not to think only of ourselves in this



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business," said Dom Constantino; "it is a nice sum, but it leaves our successors nothing. The Tooth is a rare investment; it will go on pulling the money out of these heathen's pockets as long as it keeps together. St. Thomas's shrine will just about hold it."

The Archbishop agreed, with the proviso that the Tooth should first be cleansed, by exorcism or some other means, of those thousand-odd years of heathen prayer by which it was at present defiled.

"That's your concern," said the Viceroy abruptly, turning. "Meanwhile, I'll send these fellows about their business."

The ambassadors, sped with presents, but without the object of their mission, departed weeping to incur the penalty of death promised by their King in case of failure. The Archbishop held one remarkable ceremony of cleansing, and was preparing for another of solemn installation, when a merchantman sailed in under the guns of the port and, having paid her dues and dropped her anchor, sent a boatswain ashore with a letter for the Archbishop, whose effect was rather more disturbing to that prelate than the summons of the last trump.

"Your Grace," said the letter, without flourishes, "it has been my misfortune, God's will, to endure captivity, from which I am now escaped like Jonah out of the mouth of Leviathan, and it is my intention to return at once by sea to my duty, wherein I hope never again to fail. I ask your Grace's prayers and blessing, and am the humble servant of Christ——"

The Archbishop sat quite still, very white, reading this, then sprang up from his chair, with a sweep of his arm sending Cristobal scampering, and called immediately for a messenger. An hour later the Viceroy arrived in his palanquin, to find His Grace



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pacing the room with a hand on his breast and his face like cheese.

"Here's a to-do," said the Viceroy when he had read the letter. "Why couldn't the ship arrive ten days ago? We could have taken the money and let the Tooth go back, and nobody except our purses any the wiser. Now you've set it up in the cathedral, and when the Inquisidor comes, both you and I know very well what he'll do with it. A man's tooth a foot long!"

The Viceroy laughed.

"I will not permit such another scandal as that burning," said the Archbishop setting his lips in an unfamiliar line. "Disorder, bloodshed, and loss to the Church—no, decidedly, that must never happen again."

"Well," said the Viceroy, "you know what he'll do. You and I have no authority over him; he's answerable to the Grand Council, half-way across the world. We've played him one trick, and he turned the tables on us in a very neat way. One must respect the fellow; he has wits. I tell you frankly, I'm in no mind to cross him again. The Aljube still holds on to his witnesses, Maria and Enrique, and do you think I can get hold of them? His underlings are as dogged as himself. Short of bringing up the cannon from the fortress and blowing the place sky-high I can't get at those two to silence them; and if I blew up a church building I should never be able to go back to Portugal. It's trouble either way; and if you'll take my advice, Dom Gaspar, you'll burn this Tooth, the way he burned St. Thomas."

"You have only your own revenues to think of," returned the Archbishop; "I am trustee for the Church."

"As you please," said the Viceroy, shrugging. "There's my advice. Cut your loss. Burn the Tooth,



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before he burns it for you. And get the credit of being disinterested. He's not to know of the money we took from the temple at the same time."

This advice the Archbishop pondered, tossing, through the whole of that night, and at last came to the conclusion that the Viceroy was right. True, he had been careful to take no hand in the matter of Enrique, but the Inquisidor Mor had looked on him once or twice with an enquiring eye, and nobody could tell what scandal that little abominable brown girl might not have invented in prison. As for facing out the matter of the Tooth, insisting that it was Adam's, and requiring veneration for it, the Inquisidor was quite capable of setting distant theologians and historians enquiring into its claims, and putting his spiritual superior irrevocably in the wrong. There was no alternative; the Tooth must go.

Accordingly, some three weeks after the arrival of the fatal letter, an assembly was called in the cathedral square, to which the people came, mystified, but delighted with the show, to hear His Grace condemn and execrate, and eternally cast out from the sphere of belief some six or seven pounds of ivory; with penalties of a far-reaching nature for all persons who should continue to believe in, revere, or otherwise acknowledge the existence of the relic which in Kandy had been guarded by an army and a Caco-demon of its own. This done, and the ashes of the Tooth strewn upon Goa's river waters, the Archbishop returned to his cool palace, and pulling Cristobal to him, lamented:

"Cristobal, what is to become of us? Are we never to be free of the shadow of that terrible and righteous man? All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. Oh God," prayed the



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Archbishop, "surely thou didst set me in a slippery place! Why doth thine anger smoke still against the sheep and the shepherd of thy pasture?" The sound of cannons from the fortress roused him from his knees. "Another ship, Cristobal," said the Archbishop tremulously; "this will be the man in person."

And he prepared himself with trembling lips to smile, and bless, and welcome. But the hours went by and there was no movement in the streets, no clamour, no opening doors or quick footsteps approaching with news, and he began to hope.

At five o'clock the Viceroy arrived in his palanquin; by the side of it walked a ragged and scarred sailor, with his hand upon the shoulder of a boy. The Viceroy entered in a raging temper; his heavy feet, passing through the ante-room, made the carved ivories on its table clatter; he used his sword for a walking-stick, alarming the Archbishop intolerably to hear him.

"Well," said the Viceroy, flinging himself down and thumping with his sword's flat on the table, "what do you think of this latest news? Upon my soul I begin to believe in the devil, Dom Gaspar; this is none of God's work. Here we get a story of our Inquisidor returning; we put the equal of a shipload of treasure in the fire for fear of him, and let another go back where it came from. What next? He's dead, after all, martyred by pirates if we are to believe this boy, and we've lost both the money and the Tooth."

Dom Gaspar was trembling.

"Dead?" said he, turning from the Viceroy to the bringer of the news and to the sailor. "Dead? Dead?"

"Tell him, boy," grunted Dom Constantino.

The boy Abdul then, in the language of that coast, gave the story of how his master, the saintliest of men,



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had been set upon by sea; how he had affronted strange gods; how he had preached to heathen seamen; how he had lifted no weapon to defend himself and at last had been carried off in a flame of fire with his hands to the last clasped about his charm. And the boy Abdul reproduced with such fidelity the Inquisidor's gesture with the crucifix that they could no longer have any doubt; then, affected by his own story, he wept copiously, assuring all present that he had been converted to the god of that saintly man.

"The three-faced god that never marry," said the boy Abdul, "I worship."

And he wept anew. But the Archbishop did not weep, nor did he sulk and stamp like the Viceroy. His face was transfigured; Cristobal saw it, used as he was to his master's moods, and crept within reach of his hand for the first time that afternoon. His Grace questioned the boy sharply; in reply, Abdul pulled from his clothing a piece of black rag that had once formed part of the Inquisidor's cassock, and some nuts on a string that had served him to number his prayers. The Archbishop took these in his hands, weighing them as though they had been fine gold, smiling, while the Viceroy stared.

"What of it, Dom Gaspar?"

"It will take a little time," returned the Archbishop slowly; "the matter must first be referred to Rome; but we are saved, Excellency."

"I understand you," the Viceroy answered bluntly. "We run no risk on the old scores, with the Inquisidor gone. But we have lost our money."

"No," said the Archbishop, beatifically, "we have saved that as well. To God the glory!"

"Amen, if it is so," the Viceroy grunted. "How?"



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"We need make no more expeditions," the Archbishop answered, "shed no more blood, be a reproach no longer. We have at last," he lifted up the rag and the nutshells, "a martyr of our own."

Thus it happened that after due reports and enquiries, some juggling with words by the devil's advocate at Rome, and encouragement from cardinals who thought that a new Eastern martyr was due, the Archbishop of Goa, Primate of all the Indies, Dom Gaspar de Pereira, stood in his most magnificent robes in front of the Cathedral, on top of the steps where St. Thomas's bones and Adam's Tooth had been ceremonially burnt, to proclaim Goa's own blessed one; whose name, masked for so many years by the title of his office, turned out to be Thomas, too. The Archbishop had his sermon pat; he had learned it by heart months ago, and as he stood with his fine head reverently bent and his hand upraised over the silver reliquary that had housed in succession such strangely dissimilar objects of devotion, he knew happiness.

"But now that the fullness of time has discovered the glory of his soul, though his body, dismembered and tormented in the service of God, has been lost to us, leaving only these poor relics, and our proud memories, to recall him; now that we may, with his Holiness' sanction, truly call him Blessed; let us take, brethren, the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and rejoice before the Lord our God seven days."

Which accordingly was done, to the equal satisfaction of Archbishop, Viceroy, the authorities of the Casa Santa, and devout visiting pirates from up and down the Coromandel coast.



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# BOOK II

## FRANCE, 1789

The Heaven bemoaneth too much the Androgyn born,
Near heaven humane blood shall be spilt,
By death too late a great people shall be refreshed.

*Annotation:*

The words are plain enough, but of the sense, every-one may think what he pleaseth.

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(i)

THE adventurer known as M. de St. Esprit first appeared in Paris in the year 1788. His name was a nickname, which his immense facility and fluency in languages had earned for him in the clubs and casual meeting places, where he spoke as a rule in good enough French, but with the vowels all blunted. He disputed, however, in other tongues with such fire that the surname of Holy Ghost was irrevocably attached to him; and it was the evening recreation of certain young fashionables to stroll into the Palais Royal and listen to him. His talk was, as a rule, a less modish version of the revolutionary chatter of drawing-rooms; he opposed the temporal splendours of the Church; he had a good deal to say concerning the simple savage, that legendary figure combining entire self-mastery with noble impatience of all outward forms of control. M. de St. Esprit was, to begin with, only one of the unnumbered haranguers, arguers, reformers of the capital, with this difference: that he was a sleek man with a poor following, while most of the firebrands went hungry and were applauded by duchesses. He spoke in one of the minor clubs in the Palais Royal, a place where tradesmen and such came for their game of dominoes, a place too respectable to attract the attention either of duchesses or spies. And yet the solitary picture of St. Esprit at this period comes from the pen of an Irish dowager visiting at the English Embassy. Her letter may as well be given, for it has a smack of naturalness and comedy, two qualities not often associated with the personage whom she describes.



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"The Ambassador," begins Lady Kilblany, writing to an old but spirited friend in the County Clare, "one never sees, save in state, cocked up at the head of a great table of plate, very badly polished. (Never again shall I blush for my own servants, there are troops of the wretches here, but what is everyone's business is no persons, and we have dirty dishes handed to us on kid gloves.) There are several very impudent young men attached to the Embassy, in what capacity the L-rd knows, who drive up and down all day behind very fast horses. One of these, Mr. Augustus Petre, has elected himself my cicisbeo, transports me in his whisky, as they call their vehicles, to all the sights, and arms me about among the fashionable crowds, for we betake ourselves nightly to the Opera or Coliseum, and daily to the Palais Royal, where we walk under the trees, at all the *moraller* hours. So gross is the state of public tolerance that there are periods even by daylight when it is not suitable for decent women to take the air or make their purchases at this (royal) Rendez-vous, for fear of rubbing elbows with who-res, or even themselves receiving nasty proposals. At this present season I believe the hours between eleven and one are tolerably free from offence, and from five to six.

"But it was not with the intention of cataloguing the hours of debauchery that, dearest Anna, I took up my pen: but to relate to you an occurrence, which I fancy will make plain to you the dangers of too great *enthusiasm.*

"My cicisbeo having suggested that we should attend the Palais Royal for the purpose of acquiring some trinket which fashion commands, we found ourselves strolling there at a time when the clubs, *cloobs* as they pronounce, meet to talk politics and other nonsense.



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These are the silliest assemblies, modelled, as their imitators fondly imagine, on the English. But who ever heard of Englishmen meeting to talk? (I do not say Irishmen.) London clubs are places where a man may be silent without incivility, and lose money to his equals. But these chatter-boxes have no notion of such a thing. There is word, His Excellency informs me, of their being put down, and indeed I cannot tell what purpose they serve, that should preserve them.

"When the trinket had been bought, Augustus proposed that we should visit one of these assemblies, where, he said, there was a fellow worth hearing, to whom the young men have allotted a very blasphemous Soubriquet. 'This,' said he, 'is the place,' and before I could protest I was through the door of a lemonade-seller's. It was full of ill-dressed discontented-looking men, few women; and addressing the assembly from a small table was a most singular-looking Personage, dressed decently in black. I describe him, since he seemed to me dangerous, and one of whom more will be heard. His cheeks were smooth as a woman's, and his dark hair grew fine. His form, though angular, had a turn of the hip and breast by no means masculine. But such an appearance is hardly out of the way in Paris, where the men dress and pad themselves to look as like women as they can: while the women with their riding-capes and canes straddle about like men.

"This Person, for I will not refer to him by his Soubriquet, was speaking as we entered on the subject of the religious procession (Fête-Dieu) that had taken place on the preceding day; that it was a mummery, etc., which nobody seeing it could doubt.

" 'And is this all religion has to offer her petitioners,'



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says he, 'a few children strewing flowers, a few tapestries hung from windows? But gold cups in her servants' hands, gold in the very umbrellas over their heads. Why, this is not a religion, this is a court play. The priests show God as a king; and there, to my mind, they come near offering an insult to the Supreme Being.'

"At this there was clapping, and a babel of noise applauding him. You have always said, dearest Anna, that I am intrepid, certain it is that when rage possesses me I am indifferent to consequences. I now rose, and even stood upon my chair, and spoke very loud in what French I could muster, as follows:

" 'You, sir, are the King's guest in France, as I am. You stand here by the King's leave and good pleasure. Have the honesty to speak civil of your host.'

"At this there was no babel, but a silence, all the persons present turning my way with their mouths open. The Person, however, was no way daunted.

" 'Madam,' says he, in good English enough, 'I make a guess at your country. It sets the standard of taste here in Paris at this moment. But let me say that the reign of taste and civility has lasted too long. There are things soon to be said that will not do for drawing-rooms.'

" 'Then, sir,' said I, 'they may do for the Bastille!'

"With that my squire put both arms about my knees, lifted me, and fairly made off with me in his arms to the door. When he had set me down outside, which he did very awkwardly for laughing, I gave him my mind for taking me to such a place, and when he was sufficiently humble, *fishwifed* him once more for taking me away from it. 'Why,' says he, 'you could take care of both of us, I don't doubt, but I saw there a man, a mouchard (spy) by the look of him, that fellow in green, with the



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striped stockings, and I have no stomach for that sort of trouble. However,' says he, 'you spoke out for the King very handsomely, and if he were a gentleman he would make you a duchess for it, but he has no eye for looks, only for locks——' very ridiculous disloyal talk.

"Such, dearest Anna, is the history of your friend's latest exploit, which I pray the Ambassador won't hear of, for though they are used, here, to grandmothers having lovers, they may not take a sniff at politics, except by the *back staircase*. Now to tell you of this latest folly that the genius of Mlle Bertin has clapped upon all modish Parisian female heads, from fifteen years to eighty——"

This letter of Louisa Lady Kilblany still exists in a private collection of state papers of the period. There is no apparent reason for its preservation in such company except the reference to M. de St. Esprit, who soon afterwards disappeared, or rather ceased from such activities as speaking in a public café. Pinned to Lady Kilblany's letter is another document, a printed copy, with the arms of France at the head, of the King's decree dated July of that same year, 1788, forbidding "all gatherings for purposes of discussion in public places"; in other words, abolishing the clubs. It would seem that Mr. Augustus Petre, who thought he perceived a spy among the company that listened on the occasion of her ladyship's outburst, was right after all.

(ii)

The police raid foreshadowed by the Ambassador's prophecy did in fact take place on the day after her



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ladyship's altercation with the principal speaker of one of the minor clubs. It was a good shrewd blow, swiftly struck, and with no warning. Picture, for example, the interior of that café to which her ladyship and Mr. Petre penetrated, the establishment on whose glass front, a front candid as the forehead of a young girl, was inscribed in shabby gold the words, "Smith, Limonadier." There were numerous frail white-painted tables about, with elegant chairs set two to a table; the elegance was a relic of Mr. Smith's earlier and more ambitious days, when he had thought to cater for the court, and to put above his shop that proudest title of his calling, "Limonadier du Roi." But things had not gone well, an unsatisfactory son made off with money that should have pushed trade, and in 1788 Smith (a Burgundian by birth) was entertaining lawyers' clerks, tradesmen of the smaller sort, pamphleteers, prostitutes, with in the moraller hours a provincial lady or two seeking a respectable place in which to rest her feet, and count the money left in her purse after a tour of the arcades. There was no wine sold at Smith's, except the small quantity his speciality involved, a kind of punch, proudly christened after himself; customers asked for "un demi-Smith," and were served with a mixture, red wine and fruit juice, of surprising artlessness. Over this, and coffee with milk, and lemon ices in summer, his clients sat reading their journals, and comfortably predicting the imminent fall of civilisation.

On the evening of the police visit, the company was thus composed; some twenty drab-coloured men, two of those prostitutes whose strange trade it was to whet appetites by appearing like country cousins and virtuous dowdy women; a young actress, alone; and a



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young man with some pretensions to fashion, who had just bought at the toy shop round the corner a mechanical bird concealed in a snuff-box. He displayed this, with tales of what he had paid for it; set it singing by pressure on a small gold knob, nodding his head to the tune, which was pretty enough, and about as like a nightingale as Watteau's shepherds to those who marched the city's mutton in to Paris of a morning. The young man appeared to be slightly, though inoffensively drunk. He sat sprawled, and spilt his drink in his saucer, laughed raucously for no reason now and then, and on occasion played dangerously with a strong cudgel-like stick, for which the close-set tables provided no adequate room. Asked by an inquisitive neighbour why he carried it, he replied that it was English, and no man valuing his position in the world could afford not to do as the English did.

"Even," said he, "to carrying about a damn silly stick like a damn ridiculous figure of Hercules."

Thus spoke the young man, dressed in apple-green, with blue and white striped stockings, waistcoat to match, two watches at his waist and a prodigious beaver hat. He was undoubtedly a little drunk.

He accosted Smith in English, and was answered by that worthy—who possessed no more than ten words in the tongue of his adopted country—in German, upon which the fribble sank back satisfied.

"That's so," said he wisely, in response to the German phrase; "you are right, England is the only country, and we all respect her institutions, constitutions, but every man of spirit must admit that her fashions are damn tedious."

The other habitués smiled, and went on with their dominoes or their talk, which, for once, seemed not too



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much concerned with politics. It had been an exquisite soft day of summer; the air, enclosed though it was by glass and painted wood, seemed to carry lilac on it, and wistful country scents. The talk of the two prostitutes was concerned, for once, not wholly with their luck or their skill at bargaining.

"Ah," said the elder, "there are times when I wouldn't mind to be what they all think I am, and keep a little shop at Nogent, or some such unearthly place, and sell sweets to children. Nights like this you'd be able to go for a stroll, and a bed to yourself at the end of it."

"Give me Paris," said the other. "I was born here. Paris is my mark, you can have all the rest. Why, down our street there used to be as pretty a show of flowers as you'd see in a month in these country places. The police put a stop to it; the pots used to blow down. There was a man killed once, in a storm, with a daffodil that fell on his head. So the police don't like it, and you've got to grow them out of sight. They don't get so much sun that way. But my mother's raised a nice lot of mignonette from seed——"

"And a nice lot of mignonnes," said the young man, ogling and chinking silver in his pocket. "How much, mademoiselle? What's the charge for a little gardening?" And he made his meaning clear by the use of a brief English word in the young actress's ear.

She eyed, and ignored him.

"You don't understand English?" he persisted, crestfallen. "Well, you ought to understand this. This talks clear enough." And he jingled his money again. She remained contemptuously silent. "What's the good of this place?" enquired the young man petulantly. "Bad liquor, and the women don't know what a man



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means. What's wrong with the lot of you? You might as well all be laid out on slabs in the dead-house, if you had your clothes off. No talk, eh? Where's the little man, where's this fellow, John the Baptist, or whatever they call him? Not here to-night? Why don't somebody fetch him to liven us up with a touch of treason?"

The domino-players indicated with hunched shoulders that they were tired of him; there was an irritated rattle of newspapers; the two women, very furtively, were counting money which they had whipped out from under their garters. The owner of the mechanical bird prepared for lack of distraction to play it again, and had begun dolefully to wind up the spring when in the mirror that faced him he saw that the door was opening. M. de St. Esprit came in, preoccupied, and sat down at a white rickety table alone. His face was sombre. But the young man with the bird was in no condition to appreciate the finer shades of expression. He was up in a moment, blundering over among the tables.

"Here's my man!" exclaimed the fashionable. "Now we'll hear something. What's the news from the States-General? They say that when their resolutions are sent out to Versailles they are carefully read—by the Clerk of the Privy; the King uses all those written on stiff papers, and leaves the vellum petitions to the Queen, as being softer. What's the truth of it?"

Those within hearing had a loud laugh for this indiscretion, all except Smith the proprietor. His ambition to serve the King with lemonade was dead, but such reverence as would preserve himself from trouble with the police he gladly accorded. It was a maximum with those experts in treason, the mouchards, to make responsible the proprietor of those four walls within which treason was uttered; this, they held, made



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a man careful what company he kept. Mr. Smith, therefore, a trifle nervously requested the young man in the striped stockings to have a little discretion.

"Discretion!" echoed the other, and vacantly laughed. "What we want is action; bloody revolution, and the more blood the better. That's what the philosophers say, and they ought to know."

And he called loudly upon the newcomer to second him; the domino-players and the rest looked towards M. de St. Esprit; there was a tiny silence in which the mechanical bird, having run down, snapped to its gilt lid with the sound of a pistol cocking.

M. de St. Esprit, however, though ready enough with words as a general rule, did not immediately answer. He looked up steadily at the young man and after a moment asked:

"Are you drunk?"

"By God I am," returned the youngster without hesitation, explosively, "drunk as a marquis; and on English punch too, the liberty drink; why, you can't even get a head on French wine, mawkish stuff, half taxation and the rest water. I am drunk, and proud of it. There'll never be anything done in France till the whole nation's the way I am."

He called on Smith for a further bumper of this ennobling liquor, St. Esprit eyeing him the while, and frowning under the fine-growing womanish hair that had caught Lady Kilblany's judicious eye. At last:

"You talk very freely," said St. Esprit; "are you not afraid there may be ears about?"

"What of them?" the young man responded, pot-valiant. "You talked as freely yourself a couple of nights ago. Yes, and a couple of weeks ago. You were noisy enough then, and not so tender for your own skin



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and other peoples'. A man takes a long time, half his life, they say, to learn discretion, and here's one learns it in two days. Congratulations!" said the young man in striped stockings with an ironical bow that sent him lurching over among his neighbours' coffee-cups. "How did it all come about? Tell the gentlemen, they'll be interested." And with a wavering gesture he indicated the other occupants of the café. "Much interested. We all are." Then, with a sudden change of manner: "How much did they pay you to change your coat, spy?"

The other men got on their feet at that. They were all habitués of the place, talkers of treason, listeners to and readers of treason. It was their recreation, nothing more. Those who had friends among the police knew that Smith's was regarded as harmless. But a zealous mouchard, a man on the look-out for promotion, could make the discussions, the enthusiasms, sound very ugly. They got up, therefore, and gathered about St. Esprit's table, where he sat still, frowning and turning his coffee-cup in his fingers; he took no wine. The young man went on bawling out accusations. St. Esprit was a spy, an agent provocateur, a man that had been bought for a few dirty francs, or a Stock Exchange tip from somebody high up.

"And now it's us poor rats for the Bastille, for listening, and the man that did the talking gets a pension, and his hand in our pockets. What d'you say to it, sirs? Are you going to let the spy go out of here and write down your names on those papers he's got ready stamped in his pocket—ah, I know the tricks! A paper, stamped, and signed with the big L, that's what these mouchards carry; and blanks for names—your name, mine. He writes 'em in, and tips the wink to a



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bailiff as we go by, and that's the last that's heard of us, you and me. We go into darkness, on one man's word, and a stamped ticket from the King. Twenty of us. On one man's word. What are you going to do about it, gentlemen? Look, right in his breast-pocket, the papers, all stamped ready——"

The young man, with a sudden swiftness and accuracy astonishing in one so elated by punch, leaned forward and thrust his hand into the breast of St. Esprit's dark coat. What he felt there checked him, and for an instant his hand hung, his whole face fell into a spontaneous grimace of astonishment. The papers that had been in his hand were left sticking awkwardly out of the coat-breast.

"By God!" said the young man, with a laugh by no means drunk, "a woman!"

There was a moment of some confusion; anger and laughter were equally matched in the noise. A hand or two plucked at his black coat; the papers which the young spy in striped stockings had planted there were pulled out and angrily scattered; and the two women were loud in their exclamations of dismay, with an eye on the till, which Smith in his anxiety was quitting. The one person entirely unperturbed was M. de St. Esprit, who sat still, hands together, clasped and resting on the table in front of him, and looking on at the babel with an expression of such contempt that the laughter died. He would not speak until there was silence, nor would he command silence; he sat there motionless as a waiting cat until they were in a condition to listen to him. Then he said, very easy and unalarmed, making no answer to the last accusation:

"I am not to be so easily tarred with your brush. This trick"—his foot stirred the torn *lettres de cachet*—



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"is an old one. I am no spy, gentlemen; but I can tell you something of how the police work. To-night, for instance, all these places, Smith's, Le Perroquet, Landrin's, they will all be closed by order of the King and his Lieutenant, M. du Crosne. The police do not close doors gently; look out for damage." There was a flurry among the leaning bodies, the intent faces. Mr. Smith, white-faced, was protesting, urging his customers to go.

"It will not be yet," M. de St. Esprit soothed him. "There will be some signal. Not the bells this time, the bells that sounded the Bartholomew slaughter. Something more trivial, more suited to the occasion." His eye caught the swift sidelong glance of the young man in striped stockings, and followed it mockingly; his plump hand set forth in one gesture the elegance and triviality of that young man. "You are to give the signal. No, hardly a Bartholomew. What's the saint to-day?" He looked towards the little printed calendar that hung in Smith's corner by the till, read and laughed. "St. Loup! July the twenty-ninth, Saint Loup! A wolf, gentlemen, in sheep's clothing." And again he indicated the extravagant waistcoat and jewels of the fop.

"What's this you're saying?" stuttered the young man. "Are you calling me a spy, you foreign scum, you?"

People began to edge for the door, but the young man's clumsy length and a spilt chair or two barred the way.

"Yes, I am calling you that," said M. de St. Esprit calmly still, "among other things. I know that there will be no raid till you signal, and before that I have something to say. Listen, all you people!



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But first, hand me this youngster's toy."

He had power. The tortoise-shell came to him, handed over half a dozen shoulders, from the table at the back of the shop where its owner in his first enthusiasm of feigned drunkenness had left it. The key hung from his fob, with the gilt and wrought keys of his two watches. M. de St. Esprit, leaning forward, twitched the ribbon from the fop's striped pocket, while that individual swore in bad English, with the shadow of fear in his eyes; with the key he wound up the singing bird. This done:

"Gentlemen," said M. de St. Esprit, "let me give you one little instance of the difference between East and West, a difference which I did not sufficiently understand and which has misled me. In the East, where I have lived much, when we wish to make trouble we start very secretly, whispering among the very poor. There are so many of these, they swarm, there is no way to trace a rumour home or to discover a sedition until it has reached the point of outbreak. That is how we do in the East, and I had thought, like a fool, that I should find the same conditions here. But in the West there is nobody who can understand the power of silence. Your poor men, if they have a grievance, must shout it. Your middling men, yourselves, gentlemen"—he lifted one hand in ironic salute —"have not the wit to understand what is said to you. You listen as to a play, and hiss the villain, but you would no more lift your finger to set wrong to rights than you would leap over the footlights at the Comédie Française, and strike down tyranny in a cardboard crown. You know what your priesthood is; you know what the bread is that they serve you out of a gold cup; yet the fortnight before Easter sees you all



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scurrying to these men, telling them your sins—your sins! How they must laugh, how they must nudge each other, and hold their sides, and bite their lips to keep grave when up you come to the altar, all the lost sheep, baa, baa! You know them to be hypocrites, and yourselves for fools, yet you go to Mass, and you pay your tithes; and when a sane person, when I ask you your reason—'The women like it,' you say. The women! Well, you shall have your awakening. And when it comes you will see, you who talk of the piety of the woman, a woman sitting on the altar naked where the priest now bows and bends and insults the Supreme Being with bad Latin. You will see that, and duck your knee to her as you do now to the cross."

He paused. The men, readers of liberal newspapers, and the small hand-written blasphemies that circulated in secret, stared owlishly, uncomfortably, at him and at each other. One of the two prostitutes crossed herself, as did the young actress, standing now, looking frightened. She was a hard-working decent girl enough, who had just been allotted her first part of any importance, a shepherdess in the most recent piece of nonsense by MM. de Piis and Barré; which she had been studying over a cup of Smith's coffee, too lost in it and her ambition to hear the young man's insolence, the elder man's prophecy. In her mind sang her verses:

*Votre projet m'alarme,*
*Se peut-il qu'en ce jour*
*La liberté vous charme*
*Au repris de l'amour?*

It was a difficult tune, and she had been in half a mind to have a Mass said for her own success, when she



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heard the blasphemy and made her gesture. St. Esprit saw it, and with a smile, leaning forward:

"Your age, sweetheart?"

"Nineteen," she answered, backing. She looked older; but that was the lack of rouge, which she had omitted in order to obtain tranquillity to learn her part.

"Your name?"

She told him.

"That," said St. Esprit, slowly smiling, to the attentive men, "if she does not die of the pox, or the food in Bicêtre, shall be the woman. You heard her name. You hear me speak. You shall bob your heads to that slut, sitting stripped on Notre-Dame altar, if you live long enough. A prophecy! That's what the West wants, miracle, miracle, and can never believe, though it were to rain stars by night and manna by day. Your poor are noisy, yourselves cowards; between you, you could not upset a chamber-pot, much less a throne. Good-day to you, ladies, gentlemen, and you, Mr. Spy. What? Your signal's late. So it is. Permit me, sir, I won't trouble you; and you, gentlemen, don't for your lives' sake try to trouble me."

He was standing; one hand held the musical box, the other was under the tails of his coat, and his audience heard a sound that was not the snap of the box's lid, but like it; the cocking of a firearm in a tail-pocket. Only the young man in the striped stockings made any attempt to stop the contemptuous leisurely exit; but as he got within reach a knee came up into the pit of his stomach and set him yelping. Smith was clamouring something about payment, tuned down, as the cool eye caught his to—"when your honour comes again."

"I shan't come again," said M. de St. Esprit coolly.



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"I'll fly higher henceforth. This gentleman," he indicated the writhing young man in stripes with a jerk of his chin, and a half-smile, "will settle for me. Now, gentlemen," to the astounded audience of domino-players and newspaper-readers, "now for the massacre of St. Wolf! And may he never lack sheep like yourselves."

He jerked the catch of the box with his thumb, standing in the street, and holding the box high in the air. The shrill colourless whistle called men's figures out of half a dozen doorways, while he still held it aloft, considering the bird's tiny antics with his head on one side; when at last it shut down its lid, and the whistle ceased, he gave a laugh like a child, and moved aside from Mr. Smith's door. As the glass panels broke under police pistol-butts, tinkling a faint accompaniment to shouting, M. de St. Esprit slipped the tortoise-shell box into his pocket and sauntered on.

(iii)

The young actress, Valentine Desjardins, made a success of her shepherdess, and forgot the alarming promises of the unknown M. de St. Esprit. She was a good girl, no more spiritual than a woman must be who depends on her looks and her wits to live, but no more venal. She had a choice of lovers, but with common sense accepted only such as could help her career without setting her comrades against her; the manager of the Italian Comedy whose attentions were the prerogative of every woman in his troupe, and the under-manager of a small but very successful theatre of the lesser order. This last was by way of insurance



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against a rainy day, for the Italian Comedy had none of the faithful qualities of its rival, the French Comedy, which could find an actress enchanting for fifty years; comedy—the other theatre, despite its title, played tragedy only—demanded young blood, young twinkling feet, snub noses rather than Roman; and snub noses soon age. It was, therefore, very apt to discard all actresses not actually first favourites, or highly protected, after five years or so; a fact of which Mlle. Desjardins, who came from Normandy, a prudent quarter of France, was aware. She was aware, too, that she was not in the way to be a first favourite; that she danced just not well enough, was just too tall to be snapped up into the arms of the juvenile lead and borne away without a stagger. (The juvenile was short; "like Garrick," as he used to say, preening.) Since, therefore, she foresaw that sooner or later the Italian stage would know her no more, she made her plans, and took her precautions; the junior manager would, in a few years' time, have ripened into management and be glad for old time's sake to employ or to marry her; the future was neatly mapped.

Then, as a careless turn of the hand twists a globe, and the comfortable known countries are displaced, yielding to wide vague spaces across which run the words "terra incognita," so Mlle. Desjardins' life was tilted and upset, and took on an aspect quite out of her calculations. She fell in love with a poor, well-born and flighty young viscount, who responded with such fervour that he even proposed, to the entire horror of his friends and relations, to marry her.

"You will do nothing of the kind," said a grim uncle, to whose ears word of this plan was borne by scandalized friends. Standing before his own carved



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chimney-piece, fingering his cross of St. Louis, the old gentleman was formidable, and his nephew, the memory of youthful scoldings stirring in his mind, could not quite find voice to deal with him.

"Why can't you keep the girl," demanded the uncle, "which is what she expects, instead of setting your whole family by the ears?"

The Vicomte had an excellent answer to that, which he gave with a spread of his hands.

"No money. A man of honour can't expect a girl to live with him for love."

The uncle at this growled out something about black-mail and took a turn about the room; paused, and said, looking wickedly:

"I've only to go to the Lieutenant, you know; he's an old brother-in-arms. I can get you put away, my friend, without any argument, in a place where money won't matter."

The young man shrugged.

"That sort of threatening—it's very Louis Quinze. Of course you can get me put away. No doubt that would please the family."

"Nothing of the kind. The family doesn't want disgrace, either way. This girl—where does she come from?"

"One doesn't ask."

"Naturally. I should have said—at the Italians, is she?—how did she make her way?"

"One doesn't ask," the young man repeated, moving a trifle restlessly.

"Of course; it would be awkward knowing one's predecessors."

"That awkwardness applies to a wife taken out of any society," said the young man sourly. "I do ask



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you, sir, to let me alone. I am fully of age. I don't require the family to recognise my wife. I simply say that I can't keep her, for I haven't an acre of land left to sell, and I'm not going to let her throw herself away for nothing. That's not business, and this is a business age."

"She'll keep you, I suppose," said the uncle, "out of her earnings. Well, my age didn't know anything about business; we left that to our stewards. But we were connoisseurs in behaviour. We didn't live on our women."

"No?" said the young man insolently, and cocked an eye at the ugly portrait over the mantelpiece, behind his uncle's too-small head; at which the uncle put his hand behind him and thrust down the bell-handle furiously; for he had married an heiress with a hare-lip, and kept her always in the country till she died. This house in the rue Louis le Grand was hers; the footmen who came running to the bell wore liveries bought with her money.

"I've warned you," said the uncle, choking; "and now"—the footmen were bowing—"show M. d'Ys out."

The young man went through ceremonious motions of farewell to which the other very stiffly responded, turned and went down to the hall where his own man, Joaquin, waited with his hat and stick. Joaquin had changed his name from Jacques five years ago, when the Queen played in one of Beaumarchais's comedies and made Spain and Spanish valets the fashion. He had, however, none of the spring and joy of Figaro. He was solid, and always a little behind the times. While his mates were de-baptizing themselves after the English manner, when they were all Jack or Tom, the name of Joaquin remained sole lingering tribute to an



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earlier mode. He was, however, knowledgeable where his master was concerned as a dog might be, and he perceived in the look of M. d'Ys as that young man came down his uncle's staircase that there was something amiss; when they came to the waiting carriage he knew it.

"Not you," said M. d'Ys, as the valet prepared to step up beside him. "Walk home. My God, do I keep a horse to spare your fat calves? Get 'em dirty for once, and be damned to you."

With which he drove off, scattering mud, and admired by his uncle's porter.

"I like a gentleman with an edge to his tongue," said the porter to Joaquin, looking after the vehicle; "these jumped-up fellows, these financiers as they call them, they're too mealy-mouthed; it don't come natural to 'em to damn a man, and they do it like they were apologising. The Vicomte now, he takes after his uncle; it's a treat to hear."

Joaquin, however, had perceived from his master's manner that there was something more than a family facility in all this; and declining the porter's offer of a glass of coffee, he set off through the streets towards his master's unobtrusive lodgings—unobtrusive but smart; no address was equivalent to no credit—near the Luxembourg, which neighbourhood had the added advantage of being only a hundred yards away from the new house of the Italian Comedy.

Arrived, he found the parlour door locked, and stooping, heard voices; recognising both, he went quietly away to his kitchen, where, removing his grey and gold livery, he donned a striped apron and philosophically set about peeling potatoes.

Inside the locked room battle was raging.



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"But I don't want to marry you, and I won't marry you. Your uncle was quite right. Does one marry a comédienne?"

"Will you listen?"

"Not I. You profess to be in love with me, and yet you won't touch me. I might as well be a nun for all the good you are to me."

"Listen, please, sweet. Valentine, please?"

She came over to him and took his hand at that, putting her cheek against it with a pretty touch of her art; and yet she did not want, with him, to have any tricks of the stage about her; so she snatched at his other hand clumsily, and they stood face to face.

"Yes? What have you got to say that's so important, Monsieur Alain-Hippolyte-Charles—I forget all your ridiculous names. What have you got to say that makes it impossible to kiss a poor girl?"

He answered her in the oddest manner, gravely, with what in her own mind she called Palais Royal talk; equality, the end of privilege, liberty bonnets for all and the brotherhood of man. She interrupted once or twice.

"—but why d'you want to upset everything? What does privilege matter? I'll never be asked to play opposite the Queen, I know that. What of it? Who wants to?"

And later, when he spoke of the States-General, she learnt with surprise and dismay that he proposed to get himself elected, not to the Lords, but to the Third Chamber.

"But they'll never listen to you. You don't know the sort of people—little journalists, little café-keepers, fiddlers, scum."

To that he answered that she need not concern



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herself. His election would be managed, that was safe. The thing was, not to let the scum get to the top. To that end he, who for the past half dozen years had done nothing more active than wear admirably-fitting clothes, proposed to work.

"Work?" said she, and took his hand, considering it; small, smooth, strong enough; then put her hand flat upon his open palm.

"As big as yours; that's because I had to take my turn at the wash-tub till I was fifteen—yes, and carry heavy baskets of linen home to the clients. They're white now, but they'll never be small. Look at my feet." She stuck them out. "Fifteen years of standing about barefoot."

"My aunts have been standing about at Versailles for the past twenty," said he; "theirs are flat into the bargain. But I'm not going to start carpentering. I've got a seat. I'm going to sit in it, and talk sense to my peers."

"They won't listen. They'll have you shut up."

He looked at her curiously.

"Oh, no, they won't. There are too many of them in it. Orléans——"

He stopped.

"He's in it too, is he? Well——" She suddenly rose and stood akimbo. "It's all very well, monsieur; but still you haven't told me where I come in."

He laughed at that, suddenly returning for the first time to the impudent fashionable.

"I'm marrying you so that the Third Estate will listen to me."

The hand whose size they had recently been considering together swung towards his cheek; he caught it.

"You're not even Third Estate, mademoiselle.



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You're a rogue and vagabond. You're excommunicated by the mere fact of your profession. So I shall get a hearing from all the thieves and atheists, as well as the honest labouring men. Do you see how useful you'll be, Vicomtesse? All the First Estate will listen from curiosity; and the Second won't listen at all, because lawyers are all tongues and no ears; and the Third will say, 'Ah, now, that's a good fellow, married a washer-woman's daughter. He showed sense,' they'll say, 'let's hear what he's got to tell us.' "

He pulled her to him, but she put her hands against his coat, and still standing, pushed him away.

"I don't like to have you talk that way about the Church. I can't go to confession while I'm on the stage, that's my misfortune. But don't you go classing me with atheists like that old man that died—him they made such a fuss about at the Français."

"Voltaire? I don't. But you see why I want to marry you. Is it a bargain?"

"I think you're mad," said she despairingly.

The young man lolled his head, stuck his fingers idiotically through the pomaded hair that had cost Joaquin an hour's labour, and beckoned with a leer, like the inhabitant of an asylum.

"Come inside!"

"You in Parliament," said she, gazing upon this exhibition; "they'll laugh."

"Not so much as they will at you as a Vicomtesse," said M. d'Ys with composure, sleeking his coiffure with both palms. She fired up at that.

"Keep your impudence to yourself. D'you suppose after three years on the stage I don't know how to curtsy?" And she took on a ceremonious and affected air, stepping back from him; with a lift of the eyebrow



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transforming herself to the most absurd of Molière's precious ladies, Madelon.

"Here's my cousin," said she, mincing, in French a hundred years out of date, "that will tell you as well as I that Matrimony ought never to be brought about till after other Adventures—To come upon a Love visit with a leg entirely unadorned; a Hat destitute of feathers; a head with the locks irregular—Heavens! What lovers are these!"

She checked herself, with a look at the clock; snatched up her hat and a shawl, and was busy in a moment arranging these before the glass.

"Not yet!"

"We're playing the *Hunting Party* to-night; I'm Catau; I must put on my best Norman accent and see my feet are clean. Barefoot again, M. le Vicomte, just like I used to walk through Rouen with the washing basket on my head."

But he was not listening, and after a moment a question emerged from his musing.

"What's our parish here?"

"Notre-Dame de Lorette," she answered immediately, twisting the scarf about her shoulders.

"For a rogue and vagabond you know a deal about churches," said he, teasing; but a moment after sprang up to put his arms about her. She had turned away; there were tears in her eyes.

"That was unkind."

"I know it, Valentine; Valentine, when we're married you shall go to church all day while I'm in the Chamber; I'll buy you a little priest of your own. Don't cry. I'm so used to the women who use churches as rendezvous for their lovers. One forgets—one forgets there are people who take them seriously."



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"I don't mock at your Mason's—what do they call them?—boxes?"

"Lodges. Will you be at Notre-Dame de Lorette after the show, at eleven?"

"What for?"

"To be made an honest woman of. But we'll have to go on living here." He surveyed the apartment, which for all its smart address was cramped even for one.

"We'll send away Joaquin," she said eagerly. "I can cook. I can go to market."

"Barefoot, Madame la Vicomtesse?"

"And over red-hot coals for you," said she, suddenly and savagely, with a touch of rough accent coming through the careful stage speech. He caught her; then broke off to swear at the discreet tap on the door.

"Does mademoiselle take coffee?" came the voice of Joaquin.

"Mademoiselle is just off."

She turned the key, and without more delay departed; the management had very little patience with love affairs that interfered with the time-table. Joaquin bowed her out, and returned to his master, who stood quite still in the centre of the room, half smiling.

"Supper at home, monsieur?"

"It depends. I shall want some money. How long will it take you to get to the Mont de Piété?"

"Unless it is for play, monsieur, ready money, we have some credit still."

"My good donkey, it's not a question of the butcher and bookmaker. You can eat on credit, and dress yourself on credit, and credit will give you a roof over your head. But you never knew a priest give credit yet. Put your best leg foremost; I'm being married to-night."



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Still Joaquin did not go.

"Sir, there was a man a while ago asking if you lived here."

"A dun, I suppose."

"Sir, it was a man you had better not have any business with. I know him, though he didn't know me without my livery. I've seen him in this district before. He works with the police."

"My uncle's been to the Lieutenant, then." M. d'Ys stood awhile, biting at his lip; then, with a sudden sweeping gesture: "Pack up, pack up, we're moving. By God, if they're after me I'll lead them a dance!"

He reached out at Joaquin with an English boxing stroke which sounded dully upon that worthy's solid shoulder, and set about pitching books into a portmanteau.

## (iv)

The young man in striped stockings, now attired as an attorney's clerk in very rusty black, sat in a café near the Luxembourg known as the Sun in Splendour, and conversed with the waiter.

"Terrible stuff, this wine they're giving us now," said he; and if he spoke it in the rather snuffling tones suited to his chosen disguise, it was none the less his opinion. The waiter agreed.

"No wonder," said the waiter, "they're all taking to coffee; it'll be the ruin of the restaurant trade. We don't sell the stuff; it means another licence, and one's enough to pay for these times. Coffee! What sort of drink is that to ask a French working man to swallow?"



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"I don't care for it myself," returned the lawyer's clerk. "Ah! Things will have to be worse before they're better."

The waiter looked at him timidly, and wiped down the table without replying.

"I like things done orderly," said the clerk; "that's my trade. But if they can't be done that way, then——"

He indicated with a gesture the alternative and drank up his wine.

"I've got a brother thinks like you," said the waiter cautiously. "He's always spouting about equality. How can you have equality without you tax everybody the same?"

"Tax 'em, then," returned the clerk.

The waiter laughed, a scornful unsatisfying laugh.

"Why, you can't get money out of the lords for the wine they drink and the coats on their backs. You ought to know that, you must have served a writ or two in your time. And if tradesmen can't get the money out of them for what they buy, how's the King going to get it?"

"I didn't say the King," returned the clerk, with a knowing look. "Maybe it won't be the King."

"I know your sort," said the waiter, ruffling his coat-tails with frightened defiance, like a small bird defending its nest. "We don't want this place smashed up, the way they did in the Palais Royal. This is a loyal house, and if only the Farmers would take this new tax off the wine——"

"All right, all serene," the clerk soothed him, "no offence. I'm not saying anything against His Majesty. Only I could think of other things to do with the money besides hanging it round a woman's neck."



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But the little waiter was not to be drawn.

"I don't know anything about that. If you've finished, it'll be six sous."

The clerk paid, adjusted his grubby neckcloth in the mirror over the bar, and strolled out, humming, to visit another café two streets off where there had been rumours of seditious gatherings. In his notebook, a shabby thing of doubled foolscap, such as men of his calling made from spoiled sheets in the office, he wrote, standing against a wall:

"Information probably correct. Denials not convincing. Will repay watching."

The next café was in the rue St. Marc; he paused on his way to it to ask at a milk-shop if a servant in grey and gold ever dealt there; the milkwoman had too much to do, she said, tossing her head, to be looking after that sort of loafer. The clerk agreed.

"It's an easy life, these valets, everything of the best, and nothing to do for it but help a man on with his coat now and then."

"You're right," the woman agreed. "Well, sorry I can't help you out. I've been single-handed since my boy was killed."

"A soldier, was he?"

"No, it was an accident; a carriage. He lingered six months. The young gentleman that was driving threw him a bit of money as he lay in the road; I used that to bury him with."

"They're hard times for poor people."

"You're right."

The clerk—whose true name perhaps he himself had forgotten, so long was it since he had used it—continued his progress and came to the wine-shop in the rue St. Marc.



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"Not much room along here for carriages," said he to the waiter who served him.

"We don't get many."

"What, not with the Italians just round the corner?"

"They go round by the rue Richelieu mostly. We get some of the servants along sometimes."

"That's how you come to keep such a good glass of wine. I'll have another if it's all the same to you."

"That's what we're here for."

The glass of wine was brought, and the conversation renewed.

"D'you ever see a young fellow in here in a grey livery? Young fellow with some sort of a Spanish name? Why they want to call themselves such outlandish things I can never make out."

"Joaquin, would it be?"

"That's the one. I've got a piece of news for him."

"Why, he's generally in here at this hour. His master's interested"—the chin jerked significantly—"in something up at the Comedy."

"Pretty?"

"These young lords don't waste time on the plain ones. They don't have to buy something that'll wear well. Plenty of show, and a smart cut, that's all they ask."

The clerk, with an air of not attending to this, all at once beckoned the waiter's ear down to the level of his lips.

"You don't know of a club that wants a speaker?" The waiter retreated; the clerk put a hand to his lapel and pulled him down again. "Guaranteed orator——"

"Yes, guaranteed to get us all into trouble. What'd be the sense of a club here?"

The clerk appeared a little disconcerted.

"Well, you get all these servants. D'you mean to



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say they don't like a bit of oratory now and again? I should, if I had the job of blowing another man's nose for him. We're all born equal."

"Equality? They wouldn't thank you for it. No; what they like, after they've had a booting from their masters, is to come in here and order us about. If we were their equals they couldn't do that."

This argument the clerk apparently accepted; and resignedly asking for the *Gazette*, settled himself down with an eye on the clock to await the arrival of Joaquin. It was to be presumed that he was only free while the performance lasted and his master was engaged; at ten, or a little after, there was a distant confusion and a hurried exit of multi-coloured clients that told of the end of a performance. The clerk put down his paper, yawned and went out with the crowd to stand by the steps of the side door from which the actresses later on would emerge. He was not alone. Half a dozen black- or brown-clad citizens, young enough to find on the stage the stuff that day-dreams are made of, waited with him, wistfully peering at each face that came out, never daring to speak directly to any of the women, but murmuring all together sometimes as a specially pretty creature posed on the steps. The clerk said to his neighbour, looking silly and shy:

"Which is the Desjardins?"

"Not come out yet. A big girl," the neighbour answered, off-handedly, proud of his knowledge. "Not much, off the stage."

"I daresay she keeps her carriage, though. They have the spending of a lot of money, these girls," said the clerk wistfully.

"Worth it, too, some of them. Do you know what I'd do if I drew first prize in the lottery? Set the wife



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up in a house in the country out of the way, and take a little place near here with one of these girls."

"Which one?" asked the clerk, playing the innocent, and gaping. "The Desjardins?"

"Not for me. Besides, she's got a lover."

The clerk drooped a little, and his informative neighbour laughed, turning to an acquaintance on his right.

"What d'you think of that? Here's a young spark been saving up his money for a month to have a go at the Desjardins. He's a great lad, this one. How much does it come to?" The clerk mumbled, turning a few coins in his pockets. "About sixteen francs in all? Oh, that ought to be enough; yes, certainly."

