

THE ROSICRUCIAN

A ROMANCE OF THE GREAT WAR

BY

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LLANFAIRFECHAN :

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DEDICATED
TO
COMRADES OF THE GREAT WAR
THROUGHOUT
THE BRITISH EMPIRE

*All names of characters in this story are
purely imaginary.*

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NORTH WALES. .

THE ROSICRUCIAN

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I

“Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart’s Desire?”

—*Omar Khayyam.*

WOODVILLE SPRING is one of the quietest and most secluded spots on the beautiful island of Britain; a little corner of East Anglia, free from the roar and tumult of the Town and far beyond the sound of the raucous cries of newspaper urchins. Thither, by an undesigned coincidence and all but simultaneously, two strenuous toilers in the realm of the intellect had retreated in order to seek a brief respite for jaded nerves, fagged brains, and tired bodies.

Nor did kindly Nature, in her gorgeous summer garb—and loaded with a rich abundance of precious fruit and other good things which make glad every human heart that is in tune with her marvellous order—ever seem more mystically peaceful or more placidly indifferent to the stupidity of the rulers of mankind and the occasional foolish rebellion of mobs against her mysterious ways and inexorable laws, than on that memorable evening of the last of July, when Dante Jebson and Beatrice Harlington accidentally came face to face. They were not entire strangers to each other.

It happened upon a narrow footpath leading out of a wood into a meadow of newly-mown hay, whose nerve-soothing odour, mingled with the humming music of myriads of unseen insects, was strangely reminiscent of earlier and happier days. Nay, the earth beneath and the whole atmosphere around and above teemed with numberless and various living things of whose presence none but the true lover of Nature is ever hardly cognisant, but from whose wondrous ways and joyful life men and women might, were they wise, learn many a useful lesson.

Like Nature, whose children they were, Dante and Beatrice, too, were unaffected by the disturbing influence of the evil rumours rife in the great human world whence, as they fondly imagined, they had contrived to escape but a few hours ago; *they*, too, were untouched by the dread anxiety coursing through the veins and accelerating the heart-throbs of mankind in many lands; *they*, too, were supremely indifferent to the threatened catastrophes and thrilling events that were casting their ominous shadows before; in *their* souls, too, as in the soul of Nature, there reigned that mystic peace, that serene outlook, which passeth human understanding. At least, one might have inferred so much from the index of their countenances, their jovial laughter, and the unconventional cordiality with which these twin souls greeted each other and seemed most harmoniously to blend. For here, at all events, were they not beyond the silly stare of the madding crowd and even out of the reach of the penetrating gaze of Dame Grundy and her all-but ubiquitous brood? They may have thought so; or they may not.

Twin souls! And yet they had rarely met before. Of correspondence there had not been a thread; while what snatches of actual conversation had taken place had invariably been upon the spiritual plane, along intellectual lines, or touching matters purely artistic and literary. It was an unerring instinct that told the twain that their souls were kindred. They were guided, as they doubtless believed, by that mutual discernment of thought and sentiment which *is* sometimes obeyed and followed even in the rough-and-tumble life of ordinary human beings. Nevertheless it is not impossible that, after all, they were mistaken in their mutual soul-reading.

To explain. Any notion of what in the vocabulary of the vulgar is designated "love" as between these two was unthought of. Both, as time counts, had travelled beyond *that* stage upon life's thorny and often desolate and lonely road. Not, apparently, that either had as yet been deprived of that spirit of perennial youth which hopeth all things; far from it. At all events, even if by a remote possibility some vaguely-perceived hint of the sentiment alluded to might at some time or other have been adumbrated on the psychic mirror of each or either, yet to seek a channel for its due expression must be ruthlessly voted out of the question. For there were presumed to be, as each was vividly aware and very keenly conscious, irremovable barriers and insuperable impediments. Yet each understood the other—or at least so they imagined; and in that implied understanding, silent but eloquent, there was contentment as joyful as it was sacred.

It was simply this, that Dante Jebson and Beatrice

Harlington felt mutually attracted by the operation of that psychological law of affinity, that sympathy of soul with soul and response of heart to heart, which no mere man-made legality, convention, or fashion has so far been able to over-rule, supersede, let or hinder, much less to eradicate. It is Nature's way; and our twain viewed life in Nature's light. To them it seemed but a part of the natural order of events that they should thus, at least for a few transient moments, be supremely happy in each other's company. That was all.

* * * *

Beatrice Harlington was a tall, graceful, well-made woman in whose pensive glance and firmly set, classically-moulded features—whose lines of sadness were wreathed in mirth—a truly noble soul revealed itself. She was not “pretty,” but strangely beautiful, reminding one of a familiar portrait of George Eliot, and she certainly had some decided traits of character resembling that literary celebrity of a former generation. She was a spinster, and the number of her summers might have been correctly counted, within a decade or so, if note were taken of the all-but imperceptible sprinkle of grey in her silken dark-brownish hair and of the accent of experience in her speech. By temperament, training, and status, Beatrice Harlington was an artist of a decidedly modern and independent school. Her character, however, was not all on the surface. The first impression her aspect made upon one was that it was the aspect of a woman singularly grave and quiet—might by a superficial observer perhaps be thought morose; but the eye from its calm depth sent back no shadow of misanthropy, and if the

mouth spoke self-control, it spoke it with sweetness. When a smile came—which indeed was not too often—the person in the world who liked her least would have done something to prolong or to bring it back. There was also about her personality an air of latent power, yet without the least assumption of it. It was a sort of fortress-like strength, the sure position taken and held unshrinkingly within the Walls of Truth and moral courage; and withal the perfect freedom and fearlessness of one who has control over *self* well in hand. Able too she seemed to wage offensive warfare—yet this she rarely did. The eye might fire and the cheek glow, and that sense of power strike disagreeably upon the beholder; but when the word came, it came with the very spirit of love and gentleness, hence was the more powerful. The effect was neither hurt feeling nor wounded pride—the effort being not to destroy but to build up. Yet for this very thing, so unlike themselves, not a few of her own sex disliked and shunned her. Beatrice Harlington knew it. Probably they could not endure to trust a woman thoroughly because her face commanded that trust; nor to feel themselves rebuked by her presence when she had not uttered a word.

Dante Jebson, at first sight plain, insignificant, medium-statured, also possessed a somewhat rare personality. He was a man nearing fifty, whose face on close inspection evidenced deep thought shot through with humour. A “married bachelor” of long standing, his experiences of certain aspects of human life were perhaps such as he would not care to recall more than could be helped, much less to recount in a mixed company; yet, strange as it may seem, with

not a vestige of premature old age. By profession, Dante Jebson, a member of the Society of Authors, was a public lecturer on things in general, and withal a miscellaneous penman, mostly for the Press. Even to himself he was somewhat of a psychological puzzle; much more so to many of his intimate acquaintances. To try to know "himself," and understand "himself," however, was a process which afforded him interesting mental exercise when he had nothing more important to occupy his thoughts; believing as he did that the achievement of self-knowledge, even in a small degree, was the first essential to a workable knowledge of his fellow-men. To be misunderstood by others rather amused than annoyed him; and by way of self-defence he would sometimes humorously quote a saying of Emerson's, to the effect that it is the fate of all "great men" to be misunderstood!

* * * *

"I have been trying to do a little sketching," said Beatrice, after some preliminary pleasantries. "Just now Nature seems at the zenith of her glory—though, of course, she is always glorious!"

"You see her with the artist's eye, and see her at her best," replied the man, philosophically.

"I could not get on, though," she sighed, with a humorous puckering of the face, and apparently heedless of Dante's comment; "so I tried to read, but after sitting down a while and letting my eyes travel over many pages, I started as if from a dream, having no idea what I had been reading. Isn't the news dreadful to-day?"

“ Anything serious ? ”

“ Why, haven't you seen the papers, Mr. Jebson—and you a Pressman, too ? ”

“ I usually pay little heed to what is called ‘ news, ’ in the daily journals ; it is mostly either idle gossip, venomous scandal, or foolish scare. I have tried to detach myself for a day or two, to wander in this isolated spot, away from all thought of books, newspapers, and script. It is indeed a great relief. ”

“ Have you brought with you nothing to read, then ? ”

“ I have not. In a place like this one prefers to contemplate the wonders of Nature in their varied aspects, and to listen to the music of her myriad voices. ”

“ That sounds poetical, ” commented Beatrice, with a smile bordering on a laugh. “ You are a lover of poetry ? ” she queried.

“ Oh yes ! ” replied Dante. “ The longer I live and the older I grow, poetry has an increasing fascination for me. ”

“ That is certainly interesting, ” was the woman's further comment ; adding, after a pause, “ I, too, love poetry. But tell me, Mr. Jebson, how you account for the fact that even the sublimest of poetry, while appealing to some, has apparently little interest for others ? ”

“ It has been said, as you may remember, that all great poetry is the ‘ language of a soul in pain. ’ In a sense that is true. But there is another aspect of the matter. Great poetry—like all great music, great art,

and the higher order of literature—interests people only in so far as it awakens an echo in their own souls ; that is, as it images yearnings and longings they have felt, expresses griefs and sorrows they have known, reflects joys which have been theirs, or confirms truths they have experienced. Tennyson's '*Brook*' delights all lovers of beauty and melody, because it articulates the gladness of the summer world through which it flows ; but few people care for the '*In Memoriam*' unless they have known somewhat of the grief it portrays, and the comfort of hope of which it speaks."

Beatrice sighed, gazing pensively on the ground. Presently she raised her head ; and their eyes met. "Are *you* a poet?" she asked, with childlike simplicity.

"If it be true," replied Jebson, peering into his interlocutor's face with almost stöical sternness, but without a trace of cynicism either in look or tone of voice—"If it be true that '*poets are men whom Tragedy has kissed upon the heart,*' as some one has said, then I am—a poet !"

Again she sighed, audibly ; but did not speak.

"Of course," he resumed, "that is but one of many definitions. It is the one which appeals to me."

"I prefer the one which says that '*poets are those who love*'—I forget the words," she protested.

"You are perhaps thinking of those lines of Bailey's in '*Festus*,' as first published in 1839—

'Poets are all who love, who feel great truths
And tell them. And the truth of truths is love.'"

At this stage Beatrice adroitly endeavoured to divert the conversation into a more mirthful channel ;

and, laughing hilariously, said: "If Tragedy has kissed *you* on the heart, Mr. Jebson, you look but little sad over it!"

"I am not conscious of wearing any signs of my sorrow in my face," he replied, smiling. "These are secretly and sacredly hid in the deep recesses of the soul. But there are times and occasions when they will involuntarily vibrate in mystic sympathy with responsive influences outside. But the ancient Britons, you know," he added—casting his glance across the field of hay towards the woods near by—"used to say that three essentials of poetic genius are: 'An eye to see Nature; a heart to feel Nature; and a resolute courage that dares to follow Nature!'"

"That being so," suggested the woman, suddenly turning round, taking a rapid lead, and beckoning to Dante, "we will 'follow *Nature*' as far as that oak tree, where there is a quiet little nook in which we can rest a while and listen to what more Nature has to say."