He winked at the acquaintance, who put a hand over his mouth to laugh at the notion of any creature being so naïve as to approach a comédienne with an offer of sixteen francs.

"I'll present you to her," said the neighbour, working up the joke, "the moment she comes out. Stand still, can't you?" The clerk was endeavouring to slip away from this too-friendly nuisance. "Stand still, feet together, right heel against the left ankle the way the lords do. Haven't you got a bouquet?"

"Look!" The acquaintance twitched his sleeve. Valentine Desjardins was coming down the steps.

The problem before the clerk was a difficult one; whether to let his officious neighbour push him in front of her, so that she could see his face and figure clearly, and perhaps with her actress's eye memorize both; or to run for it, a proceeding which would be in character with his assumed shyness. He was used to these decisions, he made them a dozen times a day. Now, telling himself that was only a matter of losing the



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trail for one night, he took his chance; wrenched himself out of the joker's grip, clapped his hat on his head, and at a shambling run, the run of a man who sits twelve hours of his day at a desk, departed to the tune of laughter. A moment later from the opposite direction a light carriage drove up, and the young man on the box, having armed Valentine up, set off at a gallop through the crowd, a great deal too fast for any lawyer's clerk on foot to follow. Thus the wedding ceremony at Notre-Dame de Lorette took place without interference.

## (v)

The report of the clerk on his day's work found its way, passing through two or three other hands, to the central police bureau, where such things were considered all through the hours of the day and night. In that place they knew everything. They knew when a Farmer-General took medicine, and why; why a particular prostitute had changed her beat; whether such an officer took snuff; how much another had lost at cards; to whom, and where. The police, under their Lieutenant, a personage nominated by the King, were aware of every seditious word spoken in Paris; this was their business, treason rather than crime was their quarry; and while murders in the streets had grown so frequent that a net had to be put across the Seine down by the Arsenal to catch corpses, every imprudent speech, every gesture of impatience with privilege was gathered in. Night after night the bureau of police went through its sheaves.

The report of the clerk, who went by a number, Y.27,



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in that place where personalities died, was given some official attention, since it was the result of influence brought to bear.

"Visited the lodging. Was informed that X. had gone out by concierge, who appears trustworthy; waited some hours but without result in the café opposite. N.B.—Windows of X.'s apartment give on to the inner court and cannot be seen from street. Went off duty for half an hour, not wishing to attract attention, but during that time X. must have come and gone. N.B.—His man a dangerous customer. Supposed him, from information received, to have gone to the C.I. where V.D. was playing. Doors were closed when I arrived there. Understanding that he would be safe for two hours, I made investigations in the following places, suspected of harbouring undesirable talkers:

"(i) Café du Soleil.

"Quiet, but suspicious. The *Gazette* was the only paper publicly on view, but clients were reading other journals which they took from their pockets. Names of all these I could not see, one was the *Sentinelle du Peuple*. Talk concerned with tax on wine, the extreme cold of the season, and the petitions for the States-General. It was said that at least a thousand of these had been presented, asking for more equal representation of the Third Estate. A dispute also as to the merits of two actresses of the I.C. and as to the hissing of M. Fabre d'Eglantine's *Présomptueux* at the Français. Talk soon passed from these topics to politics once more. Will repay watching.

"(ii) Café du Lys.

"Very few customers, chiefly servants. Draws its clientele from the footmen in waiting on their masters



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at the theatre. No political talk, the proprietor very discreet. Would respectfully suggest that in future no observation need be kept on this place, which may have been confused with another establishment of the same name in the rue du Mail.

"At eleven o'clock returned to the C.I., but owing to a series of adverse circumstances could not attain my object. Learned that X. is to be seen there every night, and that the liaison between him and V.D. is well known. X. changed his lodging only this evening; it should not be difficult to ascertain the new one, by watching the movements of V.D.

"I enclose a memorandum of expenses to date."

This latter amount included two wigs from the place where cast-offs were sold, one a plain wig "in the English manner," one a pedagogue's.

The report was filed in a manner which made the identity of X. perfectly clear. Under the number Y.27 was a date, with the assignment which had been made for that day, which ran:

"D'Ys, A.H.C., Vicomte. To be served with a nomination on the suit of Darnay, C.H.J., Marquis (uncle). Special request. (S.180.)"

The last number had reference to that spy who had been set to see that Y.27 did his duty. It was by no means unknown for young men in such a case to buy off their persecutors, and so escape the seclusion intended for them by influential friends; the fleas, therefore, had other fleas to bite 'em, to the number, if the matter were important, of three or four. Dressed as soldiers, provincials, knife-grinders, fops, the spies moved throughout Paris on each other's heels, not well enough paid to disregard bribes, but checked by each



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other so that in the long run their stories fitted together to make truth. In this case the second spy was honest, and proved more lucky than his predecessor; his report entirely confirmed that of Y.27 as to the latter's movements, and it had an interesting tail-piece.

"Going home (midnight) passed by the presbytery of Notre-Dame de Lorette as the door was opening. Two people came out (objects of Y.27's enquiry) saying good-bye to a priest. Could not hear what was said, but demeanour cheerful. Waited until they had gone, and rang the presbytery bell, counterfeiting drunkenness. When curé appeared, said that I had come to be married. 'Married, indeed,' said he, 'you have done some marrying already, it appears.'" (This is the expression, *faire la noce*, whose sub-meaning is to get drunk.) "I answered, 'So have you, for that gentleman that was here just now has given me money to drink their healths.' At this he said pretty sharply that if people threw away their own secrets a poor priest could not hold their tongues for them, and told me to be off; which I did, after a little more talk to keep up the character. I am sure from the demeanour of all parties that the contract had just been signed."

This document found its way to higher official quarters within an hour or two, and was indeed one of the first that met the Lieutenant's eye when he settled to work in the morning.

"Here's a nice thing," said he to his secretary, pulling at his lip. "That young nincompoop has done it before we could lay hands on him. What am I to say to his uncle?"

"He can still be put away, sir," the secretary volunteered.



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"What's the use of that?" the Lieutenant fretted.

The secretary was smooth and helpful; his intelligence directed the Lieutenant's manœuvres as a ship-captain's calculations on paper swing round the wheel and heavy rudder of a ship. He had been meditating the case of M. d'Ys since that gentleman's uncle had set the police their task, and he had perceived, as the Lieutenant did not, certain uses which could be made of him. He now, with deference, gave the talk a sudden twist which swung it right away from troublesome nephew and angry uncle.

"Sir," said the Lieutenant's secretary, "the report on that house out by Bicêtre is also unsatisfactory. We still have no information about this personage that is in any way reliable. The servants are not to be bribed, which shows at any rate that he is rich enough to pay them all well; there is no way to overlook the place. And as for a raid, that is out of the question, for the reasons your Excellency knows."

"Never know when you won't find a Royal Highness there," grunted the Lieutenant. "We can't risk that. Don't any of these fellows talk? Where's the report? Show it to me. How long has this man been on the business? Change him. Put on one of our best men. A house, a simple house standing in a garden, with people for ever coming and going, and nobody can find out what goes on there!"

"M. d'Ys is a member of the confraternity that meets there," said the secretary.

"So is M. d'Orléans; do you suppose we could buy him? Well, yes, him we might, but d'Ys—no, no. I know the breed, I served with his confoundedly starched old uncle. You may give up any idea of tapping a leak there."



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"And Madame d'Ys?" asked the secretary, still with deference.

"Who, this actress? I won't spend money on her. She'll know nothing."

"My suggestion was that she might be approached in another way." The secretary, his plan clear in his head, held back in case too much enthusiasm should defeat the whole purpose. "I have here another report; your Excellency will at once see its significance."

And he put before the Lieutenant a brief account of the week's doings and gossip behind scenes at the Italian Comedy. A mechanic, one of the stage hands, got good pay for this, and it arrived as regularly at the bureau of police as Baron Grimm's elegant correspondence at the courts of Europe. One paragraph ran:

"Thursday, a set-to between Mlles. D. and C., D. saying that when she died she would like to be buried in consecrated ground. Mlle. C. answered that was all very well for a nun, which is their name for Mlle. D., but that she would as soon find herself on the last day among comrades, than with prioresses and president's wives looking down their noses at her. Mlle. D.'s pious turn of mind is often an occasion for a joke, but all in good part."

The Lieutenant considered this document with a grave countenance which gave no hint that nowhere could he perceive how it had any bearing on the matter in hand. The secretary rescued him from his difficulty.

"Your Excellency sees the channel through which any communication must pass. It is a question of finding her confessor, who will pretty certainly be the priest that married them."

"But she continues to play on the stage. She is still,



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*ipso facto*, excommunicate, as I understand these things. How can she have a confessor?"

"Sir," responded the secretary, "I have been making enquiries, and I find the Church's view of the matter runs this way: that the Desjardins is now a nobleman's wife, and as such may be supposed to act only for pleasure. To act for bread does, as your Excellency rightly notes, put a woman outside the pale of Christianity; but to perform for amusement is entirely legitimate and innocent. The Queen herself——"

"You needn't labour that," the Lieutenant interrupted. "So our new Vicomtesse is to have the best of both worlds, is she? She is to have a husband, and a manager, and a confessor; all the luxuries. Well?"

"There is a Masonic lodge for women attached to the house at Bicêtre," said the secretary, too quickly, and deprecated his own information at once. "I am no wiser than the rest, I do not know what goes on there. But it seems to me not unlikely that M. d'Ys might introduce his wife as a member; and after that the confessor might profitably ask her some questions."

"You think so, do you?" said the Lieutenant, drumming with his fingers and pondering; then, suddenly: "Do as you like. You'll please yourself, whatever I say, I know that well enough. Call these fellows off, let the newlyweds alone—is that the manœuvre? Something might come of it. But if you assume power, you must take responsibility too."

"Excellency?"

"Deal with the uncle for me."

And the Lieutenant turned to consideration of a mocking broadsheet, the transcript of a song which had recently been heard on the Pont Neuf, where the Queen's lovers and the King's locks



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were ridiculed "to the air of Lot the Prophet"; two doggerel verses followed this direction.

"When Lot the prophet turned his eyes
He saw by Sodom burning
His wife to rock-salt turning.
And what, and what
Said the prophet Lot
Amid such general mourning?
Here's a thing,
And a very nice thing,
And who's the owner of this pretty thing?
One, two, three, four,
And a brother-in-law—
Where do I come in? said the prophet Lot.

So Lot the prophet shut his door
And bought some locksmith's learning
And made some keys for turning.
And what, and what
Said the prophet Lot,
His gallant wife discerning?
Here's a thing,
And a very nice thing,
And who's the owner of this pretty thing?
One, two, three, four—
I'll lock my door
And leave her to the cattle, says prophet Lot."

Pendant to this came a quatrain on good paper, in a prettily illegible aristocratic hand, whose theme was the same.



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Busy with file, and lathe, and bellows,
  Cleon cuts keys for others' using.
Locksmiths are estimable fellows,
  Whom only lovers find amusing.



Mlle. Desjardins, wife now to her Vicomte, continued by reason of their mutual lack of money to play villainesses, peasants and the more imposing goddesses, parts to which her height constrained her, at the Comédie Italienne. At night late she returned under escort to their new apartment, a street away from the theatre, and there contentedly put off the actress, preparing good suppers with her own hands, and sharing duties in a friendly way with Joaquin, who had refused to be dispossessed, and slept in a cupboard with holes bored here and there in it for air. The *ménage*, after a few days of halting at corners, and darting looks this way and that for spies, had abandoned suspicion, thanks to a letter sealed with the Lieutenant's own heraldry, which needed a quarter-pound of wax to do it justice.

"Monsieur," the letter read, "I am to inform you, on the part of his Excellency Baron du Crosne, that you are henceforth in no danger from his establishment unless you should in any way contravene the laws of the land. The plaint made by M. le Marquis de Darnay has, I am happy to inform you, been withdrawn. His Excellency wishes me to convey his felicitations, and to assure you of his friendly and continued interest in your welfare.—Parmentier, secretary."



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This document had at first appeared too good to be true; d'Ys suspected a trap; and it was not until Joaquin, encountering the spy, had prepared to set about him with violence, that the truth of the matter was finally confirmed.

"Let me alone," said Y.27, still a lawyer's clerk, whining, "I'm not after you. Let me go, can't you? I'm on an errand for my master."

"I know your errands," Joaquin had responded, "I'm doing a job for my master, too."

And he haled him into the street, preparatory to fighting; but the spy said in a different voice at his ear:

"Now they are married, there's nothing doing. It's all off. Have sense."

This had a credible sound. Joaquin released him, giving his nose a good tweak for general reprobation and distaste for his trade, and conveyed news of the encounter to his master, who sat at a desk with books rising to his ears on either side.

"All right," said that gentleman, "but I'd as soon be in the Bastille as here sweating over books. D'you ever read, Joaquin?"

"I can't, sir."

"Lucky man. Books are the devil. And yet, would you believe it, there are men with plans in their head for teaching everybody to read—bootblacks and policemen and cooks; the whole lot."

"All to read—all the poor?"

"That's it. Any objections?"

"Nobody would get on with their work if they were distracted like that."

"Confound you, don't talk. Go away and get some ideals."

"Which shop sells them, sir?"



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"Talking shops." Joaquin was bewildered. "All right, never mind. Is Madame in yet?"

"Not yet, sir. She told me to call for her at Notre-Dame at five. She's been to Benediction."

"I hope she'll say a prayer for us."

"She's going to, sir. She took candles from here."

M. d'Ys turned in his chair at this statement and stared, while Joaquin continued, with approval, for he, too, came from the north:

"She said, monsieur, that the candles they sold at the church cost a sou for four, and they sell them two sous, and she didn't see, Madame said, why the saints shouldn't get the benefit of the extra sou's worth, so she took her own. That's eight instead of four for the same money."

"God bless her," said M. d'Ys without irony, for this childishness touched him.

"Amen," said Joaquin, and hung his head out of the window to see the time.

"Nigh on five. Is there anything Monsieur will be wanting before I go?"

"Only patience," Monsieur answered, "and the gift of prophecy."

With that he dropped his head on his supporting hands, and bent over his books again; thus Valentine found him when she came in glowing, for there was an intolerant wind, from Notre-Dame de Lorette. She put her hands over his eyes.

"Guess who it is?"

"The wife of the Lieutenant of Police."

"Guess again."

"The Goddess of Reason." It had been her part the night before, in one of those fashionable idiocies where Fear, in a harpy's mask, was driven out of the Garden



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of Prosperity by Courage in a suit of gilded cardboard armour, vocalizing in a complicated manner the while.

"On the contrary. Guess again."

"My wife."

She pressed his head hard against her, then, releasing him, pushed books aside, and sat on his table, her long legs swinging. He said, smiling, but tenderly:

"Do you feel better, sweet? Is it fun going and sitting among all the linen-drapers' wives at last?"

"They've asked me to do a *quête;* dress up, and take a big basket with ribbons, and collect for the poor. All the girls from the theatre are coming to laugh."

"What will the *curé* think of that?"

"He won't mind, if they give to his poor." She slipped down from her perch and began, crooking her arm to an imaginary basket, to go about the room, addressing chairs and pictures with seductive invitations to charity.

"For the poor of the parish, madame? Monsieur?" She paused. "Ah, the gentleman is generous. Thank you, kind sir. What's that you say?" She bent her ear to an imaginary whispered assignation. "By all means, monsieur, at half-past seven this evening I shall be with you—in spirit. You shall have my—prayers, monsieur."

She dropped a magnificent full-blown curtsy and came back to the book-laden table.

"What is there about a church that makes men so amorous? I've seen more eyeings and handlings at midnight Mass than in all my time at the Comédie."

"You'll need someone to protect you from these church-going gentry. You'll want a squire for your basket. What's the charitable object?"



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"It's for poor mothers. Alain, will you come? Oh, will you come?"

"Of course. What time?"

"Five."

"And the day?"

"Annunciation. The twenty-fifth."

His smile died and hers with it. She knew very well what was coming.

"My dear, on that day and time I have to be——" he jerked his head in what might be taken as the direction of Bicêtre. "I'd forgotten it till now. It is prodigiously important, with the Chamber meeting next month. I must be there. It is something a little more vital than carrying a basket. My dear, I must fail you."

She took it quietly enough.

"As you like. If you must."

"But you're not hurt?" he persisted.

She met that with the faintest shrug.

"If you let yourself be hurt every time a man failed you——"

"But this is necessary. This isn't an excuse. If it were anything else at all, if all my flat-footed relations elected to drown themselves in the Seine on that day, I should carry your basket and order mourning on the way home. If His Majesty sent for me and said: 'M. d'Ys, kindly replace M. Necker as Minister of Finance from March 25th,' I should tell him respectfully that I was engaged with a basket."

His distress was evident, and she could not resist it. She came to him and stooped her powdered head to his shoulder; with her heels, she was just a little taller than he.

"I won't make difficulties. But women are jealous,



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always, of what they don't understand."

"You'll understand it one day, I promise. Valentine, what would your confessor say if I were to take you with me, one evening, to Bicêtre?"

(vii)

In a room somewhat too gilded, a little too richly and fully furnished, some dozen people sat or stood, listening to a gentleman reading. It was a cold day, the rain was sleety, and lackeys were slapping their arms against their sides as they waited in the draughty shelter of the *porte-cochère*. The courtyard of the house, together with closed and curtained windows, protected the ears of the gathering from their servants' conversation, and rendered all the passers in the street, their muddy stockings and blue noses, discarnate as dreams. Talk for a time had concerned itself with the political situation, before it sailed off on the wind of a scandal, which lasted all the while that tea—in the English manner, with muffins—was being served; the company then, at their hostess's commanding nod, settled down to listen to a small and ineffectual-looking gentleman in a bronze velvet coat with printed sphinxes stationed in line across his waistcoat.

"What, then, is the true interest of the Third Estate? The good of the nation as a whole. And if, as the other parties in the State make accusation, the people demand liberty and reform, what does this come to? Liberty to do what?

"Just this. The people may not command those armies it composes; may not direct the energies of the Church it supports; may not judge causes in the courts,



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but only plead; may not impose taxation, but only pay. And all the conspiracy, all the disloyalty, is to change this inequitable arrangement so that the burden falls equally upon all Estates alike."

There was some applause from the gathering, a light hand-clapping. The little gentleman looked up, his eyes dewed with tears.

"Ah, ladies, but there is better to come. Pardon my emotion, I cannot give voice to such sentiments and retain command of my critical faculties."

They soothed him, and the hostess ordered a little hot lemon and water for his voice, which one of the footmen brought at once on a tray, and then rejoined his fellows by the door, where they stood motionless, their eyes fixed above the level of the heads of the company so as to look as much like automata as possible. The little gentleman, after a delicate cough, proceeded.

"We are degraded, say the nobles, if we are to stand level with all the butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers of the town; with all the ploughmen of the shires. What? Half a million men degraded by a nation at their shoulder? Rome on her proudest banners bore on this device: the Senate and the People. Were her conquests less far-reaching? Philosophy teaches that all men are brothers; religion bids them love each other. Shall philosophy, shall religion be cast aside, and a proud tyranny trample humanity's pleading hands into the dust? Ah, no! Let it never be said that Frenchmen, sons of the Romans, the most enlightened, the most favoured of all the nations of the earth, forsook their manhood and turned their genius—towards what? The maintenance of that cancerous growth which their forefathers knew not, or knowing, would



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with their bare hands have pulled down; the ugly monstrous weed of privilege."

Here, upon a shrill trumpeting, the little man stopped, and pulling down his sphinxes to a smooth fit, apologised that emotion would not allow him to proceed. His hearers agreed that the strain of pronouncing such words must be enough to unman anyone of sensibility, and enquired for the date of publication.

"Publication," dubiously echoed the little gentleman. "Cold print? Madame, I'm not sure. I'm not sure that the eye can do justice to eloquence. And then, I don't seek glory; what is glory, after all? Having nonsense talked about one. But if I did consider making these few heart-throbs public, it should be, not in black and white, but in thunder and lightning." He explained this simile. "I had thought, in short, of sending the whole essay to M. de Mirabeau, who might make what public use of it he pleased."

They congratulated him. One lady thought M. de Mirabeau looked like a lion.

"He roars like one," said a young abbé, elegantly dressed, "and stinks like one, too."

The ladies laughed in a deprecating manner, and the hostess told him not to blacken their idol.

"Why, I don't say he's naturally unclean," returned the young abbé, "but when he has a speech to make, and expects popular listeners, he changes coats with his lackey so as to have about him the scent of honest toil."

They laughed again. The hostess sighed.

"Can nobody persuade the Queen to be civil to him? A Revolution is all very well, by all means let it come, one knows it to be necessary; but there should be one of us at the head, otherwise——"



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She shut her eyeglass with a snap. "But there are forces working."

The others nodded wisely; they knew what those forces were. One lady asked timidly:

"It is known that M. d'Orléans is a member of a certain brotherhood. But one has heard that an even greater personage——"

"What, madame? You exaggerate, surely?"

"Our hostess can reassure you better than I," said the lady, with a little lift at the end of the voice that made her statement a question. The hostess did not answer in words. She smiled a little, swaying her fan, for the room was warm enough to warrant one; and neither confirming nor denying this conjecture concerning the King, began a little story to distract the attention of her guests from hidden matters.

"You know," said she, "that I have at times had power to relieve certain unfortunates whom small demons torment; little silly spirits not worth the Church's attention, nor a full-dress exorcism."

Her guests' well-bred curiosity was effectually turned from the great subject; Madame de la Croix was a famous magician, though she rarely spoke of her art. They listened, as did the upright lackeys by the door, motionless as candelabra.

"A friend of mine was in this predicament. I helped him, no need to tell you how. But my orders to the spirit were that he should not vanish, on emerging, into thin air. One cannot be sure, when they do this, that they are really gone. 'I will keep you under my eye,' I said to the spirit. 'Come forth! And take the shape of a Chinesery, become a little pagoda that will stand on my table and be always on view; I shall know, then, that you are not in mischief.' Well, the little creature was



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obliging; he did as I asked, and for a week on that mantelpiece"—all the heads turned—"stood a little pagoda of yellow and gold, which would bob about and tinkle, and trot here and there most comically. You look in vain, ladies and gentlemen. The pagoda is gone."

They were transported with the obligingness displayed by this playful devil. The hostess continued.

"But man proposes. My friend whom I had delivered was so overjoyed, felt so lighthearted, that he committed some fault or other the very week after; and one morning, as I sat there at my desk I heard my clock strike, looked up—the yellow pagoda had flown. I thought, knowing these spirit creatures, that perhaps it was playing me a trick. I had the servants in to search. As we were all on our hands and knees looking under sofas and tables, a note was handed to me. 'Kindest friend, pray come as fast as you can, the little wretch is back again, suggesting the most seductive sins. I have all the time in my ears the thin tune of his little glass bells.'" The hostess smiled. "That could not be permitted. I went, I scolded, I ejected the naughty spirit and let him go free. As an ornament he was altogether too much trouble."

There was laughter, through which the hostess met the eyes and the approving nod of an elderly man with a blue ribbon; the nod said that she had done well to divert attention from that dangerous gossip concerning the King, and approved the trivial relation which had sent curiosity scampering off along other paths. There was a good deal of amusement, some discussion; and the little gentleman with the sphinxes, an Academician, took it upon himself to sum up.

"This is a time of marvels. Science, the discovery of new laws—these absorb the normal man's capacity for



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belief, which is not inexhaustible. By the time he has accorded the scientists, the inventors, the Grand Orient"—he bowed slightly in his hostess's direction—"all these their due, he has no faith left for the priests. Whether his new beliefs make him happier is another question. One is inclined to suppose, with Jean-Jacques, that the soul longs to lay aside her armour; to seek consolation neither from the crucible nor the confessional, but from Nature herself. Ah, that broad teeming bosom!" He took snuff, and proceeded in a less exalted strain. "I have often thought of founding a woodland community, where the strong and selected souls might have a chance to know freedom. No conventions, no distinctions. All living by the work of our hands, upon the bounties of Nature, far—how does the English poet phrase it?—far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. Jean-Jacques would have approved it. In fact, I remember some few years ago speaking to him of just such a project. He was enthusiastic——"

So were the members of that comfortably talking company. The footmen ranged about the gilded double doors remained quite motionless while their employer and her guests applauded this exposition of the simple life; outside, behind curtains the colour of a summer sky, sleet was being driven by a north-east wind so as to invade even the shelter of the *porte-cochère*, wherein several passers-by took refuge, among them a man of indeterminate age in a pedagogue's wig. These at once began a dispute, which soon simmered down when it was discovered, after considerable argument, that the disputants were all on the same side. One of the footmen addressed the pedagogue, using the Parisian locution to express stale news: "Henri Quatre still on his horse?"



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"If he is," returned the man with the wig, instantly accepting the challenge, "it's not these fools of Parisians' fault. They'd give him a ride on their shoulders, I verily believe, if he and the horse weren't all one. Talking as if there'd never been a good King since. And the nobility encouraging them, that ought to know better."

The shambling shy manner of the lawyer's clerk was gone, replaced by a petulant sureness, as if one unaccustomed to have his words contradicted.

A thin man, carrying a box full of brushes, agreed with him.

"I'm a brusher-down, I am. Had many a noble foot up on my box, and what I say is, the nobility's too easy with them. You can't expect King Louis to know what's going on; but the nobility that's always in and out, they ought to know what's being said and put a stop to it."

"Said—and sung," a woman corrected them. She had a twist or two of pepper and flour under her apron to keep them from the wet. "I don't let my girls go near the Pont-Neuf nowadays. The things they hear would make your ears burn. But it's the same everywhere, nothing but this talk of revolution, revolution—who's going to be any better for it, I'd like to know? Revolution won't take the taxes off. Revolution won't mend my roof."

"That's all you know," said a coachman ponderously. "I hear a lot of politics talked, and it's my opinion the country needs a change."

There was disapproval.

"What, and have only the States-General? That's five hundred masters instead of one."

"The English get along well enough."



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"The English!" The brusher-down spat, and there was a general movement and murmur of disagreement. "Call yourself a Frenchman, and talk about doing as the English do——"

"I only meant a Parliament mightn't be a bad thing."

"Talk, that's all you'll get out of a Parliament. The word itself," explained the pedagogue, "derives from the Latin, and has that meaning——"

"Parliament won't pay the grocer," said the woman, peering out at the wet street. "And if you take away the King, there's plenty poor people will be out of work."

"That's right," said the brusher-down, "and what I say is, the nobility ought to put their foot down. Instead, there's this M. de Mirabeau goes round talking about equality——"

"D'you know what his own brother said of him?" interrupted a footman. "I heard him with my own ears, standing on the steps of our house. 'Oh,' he says, 'in any other family my brother would be a black sheep, but in ours he's nothing out of the way, we're all black sheep,' says M. le Comte. That's his own brother for you. And the way he lives—women and drink——'

"They're no better out at Versailles," the coachman stated, "with their play-acting, and all the money out of our pockets on the Queen's back."

The woman fired up at this.

"Then just let me tell you, Mr. Jockey or whatever your name is, the Queen isn't dressing at all this year." There was an immediate loud laugh, above which her voice rose shrilling. "The Queen isn't spending, and so the court ladies aren't spending, and my daughter works for Poirier where the Queen goes for her dresses, and they're turning away three girls this week, and so that! for you." She made a gesture,



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free from any constraint, which indicated her opinion of the coachman. That it was shared by the majority was evident.

"No King of our own, why, we'd be a laughing-stock. The soldiers wouldn't fight if it wasn't for the King, and then where'd we be?"

"How, might I enquire, could trade be kept going?"

"We might as well be running wild in the woods like animals."

"Revolution'd be a good thing," persisted the coachman, sticking to his guns, "my master says so, and he's a duke, so if he don't know who does? Ignorant people," he continued ineffably, "don't understand the ins and outs of politics. And as for running wild in the woods, that's what we all ought to be doing, free and equal; I've heard him say so many's the time."

"He don't mean it," said the woman, but shaken. "Where'd be the sense of it?"

"That I won't presume for to say," the coachman answered, with high condescension, "but take it from me. He's in the know at Versailles; lives there, you might say. These horses know the way there blindfold. A revolution's what we're in for, and if Monseigneur says so, you can take it that comes straight from King Louis himself."

Everyone was dumbfounded at this, and remained silent, looking at the weather, which appeared to be growing more insolently rough with every passing minute.

"Well," said the woman at last, hitching her apron over her head, "I can't stay here all night, with my casserole waiting at home for a shake of pepper. Good-night to you all. I suppose there won't be any more wet feet when we get a revolution."

And with that she ventured into the street, on which



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the white crocuses of raindrops were now rising thickly. The door of the hotel opened, letting out a stream of yellow light into the *porte-cochère*, by which the shelterers could see a hall with gilt sconces, bowing men in a livery of blue and brown, and, swaying on the far wall from which a marble staircase sprang, tapestry figures of lovers bending to each other aboard a ribboned galley. The whole effect was of chill splendour, in which all spontaneous movement was checked; where the intrusion of the wind, shaking the lovers, streaming the candle-flames, seemed as out of place as real lightning on a stage. The brusher shivered, turning away, and said to the respectable man in the pedagogue's wig:

"Funny, eh? to think those people have to get born the same way as us."

The respectable man was too busy stowing books under his cloak to answer.

"D'you suppose they ever spit?" the brusher went on, pursuing his train of thought. "All marble; not a table you could put your feet on. Well, they may have full bellies, but I tell you it makes me shiver, thinking the tucked-in way people in those houses must live."

The pedagogue gave him good-day, and turning into a reputable little eating-house, wrote in a notebook the results of his day's observations, of which report one or two sentences may be quoted:

"It is my respectful opinion that the nobility and governing classes do not appreciate the effect their actions and comments may have on the man in the street. I should be inclined to say, and I beg that your Excellency will excuse my repeating this so often, that unless these revolutionary ideas had been given voice



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and insisted upon by the gentlemen, the people of Paris would never have taken such a notion into their heads. It is different for gentlemen, that are for ever reading, and by their experience know how to qualify extravagance. The people has no way to test new theories except by acting upon them.

"It is no use to silence the small man, who is only repeating what he has heard his betters say. It is the privileged who should be kept quiet, if any way can be devised whereby this could with discretion be done. In recommending this course I am actuated solely by devotion to your Excellency's interests, and my duty to the crown."

(viii)

The Assembling of the States-General on Tuesday, May 5th, is best given in the words of an eye-witness. He begins with a description of the hall of assembly, one hundred and fifty feet long by fifty-seven wide, with Ionic columns at appropriate intervals, and the yellow morning light filtered through tents of white satin. The King's dais was covered with violet velvet, strewn with gold fleurs-de-lis, and his throne had a baldaquin above it fringed with gold. In front of this dais sat the secretaries, before a long velvet-covered table, facing the gathering; next to them the Governors of Provinces and Counsellors of State; while in the body of the hall to the right of the throne were the benches for the nobles, on the left those for the clergy, and in the middle sat the commons, again upon velvet, and with their feet shuffling upon "the finest imaginable carpets from the Savonnerie factory." Two thousand spectators



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were accommodated on seats between the columns; most of them were ladies, a fact which, says our correspondent, "contributed no little to the glory of the spectacle, these being most elegantly and richly attired."

From nine-thirty until half-past eleven, three masters of ceremonies conducted deputies and visitors to their appointed places. Certain of these latter, as they appeared, were applauded; notably M. Necker, Minister of Finance, and the Duc d'Orléans, who arrived arm-in-arm with two of the deputies of the commons, and bowing, let a *curé* from his department pass in in front of him. The Dauphiné representatives were cheered; but though a similar greeting was planned for the members from Provence, it died away in murmurings; "a fact," says the eye-witness, "whose significance cannot have escaped M. de Mirabeau," that too fiery Southern prophet of revolt.

He concerns himself next with the costumes, and by a simple record of the colours contrives an astonishing picture; the nobles, black, white and gold, with white plumes in their hats; the princes of the church in red or purple according to their dignity; the Third Estate once more in black, with white cravats and three-cornered hats without cockades. Only M. Necker wore no special dress of ceremony, but appeared in his everyday coat of cinnamon velvet, richly embroidered with spangles about the breast and skirts.

At midday came the King; the assembly rose, clapping, shouting; the cries were deafening, and went on for long; then died as suddenly as they had risen, to a profound and respectful silence, his Majesty waiting the while until the Queen and the court should be placed. His dress was covered with a great violet cloak; on his



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head he wore a plumed hat, whose brooch was all of diamonds, among them the Pitt; this hat he doffed to the assembly, put it on again, and spoke to them covered and standing, they standing too, but bareheaded. When at the end of the King's speech, which was brief, the Chancellor bade the assembly, in His Majesty's name, sit and be covered, "there was such an uplifting and rustling of white plumes," says the narrator, "as made a notable picture, one not soon to be forgotten."

The Chancellor's speech was inaudible; from the report of those nearest him, it appeared that His Majesty had already made grave sacrifices and was prepared to endure all things in order to establish, in his own words, "general felicity on the sacred basis of national liberty."

Now came the report of M. the Director-General of Finance. It lasted three hours. Midway, M. Necker's voice gave out, and the secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society was permitted to read the rest from the Director's notes, which he did with excellent sonority. M. Necker was able to complete the preamble, which exhorted the assembly to generosity, and to assure the deputies that a spirit of patriotic effort alone was necessary to bring France back to the prosperity their fathers had known. It was left to M. the Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society to voice the facts; which were, that the actual deficit in revenue amounted to some fifty-six millions, owed merely on account of the running expenses of the Kingdom; in which sum no provision was made for unforeseen expenses, nor for sinking fund, nor for repayment of loans, some of which were falling due.

"Revolutions," rang the sonorous voice of the secretary, reading, "may come and go, a nation's life



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changes from day to day; but while men in perplexity have the strength to stand fast to great principles, nothing is desperate, nothing is lost. I commend to you for admiration the moral excellence of His Majesty's conduct in dealing so openly and fairly in this matter with the creditors of the State. I need not remind you that His Majesty, according to the constitution of this Kingdom, has no need to ask our advice, nor to summon our help. With a stroke of the pen, since all the nation's wealth is his by reason of his office, he might reduce this debt to nothing, free himself of it by a motion of his hand. A dastard might counsel this; a man blinded by privilege might urge it. His Majesty refuses for a moment to consider any such way out of the difficulty; and why, messieurs? Because he looks paternally upon his people; he sees that these creditors are, many of them, toilers who have put between his hands for safe-keeping the whole earnings of a laborious lifetime. He pictures, as I will not now, the disorder, the wretchedness to which any denial of their just claims might give rise. There are certain dangers which, even in perspective, are too horrible to be considered; the terror the thought of them can inspire is sufficient guarantee that they will never be permitted, in any civilised country, to arise."

This was the signal for some applause; and when a few moments later the speech drew in a modest and sober manner to its close, it was noticeable, says the eye-witness, that among the clamours of *Vive le Roi*, there were for the first time occasional shouts for the Queen. The King stood, bowed to the applauding assembly, and departed, pages holding his great mantle; outside a crowd waited to cheer him, and accompanied him, cheering. The assembly, which had



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been in the great room since nine of the morning, exposed to alternate emotions of loyalty, despondency, glad anticipation and fatigue, dispersed to find dinner. M. Necker, escorted by plaudits and accompanied by his wife in tears of sensibility, drove in his chariot back to Paris. The nobles swung off their black velvet cloaks, which the heat of the middle day rendered unwearable, and strolled away to see His Majesty dine. The assembly room remained deserted, its violet-covered benches pushed awry, until the dismantlers came in the afternoon to carry off velvet and carpets, and the gilt faldstools up by the throne, to that enormous storehouse of such trappings known as the Hôtel des Menus Plaisirs.

The bill for the whole reached the Treasury in a month's time, and amounted to half a million francs. Twice as much was spent by private persons on the necessary dresses. The new era of frugality and retrenchment in public expenditure had been inaugurated triumphantly at a cost of something over a million.

But the city of Paris, and the whole country of which it was the heart, was not discouraged by this. Everyone knew that the car of State took time to get in motion; for over a century no Government pronouncement had been made without violet velvet, and hours of ceremonial waiting, and quantities of money spent to give what dignity gold fringes and white feathers might lend to life and death.

On the first day there were no deliberations. The delegates, more especially those of the commons, took the opportunity to see a little of the life of Paris, and by nightfall were pretty well distributed among the theatres, at each of which there was a loyal demonstration. At the Italians, a piece called "Destiny and the



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Fates," described as an episode in verse, was produced for the first time; a lively but limited trifle which was none too well received by an audience which might reasonably be supposed to have had its fill of spectacle for the day.

Destiny (Mlle. Desjardins) in a grey robe, dark curls veiled, sat among forbidding rocks, one hand upon her wheel. Lightnings of the familiar stage order played about her, while in song, she announced her intention of being at once inflexible and capricious. Here came a topical verse:

"The King whose pride
Is a golden crown
I beckon him down,
I beckon him down;
But the King whose pride
Is a heart of gold—
I stay my wheel
And I sheathe my steel
And I give him a people's heart to hold!"

Mlle. Desjardins was in voice that night; she was happy, though this could be no affair of the audience, save as it showed through the trappings of her part; she rose from her rock at this verse, and sang it like one of the stars of morning, until the last note was drowned in applause. "Destiny's song only was re-demanded out of the whole entertainment," says the journalist reporting the scene.

After this the play went from bad to worse; the idea of it was tenuous, and its chief effect—the Fates snipping the thread of persons who were too long-winded in their own defence—too often repeated. Even an audience rendered indulgent by first-act



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enthusiasm could not put up with it. A miser, a mother, two lovers, a lord, were dealt with in turn by the shears of Atropos; the pit, exasperated, keeping up a running commentary:

"Cut, cut!"

"Tender shepherdess, believe me,
I shall die if you deceive me,
Let our blisses
Blend in kisses——"

"Snip, Fates, snip!"

A young man in the pit took upon himself to direct the orchestra of disapproval; his arm rose and fell, the fingers close together, in brief chopping gestures to which the rest of the discontented kept time. On the stage there were whisperings:

"Louder, louder!"

While in the wings the unhappy author strove with his manager whose theatrical sense recognised a house out of hand, and who was proposing to drop the curtain before things got worse. The comedian, a man of action, pushed them both aside, and went on two verses before his time in the character of a country *curé*.

He was a favourite. The noise stilled for a moment, so that the musicians could turn their pages, the Sisters Three adjust their attitudes, and the prompter hear himself speak.

"Cut to—'I'm the favourite of Fate,' " urged the prompter from his gilded prison-hole, but the comedian took no notice; time had come to give the author the go-by and save his comrades if he could by the use of his own wits. His eye, comically cocked, forbade the orchestra to lift their bows.

"Can anyone here tell me," asked the comedian,



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looking portentously silly, "if this is the way to Versailles? Because, you see, I'm a delegate; oh, yes, you may laugh. You think a parish priest and a deputy ought to know his way about. Let me tell you I come from the provinces. Wouldn't think so, would you? (This in a very broad Limousin accent.) Yes, I come from the provinces, and the first thing my housekeeper said to me when she heard I was coming, she said, 'You look out in Paris; before you know where you are they'll have the shirt off your back.' Well, I don't know where I am yet, but you won't get my shirt, gentlemen, that you won't. Why? 'Cause I took it off the minute I got to this town (laughter), with the rest of my clothes. (Pensively.) Such a nice girl, she was! (Laughter.) But would you believe it, when I got out of bed, that shirt was gone! Yes, gone. A brand-new linen shirt. She said the mice must have eaten it. But I wasn't going to believe that; no, no (tapping his nose), I may come from the provinces, but I didn't swallow that. It's not the mice, I said to her, but have you got an ostrich in the house? 'Ostrich?' she says. 'Yes,' I says, 'it's eaten my gold watch and chain into the bargain.' That's Paris for you. Well, if nobody here knows the way to Versailles—what's that, sir? (A hand to the ear.) The ceremony's over? In that case I'll ask this good lady with the scissors to cut me out another shirt."

And his invention at an end, to a better-humoured audience the comedian began to sing:

"I'm the favourite of Fate,
But I've noticed that of late,
She's been pouting,
She's been flouting,
She's been disinclined to kiss me——"



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It was an old tune, and none too good a one; the words—for the comedian's singing voice was inadequate—soon became inaudible. It was evident that the play held no further surprises, there would be nothing to reward patience, and the pit took to its shouting again, under the leadership of the young man in the front row.

The comedian, still in his manner of the Limousin deputy, did his best with the verse; brought out his knowing look, did his turn or two of light-heeled dancing as the tune swung into its chorus; in vain. The rebels of the pit were aided now by the chatterers in the boxes joining in the game. At the doors grenadiers looked at each other, and deciding that the rumpus was nothing political, and there was no need to intervene, grounded their muskets again and stood at ease. The stage priest resumed his chorus.

"I'm the favourite of Fate——"

"Cut, Madame Atropos, cut!"

A gentleman's voice made itself heard alone, above the din.

"Give the actors a chance!"

That was M. d'Ys, delegate, and husband of stage Destiny, now standing rather white-faced by her gilt wheel. But his shout came too late, when the audience had already entered into the spirit of author-baiting.

"But it's funny that of late,
She's been spiteful,
Cold and frightful,
She's forgotten how to kiss me——"

"Cut, cut! Cut, Fates, cut! Do your duty, Destiny! Give the order! Cut, Atropos, cut!"

The manager, in pity for his company, obedient to



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their imploring glances and the prompter's angry shrug, put the protesting author aside and called to the man on the curtain, shouting up through his cupped hands above the din from the front of the house:

"Down, ring down, Dieudonné!"

(ix)

Mlle. Desjardins, an hour before she had, as Destiny, sung so successfully, went to confession; it was her practice to go delightedly, gladly, once a fortnight, as a child runs to play in ground once forbidden. But she was happy; such sins as she had time for were inconsiderable; for months she had had nothing worse to relate than a fib or two, a gross word spoken or dubious gesture obliged by the parts she played. This evening she checked the lifted hand, and beginning drowsy murmur of the absolution with a question.

"Father: it's not forbidden, is it, to belong to a secret society?"

At that, there was a stir in the darkness of the box; the priest's voice sounded more attentive.

"Make your meaning clear, my child."

"The Freemasons, Father. I've been assured that nothing happens contrary to faith. The Abbé Fornier belongs to them——"

Of this the priest was aware. He was an ambitious personage, who, though he held a poor cure, had made something of a name as preacher in the smarter churches. His voice in the confessional kept much of its worldly smoothness; "my child" had the very intonation of his "dear lady." Lace hung back from his wrist when he lifted a hand for the blessing. Through the grille he



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could see his penitent's face very well, and he had informed himself of her status, great lady by marriage, actress by trade. Her request might have met with a sharp No, had a tradesman's wife made it; but then a tradesman's wife would not have climbed to the social height which Freemasonry implied to those who remembered Cagliostro.

He deliberated; and asked at last if she realised that no vow of secrecy was binding on the layman.

"You mean, that if I am asked in confession I must tell whatever happens there? Even though I've sworn?"

The Church and her own conscience, he told her, must come before any such oath.

"Yes, Father. But there is nothing contrary to conscience. I am told so most certainly, on the faith of a person very dear to me."

There was silence again. The priest spoke at last.

"Do you assure me that you will be honest with God?"

"I will tell if there is anything sinful."

"It is a question of your soul, remember." A pause. "You have permission."

And the voice, dropping again to its smooth hurrying professional drone, spoke the words of absolution over her bent head.

A clerkly man in a second-hand wig, who had been reckoning up his sins swiftly, like a bill of costs, by comparing the state of his soul with the list of sins in a pious book, slipped after her into the confessional. He was brisk with his "I confess," but after a few mild self-accusations halted, peering through the grille as though to guess from the listener's face how to set about his next task. It was a drooping slab-cheeked face that the dull light revealed, narrow at the temples, full at the lips; its wig fitted well, and was new powdered. The



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clerk, trained in rapid assessment of faces, found it greedy of power, craven of responsibility. He had known many such.

When the silence had lasted some seconds, the priest lifted a hand, supposing the confession to be ended.

"Absolvo te——"

"That's not all, Father. There's something else worrying me."

The priest was short with him. He did not encourage scruples in men.

"Father, what ought a man to do whose profession takes him into—call them temptations?"

He must pray for strength, the priest answered, or better, take up another trade.

"Not so easy, if the trade is a necessary one."

"Don't make so much mystery. What is it you do?"

"Police; secret service. We have to go where we're ordered; brothels, treason, we've no choice. So there are certain things I've done, but I can't tell the circumstances, you see, Father. We're bound by our oath."

"The State should have no secrets from the Church."

"And the other way round?"

The priest spoke, after a moment's pause, with indignation.

"The Church keeps her own secrets. They are inviolable."

"I'm asking what happens supposing the Church were to get to know something—in confession, say—that would be important to the State."

"Get up from your knees," the priest ordered. "This is God's tribunal, not a magistrate's court. Do you come as a penitent or as a spy?"



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"If some person in confession delivered an enemy of the Church into her hands, wouldn't the Church use that knowledge?"

"If you have any information vital to the Church, as you seem to be hinting, it is your duty as a Christian to tell it."

"What about my oath? You're under oath too. It's deadlock."

"If you will discuss this matter in the presbytery, as a citizen, I can advise you."

"It won't be discussed in the presbytery. It will be told here."

"If you speak here, then I am obliged by canon law——"

"It's not my secret."

The priest in impatience spoke loudly:

"What is this? Will you speak out, sir?" One or two heads turned among the people making preparation, and his voice sank again to that half-tone in which all the exchange hitherto had been conducted. "What's your meaning?"

"One word; I'm breaking no faith by saying it. Freemasons."

"What?"

"Working against you; against us; bringing it all down——" His hand came thump upon the ledge under the grille. "They're the enemy. Ought my oath to hold against it? or yours? Are you going to protect them by your silence?"

"I have no means of knowing," said the priest, after a moment, thinly, "anything about Freemasons and their activities."

"I mean, if it should come your way. Only if it should come your way, Father."



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"If as a citizen I were to discover anything—but not as a priest, you understand that?"

"Naturally, as a citizen. If, as a citizen, any information comes your way, you wouldn't withhold it? 'Render to Cæsar——' I heard you give a rare good sermon on that once."

"Ah! Are you a parishioner?"

"No, but I like a good sermon. You haven't as big a congregation as you ought."

"Poor people, good people!"

"You ought to have a chance to preach before the King. Perhaps you may, one day. The Lieutenant's word goes for something."

"That's your chief?"

"I report to him. Well——"

"Going? But you've not had absolution."

"A blessing will do to be going on with. I'll come again in a day or two, just to hear if you've heard anything about the Masons."

"Very good. 'Benedicat te omnipotens Deus, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.' But, you understand, I have no way of knowing whether there will be news."

"Amen. I'll take my chance of that."

The clerkly man rose from his knees, not dissatisfied, reflecting that the promise of a bribe committed nobody, and came cheap. As for the seal of confession, he had in the exercise of his trade had much to do with seals, and knew that they need not be broken in order to discover the secrets they defended. A hot knife-blade, artfully thrust under, would loosen wax. He had little enough doubt that a good warm threat to the Church would loosen the tongue of the curate of Our Lady of Lorette, that narrow-templed man.

Equipped with the knowledge that curiosity was to



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be gratified at no expense to salvation, contemplating with pleasure the prospect of sharing those secret enthusiasms which directed the energies of her husband, Valentine Desjardins drove out in a hired carriage, Joaquin attending her, to the house at Bicêtre which hid activities of such interest to the Lieutenant of Police. It had a porter's lodge like any other house of consideration; but instead of giving her name, she handed in a little token, a paltry thing made of lead, with a six-pointed star scratched on it, and answered in person the porter's questions as she had been taught.

"Who is it madame was wishing to see?"

"A gentleman of the name of Dupont. If he is not here, do not trouble."

"M. Dupont?" the porter repeated as if in doubt.

"Of the rue de l'Équerre."

"Come in, madame."

But Joaquin he would not admit; nor might the hired carriage wait outside the gate. The former, with resignation, tilted his hat till he could get his fingers under it, scratched satisfactorily through the pomade, and leant against the wall, while the coachman drove off grumbling. The porter gave some signal from his lodge, so that both doors of the square unlighted house opened to greet the neophyte. A couple of menservants took charge of her, removed her cloak, asked her name, and led her, each bearing a candlestick, down the gallery to an inconspicuous door. From behind this, when they knocked, a voice cried:

"Enter!"

But when Valentine came into it, it was empty and ill-lit. Black velvet walls absorbed all light from the sconces, and on the table stood a skull with a candle inside it. The footmen bowed civilly, asked her to wait,



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and went away; as the door shut behind them she heard two sounds—one that of a turning key, the other a knocking, muffled. She faced about quickly, and understood that this last had come through another narrow door in which now stood a figure, masked, but with a woman's headdress and skirts. The personage, standing motionless, asked in a pretty and rather high-flown voice several questions; the condition of her body, whether or no she were with child, whether she had any friend who would be answerable for her. "Is it by your own will that you seek admission? Are you ready to pass through the appointed trials? You need fear nothing that would seem a reproach to decency. You have reflected? You are determined? Let me bind your eyes."

A band of black silk was slipped round her head and firmly tied.

"Faith of a Mason to be, can you see anything, Sister?"

Valentine knew that she faced towards the skull, and the light from its eye-hollows. No hint of brightness reached her. She answered:

"Nothing."