CHAPTER II.

“Satan gave thereat his tail
A twirl of admiration;
For he thought of his daughter War
And her suckling babe ‘Taxation.’”

—*Southey*.

SWIFTLY borne upon the wings of the imagination and glancing over the mighty world of seething human atoms from which at least two lonely souls had thus for a brief space contrived to detach themselves, at no crisis in the world's history could it have been said more truly that everything was in a state of flux. Omens, grim and ugly, were everywhere discernible, on the anxious faces of people in the streets or travelling in train, tram, or omnibus, no less than in the portentous captions, ominous intelligence, and catchpenny placards of scaremonger newspapers.

Rumours, half suppressed but sufficiently articulate to hide none of their sinister significance, permeated the very air, vibrating through millions of human nerves in town, village, and hamlet; exerting a strangely subtle influence upon mind, heart, and outlook such as none but the callously indifferent could either avoid or shake off; and conjuring up in the imagination a vision of suffering and a spectre of misery realistic beyond the power of words to describe. These, as we have seen, had penetrated even the isolated corner which, by an inexplicable coincidence, the two tired friends had, unknown to each other, chosen as their temporary haven of rest.

Nor could there be any misinterpreting of these

omens and rumours. A rupture between nations was imminent ; a breach of the world's peace, involving Great Britain and other nations in a gigantic European War, was now seen to be inevitable. The war-cloud was rapidly gathering, and must soon burst with effects destructive and terrible, and anguish and suffering unprecedented in history.

Wars, cruel, devastating, and wasteful, there had been before, and many ; but mankind is slow to learn the lessons of the Past. "Give me the money that has been spent on war," wrote a famous economist, "and I will purchase every foot of land on the globe ; I will clothe every man, woman, and child in an attire of which kings and queens would be proud ; I will build a school-house on every hill-side and in every valley over the whole earth ; I will build an academy in every town, a college in every State, and fill it with able professors ; I will crown every hill with a place of worship consecrated to the promulgation of the gospel of Peace ; I will support in every pulpit an able teacher of Righteousness, so that on every Sabbath morning the chime on one hill should answer to the chime on another around the earth's wide circumference, and the voice of prayer and the song of praise should ascend like a universal holocaust to heaven !"

Nor can mankind hope to alter the course of the moral world so long as its own heart remains corrupt. Says old Cadoc the Wise : Poverty causes exertion ; exertion causes prosperity ; prosperity brings wealth ; wealth causes pride ; pride causes contention ; contention causes war ; war brings poverty ; poverty brings peace ; the peace of poverty causes exertion, and exertion brings round the same cycle as before.

CHAPTER III

“Under an old oak tree, whose boughs were massed with age, and high tops bald with antiquity.”

—*Shakespeare.*

IT did not take many seconds for the artist and the litterateur to reach the indicated spot and settle themselves down in the rustic nook under the oak tree; but what ensued for a brief space may be described as a veritable Quakers' meeting.

Dante Jebson rested his elbow on his knee and placed his chin in his hand; while his fair friend had her gaze fixed on the ferrule of her sunshade, the movements of which indicated the working of her will and the trend of her thoughts as, with her improvised drawing instrument, she quaintly outlined the form and features of a “mere man” in the dust at her feet.

Presently the promptings of the spirit moved the woman gently to break the silence. The point of the sunshade moved quicker, and the figure formed in the dust assumed a more phantastic shape, as she said somewhat vaguely, her gaze still unshifted: “Which do you prefer, Mr. Jebson, your own company or that of a companion?”

“Much depends,” he replied, raising his head, “upon the agreeability or otherwise of the ‘companion.’ I must confess, Miss Harlington, that I like my *own* company perhaps more than I ought; although at times I like to have a *companion*, especially if the

companion's talk is pleasant and mine does not bore my companion. In any case, you see, an element of selfishness predominates."

"As with all you *men!*" she affirmed, in a tone all the more cruel because it was gentle.

"I can answer only for myself," he humbly protested.

"What would *you* do, then," she inquired, lifting up her head and raising her eyebrows with feminine dignity, "supposing you were staying as I do in a place full of veritable bores—males and females—without a vestige of intellectual training and destitute of a trace of soul-culture—can say not a word on the burning topic of women's suffrage, and have not enough intelligence even to discuss the merits of the latest craze in novels? What would you do in such a case?"

"I should bear it while I must and forsake such company as much as I could," was Jebson's philosophic reply.

"In the house at the Springs where I am staying," proceeded Beatrice, "all the conversation of the boarders, when not about the weather and personal trivialities of a gossipy character, is indicative of their grave anxiety about their money and property, for most of them appear to hold shares and stocks and interests in German concerns, and they are terribly afraid of losing their money in the event of a war between England and Germany."

"Human nature, I suppose!" observed Dante, dryly.

“Human nature perverted,” she objected, with vigour.

“I tell you,” said Dante, fixing his gaze solemnly upon the ground, “I tell you, my Friend, that at the present moment a vast majority of mankind are the slavish devotees of a deity who will mark his approval of their devotion by swallowing them up. Mammon has them already in his deadly grip. Everywhere it is Mammon that rules in this hour of the world’s danger. This god takes its stand upon the past and the established. Mammon, with its hundred hands and Argus eyes; Mammon, with its bristling ports and smoking furnaces, its countless acres of cotton and corn, rules everywhere! Even Religion is swayed by its mighty sceptre. Education, business, commerce, art, poetry, and literature, all pander to it and bow down before it. The clergy of the established Church, and the parsons and officials of every sect in the land, go down upon their hands and knees and worship it! Mammon, with its sceptre of iron and fire, controls the earth. Money, rationally used, may be an incentive to much good; but it should be man’s servant, not his master. Yet at this moment the money-god rules with its iron will in the mighty halls of legislation; it draws or sheaths the sword of battle; it knots the slave-whip for the scourge of millions; it rents brothels; it keeps open the drink-shops; it widens the capaciousness of hell; it heaps up grave-yards until the dead ooze through the soil; it crams our towns with vice until it plagues the atmosphere.”

The speaker stopped, and turned his glance towards his friend. She was silent.

“Everywhere money is the ideal—the ideal in

education, in business, in religion. People talk of the *possibility* of a great European war. Why, war must inevitably come in the trail of greed, extravagance, luxury, and this mad worship of the god Mammon. War, I say, must and will come, unless the people learn the repeated lesson of history, and learn it quickly and well. Perhaps now it is too late! For I tell you, my Friend, that there is in God's universe a higher scale of values than that of pounds, shillings, and pence. There is *absolute* Right; and, before this, all conventional falsehoods must shrivel and all idolatry shrink. Let money-grabbers quake, and interest-mongers tremble."

Again the speaker stopped to breathe; and Beatrice Harlington sighed a sigh of relief.

"Conventionality is strong, and policy is strong," resumed Dante, after a moment's silence. "But the love of money is even stronger. It is the root of all that is low and despicable. It is the most deadly of the deadly sins; and, like a swart Cyclops, ever busy, it forges no unskilled weapons whereby to smite its million victims at the opportune moment!"

"What a prophet of evil you are, Mr. Jebson," commented the lady. "But to come back now to my diggings—there is, however, one old gent, who, if not particularly interesting, has at least the merit of being eccentric. While the other folk indulge in selfish and frantic speculations as to how to safeguard their financial affairs if war breaks out, this old boy hears their foolish wailings and wild forebodings with the same indifference or contempt, as Hazlitt I think puts it, that a cynic who has married a jilt or a termagant listens to the rhapsodies of lovers."

"A pretty phrase!" commented Dante, with a hearty laugh.

"But," she continued, "if anything in the conversation happens to touch directly on the war-threats of the Kaiser and the military desigus of his advisers, that curious old gent suddenly waxes loquacious, although, as I have said, he *is* certainly eccentric. A few of the people at the house seem to regard him with awe, as I imagine people used to look upon the 'prophets' and 'seers' in olden times. Indeed his general aspect is suggestive of a 'prophet,' with long white hair and a flowing white beard—but he has an uncanny glare in his eyes. The moment he speaks the boarders stare at him in wonder, with their mouths wide open as if anxious to swallow all his words."

"He must be either a fanatic or a genius, then?" said Dante, indifferently.

"A bit of both, I should say," rejoined Beatrice, in a tone betraying a touch of contempt. "I don't believe you *can* find the one without the other. But I was going to say that what attracted my attention to him at breakfast this morning was that he seemed wonderfully conversant with German ideas, thoughts, and plans."

The effect of the last remark was to rouse Dante's interest. "Did he say anything about *Kultur*?" he queried.

"Not that I noticed; though he gabbled volubly but incoherently about German 'philosophy,' mentioning Bernhardi, Treitschke, Nietzsche, Harnack, Eucken, and other German names now in the fashion."

“Is *he* a German, think you, Miss Harlington?”

“I don’t know; but he has an American accent in his speech—if speech you can call it! He bored me terribly, although he seemed to hold the other listeners spellbound while he expatiated on what he called ‘visions of coming wonders.’ I noticed, too, that as he spoke he gazed steadily into the palm of his hand, in which I imagine he held a small object concealed from our view.”

“Do you think he was bent upon mesmerising you?” ventured Dante, with a wicked look at his friend.

“Mesmerising *me*?”

“I mean, of course, the company as a whole.”

“He would never mesmerise *me*!” affirmed Beatrice, now smiling again. “My impression is that either the poor man’s mind was hopelessly rambling or else the rogue was deliberately intent upon mystifying the simple idiots around him—whom he certainly *did* seem to hypnotise! He seemed to me like one in a trance, and more than once muttered strange words about *the crucified rose*! And as he finished his ranting I observed that he stealthily attached something to his watch-chain—perhaps it was the object he had concealed in his hand.”

“Do you know his name?” Dante inquired, eagerly.

“One of the company who seems very friendly with him addressed him as Dr. Grossritter, or something like it”

“That sounds Germanic?”

“ I suppose it does! They say that he has been at the Springs for some time, although they never see him except at the breakfast table. He is supposed to be staying at the hotel, but comes to the boarding-house for breakfast—to meet his friend, they say.”

For a moment there was silence; the man resuming his meditative attitude, while the woman again began to describe a human figure in the dust.

“ Have you ever heard of the Rosicrucians, Miss Harlington ?”

He put the query tentatively, cautiously; for his curiosity had been aroused to a tingling pitch. The strange personality of Grossritter, as described by Beatrice, interested him immensely. He thought to himself that he would like to get in touch with him, especially if he were one of the Rosicrucians.

“ Rosicrucians !” she exclaimed. Why, I don’t recollect. But that sounds Germanic, too, doesn’t it ?”

“ Not particularly; although of course the thing it stands for has a decidedly Teutonic flavour. The Rosicrucians were a queer lot !”

“ A religious sect were they ?”

“ Of a sort, yes. A sect of mystical enthusiasts—perhaps not always actuated by honest motives.”

“ Oh, *do* tell me something about them, Mr. Jebson !” implored Beatrice. “ I revel in discovering what bits of knowledge are available about these out-of-the-way cults of the mystic arts.”

“ I should enjoy it immensely,” said the lecturer on things in general, “ if there were time. It would

take me too long *now*. Perhaps we shall have an opportunity for another chat before returning to town. We had better be going. The sun is setting, and it will be almost dark before we reach the Springs. If we *do* happen to meet in the course of our rustic rambles to-morrow, I *will* tell you something about the Rosicrucians and their mystic ways. In the meantime, perhaps by some innocent feminine artifice you can contrive a plan whereby to corner old Grossritter and induce him to let you examine the charm attached to his watch-chain. It would be an interesting little adventure, and might possibly result in rewarding your curiosity—and mine, too!"

CHAPTER IV

“New-made honour doth forget men’s names.”

—*Shakespeare.*

HERE and there, even in suburban London, still survives many a picturesque old mansion whose style of architecture is quaintly reminiscent of the Elizabethan period, or of periods yet more remote. Some of these ancient dwelling-places are indeed little known save to the enthusiastic antiquary or the diligent searcher among the musty records of the past who may be in quest of suitable material upon which to play in the compilation of a local history. For as a rule they are hidden away from public gaze amid clusters of gigantic elms, oaks, or sycamores, and are not infrequently surrounded by huge walls suggestive of his Majesty’s penitentiaries.

Such a mansion was Späherschloss, as the Old Hall, situated in a populous western suburb, had in modern times come to be called. Of its existence, however, much less of its history, ancient or modern, not one in a thousand of the seething masses of mankind who spent more than half their time in its immediate vicinity seemed to be aware; while among the immense processions of human beings of all sorts and conditions who daily traversed the semi-rural thoroughfare whence lies the approach thereto and from which entrance therein might, under certain conditions, be effected, not one in a million probably had

ever noticed the name of the place which, until recently, used to be visibly inscribed on a brass plate fastened to those stately iron gates.

Nor yet was it known, save perhaps to a select few, that the owner and principal inhabitant of that interesting old mansion was one Karl von Wachsam, a naturalised British subject and an ex-civil servant retired on a handsome pension granted to him by a generous English Government in recognition of faithful service rendered to King and country. Only a month or two prior to the time of which we are now writing—namely the first of August, nineteen fourteen—this worthy had figured among the newly-created Knights in the King's Birthday Honours List; after which, in the commendable spirit of that type of patriotism which Dr. Johnson somewhat cruelly defines as the "last refuge of a scoundrel," he had magnanimously adopted a more anglicised name, being now known in the higher circles of society as Sir Carolius Wideawake.

It was opposite the private entrance to the grounds wherein stood Sir Carolius's suburban residence that, on the day in question, two typical British workmen were engaged in road-repairing, and incidentally discussing topics of current interest and of more or less national importance.

"I says, Bill, old boy," said Bob Clinker, addressing his fellow-workmen, "I wonder wot the deuce they're carting in an' alit o' that there show!"

"I knows nout and I cares nout, mate!" was Bill Aspinall's indifferent reply.

"But aint yer noticed as how them there bloomin'

we-ekles is goin' in an' aht all day long wi' all sorts o' mater'l and wires an' wubbish an' that? P'raps they're longin' t' length o' the undergrahnd railway!"

"You've 'it it, mate, I'll be blow'd!" exclaimed Bill. "I'll bet yer a brass'un they're makin' a new tupp'ny toob or sumn't!"

Of course the present narrator, who happened to catch that snippet of conversation as he hurriedly passed by, knew different. At least this much he knew—that for several weeks past considerable alterations and elaborate modern "improvements" had been in process of completion in the interior of Sir Carolius Wideawake's residence. He knew also that for this important purpose the new Knight had been privileged by the British Government with special facilities to procure the services of competent foreign engineers, electricians, and attendant labourers—it being understood that the work to be accomplished was of such a delicate nature as not to be under any circumstances entrusted to Englishmen.

So that, as our record of subsequent events will go to prove, neither Bob Clinker nor Bill Aspinall was quite accurate in his conjecture.

CHAPTER V

"The heart of the woods, I feel it, beating, beating
afar ;

In the glamour and gloom of the night, in the light
of the rosy star,

For the heart of the woods is the heart of the world,
and the Heart of Eternity,

Ay, and the burning passionate Heart, of the Heart
in you and me."

WENDING his way towards his temporary quarters at Woodville Springs on that never-to-be-forgotten evening, Jebson revolved in his mind the curious recital of the breakfast-table incident to which he had just listened. Try as he would, he could not rid himself of the haunting idea that some mystery surrounded the personality of that individual with the American accent and the German name. Who could he be? What might be his motive? Then there was that allusion to the *crucified rose*—it gave rise to conjectures as phantastic as they were sinister. Could it be possible that this man was a Rosicrucian? Was Grossritter his real patronym, or merely an assumed cognomen? If the former, it was uncommon; if the latter, it was at least suggestive of megalomania. Perhaps after all, the old man was only a self-deluded religious fanatic of one of the new-fangled occult schools which from time to time spring up in Germany and America, while his intentions might be quite innocent; and yet it was not unlikely that he was one of those unscrupulous charlatans who infest these fashionable health resorts for no other purpose than to prey upon the credulity of simple-minded but wealthy folk.

Such were some of the conundrums which Jebson propounded to himself after he had bade good-night to his fair companion. Truth to tell, his interest in the mysterious individual in question was rapidly developing into inexplicable, perhaps groundless, suspicion. Why did the old man use that phrase about the *crucified rose*, of which no one ever heard save in the symbolic jargon of the Rosicrucians? At all events, reflected Jebson, it might afford a little diversion to observe the old freak's movements, and, if possible, discover whether he be a Rosicrucian or something worse in that guise.

Reaching his apartment, Jebson was greeted by his hostess with—"Very dreadful, sir, this talk of war!"

He nodded assent. Although, as we saw, he had vowed not to bother himself with newspapers during his brief holiday, he was now seized by an irresistible impulse ruthlessly to rescind that resolution; but, finding no newspaper near at hand at the moment, he donned his cap, and, hungry though he was after his rustic ramble, slipped outside again.

It was nearing ten o'clock; the newspaper shop was closed, as most other shops were; but the band was still playing in the Springs recreation ground. He walked into the hotel saloon, ordered wine and sandwiches, and picked up a newspaper. He glanced rapidly at the headlines, but so far as he could gather therefrom there was nothing but what he already knew—that the situation was "very grave."

Around numerous tables were groups of apparently well-to-do people, smoking cigarettes or cigars between

quaffs of various liquors or wine, and vigorously discussing the portentous events foreshadowed in the morning papers, and, as he inferred, emphasised later in the day by wire messages to visitors at the Springs. Jebson seated himself in a vacant chair at a small table where a tall, clean-shaven, close-cropped robust-looking man was puffing leisurely at a big cigar and jotting down figures, as it would appear, in a pocket-book.

The string band could just be heard as it struck the familiar strains of the National Anthem. Conversation gradually ceased, the various little groups dispersed, until only Jebson and the tall man were left.

“Great things stirring I guess!” commented the latter, laconically, holding his cigar between his fingers and looking at it admiringly.

“So it would seem!” confirmed Jebson.

“We in the States have been expecting big things to happen in Europe! Over there, we read the signs of the times!”

“You are an American citizen, then?”

“So, with interests in Europe,” replied he, now staring inquisitively into the face of his interlocutor.

Jebson did not feel comfortable. He said nothing. There was a glare in the man’s eyes he did not like. So he affected to read the newspaper.

The tall man rose to go; and as he did so, unwittingly let drop some papers on the floor. He at once snatched them up, and walked out. In a moment Jebson flung the paper aside, and prepared to follow. His eye caught sight of a visiting card on the floor at

his feet. It bore the name LETTIM DUPREM, with no address. He looked at it with some curiosity. Turning it over, his curiosity was enhanced tenfold, on seeing on the other side, drawn in pencil, a number of strange hieroglyphics whose significance he was unable to interpret. He put the card into his waistcoat pocket somewhat mechanically, and went outside.

Woodville is a small town of fewer than a thousand inhabitants, and renowned for the medicinal springs therein discovered in 1820. It consists of one street of about half-a-mile long, lined with various shops, a few hotels, a post-office, a branch bank, and of course the celebrated baths ; while scattered about in the vicinity are numerous villas of various sizes and types wherein visitors and health seekers and idlers of all sorts are accommodated at charges to suit the height of their dignity and the depth of their purses. Jebson had chosen one of the humblest, and therefore cheapest, on the extreme outskirts of the "town." Instead, however, of wending his steps in the direction thereof, he made for the opposite road leading into the heart of the rural district, without realising where he was until he scented the odoriferous pine woods for which the neighbourhood is famous. Roused somewhat from his semi-reverie, he slackened his pace, then stood still, hesitating.

It was a glorious night, and all idea of slumber had forsaken him. To see him then, however, one might have inferred that he was indulging in a somnambulistic exercise. Presently he resumed his steps, mechanically, hardly conscious of time or place. Into the woods he entered, walking for some considerable distance along a wondrous avenue until he

espied what proved to be a rustic bench. He sat down, rapt in thought, deep in meditation. Silence reigned—silence still as the grave—with a welcome touch of cooling summer air breathing gently amid the ample foliage. As he uplifted his gaze out of the darkness below, his eyes drank in with avidity the thin streaks of sweet light which the pale moon sent down between the huge branches of the majestic pines; while here and there also he caught the glimmer of a twinkling star. The scene filled him with awe and wonder such as he had seldom before experienced. Moreover, out of that awful silence he thought he heard the sounds of myriad voices, assuring him that whatever untoward events might happen in the immediate future to change the course of human history, the marvellous course of Nature and the solemn order of the stars would be quite unaffected and remain unchanged.

While in this state of reverent meditation, his eyes still upraised, he beheld a woman's face, divinely beautiful as it was sweetly human, looking steadily and benignantly into his own. A soft ray of the moon's light fell full upon it, though Jebson could see nothing else but the features. Yet he was by no means startled. He closed his eyes and smiled, thinking thereby to visualise still more definitely what he imagined to be merely the phantom features of one whose facial image was but dimly reflected in the mirror of his own soul; but instantly the face became blurred and indistinct. Again he opened his eyes, and again he beheld that wondrous face, vivid and real, radiant with light, thrilling with beauty.

A like predicament—seeing the full orb of a

woman's face thus illumined in the surrounding darkness by a solitary ray of moonlight which penetrated the black shadows of the stately pine trees in the solemn silence of the night—would have been more than enough to unnerve an average man of flimsy moral fibre. But Dante Jebson was made of no base mettle.

He heaved a deep breath, gazed at the "vision" before him, and into that "vision" he doubtless unconsciously projected his own thoughts.

"Ah!" he silently mused; "it is the wondrous countenance of my departed mother, for a sound of whose still voice and a touch of whose vanished hand I have longed and yearned and prayed these five-and-twenty years! Or can it be a vision of my sweet lost child, now grown into radiant womanhood?"