Almost at once she felt a hand on her right ankle, which climbed gradually to her knee. She made no movement, not even the least contraction of her muscles. Above the knee the fingers paused; there with a sudden twitch they undid the buckle of her garter, and pulled the ribbon away. The conductress then struck her hand lightly five times against the panels of the room. Five knocks answered. There was questioning, the sound of a door opening, a sense of eyes watching, and the high-flown voice turned away, as if it were answering some person at a distance:



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"It is one who seeks admission to wisdom, Venerable."

"Who is her sponsor?" A woman's voice.

There was a movement at that. Some person came to stand beside her whom she knew to be her husband; she knew his step, the little clink of his watch-keys as he walked; she could have put out her hand to his. She did not stir, however, and still she was not led forward to the inner room. There were more questions, answered this time by her husband's voice; her name was given, and her quality as his wife. Her religion, that of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Upon this another voice struck in, a voice both masculine and high, whose half-remembered tones gave her a feeling of discomfort. The attempt to put a personality to that known sound distracted her. The dialogue proceeded while she threshed her memory.

"Is the aspirant convinced that in these fraternal gatherings nothing passes which is contrary to the religion she professes?"

"She is so assured."

"Let her enter."

Valentine felt a light chain about her wrists, and a hand at her elbow urging her forward, to the right. She took ten steps, twenty; it was an enormous room, reckoning by the remoteness of the questioning voices, and the echo of her own and her sponsor's steps on its tiled floor. She was led, turned, marched backwards, in a dead silence which was full, she knew, of the breathing of watchers and their eyes. At one moment she felt a scorching glow upon her hands. Her stocking, from which the garter had been taken, dragged about her ankle. She lost all sense of direction. When at last the hand above her elbows ceased to guide, the voice of the enquirer came from a wholly unexpected quarter.



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saying that she had travelled from north to east, and now must learn how vile was the state of man; whence came the sins of man; that which he was, is, and shall become. There was a moment's complete silence. Five slow knocks broke it, and a rattle of steel. Hands loosed the silk from her eyes; she started back from the threat of two torches whirling in circles close before her face, stinking pleasantly of resin, and saw beyond these an arch of steel, swords, the sound of whose drawing her quick ear had recognised. A painted skeleton faced her. Five lamps lit the great room, by whose walls stood ranked rows of men and women; at the east end of it a throne, and an altar with a great painted hanging behind it.

The torches whirled and were extinguished. The swords remained, an arch that quivered, alive with light. The unrecognised voice addressed her, after a preliminary which she could not hear.

"——before our mysteries are fully shown, you must learn that the whole object of Masonry is the perfection of society. The character of the true Mason is enshrined in two words, justice and charity. She should admit no prejudices, flee all untruth, be guided by virtue only; and endeavour to deserve the esteem of her associates, together with the approval of the world; difficult tasks. In view of what you have learned, do you still persist in your request to be received?"

She gave her affirmation. The chains were unlocked. She was led under the swords up to the altar before the dais, and there, kneeling, with her right hand on the Gospels, spoke the vow dictated to her.

"In the presence of the great Architect of the Universe, God, and in face of this assembly, I do promise and faithfully swear to keep in my heart all



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those secrets of Masonry and Masons which are about to be told me; this under pain of contempt and dishonour. May the avenging angel give heed to my words, and if I fail may earth engulf me. But if I remain faithful may the spirit of God guard and bring me to perfection. This I swear, and this I pray. Amen."

The troubling voice went on, she docilely repeating its words, kneeling still.

"Moreover, I solemnly vow that I will this night sleep with——" The voice paused; the eyes lifted for the first time. She met their look, put a hand to her heart and started up dismayed, the riddle solved at last —"with this garter of the Order about my knee. It is of white leather, and on it are written for your edification the words Virtue and Silence."

A hand on her shoulder, her husband's hand, pushed her gently to her knees again. She heard a whisper, reassuring.

"Keep down. Keep quiet."

And she sank down again, her stiffened skirts making a circle about her, and with a deep breath tried to calm the obstinate difficult beating of her heart, listening while the signs and words of membership were told her.

"That which you, as apprentice, should make in order to be known by your brothers and sisters is this: the first and third fingers of your left hand laid on your mouth, the thumb under the chin. This is to signify silence. The response: touch your right ear with the little finger of the right hand, the other fingers lying on the cheek. The clasp: palms meeting, and the middle finger laid along the wrist. The words: ***Feix, Feax.*** This signifies, school of virtue."

The kiss of peace was given five times, a white apron was bestowed.



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"Kings, princes and princesses have worn this proudly; it symbolises right living."

White gloves came next.

"By their colour these gloves signify that candour and truth which Masonry expects of its practitioners. Take your place——" a gesture indicated which part of the room—"and prepare to give attention to the catechism which two sisters will rehearse for your benefit."

Two women stood forward, one old and painted, the other young; both wore lace upon their heads; tiny trowels were suspended by blue ribbon at their sides. The Venerable, that personage whose voice no longer puzzled, but now terribly distressed the neophyte, gave them a sign. The dialogue began.

"What should be a Mason's first duty?"

"To see that the Lodge is covered."

"Are you an apprentice?"

"I believe so."

"Are you not sure of it?"

"An apprentice is sure of nothing."

"How did you come into this Lodge?"

"Blindfold."

"For what reason?"

"To show that faith, and not curiosity, leads to the unveiling of secrets; and as a symbol of the blindness of outside persons towards our mysteries."

On it went, the voices answering each other freely, like two actresses well taught; but the neophyte, for all her pose of attention, was not listening, and had no eyes for them. Her thoughts were thrown back—how long? To a summer night, when as she sat learning her part in the quiet of Smith's coffee shop a dispute suddenly rose, and the voice that just now spoke of virtue and



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silence had threatened abominable things. She remembered a phrase or two, shivering, and asked herself whether these people could know what she knew, and if they did not, whether she should not shout it aloud, warn them—then she saw her husband looking at her happily and proudly, not displeased that she had stirred in protest at the equivocal words about the garter, with a steadiness in his eyes that it would have astonished his uncle to see. This was his religion. From it he drew strength of purpose, the will to work and plan for others, enthusiasm, hope. His wife understood, and held her tongue, and when the final words of the ritual dismissed them—"Brothers and Sisters, we have listened, laboured, obeyed, and kept silence. The Lodge is closed——" she slipped her hand through his arm with tenderness.

In the outer rooms men and women spoke to her, complimented her. One or two had been at the play, and had agreeable things to say of her singing. A heavy-featured man with a blue ribbon asked Madame Destiny for light "upon my own future, and that of our country." He was a commonplace man, with something the look of a financier, and she obeyed the impulse which dictated an impudent answer. She was used to such admirers, slow themselves, and pleased to be the dull stone from which women struck sparks: she answered with the freedom of the green-room:

"And do you then, monsieur, put your own future first?"

He looked disconcerted for an instant, drooping his lip and turning his head away, which gave her an opportunity to recognise the profile that in plaster adorned certain precincts of the Palais Royal, and she had a moment of fear, not for herself. M. d'Orléans,



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however, bore no apparent malice, but gave her a text in return very aptly.

"Well, but we are in the Kingdom of Heaven here, where the last shall be first. I have a word for your husband, madame, if he'll be so unselfish as to quit you for a moment."

He pulled d'Ys aside, speaking earnestly. The elder woman of the catechism spoke to her. She answered civilly, watching her husband's face, now grown very grave as he listened to the Duke speaking quickly and low; and when she saw his attention wholly engaged, asked the question that had been tormenting her, whether the Grand Master would come among them that evening.

"You won't see him out of Lodge. He takes no part socially. A strange voice, isn't it?"

Seeing this lady so willing to answer, Valentine began to question further; his name; his nationality. They were not known, though his accent seemed to have a German or English tang to it.

"But it may only be fashion. England is all the rage. Half the women one meets talk of nothing but race-horses and boxing."

She went off into a sentence, pronounced with strong Cockney vowels, which by a variety of English expletives implored condemnation on various limbs and functions.

"And then, their institutions, so republican! Yes, he is certainly an Englishman. He considers the people. When does a Frenchman or a German of quality care a rap for the people? And in our gatherings, you see for yourself, we are all mixed together like a box of card-counters. I belonged once to that Lodge for women started by the Grand Copt. It was like Versailles, and



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the duchesses had chairs, while the poor viscountesses like you, madame, and me, had to put up with stools. This is quite another matter. And when that comes which must come, madame—you understand me?—then there will be a plan to work upon, and men and women to undertake it. One cannot leave the people to themselves, their notion of policy is to loot the breadshops, and their religion mere mummery." The elderly lady smoothed the satin at her hip where her little apron had disturbed the rich folds. "I think M. d'Orléans has finished with your husband. A conference of importance. You know who is expected to be the next convert? No? Faith of a Mason if I tell you?" She leant forward, her fan above her lips. "A certain august cousin."

"The King!" That came out in an involuntary cry of wonder; and one or two heads turned, among them the Duke's. "But this talk of revolution——"

The unknown lady answered, smiling the little poised smile of courts.

"Dear Madame Destiny, a revolution that comes full circle is not so very dangerous."

Then d'Ys was coming towards his wife, beckoning the footman for her wraps, accepting his own hat and greatcoat, while outside the wide-open doors horses stamped, and there was a shouting of numbers; the names of that discreet house's distinguished guests were never noised abroad. For the matter of that the panels of their coaches and the liveries of their servants, to say nothing of their own distinguished faces clearly discernible through the window-glasses, were enough to supply identification; Y.27 and his compeers knew very well the names of the frequenters of the place, and they were names of power. It was what those elegant and panoplied persons did indoors that excited the interest



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of the Lieutenant of Police; and this, strangely enough, neither threats nor promises, neither bribes nor punishments had enabled him so far to learn.

Number 19, the high two-seated carriage of M. d'Ys, was brought round by the groom; M. d'Ys climbed in, took the reins, held out a hand to Madame preparing to follow. It was at that moment that a footman came on to the steps, and spoke very low in Madame's ear. She put a hand to her heart—how well the gestures of the theatre adapted themselves to living emotions!—and answered very clearly:

"Say, with my respectful compliments, no."

The footman's bow came a moment late. He was astonished, and not even his training, the special, highly paid, discreet and quite incorruptible bearing given by service in that house could disguise the consternation caused by this refusal. It was the first time in the footman's experience that such a personal message had been sent to any one of the departing company; that it should be disregarded was flat miracle. He managed his bow at last, however, and Madame d'Ys stepped up beside her husband, who, busy with his dancing horse and the nice adjustment of his capes, had heard nothing, seen nothing of the incident. They drove off, picked up Joaquin by the lodge to hang on behind, and sat together silently, feeling each other's warmth, the one wholly happy, the other dismayed. He said only one thing to her during the long drive back to their own quarter: "We are on top of the wheel to-night, sweetheart."

When they got in it was late. Paris streets were silent, their lamps beginning to sink and gutter already. But neither of the two had any thought of sleep. D'Ys, holding Valentine close to him, caught from that



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closeness something of her fear and put her away suddenly, troubled.

"You're not happy."

He knew it, and she could not have acted well enough to deceive that instinct. She said in answer, irrelevantly:

"That man, the Grand Master; does he ever speak privately to you?"

"To me? No, nor anybody else."

"How are his orders given, then?"

"Why, like a priest's. There is an exhortation, a sort of sermon."

"What does he want?"

D'Ys found that question puzzling, not because he could not answer, but because it was so fiercely asked. While he hesitated she went on:

"Who gave him authority over you? Why should you obey him?"

"Because he is a man of vision. And he knows men. He has foretold exactly every event of this past year in France—the very date of the States-General assembling. I will not say he is a prophet, but his guesses are better than Habakkuk's. He sees far ahead, and sees true." She shivered. "What's the matter? Valentine, you weren't frightened?"

She smiled at that. "Darkness, a light inside a skull, that's nothing. When I was a child myself I saw children born. No, I wasn't afraid of all the little swords and torches. But—hold both my hands." She gripped his tightly, loosed them abruptly. "You won't believe me."

"Valentine, what is it?"

"You'll hate me for it. We were so happy."

Tears filled her eyes, and suddenly putting her finger-



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tips to her mouth she kissed and let them fall in a gesture of farewell. Then she told d'Ys the story of the man-woman who had prophesied and blasphemed in the café of the Palais Royal.

He listened quietly enough, and when she had done asked her very gravely how she could be sure.

"Voices are my trade. Do you think I could be mistaken?"

"After a year? I would not let you swear to an old dress twelve months after you'd left off wearing it."

He explained carefully, kindly, how impossible it was that a personage controlling the fate of the nation should so short a time ago have been tub-thumping.

"It is so," she repeated obstinately. "He said something then I have never forgotten; can't ever forget. He spoke wickedly of the Church." She saw a twist come to her husband's mouth. "That's nothing to you; but when I heard the same voice——"

"You're mistaken, sweetheart."

"——and what's more, he knew me. Recognized me. And sent me that message."

"This is the silliest business." He was growing impatient; the words slipped out. "The Grand Master sent you a message! Where? When? What to do?"

"To go to him. It was when I was standing on the steps. I refused."

"If that's true——" He turned away from her, picked up a book, fingered it, thinking; then seemed to convince himself, shrugged and came back to her.

"If that's true, you did wrong to refuse."

She said, standing very still:

"I'll be at no man's orders except yours."

He laughed, with a touch of anger.

"My dearest child! When you're running back and



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forth to the priest, and hitching your skirts at every word from your stage manager—no orders except mine! Suppose then I tell you that next time the Grand Master makes a request, you are to obey it."

She said pitifully to that:

"Alain, you're angry with me."

He was angry; and the jealousy whose existence in his own heart he did not recognise, jealousy of that other man in the confessional to whom his wife whispered her dearest thoughts, and of the actor who had power with a word to set her languishing or capering, who called her grotesque names of endearment—these were behind his words, though he spoke reasonably.

"You must try to understand a little what he and I and all of us have to do. We have to prevent if we can this nation going down——" he sought for a simile and found the inevitable one—"a steep place into the sea. There are not so very many of us; the more need of loyalty. We have got to get the people out of the slime and keep them from trampling us into it. We have got to take enormous decisions. We may have to shed blood. It is a difficult, dangerous loyalty. We cannot afford to doubt."

"But when I tell you that I know!" she interrupted, in a kind of anguish. "I know the man's deceiving you."

"I might say the same of your confessor. What does it matter? The work counts, not the man."

"And not the woman?" said she forlornly, touching his sleeve.

He did not answer that directly, but told her coldly, though in a gentle voice, to go to bed. She obeyed him at once, argued no longer, went to the room they shared, undressed and waited for him. He did not follow; and when towards daylight, sleepless, she crept out to



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discover what had become of him, she found him stretched out on the little sofa in all his clothes, uncomfortably asleep, with a hand hanging to the floor. She looked at him for a while. The face had softened in sleep to that of the thoughtless youngster of a year ago, and she wondered at the power of the religion that could change it to another and more resolute mask by day. A silly religion she found it, with its lighted skulls, and elegant gentlemen and ladies, who had never washed so much as a plate in their lives, dressed up in white and silver aprons, and carrying ivory-handled trowels, to symbolise labour. Better the pictures in the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, the Madonna with her Child, the good Martha bustling about her housekeeping, the saints, once poor men and women, now rewarded before the throne.

"But what do his sort know of poor people?" she thought, making excuses for him because she loved him. "A church is nothing to them; they've too many other things. He's never been so cold he'd crowd in to St. Anthony's altar to warm himself by the candles; never been on his feet all day till it's like heaven to get on to your knees for a while. He doesn't know, poor little heart. God, may he never!"

She resisted the temptation to touch his cropped head and went quietly back into the bedroom, where the hands of the clock, with a gilt weeping Cupid above it, stood at six. Then she put on her clothes, and carrying her shoes in her hand past the sleeping figure, hurried out into the dull morning streets to be in time for early Mass.



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## (x)

Two days later a report from Y.27 came to the hands of the Lieutenant of Police.

"I have discovered, through a source which Your Excellency will excuse me from naming——" this was the formula—"something of what goes on at the meetings in the house at B. It appears that the proceedings consist of some of the ceremonies of Freemasonry conducted by a director, or Grand Master, whose name is not known to the frequenters of the place. By a very strange accident this person has been identified, and I should urge Your Excellency to lose no time and to allow *no other consideration* [heavily underlined] to affect your decision to secure him. Your Excellency will remember a certain trouble we had last year at the time of the closing of the clubs, an individual was lost who was one of the known speakers, and could never afterwards be traced. His name in the places where he spoke was given as M. de St. Esprit, but there was some suspicion that the male dress was nothing more than a disguise, and that the individual was in reality a woman. Since I was the officer who was so unlucky as to lose him, I hope your Excellency will give me the opportunity of regaining your approbation by putting me in charge of such operations as you may now think necessary to secure him. There should be no difficulty in surrounding the place. I have ascertained that the next meeting falls on a moonless night, and that it will *not be attended* [heavily underlined] by any person or persons whose presence would embarrass the officers of the law in the performance of their duty."

Thus Y.27, sitting at a café table in the guise of a



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provincial up in Paris for a law-suit, and writing home about the marvels of the capital. He called for a ridiculous south-country wine; he appealed to customers round about him on points of spelling; he provided amusement, with his wide-open eyes and mouth, his unintelligible accent, for half an hour, at the end of which time his report was scrawled and ready for the post. He caused more amusement by his refusal to allow the waiter to deal with it, his suspicions, loudly voiced, of all Parisians, and the confident way in which he finally entrusted it to a shabby-looking man with no better recommendation than an accent the twin of his own. By this man, another spy, the untidy paper with its superscription to a non-existent farm-wife in Provence was conveyed at once to the central bureau of Police, and so reached the Lieutenant himself less than an hour after the jokers in the café had had their laugh over it.

The Lieutenant considered it awhile, and handed it over to his smooth secretary.

"The old tricks work best," said he. "Here's the woman given the whole thing away. By the style of this," he nodded at the scrawl, "he has it all from some priest or other. That should be good enough to act on; they don't lie to their confessors. But we must have something more than just this fellow's assurance that we shan't catch a handful of princes when we raid it."

The secretary had an assenting smile, looking up from the report, and a question.

"Is it desired to make this raid while the congregation is there? We have the names of most of them already; I don't see what disciplinary measure can be applied to a hundred and fifty noble persons. If I may suggest it, the less scandal there is, the better."



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"Nonsense, man. Your hundred and fifty coronets will take no harm. Scandal gives them something to talk about."

"I was thinking, sir, of the effect on the people at this juncture."

"They can't think worse of us than they do already, Mr. Secretary. You ought to know, you are reading reports here all day, that they invent worse infamies than have ever happened, and hang the stories round any rich man's neck."

The secretary tried another tack.

"Have you considered your own position, Excellency? There is not only money, there is influence behind this impostor. Such people as these supporters of his don't care to be tricked and shown up for dupes."

The Lieutenant laughed, and answered bluntly:

"You understand certain sides of this work, none better; but when it comes to these rich idle people you're all at sea. Don't like to be tricked! Why, they're always being taken in, paying impostors, grateful to anyone that will give them something to think and talk about. Set St. Esprit up in the Place St. Louis and cut off one of his ears; they'll laugh at him, and themselves, and forget the whole thing the day another mountebank comes along."

"Sir, excuse me, I believe this business at Bicêtre goes deeper."

"Mr. Secretary, excuse me—though I agree that it won't do for us to be clapping his Majesty's cousin on the shoulder. What's your advice?"

The secretary gave an unexpected answer:

"Excellency, to leave it altogether alone."

"Reasons—if you have any?"

"I think the canker has gone too deep. I believe



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that to cut it out now may shorten the patient's life."

The Lieutenant frowned.

"I don't understand your medical metaphors. What's the matter with you? Are you taking this revolutionary nonsense seriously?" He looked at the secretary, who gazed as steadily back. "If you can't cure this sort of chatter by stopping it, how the devil are you to proceed? Talk as a policeman."

The secretary's smile went a little awry.

"As policemen, we should make our raid, noisily, publicly, with a great display of force. We—if I may for a moment associate myself with your Excellency—we are here to put down revolutionary activities as far as we can."

"Thereby reassuring the people that rich and poor who talk sedition will be treated alike. That is your advice, Mr. Secretary?"

"It is my considered advice, Excellency."

"I propose to follow it." The Lieutenant suddenly allowed his expression to change from that of the magistrate, stern, to that of the colleague, amicable. "And now, M. Parmentier"—extending a snuff-box—"as a citizen, what is your opinion of this infernal mess we are all in?"

"I think it is the beginning of——" the secretary checked and swallowed—"the death of France."

"That is why I insist that we should go about our duty bull-headed. Thinking won't do for policemen; it turns them into politicians, and politicians are the rats of the ship of state. The ship is sinking—there I am wholly of your mind. Let us stop what holes we can see, and leave thought out of it. That way madness lies."

There was a momentary silence between the two men.

"And Bicêtre?"



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"The routine. Make your fuss, arrest your fellow. In a day or two there will be other matters to think of." The Lieutenant, smiling, revised his own phrase according to his own maxim for the guidance of police officers. "Other matters to which our attention may more profitably be drawn."

"Trouble?"

"Trouble."

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The raid authorised by the Lieutenant, skilfully conceived by his secretary on the basis of Y.27's information, took place in the beginning of July 1789; a night without a moon was chosen, the gates were forced, the house surrounded and, after a struggle with the servants, investigated room by room. Below in the large hall, at whose doors armed men stood on guard, the initiates stood, angrily talking, the women flicking fans, the men sulkily fingering swords. "De part le Roi!" In the King's name! There was no resisting that cry. The invaders were in numbers, and the King's writ ran. Certain of the younger men stood aggressively before a certain door, and were addressed by an official:

"Gentlemen, don't get in my way and I won't get in yours. I don't know your names nor want to. My men have pistols and authority to shoot. Stand aside, if you please."

They exchanged glances, dropped hands from their hilts and stood away from the door. Only one kept his place, whom the official addressed civilly by name.

"We don't want to have any unpleasantness, M. d'Ys.



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You sit in the Assembly, you're not going to set an example of disloyalty, I'm sure. We've got the King's warrant for what we're doing. If St. Esprit's behind that door you'd better stand aside, sir."

"I have only one question to ask you," M. d'Ys answered, very white, very stern. "Who gave you information that any such person was here?"

The policeman looked at him with something like a wink.

"We don't tell that sort of thing. We shouldn't get any more news if we did. Now, are you going to let me by that door?"

D'Ys did not answer, then suddenly, all in a moment, flashed out his sword. The policeman had a pistol, whose butt with a flick of the wrist he brought down upon the young man's arm, numbing it. The sword tinkled down, and at a nod an underling picked it up.

"None of that," said the policeman without heat. "I'm here for the King. No more nonsense, M. d'Ys, if you please."

He thrust through the door. The incident had passed quite unseen. All about men were angrily talking, d'Ys the only silent one among them; and across the room where the women were together he saw his wife, motionless too, and knew that she, by reason of her tallness, had seen. He went across to her. Madame de Ste Croix was speaking.

"Our meetings here in any case are finished."

"And we have not landed our big fish," a small woman complained.

"Will M. d'Orléans set up a Lodge at the Palais Royal?"

"He? He has betrayed us, likely as not. Well, M. d'Ys, what will be the upshot of it all? How did His



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Majesty's excellent police get past the gate? Who is the traitor, and why?"

"I don't know," M. d'Ys answered shortly; "you may look for him at Versailles, I dare say."

The younger woman put up her fan and mourned.

"And now, what is one to do with one's evenings? The opera is so vapid after this, and as for the theatres —ah, I'm tactless, madame; but you know for yourself what our theatres are. M. d'Ys, what will the Master do? He'll find a way out, won't he? With the police it's all a question of money."

At that began, above their heads, a hurrying; there was shouting, and one scream that set them all looking upwards, checked the tongues and the fans and the fingering of swords. The guards at the doors stiffened, and unbidden dropped their muskets to their hips, facing the startled room. Feet came stumbling down the stairs, with a strange accompanying sound of laughter. The soldiers at a shout stood aside; and through the great double doors so delicately gilded, equipped with ornamental bolts instead of keyholes for greater privacy, came two men dragging a creature half-dressed in the vast fashionable fringed skirt known as a Levite, but with bare breasts under an open and very magnificent man's coat. Her hair was cropped and dishevelled, her face unpainted, the forehead hideously puckered; as she was jerked along by the armpits she neither spoke nor cried out, but looked devilishly at the assembled men and women, who in turn recognised her, and broke into exclamations, queries, and, at last, laughter. They laughed at the silent figure and at each other, pointing with their fans and fingers, letting all pent excitement out in trills and shrieks and coughs of laughter. Only M. d'Ys did not move; he was chalk-



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white, and his wife saw with horror that he swayed. She came to him, putting Madame de Ste Croix aside with one strong hand, and caught him. He did not yield to her, but with his weight against her still stared over her shoulder at the grotesque figure that policemen were bundling through the door out into a courtyard lit by flares. She understood his trouble, but said what should have been left unspoken.

"So I was right. What could that——" her head jerked—"what could that preach, how could that save a nation? Power—look how they drag her along. She can't even save herself."

He stiffened, turned his eyes that had been following the disgraceful, the ludicrous exit of the Grand Master, angrily upon his wife.

"That was said of Christ."

"Alain!" She held him silently, and her triumph was savourless because he was so horribly wounded.

A voice said, a common man's voice, speaking loudly:

"That's all right, my lords, ladies and gentlemen. Your carriages are waiting, nothing's been interfered with. You're welcome to go home."

The hysterical crowd yelped back at him sardonic thanks; there were low bows, curtsies that had been rehearsed at Versailles; swirling of cloaks about men's shoulders, a more delicate adjustment of feminine gauzes, and the numbers of carriages began to be loudly called.

"Sweet, we must go," said Valentine gently, ceasing to hold her husband, but slipping one hand to the conventional place at the crook of his elbow. She moved forward; for an instant he resisted.

"Come!" said she, with a touch of authority.

He came then, like a man hypnotised, saying nothing,



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and in that same silence they drove home. In their little apartment for the first time he looked at her defiantly, and spoke:

"Are you laughing at me?"

"No, no," she answered, her hands fluttering up to his breast.

"You have a right to. Laugh if you want."

"How could I, when you're suffering?"

"Suffering——" He broke away from her. "That's where the fun comes in. Why should I care because I trusted an impostor? The idea's the thing. The idea doesn't die because a mountebank gets hold of it."

She nodded, longing to comfort, not understanding how it was to be done.

"That's what the Church says."

"The Church—what?"

He halted. She went on, aware that perhaps she might anger him further, willing to take the chance of that if she could distract him from his misery, the humiliation of being duped.

"Once a man's a priest, no matter how wicked, you can't take away from him the power to turn bread into God. The Grand Master was like a bad priest. But he could turn——"

"I don't want to talk of it."

"——people like you, ordinary bread, my dear, good as bread, into something different from yourselves."

He laughed.

"A sermon's good, even if the devil preaches it; is that what you mean?"

"You said yourself, the idea doesn't die."

"I don't know about that," said he, head in his hands. "Not all at once, perhaps. It dies by inches. What did he want with us all? Why did he take the



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trouble to assemble us there and fill us up with words? He got no money out of us. Why did he do it? To laugh at us?" He struck down his hand at that on the heavy pointed lid of the ink-stand, and struck again until a drop of blood dashed the ormolu.

"To have power," Valentine answered, giving the cause of women's cruelty in her world.

"Power! Is there any need to make fools of people?"

His wife did not speak, since out of her own experience the answer to that question must have been yes. How else did a woman know that she had power over a man? Only when he made himself ridiculous, when he knelt or crawled in his stars and garters, only when she could take the symbols of dignity from him, and mock them and him, was a woman's empire completely attained. She remembered a phrase or two read in church:

"——and Apame the King's concubine . . . taking the crown from the King's head and setting it on her own head, she also struck the King with her left hand. And yet for all this the King gaped and gazed upon her . . . women should be strong, seeing they do this."

Her husband was tearing at his own peace with questions, walking aimlessly here and there, sucking at the wound in his hand, yet as though unconscious of it.

"He got no money out of it; not as Cagliostro did. He lived sparely. He lived in that house as a prisoner. And all the time—why? Why?" He turned on Valentine. "Your priests, if you like, do it for power. Poor men, ignorant men, with nobles on their knees to them. Understandable there. But here!"

"The same thing."

"The same?" He took her hands, not like a lover, but like a man pleading with another for freedom. "What



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would you do, Valentine, if your Church failed you, if you found that the priests betrayed your secrets, that they used your faith and your prayers for their own ends? What would you say to that? What would you do?"

She smiled.

"That couldn't happen."

"But if it did? If it did?"

"I should be then as unhappy as you are now," said she slowly. "And I should pray."

"For what?"

"Strength to hate."

"God, yes! If I could pray, if I thought God existed and was kind, I'd pray for that."

There was a moment's silence; then with a quick movement they were together, he weeping, she holding him, stroking his shoulder and neck.

"Ugly talk, horrible! Much better laugh, my dear. Like those people an hour ago. That creature hurt you, I could kill her. I could wring her neck for that. But the rest—all those fat marquises, the King's fat cousin, taken in like peasants at a fair! They laughed at themselves, that's where blood tells. The people can't laugh at themselves. Danger, hunger—they laugh at those, but not at themselves. That's why they can't forget. Laugh, my heart, it takes the sting out. Look, I'm laughing—true, I'm only half an aristo; but I've played princesses on the stage."

He muttered something about caring for nothing and nobody in the world except her. She did not hear. She was back in childhood, coming barefoot into a church in winter to stand near a saint's altar, where gusts of warmth blew this way and that from the reeking candles.



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"My little Alain," said his wife, "believing is good. It is better to believe, and be deceived, than to be out in the cold all one's life."

He lifted his face at last, and said, looking into her eyes, tears smudged under his own:

"I believe in you. Not in God, not in the future, only in you."

"I, too," she answered, gently putting up her neckerchief to the tears, "I believe in you."

"And the Church," said he; a moment's bitterness.

"The Church told me to love you and honour and be faithful to you. You don't forbid that, Mr. Infidel, do you?" He began to smile. "That's better. Sit down awhile. You won't sleep yet, if we go to bed." He shook his head, and sank down till his cheek rested against her knee. "I'll stroke your head and sing you one of my old songs, my old washerwoman songs." And softly, not at all in the voice of Destiny—how long ago since she had stood by the gilt wheel!—but in the voice of the poor child she had been, Valentine hummed the tune of the Absent Lover:

"Girl, there's to be dancing, and where is your lover?
He's sailing from this country, the wide seas over.

Girl, when he comes again, what will he bring you?
A girdle, and a flower, and a ring for my finger.

Girl, if he comes never home, how will you marry?
I'll pray, and I'll weep awhile, and take his brother Harry."



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A few days later the Lieutenant of Police and his secretary, together with their various agents, had something to think about. In the ordinary course of events there might have been a sensational trial of M. de St. Esprit, with a jury of matrons, and every kind of indecent curiosity on tiptoe. But the dismissal of the Finance Minister, M. Necker, which was known in Paris on Sunday, July 12th, at nine o'clock in the morning, was received with such unreasoning rage by the Parisians that the spy reports hardly kept pace with events. Y.27 as usual was sent to that fountain-head of all gossip, the Palais Royal, where once in the guise of a fop he had been bested by the half-man now biting his nails in the Châtelet. His report departs from its usual dispassionate style in its account of an orator who described M. Necker's dismissal as "the alarm-bell for another St. Bartholomew of patriots."

"This young man Desmoulins, a lawyer, mounted upon a table at which some persons were drinking, this being rendered necessary by the press of men about him, to make himself heard, and there shouted out that the Swiss and German battalions were coming to cut all their throats. No time was to be lost in taking arms, and there should be a sign whereby all true patriots, as he called them, should be known. After much silly discussion, and some shouting, this fellow pulled down a branch of the tree shading the table, and says he, 'Let this be our cockade,' tearing off leaves in handfuls, which all those that could come near at once put in their hats. I came closer, feigning eagerness of patriotism, and this lawyer unluckily saw and remem-



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bered me, and pulled out two pistols from under his coat, saying, 'I see the spies of the police staring me in the face, and I swear I will never fall into their hands alive!' I feared at this moment for my life, but the pistols were not cocked."

He tells next how two busts were taken from the Palais Royal, one of Necker, one of the Duc d'Orléans, and carried by the mob along the streets, every passer-by being obliged to do homage to them. Three or four thousand ragged fellows were in this procession, which roved the streets under a black and white flag until it encountered the very German corps which the agitator had threatened, coming from the Champ de Mars to blow honest Frenchmen's heads off. The Germans turned the ragged regiment into the Tuileries Gardens, and there bottled some couple of thousand patriots up for awhile—all those who had not retained enough presence of mind to run away. Then the spy has the following—his state of mind is accurately shown by this departure from the routine of police reports, which confined themselves narrowly to single facts without attempting any picture:

"In every street is disorder, fermentation and alarm. I have seen nothing like it in twenty years. The barriers are all on fire, and the people fleeing through the streets, men and women, are drunk as furies, having broken the liquor-shops open. Smuggling has already begun where the barriers are destroyed, and these goods are being paid for with old cutlasses and rusty pikes, which the rioters no longer value, having equipped themselves more dangerously from the gunsmiths' shops. Many women are to be seen with muskets upon their shoulders.



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"I would point out, with all respect to your Excellency, hoping that you will represent the same to higher quarters, how such an event as the dismissal of M. Necker, had it been announced any day but a Sunday, must have passed unnoticed, since the class of people who live by daily labour of their hands, or tradesmen, do not quit their work to assemble riotously. It is when leisure draws them together in great numbers in the walks and squares that the mob is formed, and then a few glasses of brandy are enough to start trouble."

With this piece of advice, as who should counsel the shutting of the stable door after the stealing of the horse, Y.27 pulled himself together, and concluded his report, which did not reach the hands for which it was intended. Next day the Provisional Magistrates summoned M. du Crosne before them to give instructions concerning the providing of supplies for Paris. He attended, gave all the information that was required of him, and returned to the Bureau of Police to sign the resignation that his secretary had prepared. He said, scribbling a signature, to Parmentier standing respectfully at his shoulder:

"So we both saw too clear. This is the beginning."

"The end, sir. Will you go to the King?"

"My good fellow—pardon, we're all equal now—friend Parmentier, the King doesn't want more people at his elbow telling him what not to do. He'll shuffle and change his mind half a dozen times an hour without my help. I am an orphan, and so are you; our occupation's gone."

"Your great knowledge of Paris, sir——" the secretary was beginning, the old trick of flattery still upon him; but the Lieutenant laughed.



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"The Paris of my great knowledge, your great knowledge, is gone. Listen to that." There was indeed a considerable noise in the street, which the secretary did not need to go to the window to identify. "Outside my very doors, that the scum would never pass within a mile; half of them policemen, like as not. Well, it's not my responsibility now." He looked up. "Does it occur to you, Parmentier, that a man gets mightily sick of hearing all the latest news of prostitution, gaming, murder; does it seem odd to you that sitting here watching you stamp the licences I should sometimes think of silly country activities, smoking out bees, picking raspberries?" The secretary looked curiously at him. "Oh, I'm not going to run away. I'd rather tackle a Paris mob than a peasant mob; you can't distract the peasant's attention. No, I'll stay here. But what the devil to do—Yes?"

A messenger was ushered in, a young man with a red, white and blue cockade, who announced himself as coming from the Assembly, and handed a packet. The Lieutenant read it in silence, in silence handed it to Parmentier.

"The notoriety of the disorders and excesses committed by several mobs having determined the General Assembly to re-establish the Parisian militia, it is ordered as follows——"

The secretary read, word by astonishing word, the Resolution which brought the National Guard into being, while the Lieutenant questioned the messenger.

"What's that in your hat?"

"Orders of the Assembly, sir. The tricolour is to be worn."

"Ah! To frighten the troops with, I suppose. What about arms for all these people?" He flicked a nod



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towards the paper in the secretary's hand. "Forty-eight thousand men, eh? Against—how many battalions has the King?"

"They are not to be used against the King. They are for the protection of the citizens' property and lives."

"Against what? Against whom?"

The messenger hesitated.

"Why, in case of any commotion."

"And what are the police for? Commotion is the King's business. What the devil have forty-eight thousand citizens to do with it? Why does the Assembly send you to me, and their precious Resolution too? I've resigned my office."

"You still hold the keys of certain armouries. I have to ask you, in the name of the Assembly, to hand these over to me."

"Your credentials?" The messenger handed a letter. M. du Crosne looked only at the signature: de Flesselles. "A merchant, I see, gives you your orders, and you give me mine. Your name, if you please? It would interest me to know it; and your rank, if you have any."

The young man answered civilly, giving his name, a noble one. The late Lieutenant of Police stared at him, and answered, with no change of manner:

"You are of good family, sir. I regret that I can't say as much for your principles. I did not expect that a man of your antecedents would dare to come to me with a proposition of this kind. Keys! The keys are the property of the King, from whom I had them; when he tells me to deliver them I shall do so. And that you may tell this counter-jumper, Flesselles, from me. Tell him besides that if he sets up proclamations of this kind without leave from whomsoever the King may appoint



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as Lieutenant, he'll find his shop pulled about his ears. Have I made myself clear?"

"Clear enough, monsieur, that you are living in the time of the Visigoths."

"Monsieur, you can do no good by staying. Parmentier will conduct you."

"I don't need safe conduct." The young man tapped his cockade. "You, sir, may."

"Commotions, eh? Honest citizens, I suppose, that mean no harm, but don't know which end of a gun the shot comes out of. I'll take my chance of their shooting. Salutations, M. le Marquis."

"I am sorry," said the young man surprisingly, and withdrew. His entry into the street some moments later was signalised by his admirers with some noise. The Lieutenant went to the window, and stood quietly looking out. Twenty ragamuffins had elected to escort their deputy; they now surrounded him, and with an inexpert brandishing of their weapons formed themselves into some kind of order and marched off with him in their midst. The Lieutenant watched their progress up the street, then turned back into the room.

"Did you hear what that impudent youngster said? He was right, too. Strange how long habit can make a fool of a man. Here's the trouble at last that we've both been expecting for the past five years; and the first movement that shows we were right sets me parading and gobbling like an old turkey-cock about my authority—that young dog's in the right of it. Visigothic! Yesterday's King is as far from us as Charlemagne, and the authority he gave wouldn't fetch a farthing in the market." A pause. "What will you do? You liked being here, in the heart of the web.



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What will you do, now that every rascal is an honest man by Act of Parliament?"

"I have a cousin in the Assembly," said the smooth secretary, "deputy for the Pas-de-Calais. He may employ me."

"No doubt, no doubt he will." M. du Crosne bowed cordially. "I have to thank you for doing my work for me all these years."

"Excellency, I have to thank you for lending me your countenance."

The ex-Lieutenant of Police laughed.

"My Visigothic countenance! The old turnip-lantern! It will take more than my countenance to quiet this city now. We should have let that masquerade go on at Bicêtre; it might have saved the King."

"You saw the drift of it, then, did you?" the secretary asked with a sharp look, and forgetting all titles of respect.

"A secret society with branches all over France; the King a member, so that wherever he went, or whatever might happen, he could rely on protection. That was the drift. Am I right, friend Parmentier? It was a real force, too; a mixture of classes for the first time. And you broke it up."

"You gave the order."

"I gave the order, yes. And if I had not, don't you suppose there would have been a raid all the same? By some extraordinary misunderstanding there would certainly have been a raid before they got hold of the King. You were only just in time, from what I hear. Who tipped the wink? D'Orléans, was it?"

"Excellency," said the secretary, no longer startled, but with his normal smoothness not yet altogether



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regained, "I don't understand you. Are you saying that I have failed in discretion or in zeal?"

"I'm saying that you managed to get your own way in that, as in most else. I'm saying that you're a Republican, have been a Republican since I've known you, and that in this matter you wanted to cheat the King of a bolt-hole. These people, this fellow St. Esprit —the thing wasn't wholly ridiculous. It would have made the King one of a brotherhood, so that when his crown was tumbled off other loyalties would remain. Isn't that so? And you got your information, and took your measures. You have a good capacity for manœuvring; I have none. You'll do well in the Assembly."

There was a moment's silence; then the secretary spoke quietly.

"I have hated the present régime for some years."

"Truth at last. I can respect you for that. Do you think I blame you? Your father was a cutler, I think. You did the Lieutenant's work, but you could never be Lieutenant because of that. Well, you are younger than I am, you may see the end of it. As for me, all I regret is that I shall probably die on a dirty pike without having smelt once more the apricots that grow on my mother's south wall in Touraine. That may seem strange to you," said M. du Crosne apologetically, "being younger. In my place you'd think of a night with an actress. But I assure you no actress that ever simpered could smell as sweet as an apricot under the sun; just ripe, and that comes away from its twig so confidingly into your hand."



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## (xiii)

It was M. de Breteuil who took over from the dispossessed Necker. He was a personage who set some value on decorum, who felt that at such a moment it was of importance that all the formalities should be observed. He therefore spent Monday, July 13th, and the next day in moving to the official residence quitted by M. Necker, the Assembly meanwhile deploring his predecessor as a victim of despotism, and voting solemn testimonials of esteem, gratitude and regret. It also declared M. de Breteuil and his colleagues to be solely responsible for the uproar in Paris; an injustice to these unfortunates who had been innocently and decorously occupied, during the crucial days, in moving their furniture and giving orders for the renewal of draperies.

The King, secure in the assurances that reached him from these officials that the disturbances in the capital were sporadic and of no significance, snubbed the Assembly's deputation which went to him with a contrary report. Forty deputies, including M. d'Ys and headed by an antique but energetic Archbishop, went to Versailles to tell the King the truth; their Resolution required the withdrawal of foreign troops from the capital and promised, if this were granted, that the Assembly would send members to bear the news in person to Paris, who should do everything in their power to appease the people and check disorder. Unhappily, the Archbishop despised compromise. Received by the King, his thirty-nine supporters standing at his back, he began:

"The National Assembly, of which I have the honour to be President——"



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At this the King checked him.

"You should rather say, M. de Vienne, the States-General."

"The National Assembly," repeated the Archbishop a little more loudly, and the King let it pass. But when the Resolution had been read Louis, who had a Bourbon memory, answered with great deliberation:

"I have already told you, my lords and gentlemen, that it is for me to decide what measures are best for the putting down of the disorder in Paris. Your presence there, it seems to me, can do no good; while by remaining here you can conveniently proceed with the business for which you were called together, and to which I now recommend that you should give your attention."

It was a firm answer; a silly answer. The sole result of it was to set the Assembly drafting further resolutions, setting up M. de la Fayette as Vice-President, and sending messages of encouragement to the Hôtel de Ville in Paris.

Here, strangely enough, on the night of the thirteenth of July there was a lull. Plundering ceased, though there were still ragamuffins at large who spent the small hours coursing in bands through the streets, ordering lamps to be lit here, and put out there, so that householders, sick of appearing at their windows with candles, at last came with blunderbusses, and let fly at some of the gatherings. The troops in the Champs Élysées had been withdrawn, a fact which should have afforded the people some satisfaction; but it had been done too late, suspicion was awake, there were stories that these regiments had only retreated to join others which were encircling Paris; and the result was that, although the night was quiet, there were men coming



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in orderly bodies at all hours, and grimly, to demand arms at the Hôtel de Ville. They got only a few pikes, the arsenals were still in the King's hands; as they went away with these, on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville ragged men accosted them, producing from their breeches silver-mounted pistols, elegant swords, which the National Guard bought at bargain prices; a common pistol fetched no more than ten sous, a cutlass the same. An expedition to the Invalides was fruitful; in half an hour enough arms were obtained for most of the forty-eight thousand militia established by resolution.

Still the clamour for arms continued, as did the oratory of the Palais Royal patriots; in the coffee shops, in the gardens, standing on chairs, drunk, sober, dressed in rags or the latest extreme of English fashion, the orators persisted. The people had a right to protect itself, the people had a right to rule France, to eat meat three times a day, to own no authority, to sleep with duchesses. Always the refrain was "More arms!"

"Arms!" demanded the seven young men who on the morning of July 14th interviewed the Governor of the Bastille. "Arms!" echoed the deputies of a mob that succeeded them. M. de Launay answered that he had none, except what were needed to equip his soldiers, to the number of a hundred and fourteen men.

"You have cannon! By what right do you train cannon on the people?"

"They are not loaded, gentlemen."

"We will assure ourselves of that."

They did; it was true, and the cannon had even been drawn out of the embrasures. They could not be used against the people.



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"Where are your soldiers? Let us see if they are patriots."

The Governor summoned those who were on guard, who swore that they would make no use of their arms, no matter whose the order, unless they were first attacked. The deputies embraced these Swiss, and departed to inform the crowd that they need have no fear, that the Governor was a gentleman.

But they had been an hour in the castle, and the crowd they emerged upon was not that which they had left. It had grown. Thirty thousand men and women were assembled in the square outside the Bastille, who had forgotten the faces of their own emissaries, or never known them, so that these latter had a rough handling, being taken for masquerading royalists. They got away at the moment when two fellows, running up through a neighbouring perfumer's house and out on to its roof, dropped thence outside the wall close to the guard-house. Not a soul was there. The great drawbridge was hoisted up; they misunderstood it, or were too impatient to lower it by using the mechanism, and set about hacking its chains with hatchets; which loosed it, but in falling one man was crushed to death and another wounded. Over their bodies the crowd swarmed into the court, and ran this way and that, the soldiers in the central castle still, according to promise, holding their fire; until at last the Governor, seeing the crowds increase and reflecting that it was his business, after all, to hold the Bastille for the King, gave the order for one discharge of muskets. That cleared the court, but set rumours flying more dangerous than any massed attack. Fugitives with stories of how the Swiss had mown down unarmed men were soon at the Hôtel de Ville; they were listened to, applauded, and the cannon



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taken that morning from the Invalides went rolling through the town, dragged by teams of men, towards the Faubourg St. Antoine. These cannons, which not a soul among the mob knew how to use, did more destruction to those employed in firing them than to the castle; still, the moral effect of them, and of the fires which had started at two or three points, was very great. The Governor consulted with his garrison, and set up a napkin tied to a bayonet on one of the towers, his drums meanwhile beating a parley. But the mob was no more learned in the military significance of a drum-tune than in the weight of powder necessary to discharge ball from a cannon without bursting it. There was an ugly reception to this showing of the white flag; a redoubling of fire, and yelling. M. de Launay again consulted his officers, whose advice was capitulation, with one proviso: the soldiers not to be massacred. One of them wrote on a piece of paper, which he thrust out on his cane through the wicket of the inner drawbridge:

"We have twenty thousand pounds weight of powder; if you do not accept our terms, and let us go, we will send the castle, and you, and the whole quarter, sky-high."

This paper could not be read at first; the width of the ditch was too great. A plank was pushed across; but the first man who tried to walk it fell into the moat. A person dressed as a lawyer's clerk, whose name is given as Maillard, managed to get across and read the paper. Some National Guards took it from him, read it in committee, and shouted to the defenders:

"It's all right, agreed; come out, we won't hurt you."

The Governor accepted; the drawbridge was let down, and the gate opened. Within, the advancing



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crowds could see Swiss and French soldiers, disarmed but standing to attention, making a lane, the Governor at their head, wearing a grey civilian coat. He was surrounded, and told that he was to be taken to the Hôtel de Ville. A procession set off, Maillard carrying colours taken from the garrison, the Governor walking between two National Guards, who, however, could hardly protect him from the people's weapons, and not at all from their threatening voices. The Governor wore no hat. One of his escort crowned him with his own, thinking to make the victim less noticeable; in a moment the yells and blows were directed at him, until M. de Launay, taking off the hat, replaced it on its owner's head. It bore the rebel cockade; and it was perhaps as much from motives of loyalty as those of humanity and pride that the Governor would not continue to wear it.

He did not reach the Hôtel de Ville. In the Place de Grève, where ordinarily executions were conducted, a group of men attacked the two guards savagely and got them down. M. de Launay was killed on top of them as they lay, and his head, fixed on a pike, was carried to the Hôtel de Ville. This was at five in the afternoon.

Maillard, who makes two dramatic appearances in the history of the taking of the Bastille, was the personage known to the Bureau of Police as Y.27. Colin Maillard, blind-man's-buff, was a game he had played all his life, reaching out in the dark to touch unknown hands and faces. He had never cared to live on the surface. Darkness gave power. It is characteristic of him that on this one day when his activities forced him into the light he hid his identity under his pseudonym, and his report, which reached the deserted offices of



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the new police chief that evening late, was written after he had changed his dress and appearance to that of a country farmer. He describes his own behaviour as though it had been that of a stranger, and the report ends:

"I would have attempted to return myself, or send word of all these happenings, but having become an object of some regard to the crowd, I thought it better to go with it and observe, rather than break away. As the result of these observations, it is my opinion that the people should never have been allowed to taste success. However, there is as yet no organization. I suggest with all respect that what urges them to excess is not the presence of the regiments, but their inactivity. Either the soldiers must fire, or they must go. I anticipate considerable further rioting to-night."

The roving mob discovered in the dungeons of the Bastille, that place of forgotten men, seven prisoners only, whom they carried out in triumph on their shoulders, a tribute which must have occasioned some astonishment to those delivered, of whom four were forgers, two quite mad, and the seventh a nobleman accused of incest.