With a sudden impulse he turned his glance away as if waking from his reverie, wondering whether he was in the lonely darkness of Hell or merely crossing the river of Death into the Land of Light. The shudder was no sooner upon him than it was again gone as he once more peered into that gentle face and responded to the inquiry of those lustrous eyes. Instantly all doubt was dissipated, and he was possessed by a sense of holy love and unspeakable happiness.

For perhaps a second, which to Dante Jebson seemed like an hour, the face remained immobile, but presently he thought he perceived a slight twitching of the muscles as though it were about to smile. Thus encouraged, he again heaved a deep breath, and said in a half-articulate but imploring tone—

“Ghost or spirit—vision, apparition, or phantom—speak to me !”

“Comrade ! Be not disturbed ! I am neither a dead ghost nor a disembodied spirit ! I am a woman—and your Friend ! Be not dismayed—you are not alone !”

And Dante Jebson leapt to his feet and saluted. For the voice which thus greeted him was indeed the voice of a Friend clothed with human flesh, a beating heart and warm blood coursing through her veins. Nor will any reader of these pages be slow to solve the problem who from bitter experience knows somewhat of the real meaning of “aloneness” and its accompanying pangs of soul-hunger.

* * * *

“About those Rosicrucians?” Beatrice queried, expectantly. “Who were they? Where did they originate? What did they teach, practise, profess, or pretend?”

“Oh, yes !” he replied, collecting himself. “For the moment I had forgotten that matter. Since we parted last night—let me see ! Was it last night?”

“It was but a few hours ago,” Beatrice assured him.

“Well, since we parted—it seems to me a very long time ago !—something else has absorbed me. And now I think of it, I have a pretty little stratagem which you may practise on that German-American you spoke about. If you take this card with you and copy the symbols at the back of it and ask him if he can

translate them, it will serve as an excuse to get into conversation with the man. Then you can perhaps induce him to let you examine that jewel—" Dante let out that word accidentally—"I mean that little affair attached to his watch-chain." So saying he handed the woman the visiting card that he had picked up at the hotel, which she took and deposited in her hand-bag, saying she would look at it when she got into the light of her apartment.

"But I have come to hear about the Rosicrucians," she reminded him, speaking in a tone of sweet impatience.

"To be sure!" he assented; adding, after a moment's reflection, "it occurs to me that the mere asking of such questions as those which you have just put is not without some significance at the present time; while the answers to them might, in capable hands, be rendered no less entertaining than informing. But let me see! How can I begin?"

"Oh," said Beatrice, "suppose yourself delivering a public lecture. I'll be your chairman, and by shutting your eyes you can easily imagine that these surrounding trees are your audience."

"The ancient Egyptians," began the lecturer, "are said to have worshipped, among a host of other deities, one whom they named Thoth, the god of eloquence and letters, the inventor of writing and philosophy. The Romans had a god named Mercury, the patron of commerce and gain. In Greek mythology Hermes is the god of wit and cunning, the messenger of heaven, the conductor of souls to the nether world, and withal the fabled inventor of astrology and alchemy—the arts

respectively of reading the signs of the stars and of the transmutation of metals. The point is that the classical poets of antiquity appear to regard as identical the Egyptian Thoth, the Roman Mercury, and the Greek Hermes."

"But what in the name of Hermes has that to do with the subject of your lecture?" demanded the woman in the chair.

"To the last-mentioned god," the lecturer proceeded, heedless of the interruption, "we are indebted for some useful words—at all events some useful words are derived from his name—not only in connection with chemistry, which has superseded alchemy, but also with natural philosophy, especially astronomy, which in the world of accredited science has happily supplanted astrology."

"Why don't you come to the topic?" again the 'Chairman' demanded. "Never mind the padding."

"The alchemists—as those enthusiasts in former times were designated who claimed to possess the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, and imagined that they could turn common metals into precious gold—appear to have deemed themselves legitimate descendants of the god Hermes; hence they were generally called Hermetic Philosophers. We have inherited nothing from these alchemists save their terminology, which meets us at many turns; yet numerous were the schools of philosophy in vogue in ancient times as well as during the middle ages which were classified in that category."

"But when are you coming to the Rosicrucians?
. I beg pardon. Go on!"

“ It is into the tenets, theories, practices, and pretences of *one* of the more *modern* of these various schools of Hermetic Philosophers that we are now to direct our inquiries There, Miss Chairman, how would that do for an introductory?”

There came no answer! The figure at his side had vanished as mysteriously as it had come. And—save for the young rabbits gambolling about his feet, and birds twittering in the bushes, and squirrels desporting themselves in the high branches, through which signs were visible that the dawn was breaking—save for these, Dante Jebson was alone!

CHAPTER VI

“ More, much more, the heart may feel
Than pen may write or lip reveal.”

—*Praed.*

AROUND the breakfast-table at the boarding-house that morning there was no particularly animated discussion, certainly no eccentric gesticulations on the part of Dr. Grossritter such as those of which Beatrice Harlington had been a bored but silent witness on the day after her arrival at Woodville Springs. Of course the old “prophet” was there; but he was reticent, and seemed to manifest no interest in anything save perhaps the occasional whispers of a lady guest who sat next to him. With that personality he gave one the impression of being on familiar terms.

Beatrice sat on the opposite side of the table; and more than once she cast a stealthy glance across the boards in the hope of catching a chance sight of the mystic charm which she imagined must be hanging to the old gentleman’s watch-chain, closely to examine which the longing was growing upon her.

Breakfast over, most of the company dispersed and adjourned to their various rooms. As Grossritter was in the act of rising, Beatrice noticed, or thought she noticed, a glaring red sparkle—not upon his breast, but on one of his fingers. Curious, she mused, that she had not seen it before, for it must have been a precious gem set in a ring! However, the great man walked out of the room without a word, accompanied

by his lady friend—obviously much younger than he ; his daughter perhaps ?

Armed with the copy she had carefully made of the hieroglyphics at the back of the card given to her by Jebson during their midnight sojourn in the pine woods, Beatrice's eagerness for an opportunity to have a word with the eccentric man was growing insistent like that of an eagle longing to attack its prey. For a moment, however, she deemed it prudent to stay behind, lest she might draw more attention to herself or her movements than would prove desirable. Then she rose and took up the track ; but the object of her quest was invisible. On inquiring cautiously of a servant who happened to be at the front door, all the information she was able to elicit was that "he had no doubt gone over to the Springs Hotel," where he was presumed to stay. Thither she hurried, moved by that womanly impulse which will not easily be baffled.

"No, Miss," she was told, "there is no one of that name here !"

Baffled she was, then ! And for a second she felt the sting of the chagrine. But Beatrice Harlington was not a woman to worry about the miscarriage of a projected joke. There were greater disappointments in life than that ; and these she had learned by experience to meet philosophically. So, she soon dismissed all thought of the abortive little adventure from her mind, and sauntered aimlessly towards the railway station for a morning paper. Having procured a copy of the *Zodiac*, the only daily paper there available so early, she sat on a platform seat of a somewhat rude construction and scanned the newspaper

contents, taking no special heed of the small crowd of waiting passengers. Presently a train for London came in, and suddenly her attention was drawn to a little party including a tall, clean-shaven man of middle age, and two lackeys carrying his baggage. As the tall man was boarding the train, he glared at Beatrice with a cynical, sardonic leer, while a brilliant red lustre sparkled from his hand, precisely the same as that of which she had caught a transient glimpse from Grossritter's finger at the boarding-house but half-an-hour previously! The coincidence did but deepen the mystery of the former personality, so that after all she found it absolutely impossible to banish him altogether from her thoughts. Now she really *did* feel a bit annoyed at the failure of her scheme.

Jumping to her feet after the train had gone out of sight, Beatrice quickly returned to her apartment, snatched up her sketching paraphernalia, and rapidly made off into the beautiful country. After tramping several miles along the high road, as lonely as it was dusty, she came in view of an extensive heath, across which there was a track which looked as if at one time it had been a public footpath; but it gradually grew more indistinct. Still she trampled joyously through the full-bloomed and sweetly-scented heather, until presently she espied in the distance a solitary building, nestling half concealed in a coppice. It was a gamekeeper's cottage; and when she got sufficiently close to it, she settled down to sketch.

Two or three hours had passed without a sign of the near existence of any other living human being, when an elderly woman of the rural matronly type emerged from the cottage and signified to some

scattered chickens that she was about to scatter food for them. Seeing the artist at work, the hospitable landlady went up to her and politely inquired if she would care to step inside and rest a while—a kindly thought which Beatrice Harlington was quick to appreciate, testifying her gratitude by presenting the homely woman with one of her beautiful sketches of the cottage and its surroundings.

They were sitting in a cosy little parlour waiting for the kettle to boil and chatting pleasantly like real old friends, Beatrice expressing her delight with the quiet peacefulness and beauty of the place—although she soon realised that rumours of an impending war had reached there, too!—when a terrier that was securely chained in the backyard gave a sharp bark, and almost simultaneously there was a gentle rat-tat at the front door. To this the good lady of the house at once responded.

“If it is not too much to ask, Madam, would you kindly give me a glass of milk or make me a cup of tea?” The speaker’s clothes were dusty, and his visage betokened fatigue.

“With pleasure, sir, if you have no objection to company! Come in, sir!” And Dante Jebson was ushered into the little parlour.

“Mr. Jebson!” announced Beatrice, in an unconcerned, matter-of-course tone of voice, nor manifesting the slightest sign of discomfiture at this unexpected appearance.

“Oh, I see, your husband then?” exclaimed the good landlady. “How fortunate, sir! You have

come just in time !” And she made a graceful curtsy as she stepped into the kitchen, pulling the parlour door behind her.

Jebson indulged a hearty laugh. Beatrice did not seem to have noticed the joke ; she was too busily adjusting some of her belongings. The landlady—who probably remains unenlightened on the one point to this day—took things as they seemed ; cheerfully attended to the operations of the kettle, and then proceeded to arrange a dainty display of the table. Visitors did not often reach that spot, and she felt honoured in having guests.

For some minutes the two friends sat silently, feeling neither constraint nor awkwardness, soul communing with soul. It was but a part of the natural order of things !

“I trust you had a pleasant rest last night, Mr. Jebson,” said Beatrice at last, pouring out the tea.

“Well, yes,” he replied, with some hesitation. “I think I *did* sleep a little !”

“I am *so* glad ! You looked a bit tired when you left the oak-tree and I am afraid I made you talk too much !”

“Oh, no !” he said, steadying his gaze on the ceiling.

The truth is that he felt somewhat perplexed at the question. He made an effort to re-visualise the scene in the woods, wondering whether she *really* had been there listening to his impromptu opening of the imaginary public lecture. . . . Surely it wasn't a

dream ! It could not have been a mere "vision !" It was all so vivid, so realistic ! And if he *did* sleep any, it must have been after she had departed from the woods !

"A penny for your thoughts !" she tantalised.

"I was only thinking if I had unwittingly offended you by something I might have said," he replied, tentatively if not timidly, "that you should have vanished so suddenly before hearing the end of my 'introductory.'"