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The Italian Comedy shut that night. It was not an evening for laughter, there was no possibility of any carriage getting through the crowds, and imaginary events and intrigues had for once been superseded in Parisian minds by the interest of facts. The players arrived as usual, only to be dismissed, and told to get



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to their homes again by their manager, in a sweat of fear lest his theatre should be taken and fired as the Bastille had been. He had received plenty of complaints about the recent retraction of his pit in order to provide more boxes for elegant ladies, and since he was a man whose theatre was his world, he supposed that this grievance would be the first remembered amid the general breaking up of laws. But the discipline of a city is not loosened all at once; orders remain orders here and there, though all direction of policy or behaviour may be gone. Thus it was that at four o'clock, punctually to the minute, the usual squad of grenadiers turned up and deployed in the theatre square. It had been one of their regimental tasks for something like half a century to keep the groundlings of the playhouses in order; they saw to the seating, relentlessly insisting, says an observer of the period, on so many posteriors to a bench; they subdued too-enthusiastic applause with musket-butts dropped on toes, and generally saw to it that the audience remained polite. No orders having been received to the contrary, these worthies, sixteen of them with a sergeant-major, turned up as usual at the locked doors of the Italian Theatre, on which they hammered imperatively, until the manager himself came down to open.

"What's the meaning of this? It isn't Good Friday, Mr. Manager?"

"No play to-night, gentlemen. My God, at first I thought you were bandits. All my people have gone home."

"That's no reason for keeping us out. You know the law, and so do I. We're here to preserve public order, play or no play."

"Come in, come in, I'm glad to have your protection.



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If a couple of men will stand by this, sergeant, and the stage door, why, then, if these assassins come——"

"Those aren't our stations. Eight men in the gallery, eight in the pit, that's the regulation."

"But there's no public, there's no play, nothing for you to do in the gallery and pit. Whereas if you were to stand at the doors the mob might be overawed."

"That's not my concern. I'm not here to protect your theatre. I'm here to see there's no disloyalty talked, and no trouble started."

"Disloyalty! Trouble! What are all these mobs, then, rushing up and down decent streets, frightening patrons away?"

"I don't want to have to argue with you." That was the phrase with which obstreperous playgoers were warned. "Platoon! By your left——"

And the platoon filed in its customary order into the foyer; there split; and while eight men made their way to the deserted gallery, the rest stationed themselves at the doors of the pit, standing at attention, muskets grounded and bayonets fixed, staring at the dropped curtain which offered a galaxy of pagan deities for their consideration. They stood thus for three hours until the theatre grew almost dark, and only the white bodies of Syrinx and Daphne still showed clear. Then the sergeant, privileged by his rank to roam the corridors at will, heard a din and some shouting at the deserted stage door. He was a stickler for order, the sergeant, and in a general way found it possible to stand up to almost any boredom in the course of duty; still, three hours' silence and the thunderous feel of the air, together with the prospect of a little swashbuckling—for he had been trained to think one grenadier the equal of twenty citizens—sent him down past the stage door-keeper's



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box to bandy words with this noisy individual. Regardless of whether or no the assault was being conducted by one man or fifty, he flung the door wide and stood at the top of the steps, fiercely scowling in the manner with which he was used to overcome the protests of playgoers, and looking fully seven feet high. The solitary young man who knocked, however, took no notice of this, but barked one question at him:

"My wife; is she here?"

The sergeant, peering, recognised the speaker as an habitual patron, and smoothed out his frown. He knew all about the romance, and admired both parties to it.

"M. le Vicomtel Mlle. Desjardins isn't here, sir. None of them's here, except the manager. He sent them all off three hours ago."

"My God!" said the young man, staring and biting his lip. "She's not at home either. Let me in, Patou, perhaps somebody knows where she is."

"She'll be all right, sir. What's the news from the Assembly?"

"Blast the Assembly, a lot of windbags, useless. You can't stop bloodshed with talk. The Bastille's gone. They'll be out at Versailles next. Stand aside, can't you?"

"It's not a bit of good, sir, there's not a soul in the house——"

He stood aside, however, and the young man, going upstairs three steps at a time, found himself outside the dressing-rooms, where he halted, and yelled the manager's name. A quavering voice came from behind a door on his left:

"I've got a gun. I'm armed. Don't come near me."

"You fool, who wants you? Where's Valentine?"

At that, with much turning of keys and thrusting back of bolts, the door opened, and a face peered out,



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preceded by the mouth of an aged pistol. M. d'Ys, mistrusting the quivering hand that held it, twitched it away and threw it down.

"Answer me. Where's Valentine?"

"How should I know where she's gone? I sent her away; they went off together, the three girls."

"No man with them?"

The pallid face was moved to a grin.

"These newlyweds! We were to have played *The Jealous Man* to-night——"

M. d'Ys stopped that with a sharp slap on the cheek, and prevented withdrawal of the head by catching his fingers in its neckcloth and twisting.

"D'you know what the streets are like? You sent off those women without a sword to take care of them?"

"We actors," said the pallid face, snarling, "don't carry swords, by Act of Parliament." Then terror, which a moment's rage had displaced, came back into the voice. "The streets—what's happening? Is there much blood? Which way was the mob going?"

"To hell, where you'll be if you don't give me an answer. Did my wife say——"

"She said nothing, nothing. Let me go. A lover? Not she. Don't twist me! She's a darling, a saint. Why don't you look for her in church, that's the most likely place. My throat, my voice——"

The pressure ceased suddenly, and its victim, released, fell against the wall, where he remained a while getting his breath and malignantly surveying the back of M. d'Ys, retreating at a run down the corridor towards the green-room and the stairs. At last, with a grunt, he stooped to pick up his pistol.

"I ought to have said something about the mole on Valentine's hip," reflected the manager. "That would



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have shown him. It's time someone did something about these young bastards. Privilege! If the people get rid of that for us——" A clock inside the room struck seven. "God! And at nine the soldiers go. I shall be here alone." He stood with the pistol in his hand, listening. To those inner passages of the theatre no sound came, but his imagination broke the silence with shots, and the crackling of wood; the fear that came on him then was not wholly for his own skin. "My theatre, my pretty theatre!"

He stood with his forehead against the green door; then, the pistol hidden under his laces, went up towards the gallery to be with the soldiers, and take courage from their familiar presence.

M. d'Ys meanwhile turned north towards the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, following the hint which the distracted manager had given him, and which seemed as reasonable as any other guess at his wife's whereabouts. The streets were full of people standing about in the slanting evening sunlight, talking, listening; occasionally moving aside in haste to let pass a patrol of National Guard, going at the double nobody knew where.

"We'll have the foreign hussars down on us, you'll see."

"A bombardment, more like."

"There were a hundred prisoners in the Bastille, chained up naked, and mad, the lot of them."

"You're a liar! I tell you I was there, and there were more like a thousand. Skeletons, most of them were, and the marks of the lash on their backs. That's King Louis for you."

"That's what he'll do to you if he catches you."

"He won't catch me. He won't be on his throne to-morrow. He'll have cleared out like the fat rat he is,



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and as for his hussars, I don't care a—— Look out! Soldiers!"

They fled into doorways, the talkers, while half a dozen men of the watch strolled down the street fingering their staves. Only M. d'Ys held on his way, until one of the watchmen stopped him, in spite of the cockade on his hat.

"Where going?"

"Notre-Dame de Lorette."

"There's trouble up that way."

"I'm going to fetch my wife."

"Armed?"

"No. I'm a deputy."

"If you were God Almighty the mob up there wouldn't know. They're drunk. They've been breaking up the liquor shops."

"I've got to fetch my wife."

"It's your funeral." They yielded to let him through, then called: "Hey, monsieur, monsieur! From which Assembly?"

"Versailles."

"What's up? Have they seen the King?" The men were round him again. "Any chance of the soldiers coming? Chance of relief? We've been on duty forty-eight hours. Hulin's got a nasty poke in the arm, he oughtn't to be on his feet. What's the Assembly doing?"

M. d'Ys was not aware of it, but at that moment the Comte de Mirabeau, sweating and breathing drink like any one of the mob, was making his famous speech in favour of appointing the Duke of Orléans Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. "Who denies that the French are Monarchists? France needs a King, France deserves a King—who'll dispute that? Not I, gentlemen. But



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it seems to me that Seventeen is as good a number as Sixteen; and once the people understand that Louis XVI is an accessory before these dreadful facts, then it will call, and with no uncertain voice, for Louis XVII. Is a man a traitor because he recognises this? A bad citizen, because he wants to take the only means of having his grievances redressed? A bad reasoner because he argues: From such a source evil flows, let that source be cut off!"

To which speech the assembled nobility found answer only in a whispered ridiculous impromptu, which went the rounds:

"Frenchmen, mourn the orator
Who will never charm you more;
Death by poison claimed him young
On the day he bit his tongue."

M. d'Ys, though not aware of M. de Mirabeau's speech and the response to it, knew that a deputation had gone to the King, and told the men so.

"To send soldiers?"

"To take them away."

The watchmen stared at each other.

"How do they expect to get Paris quietened down? These scum don't take notice of us any more. They're armed; we're not. Well, I suppose we'd better keep going while we can move our feet. Better join up with us, sir. We're going your way."

They went together slowly up the narrow streets. There was no opposition, and few signs of any violence, only here and there a man sitting in a doorway surrounded by a knot of women, and talking big while they bandaged him. An alarm-bell, clanging in some direction which the winding streets and the vagaries of



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the breeze would not let them ascertain, brought heads out of the upper windows. Once they found a boy playing with a silver-mounted pistol, and took it from him. It was unloaded. The head of the watch tossed it to M. d'Ys with a word:

"Might come in handy."

They turned into the broader street of the Faubourg Montmartre; and here certainly were evidences of commotion.

"I knew it," said the man called Hulin resignedly. "It's up by the barrier. They've smashed it, likely, and the stuff's being rushed in free. If ever we get back to law and order there'll be a million gallons of spirits in Paris unpaid for. That's what's sending 'em mad, they're afraid it won't last and they're putting it down like water."

And indeed the street was crowded in an ugly manner with lurching people, who sang, tenderly embraced the watchmen, but appeared, beyond the evident fact of their drunkenness, to be in no very bad disposition. Some drank King Louis's health, with damnation to his wife and ministers. Some had already hit off new words to an old tune and were hymning the fall of the Bastille:

"The prisoners so joyful
As ever you did see,
They laid down their chain
And never again
The guests of King Louis did they wish for to be."

"Don't let on you're a deputy," said one watchman in the ear of M. d'Ys, "not from Versailles; they haven't got much opinion of Versailles. It's the Town Hall they take notice of here. They think the King pays the others."



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M. d'Ys recognised the wisdom of this, and held his tongue except to wish those that approached him with bottles their very good health, while they in return politely drank to his cockade.

"We're not bad fellows," said a stuttering shoemaker in a leather apron, tapping off the neck of a bottle with his little hammer, "we like our bit of fun. They roasted the Governor down there, did you hear that? So they tell me. But that was fellows from the Faubourg St. Antoine. Up here we're all as mild as mother's milk—milder. You needn't be afraid of any roasting and such-like up here. Why, damn it, we're all alike. All come out of the same bag. You don't deny that? That's right. That's what I call a sensible man. I'd like to have a little conversation with you about politics, only I've got the hiccups. Well, here's to hell with the Austrian bitch!"

The crowd thickened with the light. It was eight o'clock when they reached the broken barrier at the cross-roads of the Rue des Porcherons, and M. d'Ys turned off to the right, shouldering through the people, treading over drunken women and a child or two on the steps of the church. They were not so drunk as to be quarrelsome, nor so blind to the world that they could not appreciate the fine humour of a neatly dressed and sufficiently handsome young man attempting to make his way into church on a week-day.

"Look, the sweetheart! He's come to be married. Where's the bride? Have it by proxy, darling, and let me stand for her. Yes, and lie for her. Take your pick, it's not often us poor folk get somebody like you to look at; not the right side of the blanket anyway. Can't get in? Well, that's what we're all complaining. What's a church for?"



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Several of them were sufficiently refreshed to accompany their protégé round to the side-door. They hung upon him, blubbering kisses down his sleeve and on his neck, smelling unspeakably, but good-natured; he was patient with them.

"That's it, mother. I'm looking for a wife, but she's inside, I believe. How long has this church been shut?" He knocked steadily at the small door. "Some of you saw her come perhaps—tall, a green bonnet? Might be with two other women."

No, they had not seen her, but they were distressed beyond measure at the distress of their pretty young man. They began bawling to friends in the busy crowd of drinkers:

"Hey, Étienne, Petit-Jean, here a minute. How'll we get into this church? The young man's wife's inside with her lousy confessor, and they've locked the door. He's got to get in. How'll we do it?"

Men came towards them, attracted by their screeching, and perceiving that it might be a good thing to have the church open, and that there might be pickings, lent their intellects to the problem. D'Ys, a little sickened at his company and at the interest he had roused, tried to quiet the women. They would have none of it. He was their own pretty sweetheart, they insisted, and his wife should not hide from him while they could move a finger.

"Men! Up on each other's shoulders and smash the window. What's an old saint or two? Here's a pretty boy in a hurry to get to bed. Up with you. Take a stone to their reverences." There was a splintering of glass, duller sounds as the lead of the window yielded. "He's in. Round to the door, Petit-Jean, let us all in. What's a church for?"



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D'Ys was the first through when the turned key released its hold, and stood a moment, enquiring of the half-darkness with his eyes. He saw Valentine almost at once. She was kneeling close by the altar with some other women, while the priest had been leading them in the rosary, or so it appeared by the beads still hanging from his fingers: he was standing now, and the few candles at St. Anthony's shrine showed his face white and wet as new cheese. The sight of his wife, and the thought of her bending her knees to this man, telling perhaps of her husband's kisses—this, together with the end to immediate anxiety, angered d'Ys past bearing. The hand that gripped her shoulder bruised it.

"What the devil are you doing here?"

"Alain!" She looked at him, and past him to the disreputables at his back. "Why aren't you in Versailles?"

"D'you think I could stay out there after the news came? Where's Joaquin? By God, I'll have the hide off him for this, and that insolent swine at the theatre too——"

"My poor Alain, but I was all right, safer than you; I'm not frightened."

His ragged retinue had caught the word Versailles, and were on to it.

"He's from Versailles. What's your job, gentleman? What's King Louis think of the Parisians now?"

But he was still too discountenanced with relief and the trouble the search had given him to answer them good-humouredly. He went on, addressing his wife:

"You'll come home with me. What made that fool"—his nod flung the word at the *curé*—"shut up his church? Once violence starts there's no end to it, no saying what will happen."



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And in fact the church was now nearly filled with people, some cheerfully drunken, some predatory, all noisy. The unsavoury congregation had only one inlet, the door which Petit-Jean had unlocked, and no egress at all, since it had occurred to nobody to unbar the larger western door, and there were chairs piled up, as though with some idea of defence, against it. From curiosity or hope of sport the press of people continued to pass through this single narrow way, until there was no getting backwards or forwards, and the church was fuller than any feast day had ever known it. D'Ys, standing in front of his wife, began to push forwards towards it; but he had reckoned without the word "Versailles," which had gone the rounds, and was exciting a dozen different emotions, all of which found expression in an attempt to get near him, as the fountain-head of news.

"Hey, gentleman, what about the soldiers? What about all the Russians and Prussians and Swisses? There's a circle of them round Paris. They're put to stop the bread coming in; that's right, isn't it?"

He did not answer, partly because the noise had become so great that he could not distinguish questions, but he went forward, silent and as grimly as he could look, his wife holding to his waist, and shuffling an inch at a time nearer the door. His bodyguard of women was yelping in defence of him; men were shouting for shouting's sake, and what children there were howled, lost in the forest of legs.

At this juncture one of the soberer men, a man with an eye to the main chance, an eel-like man to whom crowds were his means of livelihood, slipped a hand to the young man's waistcoat pocket, and lifted away his watch, fobs and all. One of the women caught him in



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the act and bore down upon the pilfering hand with her teeth; at which the pickpocket gave a yell so strident as to silence the immediate noise about them, and decried her for a species of she-gander and a slut. She retorted. There were gestures, and a suggestion that the thief should be strung up for robbing, and in church, too, a nice young man only looking for his wife; a young man come from Versailles to tell them how all the taxes were off and all the Farmers-General hanged, and the King had taken off his hat to Henry IV, and there would be free drinks for ever; a decent young man of the people with a nice pretty wife——

But the pickpocket had another version of M. d'Ys to offer.

"He's a spy," yelled that martyr, between sucks at his hand, "he's a noble and a spy; look at the crown on his watch, if you want to know; and there's a pistol in his tail-pocket, I felt it; and you'll find chalk in his pocket, too, if you look. He's no more a patriot than I am, and that's no more his wife than I am, so don't you let him fool you. It's an actress, and I've seen her dance at the Italians with no more clothes on than an egg."

The altercation had cleared a little space about them, leaving enough room for M. d'Ys to swing his arms. He had taken the prevalent English enthusiasm enough to know how to use his fists, and now a jab caught the pickpocket on the ear and felled him. He sank down, bubbling, and was lost as the crowd, suddenly alert, gave M. d'Ys its attention. The combination of coronet and chalk was to them a very sinister one. There had been rumours going all the day, starting nobody knew where or how, a crowd memory going back to the St. Bartholomew perhaps, that the nobles were soon to



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make an attack on the people. Well-dressed men had been reported as going about marking certain doors with a cross in chalk, so that the rich men sallying out by night from their hotels might know where to strike. A strange picture this, of financiers creeping out of their safety with cloaks and daggers to take personal vengeance upon porters and chimney-sweeps. The people, however, had accepted it. It was one of the rumours that kept the town awake and stirring at night.

Noise followed the thief's accusation. He, perceiving that he had the ear of the crowd and might venture further, dived at the pocket holding the pistol and brought it out before d'Ys could turn. He held it up, clamouring, for all to see; silver-mounted, brand-new, a nobleman's pistol; what was it doing there in an innocent gathering of the people—unarmed, all of them? He asked his question; d'Ys would not answer it with the truth, which had an improbable ring to it, that he had taken it out of a child's hand in the street. He stood silent, very white, hands clenched; but the press of people kept his arms to his sides. Some were exhorting the pickpocket:

"Try the other side. Find the chalk. We'll hold him. Turn out his pockets, hers too. She's used to a hand in her placket."

They held him, and he felt his wife's arms go from his waist. On that he lost his head completely, cursed them for gutter animals, bastards and cowards, and struggled. They held him, beginning to laugh and badger him with tweaks of his hair, flips on his nose. It was the cat-mood which later tormented Bailly, once the crowd's god, with a two-hour execution. There was no savagery yet, only a pleased and wondering delight, like a child's, in torment. D'Ys heard his wife's voice behind him crying



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out something; it was her stage voice, strong and carrying. The people holding him turned their heads to look, loosing him so that he too could turn.

Valentine was on the steps of the altar, her arms raised in a big gesture, smiling, her colour high. The clamour dwindled until he could hear what she was saying.

"—yes, an actress. And why not? Hasn't a poor girl any right to live? What's the matter with acting? If a girl's got a good voice, and good legs, why shouldn't she show 'em off?" She was the young laundress now, standing with her hands at her hips and her head cocked wickedly; a wink hung on her left eyelid. "The stage is the life, believe me. Not much work, pretty dresses and lots of 'em, and please yourself who you get into bed with——"

There were shouts from the crowd, beginning to be pleased with her.

"Do a bit of acting. Show us what you can do. Show a leg."

"I'm on!" said she, with a shriek of laughter. "We want an orchestra. You there with the drum"—there was a man with a tambour captured at the Invalides that morning—"strike up, can't you? Any of you play the organ or whistle?" A couple of young men, glad of the chance, were at the small organ in a side chapel, one blowing, the other inducing vile and long-drawn discords at the keys. "No good, no good, shut them up, we'll make shift with the drum. No sticks?" The drummer, crimsoning, could produce only a rap or two with his knuckles. "Give it to me, citizens. Throw me up a couple of St. Anthony's candles, they'll do to beat with——" The drum was wrested from its possessor, and passed along hand to hand, the people standing



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now in rows, peering and anticipatory, as at a Punch and Judy. Valentine strung the drum about her neck, flourished the candles, and beat with them once. "Bah, they're too soft, they're melting with this heat, take them away and rub your corns with them. Something hard, something that'll wake us all up. That's better!" Two pistols were thrust into her hand. "Now, citizens! The one and only Valentine, of the Italian Theatre, daughter of Madame Desjardins, laundress, of Three Apples Street, Rouen; first appearance on the steps of any church! Walk up!" She brought down the butts of the pistols with vigour and rhythm on the drum. "No charge, ladies and gentlemen, to patriots. Join in the chorus, make it go. What's your pleasure? A pious song first, we're in church, and don't you forget it."

There was a groan, which she answered with a grin, striking up a brisk tune in six-eight on her drum.

"When Dagobert was King
A fine pair of trousers he wore,
But put them on hind to fore.
And what said Saint Eli
When this state of things he found?
Your Majesty's breech is wrong way round."

They took it away from her and sang it through, all the twenty-one verses, Valentine varying her accompaniment with the drum and pistols, and swaggering to and fro upon the altar steps inside the rail. At last it was ended, and there was a fury of clapping with cries of "Bis!"

"Something like a song, patriots, eh? You're in good voice this evening, all of you. Been wetting your whistles by the sound of it. Nobody got a drop for a poor girl?" There was an immediate scramble, one of



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the vases high on St. Joseph's shrine was emptied on the floor, its flowers spilling underfoot, and a dram of spirit poured in and handed to her. She tossed it off with an open throat, and threw back the vase over her shoulder, where it broke against the altar.

"That's for luck. Now, item number two on the programme, what's it to be?" She struck a meditative rap or two on the drum. "Silence! The celebrated entertainer is thinking." And there was silence, immediate and complete, in which d'Ys could almost hear his own heart thudding. His captors had left him, nobody paid him any attention, he could have walked out of the door, free. He stayed at the back of the crowd, watching, with tears in his eyes, his wife playing mountebank for his life and her own. At his elbow he heard a sigh and a sniffling and half turned; it was the *curé*, his surplice doffed, neck bands hastily stowed in his pocket in an attempt to give his costume something of a lay look, hands twisted together, and with a most lamentable countenance.

"My poor church!" said he; and then, pressing to d'Ys: "Why do we not protest, sir? This is desecration —a parishioner, too."

"Aren't you man enough to understand what she's doing? Get out of here if it troubles you. There's nobody at the door."

"But there are people in the street."

"Oh, God!" said the young man, with impatience. "Stay, then, and listen civilly while she saves your skin."

He forgot the priest, and gave his attention once more to the scene in the sanctuary.

The people were shouting at Valentine, demanding this song and that, but she shook her head, looking in a mocking way at the statue of St. Joseph; at last she



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walked over to it, struck a pose, and beat on her drum a long warning roll. The voices died down, but she waited, eyeing her audience, until there was absolute quiet once more. Then, dropping the pistols, she put out a hand to the statue, bearded and benevolently smiling, and began in a clear sweet thread of voice the old song of the arrival at Bethlehem, which begins with the Virgin's recognition of the city, David's birthplace, and her plea for rest and shelter.

She sang as to Joseph, in the next verse answering herself with tender reassurance. There was a movement among the people, and some noise. She continued to sing, not raising her voice, the Virgin's plaint; her pose, straining back from the absurd drum, was that of a woman carrying a child, and it was women's voices that hushed the others down. As the song went on Valentine moved here and there upon her narrow stage, using its resources most skilfully. There was an ugly carved head high on a pillar to the left, with which she pleaded as to the cruel hostess of the inn. At the end of that verse, where Mary is turned away with a jeer, "You're too near your time," a hissing broke out in the crowd; Valentine, who had served her apprenticeship in booths, heard it with triumph. At the Italians a hiss meant condemnation of the actor; here, of the character she played. It gave her strength, and a purpose in which her original intent, the mere distraction of the crowd from its object, was totally forgotten. Her imagination was alight, filling the few yards of space with figures out of legend; the statues came alive to her voice, which at last, as the moment of the birth came near, sank to a whisper. The birth was enacted, not as the decencies of the legitimate stage dictated, but as she and all other women there



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knew it had happened. There was no laughter.

Then, kneeling up from where she had lain by the altar, she swung her whole strength into the trumpet call which ends the song.

"Unto us a child is born,
Sound the horn, sound the horn,
Hope and joy to us are born,
Sound, sound the horn!"

They were in tears, the people; drunken, silly tears, but she had touched them, and they sang the tune, hiccupping and sobbing. Some women were on their knees at the altar rails as for communion. A man who said, "Religion, eh? All this song and dance about a bastard," was struck down by his neighbour. Sleeping children smelling of wine were lifted up for Valentine to kiss. The pickpocket, the original cause of all the trouble, was hauled outside by a dozen enthusiasts, and amid cheers trussed up by the ankles to a convenient shop-sign, where they left him to jerk and scream while five hundred men and women, swearing admiration and friendship, and death to all detractors of Desjardins and her man, escorted them downhill, together with the *curé*, who somehow or other was swept up and included in the general benevolence, by the street of the Faubourg Montmartre, over the rampart and along by the garden of the Filles St. Thomas, home.

The religious, chanting their last office in the dark, loudly, so as to shut out the sounds and silences, echoes of singular events, that had perplexed them all day, heard, through one thin voice intoning the antiphon, this approaching clatter and singing, and were able from time to time to distinguish the tune of a Christmas



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carol, sinister in the sultry July night. They could make nothing of it.

## (xv)

Safe in the little lodging up four flights of stairs the priest was apologising for his presence.

"I won't impose upon you. I had no intention of accompanying you, but you saw how those wretches, those poor creatures, compelled me. And now that I'm here, perhaps—my house up there is exposed. It's near the barrier. They'll be drinking and mischievous, all night. If I might claim just a corner of your floor, with a book for a pillow—we poor clerics, you know, don't need much in the way of luxury."

Valentine was solicitous, delighted to be playing the housewife.

"But, Father, there's a good sofa, plenty of bed-clothes. Of course you must stay; it would be too dangerous going back through the streets. Then I shall feel like a duchess, with my own confessor in the house."

He laughed, this time more boldly, some of that manner returning which gave him popularity with his female parishioners.

"Not unnecessary, madame, a confessor. King Dagobert in a church! Few duchesses can have that to tell."

D'Ys, standing with his back to them by the writing-table, loading the pistol which had been restored to him, recognised to his surprise real anxiety and trouble in his wife's answer; with some anger heard her apologise.



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"Father, they were in a bad mood. I know that mood; horrible things breed from it. But if you can make them laugh, or make them sing, the wickedness goes. If I had started with Bethlehem they would have hooted, but when they'd had their laugh they were good. Father, I felt sick and unhappy standing up there where you stand, spilling out dirty words. It was a sin, but I had to do it; I'll make my confession now if you'll hear it?"

At that there were two movements; one of the priest, deprecating, one of her husband quickly turning and dropping the pistol. The *curé* had caught his look, and fended off her suggestion with a smooth hand. His voice was that of the ladies' man, the preacher to whom women offered macaroons after a telling Lenten sermon on hell. "We may forget the whole affair, I hope, and trust that the good God will do likewise, considering what hung upon it."

"Your life and mine," said M. d'Ys grimly, for he had not forgotten their altercation in the church. "But for that song, you and I would be strung up now to a bootmaker's sign like that other poor devil. I can't speak for you, monsieur; but I should not have made a pretty martyr."

"No need, no need, happily, to remember it," said the priest in a hurry; then resumed his former manner. "I say happily; that is speaking from the human point of view. In God's eyes martyrdom is the greatest gift."

"I don't see eye to eye with God in that," d'Ys answered bluntly.

His wife's hand was on his arm. She had been standing, fixed in attention, frowning at her own thoughts and paying no great heed to their exchange. Now he perceived that some emotion or recollection



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had hold of her; her grip upon his sleeve tightened.

"Alain, was it this he meant, I wonder?"

"This? He?"

"That creature in the Palais Royal. He said—what I told you. Oh, but surely it must be that! Standing up where the priest stands, and the people adoring me—it's come, Alain, it's happened, it's over!" She held him to her, and suddenly began to cry. "I'm a fool. I believed him. It's been at the back of my mind always, making me sick with fright and worry. I wanted to be good. Now it's come like this, I don't mind. It's happened. I can forget it. My darling, I didn't tell you, it was ridiculous, it was unreasonable; but it has often made me unhappy." She remembered the priest's presence all at once, and moved away from her husband, dabbing at her eyes, making a small apologetic curtsy. "A silly prophecy, Father, before I was married. I've been troubled, thinking of it."

"You mustn't go to fortune-tellers, madame," the priest answered, smiling and shaking his finger, "that won't do. Or if you do go—the ladies can't keep away from such people—then you mustn't believe what they say."

"No more," she said, with a glance at her husband. "Never more." In the moment's silence that followed those words she drew a deep breath like a person reprieved. With the sigh she became housewife again, hostess of the people, bustling, all her goddess-dignity departed. "We must all have something to eat. Father, a glass of wine? Where's Joaquin?"

"Out in the streets," her husband answered with a laugh, none too jovial. "These fellows can't keep out of any excitement that's going. It's late. But I'll fetch the wine."



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And he went out of the room abruptly, damning the *curé* under his breath. He had things to say to Valentine; he was jealous that another man should see her in tears. He wanted to hold her, not speaking, letting her feel from his closeness all that he felt, tenderness for which words were too clumsy.

"A fine young man, your husband," said the priest as the door shut, fingering the linen bands in his tail-pocket, conscious of his bare neck and the raffish poise of his wig. He spoke to make talk, but she answered gravely: "You are not to mind if he speaks rather bitterly. He is not a believer. His mother died very young." She looked dubiously at the priest: "He is not easy to argue with."

"I leave that to you," he answered with as pretty a bow as his disordered dress would permit. "Wives have advantages that a poor curate can't lay claim to." She was pulling open the wings of a cupboard, getting out glasses, and he became at once the ladies' man of a hundred Sunday collations. "Allow me. I'm very handy with such things."

"I can't find a napkin," she answered, disregarding him. "Where can Joaquin have put the linen? Or himself, for that matter. Wait; don't tinkle the glasses. Was that a sound at the door?"

She went towards it, but as her hand touched the handle it turned. Joaquin was there, looking shame-faced.

"You! Well, that's a good thing." She was akimbo, facing him. "I suppose, then, there's nothing more going on in the town. I take it there's nothing more for monsieur to see in the streets, no more free shows, comical, historical, tragical! Midnight, or thereabouts, all quiet, nothing doing, the lights are out, and so



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monsieur comes home. And where, if you're not too much of a patriot to answer the question, have you hidden the linen?"

"Madame, the fact is—it's late, I know—but I've got someone with me. A lady."

"You have the impudence to tell me that to my face, with the *curé* looking on! Felicitations! I hope she's not fat. Two's a crowd in that cupboard of yours."

"Madame, it's not like that, it's a friend of the master's." She stared, astonished; he went on. "Like this. I was down at the lodge of the Hôtel d'Uzès, having a word with the porter, and this lady comes ringing at the gate. No carriage, nobody with her. On foot, and none too tidy. A lady, though. She asked for the Duke. Petiot had his orders, and anyway the Duke was out at Versailles. She'd had her carriage wrecked, she said, and her people knocked about, and where was she to spend the night? Petiot couldn't take it on himself to lend one of the Duke's carriages. He sent a message to the house, though. Madame Dupont was the name, but the major-domo didn't know it."

"Dupont?"

"Of the rue de l'Équerre; or that's how I heard it. Then she mentioned monsieur's name, said she knew he lived in this quarter. So at that I up and said who I was, and that I knew it would be monsieur's wish. So she took my arm, not to look too distinguished, and she's in the lobby now."

"A woman, Joaquin; you're sure?"

"Madame!" The priest was at her elbow. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing; I'm a fool. You did right, Joaquin. Bring this lady in."

The person that advanced past Joaquin's bowing was



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dressed fashionably in a riding-coat like a man's, the laces above tumbled a little; she was bare-headed, save for a wig dressed in ringlets to her shoulders. In silence, standing stiffly, and still as in a nightmare, Valentine waited for her to speak.

"You must not scold your man, madame; it was I who insisted, hearing your husband's name——"

Valentine gave at that a sound like a moan. Her husband, entering with a bottle in his hand, set it quickly down and ran to her. She hid her face against him, shutting out the sight of the woman in the riding-coat. He felt her shivering, and turned to see the cause. The intruder nodded at him, smiling recognition. D'Ys spoke roughly, holding his wife to him:

"I can't have you here."

"I have endured a good deal," the woman answered. "I need rest."

"Not here. I'll lend you clothes and money."

The priest, staring from one to the other, amazed at the scene, quite unable to comprehend this offer, recollected that he was an outsider, and this perhaps a family quarrel. He withdrew to the window, where, for occupation and because the room was stifling, he opened the shutters a little. The glare of a none too distant fire entered, dancing, and he could see that there was movement in the streets. He swung the shutters to again instantly. The dialogue was continuing.

"I have money. What I want is shelter."

"You were safe in the Châtelet."

"The mob freed me, with the rest of the prisoners. If I leave here, where am I to go?"

"You have resources."

The woman in the riding-coat hesitated and turned. But at that the priest came forward.



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"Monsieur, I don't think you quite realise the condition of the streets. It is close on midnight, there is no public protection left, these bandits are setting Paris on fire. As a Christian——"

"I'm not a Christian, sir. There are reasons why this person should not stay in my house."

At that Valentine thrust him gently away, and called to the woman in the door:

"Don't go into the street. Wait." And to her husband: "What harm can it do? Now that we know and are warned."

The woman stood passively, waiting her orders. There was silence in the room, to which entered, even through the tightly closed shutters, uneasy noises of voices and running feet. D'Ys looked at the window, shrugged, and walked to the desk where he had left the bottle.

"Wine, then. We must take the bedfellows adversity sends us."

Glasses were ready on the table. He poured wine into them, and handed one to his wife. The others he left for his unbidden guests to take. The priest did so with an assured gesture, and lifted his to his hostess; he had readjusted the bands at his neck again, a proceeding which had given him back most of his self-confidence.

"To our relief from trouble, and the chastising of Paris!"

The woman in the riding-coat too lifted her glass, but not to any person in the room. A lamp was set under the mirror. She faced that, and her murmur was:

"To the future!"

"Almost too brave a toast, madame. Won't you qualify it? A peaceful future? A prosperous future?"

"The future as it will be," said she, setting down her



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glass empty. "It is for us to make what we choose of it."

The priest looked shocked; a professional social grimace.

"I'm afraid you talk like a philosopher. I am in a nest of unbelievers here." And he threw a playful glance at Valentine, a hint to maintain the conversation at this polite level. "Madame, you must stand by me. Here is a lady who says the future is on our shoulders, and I am so old-fashioned—you, too, I hope—that I prefer to leave such matters to God."

"God needs lieutenants, as the King does. Do you suppose this country will be saved from confusion and this people from power by prayer? There must be energy, energy, and more energy. And a directing vision."

"Ah!" the *curé* answered non-committally; and continued in a polite voice: "You will be interested to hear of the experiments a friend of mine has been making. He computes—by chemistry, you know—the units of energy contained in thought of different kinds. Now prayer is thought at its strongest——"

"Why do you trouble still to talk this cant?" The priest looked offended, but d'Ys was addressing the woman. "You have been shown for what you are, nobody heeds you. Why do you still persist?"

"I persist," said the woman slowly, "because you do not silence an idea by striking the man who utters it across the mouth. As for what I am, you have no notion of that, you have not been shown it. You have seen a night arrest by armed men. Well? Eighteen hundred years ago you might have seen as much at Gethsemane."

"I'm no believer, but I won't hear you say that."

"No believer! You have a capacity for belief that is



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inexhaustible. Do not confuse the issue. It is not your capacity, but your digestion that is at fault. You can swallow the proposition of Rousseau, that all men are born free and equal, but not the proposition of Jesus Christ that men must be born again before they can enter the Kingdom. Why should one truth stick in your gorge while the other goes down?"

"Why, madame," said the priest with a laugh, "you are not after all such a philosopher as at first I thought. A very pretty question indeed! Come now, sir, this is a night for argument; you must answer."

"I'll answer." D'Ys came a step nearer the table. "I am a man lost in a forest. It's night; pitch dark; but I have in my hand a little lantern, and I can see my steps one at a time. A man in the same plight as myself says to me, 'Put out your light, friend, you'll see better.' That man is a priest."

His tone was not that of drawing-room conversation. The *curé* found some difficulty in turning this response away lightly.

"When you've put out your candle, the moon will rise. Isn't that so, madame? Faith—faith is the moon that will light you; the gift of God."

"Is not reason His gift, too?"

"Our talk is becoming a little unsuited to our company," the *curé* reproved him, "and to our situation. Madame, let me pour you another glass of wine, and give a toast which we may all drink without quarrelling. The Assembly! And may its labours be fruitful!" He lifted his own glass, and had emptied it before he saw that the others stood silent and unmoving.

"The Assembly!" repeated the woman in the riding-coat. "M. d'Ys is discreet, he won't drink to himself. Besides, he knows very well that half a pint of wine



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more or less won't give those talkers wisdom. Talk!" She stretched her hands, clenching them. "Everywhere hope; the King hoping the people will submit; the people hoping the King will not betray them. But nowhere a plan, except some vague intrigue to let the Duke of Orléans up; King Log, King Stork! Nowhere any principle applied."

"There you hit it," the priest clamoured. "None applied. But there are principles which would free us all, waiting for a trial. Christianity! There's the answer, in a single word. You agree with me, madame? Christ; not the atheist Rousseau."

"You, M. d'Ys," asked the woman, turning, "Jean Jacques is your man. Nature; contact with the soil. No buying or selling, no occupation save by choice. The marriage-tie loosed to let incompatibles slip out. Rule by the general will. That's your position, I think?"

He nodded; then suddenly became aware that he had almost forgotten his mistrust and hatred of this personage, and became angry once more. "Why do I stand here to be assessed by you? What authority have you to question me? You're in my house, because common humanity won't let me send you out in that dress at this hour among the people. But my opinion of you doesn't change. And the memory, with the look of you now—it sickens me; like an Old Testament prophet turned out by Rose Bertin——"

The woman laughed, an odd sound, deep. The speaking voice was high.

"What are we to do? Sit mum and listen to the street noises? This is what speech was given man for, to distract his mind from actualities." She spoke to Valentine. "Madame, have I your permission to sit awhile? Even Old Testament prophets dressed *à la*



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*Lévite* after several hours on foot get a little tired in the hams."

She sat without permission, not troubling to make the tone of her request civil. Women know well enough when civility is wasted, and the hostility between her and her hostess demanded no duellist's salute. Valentine turned away to sit at the writing-desk under the lamp and found some mending to occupy her hands; but she could not defend her ears against the discussion, nor her intelligence against the conviction that her husband was not wholly out of danger from the mountebank. He was, despite his distrust of words, easily seduced by them. That he sat at the same table, that he spoke in answer to these propositions and questions was a sign of yielding. At the back of her mind, she was conscious of a deadly and unreasoning fear.

"Since we cannot use the night for sleep, its best purpose, shall we do the next best thing, shall we dream? Aloud, and without bitterness? This trouble in which we find ourselves is not ignoble. These people that terrify us, that run about yelling like beasts, carry each a spark—a soul, you will say; you, the power to calculate and to use tools; there are twenty millions of these creatures, and it is not a matter of indifference to any one of us that they should suffer. In India there is a sect that believes this world to be only one of seventy-four comedies with which their deities enliven the tedium of eternal bliss. We cannot achieve such detachment. We are on the stage ourselves, discovering that the golden apples are painted wood and the goblets won't hold wine; but, by some oversight, the property swords can kill. Who's to write the next drama to be played at the Théâtre Royal, France? Why not ourselves, gentlemen?"



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Neither answered. The priest was perplexed, peering at the woman. D'Ys said at last:

"Events are our masters now. We must wait on them."

"If you think that," the woman in the riding-coat answered, straddling her feet under the table, wide apart like a man, "you'll do well to quit the Assembly. The man who dies for a cause he doesn't believe in is a fool, not a martyr."

"But, my God, one must do something!"

"Why," said the woman, gravely considering, "that's true. That's our curse. We must do; but why we must, what drives us, no man ever enquires. We are afraid of what we might find in our hearts. So we act, and stand back aghast from the results of our actions. What drives us, *abbé*?"

"David answers you," said the priest, and began unctuously to recite, " 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit, whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell there art thou also.' We do because we are made in the image and likeness of the Doer."

"You, Vicomte?"

"If I knew what, I might know why."

"Let me guess at it for you in terms of your theology; a revelation according to St. Jean-Jacques the Divine." She brought her remarkable hands together, loosely clasping them upon the table before her. The light shone sideways on her face, deepening the sockets of the eyes, widening the lips to an Egyptian contentment; the brows still were tormented. "Nature achieves her ends by waiting. Man, unless he bestirs himself, dies. He is given, therefore, energy enough to seek his food and sustain himself between sleeps. That was his first cycle, when he was a beast among other beasts in the



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forest; waking, hunting, devouring, sleeping again. We are past that—we as individuals. We have energy to spend in talk, in speculation, in adventures of the mind. Why? Because other men are taking upon themselves a double labour. This power of ours is borrowed from those other men, whose talk is of bullocks. We do in thought because we are done by in action; our minds are restless because our bodies have not earned their sleep."

"You leave God out," said the priest. "Having come to the knowledge of God, are we to go back, to be like the beasts?"

"We are to pay our debts," said the woman, her eyes on d'Ys for once. His wife watched him too, seeing in his face the strengthening that had been there when he spoke to her first of Bicêtre and the plan to save the King. The sullenness was no more than surface-deep. He was intent.

"You will grant me that we owe to our fellows the speculations for which their labours lend the energy. True, it was God who set the ball rolling. But we should not divert to Him—who, after all, is sufficient to His own glory—those poor endeavours of the mind of which meat, bread and wine render us capable. We owe nothing to God but recognition, since He parted with none of His substance to endow us. Men daily give us their sweat, their blood, their lives, in order that we may sit tranquilly in a room with our feet under a table and our heads somewhere among the stars. Will you say that the debt is equal, *abbé*?"

The clock, the weeping Cupid, struck the hour of midnight unnoticed, while the debate swayed to and fro; a duologue, for d'Ys held apart from it sulkily. The priest, unaccustomed to such dialectic, softened to argument by the one-sided disputations of the pulpit,



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made himself a little ridiculous with his alternation of manner. When he was bested in the talk, he took refuge in politenesses—"we must not argue with the ladies," "we must let the ladies have the last word." But at length an imaginary conversation, between a nun whose sparrow had been restored to life by nine Hail Marys, and a metaphysician who asserted that these might just as well have been nine sneezes, was too much for him. The woman was concluding:

" 'But,' said the good sister, 'we are told that God has a care for the sparrows.' 'So He has; He must consider also, however, the timing and twirling of some sixteen planets, together with Saturn's ring and a score of universes. These hang to His throne by an infinite chain, of which not one link may be displaced; and thus, if your nine Hail Marys did indeed restore the bird to life, they must have displaced, in so doing, the whole order of this world, and all the others.' 'But my confessor says——' 'Your confessor says many things to which you are obedient, perhaps for your peace; but next time he tells you that God is continually changing His will, like a rich old gentleman badgered by inheritors, say to him, "Very reverend father, give me my absolution and cease to talk nonsense."' "

At that the priest got out of his chair in a fury, a chuckle from d'Ys and an intake of breath from the chair by the lamp turning him a turkey-cock red.

"Ah, no! This is not amusing. This is dangerous and silly talk. I think, with madame's permission, there's been enough of it." Valentine did not stir. He stared hard at his tormentor. "You don't talk like any woman I've ever heard. This is Palais Royal stuff."

She disregarded that, disregarded d'Ys, for whose attention she had been angling, and now had secured,



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by her baiting of the priest; most completely did she disregard the woman by the lamp.

"We cannot agree, I see. Perhaps you will grant me one thing; indeed, according to your theology you must grant it. We are finite beings. Then let us leave infinity alone. Let us not map it, not set down rules for it; theography, theology, have done with them. Let us make laws for what we know."

"What! and go back to the beasts of the field?"

"Or, with Christ, to the lilies."

"It is blasphemous that you should speak that name." The priest was standing, and his fist came on the table in a pulpit gesture. "I would rather go out now alone into the streets than stay here listening. This is old stuff, that wiser heads than mine have disproved long ago. I will not let the name of Our Lord be pronounced among these ordures——"

"I'm in a poor case," answered the woman, smiling. "The atheist would not hear me talk of Christ, and now the priest will not have it, either. Let us come back, then, to our fellow-men; about whom, it seems, we can dispute without acrimony, since they do not matter."

"That's not true." It was d'Ys speaking at last, and his wife heard the pleading in his voice with dismay. "I have, in all this world, only my faith in my wife and the will to work for the people. How? To what end? I can't go all the way with Jean-Jacques, I can't give up trade, towns, the skills men have learned. There's beauty in these things. I'm with the priest so far. I can't go back to the woods."

"Then pay your debt." For the first time since they had sat down she addressed him deliberately; the priest waited indecisively, unwilling to sit down after his outburst, afraid to face the streets, looking down



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with angry intentness at the face of the woman, still seated. She gave him no more of her attention; she had finished with him.

"Shall I tell you how it is to be done? Turn me into the street after. But I have faith in you, though you have none in me. You have youth, courage, a heart. Shall I give you your orders?"

She waited. He was intent.

"Tell the people to have no gods, divine or human; they turn aside the need for effort. A man who is afraid, or who is lazy, says, 'It is God's will,' or 'It is the King's order.' Next: tell the people there is no heaven. Then they will work to make this life endurable. Third: rid them of gold. It is discovered by chance, it is rare by chance. It tosses up kings and priests overnight. They must value, not that which is rare, but that which is common. They must exchange effort, not handfuls of luck. When you have got only one of these truths into the heads of our twenty millions it will be time for you to die. Let them burn you then, and scatter your ashes. A tomb fixes memory, but the law-giver should not be remembered. His authority must not terrify new generations with the fear of change. Go back to earth, which can find a use for you when you are dead, and have the humility to suppose that the Supreme Being can keep the heavens in order without either your help or your applause."

She paused, then suddenly held out her right hand. "There's your lesson, Vicomte."

He made an instinctive movement to take the outstretched hand. On the instant the priest leant across the table, and with one hand on the man's shoulder and one on the woman's, thrust them apart with his whole force. Turning his head he called to Valentine:



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"Madame, come here; do you hear what has been agreed?"

"I hear," said she.

She had risen, dropping her work, and now came forward to the group, one hand hidden in her skirt. She said nothing to her husband, but looked at him so that he answered the look, catching her arm:

"But you knew it, you knew it! What does it matter who gives the direction? This is my work, I can do this."

Still she did not speak; but having looked long, she turned her eyes to the sprawling, silent, but very alert woman, and gave her an order.

"Stand up."

The woman, slowly, with an eye upon that hand in the folds of the dress, got on to her feet, and stood challenging. Valentine spoke, looking at the pulse of her enemy's heart where the laces had fallen apart:

"Events are not our masters; you said that. It's true enough." To her husband: "Will you believe that I love you better than my religion; better than my chance of salvation?"

"Valentine, you can't bargain with souls. Your chance of salvation—my sweet, there's no hell."

"But I believe that there is," she answered steadily. "If I risk it for you, will you understand that I love you?"

"I don't know what you mean," said he, bewildered. "I've never doubted you."

"Let us have it clear," she said. "I am going to kill, and in cold blood, to put an end to his wickedness, that creature there, the Grand Master. I believe that I will be damned for doing it, but that you will be saved. I should have done it long ago. But when I saw him



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dragged spitting out of the house at Bicêtre I thought you were safe from him."

"My God," said the priest of a sudden, with a cackle of nervous laughter, "the Grand Master; so this was the person! I thought we had him safe."

There was no more than one second of silence. In that time d'Ys understood that his wife had betrayed him; she, that she had been in turn betrayed. In the bitter fury of that knowledge she flung up her hand with the pistol as d'Ys threw himself at the priest. The ball aimed for the woman's heart took him in the neck; a spurt of blood came hard and warm against his wife's hand. Its flow lessened as her fingers darted to the wound and pressed, but the ball had gone upwards into his brain, and he was dead when he fell across the table. She caught the pistol again in her bloody hand, put it to her mouth, closed her thumb on the trigger. The hammer clicked; the second barrel was not loaded. She said as if to herself:

"I shall never have courage to do it again." Then, to the priest, with his hand on the dead man's heart: "Hands off him, you!"

"Madame, madame, at least let me say a prayer for him."

She struck down his right hand that was beginning the sign of the cross, then with a scream flung herself on the woman in the riding-coat, hands stretched like claws. In silence, quite easily, a man's muscles against a woman's, the other mastered and flung her off. She returned, shrieking, and again was put off, roughly, so that she fell to her knees by the table. D'Ys was looking at her, his face turned sideways. She put her arms round the dead head, mothered and smoothed it; at last pulled the neckerchief off her shoulders to cover it, and



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with no other word or gesture, her breast bare, went out of the room. The priest and the woman heard her footsteps clattering down the wooden stairs, but lost them among the general noise when she emerged into the street.

(xvi)

At this point may very well be given another excerpt from the letters of the Irish dowager, who, with her national instinct for a good brand of trouble, was back again in Paris a year or so later, aged seventy-odd, but perfectly sure of herself, and surveying the town, which had turned upside down since her last visit, with tolerant and remarkably quick-sighted eyes. She had been taken, by one of the inevitable young men about the British Embassy, to witness an execution, and commented unfavourably on the sheep-like demeanour of the victims, who, if they had made nuisances of themselves, would in her opinion soon have sickened the populace of watching the guillotine. "For the way they now present themselves to the hands of the odious Sampson is so restrained and decent, with nothing more than a sob or two that cannot well be heard above the drums and yelling, that the populace (which has no faculty of imagining) is fain to believe there is no great suffering undergone, and so display no pity." She recommends that the victims should all shriek, from the moment of quitting the prison, "as like pigs as they can contrive," and the number of executions would be halved in a week. She goes on to add, with a dig at the English, that even in London, "where a man will give a guinea for a window looking on Tyburn," the sight



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would not command so much money if victims were forbidden to make speeches and wear ribbon in their hats.