Beatrice instantly grasped the situation, and seemed now bent on a little joke at the perplexed man's expense. "You promised, you remember," she said, mischievously, "that you would, some other time, tell me something about those Rosicrucians. It was beginning to get dark in the nook, you remember !"

He tried not to look stupid, though he was certainly a little mystified ! *Had* it been only a dream, then ? Or could that one small glass of wine have 'got into his head' ? Impossible ! He would put it to her point blank ! And yet, perhaps he had better not ! It would make him look as ridiculous as he felt ! He must try to divert the conversation ! What could he say ?

How long Dante Jebson would have remained in this ruminating predicament had not Beatrice Harlington saved him the trouble, is hardly worth speculation. The point is that she *did*.

"But why do you look so sombre, Comrade ?" she asked him, almost seriously, with significant emphasis on the last word.

The effect was electrical. The magic of that word did it! Instantly, Dante Jebson was his real self again. He was now doubly assured, clearly convinced, that he could neither have been drunk without drinking nor had dreamt without sleeping. The problem was solved!

"But why did you go?" he inquired, bluntly but pleasantly.

"You were so very sleepy, you see," she assured him; "and no sooner had you actually gone to sleep than I noiselessly slipped off so that you might enjoy a peaceful slumber."

Slumber or no slumber, Beatrice had *really* been there—there was now no mystery about it;—in the woods—that very night—and told him she was his *Friend* and he her *Comrade*!

"You did not hear the end of my 'introductory'?" he queried, laughing joyously.

"On the contrary, Comrade, I made a mental note of your last word before you dozed off, so that I know precisely where you may now, *please*, resume the thread of your 'discourse.' Your nocturnal introductory was rather long, and—tedious, if you will excuse my saying so."

"Public lectures, like popular books, need padding, you know, Miss Harlington."

"I wish people who deliver lectures or write books would ignore 'introductorys' and the padding, and come to their subjects straight away."

"Yet that is not the way you paint pictures, is it?"

With no background or foreground and surrounding details and little touches, your efforts would hardly be artistic, but mere skeletons, with neither animation nor poetry—nothing to enliven them. And as in the culinary preparation of—let us say—a pheasant or a turkey, it is the dressing and the stuffing that lend piquancy to the palate and help the process of digestion, so in the delivery of lectures and the making of books it is often the padding that is the most interesting part, while telling illustrations aid the memory and assist the assimilation of facts.”

“What is to be the title of your next book?”

“‘The Psychology of a Town Gossip; or, The Transformation of Satan.’ Or, perhaps still more appropriate, ‘The Conversion of the Devil.’”

“Good gracious!”

“Neither ‘good’ nor ‘gracious’ will probably be the verdict of the critical gossips in the newspapers and elsewhere.”

“And do you really think your writings will *live*?”

“I *do* write to live, certainly!” was the literary man’s evasive reply. In his eye there was a sly twinkle which the artist affected not to see.

Nevertheless, Beatrice’s comment was, “I see! . . . And,” she added, “a vital point! . . . But why don’t you write a book about the Rosicrucians? To know something about *them* would surely be more edifying and enlightening than to gossip about Satan or any other distinguished personage, imaginary or real. Of course the conversion of the Devil is a consummation devoutly to be desired, but any thought of its

possibility may safely be deferred at least a few thousand years. Rosicrucians, I presume, are real, not merely imaginary, and *their* ways must be particularly interesting. But gossip appeals only to a very low and vulgar type of mind."

"What you say, my Friend, is true enough, no doubt. Unfortunately the evolution of human intelligence is a very slow process, and we have not yet arrived at a stage in our so-called civilisation when 'edification' or 'enlightenment' counts for much in the estimation of the generality of the inhabitants of our little island. There is very little desire for any kind of useful knowledge—only an unhealthy hankering for what is called 'pleasure' or mere amusement; so that the rare few who deem it their mission in life to endeavour to 'instruct' their fellows in the more vital and essential things may convey their lessons only in minute homeopathic doses, as it were, stealthily hidden in sugar coatings agreeable to the palate of the average human-animal."

"Mr. Dante Jebson, I wish you would not talk poetically, or in parables!"

"Miss Beatrice Harlington, I beg your pardon! I will try to speak in plain, unpoetic prose. When war is declared, as I apprehend it soon will be, the public are not likely to be eagerly interested either in imaginary Devils or real Rosicrucians! And I guess there will soon be a more serious business calling upon us men than to write books ourselves or to read the books of others either!"

"In the Army they will need only strong young

men who can fight, not——” The sentence was left unfinished.

“At first, perhaps. If war breaks out between Britain and Germany, before it is finished the nation will need the older fogeys as well as the younger men.”

“But, seriously, Comrade, I don't believe there *will* or *can* be war after all the Christian preaching of these twenty centuries.”

“But nobody believes in the religion of Jesus *now!*”

“In any case I think it would be ‘awfully interesting’—as shop girls and society people say—to have a book on the Rosicrucians, especially as you seem so reluctant to tell *me* anything about them!”

“I am not at all reluctant, Miss Harlington! I will begin at once, if you wish it. I may have to get back to London on Monday morning, and shall perhaps not have another opportunity!”

“Nonsense!” was the coaxing objection. “Take your needed rest, pleasantly and profitably. It is foolish to anticipate events that may never happen. But you are returning to Woodville to-night, I suppose? *I* have arranged with the good landlady to stay here over night. If we happen to come across each other's path again, you will then tell me about the Rosicrucians? . . .”

And Dante Jebson traversed the lonely road in the company of his own thoughts, the evening twilight having deepened into night long ere he reached the end of his journey.

CHAPTER VII

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.”

—*Shakespeare.*

BOB CLINKER and Bill Aspinall, like the honest and true British workmen they were, had conscientiously and thoroughly completed their allotted day's task of repairing a portion of Snobb Lane, West, in front of Sir Carolius Wideawake's residence. They were in the not unwelcome act of loading their implements of labour on a wheelbarrow prior to making for the depôt, when they were startled by the unmusical hoot of a motor car sounded close by ; and before you could say Späherschloss an imposing automobile stood outside those iron gates, against which rested the workers' barrow. And with that servile deference to “greatness”—genuine or spurious, real or pretended—which is characteristic of England's industrial population, Bob and Bill rushed together to remove the double-handled monocycle out of the way, and then stood at attention caps in hands. Thus the two workmen were enabled to obtain a brief but tolerably accurate view of the occupants of the car—a lady and a gentleman ; he a handsome individual of aristocratic mien, wearing a monocle and a grey beaver hat ; while the face of the female was that of a powdered beauty shaded by a large-brimmed head-gear decked with pink flowers and a waving white plume.

A signal from a flunkey seated beside the chauffeur at once brought another flunkey into evidence as the gates flew wide open.

"Goblahmie!" exclaimed Bob, sniffing and staring as if he had never seen a self-moving vehicle before, until the car had disappeared and the gates were shut. "That there bloke in that car there is some bloomin' toff, ye may take yer life, Bill!"

"Yahs, I'll bet yer!" Bill assented.

"And did yer notice that there wing on 'is fingham wi' a spot o' shiny wed on it as 'is 'and was a-goin' up?"

"I'll bet yer a pot o' four ale he's the bloke as owns this 'ere hahse, an' they've bin an' got spliced or some'at an' he's a bringin' 'is old gal 'ome!"

"Blahmie!" Bob ejaculated once more. "I thought as no bloomin' toff lived there, as they was a pullin' o' the bloomin' show dahn for a undergrahnd or some'at o' that!"

"Anyways, mate, undergrahnd or no undergrahnd, I'm a goin' to clear aht of it to get 'ome to *my* ole gal an' t' kidds! You an' me've done *our* bit for to-day mate, and thank Gawd it's Sunday to-morrow!"

* * * *

As it will have been inferred, the two distinguished figures in the motor car were none other than Sir Carolius and Lady Wideawake. They were returning from a sojourn in the country.

CHAPTER VIII

“ Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The Bridal of the earth and sky.”

—*George Herbert.*

EVEN if, by some trick of the memory, Dante Jebson might have lost count of the days of the week, it would hardly have been possible for him not to be conscious of the peacefulness which hallowed the very atmosphere and reigned through the whole environment as he sauntered along the main Woodville thoroughfare on that golden August morning. But he needed no reminder that it was Sunday. Nor need any reader who is an ardent lover of rural life be reminded of the feelings and sentiments that are involuntarily awakened in the meditative soul on the morning of the Day of Rest in an English village or small town.

On that summer morning, the air, fresh and invigorating, was fragrant with the sweet odour of many flowers, commingling with the salubrious scent of the pine, spruce, and sycamore wafted on the gentle zephyr coming from the direction of the distant woods. Birds were chirping and twittering in the fruit-trees at the rear of the houses, while in the little gardens in front thereof butterflies and innumerable other insects were playing undisturbed amid the shrubbery or flying joyously from flower to flower. Yet our man imagined himself the one solitary human being who was astir in the neighbourhood of Woodville Springs at that hour. Such was not the

case—of this he was convinced when he heard the monotonous clang of a church bell calling the devout to early morning service ; and soon a number of reverent spirits were seen making for a sacred edifice.

Dante Jebson was no churchman ; indeed he did not even profess to be a Christian, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Some of his casual acquaintances called him an agnostic ; others, an atheist. But by the proud wearers of these labels the former designation usually denotes one who knows that he knows all there is to know, and the latter a self-made man who pays homage only to his own maker. Neither description applied to Dante. Be this as it may, on that Sunday morning he felt a strange impulse urging him to follow the example set by those few early worshippers.

So he walked slowly as far as the church portals, where he stood and listened. The organ was playing, and the small congregation began to chant their morning hymn of praise. He noticed that the sacred building looked quite modern, and could scarcely have been completed more than a year or two. Then a few hundred yards away he espied a cluster of trees such as generally grow in country graveyards, and on closer observation he concluded that *there* was the old parish church, for it plainly shot up its little bell-tower from the midst of a grove of yews, and firs, and other evergreens. Thitherward he wended his way. Finding an easy access to the churchyard, he roamed moodily amid the memorial stones and crosses of various sizes, halting here and there to read some quaintly original inscription. Presently he

arrived at the huge door of the little sanctuary, evidently some centuries old. It was chained and padlocked, as it appeared ; but a strip of paper pasted upon an otherwise bare notice-board announced that the church was kept open to visitors and others for private prayer and meditation, public worship being now held in the recently-consecrated new building a little distance away. Dante was pleased to discover that no key was required to operate the lock and remove the chain. So he stepped inside, seating himself near the exit. It was a small interior, capable of seating perhaps a hundred worshippers at one time. Everything, spotlessly clean, was left intact, with prayer-books in the pews and a Bible on the lectern. For a considerable time the man remained there alone, in deep thought and solemn contemplation.

Presently he rose from his seat, and noiselessly traversed the narrow aisle till he came to the railings in front of the altar, upon which stood a large cross of shining brass. There Dante Jebson, agnostic or atheist, stood for some time in rapt contemplation, with his gaze fixed on the historic and sacred symbol of suffering and sorrow.

Whilst in that attitude, he thought he felt the touch of a human hand gently taking hold of his own. A strange mystic sensation coursed through his blood. Nor at least for a moment did he vividly realise that a living being was there and then standing by his side.

Their eyes did not meet ; their lips did not speak. But in the solemn silence they reverently knelt together before the altar.

The sun was now high in the firmament ; indeed it would not be long ere he reached the zenith of his noonday glory. Dante Jebson and Beatrice Harlington were sitting together upon a tombstone under the cool shadow of the outspreading branches of a giant elm that had weathered many a storm. Passing to and fro were numerous Woodville visitors and others, either going into the old parish church for private meditation and rest, or else returning therefrom with the satisfaction of having gratified some whim of idle curiosity. But to the presence of this stream of human life—representing various types of character, many moods and shades of temperament, and no doubt as many degrees of intelligence—Dante and Beatrice were apparently oblivious ; while scientifically to analyse their respective trains of thought or correctly to gauge the intensity of their feelings, would have defied the subtlest of psychologists and the most expert practitioner of the delicate art of pathology.

“Comrade and Friend !” said she.

“Friend and Comrade !” he answered.

“And Rosicrucians ?” she added.

“To be sure.” he affirmed.

“With no ‘introductory’ ?” she queried.

“Save that already outlined,” he stipulated.

“Just so.” she assented.

“That being agreed upon,” said he, by way of beginning a new ‘introductory’ to the subject, “if I were to project a book such as you suggested last

evening, I should proceed somewhat thus:—The Rosicrucians, then, first appeared as a distinct sect in Germany about the year 1302. They came into greater prominence in that country during the seventeenth century. Their name is said to be due to a cunning German theologian, one Johann Valentin Andreaë, who in anonymous pamphlets called himself a knight of the Rose Cross (*Rosencreuz*), using a seal with a St. Andrew's cross and four roses. Hence the jewel of the Rosicrucians is formed of a transparent red stone"—at the mention of which Beatrice gave a slight start, as if suddenly reminded of something—"with a red cross on the one side and a red rose on the other, thus it is a *crucified rose*"—and once again the listener shuddered—"not unlike the emblem of the Templars, which is a red rose on a cross."

"But tell me, Comrade," said Beatrice, apologetically, "what made you first mention to me about these Rosicrucians? Was it my telling you what that silly old man at the boarding-house was saying?"

"Just so!" said he. "But we will talk about him another time. . . . We are told that the Rossi, or Rosy-crucians' idea concerning this emblematic red cross 'probably came from the fable of Adonis—who was the sun whom we have so often seen crucified—being changed into a red rose by Venus.'"

"Did it ever occur to you that that old gent was a Rosicrucian?"

"His dialect as quoted by yourself certainly reminded me of an account I have read of the 'symbolic' lingo employed by the cult. However,

to proceed with my 'book': In the seventeenth century, and early in the eighteenth, a Rosicrucian was one who professed to belong to a secret society of philosophers deeply versed in the mysteries of Nature; it being claimed that the alleged society had existed several hundred years. These mystics were also designated Brothers of the Rose Cross, and Rosy-Cross Knights. And, along with other pretensions, they appear to have professed to be able to transmute metals at will, to prolong life beyond the natural span, to know what was happening in distant places without the aid of newspapers, to heal diseases by magic, and to discover the most hidden secrets in the world by the application of the Cabala, and the science of Numbers."

"I am sorry to interrupt, Comrade, but I don't believe the majority of the readers of your book would know what Cabala means. I don't!"

"To explain, then, gentle Friend, the 'Cabala' is a sort of occult theosophy——"

"Oh," exclaimed Beatrice, "I am particularly interested in Theosophy. A friend of mine recently lent me a book on it!"

"—or a traditional interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures handed down from the ancient Jewish commentators, and always held in great reverence by the rabbinical doctors."

"In *my* Theosophy book," interrupted the listener again, "it says nothing about that!"

"But in *my* book I would say that: The curious may find traces of it in the *Midrash*, the *Mishna*, the

Talmud, and other authoritative sacred writings of the Jews. The Cabala is a mode of interpretation applied in particular to the nature of God and the mystery of human existence. It assumes that each letter, word, number, and accent in the ancient Scriptures enshrines a secret meaning, a hidden sense ; and moreover it is claimed for it that its diligent study will teach the method whereby these occult meanings, cryptic senses, and symbolic significations may be ascertained and interpreted."

"Is it here, then, that we get the origin of the verb *to cabal*, which we sometimes hear in vulgar speech and see in popular prints?"

"Your asking the question testifies that you are not bored beyond your power of endurance, Friend," said Dante, pleasure gleaming in his eyes.

"On the contrary, Comrade, I am profited and instructed."

"Yes," he proceeded, making an effort to imagine himself writing a new book, "*to cabal* is to scheme in secret—to plot, to intrigue, to deceive. 'Cabalism' is the science of secrecy, the mystic art—or the art of mystifying. In the dictionaries you will find that a 'cabal' is synonymous with a 'junto,' described as 'a secret council to deliberate on affairs of government'—in reality to play the tricks of party politics ; a 'cabal' signifies a number of scheming men combined for partisan designs and pledged to secrecy : as the poet Thomson says—

'The puzzling sons of party next appeared,
In dark cabals and mighty juntos met!'"

"I hope your book will be published soon!" she said, seriously.

Jebson burst out into a really boisterous laugh. "Friend," he said, presently, "there is not a publisher in this kingdom who would look at such a book, not to speak of publishing it! It would not *pay*."

"And I remember," sighed Beatrice, "you told me that you, like the general run of authors, I suppose, 'write to live!'"

"True," said he, "but that is not quite the same as writing for a living, you know, Friend."

"Do you mean to imply, then, that if you were to put all these things you tell me about the Rosicrucians into a *real* book, it would be merely for your own amusement?" she inquired, with an air of incredulity.

"And for *your* entertainment, Friend! If I succeeded in *that*, I should deem myself well repaid in the honour."

"But I am hindering you from going on with it!" she apologised. "Will you please proceed?"

"Well, then, in my book on the Rosicrucians I should next say something like this: In passing, it may be of interest, and may aid in the illumination of the somewhat mystical topic under consideration, if we here digress in order to recall how the word 'Cabal' as a noun found its way into common usage in our English speech. It so happened, as Macaulay tells us, that in 1671, by a whimsical coincidence, the Cabinet consisted of five persons, the initials of whose names were C, A, B, A, L—Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley,

and Lauderdale. Hence in derision it was christened CABAL, and the anagram caught on. *That* Cabinet deliberated in secret, and issued reports designed to mystify rather than enlighten, to puzzle rather than inform—unless of course by some strange stroke of good fortune one happened to be in possession of the magic key whereby to unlock the secret.”

“It seems to me,” Beatrice commented, with a scornful shake of the head, “that the example of *that* Cabinet has been generally followed by *other* Cabinets less famous in more modern times! And I suppose it is not to be imagined that the treasure you have alluded to existed outside the ‘junto’ itself?”

“As a point of historical fact,” the book-maker resumed, “our Teutonic mystics—let me see, how shall I put it?—such a cabalistic key, with which to unlock the golden casket of human life, to unravel the mystery of the nature and attributes of the Most High—this open sesame the Rosicrucians *did* certainly claim to possess. They, too, swore fidelity, promised secrecy; pledging themselves to write only hieroglyphically, cryptically, to speak symbolically, figuratively, so that none but the initiated might understand correctly and translate intelligibly. They affirmed, moreover, that the ancient philosophers of Egypt, the Sages of Chaldea, the Magi of Persia, and the Gymnosophists of the Indies employed identically the same methods and taught practically the same doctrines as themselves; which no doubt, with a qualification, is a fact.”

“Yet surely, that fact in itself is no proof of the honest intention of *their* methods or the infallibility of *their* doctrines!” Beatrice objected.

“Rather does it tend in the opposite direction. For, as we have seen, those Rosicrucians were Germans, and Rosicrucianism is essentially a German commodity!——”

“Oh, my word!” exclaimed the woman, rising to her feet as if a real German bomb had exploded in the old grave upon which they were seated, “the clock has struck one, and I shall be late for lunch! Don’t forget where to begin the next chapter.”

And Beatrice Harlington was half way out of the churchyard before Dante Jebson had time to collect his wits and realise that he was——alone!

(END OF BOOK ONE).

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER IX

"Revenge and wrong bring forth their kind."

—*Shelley.*

THE *annus mirabilis* nineteen-fourteen was nearing its close. It had opened with an acrimonious war of words arising out of a triviality known in ecclesiastical circles as the "Kikuyu incident," and an equally ludicrous if more insane threat of a "civil war" in Ireland. It was closing with a very real war, terrible beyond words, a deadly conflict into which Great Britain had been unwillingly drawn. What remote connection there might conceivably be between that *beginning* here at home with a logomachy waged by mutually jealous ecclesiastics on the one hand, the clashing of hostile political interests and opposing petty intrigues on the other, and that *ending* on the continent of Europe with Armageddon's sanguinary clashing of swords backed by all the infernal machinery of destruction—or whether indeed the latter condition did not inevitably ensue as the natural result of the former—must be left to the penetrating discernment of future historians to discover and elucidate. Apparently insignificant beginnings have often produced disastrous effects. Be that as it may, few intelligent people there were who were not suspicious of the existence of a curiously anomalous state of things in our midst which the out-

break of the great war did but serve more glaringly to reveal.

It is only five months since that first Sunday in August when Dante Jebson found himself sitting alone upon a crumbling tombstone in Woodville graveyard watching the swiftly-retreating steps of his gentle Friend until her material form disappeared in the distance. Yet as he stands to-day inside a city newspaper office awaiting the pleasure and convenience of the world-renowned proprietor and editor-in-chief of the *Zodiac*, it seems to him like a thousand years!

Five months, no more, had passed, and in that time the world was upside down. As the situation was summed up by a graphic pen: Geographies and coloured maps were every one of them out of date, and no one had the remotest idea when they could be replaced by authentic successors. The division of armaments into sea and land forces was obsolete—ships in the air and armies in the sky having now to be reckoned with. At nightfall people crept blindly along the shadowed streets, from which the lights of former times had vanished, even as if gas and electricity had been but forgotten inventions of the past. In the home of freedom strict censorship of the Press had come back to us, and no prophet could be trusted to predict the time when things would come right again. Not only were nations at war, and that on a scale which made all the great battles of history seem puny in the comparison; but war, as understood by combatants boasting of “culture,” had taken on features of savagery so inhuman as to constitute a revival of the deeds of blackness which, one had fain imagined, were the opprobrium only of

the darkest ages. Five months of wonders manifold, of anxiety and anguish and misery unspeakable, seemed to have cut off the world by a vast chasm from all former ideas of hope, of civilisation, even of religion.

Such was the train of thought, the frame of mind, of which Dante Jebson tried to rid himself as he was ushered with due ceremony into the chief editorial sanctum whence the mighty intellect of Prodotes Egoman presumed to rule the universe and preserve the British Empire as a going concern.