Lady Kilblany had not long in Paris; she proposed, therefore, to make the most of her time, and with the assistance of the ever-ready young men did contrive to see every sight or ceremony at all worthy of notice. The installation of the Goddess of Liberty, a publisher's wife with indifferent teeth, she could not attend, by reason of a sudden and well-deserved attack of rheumatism which even in that warm weather laid her low. But the feast of the Goddess of Reason some months later found her alert and observant.

"Notre Dame was the centre of this mummery, and the centre of this centre was a creature from the opera (not a place where Reason may ordinarily be looked for) in a white robe, with laurel leaves, and young female attendants dressed in a scanty way which these gentlemen of the Assembly have decided is Roman, and patriotic as a consequence. For you must know it is impossible here to take example by any fashion in morals or dress that is not out of date by two thousand years or so. They built in the cathedral a very pretty mound with a temple upon it, in which sat this woman with a Phrygian cap on her head, looking as demure as she could, only smirking a little when they sang hymns to her. It is strange to see, not that I am taken aback by it, having for seventy-two years surveyed every kind of folly, both domestic and political, how these proud Assembly men will do for a woman what they would scorn to do for the Almighty. They put their liberty bonnets off and on to her, and kow-tow in processions, when all know her to be the kind of goddess whose secrets a guinea or two will buy. But I shall never have



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done being amazed at men, and Frenchmen are the most ape-like of them all."

The ceremony took long, but she sat through it, and in the evening was agog for more excitement.

"They say the streets are dangerous at night, from the great misery of the Free, Equal and Brotherly people, who range about like droves of wolves, to plunder what they can. I prevailed, however, upon my escort (Lady Castlebarry's son) to take me into one of the northern sections, which are reputed very noisy. We set out dressed (you may be sure that I neglect no precautions) in revolutionary cockades, for, dearest Anna, though you have reproached me often with a tendency to *trail my coat* as our people say, it would not do to trail it through such mud as this rabble. We found, in spite of the day, few people abroad in the streets, and those few tipsy. Most of the churches, which in Montmartre were many, though not fine, have been transformed into clubs and shelters; perhaps the most Christian work ever they performed since they were built. One that I visited, by the name of Our Lady of Lorette, was holding a ceremony, a kind of poor similitude of that which had been performed in the cathedral that day. They had erected a pitiful kind of mound and temple, inhabited by a fine young woman in a red cap, round whom they danced with great spirit. No doubt this creature was as shameless a piece as the other, but I was struck by her appearance of dignity, and her unconcern was remarkable. She beheld all the caperings like a statue, smiled never, and seemed wrapt in some not happy meditation: 'Kitty a fair but frozen maid.' You will think that I begin to show signs of dwindling back into sentimental missishness at seventy-two, but I would swear that this woman wore a sorry



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heart under her Roman drapings. She is known in the district, it seems, for I asked, and was told, The citizeness had a dirty aristo for a husband, but she shot him with her own hand and came back to the people. Her name was La Desjardins, whom I recollect to have seen in the old days at the Italian Theatre, playing comedy, for which she was inches too tall.

"The celebration continued most of the night with little variety; I returned walking, for any kind of carriage is aristocratic, and dirty stockings save insolence from the soldiers, who are everywhere. How I shall be scolded when I see you, for this imprudence in one of my *girlish* years! It is my last fling; back I come gladly to my footstool and my fire-screen. All the Roman virtues are at large in this town, and by no means comfortable at close quarters. Poor Reason sits still upon her throne—how long? God save us all, and bring me soon home to my dearest Anna, and the County Kildare."



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# BOOK III

## AUSTRALIA, 1999

After a great human change, another greater is nigh at
hand,
The great Motor remounts the Ages,
Rain, Blood, Milk, Famine, Sword, Plague,
In the heaven shall be seen a running fire with long
sparks.

*Annotation:*

By these prodigis it seemeth the Author intendeth to speak of the last day, and of the forerunners of it.

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## (i)

"AND now," said the bodiless voice of the preacher, "I will ask you all first to look at the map."

Upon the end wall of the church was a silver screen, covered by a large allegorical painting of some antiquity representing whole families—the ladies attired in crinolines—cheerfully washing in blood; this picture now, at the pressing of a button, rolled up, the lights sank to a comfortable twilight, and upon the screen appeared a map of the world from Mercator's projection. It seemed at first to be a very ordinary map, black outlines of continents and islands, but as the audience watched, North America began to be tinged with red as by the rising of some belated sun. This red, starting from California, began to spread east and north, halted a while at the Isthmus, and thence began gradually to suffuse the southern masses of the continent; a phenomenon which the voice of the preacher explained.

"It will be remembered—can it ever be forgotten?—that the movement to which we of to-day owe our religious liberty began in the sunny western states of America; to be exact, in the small town, as it was then, of Pharaoh, Cal. The coloured portion of the map represents the first two years' labour of the New Gospel workers, who gave up good homes and good money to carry the great news; and let me say that an event which after two thousand years and more can still inspire men to leave their homes may be counted news indeed. South of this line"—a slim pointer of shadow



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appeared on the screen, its tip resting on the Canal Zone—"they met with opposition from the illiterate and savage natives, now, thanks to the zeal and wise strategy of the directors of the N.G., Gospellers, and a credit to the world. The moral conquest of these regions"—the pointer travelled down, easily traversing Amazonian forests, fording floods, balancing along Andean crests like a condor's bill, and at last touched Cape Horn—"was completed, with some loss of life, but never of sustaining faith, in the course of the next five years. Language, tradition, everything was against those first Gospellers. They never lost heart. With their eloquence, and such instruments for instruction and destruction as had then been devised, they set forth. If you want proof of their zeal and devotion, look at the map."

The whole of America was now a deep blood red. It covered the snows of Canada, the greens of the tropics, the yellow grasses of the great plains. The pointer was doubled, tripled. Three slender dark rods set out, journeying slowly from the Californian city whose name now appeared in letters of live shimmering gold; Pharaoh. One rod went east and north, over Greenland, flushed Iceland, descended by way of the Hebrides over Scotland, where it hung a little; thence down in a quick rush through England and across the Channel. The second rod went west by way of the Pacific Islands, which were quickly lit from it so that they glowed suddenly on the map like sparks, and thence to Asia. The third rod took a south-eastern route, hopping by way of the Canaries and Azores to the African coast, which reddened from shore to shore in what seemed an instant. This pointer and the Asian rod had done their work while the first still toiled here and there across



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Europe. Rome seemed incombustible; indeed, when all the rest of the map was a good glowing red, with certain names standing out in living letters, BEDFORD, SMJOLNJCONICS, ATHENS, this aged recalcitrant city was still featureless, a white roundel, defying the New Gospellers, torture, and time. The preacher's voice gave an historical explanation.

"It will be remembered that this city harboured the Pope, a name which in itself symbolises all the obstinacy, all the blindness and tyranny of the old faiths, though not all of these by any means owned his sway. His partisans withdrew from other countries before the victorious onset of the New Gospellers, and concentrated their defences about this city, which, however, was finally reduced by assault from the air in the spring of 1983. It still, though no longer a place of any religious or other importance, is visited by tourists eager to survey the enormous craters, which considerably exceed in depth and width the greatest natural structures of the kind, such as Popocatepetl and Vesuvius. After this, the rest of Europe was encouraged to throw off the shackles of tradition, and to welcome Christ. The territory to the east"—the pointer only needed to flicker over this to redden it—"known as Russia then, but to-day better recognised under the title of standard-bearer of the new Israel, Reuben; this country, which had for long lain in darkness, was quick to see and set on high the Gospel light. China in much the same manner responded to persuasion. India received the news with joy, and from that peninsula missionaries soon brought knowledge into the benighted places near at hand. In less than twenty-five years, my brethren, from the setting out of that first small mission from Pharaoh, California, the



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whole of the civilised world was singing the praises of God to the inspired words and music of a woman—Emma Jordan Sopwith."

At this name all the hearers inclined their heads, while above California on the map a crown of light suddenly appeared. But when it began again the speaker's voice sounded a grave note.

"Twenty-five years of glorious faith and freedom; twenty-five years' perpetual increase, not only of belief, but of health, wealth and happiness for the peoples of this world. When the benefits are so clearly seen, how can any man be so blind as to shut his eyes to them? If Emma Jordan Sopwith were to come into this church in person, and say to each of you here: Hold open your bag or your pocket, I want to fill it with jewels, wouldn't you accept most joyously? Wouldn't you crowd up here to the screen and try to be first to take advantage of that glorious offer? Of course you would, sane men and women as you are. Because the jewels that Mrs. Sopwith gives are taken from the heavenly gates; they are the jewels those crowns will be made of that you will all come to wear in heaven. But there are men and women who are not sane, not wise. Once more, my brethren, I ask you to cast your eyes upon the map."

They did so. The pointer traced a way across the Pacific, and rested accusingly upon a southern continent. No glow answered its touch. Instead, the wastes of Australia began to be striped with yellow and green. The yellow deepened, became orange; the green darkened to a savage emerald; and the two colours, zig-zagging across from coast to coast, seemed to dance defiance at the pointer.

"One place only, freighted with half a million



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priceless human souls, resists the New Gospel. I do not need to name it, the name has long been a reproach to civilisation. Nor do I need to recall to your mind the fate of those missionaries, devoted men and women despatched by the hands of Emma Jordan Sopwith herself to succour these shipwrecked souls and bring them out of the darkness. Deaf to reason, blind to example, these people turn their backs upon the dawn, and scandalise the whole world with the spectacle of their faction fights, unknown elsewhere since Ireland was evangelised from above some years ago.

"I do not ask you, in Mrs. Emma Jordan Sopwith's name, to condemn these people. She has only love in her heart for them, as for all sinners. But it has been decided that for their own sakes they must be given some concrete proof that the doctrines interpreted by our respected Mother are those which no man who values his soul's salvation or his body's well-being can afford to neglect.

"And now I will close with a few words from the Writings."

The audience listened to these devoutly, and when the voice ceased, sang a hymn, conducted from the screen by the celebrated Gino Carmagnola, several thousand miles away, smiling, shaggy, the best-known and most popular musician in the world:

"The Lord that has no thunders, is not the Lord for me,
But He that smites the nations, takes up the sword
for me.
He need not show forth reasons,
Love has its times and seasons,
But He that smites the Midianites, He is the Lord for
me."



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The supporting orchestra from the loud-speaker swept up in a final terrific thrust, barbed with brass, sank to the Amen and ceased. The congregation began to disperse, returning to the tall steely streets in which rain was falling. All were known to each other, and but for the incessant rain there might have been an animated scene outside the meeting-house, which itself was a curious survival. It was actually all that remained of one of the ancient institutions that in England had been used to house scholars, but which since the Destruction of the Books (1982) had been used for other more practical purposes; the Library of All Souls, Oxford, whose fretted stone remained among the featureless streets of steel for a sign that the past, while it could no longer compel reverence, might serve to point a moral. There was some feeling among the pious that a place for so many centuries dedicated to useless learning, which not only failed to advance a man in this life, but imperilled his soul in the next, was not the most inspiring shrine for the New Gospel. Antiquaries, however, for once were a match for the pious; they brought all their paltry influence to bear and succeeded in keeping the fabric intact, though the interior had necessarily to be transformed in accordance with the regulations laid down for the upkeep and conduct of a Number Three Temple; one, that is, whose maximum congregation amounted to no more than one thousand persons. It came low in the hierarchy of such places, which ranged from small steel chapels to enormous stadia that on special occasions could comfortably hold a hundred thousand worshippers. However, it suited its congregation very well, being a survival, like themselves, of old and less enlightened times. These people were nearly all aged ex-dons, with



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such families as the spread of the Word had left them, men and women into whose talk tags of ancient heathen languages would creep from time to time; who would dispute in the secrecy of their homes upon questions which could matter to no one, setting one fragment of poetry against another, pulling out from their tenacious memories line after line of verbiage that had no longer any relation to the world as it was; if indeed it had ever been so related. They imagined that their lack of conformity went unmarked, tried with naïve subterfuges to keep out of the religious limelight; actually their predilections were known, but it had been decided, by those in whose hands such things rested, that they could do little harm to faith and morals, segregated as they were.

"They'll pass on soon," said Mr. J. Arthur Libby, chairman of that all-powerful little committee, "and their children are of our way of thinking. In ten or twenty years' time there may be a future for Oxford. Who says we've got no respect for history? I'm all for history. But it's got to be right history, and not just a lot of propaganda."

Mr. J. Arthur Libby's shrewd assessment of the situation was correct. The dons, bandying Greek and other unprofitable nonsense in their homes, commanded neither the respect nor the obedience of their younger children, those who, infants when the world movement towards God began, were now in their late twenties. These, while honouring their father and mother by sending flowers on Father's and Mother's Day, which was how the sense of the commandment had been narrowed down, felt that their first loyalty was to the organisation which taught them, fed, entertained and excited them, and provided the true background of their lives.



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A brief survey of history will sufficiently explain this attitude. Books as the older generation knew them, things to be borrowed or owned, read in quantity, and judged freely, had become illegal possessions after the great decision of Mrs. Sopwith in 1982 that they were unnecessary, first to the salvation, secondly to the progress of the human race. She had observed, in such books as she had read as a young woman, an increasing tendency to turn in the path of progress, and look backwards towards more coloured, less sanitary centuries with something of regret. These fanciful novels obsessed the printing presses to the detriment, and eventually almost to the exclusion, of the sale of Bibles. They inculcated pernicious longings for the unexpected to happen; they belonged to the old world which chance and individuality ruled; they suggested alternatives to the Bible creed, making, as Mrs. Sopwith observed, nobody a cent happier. The case for the destruction of all book hoards, and the banishing of books from the world might have been (but was not) contained in the following syllogism:

The Bible is necessary (for salvation, etc.).
Other books are not the Bible.
Other books are not necessary.

Mrs. Sopwith, however, in a homily of several thousand words, to be found in her collected works, announced her reasons to the world, together with her decision. Between the broadcasting of this disciplinary measure and the execution of its provisions by the police, no time was allowed to lapse; the listening congregations were detained in their respective churches —to prevent backsliding, and possible concealment of bibliographic treasures—while the main repositories of



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books were sealed and carefully blown up by the explosion of previously laid mines. A house-to-house search followed, renewed periodically without warning until the last scrap of printed matter—excepting always Holy Writ and the works of Mrs. Sopwith—had been consigned to flames. There was little or no protest against this measure, which was pretty universally recognised as salutary; only in one or two incorrigible centres was there any attempt to obstruct the police, and in all cases, strange to say, the offenders were antiquaries and dons, normally the meekest and most easily terrified of men. Bodley's Librarian, for example, a small spectacled person of no determination or standing who had somehow got wind of the planned destruction, absented himself on the appointed day from church through some trick still unexplained, and was caught by the officials burying with his own bleeding and grimed hands a dozen tall brown volumes from Duke Humphrey's library. The level of intellect attained by the book-saturated is shown in his choice of the grassy plot close by for a burial ground, a place where any disturbance of the smooth surface was instantly and guiltily visible. In extenuation, however, it must be said that without the necessary tools he could not have hoped to penetrate the reinforced rubber surface of a street, and that his own dwelling would have been suspect.

Following the destruction of the books, came the edict which imposed a ban upon all newsprint. This measure, though even more obviously imposed by necessity than the first, roused a certain amount of opposition among addicts of the Press; but Mrs. Sopwith's decision was final, and backed by reasoning in which even these opponents of progress could not



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hope to find a flaw. The syllogism which proved the backbone of her 10,000-word statement might be presented as follows:

That which is not necessary to salvation
should not exist.
Newspapers are not necessary to salvation,
Newspapers should not exist.

And in a single day they did indeed cease to do so. With them ended a chapter five hundred years long in the story of man's development, an exciting chapter, which might be labelled: Rise, Decline, and Fall of the Empire of the Written Word. The device of cutting wood or steel or lead into type-shapes and pressing paper upon their inked surfaces, had preserved and encouraged philosophy, preserved and enlightened history, brought dead or imaginary personages to life, wasted or filled much time. It had declined from a mystery to a commonplace in those five hundred years, and passed from the charge of craftsmen and churches into the hands of patent medicine vendors, and commentators on the respective speeds of running animals. In the last century of its existence, when it had begun to decay, enormous sums of money had been spent by governments, and prodigies of co-relation performed by children to assimilate the meaning of these arbitrary symbols, until the new and final device of the talkie did away for the need for any such prodigality of time and money. The spoken word, together with the discipline of the eye, replaced the written word, and the discipline of the mind, as the early picture alphabets were replaced by arbitrary symbols. Humanity's wheel, coming full circle, brought it back to the picture stage once more. The loud-speaker and the screen took the place of



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such litter as bookcases and pianos in the home; and all these loud-speakers, all these screens, took their material from the distributing centres set up all over the world by the inspiration and genius of Mrs. Emma Jordan Sopwith.

No books; no newspapers; but no dullness, and no time for looking back. Mrs. Sopwith, with her astonishing apprehension of the needs of lesser minds, saw to it that in the leisure hours which a twenty-eight-hour week left to mankind there should be provision for all physical and spiritual needs.

"Your church is your centre of life," she had said in one of her rare talks, and this was literally true. All activities radiated from the church. It gave or withheld permission to play games; it provided a day and night service of talking pictures, including ten minutes, every six hours, of prayer; it allotted jobs according to capacity; there was no aspect of daily life in which it had not a controlling hand. This prodigious authority, acquired by the use of imagination and power in about equal parts, was something with which the mere wishes and prejudices of parents, backed by occasional slappings, could hardly compete. They had their heart-burnings, doubtless, being human creatures, their jealousies and mental revenges in which the dominating personality of the Mother might shudderingly figure; but the system, which had been devised very shrewdly, was in the end too strong for them. The only way in which they could get back at Mrs. Sopwith was by refusing to provide Gospel-fodder, taking advantage of the much simplified and perfected methods of birth-control which the nineteen fifties and sixties had invented.

It is another instance of the insufficient and short-



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sighted working of print-saturated minds (for these rebels were all persons who had been born before the New Gospel finally triumphed in England), that it occurred to none of them how easily Mrs. Sopwith and her advisers might have countered this; for it was in their power to prevent the manufacture of any article merely by withdrawing from its makers and vendors the privileges of the church; which meant, apart from a discouraging future for the offender's salvation, that neither he nor his family would be able to obtain either work or recreation, to say nothing of food, until the disobedience ceased and had been atoned for. Mrs. Sopwith could, therefore, had she so desired, have deprived all but the most determined or cold-blooded of the power to regulate the size of their families. She did not do so. She had no wish suddenly to double the population of the globe, and bring her various subject peoples to unmanageable size.

These disciplinary matters being settled, her next task was to rename the world according to the list of the tribes of Israel, whose positions and proportions relative to each other are so carefully given in the second book of Numbers. (Dan, which, it will be remembered, was the lattermost, was the name reserved for that recalcitrant southern continent, still rebellious and unmindful of its own best good.) And these tribes were ruled by her as the Israelites by Moses, with humanity and rigid order, livened by occasional stimulating visions, distributed through the world by means of microphone and projector, of the hinder parts of God.



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(ii)

Among those who attended worship at the prescribed hours, and listened to the words of Mrs. Sopwith's ministers echoing emptily from the stripped walls of the ex-Library of All Souls, now Number Three temple of number 27 Tent of the tribe of Gad, was an elderly man with one daughter named Jane. (He had been christened from some heathen classic, and had the grace to be a trifle ashamed of his first name of Endymion.) Their surname was Cobbett; and in the days when an Oxford degree still commanded respect and a meagre salary, he had been entitled to write after this the words Master of Arts, Doctor of Civil Law. A world which no longer found time to split hairs had no use for Doctor Cobbett, though with contemptuous generosity it awarded him an old-age pension and permitted him, on condition that he conformed to the new religious usages, to exist, feeding upon memories, and devoted to, though more than a little afraid of, his daughter Jane.

She was just twenty-one, and had only known history as Mrs. Sopwith dictated it from her citadel of truth in Pharaoh, Cal. She had an excellent job, making technical talkies which explained in terms of calories and hymnal phraseology the technique of nourishing very young children. She worked five days of the week at Bedford, the talkie centre where photography and voices were synchronised for the consumption of the mothers of the tribe of Gad; and on Saturdays returned to the heavy lagging Oxford atmosphere to see, among other things, that her father kept out of trouble by going regularly to church. Somewhat to her own surprise, she was fond of him. He had for her all the



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fascination that an entirely unblending character can exert. His citations from the poets, more especially an unintelligible tribe known as the Jacobeans, bemused and allured her by their sound, though their sense, what she made of it, was neither intelligible nor welcome to a Gospeller. Sermons had always a good deal to say concerning the snares of the devil, and as a child she had supposed that the devil must use just such troubling cadences as Milton's to allure the world to sin.

"Ay me! while thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, whither thy bones are hurl'd
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides
Where thou, perhaps, under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of this monstrous world,
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied
Sleep'st by the fable of Belearus old——"

That long and solemn-dropping rhyme had brought tears to the eyes of six-year-old Jane, which even now, staunch citizen and Gospeller, and therefore immune to poetry as she was, she had some ado to explain. Moist vows! The imaginary unnecessary personages all through! And all on account of a young man accidentally drowned at sea. Jane's twenty-two years had seen too many purposeful drownings to be able to take this individual's loss at all seriously; the conversion—that is to say, the total depopulation—of Ireland by means of a series of cloudbursts ingeniously touched off was too recent to allow lament for one barbarian young man lost. And yet, the catch at the throat when the rhyme changed! It was a reaction which Jane Cobbett had never observed in herself hearing the occasional poems of Mrs. Sopwith, full of good cheer and good sense as these were.



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This active and reasonable young woman walked home from church after service in a silence which her father timidly tried to penetrate, selecting a subject on which they could agree by way of gambit.

"The older I grow," said he, "the more I love music. As a very young man I had no ear for it; indeed, it was not altogether necessary to have an ear to appreciate the type of music that was being written then; but now one appreciates it."

"Dear," said his daughter, preoccupied, but ever exact, "then you ought to sing the hymn words, instead of merely mooing as you do."

"The words," repeated Dr. Cobbett, "ah, the words are another matter."

And he let the subject drop, seeing entanglements in it, only to try again a moment later.

"I sometimes think I'd like to try my hand again at lecturing. In the old days, giving my courses here, I used to draw quite a crowd, and the men had a nick-name for me, always a sign of popularity—Dimmy, or some such absurd diminutive."

"Your voice has quite gone, darling," answered his daughter, telling the unpleasant truth as she had always been taught to do. "One can't do anything about it. It isn't the least good my putting up your name to them at headquarters. Besides, what could you lecture about? You only know the old stuff."

"I'm sorry," said Dr. Cobbett in a voice that certainly sounded a little shaky, "it is out of the question, of course. I miss the occupation, however."

"Always this idea of doing something," said his daughter, emerging from her preoccupation suddenly; "you simply must get used to having things done for you. Why can't you just let yourself go, like everybody



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else over fifty? Go to church more. Goodness me, there are things to look at and hear going on there all day and night. I can't understand any sane person finding time pass slowly with everything that's being done to help."

"Too much."

"What?"

"Too much is being done. Excuse me, Jane, I know your convictions, I respect them; but a man of my generation cannot get used to being mentally and physically spoon-fed. Our fault, no doubt; lack of adaptability, no doubt; but not to be argued away. If only one could have a typewriter——"

"Be quiet! You wouldn't have asked a clergyman in the old days if you could borrow his font. You know quite well laymen aren't allowed typewriters; it's a church property. Besides, what would you do with it? Only get into mischief. You know as well as I do there's only two writings necessary to salvation." She increased her pace, frowning, her father trotting beside her, anxious and humble. After fifty yards she stopped dead and turned to him, so that he could see how the lines in her forehead were caused by worry, not anger.

"I do wish you would learn to fit in."

He shook his head miserably.

"I know, I know I'm an anxiety. I do try, Jennie. But there are certain attitudes of mind, certain words—you'll never understand, you younger people, the true incidence of words. You hear them only; what little print you see is all this phonetic spelling, words bastardised. In the old days you could see the genealogy of a word in its spelling, just as even now you trace a family by a lip or a nose. Words meant something when you could lay them before your eyes for an hour



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at a time, turn them about, soak them in. There was integrity. There was music. You didn't know the Bible before they made the last revision, did you? It might be obscure when you took a context word for word; but the meaning came through that lovely verbal complexity clear as a bell; just by the look of the phrases, their sound to the eye."

"Oh," said his daughter sharply and wretchedly, "don't talk like that. How am I going to be able to leave you if you go on talking like that?"

"Leave me?" said he, checked and frightened. "They're not sending you out of England, are they, Jennie?"

"We're home," said she, looking up at a lighted number, "don't let's talk now. I'll tell you after."

And with that they stepped into the warmth and skilful lighting of the hostel that gave Dr. Cobbett a bedroom with all comforts, excellent food and screen service for the amount of his little pension a week. It was not to be expected that such a sum could confer privacy; indeed, that was a luxury which had vanished from even the most useful and well-salaried lives. But everything else in reason was provided, and since the inmates were mostly elderly there was not the demand for personal seclusion such as had been provided in the establishments which housed younger folk. Jane knew her way, and walked immediately to the common-room, where she was, among these grey and hankering people, something of a favourite. She was in touch with the world, they were not, and the fact that her duties brought her in contact with children gave her a romantic interest in the eyes of the grey ladies. She, however, could never feel easy with them, nor indeed with anyone of that generation except her father; that



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she should love him with an affection quite unsatisfied by the offering of a customary floral tribute on Father's Day was mysterious to her; and she was secretly as much ashamed of it as of the unbidden tears that came when he spoke aloud, in an occasional fit of absence of mind, the suspect rhymes or pacing rhythmic prose of forgotten John Milton.

It was only after the meal, a good one and simple, had been cleared away, the plates and cutlery bustled into their chute, and the other inmates, with the exception of one aged deaf lady, had drifted off to church again, that Jane revealed the cause of her trouble. She stood in front of her father, hands clasped behind her back, a worried frown above the affection in her eyes, and told him that she had volunteered and been accepted for mission service.

"You know this Australian business they were talking about in sermon to-day? Well, it's that. They want a few people to go over and spy out the land. It's no good sending preachers—only preachers, I mean. You know what happened last time. There's something about them——" she would not put into words the blasphemous and final attitude adopted by the recalcitrant southerners towards those who sought their good. "But, presumably, savages though they are, they're fond of their babies and don't want them to die; and if I can slip in on that, I shall be in a strong position to report. Not that I suppose it will be much good; they're always moving about; there aren't any fixed positions or towns any longer. Still, it will be a change." She altered that; restlessness of any kind was not encouraged in the inner Gospel circles. "It will be a valuable experience. After all, I know pretty well all there is to know about babies."



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"Not quite all," said her father dubiously, his eyes troubled. "Not yet quite all. You've not had one, you see. But this venture—it has a dangerous sound to me."

"Oh, my dear, don't start thinking about that. That isn't what worries me. It's what you'll be getting up to if I leave you alone." She surveyed him sternly. "You'll start missing church; they'll dock your rations; you'll be an absolute skeleton by the time I get back. Listen; I want you to promise me something——"

"It's all very well to say this venture isn't dangerous. Of course it's dangerous. A hostile country, and you alone—There's another thing. In the old days mothers of four or five children didn't care to be lectured about them by chits with none. Of course, while you do it through the ether you're safe; but you have to remember that these people are half a century behind the rest of the world." He sighed. "It's understandable; allowing for their lack of culture, you know. I shouldn't be too dogmatic about babies, if I were you."

"Now listen; do you promise me that while I'm away you'll go to church regularly?"

He promised; but she still looked dissatisfied.

"Yes, but that isn't enough. Will you promise to look as if you enjoyed it?"

He assented even to that.

"Though I'm not much of an actor, you know."

"Why can't you find happiness in God?" She was wistful. "What is it you want? What would satisfy you?"

"A little mystery, perhaps," he answered, smiling at her, "a sense of littleness. It is good, sometimes, to feel that one doesn't understand."

But Mrs. Sopwith's disciple could not agree with him, wondered at him, and at the period and teaching that could persuade men to prefer the edges of their ex-



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periences blurred. She did not argue, however. She was going away from him soon, not for the weekly five days, but for an unknown time. Sentiments unrecognised were troubling her. She thrust them away, and came down to the practical help he could give her.

"Tell me what I'm to expect out there. How different will they be? Can they read?"

"I believe so." He sighed again. "I believe there are libraries; hidden of course. They live in dread of raids. And you mustn't think to find them quite so——" he hesitated, rejecting unpalatable words—"so suggestible as people here, for instance. They argue. They differ, and say so. You haven't learned yet to argue. Nobody can answer you back through the ether."

"They can't be happy," said she decidedly; and the longing to evangelise these outrageous people gripped her like a strong hand. "Are there any shibboleths; things I oughtn't to say?"

"Ah, there I can't help. I visited the place forty years ago. They expected one then to take an interest in horses; and there was a good deal of liquor drunk. Games, too—cricket, not the sort we know; the ball was bowled by hand, and it was played out of doors. But shibboleths—let me think." He pondered, tapping a thin hand upon his knee. "Each party of course has its own. I think that if in Orange society you introduce yourself by a hearty To Hell with the Pope! it might smooth matters. But the others, I don't know; they had so many in the old days. Can you say the words of the Hail Mary?" He repeated them in English; then, lingeringly, in Latin. "You might get that by heart. I think Mrs. Sopwith should really see that you have some notion of comparative religion before you start."



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"Soon there won't be any left to compare," she answered gaily.

"You're so sure of winning, are you?"

"With the whole world behind us?" But his anxious look struck at her heart. "You're not to be upset. I want to go. I'll do good work. It's real—to bring people to the true knowledge of God; worth anything, any hardships and risks. You don't think so. I wish you did."

He took her young firm hand in his two dry ones, and brought out some sort of smile.

"I admire your patience with me; you, who always look forward. Such people are impatient, mostly." He saw the tears come suddenly to her eyes, and looked down to spare her embarrassment. "God bless you, even if mine's the wrong God."

(iii)

The plan of smuggling Miss Cobbett into that distressful southern country was, after long consideration, finally abandoned. The language difficulty was very great, since any person speaking without their own curiously tilted accent and close-mouthed delivery—acquired, said the ill-natured, by much keeping of stable secrets—became suspect at once, and Jane used the clear diction of her father, whose English seemed always to be sensitively weighing Latin quantities. This, while an admired characteristic for a broadcaster, was a nuisance to a spy. Nor were her attempts at disguising very happy.

"I tell you, Miss Cobbett, there's nothing for it; you'll just have to go in on the quota."



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This was an arrangement whereby publicists might visit Australia in small batches of ten or fifteen people at a time. They were not allowed a moment unchaperoned. Australian guides were at hand all the time to keep them out of places where it was not desired that they should poke their noses, and to expatiate upon ruins here and there, results and monuments of the religious wars. This might have seemed an excellent opening; but there were snags, difficulties almost insuperable in the way of getting any missionising done. For one thing, the places shown were, as a rule, those no longer lived in; for another, visitors had to sign papers and in a solemn manner give their assurance that they would not touch, in conversation or any other way, upon questions of religion. Certain recent and deplored investigators had not kept to this. Fired with zeal, and finding themselves for once in the midst of an Australian crowd, come to view and perform expiatory ceremonies upon the ruin of their largest bridge, they launched out into the Gospel as interpreted by Mrs. Emma Jordan Sopwith; worse, they quoted passages from her revised version, which had the effect upon these southerners that the reading of Scripture is said to have had, in past times, upon the devil.

"Who," clamoured the Gospellers, "shall come between us and Christ? Not misfortune, nor persuasion, nor insufficiency of clothing, nor high explosive. The prophet tells us that all true believers have to suffer for their belief; this may be so, but cannot matter, since victory is certain in the end. Personally, we are sure that whether we continue in this or the spirit world, no matter what troubles or temptations oppose us, we may rest safe in the



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knowledge that we are the chosen of God."

This concise and far more comprehensible version of St. Paul's wild words* had at first a stupefying effect on the listeners; but in a moment, when they revived, they seized the speakers, and put their faith to all the tests which the Apostle's ingenuity suggested, with results which had encouraged other visitors to keep strictly to their word, and forbear all sermonising.

Thus, to go on the quota meant, more briefly, holding one's tongue.

"We regret it, Miss Cobbett," said the delegate who gave Jane her instructions. "You'll find it hard to swallow down some of the stuff you'll hear. But you've got to remember that you're doing it for a great cause, and you needn't think because you're holding back on the Gospel, the Gospel's going to hold back on you." He laughed jovially. "We know a lot about you. We know your faith isn't the kind that's easily shaken. We know you can be trusted. And meanwhile we'll look after your father for you. Very remarkable man, Dr. Cobbett. I was up at Oxford in his day—well, only for a few months, just before the Gospel got to us. He misses the books, I daresay; that's his generation, there's no help for it. Yes, don't you worry, we'll look after him for you."

It did not occur to Jane, shrewd as she was, but wholly preoccupied with the prospect of her mission,

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulations or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



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that her father might be considered, and in certain remotely conceivable circumstances used, as a hostage.

"Does all this mean I'll have to tell a lot of lies?" she asked the delegate point-blank. That middle-aged but alert person was accustomed to such questions, and gave a fair answer.

"What you have to remember is the cause you're serving, and you've got to say to yourself that God can read all hearts. Say you tell a lie; you don't mean a lie, you don't want to lie. If people are taken in by it, why that's what we want, to take 'em in—to the fold. Isn't that right? Of course it is. No, what you want to do, is avoid clashes; see as much as they'll let you; get into their confidence on the child welfare side; then when we see you back in a month's time you'll have some information for us, I shouldn't wonder. Now, just understand there's no danger at all about this, properly speaking——"

"I don't in the least care for that."

"Quite right, fine spirit. What I should have said is, your object must be to keep out of trouble; that, and keep your eyes open, and if the result's what we hope, there's a chance—a chance, mind you—of getting in at Pharaoh, on the Temple Number One work, under the direct inspiration of the Mother."

"D'you mean that?"

"Certainly I mean it. It's just on time"—looking at a dial set in his desk—"for the three o'clock prayers. Shall we step in and ask a blessing from above? You'll want," said the delegate jovially, "all you can get."

Entirely happy, she followed him down a long corridor, to kneel reverently and joyously before the screen.



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(iv)

Jane, with nine others, stepped from the air machine a fortnight later on to Australian soil, in cloudless, stupefying weather. The distances were dancing; everything else, trees, waves, and birds, was altogether still with heat. From the pepper-trees came a croaking of locusts, whose carapaces, sloughed and gaping, clung beside the living creatures on the boughs. The grass was burnt yellow; there were no visible flowers; but walking as the adventurers soon did into a grove of thin trees, sharp delicious scents came up from plants they trod underfoot. The landing ground had once been a race-course, sufficiently famous in its day, disused now for twenty years or more, since, with the terror of the New Gospel on them, the people had taken to the nomadic life. That they should give up horse-racing entirely, however, was too much to suppose, and there were legends which no traveller could substantiate of hidden race-courses lost among some of the central woody valleys, and even of huge caverns dug for the purpose underground. This place, except for the shape of it, showed hardly any trace of what it had been. White ant had dealt with the wood of the grand stands; when these collapsed nothing but a few brick foundations were left, which soon were covered with a growth of lantana, that voracious plant; under these a great underground hangar had been excavated to accommodate a couple of hundred machines. It was empty now, except for the visiting plane. Questions as to whether it was ever used met with black looks from the guide, and Jane, who understood this reticence, nudged her tactless neighbour to keep quiet. The fact was, as all



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the better informed people were aware, that the Australians moved about their vast continent in swarms, like locusts, a thousand or so persons at a time. Whole towns would suddenly quit their dwellings and take to the air, animals and all, making seasonal flights to avoid heat or cold, and to descend upon pastures untouched by drought. At this period of the year, January, the summer being at its height, migrations went towards the southern coast, where the national passion for sea-bathing could be indulged. Later this hangar would be filled with visitors for the Feast of the Bridge, a fact of which the guide surlily informed them, and without more ado shepherded the ten towards a temporary building where sat a Customs investigator surrounded by soldiers in a picturesque uniform, red on brown, with grey plumes in their hats.

This official wore a sash striped with green and orange in equal proportions, thus proclaiming himself a Federal officer; that is, a person attached to the necessary services, and independent of whichever side happened momentarily to be uppermost in the current war. These Customs officers and their guards, with the water officials, whose duties were invariable and whose services were paid for by both parties ungrudgingly, were all that remained of the Federation whose memory an old song preserved; an old song long since transformed, after the way of politics dead, into a children's game.

"We're a happy, happy nation,"

sang the Australian children, holding hands, and circling about one of their number.

"Thanks to good old Federation,
Give three cheers for arbitration
And the Seven Parliaments."



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(The child in the centre of the circle represented the lost town of Canberra, and its task was to escape from the circle of the Seven Parliaments.)

But survival or no, the Customs official was business-like. He had a list of the names of the visiting ten, and he catechised each one in turn, taking them in alphabetical order. Jane's inquisition came almost at once.

"This your name?" pointing to his written sheet. Jane, mindful of the delegate's caution, feigned semi-ignorance of all letters. It was safer. The Australians, who still carried on much of their business by means of the printed word, were apt to keep a strict and special watch upon persons who admitted to literacy. The official looked at her sharply. "Is Jane Cobbett your name?" She admitted that. "Daughter of the professor?" She succeeded in looking a trifle bewildered. "There's a Doctor Endymion Cobbett of Oxford that's a good deal thought of here. Wrote some books on poetry that we use in our schools." Jane had some ado not to look glad of her father's renown; with a pang, and an inward reminder of the great purpose she was serving, she blinked and denied him. Her story would not have been credible with such a father in the background. A daughter of Endymion Cobbett, and illiterate! She denied him with all the simple ecstatic fervour of the liar for a cause, and the official proceeded with the examination after a reference to some papers.

"What's the idea, your coming here?"

Jane answered, in the manner she had been told would be acceptable:

"To see your scenery, and a little racing if that's possible."

"Racing," repeated the Customs official, a little less formidably. "Don't see much of it where you come



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from." Jane agreed; there were horses in zoos, but they were too rare to be raced. His next question was asked with a smile:

"Brought some money to lose?"

Of this she had any quantity, and produced letters of credit amply satisfactory. The Customs official let her go, indicated a chair with a nod, and proceeded to examine the next upon his roster. When the ten had offered their explanations ard reasons for the making of the trip, which varied from health to landscape painting, he requested them all to rise, and signalled to one of the soldiers, who at once with military precision began to hand round familiar books. Jane did not need to flutter the leaves of her copy; she knew by the feel and the shape of it that it was none other than Mrs. Sopwith's own version of the Bible, according to the revision finally accomplished in 1987.

"Do you know what those books are, ladies and gentlemen?" enquired the Customs officer. "I see you do. You're required according to our law to take an oath on them. You agree to that?" They did. "Repeat after me——"

And impressively, grouping the words half a dozen at a time, he administered the oath, rather after the old manner of swearing a witness in a court of law.

"I (say your name aloud) hereby declare—that while I am in this country—I will obey its laws—respect its religion—and refrain from any act—likely to cause any breach of the peace—on pain of immediate deportation. So help me, God."

Self-consciously they muttered it; and when the brief ceremony was over, the same soldier came forward, took the books, checking the number of them as he did so, and finally locked them safely away in a large



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despatch case, whose key he handed to his superior.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said that officer, "it's not getting cooler, and I dare say, as you've come all this distance to have a look at our far-famed sunshine, you're not disappointed. The guides will tell you the arrangements for the day. There's time for a bathe if anyone cares for it, before you move on to your quarters for the night. I bid you welcome to Australia, the land of the free."

And he stumped out of his shanty with the escort of red and brown soldiers at his heels to search baggage, leaving the ten voyagers to their guides. There were two of these, a man and a woman. The man had the face which they were to come to know as typical; bony, long, with deep eyes, a hooked nose, and a curiously unfinished, slack-looking yet angry mouth. The girl was not so easily placed. She had the misty dark hair of the westernmost British Isle, and smoke-grey eyes in a pale face, hardly browned at all by the sun. She spoke well, very fluently, with a lift that was not wholly Australian to her voice; Jane supposed her to be of Irish descent, but asked no questions, knowing the long memory of that nation, and supposing that enquiries from one of a community which had finally dispersed that nation into the sea might not be welcomed. She seemed friendly, however, and asked the three women under her charge if they would care, as the customs men had suggested, for a bathe. They accepted, and were flown to a lagoon lying sheltered from breakers at low tide by a dune of sand. There they swam, their bodies soaking in the sun, while gulls, disturbed for a moment by their appearance, rose, circled a moment squalling, then settled again on the still water that mirrored them with hardly a wrinkle of breeze to distort the images.



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Jane had seen in her brief lifetime many deserted places. Whole populations had, even in those few years, drained quite away from the country towards the towns and churches, leaving behind it old landmarks, houses, a spire or tower dwarfed by the striding pylons beside the roads; but never in any English place had she felt such estrangement from the land as here. Jane was not a person who yielded readily to impressions which her reason refused to support; her senses were active and discriminated well. Nevertheless, lying in the sand of this forbidden country, she had a feeling that the disdainful earth was rejecting her, refusing her entry to itself, and threatening her, a Gospeller convinced and fanatical, with the fate of the Laodiceans; "because thou art neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth——" or, as Mrs. Sopwith had once amended the crude words: "Lukewarmness gets nobody no place." All the vegetation about her was thin and wispy, the undergrowth such as it was crept no more than ankle-high, small tough plants defiantly sprouted from yellow earth baked hard as clay. Defiance! That was in the heavy air, the tough soil; and a fragment came into her head which she knew to be Latin, but whose meaning her conscious mind could not untangle: "Absorpti sunt juncti petrae judices eorum": a phrase for which Mrs. Sopwith's version of the Psalm could find no place, since the literal translation was senseless: their judges are swallowed up, joined to the rock. Jane hurried it undeciphered back into her subconscious again whence it had come, not recognising it as part of David's cry for protection against forces unknown and terrible. "They shall hear my words, because they have prevailed; as the grossness of the earth is broken out upon the earth. Our bones are dissipated near to hell; for to thee, our



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Lord, are mine eyes, in thee have I hoped; take not away my soul."

As the sun began to sink a droning was heard some distance out to sea, and a heavy ancient plane, lolloping like a bumble-bee, came out of the few heavy clouds on the horizon and landed on the turf. The travellers, weary by this time of sitting on the sand, and a good deal afflicted by mosquitoes, roused themselves to watch its descent, and began to be busy about their bags, from which the Customs officials had removed all photographic apparatus, all radio-receivers, and such works of Mrs. Sopwith's as they could find. These were put aside in a safe, sealed in the presence of the travellers; they would be returned when it was time to leave the country. The bereaved tourists protested, and fumed to each other of the Australians' ridiculous passion for secrecy.

"And this night-flying, too. All so that we shan't gather any notion of the lie of the land. Absurd! As if it wasn't every inch of it mapped and surveyed. As if our people wouldn't know to a foot where to land if they wanted to!"

But an elderly man was calmer.

"You have to remember that they are perpetually changing their ground; shifting camp. It's true our people would know just where they ought to be; but where they really are is quite another thing. These trees make an admirable screen."

And with his hand he indicated the line of gum-trees, straggling, but quick growers and perpetually advancing, that folded in the ellipse of turf. It was true, as they could see, when they looked from the small mound where the grand stand had been, that this country must be puzzling from the air. They were still near to



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the coast; but that guide once left behind, the greys of the tree-tops were unbroken, every range looked alike; the rare rivers were marked by no unusual vegetation along their borders.

"If it be thus in the green wood," quoted the elderly gentleman, "what shall it be in the dry? I take it that their deserts must be even more impenetrable. Well," and he shouldered his baggage, since porters there were none, "I think we may climb in."

They did so; and were settled in their seats for a good half hour before the machine started, waiting for the very last western light to die out of the sky. It was a hot sunset, sullen sterile clouds lying very low, red flaming behind them, green above; no coolness came with it, but that hottest of all sounds, the stridulation of the locusts, stopped; and high above, so high that he came within the last circle of light thrown by the falling sun, an eagle was wheeling. Their pilot watched the bird, and when at last it was too dark to see him, gave the signal, and stepped into his cockpit. They were off, to the accompaniment of noise such as the pampered inhabitants of more advanced countries of the globe had almost forgotten; this antiquated alarming machine clove the silence of the skies roaring. Stars came pricking through, and a thin moon was drawn up out of the east as though by the wind of their going. The passengers sat, glad of the high air, their thoughts enlivened by all the preliminaries of their journey to a hopefulness of strangeness and adventure. They were fifty years back in time, and their lives had become counters once more in a dangerous game.

Since there was no hearing, there was, while the flight lasted, no conversation. Time, which these people were used to have filled for them, began to hang heavily;



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there was consulting of dials, some restless movement, until about four hours after the start, towards midnight, a flare showed on the ground some way ahead, and the plane went nosing down in its direction, spiralling. Another light, and another, sprang out of the darkness, a triangle with the apex pointing north. The passengers craned at their windows, and could see, from the round white spaces these lights illumined, that they were out of the tree country, in some inland place near or upon the central desert. The landing field where they descended was just that; desert; sandy soil that yielded to the foot walking; low scrub in patches; no sign of habitation. Jane, who had been drowsing, spoke to the guide, asking the name of it.

"You don't want to know that," answered the girl, with a kind of pleasant grimace; and would say no more except that it was a Green town. She was helpful, though, with baggage, summoning men from the crowd—for a crowd there now was, drawn by the flares apparently out of space—to attend to the women's bundles, not giving orders, but intimating that they might "lend a hand with the swags." There were no persons whose business it was to carry luggage, she told Jane; it was no part of the community's duty to look after visitors.

In spite of darkness, and this forbidding welcome—the crowd was silent, and seemed to consider the new arrivals sardonically—the next half-hour was full of interest. They were led through the black night a little way, past an erection that gave out liquid sounds of dropping water, past old squares of brick a foot or so high that had been the foundation of houses, to a village of this wandering people. Perhaps two hundred old rickety planes lay wing to wing, arranged in a pattern;



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between them there were streets, and in the centre of the pattern a good-sized square, at whose eastern end stood a large plane of special character, its wings curiously painted with ancient religious designs. No time was allowed for the inspection of this, and the system of lighting did not in fact permit of much investigation. The weary visitors, trailing their bags, or shifting them from hand to hand, incuriously followed their guides through the maze, while the crowd, now throwing out occasional comments or snatches of song, followed the visitors.

Their sleeping place—for any other word, such as hostel, rest-house, or inn, would be too dignified to describe the quarters that received them—was primitive beyond anything the experience of the travellers had ever encountered. It consisted of a tent divided into compartments, one sleeping room for the men, one for the women, and a kind of common room between set with chairs, and bright with carpets thrown down on beaten sand. There was a water supply; but printed notices said everywhere, in large letters: "DON'T WASTE," and the guide informed the women that only one shower-bath a day could be allowed. The residents, she added, did not even get that. The tent, however, was agreeably cool, kept wet by means of a sprinkler on the roof which ran all night; to this patter, a homely sound that reminded her of England, Jane fell asleep.

Morning broke in a quick flare of red, and silently; there were no birds in this desert, except the bush turkeys who, wary, kept their distance from such camps. Loud staccato bangings on a tin can summoned the travellers to a breakfast of embarrassing plenty; grilled chops, porridge, and pannikins of the famed Australian tea. They ate hurriedly, eager to be out



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sight-seeing; then stepped into a luminous morning, pale with heat, but not yet so wholly colourless as mid-day would make it.

Each visitor had a different interest; one woman wanted to be shown the store cupboards and to hear how food was procured, an engineer made enquiry about the water supply, the painter demanded to be shown "types"; it was Jane Cobbett, unmindful for once of her instructions, who asked if they might inspect the church. That brought her a sharp look from the male guide, and she changed her question artlessly, as though the idea of the church had only momentarily caught her fancy, to:

"Why is this called a Green town?"

All the travellers were interested to know this, and answer was left to the man.

"Ye see," said he, "it's a question of the two faiths. How much does any of ye know, what history have ye read?"

They had read none; most of them remembered a screen course which dealt with the misdemeanours of the Popes; but this, though it had been remarkably well acted, they felt would not meet with the approval of the guide. They confessed ignorance, therefore. He surveyed them, not ill-pleased.

"Well, well, and that's the best the Gospel can do for ye. Has anyone here never heard of Oliver Cromwell?"

Nobody had; though into Jane's mind leapt the memory that his secretary for a time had been her tempter, John Milton. The guide, shaking his head good-humouredly, explained that Oliver Cromwell had saddled Ireland long ago with a heap of overbearing English immigrants that had taken the land of Ireland



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from its owners—"and the bread out of the children's mouths before he spitted them on his soldiers' pikes." Oliver had started the religious wars; and the descendants of both parties, shifting to Australia after that continent's discovery—"by an Englishman," he admitted reluctantly—carried on the feud they had inherited.

A small ferrety man in spectacles enquired how the feud could be carried on, since there was no longer any Pope?

"No Pope," repeated the guide scornfully; "for the matter of that, there's no Oliver either. If ye know anything of wars, ye'd know its worst when nobody knows what it's all about."

"You seem remarkably peaceful now," said the intelligent elderly man, endeavouring to soothe. "I suppose there's no danger of a raid right out here?"

"That's all you know," returned the guide briefly and unfavourably, and without more explanation or argument led the way to the central square, where in the glimmer of last night's lanterns they had seen a large plane with strange mystical decorations on the wings. It was noticeable that hardly any of the indigenes stared out at the party from the shelter of their tented planes, and as they turned a corner into the square the reason for this became clear. Assembled in front of a table hung with white stood a man in a curious dress, a white long skirt, with a kind of tabard of blood-red silk over it, from which his hands in white sleeves protruded, making gestures over the table. Watching this performance, the whole population of the flying town was gathered, kneeling, devoutly silent, and making from time to time responses whose meaning the visitors could not guess. The guide stopped short,



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consulted in a whisper with his girl colleague, and said in a low voice to the ten:

"If ye want to wait, keep quiet, and kneel when they do."

The visitors consulted each other with their eyes, and through each head ran the thought of what Mrs. Sopwith would say, together with the cancelling and comforting remembrance that she could never possibly come to know. They knelt, and used their eyes.

The under side of the plane's wings, now fully visible in the strong light of morning, was rich with pictures, some not edifying; a naked man stuck with arrows and a woman with her severed breasts carried on a plate shocked Jane, and she shrank from the savage mentality that could permit children to look on such horrors; the New Gospel tried to shield the imaginations of its little ones. But the troops of healthy-looking youngsters that knelt about in the sand presented no outward symptoms of any complex, and contemplated Saints Sebastian and Lucy with the detachment, or rather the completely unseeing glance of young things habituated to their surroundings and no longer mindful of them. The other furnishings of the altar table were of some interest: a large book printed in black and red, a brass crucifix evidently of some antiquity, a cup of some metal of a reddish-yellow colour, non-synthetic gold in all probability. The silence of the people, and their apparent interest in the slight movements of the dressed-up man at the altar, seemed to the strangers very striking, accustomed as they were themselves to the swift-changing screen-play and music of their own services.

Into the horrified mind of Jane Cobbett came a pang of doubt. The posturings were ridiculous, the paintings



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barbaric; but for all the New Gospel talk of a New Israel, were not these people, with their tents in the desert, their hand-to-mouth existence, more kin to Old Israel than the New Gospellers, safe in their steel towns? Did not the uncertainty of this tribal life correspond more nearly with that led by God's chosen people in the Scriptures? Jane was loyal, she drove the thought away, but it had made its entry and left irritation behind. She was glad when the ceremony drew to a close.

At the end the priest turned and addressed his congregation in the typical sing-song voice.

"I want to call your attention to what's been arranged for next Tuesday. You all know there's to be the usual races on that day, and there's every reason to think, by what I hear from the stable, that the best horses will win. You're at liberty to back your fancy. Back generously; never forget that on this one day of the year it's the Church that makes the book. The old firm; there's none so reliable. Any that wish to lay their bets before the day of the race, apply to Father McGuire or myself at the presbytery, and we'll be glad to take your money. Once more, I say, be generous; none of your little poking pounds. A fiver, ten, that's the stuff, that's the way to bet. And you all of you know well enough you'll get the money back a hundredfold, either here or there." And with a gesture to which his clothing lent majesty, he pointed up at the sky. The congregation made reassuring noises, and with no more ceremony dispersed.

"Now what," asked the elderly man, while the others clustered about the guide, "in the world might that mean?"

The guide was reticent. There were races on Shrove



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Tuesday always; symbolic races. On that day the priests made the Church's income for the year.

"How?"

Well, the priests took all the bets. It was the same as ordinary races, only all the money that changed hands went to the Church. If a man won, he gave half his winnings. If he lost, the priests, acting as bookies, kept his money as a bookie would have done.

"But why can't they just give the money without mixing religion up with racing in this blasphemous way?" asked one of the women indignantly. Her work was film continuity, and she was a personage in Bedford. The guide, however, displayed no respect for her.

"What was that word you used? We don't want any talk about religion here."

"That's just what you do want," insisted the continuity expert, "I never in the whole course of my life heard anything so outrageous." She was flushed, angry, and ripe to burst at any moment into propaganda.

The guide surveyed her.

"We didn't let you into this country for you to pass remarks. We don't like missionaries, any more than you like horse-racing. You'd better keep quiet, lady."

With that he was moving on to expound to them the Australian system of water conservation. But the imaginations of his charges had been stirred by this extraordinary recital and they persisted in question.

"Where do you keep the horses?"

"You couldn't race them here, in this heat, on this sand."

"Oh, can't we go on Tuesday and see?"

This last was Jane, keeping up her pose of the intelligent neophyte, the none too pious gleaner of new experiences. She looked remarkably pretty; she



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was really interested to learn, and her voice conveyed a genuine eagerness. But the guide was monosyllabic.

"No fear."

"Oh, but why not? The Customs man said I'd be let go to races."

"Not these."

"Oh, but why?"

There was no answer to that, except a murmur from the Australian girl which told her not to insist; and a sentence flung by the man over his shoulder as he strode off:

"You'll be out of here by Tuesday."

Jane abandoned enquiry; there was no need to make herself conspicuous by insisting; with the others she inspected the waterworks, of an incredibly primitive nature, and was shown some of the migratory homes.

In one of these latter a woman sat with a baby at her breast. Now this method of feeding was, in more civilized places, gradually becoming abandoned; it had been found to lead to complexes so entangled and unspeakable that no rational mother in the Gospel world would choose to expose her child to the risk of them. It had therefore been abolished, to the satisfaction of everybody, with the possible exception of the babies. Jane longed to tell this mother that she was laying up trouble for herself and her child; her hands itched for the dummy baby, washable and detachable limb from limb, which she used for screen purposes to spread sense among the mothers of the New Israel. But the child looked healthy, the mother contented; and again came that pang, that moment's wonder.

They lunched warmly at twelve, and then, with the sun high above and all the distances in a dervish frenzy



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in every direction, the party fell asleep in its canvas shelters, thankfully. The guide said:

"The plane'll be coming for you at sundown. You're moving on to an Orange town, somewhere south. You've seen everything here."

"Except the races."

"T' hell with the races!" The guide checked himself, as though caught in blasphemy. "What I mean is, you get that idea out of your head, you, Miss What's This, unless you're looking for trouble. Bags packed by six."

Jane was not looking for trouble, was indeed wholly concerned to keep out of it. All the same, she could not help grumbling a little to her companions, the continuity artist and the elderly silent woman, last of their trio.

"What's the good of all this? We don't really see anything. We can't talk to anyone with those guides at our elbows all the time."

"My dear, they only show what they want us to see," returned the continuity artist from the truckle bed where she lay in her shift. "You don't suppose they want us to find out anything; naturally they won't let us in on the really interesting stuff. They're very secretive. I shouldn't be surprised to learn they've got a Pope hidden somewhere in the bowels of the earth."

"I think it's nice the way families live together," said the elderly woman unexpectedly. The other two turned on their couches with a grinding of rusty springs.

"But it's uneconomic. It's sentimental. Everyone with his own front door and fireplace, I suppose! Parental authority, all jealousy and impulse and not a spark of reason——"

"I only thought they looked happy," said the elderly



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woman, a little frightened. "I dare say it's not the best sort——"

"You can't be happy on lies," said Jane, the Crusader, severely. "Giving the man authority, and keeping the woman in squalor, and letting the children eat what and when they like—what sort of a world would that make?"

"Terrible, of course," returned the elderly woman abjectly, for she had seen and known something of what came to those who crossed Gospellers in their onward march. "I don't mean it would do for civilized people. I only mean it doesn't seem so wrong here as it would with us. That's all I meant."

The fiery pair were not satisfied, but they perceived that she was a craven arguer, not worth powder and shot. They turned on their backs, lay flat, and lost consciousness, pressed down into sleep by the weight of the silence about them. The sun stared upon their tent out of a white sky. To the north a mirage, a clear lake with birds drifting and trees bending to it, appeared beckoning, and faded as the sun sloped, unseen. Cruelty departed from air and sand, and at last when shadows began to lie long there was heard a comfortable droning in the south, which woke the camp, and set the adventurers stretching and robing in their tents.

"Our plane," said the continuity artist, yawning. "Well, twenty-four hours is enough of this."

There was a sudden blare close beside them, a trumpet, breathlessly blown, skidding from note to note, but imperative. The continuity artist, afflicted with the sense of perfect pitch, put her hands to her too-sensitive ears.

"What on earth——!" she enquired of the still quivering air.



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It was the elderly woman, white-faced, who answered that unfinished question.

"It's the Assembly," said she. "Oh, God!"

The two looked at her, and proceeded leisurely with their dressing. They had no notion, and cared very little, what the Assembly might be.



They were, however, to learn.

There was a running and calling outside their tent. The afternoon, which had been slumberous, languid, suddenly started into life, and became noisy with voices and feet. Above the din the brazen panic of the bugle sounded continuously. To the women came running their guide, her pale cheeks flushed brick-red, her eyes alight with the joy of a shindy.

"It's a raid," said she, gasping, "the dirty Protestants! Coming up so sly from the south, the way we'd be thinking it was the travel plane! Come, now, I've got to see you all safe. Men too. Hey!" And she tore aside the knotted door into the masculine tent, shouting to the seven to be quick about it. They appeared, white-faced.

"What? Who?"

"The Protestants, don't I tell you. Come on out of it."

"Where to? They're in planes, aren't they? We'll never get away——"

The guide summoned breath for a sniff of ineffable scorn.

"We don't fight that way, thank God, with chemicals and poisoning the water, and such-like



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dirty tricks. Not even the Protestants would do that. No, but they don't like outsiders any more than ourselves, and if they come your way you'll know it. Leave your bags, leave them, there's no time——"

And she shepherded her ten, protesting, and nervously looking round, towards a hummock of sand crowned by a huge ancient ant-heap some quarter of a mile from the camp. They were aware, as they went, of men scurrying forward past them with never a glance, bearing strange weapons, Biblical almost; one young fellow had a stone slung in a stocking, which he swung in his hand as he ran, like the young David; others had clubs and spears of wood toughened in fire. There were no firearms, and no burr of engines in the air; save for the noise of voices it would have seemed ridiculous to suppose that human creatures not far off were threatening each other with death. The party arrived at the ant-heap.

"Stay here, and don't you budge," the guide ordered. A little collection of coloured stones, collected perhaps by some child, lay scattered at the foot of the heap; she stooped, swiftly gathered them into the lap of her dress, and without waiting an instant legged back to the fight, pursued, feebly because of the heat, by the cries of the abandoned travellers.

"Guide! Miss! What are we to do, what's going to happen? This place isn't safe."

"Safe!" came her voice over one shoulder as she fled. "Safe, where are ye?"

With which idiomatic phrase from the land of her fathers, implying both scorn and the impossibility of doing any better, she was out of earshot. The disconsolate party consulted with glances.

"Very remiss," said the ferrety man. "Bad



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organisation. I wasn't prepared for this. I understood that these tribal feuds were not allowed to inconvenience travellers. I shall certainly make representations when I get home."

All agreed. This was barbarism carried too far. In kindness to the people themselves it should not be allowed to go on.

"And yet," said the elderly man, who had been watching the distant clash from under his rounded hands, "and yet, you know, it really looks as though the whole thing were more of a game. There's no point of view, so to speak, behind the sword. The killing here will be incidental, not the main object. It recalls all that one has read of the Irish."

And he coughed, for he too, like Jane, had kept his literacy discreetly dark. However, there was no person present who cared to take advantage of this slip, and the elderly woman provided distraction by dissolving in tears.

"Oh, the blood!" said she, shuddering horribly, "the blood!"

And this was strange; for though she had witnessed a good many victories of the Gospel spirit, these had always been attained without bloodshed, by drowning or stifling, or electric waves. Yet it was the thought of blood being shed that set her shuddering and weeping. Jane dealt with her by a practical method.

"These are what they call bulldog ants, I think," said she in detached tones. "You're just on a nest of them."

The elderly woman recalled her spirit from contemplations of massacre to rise abruptly and shake her skirts, after which interlude it was difficult to resume hysterical weeping. She became quiet, and watched



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with the others the progress of the battle.

As well as they could see for dust, the surprise tactics of Orangemen seemed to have succeeded. Two large planes had come in the wake of the first, landed and disgorged their raiding parties, which attacked the camp on three sides, shouting, always shouting amid the upward swirling dust.

"Their poor throats!" said the elderly woman, and put up a hand to her own.

"So long as it's not our poor throats," said the ferrety man, disagreeably. "If you ask me, I think the Mother's done very wisely not to interfere with these people. Let them knock each other's heads off; save us trouble. And the country"—he looked with distaste at the ant-heap—"barren; good for nothing. It could be sunk under the sea and not missed. Absolute desert."

"And we," said Jane, uncompromising, "are in the middle of it."

Thus abruptly recalled to the facts of the case, the ferrety man subsided, and the actual position of the travellers became abundantly clear, in the silence, to all. They were in the middle of the desert—where, they had no notion; how far from help, they could not tell. Between them and the fury of an unknown but too evidently savage tribe stood only another tribe, surprised and less powerful, lukewarm in its appreciation of travellers, and definitely hostile to the New Word of God which those travellers in their persons represented. Whatever the upshot of the battle, the outlook of the adventurers must be stimulating. It was likely that news of their presence had attracted the raiders, whose purpose was to make them captives; beyond this point it was by no means comfortable to look, since to fanatics



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ransom would hardly be an object. The elderly woman. with the tactlessness of her generation, put their plight in a nutshell.

"If they win they'll kill us. We can't get away. They look like winning. Oh, why ever did we come?"

Nobody answered her; the strangeness of such abrupt dying came to puzzle all their uneasy minds, accustomed to the euthanasia, the fading-out under drugs so invariable in those more advanced countries from which they came. Only Jane did not heed; she was watching the progress of the fight, and her imagination, that hereditary faculty which Mrs. Sopwith's rule had not wholly succeeded in disciplining, went out to battle on the side of the villagers. It was glorious, this sort of fighting; magnificent, this disdain of the weapons of science. So must King Adoni-zedek and the other four kings of the Amorites have striven with Joshua's legions at Gibeon, foot to foot, with weapons out of the earth, bronze swords, spears of toughened wood; and blood to show for it all, instead of the gaspings with which enemies of the New Gospel went down, stricken by gases according to God's word in Isaiah, all for their good. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."

"Our people are losing," said the elderly man with forced composure, suddenly putting down his hands as though he could no longer bear to watch.

Our people! Jane glanced at him swiftly, feeling less alone. She stared eagerly at the fray, where the invaders were making visible progress and the defenders falling back. She saw a tiny dark silhouette rear itself against the sun, standing on the wing of a plane; a woman, her arms about something, holding it preciously to her. A thin dark rod, no thicker at that distance



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than a hair, thrust up at her, and she doubled over it limply and clumsily.

At that sight the disciplinary bond of twenty-one years snapped in Jane's heart. She made no attempt to draw her companions with her, but suddenly began, alone, to run. She had no weapon, no notion of what she was about to do. As she ran thoughts chilling and mocking and completely discouraging swept into her head, but she was listening to her blood, legacy from uncounted generations of men who had fought; and her blood, like an angry person shouting, wholly overbore those frigid counsels of the New Gospel spectator in her soul.

She stooped as she came near the confusion and picked up a spear that had been dropped. The line of the defenders was broken, they were straggling inwards, fighting still among the narrow lanes made by the wings of their old machines, defending their canvas city inch by inch with the eternally unchanging tactics of street-fighting. A match would have set one plane, and that one all the rest, flaring up to heaven; but these raiders would not use fire, as they would not poison wells; water and transport were the community's life in this wild country, respected mutually even by enemies.

She came behind a man with an orange band on his arm, and stuck her spear into his body from behind; left it in him, after a wrench or two, and clambered on to the overhanging wing of a plane. Standing high, she could see how the Green men and women were withdrawing towards the central square, their sanctuary, where the great plane stood with the pictured wings. She ran along towards this from wing to wing, leaping with an unsuspected strength. A gap confronted her in which men were struggling, unaware of



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her; she took instant decision, and lightly using their shoulders as stepping stones, got across.

Nobody, she could see, was at the controls of the big plane; no movement appeared in its cabins. A hand flashed for a moment into view with a heavy crucifix, the brass crucifix she had seen that morning, grasped in it; the strange weapon came down and rose again, hacking. Evidently their priest was in the very deeps of the fray, unlike those directors of faith who issued orders from the insulated steel towers of Pharaoh, Cal. Jane had a moment's calm apprehension of how such a camp as this might be guarded from raids such as these.

"They ought to range the planes in a circle with the propellers facing outward, and switch on when they're attacked. Nobody's going to face being cut to pieces at the rate of 2,000 revolutions a minute. What fools they are!"

This gust of irritation could not, however, conceal from her clear sight that things were going badly. The Orangemen, fighting in a wedge, had made their way almost to the very table on which the tabernacle stood; only the priest, yelling, opposed them. The crucifix flailed once or twice, then he was down, and the Orangemen were reaching up with their weapons at the pictures of saints on the wings to deface them, standing right under the plane, clustered all about the three propellers.

Jane knew nothing of aeroplanes; this antiquated type would have puzzled the best engineers of her country to understand; but she had been sitting forward when they took off the night before, and she had seen the pilot's foot go to a certain pedal, the starter. She thrust her own small foot down upon its spadelike rusty



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surface, savagely thrust, as she had put all her weight behind the spear. The engine broke into a roar, there were yells, and looking grimly up at the front window she saw it spattered and trickling with blood. At that sight, like a creature possessed, she climbed out from the cabin, stood up above the whirling fury and the drone, shouting inaudibly, unintelligibly to villagers to come on, to kill, that she was on their side. They looked up, saw her there blood-stained, with the last red of the sun on her, and took heart. Six of the Orangemen had been cut to pieces in a manner very terrifying to their followers; and now the priest was reviving, staggering, but still holding up his crucifix with the patient figure on it. Jane beckoned him; completely and instantly understanding, he tossed it up to her; she stood there, both hands thrusting it aloft, singing to those people of her village, her people whom she would rescue, if they could only catch the spark from her; exhorting them inaudibly in the battle-hymn of Mrs. Emma Jordan Sopwith:

> "He that smites the nations takes up the sword for me——"

To that cry, unheard but divine, the Green villagers rallied; from that furious lit figure in the outlandish dress the Orange raiders took panic. They fled, seized by the fear which ruled their nights and days, that here at last were the New Gospellers upon them. The words of the terror of Israel rang in their ears, wild prophecies of wrath to come, unintelligible and therefore unlimited in meaning. "Then shall the right aiming thunderbolts go abroad; and from the clouds, as from a well-drawn bow, shall they fly to the mark. And hailstones full of wrath shall be cast as out of a stone



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bow, and the water of the sea shall rage against them, and the floods shall cruelly drown them——" Thus Ireland, the country of their love and hate and the core of their hearts, had been devoured. Thus, stricken with thunderbolts from the sky, great cylinders containing gases, Rome had been destroyed. They remembered, and fled.

They fled; and the villagers, not pursuing, huddled themselves and their wounded into their planes, and made off into the south; from which direction, tiny against the cloudless sunset, now appeared the travel-plane with promise of succour.

The group by the ant-heap, after a first motion of astonishment and alarm, was divided in counsel.

"She'll be killed, she'll be killed," the elderly lady moaned.

"Excuse me," said the painter sharply, because he was himself afraid, "I can't think how you ever came on this trip. You don't talk like a Gospeller."

"I've been school-teaching for twenty years," said the woman, sitting up. "I was the first baptized when the Gospel came to Wolverhampton. I've earned this trip as much as any of you."

"Yes, yes," said the elderly man soothingly, "but the thing is, we're all in the same boat."

"And the boat's got a leak in it," said a young man, with a laugh that for all his jauntiness had a quiver in it.

"Don't talk like that." These were the robust tones of the continuity expert. "Personally, I think Jane Cobbett is right. How many of us are there?" She swept the assembly with a glance which omitted the elderly woman from its calculations. "Eight able-bodied people. We might attack the Orangemen in the



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rear, and turn the scale. Wasn't there some battle——?"

"You're not counting us?" said two young men simultaneously. They were pale specimens, the trip was obviously a good-conduct prize earned by blind obedience and faith. "We won't fight," one continued, "it's wrong."

The other agreed. The she-commander looked at them with some respect, and reasoned without truculence:

"Of course it's wrong. But if we're going to be killed anyhow——" and she quoted Mrs. Sopwith's adaptation of an old English lay:

> "For how can man die better
> Than facing fearful odds
> For the triumph of New Gospel,
> And the temples that are God's?"

But the young men would not have this. They had been brought up in acceptance of the fact that physical violence was wrong. They were of the New Israel, which punished encounters of schoolboys if they drew blood, and was repelled by the unseemly savagery of Nature in childbirth. They were right, and the continuity expert knew it; but women are not so easily drilled into corporate thinking as men, and for all John Knox's hard words can never spiritually make a regiment. She hesitated still.

"I think really we'd better not interfere," said a meek chemist who hitherto had not spoken. "You see, it's really a question of which side is going to win. It's not a question of right or wrong at all. At least, not altogether. The danger, it seems to me, is of joining in on the wrong side."

This reasoning appealed to all. There was a sigh from



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half a dozen bosoms, representing regret for security, condemnation of adventure. In the lands Mrs. Sopwith ruled it was so easy to know which side would win. At this juncture Jane Cobbett was seen against the sun, running over the wings of the adjacent planes, and they ceased their discussion to watch her. She sprang and bounded like those mountain goats which so enlivened zoos. She was at the very heart of the danger, looking down on death. Her flying figure, for some reason unsuspected by their inmost souls, gave them a moment's feeling of envy and of pride. They had been taught to regard such conduct as serving no purpose, as despicably silly; it was no part of a Christian's duty to regulate the quarrels of unbelievers by personal intervention; nevertheless, their heart-beats quickened, and when the elderly man said, "It may not be Gospel, but it's grand," there were no dissentient voices.

Inexplicable things then began to happen. They heard the roar of the propellers which cut six Orange-men into strips; they saw the mad dance of the figure waving some emblem; and then, with eyes which hardly could believe their own retinas, they saw the panic flight of the raiders, straggling across the plain from the canvas city they had so newly conquered. The continuity expert it was who grumbled.

"So they won after all. I told you we ought to have joined in."

The men, however, and the elderly woman could not regret that the battle had been won without them. And when they saw the travel plane approaching, with one impulse they dropped on their knees, and mingling their own with the acceptable phrases of their spiritual Mother, thanked God for deliverance.



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## (vi)

Their troubles, however, were not yet over. The Federal plane, true, was there, with its nonchalant pilot scarfed in the two colours, and a pair of relieving guides, surveying the blood still darkening here and there with interest and concern.

"Must have been a bonza bust-up," said the male guide wistfully; then recalled himself to his duty, and greeted with apologies the party from the ant-heap; could not understand how such a thing could have happened; very sorry, more surprised; hoped the ant-heap party wouldn't hold it against Australia; every care was taken as a rule——

"We want to go away from here," said the elderly woman, cutting him short. "Look at those flies."

It was a fact that the blood, though sand had been hastily scuffed over most of the patches, was attracting myriads of flies, a sight liable to turn New World stomachs rapidly and completely.

"We shall complain," said the ferrety man; "make representations. This sort of thing won't do your tourist business any good."

The guide was too well used to tourists in a temper to reply. He realised, moreover, that the Federal authorities had been caught napping, and said smoothly in his indolent national voice:

"That's right, we got to take responsibility when things go wrong. If you've got your bags packed, we'll be starting off quick. You won't have the same trouble again, I don't mind betting."

"If we do," said the ferrety man ferociously,



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"you'll have to answer to our Government. Mrs. Sopwith won't stand much of this."

The guide was silent. He knew from years of experience that a grievance which will renew itself in argument can find in silence no force of recoil. The nine hurried off to their tent, unpillaged by some chance of war, where they found their baggage undisturbed, and were able, by setting their bodies in the accustomed order, to regain something of command over their souls. They dressed, packed, sipped a farewell pannikin of tea served by a woman with a bandage round her head, an insufficient bandage from which they all looked away. Then they were ready for the plane. The new guide was helpful, offered an arm to the ladies, a hand to the men with their bags, checking them on his way-bill as they ascended into the body of the plane, still cool from its voyage through the upper air. Only one name remained unanswered.

"Where's this Jane Cobbett?" asked the guide of the surrounding villagers, lifting his voice; then, when there was no answer, to the pilot: "Sound the syren."

The pilot sounded a long lugubrious call. When it had dwindled down to mere purring, the villagers spoke all at once, explaining.

"She's not going. She's staying here."

"None of that," said the guide sharply. "I'm responsible for these people, and I've had enough worry. You hand her over."

They clamoured again, explaining how entirely he had misunderstood. She was staying because she wanted to stay. She'd done them a good turn, and they didn't want to part with her, and she didn't want to go.

"I don't know anything about that," the guide answered them, weary; "what I do know is if you don't



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hand her over you're going to get the whole boiling of us into trouble. You can't go making away with any more of these New World Gospel lambs. There's orders out. Now just one of you mooch along and fetch her."

The villagers' reply was interrupted by a commotion at the edge of the town, and the guide, standing a little above them on the rickety steps of the machine, could see that the missing Gospeller was approaching, borne shoulder-high. The crowding Green people ran to meet and escort her; the Gospellers hung out of the plane windows and set up a pale cheer, since after all it was to her impulsive conduct that they owed their present safety; and in triumph Jane Cobbett, that wholly satisfactory and orthodox lecturer in mothercraft, rejoined her fellow-travellers.

Her appearance, however, shocked these. She had blood on her dress. Her hair was wild. Her eyes showed a sublime troubling joy in their glance. The elderly gentleman, who in his youth had heard of heathen goddesses and warrior queens, compared her in his mind to an Amazon, to Boadicea, and to the goddesses, names forgotten, who had fought at Troy. Her supporters, when they arrived at the plane, did not set her down.

"Well," said the guide humorously, "been seeing a bit of life, haven't you?" No apologies to Jane. He perceived clearly, as the elderly man did, that she had enjoyed the fight. "You'll be glad of a nice rest and cool off, up among the clouds."

The villagers gave a yell of protest. Jane answered, when they had done:

"I'm not coming with you."

There was another yell, in which the denizens of the travel-plane joined. They protested. They enquired of each other whether she had gone out of her wits. They



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loudly implored her not to be so ridiculous, to jump in, it was getting late. The guide produced his waybill on which her name was written, pointing out, in a bellow owing to the enthusiastic din, that he must deliver all those persons named upon it into the right hands or he would lose his job. Jane Cobbett repeated what she had said.

"I'm not coming with you."

And the villagers, with yells, not only concurred in this decision but made a war-whooping unreasoning defiance of it.

The guide, a person of discrimination, considered the whole situation while he stared down at his waybill. He was not armed, nor was the pilot. He had at his back nine Gospellers, persons whom his experience told him were useless in a row. The villagers were armed, determined, and had got into the swing of fighting. The recalcitrant woman possessed the kind of chin against which oiled persuasion is vain.

"I've warned you," was all he said as he turned his back on them and walked up the steps into the plane. Inside in the long cabin Gospellers clustered about him. He was neglecting his duty, he was incompetent, he must use force if only force would do to bring back Jane Cobbett to sanity. He listened gravely, and when their clamour ceased made a sign to the pilot, who stepped briskly on the self-starter; in the deafening roar of the engine his answer went unheard. It was:

"I know when I'm wasting time, if you don't."

With that the aged plane rose, found her balance amid shifting pressures of air and was off through the night. The Southern Cross, that bright lop-sided constellation, greeted eyes accustomed to the Great Bear. In this topsy-turvy continent not even stars were the same.



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## (vii)

The heroine of the afternoon was gently, with cheering, let down to the ground by her supporters, and with that symbolic action there rushed upon her again all her quarter-century of inhibitions and prohibitions. Even to further the Gospel cause, even to insinuate herself into this people's good graces, as her mission bade her, was it well to let all decorum go? She had enjoyed the fight. She knew in her heart that she was, or could be, better at fighting than at mothercraft; and she had some satisfaction in the thought that she had bought her position as spy at the risk of her own life. It made her position appear somewhat less ignoble. And though she had assurance that nothing which furthered the cause of right could be ignoble, yet some-thing in her, some age-old reprehensible quality that sickened at the task of deception, needed all the comfort it could get.

That evening there was a conference with the two priests. The elder, Father Moran, was the fighter. Father McGuire was a very young man, pale, but with the eyes of the fanatic, which rarely flame with ardour but are of a curious colour, a clear unseeing grey. She had given back the crucifix, and Father McGuire sat cleaning it with sand as he listened to the two con-ferring. Father Moran's florid colour was a shade or two lighter. He was bandaged, but very much alive; blood-letting had done him good, and he was cheerful.

"We showed 'em," he kept repeating. "With God's help and yours, my dear child, we showed the Oranges! Squeezed them dry! When did you begin, now, to feel this call from God?"



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The phrase took Jane aback. It was much used by the seniors of the Gospel. Everything was a call; people received calls to be steel workers, sound experts, gas manufacturers; and the impulse which had driven Jane from the safe seclusion of the ant-heap to the centre of battle had been entirely unlike anything she had experienced when first she became a mothercraft lecturer. She answered, therefore, telling the truth as far as she was able:

"I don't think it was God. I didn't want the Orangemen to win."

The priest gave a great hearty laugh, and suddenly put up a hand to his shoulder as it throbbed.

"Wow! That was a nice knock I got. Well, but my dear child, don't you see that what you're saying is just a sure proof of that very fact? Didn't want the Orangemen to win! And what d'you call that if it wasn't God's own voice speaking?"

Then he sobered down.

"You understand, I've got to ask a few questions. Not that I'm not grateful to you, and not that all the men of this town, women, too, come to that, wouldn't let you walk on their faces in hobnail boots."

He did not, however, at once state his questions. He looked at her, admiring and troubled, walked up and down, and halted at last before her.

"It's the wish of us all that you should stay. No question about that. And that you should become a Catholic, and live here among us. You'd be respected by Green and Orange alike, for when all's said and done and whatever were Ireland's faults—God rest her and the souls of her people!—she sent out good fighters, and knows how to respect good fighters. But——"

The priest rasped the grey stiff stubble on his chin.



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"But the question is, what are they going to think about it on the other side, your side of the world?"

"Mrs. Sopwith?" said Jane, wondering just what Mrs. Sopwith would think, tranquilly communing with God in her steel tower, if her meditations were broken by news of Jane's apostasy.

"That's her," said the priest briefly; "tell me now, what sort of a person are you? Will you be missed if you stay? They only send the top-notchers on these trips, we know. You're a valuable woman. Would it mean war to get you back? Like in the old story, how they set out to get back that heathen woman from Troy—seven years of it they had. Well, we don't want seven years nor yet seven days of it. If there's the slightest risk of trouble, and I want your honest opinion on this, understand; if there's risk, back you go. We'd like to have you, the way we'd like many another thing in this world that isn't good for us; but if it's to bring trouble on all of us—well, you see how it is, my dear child. God knows it wouldn't be my own wish."

Jane did see; and had a glimpse, in addition, of how the great Mother was regarded here. As she hesitated, dubious, for this was a grave derangement of her plans, Father McGuire lifted his face from the newly-burnished crucifix which he had been contemplating.

"Can I put in my word, Father?"

"And welcome," said Father Moran heartily. "What is it you have to say? Father McGuire's by way of being a saint"—this to Jane with a large smile; "he gets that way by diet, or the lack of it. But you heed him, for all that. Go on, Father."

"Miss Cobbett," the young man began abruptly, "have you heard of St. Joan?" Jane shook her head. "Will you listen while I tell you? There was a time



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when France—you have some other name for it now—when that country was being oppressed by the English, that are the same wherever they go, grasping and treacherous. The French were brave, but they had no leaders, and a nation that is not led will dash itself to pieces and spend strength, and have nothing in the end to show for it but a heap of graves. (You don't bury that way any more.) Well, the French were losing their own land acre by acre, and their men, and their King couldn't get to be crowned so he'd have at least God's blessing to help. There was a young woman then, up in Lorraine where they grow the wines, that saw two of God's blessed saints in—call it a dream. They told her to go and find a sword under an altar, and save France with it. God blessed her, and she led the King with all his nation out of slavery; and now she's at Almighty God's right hand praying for those of us that are still in bondage, the cowards, those that are under the shadow of fear." His thin face twisted. "Miss Cobbett, that great saint prays for me."

Father Moran put up a hand to silence him, or perhaps in deprecation; Jane remembered a figure she had seen that afternoon crouching by the painted church-plane, passive, with tormented eyes. The young priest went on, disregarding for once his senior's hand.

"But it's not myself only. It's this country that wants someone to defend it against fear. Half our lives are spent underground; look at our faces, look how we can't give a stranger a civil answer. It's not the Orange flag frightening us, it's the thought of what might come from the air, over the sea. How long will it be before they gather us up as they gathered our fathers in Ireland? How will death come this time on innocent people? Will they drown us or choke us? We can have



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no abiding city for fear it should go down on their destroying charts. What sort of life is it? We make no books, we build nothing, paint no pictures. The fear's always on us, like it was on the French before Saint Joan came. Australia's torn the way France was. We want somebody. We've got to find somebody——"

He stopped, and with a gesture both weary and ashamed, dropped his face in his hands. The elder priest got up and came over to him, patted his shoulder, and said, looking apologetically at Jane:

"They say the child unborn will take notions, and grow queer from the troubles of its mother. Before this lad was in the world at all the news came that every creature at the old place had gone, brothers and sisters, and an old horse they had there, Katie, that his mother used to ride when she was no more than a slip of a girl in the County Kildare. He's been in dread of the Gospel ever since—small blame to him. What he says about Saint Joan is true enough."

There was a brief silence.

"I can't fight Mrs. Sopwith," said Jane desperately and suddenly, the unregenerate part of her touched and terrified by this faith. She was on the verge of confessing to them both her mission of spy, so emotionally poignant was the appeal, but discipline won. She repeated: "I can't fight her."

"I'm not asking it," the elder priest answered, putting the matter aside with a gesture. "I'm not asking that, though I think if she comes at us we'd have a chance if we'd someone to follow. Will she come at us if we keep you? that's what I'm asking."

Jane reassured him. She could truthfully do that. Mrs. Sopwith would make no search for her. She knew that she would be allowed plenty of rope, but it was



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hardly possible to share with the priest her reasons for this confidence. She repeated, therefore, with as much earnestness as she could contrive, the assurance of her unimportance in the Gospel scheme, and begged to be allowed to stay with the wandering people. He looked at her steadily and shrewdly, believed her, and capitulated.

"God bless you!" said Father Moran, affected, and blowing his nose with a hideous noise. "Gospeller or Christian, this is the place for a woman the cut of you. You come at a good time for that matter, let me tell you," he continued, regaining jocularity. "It's the races to-morrow. Well, well, my head's like a race-course itself, with the thoughts going round. Good-night now, my dear child, you'll sleep sound, and wake up with an appetite, and remember that while Almighty God has so much as the corner of His eye on us, we're safe." He patted Father McGuire's bent shoulders again. "We're safe."

Jane went alone to her tent, that vast guest-tent, through the lanes of sleeping families. There were no lights; the darkness reminded her of the ever-present threat from the air that obsessed the villagers; even where a wounded man lay tossing, no lamps were lit. The people rose with the sun, and went to bed with it. Jane, that strategist, smiled at their naïve precautions, for why anticipate and guard only against attack by night? They spread the wings of their village wide over the ground, roughly camouflaged, true, but easily perceptible from the air as a rectangle, one of the geometrical forms found rarely in Nature. They were absurdly vulnerable by day; that the afternoon's raid showed clearly. Yet here they were, confidently expecting enemies only by night, lighting no lamps even



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for sickness to be tended, keeping a look-out awake to warn the sleeping community at the first sign of any light or noise in the sky. They needed leading, thought Jane Cobbett, exchanging a subdued good-night with this watchman; and though something in her blood answered happily to their way of living, the common sense which life in the New World fostered was contemptuous of their mental laziness.

"They're fools," said Jane Cobbett's intellect uncompromisingly. "People who allow themselves to suffer, and be stupid, are fools. They deserve what they're going to get. The world can't afford people like these any longer."

Some dark unknown quality at the bottom of her soul murmured against this. She overbore the voice, and going into her tent, without further ado fell asleep.



Next morning the chatter of the villagers woke her even before the woman with the bandage came with a cup of tea to tell her that it was just after three, and the flight was for four. Would she travel in the Church plane, Father Moran wanted to know? Jane would, and said so with her compliments.

"But where are we going?"

The woman gazed.

"It's the races to-day. We're going to the races. All the other towns will be there."

"What other towns? Will the Orange people be there?"

The woman gave a short laugh.

"Not this time. The money goes to the Church to-day.



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You can have a double shower if you like. Breakfast in a quarter of an hour."

And she went away, darkling, to prepare that comprehensive meal. Jane dressed, ate, and arrived at the central square as Mass was ending. The people were dressed in their best, and evidently full of the excitement appropriate to the day; but they kept still till the last prayer, which they recited with emphasis, and then let off steam in a hymn. Jane had heard some hymn-singing in her time, but never anything to equal this outburst. She could not catch all the words, for it was a tune with rapid swoops ascending, and a kind of galloping rhythm. In so far as its meaning could be gathered, it seemed to implore a blessing on the activities of the day:

"The lightnings of heaven, the galloping wind
Ride slower than prayer to the Judge up above;
'Tis prayer is the winner, 'tis prayer that shall find,
Life's handicap over, the Cup which is love."

This sung, they all started up from their knees, and went off to get their machines in order, to pack away beds and children, and to push the planes apart so that when the time came for flight each would have room to take off. It was soon done. In half an hour they were ready, and went off in coveys, four at a time. The Church plane rose alone, but was soon surrounded by the machines which had the task of guarding it. The young priest was pilot. Jane sat in Father Moran's own comfortable leather-covered armchair, very shabby and tobacco-ridden, and watched from the window the land as it drifted by below.

They crossed perhaps a hundred miles of desert, flat, dun-coloured, mottled with clumps of spinifex and



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whitish grasses; then saw the fringe of the tree country appearing. It was hilly, and the tops of the hills with their blue-grey foliage showed as islands in a thin mist that was rolling up from the valleys. This ascended towards the upper air into the rays of the sun, now strengthening; it twirled upwards slowly, like smoke on a windless day, and as it was withdrawn deep valleys appeared, these too blue with trees. Valley and hill succeeded each other, eternally repeated and unchanging. It was, for all its alternations of height, country more featureless even than the deserts they had quitted.

The young priest was steering by compass, as was inevitable when there were no landmarks, and the whole concourse of planes with their loads of people, animals and domestic fowls, kept together in rough formation, dipped and swung like a flight of swallows, roaring intolerably through the clear spaces, and throwing on the grey tree-tops, massed close together, shadows as of gigantic birds passing. As before, no conversation was possible. One question, however, came into Jane's head and puzzled her until she was constrained to lean over Father Moran, deep in a red-edged devotional book, take the pencil from his pocket, and write on a scrap of what appeared to be sermon paper:

"Don't the Orange people ever attack these race-gatherings?"

The din of the engine presented no barrier to the voice of Father Jeremiah Moran. Putting one hand funnel-wise before his mouth, and turning this towards her ear, he responded:

"There's not many things that scum holds sacred, but there's some, and racing's one of them. There has to be give and take in these things. I was at one of their meetings myself one time, not dressed the way



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I am now, of course; with more of a long face on me. There was a horse there called Shillelagh, that I fancied on account of the name. Well, I put all I had on him, and they have the Tote there. Would you believe it, not another person besides myself liked this horse, and the Tote had to pay out at about two hundred to one. 'Well,' I said to the people, 'that's the first time ever a shillelagh put a lump in my pocket without one on the head to match,' I said. And the Protestants all trying to place who the lucky fella could be."

Jane nodded and smiled, but the chief significance of this anecdote was lost upon her. She gleaned from it the fact that racing was the one enthusiasm the two warring tribes had in common, and that the race-course only, of all the millions of acres of land included in the island continent, might be accounted neutral ground.

Father Moran was going on with his reminiscences in a ruminative bellow.

"And there was another thing happened to me that same time; I stood two Protestants a drink. That's a thing I never thought to do. But I got it past my gullet somehow, whisky it was, and one of these fellows turns to the other and he says, 'That toothful 'll do us no good, we forgot the Pope. Another round,' he says, 'and to hell with him.' Well, there was a nice sort of a problem for a Catholic. I drank it—I had to, or they'd have had me murdered. No, but what I did then was to say 'Excuse me!' and I went out from the place where they were all drinking, and put my fingers down my throat and up came the whisky. A silly young fella I was then; for what harm could a spot of whisky in my stomach do the Pope, God rest him, come to think of it?"



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To this there seemed to be no very evident answer, and the priest sat back again, contented with the stories he had told, and opened once more the breviary he had closed for a while over his thumb.

The plane began to dip. Looking out, Jane perceived that a narrow crack was opening in the rolling trees, as it might be the bent track of a watercourse. It was not a watercourse, however, though in the far past it must have been something of the kind. Now there was no green, only the greys and dun-colours of the burnt desert grasses growing on flats a mile wide, and perhaps twice as long. It was not a natural clearing, but a site chosen with very great care, invisible until a plane was over it, and wholly unsuspected among the thousands of acres of crowding trees.

Jane looked up at the sky. Two coveys of planes were visible, approaching from the north-east, forty or fifty to each, whose drone was inaudible above the din of their own ancient engines. Father Moran at this juncture cast an eye on the clock, briskly blessed himself, and put down his book with a slap to peer out.

"Well done, Father!" This to the pilot. "If they beat us by five minutes it's as much as they'll do. What's that to the left? What church is that? Holy wars, it's Father Guinness in his old St. Peter ad Vincula! Look at the spread on her, a furlong across she looks, and the paint all fresh. Where did the money come from for that?"

The central plane of the first covey was now proudly displayed broadside on, with gilt pillars to her cabin windows, the fuselage decorated profusely with cherubs in blue, and every kind of ecclesiastical extravagance plain to the sight.



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"That's never the old church," muttered Father Moran, scanning it through glasses. "And yet there's St. Peter and the chains; it's Father Guinness sure enough. How's he come by that now, d'you suppose? D'ye see him, Father?" he bawled to the pilot, who nodded. "What's the meaning of it?" He puzzled; then consoled himself. "Well, maybe after to-day, if the favourites don't win, and our luck holds, we'll treat ourselves to a lick of gold on the windows too. Let him down first, Father." The rival church was disporting itself with an abandon which hinted at new and trustworthy engines in addition to the paint. "It would indeed be a pity for a common chapel of ease like ourselves to be colliding with a cathedral. I'll have a laugh with Father Guinness over this."

Their plane dropped away from its escorting families, and turning into a faint wind, followed the St. Peter to the narrower end of the wedge-shaped clearing. Already one or two other machines were at rest there, and Jane could perceive from the style of decoration that they were all of them churches. Ordinary dwellings were kept bright with paint, too, in a very engaging manner, such as caravans used, in the England Jane had never known, to brighten country roads. But on churches the Australians expended their imaginations and their money.

The St. Peter, seen close, presented a remarkable spectacle. On the wings was depicted, in primary colours and with a good deal of gold leaf, the Last Judgment; the right wing showed saved souls struggling out of coffins, angels giving them a helping hand here and there, while those already freed were winging their way upwards with a kind of swimming stroke. On the left wing, in an atmosphere sulphurous and



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reddened, the damned struggled with their tormentors, the chief of whom appeared with a woman's face. Jane could place the original of that portrait, and was shocked; but she had to admit that the artist had somehow caught something of the strange dispassionate look of Mrs. Emma Jordan Sopwith in her official photographs; brooding and timeless and incapable of imagining suffering. This figure, thrusting down an imploring sinner with a trident, had none of the gleeful facial expression of its horned and tailed satellites; the thrust had righteousness behind it; a dreadful incorruptible righteousness in wrong that was terrifying; the face brooded.

"Well, well, well," said Father Moran, slapping the long thin incumbent of this new Sistine Chapel on the shoulder, "who've you been holding up, Father Guinness? You didn't get all that gold out of the congregation's pocket, don't tell me——" Jane was at his back and he remembered her politely, even in the full flood of chaff. "Here's a lady, and when I say lady, I mean it, from the other side, come to take a look at the wild men." The other priest's face revealed astonishment. "Ah, it's all right, don't go thinking what I saw at the back of your mind. Would you believe it? This young lady had the Orangemen beat for us yesterday. We were done, only for her. Six of them she sent to glory, and the rest off like redshanks. We're proud of her, and that's why we're showing her our best."

The other priest still looked dubious, but he shook Jane's hand and asked civilly if she had ever seen races before. She answered, No.

"Not the like of these, anyway," said Father Moran with a rich laugh. "What d'you say to all the horses



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carrying the same colours? That's the way we do here, on this one day of the year. Have you got your contraption, Father?" And he tapped the wide-mouthed leather bag that was slung across his own stomach. "Look at the waist. I'm getting on now; Father McGuire has it he'll cut a round out of the table for me to sit, same as they did for St. Thomas Aquinas, long ago. Who's got the time?" Father Guinness had it; it lacked five minutes to midday. "Time to be sounding the Angelus. Is the Bishop here? His chaplain should do it."

The Bishop's chaplain was indeed superintending the rigging up of a great bell, or rather, unloosing the rope from its cleat; the rigging had been done earlier in the day. It was a colossal greenish bell, swung for this purpose on the stretched arm of a gum tree, cleared of leaves and minor branches to allow the great bronze hollow room to toss. As they watched, out came the Bishop himself from the cabin of a plane, watch in hand, nodded to the priest, and knelt just by the bell. Up the valley the sound of a crowd increased, despite the heat, to a steady noise almost without pulsations, as though no single member of that crowd drew breath, or was silent for so much as a minute. The priests, some twenty of them, talked too, but less boisterously, and with an eye on the Bishop. His Lordship's head nodded once in the chaplain's direction, and that young man caught the rope with his strength, bracing his feet far apart, and pulled; a note was heard, loud yet mellow, in whose far-reaching sweetness silver sounded. Two other notes followed, then a rest; in that rest the silence of the valley was absolute as though round the bend were only the denizens of the bush, creatures that lie quiet in the heat of the day, snakes and tree-bears and bright



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furtive birds; but there was a murmur at the back of the silence that sounded like sea on shore. Another group of three strokes continued the appeal; a third group followed. Since all the black-clad men about her were on their knees on the bare ground, reciting Latin, Jane, too, knelt, wondering very much what it was all about. But she had been too well used to prayer at unexpected hours, prayer before taking a walk or a medicine, prayer in the midst of a scientific experiment, to feel in any way shy at finding herself now on her knees. The prayer was spoken by the Bishop; responses in Latin of every colour in pronunciation came from the priests. Soon she caught words she recognised as being part of the Hail Mary that her father, Endymion Cobbett, had recited for her before she left England; the Shibboleth. Her aural memory was good, and she found, with Father Moran's bass leading her, that the words came back; at the third repetition she could join in.

"Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen."

When they got up from their knees, the big priest said to her:

"Where did you get the Hail Mary from? You're half a Catholic already."

She told then what she had withheld from the Customs official, that her father was Endymion Cobbett, Master of Arts and the rest of the forgotten dignities. The priest was impressed.

"Is he now? There was a little book of his the children used to learn, about one of these writers. Let me see, I remember now; it was called *Scenes from the Comedies of Shakespeare*, and there was a piece with a fat man in a basket. So that's your father! I'm greatly interested." But the topic could not hold for long



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against the rival attraction of the horses, who now came within view. "Look, they're ready!"

He quickened his pace, and at a good four miles an hour, the sun glaring, they rounded the bend of the valley. A din which this shoulder of land screened from them burst out as by the sudden pulling of an organ-stop, and the greyish grass became invisible, covered with crowding people in bright clothes; ten thousand of them, perhaps, men, women, and children in their best. Wholly disregarding the heat, they were standing, lying, eating, drinking at the edge of the trees, between which Jane could see horses tethered and grazing. Children played unconcernedly near these creatures, which were watched by small men in blouses of yellow and white.

"That's the Pope's colours," said Father Moran, "to-day all the jocks wear them. You can tell which horse is which by the number. That's what I told you you'd never see in any other place. D'you see that railed off part there?" He pointed. "That's for the bookies, me and the other clerics. The Bishop'll be up with the judges at the post." He paused. "Have you any sort of a head for figures? I could do with another clerk besides Father McGuire." He leaned confidentially and warmly over her. "A saint's no use when it comes to betting slips, though God knows his prayers'll get heard before mine. Come along, now, this'll be new for you." And he rapidly expounded her simple task, which the mothercraft expert, accustomed to learn by the ear, soon assimilated.

The people stared at the pair as they walked, and the word going round of Jane's exploit with the Orangemen, hands were stretched out for her to shake, women caught up their babies—healthy, but deplorably



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unhygienic—to stare at her, and an excited noise that was almost a cheer went with them through the throng.

A canvas tent, camouflaged, with the greys of the gum trees all round it, had been stretched for the accommodation of the clerical bookmakers. In the shelter of this Jane Cobbett saw for the first time in her life printing casually used, booklets which gave the names and riders of the horses for each race. Every man and woman that came to bet had one of these, with a design in colours on the outside of a kind of tall queer-shaped hat, with two keys crossed underneath it; some Papal symbol, she supposed. Then the ritual of betting claimed her attention.

There was no shouting of odds. Instead, the priests, with voices pulpit-trained, sent out above the crowd such appeals as:

"Write your own card, any horse. Come on now, odds don't matter to-day, every horse a winner. Come on, show the colour of your money, don't be hanging about with your hands in your pockets. First race, five furlongs, seven runners, and every horse a winner. Now's your chance. Every horse a winner!"

The people crowded round Father Moran, since at Father Moran's side stood the unknown girl from the other world who had made shavings of six Orangemen. The slips they received were scribbled in her writing. The bag slung on the priest's wide paunch began to sag, heavy with gold money.