The door was shut, and the man whose interview had been requisitioned was beckoned into a chair in the near presence.

"You have made useful contributions to the literary columns of some of our journals," Egoman began; "and I have a business proposition to lay before you."

"No objection to hearing it," said the literary man.

"It has occurred to me that you might deem it conducive to your interest and advancement to join the editorial staff of the *Zodiac* for the duration of the war."

"I see!" was Jebson's almost curt comment.

"First, then, I may tell you as a Brother Mason that I have commissioned an American journalist of repute to visit the various fronts and glean at first hand any useful information he can. As a subject of a neutral country the Government, at my bidding, has granted him a free passport to travel in Germany,

where he will of course pose as a friend of our enemy, while any secret information of a military or naval character that we can transmit to him he will know how to use to hoodwink the Kaiser and his advisers. His communications to us and ours to him will be in cypher; and your duties will be to deal with any material that may come to hand, skilfully dishing it up to suit the palate of the British public, who as you are aware, have unbounded confidence in the insight, foresight, and wisdom of the *Zodiac*."

"Is that individual you speak of to be trusted, Mr. Egoman? Is he a genuine American? Or might he not be a German in disguise?"

"I have satisfied myself on these points, Jebson," replied Egoman, irritably but haughtily. "Your engagement in the capacity indicated," he added, after a moment, "will of course be contingent upon your readiness to bind yourself by an oath to preserve absolute secrecy. Name your figure. Are you game?"

"I am *not*, sir!" affirmed Jebson, the blood warming in his veins and rising to his face as he hurriedly prepared to depart.

Protodes Egoman was of course a Christian; that is to say, outwardly he made a great profession of what in the language of ecclesiastical orthodoxy is called "religion;" but in his heart he was—well, he knew of no god but himself, and no god but himself did he serve. In other words, Egoman was his own god.

"Now, don't be an ass, Jebson!" said Egoman, persuasively.

“Being a Briton,” replied Jebson, scornfully, “the price of my honour is not to be measured by the size of a figure.”

Obviously, the wrath of the wielder of newspapers was stirred to its depths by this unexpected rebuke from so small a fry as a mere casual contributor to the *Zodiac*. “You are a traitor to your country,” he growled, “and an insolent blackguard to boot !” And his violent tap on a bell was instantly answered by a liveried youngster who politely showed Jebson the way out.

As the latter stepped into the street, he caught sight of a figure entering the building which he felt convinced was that of the individual whose card, as he supposed, he had picked up five months previously in the saloon of the country hotel. The incident also served to recall to his mind with remarkable vividness his strange experience on that wonderful night in the woods. Yet, curiously, the name inscribed on the card was completely obliterated from his memory, although he remembered distinctly handing the card to his Friend—of whose present whereabouts he was utterly ignorant. Ah ! the changes wrought in those five short months !

Returning into his own little “den” in the purlieu of Fleet Street, the first thing that caught his eye was that morning’s edition of the *Zodiac*, which lay folded on his table. Opening it, he scanned the leading editorial, and as he did so marvelled at the abnormal twist of perverted moral sensibility that could have penned or dictated that hysterical screed—pompously extolling the journalistic “honesty” and other exemplary virtues of a nameless group of dailies ; mealy

denouncing the tone of others, classed outside the "patriotic" category; scathingly exposing the weakness of the police authorities in failing to hound and run to earth all and sundry whose names were imagined to betray the remotest hint of foreign extraction; and winding up with a dab of the extreme unction of self-praise for having supplied "valuable information" touching the existence and locality of a house which actually had a German name and therefore harbouring some dangerous German spy!

By an ironical coincidence, another column of the same issue of the *Zodiac* contained a petty attempt to hold up to public ridicule certain officers of the law who appeared to have paid a futile visit to an old mansion in Snobb Lane, West, which, as the writer put it, "had formerly been tenanted by a naturalised German, but was now occupied by a titled gentleman with an English name!"

He casually turned over another page of the paper to glance at the "news" of the day, and was greeted with various "sensational" captions in glaring type; such, for example, as—

"SUSPENSION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE DURATION OF THE WAR.—(*Official*)."

"WANTED—A NEW PREMIER!"

"GERMAN SPIES IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES."

"A WAR EDITION OF THE BIBLE—DELETION OF THE BEATITUDES.—(*Official*)."

"SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF ORIGINAL SIN."

"ANTICHRIST ON THE GERMAN THRONE."

"A BACHELOR BISHOP ON THE NATIONAL
ADVANTAGES OF POLYGAMY."

"THE KAISER—CHIEF OF ATHEISTS."

"PROPOSED NATIONAL MISSION OF REPENTANCE
AND HOPE."

"WAGES OF MUNITION WORKERS TO BE TREBLED."

"PROPOSED EXTRA PAY OF ONE PENNY A DAY
TO SOLDIERS AT THE FRONT."

"A CONVERTED MURDERER ON THE CALL TO
NATIONAL REPENTANCE."

&c., &c.

Dante Jebson lit his pipe, and sat down. He was sadly reflecting upon the strange freaks of journalistic genius thus displayed in the *Zodiac* as the guide and inspiration of a notorious section of the English daily Press which claimed to mould public opinion on all vital points connected with the conduct of the War and the government of the people. As he was thus musing, his eye travelled towards the mantelpiece, on which stood the framed portrait of a little girl. He suddenly rose, and went and stood in reverent silence in front of the picture; then he took it in his hand affectionately, looked at it admiringly for a few moments, his mind taking him back in imagination to incidents of twenty years before, still vivid in his memory.

He was startled from his reverie by an unusually vigorous rap at the door of his "den," followed by the unceremonious entrance of an elderly man in parsonic attire.

CHAPTER X

“Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would make war rather than let it perish. And the war came.”

—*Abraham Lincoln* (in 1865).

“WHAT ho, Dante, my boy!” exclaimed the visitor, extending his hand to Jebson. “Glad I’ve found you at last. What a queer place this London is!”

“Sit down, uncle. Very pleased to see you!” said Jebson, who in point of fact was no more pleased than surprised, for he had great respect for his mother’s brother, though he had not seen him for years. “Have a cigar, uncle, and make yourself comfortable. You still smoke, I suppose?”

“Perhaps the only useful thing a man at *my* time of life can do,” answered the old gent, half merrily, lighting the fragrant weed and beginning to pull at it with such extraordinary vigour that the “den” was immediately filled with a white cloud.

The Reverend Obadiah Truedyn, M.A., was usually calm and dignified, and as worthy of his profession as any man who ever wore a white cravat, though he was of a somewhat excitable temperament, and liable at times either to be swayed by great enthusiasm or to give vent to intense emotion and even bursts of vehemence against things which stirred his indignation. But his heart was a heart of gold. He was as benevolent by nature as he was venerable in

appearance—a typical Nonconformist pastor of the old school of liberal Dissent. All his life a bachelor, he was now in his seventy-first year. He had but recently retired from a long and active ministry to a country congregation worshipping in a quaint little meeting-house having traditions dating back to the great eviction of 1662 ; and had gone to spend the evening of a useful life with a distant relative.

“I have been at the War Office,” said the old minister, the core of whose creed was to help others, “trying to get information about the son of a neighbour, reported ‘killed in action,’ with no date or details ; but one might as well try to follow the trail of a needle in a pottle of hay. They can tell me nothing—a gang of veritable imbeciles !”

“Things will no doubt come right in time, uncle,” Jebson suggested, in a mollifying tone.

“In time ! Ah, perhaps ! All things will get right—in time, doubtless ! . . . But I wondered, my boy, if I found you, whether you would come and spend a week or two with me at Saltlake ? It is a charming place, you know !

“Salt Lake, uncle ! Why, do you really wish to make a Mormon of me ?”

“Now, Dante, you scoundrel ! *Saltlake*, I said—a very pretty little village in a Home County, and near a cathedral town, where people live decently, my boy—not that great city across the waters where one may have as many wives as one can afford to keep. But you’ve had enough of that sort of thing, haven’t you ?”

“I should be very pleased indeed—I mean, not to have a lot of wives, but—to spend a few days with you, later on. For a time, I am likely to be rather pressed with work.”

“Work, bless you! Work is the salvation of us all! You are fortunate! I wish *I* hadn’t retired so soon! The world has now no use for old men! Ah! this war is intolerable to contemplate!”

Though of a naturally sunny disposition, it was obvious that the liberal-minded old pastor was greatly distressed by the thought of the war.

“It has certainly brought about some changes already,” said Jebson, reflectively, “and no doubt will bring about many more.”

“Changes, man alive!” ejaculated Truedyn, rising in his chair and putting his lighted cigar on the mantelpiece. “Why, if Isaiah the prophet—who saw in a beautiful vision a time when the nations of the earth were to be united in one family, and live together in peace and harmony, working for the same ideals, worshipping the same God, and walking in the way of righteousness; a time when they would beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and nation would not lift up the sword against nation, nor learn war any more;—if old Isaiah were to rise from the dead and appear in Europe just now, how would his optimistic spirit view the situation?”

“No doubt some surprises would jar upon his hopeful soul. But you haven’t heard of my latest book, have you, uncle?” Jebson seemed anxious to divert the old man’s attention.

“I tell you,” he went on, his eyes fixed on the smouldering cigar, “that his faith would be tested, his nature would be shocked, the reality of his vision would be shattered, and he would be sadly convinced that, after the flight of five-and-twenty centuries since he dreamed of universal peace, the nations have advanced the methods of warfare into an exact science, and are still learning war to an extent that would have appalled his own generation! How would he feel when he saw that one modern machine-gun can hurl more into death in an hour than all the weapons of Israel and Syria together in a whole year of continuous warfare?”

“But after all, uncle, this is only a useless speculation. What sort of weather is it at Saltlake just now? I will certainly try to get down there soon.”

“Arise, then, O Isaiah,” the old pastor proceeded, taking not the slightest notice of Jebson’s interruption, his eyes being now shut, “and we will show you that in this year of the Lord nineteen hundred and fourteen more than two hundred million souls are aflame with the passion of war and eager for the vengeance of blood. Arise! and see how we so-called Christian nations beat our ploughshares into rifles and straighten our pruning-hooks into bayonets! Arise! and see how we turn our pulpits into recruiting platforms, convert our parks into drilling-grounds, our schools into barracks, and our places of worship into shooting ranges! Arise! and behold the flower of our manhood marching in their thousands to kill their brothers or be killed by them! Behold how the arteries of commerce are

ruthlessly cut and severed, the cords of friendship snapped, and the heart of humanity pierced and bruised ! Behold the fair fields of agriculture changed into scenes of carnage, the peaceful farms of industrious peasants demolished and their humble dwellings burnt and ruined ! Behold the trenches filled with precious blood mingled with the converging streams of mothers' tears which are flowing freely from the hills of Scotland and the mountains of Wales down to the plains of Russia !'

"It *is* all very sad, certainly," commented Jebson. "But come, uncle, sit down. Presently we shall go out for a bit of lunch, and talk about my new book." And the nephew succeeded in inducing his uncle to seat himself again, re-lighting his cigar for him and wiping his brow—this little outburst having produced large bubbles of perspiration on the noble old man's forehead.