"Aha!" he shouted across to Father Guinness, his neighbour in the ring. "Last Judgment, is it? I'll get a Creation out of this day's work before I'm done."

Father Guinness laughed, confident in his new splendours, and allowed his rival good-temperedly to take money from his flock. By their chaff it appeared to



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Jane that each priest kept for his own Church's use the money that he took, after a tithe of some ten per cent had been taken off for the Bishop. The betting was heavy. Men gave great broad gold pieces, Federal money stamped with the Kangaroo, in exchange for their slips, and took the scraps of paper, laughing:

"How many years'll this get me off, Father?"

"The Church won't see any of this, not if Father Moran's got the handling of it. D'you want to know where it'll go? On a horse at the next Protestant meeting."

"Very likely, very likely, my friend. And who'll be the jock that'll pull that horse? Yourself, by any chance?"

There was a loud inexplicable laugh at this. A man pushed two gold pieces into Jane's hand, and got his paper with the name scribbled on it—Warrambungle to win, £10. He glanced at it, and his face changed.

"Was it two pieces I gave ye?"

Jane said yes, and showed them in her hand, not yet stowed away.

"Didn't you mean to? Would you like one back?"

The man looked at her and the money undecided, then lifted his shoulders and spat.

"Ah, I gave it to Almighty God, t'hell with it."

He turned away. Far up the course a bell sounded, a shrill insistent lay bell; and all the punters, followed by the priests, departed from shelter and made for the side of the course to get a view. The horses were coming out, cantering up to the start, each mounted by a man in white and yellow, and with sweat already darkening some of their coats. Father Moran, still shouting at the top of his voice adjurations to those who might not yet have had their flutter, caught Jane by the elbow and



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began to run with her towards a vacant place. They arrived at it simultaneously with Father Guinness, whose lean face had now a tinge of red on its cheek-bones, and was expanded in a schoolboy though saturnine grin.

"Have you anything on yourself, Father?" enquired Father Moran, panting; "what d'you fancy? Myself I'd like the black. Here, I'll have a tenner on him—God knows I've stripped enough off your congregation for the day."

Father Guinness took the pieces of gold gratefully, with the civil wish that he might get it back, and they manœuvred themselves into a good position, where they could see the horses fidgeting in line. Something, a barrier of some kind, was lifted. Simultaneously a yell, to which all the previous noise was as a pattering of leaves, was launched, and accompanied the horses as they sped. The two priests, shouting steadily, but with eyes intent, added their voices to this din; and when the noise of hoofs, audible as drum-beats below brass, grew nearer and bore down upon them, amid dust and gleaming caps, the religious frenzy of it all caught even the soul of Jane. She had risked no money, she had fancied no horse, but now she intensely wanted a striding grey beast to win, and yelled to the rider, as all those about her were doing:

"Belt him! Get him going! You're home and dry!"

What these expressions meant she had no conception; but they seemed, in their remoteness from all the everyday terminology of life, to be wholly suited to this wild moment in a savage country.

The hoofs ran past, dying down to a mere flutter, a ruffle of very distant drums. The yells continued. Then, with a supreme shriek, in which were blended triumph,



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and the satisfaction of getting a question answered, some horse or other passed the post first. Its name reached them in a moment, swung down by word of mouth: Warrambungle.

"The black! The black!" ejaculated Father Moran, catching at his neighbour priest's arm. "If that isn't the devil's own luck. Keep the tenner, Father, it'll stand for next time. Well, well, I didn't see all of it, but I got my worth of sport. Come on now, back to the ring, they'll be coming to cash in."

They did come, but not many; the black had not been a very popular horse. The Church had done well out of the 12.15 race. Jane was glad to hand back his gold pieces to the man who had given two by mistake. Beer was brought, cool from some underground cache, and the clerical bookmakers, refreshed, resumed their roaring. The crowds betted and laughed, with sweat coursing down their faces, but good-tempered as Jane Cobbett had never seen human beings before. They had no business, according to the New World doctrine, to be happy. True happiness was only found in work and the consciousness of salvation. These people seemed not to work—for what was a little grazing, a little digging for gold?—and their prospects of salvation were not, by the standards of the New World, exceedingly bright. They were like children; and the mothercraft expert could not resist their charm, their naïve certainty that their game must interest the whole world, their unconcern for the morrow.

The day declined, shadows leaned over. The assembled Green villagers acclaimed each winner with untarnished enthusiasm. The Church had done well; when in the last race a jockey very evidently pulled the favourite there were cheers, as for a generous and public-



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spirited action, and he was applauded by the Bishop from the judge's box. This was at 5.30, by which time Jane, accustomed to a four-hour working day, and wearied by the heat, had had quite enough.

"Tired?" said Father Moran, observing her. "That won't do. I've a notion the Bishop'll be sending for you soon. That young man dropped a word, the chaplain, I mean, and it would be a great thing for us all."

What would be a great thing was revealed in the next minute when a messenger appeared, breathlessly conveying His Lordship's compliments, and would Miss Cobbett step up to the stand?

"I knew it," Father Moran triumphed. "Smarten yourself up now, here's a comb——" he withdrew one from his pocket—"look your best."

"But why does he want me? What for?"

"What for, is it? To hand out the prizes."

Jane resigned herself. She adjusted her hair and dress as well as the primitive conditions of her surroundings allowed, and permitted herself to be led by the messenger to that part of the course known as the stand; a few raised benches, near which had been set a table with a clean cloth on it. Jane had a moment's panic, of the kind which besets all those confronted with an unfamiliar religious service. There was no need for dismay, however. The Bishop's greeting took the form of congratulations and thanks.

"I hear great things of your courage, Miss Cobbett, and I'm grateful indeed to you for preserving one of our oldest communities from grave danger. This meeting would have been a very sad occasion if we had been unable to welcome the people of Sydney at it."

"Sydney?" Jane echoed, stupefied. She had thought of that place as a vast city.



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"One of our oldest settlements. Well, that's a word we use no longer; it's no longer suitable. Communities, I should rather have said. You've heard of Sydney, then?"

She hazarded:

"The place where they had the bridge?"

The Bishop answered very briefly that the bridge had not been the city's sole claim to the remembrance of posterity, and changed the subject.

"You are our first visitor for twenty years to enter into the people's life. Very insignificant it must appear to you, with your great crowds, and your great mechanical resources. We are simple people, and if it please Almighty God we'll remain so." Mrs. Sopwith he appeared to leave out of his calculations. "All the same, we like a little novelty, like the rest of the human race, and it would give us all a great deal of pleasure if you'd hand the prizes. There will be nothing to shock your religious convictions."

This he said with a twinkle, as though hinting that her religious convictions were not all they had been. Twinkles in such matters were a new experience for Jane and her faith in the Mother was strong; but she responded as well as her upbringing would allow, and moved with him to look at the cups and trophies of some base metal that now were ranged upon the white-clothed table. Winning jockeys were pushed into front place. The crowd somehow, policed by its own efforts, contained itself without the circumference of a white and yellow twisted rope. The chaplain took up a list, the Bishop raised a hand for silence; waited till it was absolute, dropped the hand, opened his mouth, and paused. Through the still evening coming from a direction which the shifting wind distorted, there



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was clearly audible the hum of an engine in the air.

The Bishop looked upwards, straining his senses; the whole crowd, too, stood motionless, fixed in an attempt to know if there were danger. The hum grew more clearly perceptible, advancing towards the valley, and at once, in silent panic, they broke.

That was hideous, for it was unreasoning. One plane—the hum was not loud—what harm could one plane do unequipped with such devices as the Gospel used? Jane, however, did not wholly understand the situation. These people kept to the ways of the air as to high roads. Orange and Green knew each other's resorts and habitations very well, and except for occasional forays, let each other alone. All the people of the district were gathered here, no single plane was missing. The hum, therefore, told them that some unusual thing was afoot, and to them the unusual was terrifying as it is to children. They scattered into the shelter of the trees, men urging their women, women screaming and lugging their children. Even the Bishop moved back into the screen of gums, and Jane with him. There, in the hush which holds terrified animals, the people who ten minutes before had been inexhaustibly screaming and laughing, eating and playing the fool, sat not moving, holding their children to them, and looking fearfully up through the thin screen of the gums thirty feet over their heads.

The noise which had occasioned this silence, this immobility, drew nearer, became deafening, was suddenly shut off; and along the central valley flat ran quietly a big machine with bands of green and orange striping the fuselage and wings. The silence at once was rent.

"Federals. Water-joeys."



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And the crowd as it had surged into shelter now surged out again, alert with curiosity. A man in a green and yellow sash opened the door of the machine and stood on the steps looking down on them all.

"Had a good day, boys? Bishop here? I want a word with him." The Bishop advanced. "Afternoon, Your Lordship. What's the idea, keeping the young lady?"

The Bishop explained, with clamorous assistance from his flock, why Jane was present. The Federal man listened impatiently.

"I know all that. That's all right. We're not objecting."

"Then who is?"

The Federal man with a jerk of his thumb indicating outer space, replied:

"The sods she came with."

And he in turn told his story; how the nine travellers had held a protest committee meeting in the plane as they travelled from the Sydney location towards that Orange town which was the next on their programme; how they had arrived simultaneously at the decision that Federal authority must be brought to bear; how they had threatened "representations," that word of ill-omen, to headquarters on their return; how they had accused the Sydney villagers wildly of "perverting" one of the props and stays of Number 27 Tent of the tribe of Gad.

"The Government doesn't want to kill the lot," explained the emissary, "that'll get us into a mess if you like. Mrs. S. won't stand for any more of her missionaries being martyred. And we can't let them go home and complain, or there'll be an expedition. It's hard on the girl, if she wants to stay. But there it is, I've got my orders, and I'll have to trouble you."



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He addressed Jane, who became more reluctant, the more she pondered, to rejoin those nine travellers with whom she had set out. She had not confided her mission to any one of them; had been warned and instructed, indeed, not to do so. Now, when she was learning something of value, their outraged Gospel rectitude would not leave her alone. That they were, had circumstances been normal, in the right, made their interference none the less annoying.

"I want to stay," she protested. "I want to try and learn something about Australia." That was the truth.

"I don't know anything about that," said the Federal man. "I've got my orders, and now you've got yours."

"But they don't understand," Jane persisted, inwardly raging. Caution made her stop there; too much protesting was always suspect. Better, perhaps, to yield, to go back and explain. But by that course precious time, and the precious contact she had made already with this people, would be lost. She asked herself the question that came to every devout Gospeller's mind before a decision was to be made: how would the Mother act? And seeing in imagination those passionless features, comparing that remote intelligence with her own, she learned with horror that her motives in insisting upon staying with the Australians were mixed; and with horror perceived that she was, in their society, wholly happy for the first time in her life. The Mother beheld them as a temptation, her imagined lips bade her young follower flee. But so hidden are the workings of the mind from itself that Jane, although she heard this ghostly counsel, opposed to it the explicit instructions which had been given her before she set



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out; to learn and to report. She set the letter, these instructions, against the spirit, that tremor of conscience warning her she was in danger. However, a certain leaven of New Gospel guile remained with her, and the maxim that truth is safest.

"What ought I to do?" she asked the Bishop.

The Bishop saw in the wide enquiring eyes the evident enjoyment of Australian life, the open-mindedness, signs of a soul to be saved. He believed, quietly, grieving, that all Gospellers would be sent to the left at Doomsday. He was a man of exceeding simplicity, unaccustomed to look ahead, for he took literally the Gospel bidding to have no thought for the morrow. Dread of Mrs. Sopwith's vengeance did not outweigh, in his mind, the winning of this young soul. He told her that she should stay, the responsibility for the decision to rest on him.

The Federal officer looked undecided. The Bishop's opposition was unexpected, and would certainly appease the Federal authorities, who had only acceded to the tourists' frantic request because they were themselves afraid that the truant girl Gospeller might be a spy and a missionary. That she was no missionary was evident, for she had been acting, so scraps of clamour informed him, all that day as bookie's clerk, which implied right-mindedness. That she was no spy the Bishop's trust was some sort of guarantee. Even Jane, unskilled in the reading of expressions—lecturing, she never saw her audience—could observe that he was in two minds.

"I'll write," she offered, "and explain. They think I'm being kept here against my will. But I love these people——" her ear, sensitive to truth as a musician's to pitch, recognised the ring of that—"and this is my



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holiday. The Bishop and Father Moran will look after me. Let me write to the others."

The Federal emissary considered, abruptly told her to wait a minute, and walked aside a little with the Bishop. They consulted. They returned.

"Well, if His Lordship'll be responsible, and you write something to keep those (unprintables) quiet, I don't mind leaving it a few days longer. But you'll have to clear out when the fortnight's up."

Jane promised, and asked for writing materials. Somebody handed her a pencil and an unused betting slip, on which she scribbled, in the simplified spelling of the New World:

ī ã nŏt a prisnə, & ã itrstngli ŏkupīd. plēz rāz no fəthə ŏbjeckshns tu mī rəmanĭg hēr. wil rejœ̃ yu ī tīm fŏ depâchə.

The Federal officer took this missive, looked at it blankly, and said with a shrug:

"I suppose it's all right. I never had much of a head for these puzzles myself. What of 'em's it for?"

It was for the continuity expert, whose name Jane rapidly scribbled on the obverse of the note, giving an explanation.

"The lady with fair hair. Rather short in her manner."

"Short!" The official laughed briefly. "I had her two hours in the office. She'd talk the leg off a bandicoot."

Though Jane's reason would not acquiesce, her imagination admitted the expert to be capable of this surprising feat; and she had a moment's unregenerate elevation of spirit at the thought of addressing that Gospeller on a betting slip. The Federal man looked at



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her in no unfriendly manner, and said, holding out his hand:

"Well, I've had a lot of contact with people from over your side, and you're the first human being they've sent us. I don't blame you, wanting to stay. But you got to be ready when I come next time. We don't want trouble, and we're not looking for it. O.K.?"

Jane agreed that when next he came she would be ready. It was no very long time, ten days only, but by keeping her eyes open and her wits about her she might hope to glean much useful matter. She had some notion of the people's way of living; none, of the whereabouts of those underground cities of which travellers' tales were told. Her mind, naturally active, was not appalled, but rather stimulated at the thought of all the concentrated observation that must be crowded into those ten days.

"Good-o," responded the Federal man. "Well, I'm off."

And he ascended his machine, set it roaring, and was away in a very few minutes into the evening sky above the trees. The sun had dropped, throwing up towards the cloudless oval above a diffusion of softly golden light which reddened as they watched.

"Time for the Angelus," said the Bishop to his chaplain. "Use the starting-bell."

The young man ran, and in another sixty seconds the ritual clanging began, sending the people at once to their knees. Jane could not translate the Latin of the antiphon. She disapproved the use of a dead tongue in addressing the Deity. She knew that the prayer was idolatrous, and could do the petitioners no good. Nevertheless, as she knelt with them under the awning and offered up in her own words, or, rather, the words of



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Mrs. Sopwith, thanks for the day that had been conducted by divine wisdom and toleration to its end, before the eyes of her mind came a picture from the Old Testament, of men and women in the wilderness, worshipping at a temple that was nothing more than a tent, the tabernacle of the congregation without the Veil. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the tree aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the water."

Jane Cobbett, brought up on Mrs. Sopwith's version of the Bible, did not rehearse these actual words within her mind; but she felt that which they expressed; and it was a moment or two before she put the comparison, as blasphemous, wholly from her mind.



Just how it came about no one ever knew for certain, though it might be assumed that a Gospel ship anchored off Port Phillip had something to do with sending out the message, slinging it from aerial to aerial till it came to a halt in Pharaoh, Cal. The one thing evident was that the Gospellers, not reassured by Jane's note, but rather incited to believe the worst, and still entirely ignorant of her mission, had contrived to send it. They were in a panic. They beheld themselves blamed by the Mother for permitting the abduction. Fear proved itself the mother of invention, and they had to devise some means of shifting the responsibility from their own shoulders. Thus, their horrified account of the battle of the Green and Orange, though it gave only the



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bare facts, carried conviction to those who heard it on the other side.

Since the conversion of Australia had already been decided upon by the small powerful council of the Mother's advisers, proof of the Australians' bad faith was not altogether unwelcome. It would not have been difficult for Mrs. Sopwith to justify herself in the eyes of her world had she set forth to impose the Gospel *vi et armis*; any severity was justified that brought souls to the truth. And yet, despite her wide-flung legend and the loyalty of those close to her, the magnificent woman was no longer content to be revered. She wanted now—strange aberration, odd sinking of the flame of the spirit—to be loved; to be not law-giver only, but saviour. The Mother was ageing.

The Australian venture on which she had determined was to be presented to the eyes of the world, therefore, not as a conquest but as a crusade. To do this required some re-adjustment of the facts. Jane Cobbett, for instance, must be a rebel no longer; she must be transformed by the iron wand of necessity to a victim, detained against her will by this predatory people. It was done in a twinkling, or, to speak more reverently, in one lift of the Mother's heavy eyelids, and a word which disposed of certain suggestions of the council based on the contrary assumption, that Jane was a renegade. (Among these suggestions, though Jane never knew it, was a device involving moral pressure, in which her father was concerned.) For the purposes of Mrs. Sopwith's campaign Jane Cobbett must be a prisoner, helpless against the wiles of the enemy, and sending up her cry from the depths.

To this end the report from the nine tourists had to be ignored. It was dangerous to do so, in a world where



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truth habitually reigned; nevertheless, ignored it must be. The next question that presented itself to the conclave was that of procedure, and here the way was thorny.

For to send a summons to yield up the girl was too risky; the desperadoes might do so; while not to summon, suddenly to descend without warning upon an unarmed pastoral people—would not this effectually disperse the crusading atmosphere so essential to the Mother's peace of mind?

The conclave turned the question this way and that. Had they information enough for the strategic needs of a campaign? Maps were brought and expounded; air photographs, made, true, some twenty years before, were examined upon the screen. Half a million people, split up into small wandering units, scattered under trees, down gullies, in the very bowels of the earth; this was the enemy, whose mobility presented the tacticians with a formidable problem. It really was not a matter to be tackled without thought, or what came to the same thing in the New Israel, prayer. After a day's wrestling, bodiless voices in places so remote from each other as Belize, Göttingen, and Wei-Hai-Wei were announcing to worshippers gathered for evening service, while upon the screen the face of the Mother appeared in meditation:

"To-night there is a personal message for each one of you, a personal appeal from Mrs. Emma Jordan Sopwith herself. They are her own words. May they sink into each and every heart. These are they:

" 'I ask the prayers of all those who share the faith with me that I may be enlightened from above in a matter of super-interest to all. We all believe in direct guidance from the Divine Wisdom. As the wind sweeps



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away clouds that hide the polar star from the mariner, so ask Him to draw away the veil that temporarily hides His purpose.' "

And the timeless face of the Mother faded from the screen to a sound of music, grave organ notes that heralded and ushered out all her appearance in shadow-show.

Doubtless the prayers ascended and were heard, for next morning she came pacing into the council room with a smooth forehead. She was a tall woman, broad-shouldered, wearing her hair in the manner that the early part of the century had first dictated, short-clipped; even now, in her eightieth year, it grew thickly, with curls where the scissors allowed length enough. She affected no robes for these everyday appearances, but wore the regulation dress with wide masculine trousers instead of the skirt which most women found more becoming. She had been angular as a young woman. Now her angles served her well, subdued by a long discipline of appearances before the camera to just such asceticism as the people expect of their prophets. She was narrow-hipped, big-footed; at the council table, her attitude had a man's dignity rather than a woman's, and when she relaxed it was into masculine gestures of impatience or pleading. The screen, by an arrangement of arc lamps, contrived to present her to her people robed wholly in light, light outlining her exquisitely shaped head, and masking the clumsy feet and hands. She was impressive then. But in the silent shining council room when she sat gripping her chair, or walked slowly striding, one arm behind her and the knotted fingers snapping as she listened, she terrified. The Mother, then, seemed an astonishing misnomer. The council had projected other names for her, but this was



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her own choice and she held to it, instinctively aware that the powers she handled were primitive, demanding primitive symbols for their expression; she robed herself for public appearance as the priests of the old Israel put on fringes, to lend masculinity something of the feminine hidden strength. She was fecund; she bore peoples; she had a right to the trappings of matriarchy, and its title.

The council, observing the smooth brow, learned without astonishment that guidance had been received. Her following question puzzled them; had they ever heard of that Australian ceremony known as the Feast of the Bridge? They had, but vaguely, and could not see the significance of it; those who were old enough to have any knowledge of history knew that this great structure, fallen and broken now, was to the Australians as the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem once to the Jews, a reminder of past glories to which from time to time pilgrims came to remember and weep. The Mother enlightened them, surprising them as ever by her encyclopædic knowledge of the lost and wrong religions of the world.

The Feast of the Bridge brought communities from all over Australia to lament together. It was not wholly a religious feast, but was attended by both Orange and Green, the one occasion on which they met together without rancour, to gaze on their deserted city. The Mother had, at some time before the spread of the Gospel, visited this place. She described its streets and gardens, the entrance to its harbour, that narrow cleft in a dangerous coast, and the view down past islands and red houses to spires and smoky turrets, above which the steel rainbow of the Bridge had lifted its gigantic arc. Sydney, like Babylon, had flourished, and



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at last by the fears of its own people been laid low; like that town, she was no more to be called the lady of kingdoms. The Mother reached for her Bible and turned up Isaiah 47. There it was, the whole story of Sydney, which town had said indeed, "I shall be a lady for ever," and had trusted in her own wickedness, so that evil came upon her; her enchanters and star-gazers, the priests of the Orange and Green, could do nothing to save her, and now the time of her last end was at hand, when her people should be consumed as stubble, and desolation, coming whence she could not know, was about to descend from above. Mrs. Sopwith enjoyed this chapter of the prophet, and had applied it often to other cities which she had saved as by fire. But never before had it been quoted with a patness, an applicability so entire, as to this once light-hearted southern town.

The plan of campaign was simple. Under the existing arrangement all tourists were conveyed to and from Australia in Gospel air machines. One was due to call for the stranded nine and their lost lamb two days before the Feast of the Bridge began. It should call, and develop some kind of trouble, be unable to take off. The Australian machines were not adapted for flying over sea, they could offer no substitute. The radio apparatus of this Gospel vehicle must also, by skill and tact on the part of the pilot's mechanic, be put out of action. The Gospel world would thus be left without news of its travellers for two days. A mother's heart surely might, without prejudice, be entitled to fear the worst, remembering what had happened to former missionaries. Was it not only natural to fear lest the barbarians, drunk with the frenzy of their feast, should seek out sacrifice? And more natural still that she should send in force to discover the truth? Once the



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expedition came in view there was little doubt that the Australians would prove contumacious; with their backs to the wall they were obstinate fighters, and could face reality with abundant courage once their noses had been rubbed in it. It was fear of the unknown that terrified and had scattered them. And the contumacious it was only righteous to put down.

"Another Ireland?" asked one of the council.

The Mother did not answer directly. She did not, nowadays, care to be reminded of Ireland, the island that had hated her to the death. She said a moment later, coldly, that conditions were wholly different, and turned to another counsellor with the request that he should prepare the world. No more was said, no notes were taken, the tenacious verbally-trained memories of the Gospellers held their plans secure, locked away from every chance of betrayal or discovery. They said a brief prayer, bowing their heads over the table between them, and dispersed.

Thus it was that on the day after the visitors' fortnight was up, when the screens of all the world should have shown them at home, smiling, happy to be back on Gospel ground, the voices were announcing:

"The ten tourists who recently made the journey to Australia, and who were due back in Gad this morning, have not yet reappeared. It is possible that they have encountered bad weather en route, and come down for shelter on some island not equipped with a transmission station. No message has been received from the pilot of the machine, and it is supposed that his aerial may in some way have become damaged by storm. Weather reports from area 57 B., through which the machine must have passed, indicate considerable disturbance. No anxiety, however, need be felt."



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It was all very well for Mrs. Sopwith's Machiavel to reassure the world on this score; but those persons who gathered in Number 3 Temple of Tent 12 were disturbed by the news. Outside the Temple sympathisers gathered round Endymion Cobbett, who, walking slowly along streets which had not kept the outlines of the Oxford he had known, answered kind enquiry with a heavy heart.

"My dear Dimmy," said a brusque old lady in hexagonal glasses, who in her day had ruled over one of the dead and gone female colleges of that town, "my dear Dimmy, they won't eat Jane, she's far too tough. If that young woman had lived forty years ago under my charge I shouldn't have been anxious to keep her, and you don't suppose these Colonials will like being bullied any more than I should. No nation in its senses would detain Jane against her will. She's a holy terror."

This bluntness he recognised for what it was, an old-world attempt to make him feel more comfortable. He shook his head, however, and walked on. The ex-principal kept pace.

"Now listen to me. You're not to brood. Goodness me, the world's a safe place enough, and if Jane can't look after herself I don't know who can. I tell you what, Dimmy. Come round after supper to my hostel, and we'll get together in a corner—everyone else will be out; I'm licensed, I'm over eighty—and say poetry to each other. French for me, Latin for you. Come now!"

He was tempted, and hesitated. She urged him.

"Forget those windy hymns. Don't let's be godly; we're far too nearly dead, both of us. Recite Petronius if you want to."

"My dear Dorothy, what ideas you have of me! I've never known the Arbiter by heart."



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"Virgil, then. Something—oh, something different from all this." She swept a gesture that condemned utterly the grey steel and rubber streets. "Something with animals in it. 'Illi ardua cervix, argutumque caput' —ah, my Latin's rusty; the Georgics, isn't it; that description of the blood horse?"

"Book Three. I'll come. But, Dorothy, you're wrong about Jane."

"Dimmy, dear fool, I only wanted to rouse you. Of course I'm wrong, I'm doddering, take no notice of me. I don't laugh at you for loving her, God forbid. There's too little sentiment left in the world as it is. Only, you don't see her as I do."

"How do you see her?"

"Why, an Amazon turned school-marm. I was the same myself once, I know the type. A girl like that, if you set fire to her, could blow the lid off the world."

"She isn't in love with anyone so far."

"Goodness, I don't mean a young man. They fall in love with ideas, that kind. And a lot of good it does them. I fell in love that way once. I thought you should teach people to look into the past as into a mirror; and see themselves there, in other dresses; and correct their awkwardnesses, their uglinesses, that way. The mirror isn't there any longer, Dimmy; they've smashed it. They smashed it when they burned the books. We can only look forward now, and a damned hideous vista it is——"

"Dorothy!"

"——but short, thank God. For me, anyhow."



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## (x)

All over Australia the planes were tuning up for their flight to Sydney. The whole population, with some few exceptions—the sick and those who looked after them, tenders of live-stock, and watchers on outpost duty at coastal listening stations—looked forward to this feast, and faithfully attended it. Two hundred thousand people annually assembled in the streets which once had seen the coming and going of a million, and the town itself, dilapidated, with bush already strangling its suburbs, and the white ant riddling its timbers to powder, took on an appearance of gay life, like a marionette answering to hands on its strings. Two days before the Feast some few planes from the outlying camps had come in; the women wandered through stripped buildings that had been shops, the men leaned against such lamp-posts as still stood erect to give each other news of crops and seasons; and on the deserted race-course out at Rosehill a large Gospel plane stood, looking spruce and efficient among the outback shandrydans, with mechanics swarming over it, and a guard of Federal soldiers about it. The guard was unnecessary; Australians dreaded the Gospel and all its works too much to have any curiosity about its machines. The local Federal authorities, however, had other misgivings as they conversed together in the shadow of an aged roofless church.

"Filter-trouble, that's all he'll say. And he won't let one of our mechanics near his bus. We don't want these Gospellers hanging round while the Feast's on."

"They'll get out as quick as they can," said a large, easy man, the Federal Prime Minister. "If they're not



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right by to-night we'll switch 'em down to Hobart. Can't keep 'em here over the Feast."

"It's a dodge," said the Customs minister doggedly. "There's something behind it. I always did say this was a bloody silly way of celebrating, and I say so again. Why can't each community stay where it is and have a service on its own? More reverent, to my mind, than all this mob coming here and getting so boozed they try to light their pipes at the pump. We don't want Gospellers to see 'em like that. There's nothing wrong with this machine, and the pilot knows it. I've had a word with him. He won't tell a thing."

"You got to make allowances, Fisher," returned the Prime Minister; "you know as well as I do how touchy Gospellers are. The idea of one of their planes giving trouble's poison to this fellow. That's why he won't talk. But you bet your boots he's saying a few prayers. Old Mother Sopwith don't care about time-tables going wrong. She likes to work to schedule, and I don't blame her, at that."

"Yes, and suppose he doesn't get off to-night and these people don't turn up on time, what's going to happen? Any stick's good enough to beat a dingo, that's us. She'll have an expedition over with microbes and gas in no time, and here we are, all nice and handy for her to brown into."

"Ah, go and get yourself a drink, Bill," said his chief; "you want to learn to look on the bright side."

"I don't mind looking on it when it's there. It's looking for the bright side on a tombstone makes me tired."

"Well, what about this Gospel girl the other day? A place that can turn out a girl like that can't have everything wrong with it."



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"You never know," the Customs minister grumbled. "May be a spy."

"Spies don't chance getting holes in their skins. We can't afford to let her stay, I grant you; she's keen to, the Bishop says. But it can't be done." He tapped the Customs minister on the shoulder. "Her father's the Cobbett that wrote the poetry book we used to have as kids. I learnt a heap of pieces out of that book; some of the kids still do." His eyes took on the glazed appearance of the Standard V child about to recite, and from his lips emerged, surprisingly, lines of verse:

> " 'The thirsty earth soaks up the rain,
> And drinks, and gapes for drink again;
> The plants suck in the earth, and are
> With constant drinking fresh and fair;'

"Fellow that wrote that knew something about droughts. Must be a lot of good in a fellow like that. He's no wowser, anyway. I'd like to have that girl stay. This country could do with a bit of culture."

"Come back to earth," the Customs minister advised. "Tell me what the hell I'm to do about these Gospel goats."

The Premier returned to earth, and gave the matter his slow consideration. He said at last:

"Have a plane stand by to take 'em out of here to-night. Feast isn't a peep-show. Shift them down the coast."

"O.K." But still the Customs man lingered. "Look, has anything been done to warn their own side of the world they'll be a bit late in starting?"

"Hell, we don't want to start swapping news with California. What's the odds if they're a couple of days late? Still, you're right at that, somebody'd better see



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to it. Tell the Broken Bay station to try and pick up a ship and hand it on. Is this girl back with the mob yet?"

"Yesterday."

"No need to worry about her, then."

And the Premier, left alone, sighed to think of the untapped store of culture that was going from them, jealously snatched away by old Mother S.

In her tent, back with the other nine travellers, Jane Cobbett's sigh matched his. She had spent in sin the days between the Shrove Tuesday races and her return, yet could feel no guilt. This troubled her; for a Gospeller heart and soul would have felt unclean after such an experience as hers, would have required the prayers of the congregation, would have taken every step by which a soul may be drawn out of the mire and cleansed. Yet she was conscious only of exaltation; her trained memory had seized like a starved thing upon whole gobbets of sin and irrevocably incorporated them with her being. She could never forget, and while she remembered could never regret, this week's debauch. She who should have felt soiled, felt uplifted, and at the back of her mind lurked phrases her father had used to her concerning the, to him, holy magic of the printed word. Jane Cobbett had been reading.

Reading with difficulty and pain, her eyes troubled at first by the old print and spelling, and her conscience by the enormity of sharing the thoughts of other seers than Mrs. Sopwith and the compilers of the Bible, Jane came labouring into the wide country of human imagination. The books at the Bishop's command were not numerous; they were too weighty to carry about in bulk. But they included the works of John Milton—"a heretic, but a kind of a hero"—and the anthology her father had



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compiled, besides a row of volumes in Latin having to do with Church philosophy, and one vast book filled with photographs of churches—primitive churches, with irrelevant animals carved here and there, columns soaring like trees to lace their branches in the roof, a preposterous elaboration everywhere apparent, and nowhere space for a motion-picture screen. She did not linger long over this book. She had been impressed by the planes stretched like tents, and the people worshipping in the open; these closed-in places with their restless architecture could not, she thought, be good for prayer. Mrs. Sopwith's builders made the screen the centre of their design, long simple lines led the eye to it, all thought concentrated there. How worship in comfort when the attention was constantly led off to a window showing some miraculous story, or to a carving, or to a banner? She soon put this book aside.

But the others! They were difficult, their idioms of a past age were hardly comprehensible; but from them flooded images so coloured, so vividly living, and sounds to the ear of the mind so diabolically alluring, that no struggle against them was possible. Jane woke each morning to read, was driven to meals, teased by the Bishop, gaped at by children as she lay on the ground, in the shade, turning pages. Voices spoke to her through dreams. She perceived the country about her only most vaguely, she forgot Mrs. Sopwith and her travelling companions to whom she must return. She forgot that she was a spy, and that the whole course of any future Gospel campaign must depend upon the accuracy and extent of her observation. Like the thirsty earth of the Premier's remembered poem she drank up this rain, and drank, and gaped for drink again. It was a debauch. She woke from it on the



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eighth day when the Bishop refused to let her have any more books.

"Now listen to me, my dear child," said he, taking both her hands. "Look at your eyes, back half a foot in your head. Come back to earth now," he pressed the hands strongly—"that's right. Poor child! Have you not anything to read at home?"

"Not books. We don't need them," said Jane's lips, loyal still to Mrs. Sopwith. "We have the speaker and the screen."

"That's as may be. We had, I believe, altogether too much reading when I was young. People forget how to use their own minds, always borrowing other people's. All the same—no books! That must be a great deprivation to a man like your father."

"Yes," said Jane; and understood for the first time just what that deprivation must be.

"Well, well, no doubt he makes use of his great learning some other way. A man like that ripens as the years go by; a valuable man, and one we'd welcome here." Tears came to Jane's eyes, remembering her father's plea to be made a little use of, and her superior's blunt refusal. The Bishop saw, and said gently: "You're a good daughter to him, I can tell that. Now, my child, you've not seen so much of our country as I'd hoped to show you. There are what are called the refuges, underground places to be used in case of any trouble. Interesting they are, built on from the great natural caves. That would be something new for you to see. But the week has gone by, and now there's no time. Do you realise what day it is?" She shook her head. "Thursday; to-morrow you set off home."

"Oh, no! It can't be time yet!"

The Bishop looked at her sorrowfully, and reminded



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her that he had given his word. Jane yielded, but tears came to prick her eyes as she heard the sound of the Federal plane coming up from the south next evening. The people, whom she had hardly noticed in her distraction, showed affection for her, and crowded to see her depart. Her hand was shaken, women kissed her, babies wondered at her, straddling their mothers' hips. Most touching of all, at the very last minute arrived a plane from the direction in which the Sydney people had flown off after the races, a patched familiar plane, with martyrs painted on the wings, out of which tumbled Father Moran, puffing and blowing, with both hands held out towards her.

"Well, well, well, not gone yet, thank God! I bucketed my old church over the leps till I thought she'd come to pieces, only to be on time. Has His Lordship made a convert of you yet? Ah, well, a week isn't long. But I tell you this, there'll be a lot of prayers put up for you, and out of a grand church too, the way Almighty God can't miss them. What d'ye think? The money I got at the races I can get a church that'll knock Father Guinness and his old St. Peter altogether. I can get a cathedral for the money, as big as St. Mary's that you'll see ruined when you go to Sydney. And to think if it wasn't for you His Lordship'd be a parish short out of his diocese. Well, well, and going from us now!"

The pilot, approaching, indicated that leave-taking had better be cut short. The evening was cloudy, the light failing; he was anxious to be gone. Jane, escorted by the population of the town, men, women and children, with priests of this lost religion all round her, went heavy-footed towards the plane. There was a medley of shouted good-byes as she climbed the steps



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after the pilot. At the top she turned, and with impulse which she never afterwards regretted or understood dropped on her knees to have the Bishop's blessing. He gave it inaudibly as the propellers roared, lifting his right hand with the big purple ring on it in a strong crossways sweep that the movements of his people reflected. Then the plane lifted, roared more loudly, and was away into the low clouds, flying towards Old Sydney, the rendezvous and departure point for home.

She rejoined the nine that night. They slept on mattresses on the floor of an elaborate stone building that in the old laborious days of hand-written letters had been the General Post Office; or rather, there they lay, since Jane for one got very little sleep. An acid phrase from the continuity expert greeted her.

"You're back! That's unexpected."

"I've had a most interesting time," Jane returned, disregarding the tone.

"So have we. Camp after camp, some with mosquitoes, some without; enough to make us wonder why all these Australians aren't shut up in some zoo. They're shiftless, they're suspicious, they've got no art and no buildings——"

"Why not, do you suppose?"

The continuity expert did not understand what was at the back of that question; if young Father McGuire were right, only the terror of the Gospel kept these people barbarians, for ever flitting and wheeling about their continent. But the continuity expert knew nothing of Father McGuire, and answered literally:

"Why not? Because they're barbarians, hopeless people. One doesn't like to even breathe a criticism of the Mother, but they should have been evangelised long ago. Australia's a plague-spot."



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Jane did not answer, feeling her temper rising. She turned on her mattress noisily, as a hint that further discussion would be unwelcome to her, but the elderly woman too had her curiosities concerning this romantic sojourn alone among savages, and began at once:

"I hope they didn't make things difficult for you—the men, I mean. I mean, we're so used to the discipline of the Gospel now, but I remember as a young woman in Bedford walking along the streets there used to be things said, and one felt awkward. I just wondered——"

"No, nothing of that kind. I was with the Bishop."

"A Popish Bishop! Well, I must say, you're braver than I should have been." Jane let this self-evident comment pass. "Did you see anything of these terrible sacrifices they make?"

"Mass, you mean?"

"Don't use that dreadful word. You evidently never took the course in Popish history or you wouldn't use such an expression."

"The sacrifice is a kind of bread, and it's all in Latin, of course. I couldn't understand what was said."

"Probably just as well. Isn't that a proof that what they say is too terrible, if they're afraid to use English?"

"For goodness' sake go to sleep," barked the continuity expert, "you can tell each other disgusting stories in the morning."

The elderly woman lay quiet at once, and somehow or other, with the stone floors of the General Post Office unyielding to their bones, the night went by. In the morning there was a roll-call, a prodigious breakfast, and the guides came to conduct the party round the town, populous now with its pilgrims, who stared at the venturers from another world as they passed, and made



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remarks happily incomprehensible by reason of being emitted through half-closed teeth.

"These aren't the guides we started with," said Jane to one of the non-combatant young men. He answered, whispering:

"They're afraid of being converted. We've had six lots since the first pair."

With that they came into a jungle of vegetation with parched grass underfoot.

"The Domain," said the male guide, and informed the party that in the past this had been a famous place for meetings. What kind of meetings—prayer? Well, not exactly. More like the opposite. This was where people used to come when they wanted to damn the Government, and when they had no place to sleep. No place to sleep! Weren't there the churches? Yes, but not for sleeping; "at least," the guide corrected himself, "they weren't meant that way."

A track led through the jungle, underneath large trees with juicy leaves, whose squashed and rotting fruits lay underfoot.

"Where are we going now?"

The guide answered abruptly—all the guides had a firm manner: "You'll see when you get there."

They plodded in each other's wake under the trees, and at last emerged to see the water of the harbour breaking gently on rocks below, and a broken steel arch, segment of a vast circle, thrusting into the air on their left.

"The Bridge," said the guide.

The tourists gazed on it. They had seen many feats of engineering in their own country far more amazing; but somehow this rusting ruin took the imagination. That people should have conceived anything so grandiose,



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and now be incapable of further progress, seemed to them infinitely sad. That a nation, having made this challenge to the world, should go back, dully retrograde, to a state of mind in which wood and the hand of man were preferred before steel and the machine, seemed to them pitiful beyond expression; and they could not wonder that the anniversary of that day twenty years ago when the Protestant and Catholic archbishops had led their flocks into the wilderness should be observed as a day of lamentation. They gazed. The neat elderly man enquired of their guide at last:

"May one ask about the ceremony? What exactly is done?"

Well, the guide told them, the two archbishops, successors to those who had led the Exodus, came back to Sydney; and, one at the North Shore end and one at the Quay end of the Bridge, read a service. Was there no fighting between the two parties? Not on that day; they had the width of the harbour between them.

"But what I still can't understand," pronounced the continuity expert strongly, "is why go back on it all? Why not have kept pace with the rest of the world and been comfortable? It will have to come, you know."

"What will?"

"Civilisation. You can't be the only people in the world left outside."

The guide eyed her sourly.

"We like being able to call our souls our own."

"But they're not your own——" and she was about to preach salvation according to Mrs. Sopwith; but the guide very brutally cut her short.

"No Gospelling here. If you've had a good look, you'd better be coming along."

They came along. They were walked over rough



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paths, down paved streets where grass grew, past warehouses in dilapidation and the sunken hulks of ships. "Change and decay in all around I see"; somebody hummed the ancient tune unchecked as they walked through the ruined town, and resumed their impressions of that once lively place. Their impressions of the whole visit were, indeed, hardly more happy. They had seen gum trees, and scrub, and unwashed people. They had endured discomforts which most of them had imagined no longer existed anywhere on the earth's surface. There had been flies. The food was not that to which they were accustomed. The famed Australian tea was discovered to act like a rasp on nerves not used to it. Said the elderly woman, decisively for once:

"I don't know how you feel, but I'm looking forward to home."

So were they all, with one possible exception. Life in this continent was altogether too much the prey of chance, and they were not amused by it. There was a murmur of agreement, and the men stretched themselves happily at the thought of warmth, food, and thought all synchronised once more.

Thus it was a blow when the guide announced, as they waited with packed bags on the steps of the General Post Office, that their machine had not yet been repaired. Angry at having expectation thus cheated, they became instantly suspicious, suggesting to each other that the machine must have been tampered with, that there was a plot to keep them exiled—

"Can we see the pilot personally?"

They could. He appeared, beckoned by the guide from the midst of a silently appraising group of Orangemen, and admitted that it would be unsafe to attempt an ocean crossing in the present state of his machine.



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"But we're expected."

He knew that. He was sorry. It really would not be safe.

"What are we to do then? Stay here?"

The pilot could see no alternative. Nor could the Federal authorities. But as the evening of the next day drew on, and the engine of the Gospel machine still hiccupped and hung fire, the ten, who had wandered disconsolately all day, roaming dead shops, and endeavouring to make ancient automatic machines yield stamps for souvenirs, were startled to learn from their guide that they were to "get a move on."

"In our machine?"

"One of ours. They're shifting you down the coast. You're not wanted here for the Feast."

"But this is ridiculous. We shall be days late. Have our people at home been warned? We've all got our work to do. Has permission been received for us to stay?"

Permission had not been received, but permission or no, one thing was certain. They could not be allowed to remain in Sydney. They held a committee, above which the dead hands of the Post Office clock seemed to extend an ironical blessing, and at last decided to lend their sanction to the inevitable. At seven o'clock, rebellious, they set off towards the south, half their luggage, for which there was no room in the aged Federal plane, left behind, very vocally alive to their grievances, and wholly unaware of themselves as Queen's pawns.

## (xi)

In Pharaoh, in the central steel tower, democratically named Number One Temple of Number One Tent of the tribe of Reuben, the Committee was sitting late. There



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had been prayer, and now while they waited for news there was discussion, in which the Mother did not join. She was ageing, and knew it, therefore wasted no energies that could be conserved. Hers had been the effort of will that sent uncounted numbers of missionary planes winging out into the darkness, keeping pace with the darkness as the world twirled eastwards; an army whose advance could be followed now upon the silver screen at the end of the room. It was a very remarkable sight, this living diagram that obediently manœuvred there. Points of light were the planes, and they were arranged in long triangles, like flights of ducks. These points fled across a dark space which was the Pacific Ocean, dotted here and there with the red spots of Gospellised islands, moving slowly as the hour hand of a watch in this perspective, breathlessly flung through space in fact. They had started some hours ago from San Francisco, and curiosity, which at first had held the Committee clustering round the screen, was dying down now to a restlessness which found outlet in talk.

"They're keeping well together. Ought to be just about on time."

"They've had luck with the weather."

"We prayed, didn't we? Haven't we had the whole civilised world praying for twenty-four hours? What else could you expect? Sure the weather's all we want—all God wants."

A silence.

"Did you ever go to Australia? They say it's a great country; rich; fine scenery—well, we'll soon be knowing all about it now."

A glance at the screen. "They're not far off Hawaii, making mighty good time. How long'll it take to clear things up?"



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"No time. We've got the whole population where we want it. Superstition has its uses."

"You don't want to talk that way. I know it was only fooling, but it's not so good as a joke, at that."

"Your sense of humour's not so strong, either."

"I can see a joke as quick as anyone, but I'm a practical man. I don't let my sense of humour run away with me. Are we here to get on with God's work for the world, or aren't we? That's the question, and if you can see anything funny about that——"

"All right, all right. Listen, oughtn't those plans for the Jubilee to be coming along? Who's got those in hand?"

"I've got them in hand——" a high feminine voice, not the Mother's grave tones—"and if you gentlemen can do without watching the missionaries a minute, I'll get contact with the office, and have them up."

They looked at the Mother for permission, which she gave with one assenting tap of her heavy white hand on the table. The slow-moving points of light on the screen were obscured, it was blank for a while; then, as the office in question was switched through, the plans began to unroll themselves; designs to be thrown on the clouds, the words and music of a new triumphal hymn, a form of thanksgiving prayer to be used in all the churches as soon as the Gospel position was consolidated. It was sound work, thorough and imaginative. The Mother watched, seeing her own personality magnified by the Lord, who, being mighty, had done great things for her, raising her from obscurity—she had been a school-teacher in early days—to a position where her name might without any thought of irreverence be coupled on the clouds with His own. She was grateful to the Lord, and the unfolding plans for her triumph



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should have brought a gush of prayer and thankfulness to her heart; instead, a weight persisted there, and as she sat in her habitual reposeful silence arguments darted against each other in her mind. She had the Gospels by heart. She knew that Christians must, if they were to fulfil their whole duty, take up the scourge now and then, and whip from the house of God those that despise government, the unclean people in the second chapter of Peter; those who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, and who, while they promise liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption. The apostle had some ugly words for these people, which she, the Mother, in her campaign for a clean Bible, had smoothed down. They had been offered the light, they had chosen darkness; bread had been held out to them, instead they returned to their vomit. God could no longer tolerate the blemish they made on the fair face of the Gospel world. She, the Mother, was God's vicereine and interpreter. She was doing right. But the heaviness persisted, and the wistful longing to be loved.

She said, as the dignified schemes for her apotheosis were unrolled, that too much emphasis had been laid upon overcoming and triumph; that she had no wish to be presented to the world in the light of a conqueror, whom the peoples ought to fear. Dubiously, the Committee asked what she would suggest instead. She did not answer at once, but they were accustomed to that, and waited in silence until it should be her good pleasure to respond. On the screen plans for an air display with trails of coloured lights moved unheeded; fountains of light shot up from the manœuvring planes, making a frame for a picture executed in light of her world-famous eagle profile, with the crisp hair above it, and a legend: God's Eldest Daughter, Emma Jordan



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Sopwith. The minutes ticked by. At last one member of the Committee, raising his glance to the face of the old woman sitting so upright in her throne-like comfortless chair, perceived two small shining drops upon her cheeks, and that her eyes were closed. He stared an instant, incredulous; then nudged his neighbour, the high-voiced competent woman whose devices the screen continued to show unheeded.

"Tired out," said that personage, very low. She was near the light buttons, and pressed one of them. The room faded to darkness; an instant later the screen, still alight with trails and blossoms and letters of fire, grew blank. The Committee, whose attention had been drawn by a gesture to the closed eyes, accepted this sudden black-out without protest, stretched their legs, and allowed themselves to feel the full weariness of waiting. It was nearly three in the morning. One by one they nodded, heads jerking up from their chests with occasional snorts and hard breathings like dogs. The Mother, however, protected by that darkness which all her life she had scorned and detested as the symbol of doubt, sat upright, big hands knotted, eyes closed, and her whole face twisted with difficult masculine tears.

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At this same hour, while the Committee drowsed, and the Gospel machines were no more than fifteen hundred miles from their objective, the Gospel visitors were being decanted from their aged Federal plane at a remote spot in the almost uninhabited island of Tasmania. It was too dark for them to have any notion of the place; there was considerable rain, together with



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a dampness underfoot which suggested that rain had been continuous during the day; there were no landing flares, such as even the primitive towns of the central Australian desert had afforded. Only a single light set high, and by which the pilot apparently steered, gave any hint that the desolation had inhabitants. A meeting of protest was immediately held, which the pilot dispassionately surveyed. There was, they pointed out, no necessity for so long a journey. Why had they not been taken some few miles out of Sydney, thus removing their presences from the ceremony, and flown back at the end of the day, when all was over, to await the arrival of a relief Gospel machine? The pilot, who was not a guide, and had not therefore been trained to suffer Gospellers gladly, informed them bluntly that the Federal authorities didn't trust them a yard.

"But what could we have done? We've no wish to impose ourselves where we're unwelcome."

The pilot turned a sardonic eye upon the pilot of the Gospel plane, included among the travellers, and intimated that the Federal authorities thought he had been up to some game with his engine. The Gospel pilot, untrained in lies, shifted his feet uncomfortably while muttering that the trouble was beyond him.

"Too bad," commented the Australian. "Well, shift for yourselves, folks."

And he strolled, unbelievably, off into the night, leaving the travellers with nothing but the aged, uncomfortable plane for shelter from the drizzle; with chill hands and feet and no means of warming them; without food. All eyes, including those of the Gospel pilot, consulted Jane Cobbett, as one accustomed to barbarian ways and qualified to conduct a parley.

"Go after him. I've got a torch. Tell him he must at



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least provide us with something hot to drink. Tell him he must do something. We can't be left like this. I'd come with you, only there's no sense in everybody getting wet feet. A hot drink. Coverings of some kind. This plane's got no heating whatever. Tell him we simply will not put up with this treatment. Quite politely, of course."

Thus the Gospellers, in a twitter of discomfort. Jane would have disregarded their plea but for a barbed thrust from the continuity expert, who, with her laugh, said:

"But of course it's difficult to be a heroine in cold blood."

Jane affected not to notice this. She said, after a little more argument, casually:

"I'll ask, if you think it can do any good. Which way did he go, towards the light? Don't expect much. I'll do what I can."

And she slid out of the plane, sinking her feet into wet deep grass, and set off towards that remarkable light hung fifty feet up in the sky. She lost it several times; trees intervened, and the going was rough; at last she came to a ladder, hesitated, and scaled it, to come out at last upon a platform where the light revealed itself as an arc-lamp swinging in the wind from a pylon. Between the giant struts and spokes of this a small wooden cottage showed, insecure as a bird's nest, from which a sound of laughter was coming. She knocked with her torch.

"One of them," she heard a voice say; "who'd have thought any of that mob'd have the guts?"

On which the door opened, and the pilot looked out at her. He surveyed her for a second, then said to some inner occupant of the cabin over his shoulder:



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"It's the one I was telling you about. Let her in, eh?"

Permission was given, inaudibly, and Jane came stooping through the doorway to find herself in an unbelievably primitive wireless room, where a tall man, with the lantern-jaw and light eyes of the up-country barbarian, stood grinning at her in no unfriendly manner.

"Come on, come in, let's have a look at you. Wet, eh? Put your feet on the stove." He indicated a burner, the room's only heating, which splayed a red circle of light round it, and an unclean aroma of stale oil. "Come on in and have a yarn."

Jane's loyalty to her companions urged refusal, and a peremptory request for comforts and shelter. Against this clamoured the need to gain knowledge, to be a good spy. She shared her fellows' suspicion that this transit across unnecessary distances was dictated by something more than jealousy for the sacredness of the Feast of the Bridge.

She said, addressing the pilot, but with a smile which ranged her on his side against the protesting travellers:

"They're pretty cold out there. They don't like it. I was coming to ask if you could do anything."

"Do anything," sardonically repeated the pilot; "yes, I can leave the beggars to stew, and that's what I'm doing. Come on in if you're coming, there's a cow of a wind."

Jane had made her protest. She came in without further argument, and the tenant of the cabin exerted himself to take a large damper from a shelf, which he buttered against his waist, and cutting off a slice, offered this on the knife's point. Jane accepted it and sat munching, while the wireless man stared at her very comprehensively; she put up with it as long as she could,



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and munched the damper, which was new and very light, appreciatively, while her conscience contrasted her own state, warm and fed, with the discomfort of her fellows.

"So you gave the Orangers hell?" enquired at last the tenant of the cabin, whose name subsequent talk revealed as Sid. "Wish I'd been there. These Federal jobs are slow."

"They got to be done," contributed the pilot. "Wood and water joeys, we are. Look at this Feast up in Sydney, I haven't had a sniff at a Feast for two years. Last time it was the 'flu, and this time it's Gospellers mooing round like a mob of bloody calves." He nodded briefly at Jane, as though to say that she was not included in this description.

"That's right," the other agreed, "and what about me? Three months on and a fortnight off. And what for? Keeping an ear open for planes coming over. Who the hell'd want to drop bombs on this lousy place?"

"What shows the planes?" Jane asked, mindful of her mission.

The cabin tenant jerked his head at an arrangement like a large barograph, where a needle traced its white steady circle on black paper, ruled in eighths of inches. Jane asked to see traces of their arrival that evening, and was shown the angular track. The apparatus was tuned in, Sid explained, to the area he had to watch, showed on a dusty map as a circle of which this station was the centre, having a diameter of about a thousand miles.

"I don't take any notice of what goes on inland," Sid explained. "It's the sea I've got to watch, out east."

"There's something now," said Jane eagerly: the slow



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moving needle seemed to be shivering. Sid cast a casual glance at it.

"That's right. That'll be the machine coming to fetch you. She's a long way off yet. You'll have time for a sleep."

"What'm I to do with all these cows down in the plane?" enquired the pilot fretfully.

"What's your regulations say? 'Members of the Federal Service are required to show civility and discretion in every case where they may be brought in contact with persons who are not citizens of the Commonwealth.' That's the dope, isn't it?" The needle-watcher winked at Jane. "Get on down there and show a bit of civility. Me and this young lady'll be all right."

"I'd better go too," Jane offered, not convincingly.

"You stay here," Sid bade her, heavily jocular, "and we'll tell each other the time——"

"That needle's kicking," said the pilot abruptly, and came back from the door. "What the hell—that's never a single plane, Sid, mucking up the air that way."

They crowded about the instrument, Sid holding a torch beam directed upon it, and in silence watched the manœuvres of the needle in its case. It traced a line equal to three inches an hour, and from 3 to 3.45 a.m. the line was unwavering. Now it had begun again to flicker and dance, to make a jagged graph, a quarter-inch this way, a quarter-inch below, deepening the divergence with every plunge upwards or down. Sid surveyed it incredulously, Jane with interest, but no understanding; the pilot with a kind of Old Testament prophetical triumph.

"Well?" said the latter.



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Sid surveyed both his companions in silence, at last broken to ejaculate:

"Well, that's a funny thing. Instrument gone cronk, I should say."

"Try the amplifier." The pilot refused to accept this explanation.

"You don't think there's anything in it, do you, Fred?" asked the watchman; and Jane saw with a feeling of sickness that his long-jawed face was a curious grey.

"I don't know. Your job, not mine. Find out," said the pilot jerkily. And to Jane, threatening: "You know anything about this?"

She disclaimed at once, and wholly, knowledge of any arriving machines other than the supplementary travel-plane which was to convey the voyagers home. The pilot continued to eye, but Sid had no time for her. He was bending over another instrument, very delicately turning and tilting it over a compass face; as he twisted it to the north-east a faint purring became audible, that increased in volume as they waited.

"Just about on line 160, level with Sydney; flying west fast." Sid spoke slowly, not looking at his audience. "What the hell d'you make of that?"

The pilot flared out in sudden rage: "Christ, what are you here for? Can't you see what's up? Get your blinkers off! Try Parramatta, for God's sake. No, wait on, I'll get 'em. Where's your buzzer?"

They ignored Jane. Sid crouched over his instrument with a torch. Fred the pilot sat at the solid table and found the button of the transmitter with his right middle finger, craning in the half dark to decipher the dusty list of call-stations. He found the Parramatta signal, and sent it out repeatedly, the ta-ta-ta of his



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pressure sounding jerky and strong against the purr from the amplifier. He was a methodical man. At intervals of thirty seconds by his watch he sent the call out, listening intently in the silence that followed. Once the man at the compass turned his head.

"Got them?"

"Interference," Fred grunted, and shook his head irascibly, as though the sounds through the earphones tormented him. "Can't make out a thing. No storm getting up anywhere, is there?"

But he was aware that no storm ever brewed in the Pacific could knock his call endways as those sounds did. He continued to work his buzzer faithfully for a further ten minutes, disregarding the cracklings and fizzings that assailed his ears. The purring declined, became fainter as these increased in volume. Sid was on the alert, turning the microphone to catch the last wind of those speedy and distant machines. The hum at last became imperceptible. Sid turned, his forearm wiping his forehead, to say:

"Gone. Clean through the top of my area, like cutting the top off an egg. Newcastle ought to pick 'em up—if Sweeney's awake, the snipe-gutted Irishman. How's yours?"

"Jammed," said Fred the pilot laconically, and sat back. "Ether's full of fireworks."

"What? Give it here."

The pilot relinquished his seat, and sauntered over to Jane, who stood bewildered, and her mind divided, watching.

"Well," said the pilot off-handedly to her, "looks like the end of the world's come at last. I'm glad of it, for one. Clears the air." He added, after a meditative pause: "For whoever's left."



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"Left?"

"You don't think this is a peace mission, do you?"

Sid had been swearing at his buzzer, and now snatched off the earphones so that they clattered down on the table in front of him.

"Like you said. Gabriel couldn't get his trumpet through."

"That's right," said the pilot, nodding. "We're for it."

He spoke to no one in particular, but his eyes were on Jane, and she answered with a quick rush of loyalty, the last she was to know:

"What are you talking about? The Gospel doesn't come like a thief in the night——" But she knew as she said it, from many sermons, that this was just how the Gospel did come. "The Mother's sending for us from America. What's the matter with that? She gets nervous, she's anxious for us all, she's sending planes for us from Pharaoh. More than one, why not? You're mad to think——"

"Think what?" enquired the pilot; then before she could answer: "We're blots to Emma. She wants to wash us all clean. That's right; wash us in the blood of the lamb, or any other blood that's handy. Talking of animals, we get Emma's goat." He addressed the watchman. "Sid, look, I got to go back to Sydney."

"You better stay here, son," the watchman answered. "We're out of the way here."

"I'm getting back," Fred repeated obstinately.

"What about these people?" Sid indicated the Gospellers with his thumb.

"Let 'em sweat. If they've got a complaint they know where to stick it."

"It's no good, son," persisted the needle-watcher,



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"you can't do any good up there. They're all meat up in Sydney by now."

"That's a lie!" said Jane, and said it securely, convinced that she was not deceived. "What's the matter with you? Gospellers aren't afraid of their own shadows."

"Gospellers die easy, that's why," returned the pilot grimly. "They fall, we get pushed." He had a moment's unpleasing smile. "Come up with me to Sydney if you want."

"I will," said Jane, flaring.

"What about all this mob here?" Sid enquired once more. "I haven't got the food for them. They're dainty what they eat."

The pilot made an impracticable rejoinder, and opened the door, beckoning with a jerk of his chin to Jane. No farewells were bid; Sid would not by the appearance of him, indignant, and with a background of dread, have cared to be reminded that he was left alone, philosopher and guide to stranded Gospellers. Before they had shut the door he was back at his buzzer, coaxing it with delicate pressures of his fingers, wheedling a path for his message through the perplexed air.

They departed down the grassy wet path in silence to where the plane lay couched, filled with dormant people. To the rousing and ejecting of these Fred, the pilot, brought nothing of that discretion and civility laid down in regulations for those connected with the tourist trade. His eye was dangerous, and he swung a childish but efficient weapon, ten inches of whalebone with a knob of lead on the end, which needed no more than a flick of the wrist to take effect on Gospel napes. There were protests, threats, plaintive depictings of the discomfort to which such an abandoning must reduce



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the travellers, appeals to Jane. She was, however, satisfied as to her course of behaviour. She was aware that for a Gospeller to be found spying on the Feast of the Bridge might mean death for the spy. She had no belief in the pilot's theory of any primitive destroying raid. But it was her mission, as she conceived it, to find out what she could, and to take the risks such investigation might entail. The others, not sharing her mission, should not, if she could help it, share her dangers. Accordingly she kept her mouth shut; and when at last, with a shattering din of antique cylinders under pressure, the plane took off with Fred in the driver's cabin, she was lying full length in the longer cabin below, suddenly and surprisingly asleep. It was nearly twenty hours since she, with the rest of the travellers, had been waked for breakfast in the sorting room of the ruined General Post Office, Sydney.

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The dawn came up quietly over the sea as they fled; sea-birds which had been riding asleep on waves, lifting and falling with the swell, now flew up to mark from above the ripple or the moving shadows of their food. A light thick as honey filled all the colourless sky. As the sun drew out of the east, this thick light dwindled; the sky became slowly blue and the sea reflected it. The shadow of the plane fell sideways, misshapen on the water, and darkened it in passing.

Jane woke and stretched in the cabin somewhere about nine o'clock. She looked out; a line of land showed to the west which, she supposed, must be the Australian coast. Nothing except their own engine's



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racket disturbed the tranquillity of the sky. She found a speaking-tube and addressed Fred:

"Where are we?"

"Broken Bay."

It conveyed nothing to her.

"How far from Sydney?"

The pilot assessed it at forty minutes' flight. He was gruff with fatigue, and had evidently no wish to be distracted by conversation. Jane retired from the speaking-tube, and kneeling up against the window watched the coast trailing by. It was an unwelcoming outline, brown precipices with foam renewing itself at the foot and appearing unheralded at entrances to calm bays, sure sign of treacherous rocks masked by the tide. Where these bays sank to beaches scrub grew close to the sand as the beard to a lip. No human habitations showed. The continent had, in the sunshine, a dead look, explicable by the absence of settled towns; Jane, however, was vaguely discomforted by it.

They ranged north. Beaches became more frequent, and at last a wall of cliffs began that shut in the prodigious harbour. She could spy over these, from the plane's height, to the basin itself, fringed with ruins of red brick, its islands showing like the backs of whales, and the broken arch at its western end clear above a smokeless town. They turned sharply in and flew towards it.

For some reason unexplained the pilot kept high. Possibly it was his intention to spy out possible Gospel machines; there was no cover for him, not a cloud in all the bowl-shaped expanse of heaven, but he flew in the eye of the sun, and his shadow moving on the water was no bigger than a man's hand. They came above the bridge, and circled there. Jane peered down, through



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the provided eye-holes, and could perceive a considerable concourse of people on the north shore, matched by a crowd in the Domain. There were flags, their colours and patterns undistinguishable at that distance, visible only by reason of their fluttering in the light ground breeze; except for these there seemed to be no movement at all. She had seen something of that astonishing piety which kept the Australians quiet at their ceremonies, and thought nothing of this immobility, but the pilot evidently was disquieted. The machine rocked as though for an instant he had lost control; a moment later she heard his voice up the tube:

"See that?"

"What?"

For answer he put the machine into a dive. They dropped, tumbling like a rook, some five hundred feet. She heard the voice again:

"Get the glasses. Take a good look. See if you see what I see."

"You're too high. What?"

"There's been visitors."

She looked with concentration, turning the eye-piece while the machine hung above the Domain, circling. She found the crowds as before; the flags; the easily rippling water. But now it was apparent that there was something not canny about the crowd. It was too rigid. A great assembly of people seen from above has always some quality of movement, as a cornfield has, and this lacked. But she could not focus exactly.

"Go lower."

"No fear."

"I can't see. What's the matter down there?"

A laugh came up the tube.

"They're dead. A present for God, with kind regards



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from Emma Jordan Sopwith." He uttered a brief phrase in which her name and the Deity's were coupled with a physiological impossibility.

"What price sweetness and light now?"

Jane did not hear, after the first words. She was lying flat, staring through the eye-pieces at the motionless figures in the Domain. She screwed angrily, adjusting the sights of the glasses; all at once, with a twist, a face leapt into view, clearly focused. It was a woman's, mild and in no way distorted. The cheeks were touched with clear red; she had every appearance of good health; but she lay oddly huddled, and her wide-open eyes received the sun unblinking. It was only a moment's glimpse; the plane swayed, substituting for this face another, that of a child, pink-cheeked too, puckered as if to cry. They succeeded each other, the faces and bodies, all motionless, and the expressions unsurprised; a breeze that twitched the flags tumbled children's hair as they lay.

"Got it yet?" enquired the sardonic voice from the tube.

Jane answered wildly:

"We must go down."

"Not much. That's gas, and there's not enough wind to shift it. See their pretty pink cheeks? Emma's done them proud. Now all she wants is an earthquake and a few good big holes in the ground. They'll be humming by to-morrow."

She knew that the pilot was right. There had been talk of such a method in the bureaus, how quantities of carbon monoxide gas might be compressed to a solid and transported in cylinders: dropped from a height in blocks, it would disintegrate, falling like snow, pure white, and as softly; reach the ground as a gas, an



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immediate and deadly poison lying close by its own weight; and so despatch without cruelty all such as in Mrs. Sopwith's judgment were delaying or opposing the coming of the Kingdom of God.

It was odd that in that moment Jane should not consider with her imagination the holocaust that lay before her eyes, but should, by some trick of the mind, hark back to the desert, and the outburst of young Father McGuire. The elder priest, explaining, had spoken pitifully of Ireland, the things and people his mother loved going out of life under the weight of water, while he lay secure in the womb. She had a moment of inner vision more horrible than the actual sight of bodies below. In that moment she saw the Mother of the New World driving human beings like beasts which way she would, huddling them to the slaughter, herding them this way and that, seated throned upon them; meek beasts full of eyes, resting not day or night to adore her. It was not that other creature on which she rode, the beast having seven heads and ten horns, scarlet-coloured, full of names of blasphemy; but upon those which should have been reciting, in their abasement and good beastly humbleness, the praises of the Lord; the kind, the normal, the expectant peoples of the world. Jane Cobbett, her hands covering her eyes, lay afflicted and trembling at this vision of Mrs. Sopwith bearing St. John's words upon her forehead; Mother of the abominations of the earth; and drunk—reeling, ravening drunk with the blood of the saints.

The pilot's voice roused her; an exclamation in which not fear, but a kind of angry jubilation sounded.

"Here they come back, the sods!"

And sure enough away to the north Jane saw a cloud



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of planes coming up out of the horizon beyond trees.

"I better get rid of you somehow," Fred continued. "Make south and drop you somewhere."

"What about you?"

"Never mind," said the pilot. His tone pictured for her very exactly what he proposed to do. She heard another voice, windy in the tube. "Here's something coming through. They've seen us——"

She endured the half silence in which that other voice wandered, catching only an occasional phrase; the loud-speaker was inefficient, and the sequence of words broke often into eldritch yelps and cooings. At last Fred spoke to her:

"Wanted to know where you were. I said here. Told me to put you down. I'm going to."

He turned his machine into the sun, and made away from the stricken town, over which lay, invisible and deadly, the gas. Jane said again:

"What about you?"

"Oh, they had a shot at converting me. They're at it now."

The aerial voice still was present, filtering down the tube to Jane's ears, coming from one of the machines that had let fall that gas, like snow. It used phrases such as "throwing yourself on God's mercy," "accepting God's gift of faith," "seeing the true light."

"Light!" broke in the pilot with an expletive, "I've seen one or two other things this morning." The aerial voice was silent, and she knew that in rage he had shut it off. "What the hell's the good?" He seemed to be musing. "Hell, if I could break only one of their bloody necks I'd go happy. Only one."

His voice faded as he turned to survey the following squadron. "They'll be all round us in five minutes. I



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haven't got a gun. Once we're on the ground they've got me. My God, to go out like a rabbit with poison in your guts!" The machine swayed as if he thrust at the controls.

"Don't!" said Jane suddenly. She was standing in the cabin, hands clenched. "Don't take me down. I'm not going back. They're murderers."

"You don't say!" The voice of the pilot came ironic, and Jane could not at that moment bear irony. She stamped. She hammered with her fists upon the mouth of the speaking-tube.

"I'll never go back to them. Blast and damn Mrs. Sopwith, d'you hear me? Murderers! She's a murderess. I'm not going back, I'd rather die. I want to die——"

"Shut your mouth," said the pilot sardonically. "You'll get over it. You're a Gospeller, God loves you. You'll be all right."

He held on his course, and she was cut off from him. There was no way to impose upon him her will that she should never hear the Gospel again, nor continue to live in this world that the Gospel had made. She looked about despairingly. Through the stern windows she saw the slim fly-shaped machines of Mrs. Sopwith's discipline coming nearer. There was very little time.

The foremost window of this old Australian plane gave on to the lower wing. She thrust it open, breaking the glass, breaking even the frame with the axe that hung in a sling and was marked, "In Case of Fire." Through the widened opening she crawled, and with the wind of their speed clawing at her, clinging to a strut she raised herself until she stood, her eyes on a level with the pilot's glassed-in cabin. Not able to release a hand to knock for his attention, she butted at the glass with her head behind his shoulder; he saw the movement of



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the shadow, and turned. He made a kind of furious grimace, and opened a slit of the window to shout at her. She screamed at him blindly, the wind lashing hair into her eyes, and blowing her words sideways:

"I'll throw myself down if you don't listen."

He shouted back some adjuration not to make a bloody monkey of herself.

"I will. Never again—with those people. Go for them."

"How the hell——" the rest of the sentence told her what she knew, that he was unarmed, quite powerless to attack.

"Get one of them. Ram them."

The pilot turned his head, his body steady at the controls, and looked at her. Wind, lashing from another quarter as they swerved, cleared the hair from Jane's eyes. She looked back at him steadily, and with a set mouth. He gave a nod, and a sudden laugh; she could not hear it, but she saw his teeth gleam as he turned back to his compass. She, hanging to her strut and the window frame, twisted a little to see how the following machines had drawn close. One, the leader, was almost on them; she could see the crosses painted on the wings.

Then her own plane dived and swung, and came up again with all the impetus of its descent under the Gospeller's belly. Jane, wide-eyed, saw the fuselage come at them, had time for a moment of sheer joy at the sound of rending metal; then fell, unconscious of flaring woodwork and broken bodies dropping past her.



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## (xiv)

The voice of the speaker was filling that humble temple of the New Gospel, once known as the library of All Souls, Oxford.

"It is not unknown to you how the Mother has striven with these people. For years she has done her best, sending missionaries, broadcasting on a special length contrived to reach them in their strange ever-shifting desert homes. What has been the result? Lives lost; good gifts thrown back in the face of the giver.

"For herself, for her own dignity, the Mother cares nothing. But for the Lord's dignity, whose Eldest Daughter she is, she must care. You all know that text; If through your eye sin seeps into your soul, the eye must go. The Australians were the apple of the Mother's eye. She would, like any earthly mother, have forgiven them. But God is not so patient. God's majesty takes offence at blasphemy, and unclean rites such as were practised under the Southern Cross are the most vile blasphemy that can be offered in His name.

"The Mother needs no justifying. She has taken upon herself the burdens and decisions of you all. 'Sin,' she has said, 'is a conductor to draw down the lightnings of God.' From this wrath to come you are saved, in the old phrase, by the blotting out of these people's iniquity. The clean earth sends up from every temple, from every screen and sounding board, its praise to God in the words He best loves; the words of His Eldest Daughter, who has taken the burdens of all your souls upon her, and made earth safe for God's glory; Emma Jordan Sopwith."

The congregation sang a hymn, thunderously, the



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unseen organ pounding out harmonies in support; a hymn of triumph. In one corner near the door an old man stood up when the vast congregation did, not singing. At the tune's end he heard his own name.

"We are not to forget," said the bodiless voice, "those whose courage and faith brought them no earthly recompense, but an abiding city in all faithful hearts. The name of Jane Cobbett, that young teacher and dauntless Gospeller, will never be forgotten by those for whom she died. Freely she undertook her mission, and having left her companions in a position of safety, voluntarily surrendered herself as a hostage. She lost her life gloriously, sacrificing it so that the leader of the Australians should not escape. She was last seen beckoning on the Gospel machine to ram that in which she was imprisoned; the pilot did his duty; and the last rebel and the Gospel martyrs went down in flames together.

"The Mother sends through me now, and will shortly include in a personal spoken message, her sympathy to the bereaved families. She exhorts them to sink their natural sorrow, and to remember that a gift to God does not go unrewarded here or hereafter."

There was more of it. It seemed to the old man that the deep and impersonal voice would never stop its booming. At last the final hymn was announced, sung, and the secular programme turned on. Those who chose to leave the church might do so.

With the curious delicacy and respect for privacy that the Mother had found such a stumbling-block in her first attempt to evangelise England, everyone sat still while the old man walked out into the street. He was left mercifully alone, not harassed with condolence and congratulation mingled; and while the weight of un-



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happiness persisted, he did not, during that blind walk to the hostel, think of his daughter. He was considering in a detached and philosophic way, as though preparing a lecture for undergraduates, the value, *sub specie aeternitatis*, of a full stomach, ample leisure, freedom from anxiety as to the future, and the certainty of a painless death. He set all these goods, for which during all the million centuries since its beginning mankind had knowingly striven, against the evils they displaced, and weighed the two in his mind, trying to assess how much mankind had lost or gained. Endymion Cobbett had no understanding of the theological entity, the soul, and disallowed it in his reckoning. He substituted for its amorphous connotation the word spirit, which to him was something easily to be apprehended, showing its light here and there in the poets, exquisitely visible in the conduct of certain long-forgotten men. The soul wept, fled, was tormented, cravenly repelled responsibility, abased itself to nothing, or claimed its fate to be a matter of intimate concern to a personal God. The spirit stood upright as a flame, which persisted in elemental integrity, and rose towering as the winds blew more strongly on it. In safety of body he could find nothing to compensate for the sinking low of this flame. He thought confusedly that he and all the world had given up the supreme birthright; he asked God, if there were a God, to pity them, and take the mess of pottage away. And he began to wonder if perhaps among that fine and wandering people now destroyed, a Socrates had died; the first tears came to his eyes.

In the evening his old friend came to see him where he sat at home, alone, with his hands between his knees.

"Dimmy, my dear," said she in her voice that, colourless now, had once been rich and tender, "it's an



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appalling story, but if you want to talk about it, if it would do you good, I will." He shook his head gently. "No. Then we won't. And yet if it doesn't hurt you too much—there's something I wonder about."

"Yes?"

"It's Jane." The ex-Principal silently pondered a moment. "She had much of you in her. Her mother was uneducated——" he drew breath to protest—"don't argue with me; she had no conception of what we call education. She imagined the word meant a collection of facts. Jane wasn't like that. She had understanding, so far as this benighted world would allow her to possess it. And a lover of words; one saw that even in her ridiculous lectures, with a preposterous sham baby that took to pieces joint by joint. Jane spoke English."

"She loved Milton as a little child."

"There you are. Dimmy, you know, there are books out there, in that place they've just evangelised. D'you think she can have found any?"

"Why should you think so? Dorothy, if you please, we won't talk about Jane."

She put her old knuckly hand on his knee.

"My dear, the thing's as ugly as it can be. But, in my mind there's something, a suspicion that the story isn't as they tell it. It's glorious wrong-headedness their way. But if it were glorious right-headedness—wouldn't that make a difference to the hurt?"

"While the hurt is deep you can't feel pride. A dead child is just that; a dead child."

She checked, and regarded him pitifully.

"Dimmy, would you rather I took myself off? I'm an old clucking hen and a nuisance, I know." He shook his head. "I'm not such a philosopher as you. I want to



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overcome my enemies, even if it's only an imaginary victory inside an old woman's brain. I want to think of that child defying the Gospel, not dying for it. As she did, Dimmy; as she did!"

He rose, and began walking about, shuffling his feet a little more than usual, eyes on the floor.

"What was she doing there alone? Hostage, rubbish! They'd have taken Mathers, he's one of the Committee here, a Throne and Domination in their hierarchy. Hostage, a poor little chit of a mothercraft lecturer! Why was Jane up aloft with that Australian alone, half a day's journey from the others? Why did she charge the Gospeller? For that's what it comes to; they admit as much. And they call it a gesture of devotion, so that the Australian shouldn't escape. Do you know what I call it?" She was standing face to face now with her old friend, and his eyes lifted, compelled to meet hers; she caught his wrist. "Devotion! It was a gesture of hate; of contempt; Jean Bart blowing up his ship. 'Lonely antagonists of destiny, that went down scornful before many spears.' We'll never know, they'll never tell, but I'm right, Dimmy. And when it hurts less you can be proud of Jane, by God you can!"

She dropped his hand, suddenly seeming a small old woman, very tired. She sat down, as did he a second later. But while she sat upright, he drooped, and was back at the attitude in which she had discovered him, hands loose between his knees, face expressionless. He had made no answer to her passionate words.

She looked at him, saw that he was numb, not to be roused by such means, and with some inward self-reproach and despisal of herself for a blind old fool rushing in upon territory where hung and watched dark angels, she changed her tactics. It was skilfully done.



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She shifted, with an effort of will, the attitude of her own mind, allowing excitement to sink down, beckoning to the calmness which presided over their evenings together when they sat remembering verse. He was not observing her, but for her own benefit she brought off a beautiful little piece of character-acting, assuming the half-smile, the meditative eyes that went with indulgence in such luxury of words. Usually, she chose the Georgian poets, but now the thought came of a man who had lived, more than a hundred years back, in the college on whose site this hostel had been built, and with the memory a flood of his absurd unforgettable rhymes. Unforgettable! It was a curious thing that she, who at eighty-three prided herself still on her memory, should on this occasion almost immediately be at fault. Two verses she got through safely, speaking them absently, only just above her breath, not in any way regarding her companion, whose chin had dropped against his chest. It was the passage from the Hunting of the Snark, where the Bellman exhorts his crew, having served out some grog with a liberal hand, and for their benefit enlarges upon the characteristics of the quarry.

"Let us take them in order. The first is the taste,
Which is meagre and hollow, but crisp;
Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist,
With a savour of Will-o'-the-Wisp——"

She saw his head jerk a little at that word "savour." It was wrong, and cleverly so, near enough to the right word to deceive anyone but a purist; and Endymion Cobbett was a purist.



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"Its habit of getting up late you may see
That it carries too far, when I say
That it frequently lunches at five o'clock tea,
And dines on the following day——"

"Breakfasts! 'It frequently breakfasts.' And the first line is dubious."

"My dear Dimmy, I learnt this seventy years ago. I know what I'm doing."

And she proceeded, falsifying recklessly, having roused him:

"The third is its passion for bathing machines——"

"You've missed a verse. That's the fourth characteristic; you've missed the third."

"I don't believe you. Don't interrupt me.

" 'The third is its passion for bathing machines
Which it constantly carries about——' "

He was looking up now, vigorously disapproving.

"You've left out the verse about the Snark looking grave at a pun. That's the third characteristic. The bathing machine is the fourth, and it's 'fondness,' not 'passion.' I always used to think your memory was better than mine."

"I can't think what's happened to me. The pun, of course, yes, that's the third. Then the bathing machines——" She was checking on her fingers. "What's the fifth? Oh, but this is ridiculous! 'The fifth is—is——' "

He caught the verse away from her hesitancy, giving it with a certain precise and donnish utterance which added ineffably to its flavour, taking the pose, head on one side, left hand extended and rounded as though



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caressing the phrases, which thirty years ago had been caricatured in every undergraduate's notebook.

" 'The fifth is ambition. It next will be right
To describe each particular batch:
Distinguishing those that have feathers, and bite,
From those that have whiskers, and scratch.

For although common Snarks do no manner of harm——' "

The old woman, nodding to his rhythms, smiled. All her long life, till now, she had managed women; and compared with the vigilance, patience, imagination and pliability which such managing demanded, a man in grief, and that man loved, was child's play to soothe.

(xv)

At Pharaoh preparations for the Jubilee, the love-feast which was to celebrate the crowding of all the nations of the earth under Christ's banner, were going forward. It had been decided to hold it on the Mother's birthday, which this year fell on the first Sunday in March, and since such an organisation as the executive committee of the New Gospel had the good will of the world to call upon, no delays were anticipated, no hitch in the elaborately timed chain of ceremonies. The building of the stadium had been put in hand just as soon as the campaign against Australia had been planned; it was superb, concrete faced with marble, elaborately drained, decorated, and lit; and the rostrum



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from which the Mother was to speak, from which her voice would be thrown by microphones to the four winds, had a hand-rail and lectern of steel damascened with gold. Though built so swiftly, the stadium was to remain, to be used—not every year; the Mother's astuteness fully understood how expectation was kindled by long waiting—but every five years, perhaps, for the gathering together of the peoples in thanksgiving, and on this same day.

The situation and design of the thing were astonishing. It stood on a small hill, lifting providentially out of a wide plain; though had Providence not seen to this, the Gospel engineers would have been found adequate. Their labours were spared, however. The site was all that could be wished, with a water-supply some thousand feet below the surface to be easily tapped, the amenity of trees, the necessary surrounding open spaces to accommodate thronging planes. Lastly, it was no more than ninety minutes' flight from Pharaoh, a point to be considered seriously; the Mother, since news of her triumph had come at the end of that night's vigil, had seemed to be losing something of her bodily strength. She made her decisions, she spoke in committee to the point, and saltily. But her eyes were sunken, and the guard who watched in her room at nights reported in distress to the Committee that she slept hardly at all, and would slip out of bed at all hours to pray. No person dared to speak to her of her trouble, if trouble there were. The Committee pondered, shrugged, came to the conclusion that there was nothing to be done, that she was eighty, and that the body must pay some day for the work done by the spirit. The site had been chosen before this disquietude of hers began, and it was agreed that God, as might have been expected, had



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certainly had a hand in the choosing; for she had never taken kindly to the air, and a long journey, with the excitement of the Jubilee to come after, might have had deplorable results.

It was, however, very tentatively suggested that the Mother should take a fortnight's rest from the routine work, the details of organisation which she insisted on considering daily. She eyed the suggester, who, being a woman, was not so easily quelled, and persisted, still without reference to health—even she did not dare so far—in the endeavour to obtain some measure of devolution. The Mother heard her according to her unvariable practice, never interrupting or commenting, allowing the enthusiast to run down; and when at last there was silence, she said, dropping the words out like stones, that for those who had taken the burden of authority there must be no putting off of the weight, and no resting from labour, because such people were to be differently judged. She added nothing to this explanation, which in fact was somewhat obscure; and later the Committee's distrust was allayed by the opinion of those who knew her longest, that the Mother was in travail with some further revelation. She should be left alone, they said, not bothered with precautions or suggestions, but allowed to undertake such work as she felt fit to do; and as for the prayers at night, a sedative might be inconspicuously used.

While anxiety reigned in the central tower, pilgrims began to flock towards the Western American coast. Preparations had been made for them, the Gospel in matters material was rarely caught napping; the crowds, however, did to some extent exceed anticipation and overflow the accommodation provided. Immediately the Committee mobilised the fastest



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machines the continent could provide; and by domiciling the overflow in outlying towns made of these pilgrims suburban dwellers in the city of God, coming in by day for the business of prayer, carried swiftly back after spiritual junketings at night.

A week's programme had been planned. Prayer, that most protean of human needs, was to display itself in every form, in symbols, words, music; in dances and games; in every way except meditation, for which, after all, it was not necessary to come together in thousands. Details of the Jubilee, each day of which was filled from dawn till midnight, included a football match in which the sides represented Saving Grace and Sin; a dancing competition judged by a Gospeller dressed as King David; and a bathing pool equipped with a microphone by which sinners' confessions were broadcast before they might dive in to swim; this pool was called, in letters of light, Jordan Water, and every precaution had been taken to keep its condition hygienic. Minor matters of organisation had been well attended to, physicians in adequate numbers were available, a small operating theatre had been installed in the stadium itself to deal with surgical emergencies, an undertaker with his attendant embalmers held himself inconspicuously in readiness near a remote but chastely decorated chapel; and in a building close at hand experts in mothercraft were assembled to receive any favoured infant who might choose this most auspicious of all moments to tumble into the world.

The place was beautiful, from the air more especially; new white walls circling out from the central mass like ripples from a dropped plummet, trees here and there breaking the white with shade, water lifting and falling in sunlight; the Committee looked upon what it had



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made, and saw that it was good. The Mother herself had found the city's name in St. John—New Jerusalem. She had insisted by a pious whim on the architects conforming to the specifications for that city which are given in Revelation; twelve gates, each set with pearl; precious stones, jasper, emerald, sardonix, lost in the concrete foundations; no temple, the stadium being only a meeting place; and with no need of the sun nor moon to light it, power being brought from the water-falls nearly a hundred miles off to illumine the streets with a dependable golden glow. The Mother had not seen the finished splendour, it was being kept to surprise her with its completeness, but she knew all about it, to the last penny of its cost, to the least stone of its walls. Daily, with concentration in which apprehension showed, she pored over the plans. This ringed city, the symbol of unity and peace in loving-kindness, to which no schism now could pierce, from which need proceed no more thunders, but only blessing—it lay upon her completed work like a crown. Though she spoke of it seldom, she had often cried out the name in her sleep, and many of the prayers she slipped out of bed to make were concerned with it. Emma Jordan Sopwith had always before her eyes the example of Moses and the capricious temper of the Old Testament God, who from eternity had thwarted the expectation of his labourers in time. She knew God as a daughter knows a father, from living always in the same house and sharing the same food; but that there was something masculine in His behaviour at times, an unaccountableness coming out of the deep, she, the androgynous, was aware. When the symbolic town was complete she would feel safe, and only then. God had remained quiescent while the preparations seethed, as while Moses drew his



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chosen, those touchy and murmuring pagans the Israelites, over the desert to the plains of Moab; but there awoke and thundered, and Moses died.

Mrs. Sopwith, while the New Jerusalem grew, endured such suffering as only hope can inflict.

(xvi)

But it was concluded without accident. Mrs. Sopwith, on her birthday, after receiving the customary wishes and congratulations of her Committee and personal attendants, towards evening stepped into the cabin of a silver plane, and set off inland towards her creation, the flower of her will come to fruit. It had been arranged—the Committee bowed reluctantly to the Mother's wish—that the opening of the Jubilee should take place by night. Her reasons were never plainly stated. "God's sun"—her fellow-members argued; but were cut short by a brief reminder from Mrs. Sopwith that in the matter of weather men were still comparatively helpless, and God by no means reliable. She used that expression, speaking freely, her right as Eldest Daughter. The Committee woman, planner of the gala, alone had some notion of the true reason, and smiled awry at the Mother's desire to be dispenser of all things to her people, even of light.

Towards evening, then, Mrs. Sopwith was escorted to her plane. This plane, specially designed for the Mother's conveyance, had about it nothing of the gaudiness and crude appeal to the eye of the Australian flying churches. It was elegant in half a dozen greys, with platinum shining whitely here and there among the fittings. It was noiseless, restful. To nearly all Gos-



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pellers the clouds had ceased to be a country of adventure without becoming a place in which to linger; but this machine drove like a strong bird through them, as though air were the element out of which it came, and to which it would be restored in dying.

Round it, as it approached the city, loyal planes closed in, escorting her. There was jostling, almost a rough-and-tumble in the air, young men looping over and under each other to be near her. A collision sent one enthusiast sideways, but he could be perceived, by those looking back, dropping to earth unhurt in his parachute, and nobody halted for him. The Mother's plane, arriving at the special landing-ground marked with a white cross some fifty feet long, circled three times above the heads of the watching devotees, then nosed down and came to rest lightly as a dove. The crowds, awed, held away while the tall figure descended; some, however, fell on their knees, others stretched out their children for her blessing, one woman screamed horribly and was hurried off to the waiting doctors; the Mother paused, but made no gesture except a slow bending of the head, once, twice, to acknowledge this loyalty as she walked along her private path to the stadium. There were comments.

"Looks mighty calm to have the whole of the planet under her thumb."

"Looks older."

"Looks younger."

"Looks a Tartar."

"Hush——"

The Mother walked alone, leaning on no stick, taking help from no one's arm, to the door that in token of its being her own had initials cut in the veneer of marble: E.J.S., and a date, that of her birthday and the sealing



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of her triumph. She stood for an instant before she put her hand to it, hearing from within the immense circle shouting, a drift of song, thudding of drums. Over her head aeroplanes were continually passing, flying to fetch adorers. The sun had dropped, flinging shepherd's scarlet over the whole sky, which was cloudless. All the omens seemed fair.

But the Mother in her heart did not, as she might have put it in her unregenerate days, trust God a yard. She knew Him, from His own inspired writings, for a jealous God. She knew, too, that it was impossible to be sure from one moment to the next what would please Him. And the thought came to her mind for an instant: I ought to have arranged some sacrifice; bloodshed. But seeing the grave yet jolly faces of the Committee all about her waiting, she put the idea out of her mind, and took the first step through the doorway into her own triumphal erection, greater than any of the palaces of Babylon or Rome.

She remained a short while in prayer, the Committee lifting their faces from their hats to make responses; then the clock, tyrant of her days, pointing to the moment of her appearance before the people, she rose from her knees and steadily ascended the stairs of the rostrum.

In the stadium, at a signal from the Mother's room as she quitted it, all the lights declined, sank to yellow points, went out amid singing. A single beam fell from the northern roof like a sword, and showed the figure of the Mother standing before the people, hands at her sides, clenched, but hidden in her dress. Her head was up, in the splendid pose they all knew from the photographs that were in every hostel through the width of the world. Her features could only be observed by



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those nearest, but the pose was readable by all; an attitude in which, like her predecessors Moses and Christ, she seemed to talk with God fearlessly, as a trusted familiar servant or friend. The microphones were ready for her voice, but they received, for nearly half an hour, only the enormous tumult of her welcome. The people clamoured at her, acclaimed her, sang, trumpeted, stamped, wept in her honour. They came from all over the world. They were unanimous now in worship; God was affronted no longer by ugly superstitions and the relics of dead faiths. The earth was clean, and one, and holy. This gathering witnessed it. The hosannas were for joy at an assured salvation. Mrs. Sopwith, with clenched hands, wordlessly called God's attention to her achievement; and in thought added a schoolgirl pleading—"Don't spoil it all!"

Somewhere in the building, in a small room, sat the director of the pageant, to whom it appeared that the clamour was continuing too long. He had allowed a quarter of an hour for the welcome, and as the hand of his huge clock moved onwards, it appeared to him, anxiously considering the quality of sounds from the stadium, as though a note of hysteria were beginning to insinuate itself. He calculated that the Mother must be enduring considerable emotional strain, which would unfit her for immediate preaching. Accordingly, genius of organising that he was, he changed the programme with a pressure of his hand. Through the din the strains of organ reed notes thrust their way, and to the single beam of light was added another that danced in the sky, across which planes had already deposited a screen of cloud. This beam bore through the air and up a thousand feet into the night the likeness of Mrs. Sopwith, tinted to the life; she showed upon the softly



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rolling surface of the artificial screen, turned her eyes upon them, seemed to speak; did speak, indeed, but her voice was lost in the mounting frenzy of the hymn that a quarter of a million voices launched skywards from the stadium's round mouth. The real Emma Jordan Sopwith, standing tiny on her rostrum, faced her enormous simulacrum, seeing herself grown to that from the little school-teacher of sixty years ago, wondering at the back of her mind if it were not just too much, and whether God would stand it.

The hymn ended. Slowly the cloud drifted away, borne on a light wind, leaving behind wisps from which a vast eye still looked, or a nostril flickered. It had taken seven minutes; time, the master of ceremonies thought, to allow the Mother to recover. She was indeed ready, and pressed the signal which should warn him. He heard the buzz; heard, so exquisitely sensitive was the microphone, a tiny chink as she laid her ringed hands on the damascened rail to speak; heard all other sounds drop away to an utter quietness; and—for he was truly a religious man—the master of ceremonies uncrossed his legs and composed himself to genuine attention.

He could picture her standing, getting the measure of the vast audience, touching perhaps the cross at her neck as her custom was while she marshalled her words. He was used to her silences and admired them. Nothing got a congregation like just standing there. It made them feel that she was scanning individuals, and in their presence receiving personal succour and inspiration from God. But this silence went on too long; a whole minute. He got up from his chair to peer into the periscope which gave him a panorama of the stadium, focusing his attention on the single lighted figure. Mrs.



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Sopwith stood in an attitude very different from her usual dignified posture of petition. Her classic mouth was open crookedly; she stared upwards with a horrid bulging of the eyeballs; and the microphone vouchsafed a whisper:

"I knew—I knew——"

The startled master of ceremonies, still alert to make his pageant a success, acted promptly. He switched off the beam that illuminated that alarming figure, and pressed the button for the second sky display. His assistants, loyal, though astonished at this second deviation from plan, and unable themselves to see what was happening in the stadium, set about their task immediately. The master at his periscope saw his missionary light beams go darting up one after another, bearing photographic representations of Scriptural characters; the angels that Jacob saw walking, Leviathan spewing out the prophet into a swelling sea; but the cloud screen not being prepared to receive them, these shadows could find no resting-place, and stretched out towards the stars blindly. He gave a mild curse and was turning to rectify this omission when both eye and hand were arrested by the appalling sound of a trumpet. It froze him motionless, and drowned the wailing of the people assembled. Beyond the darkness searched by his lights a commotion began among the stars. When the sound ceased his senses seemed to be, not dulled, but agonisingly acute, so that in the concrete cell fifty feet below the roof he could hear a pattering as of rain, and could see through his periscope Mrs. Sopwith's hands faintly brushing at her white robe, spotted now with some dark substance that was dropping from the heavens, together with hail and fire. He was a young man, the master of the ceremonies, and the Bible had



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been revised before he came to it, but he knew what had happened, that the dark substance was blood, that this trumpet was to be the first of seven, and that the end of the world was at hand.

The Almighty had, in the usual manner, disappointed His coadjutor after all.



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# EPILOGUE

## Between Earth and Heaven

In the year 1999 and seven months
From Heaven a great and terrible King——

*Annotation:*

Here once more I lost my Spectacles, and could not see through, therefore I had rather be silent than coin lies.

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WHEN the seventh trumpet had sounded, as it did after the passing of what seemed immemorable time, there was an extraordinary silence. Those human beings who had survived the opening of the vials, the seven thunders, the plagues and darkenings, and the loosing of the four angels, looked at each other unrecognising. All human feeling had been blown away by the sound of the trumpet, and these people stood like trees, living, held fast to the earth, but no longer able even—the last emotion—to fear. They had been stripped by the happenings of Doomsday of all power to relate or to wonder, and so were not appalled by the vision they now saw, of the dead rising out of their graves. Up they came, cloudily, out of the ground and the sea, and seemed like an invading vapour to penetrate the bodies of the living; these had eaten meat that had pastured on grass, and fish that had nibbled bare the bones of drowned sailors. Dead and living came together without knowledge of each other; but a purpose informed the mass as some corporate will directs a flight of birds, and all their attention was thrown towards the ragged sky, dark now except for the arcs of dropping planets.

There they became aware of a conflict. Nothing was to be seen or heard, but the darkness was taut, and shapes appeared now and then to obscure the stars in their fall. Humanity watched passively, having no further interest in the maintenance of order or the triumph of any individual might. Nevertheless,



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entities were pulled towards the struggle, smoking up from the earth into it like marsh mists drawn by the sun, and were used there in the void for purposes and by powers not apprehended. The matter, whatever it may have been, was disputed in silence, lit by stars trailing flame. It was disputed at enormous tension, as though a sound were to ascend out of ears' reach and persist, troubling the air, helpless to give it passage; most cruelly imposing itself, and at last ceasing softly as an agony ends in a sigh.

Suddenly it appeared to the human combatants that light was growing; one thrusting planet had been anchored, and by staying had caught within its own radius of attraction other suns. They in their falling were caught in this attraction as in a whirlpool, and after circling awhile at speed began to float and hang spaced in the emptiness of heaven. The central planet was far away from the earth, and shone dimly and small, unthinkable billions of miles from its satellites; its midday, by reason of this distance, was no more than a twilight. Still, the familiar shapes of earth could be seen, upheaved and tilted, no green life showing, and with those cities over which the trumpets had sounded, and the vials been poured, crumbled quite away. Some were submerged; the sea had swung about when the earth reeled, and had flowed into the great plain of the Sahara as into a cup out of the Mexican gulf, which now showed its islands as little hills with their bases rising from slime. The reds and browns of rock were unchanged, and the yellows and greys of sand. It was a dim cold earth on which nothing grew, but it was warmer than space. Such dead and living as the dissension had spared drifted back to it, and wandering here and there took possession again.



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## *Epilogue*

At once the question arose, calamity being the demand which creates a supply of deities, who should be prayed to? The dead brought back out of their oblivion names and attributes unknown and best forgotten, and arranged small altars to these of coloured pebbles, which was all the present condition of their dwelling place allowed. The living had, throughout the war in heaven, that terror over which the arbiters within their minds now were busy huddling fantasies, held somehow to a name, Sopwith; this they engraved by means of flint implements on rocks, and bowed before it so that their bellies should be filled. (There were still fish in the sea, living unaware of the whole commotion; young eels plying along the Gulf Stream, now flowing out of Africa; whales sheltering under the lee of icebergs broken from the two poles.) These altars, as might have been expected, gave offence to those who had lived before the New Gospel era, and neither knew its traditions nor cared for them; the dead, who had passed through an experience denied to the living, and were still inextricably and horribly mingled with the very essence of the living, despised their mawkish ritual and troubled it often. There were wars.

But the outcome of these troubles interested the actual incumbent of the universe's throne not at all. He had always been a personage without bowels. In previous victories he had cared nothing for the respect or even for the tribute of the conquered, it was enough for him that he was the winner; he had triumphed often before over deserts of his own making. So it was now. Heaven's first law his insistence had bent like a bow. By a trick, using his opponent's own strength, he was master of a world torn, chill, and angry; of a motley pattern of planets; of a void in which could still be felt



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the wind of huge powers fleeing. Goodness, and warmth, and light had been driven out of existence for ever; the spirit had been broken for ever on the flinty anvil of the letter. Creation mourned.

On the throne of his predecessors in godhead, complacent by reason of his victory, but for fear of attack looking narrowly and with suspicion out through space, sat the aged and reprobate King of the West; and his meditations, strangely enough, were concerned with theories of conduct and morals.

"If he'd held his tongue," mused the King, while day and night noiselessly revolved about him, "he'd be here now." It was his late enemy and Lord to whom he referred thus briefly. "Words are the devil. It's a temptation to talk when people and suns and earthquakes tumble out of your mouth, but it's dangerous. He liked popularity, too; couldn't bear not to be loved. He's out in the dark now because he wanted just one more voice, mine, among the Alleluias. Not for me. Creation's thankless, love's dangerous. Myself alone! I don't know whether that's heaven or hell, but whatever it is, I'm King of it."

Thus, in contemplation of his ramshackle ill-lit universe, mused the conqueror of God, the aged and reprobate King of the West.



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