"Ah," resumed the latter, now more calmly and speaking between puffs of smoke, "if the ancient prophet of concord and peace were to come, he would surely be amazed at the huge conflagration which at this moment is consuming the civilisation of Europe ! Industries, commerce, libraries, universities, priceless buildings, and the infinitely more priceless flowers of European manhood, are being mown down like so much grass before the deadly machine-guns of the maddened armies."

"But I don't think the picture is quite so black as you would paint it, uncle." In his heart of hearts Jebson perhaps agreed with the old man, but he did not wish to encourage him in this train of reflection.

"Why, Dante," replied his uncle, seeming to warm up again, "in five months' time the most resplendent civilisation the world has ever seen has been shaken to its very foundations, is now crumbling to pieces, and no one can predict how far downward it will fall."

Jebson now felt almost inclined to shout, "Cheer up, Jeremiah!" But he had too profound a respect for the sincerity and convictions of his uncle. He contented himself with suggesting—"You are taking a somewhat exaggerated view of things, I think!"

"But what is the meaning of it all?" Truedyn demanded, putting his cigar down again. "Has the power of Evil conquered the power of Good? Has religion failed? Has human love perished, and human right been vanquished? Is the fatherhood of God a mere myth, the brotherhood of men a cruel fraud?"

"Not at all, uncle!" said Jebson, in a tone of great earnestness, which almost instantly seemed to have a subduing effect on the ex-pastor's indignation.

"What, then, my boy, is the reason of this gigantic exhibition of pedantic barbarism, this selfish assertion of criminal culture? Why all this bitter race-hatred and international perjury? If God *still* lives; if religion has *not* failed; if the brotherhood of men *is* a reality—then something *else* has failed, something else has collapsed!"

"I'll tell you what has collapsed, uncle," said Jebson, quietly and seriously, and looking the old man steadily in the face; "it is European civilisation that has collapsed! And it has collapsed because its foundations were unsound. The times are full of evil. But that evil must be faced, and removed."

“You are right there, Dante, no doubt!” And Truedyn once more re-lit his cigar. “The chief value of evil—if I may put it so—is, that by its occurrence we may learn the way of its eradication.”

“Just so!” said Jebson, pleased at this significant turn of the conversation. “When a great building is consumed by fire, we rebuild it with more durable material, upon a more imperishable foundation, so that such a catastrophe may never occur again. May we not in like manner hope to rebuild the civilisation of Europe, upon a foundation firm and solid, with material everlasting in its nature? If so, the terrors of this war will beget a blessing to humanity that will make all future generations feel thankful even for such a catastrophe as is now devastating the continent!”

“What is this new book of yours, nephew!” Truedyn inquired, evidently much relieved at having thus had an opportunity of speaking his mind to an interested audience—of one.

“Oh, it is entitled ‘In the Crucible,’ and I think you will be interested in it. A copy will be sent to you in a few days. Now I propose that we get out to lunch.”

* * * *

After the uncle and nephew had parted on the platform at St. Pancras later in the afternoon, Truedyn was conscious that at least some of his views on the war had been somewhat modified in consequence of his talk with Dante, while he felt highly pleased that his nephew had promised to spend a week or two with him at Saltlake before long.

CHAPTER XI

“His speech was like a tangled chain, nothing impaired,
but all disordered.”

—*Shakespeare.*

SOMEWHERE in France, a long train conveying wounded men from the scene of fierce fighting somewhere in Flanders had just reached a crudely-constructed but well-equipped hospital at the base. Skilful surgeons and attentive orderlies were diligently at work, some examining and healing lacerations and cuts, setting broken limbs, or searching for the location of bullets; some deftly unbandaging the heads, arms, or legs of new arrivals who as yet had received only the attention of first-aiders; while picturesque Red Cross nurses, quick of movement and gentle of touch, were busily re-dressing the wounds of others or devotedly administering to their varied physical needs.

It was hardly to be surprised at, therefore, that neither doctors, orderlies, nor nurses should just then pay any particular attention to the presence of an unfamiliar figure, wearing the sombre garb of a priest, moving ghostlike among the stretchers and the beds, whispering “words of comfort” to the wounded soldiers and putting to some of them casual queries of apparently innocent import. Besides, it was no uncommon occurrence for elderly French priests and army Chaplains to visit the hospital and enter into conversation with the patients, so that the staff generally took little heed of their movements.

Every inch of available space having been requisitioned for the new cases, three less recent ones had been put into an improvised little room thinly partitioned from the general wards, one of these being a young Irish soldier named Patrick O'Dooley. Though suffering from a shattered shoulder, Pat was as cheerful as he was brave.

"Oi says, Nurse Trixie," he whispered, addressing one of the nurses as she was wiping his brow and easing his pillow, soon after the departure of the habited visitor alluded to, "excuse me rudeness, but arre ye a Cartholic?"

Nurse Trixie had arrived from England at the hospital only a week or two ago, but seemed as though she had been a nurse all her life. She was in the prime of womanhood, graceful as she was tall, sympathetic as she was strong, and endowed with a large degree of that womanly instinct which is quick to discern, apt to understand, and eager to respond to the calls of pain and agony.

"Why do you ask such a question, Pat?" she inquired in turn, smiling pleasantly. "We are all 'catholic,' you know, in *this* place!"

"Maybe, in *this*!" rejoined Pat, he too now trying to smile; "but begorra mayhap *not* in the next place we may foind ourselves. But sarious now, nurse——"

"I am too busy just now to talk about 'serious' things, Pat," said Trixie, gently; "besides, you must keep still and quiet for a little while. Presently I shall have more time to listen to you."

No sooner had Nurse Trixie disappeared than Pat made a heroic effort to turn round, but he found the process too difficult and the agony too excruciating. Then, after a moment's breathing time, "Mate," said he in a loud whisper, "whot was the good Father's word to ye?"

The patient on his left, whom the Irishman had thought to be in a state of unconsciousness, feebly endeavoured to whimper something, but it was scarcely audible.

"Kape quiet, Number One!" commanded Pat, like one having authority, "Oi was spaking to him on me roite. . . . Number Three!" he called, a little louder this time, "whot comfortt did his rivv'ence bring to ye?"

Number Three mumbled something of which the Irishman could make no sense.

"Bejabez!" he said, half to himself, "Oi thought ye was a dacent human cratur as could spake dacently. Damn ye, can't ye answer interrigitly?"

Once more the fellow on the right emitted strange sounds, but this time more gutturally.

"Holy Mary?" roared the Irishman, the effort costing him a sharp twitch of pain: "ye are a blarney Jurrmun, then? 'To hell wid ye!"

"Now Patrick O'Dooley!" expostulated Nurse Trixie, reappearing on the scene; "if you do not behave I shall have to adopt drastic measures!" She felt his forehead with the palm of her hand, eased his head, and then seated herself on an empty biscuit-box

beside his bed. "What did you wish to say to me just now, Pat?"

"Did ye notice that praste?"

"Well, I did notice a priest go out soon after the arrival of the fresh patients. Do you mean *him*?"

"That praste is no praste at all, at all!" affirmed Pat.

"If he was not a priest, what was he, then?"

"A spoi!"

"Nonsense," laughed the nurse.

"Oi am telling ye he's a Spoi!" reiterated Pat, emphatically.

Trixie thought her patient was getting delirious and beginning to ramble. Again she put the palm of her hand on his hot forehead, and felt his pulse. "You must not talk so much, Pat," she said, soothingly.

"But sarious, now, nurse an' shure the trruth Oi be tellin' ye, that praste is no praste at all, at all! An' that cratur on me roite is a Jurrmun!"

"Yes, true Pat; but what has that got to do with it? Here, you know, we make no difference. He is seriously wounded, and we give them all, English, French, Belgians, and Germans, an equal chance to recover, you see. But what on earth makes you think the priest is a spy?"

"He was whispering to Number Three, and Oi thought they was spaking French, but bedad it wos Jurrmun; and Oi am thinking that praste is no praste

at all, at all, Oi am thinking. An' shure Oi be wanting to ask if ye can spake Jurrmun, Nurse?"

"I understand a little German, but can't speak much. Did you catch any of the priest's words, Pat?"

"Oi can tell ye, begorrah, when he came to me first he said 'Wosenquoits?' and begorrah Oi said 'No, yer rivv'rence'; and when he asked where I was hurt Oi said 'In the trenches, yer rivv'rence!—No toim for quoits, there!' says Oi! And he turri'd to Number One and said 'Wosenquoits?' with not a worrd at all, at all; and loikewise he goes to the cratur on me roite, and, says he, 'Wosenquoits?' an' the blarney praste and the cratur on me roite blathered and blathered together in French, and it was no French at all, at all, but darned Jurrmun, as Oi am thinking!"

That this curious rigmarole greatly puzzled Nurse 'Trixie is but to state the case mildly. The patient's temperature was certainly no higher than it had been for a day or two, while his pulse was quite normal. There were no unfavourable symptoms developing. Could there, then, be really some sinister meaning in what he had just told her? 'Trixie reflected a moment.

"Will you please speak that strange word quite slowly, Pat," she requested, "and as near as you can to the way in which the priest pronounced it?"

"Wo-sen-quoits!" And Pat seemed to have forgotten all his agony as he added, "Bejabez, and Oi be tellin' ye Oi am wanting to plase me koind nurse!"

Now all this conversation between nurse and patient had been carried on in a whisper, the Irishman being obviously desirous not to let the "cratur" on his right overhear it.

Vague suspicions began to cloud Trixie's horizon, as she pondered the possibility of a German spy in the guise of a French priest. Her first impulse was to mention the matter at once to some one in authority, but she hesitated.

In a few minutes the Irishman had gone to sleep, exhausted ; and the nurse returned to other duties in the main wards. She felt moody and uneasy. But whilst in the act of discussing some minor details of routine with another member of the staff, that wonderful psychological reality called the sub-conscious self asserted itself in no mistakable manner.

During her few months' arduous Red Cross work before going to France many things had been to all intents and purposes entirely obliterated from the memory. Now she suddenly recalled the name *Rosencreuz*, and in a second all that she had heard of the mystical ways and subtle methods of the Rosicrucians flashed with vivid reality across her mind, producing an irresistible conviction that Patrick O'Dooley must be right. To put it bluntly, as she did to herself, that "priest" *was* a spy ! What had she better do ? First of all she determined to try a little experiment on the German patient, and this design was no sooner thought of than she proceeded to put it into execution.

So Nurse Trixie slipped once more into the tiny ward of three beds. Pat was still in a heavy slumber ;

the patient on his left was but half-conscious; while Number Three was obviously awake, though he lay still with his eyes shut. She gently felt his pulse, then put her hand on his forehead; and, bending over him, whispered in his ear "*Rosencreuz!*" in a way that sounded as much like German as she could make it.

At once the wounded Teuton opened his eyes wide, staring at the nurse with a glare that was ominously defiant. "*Der Wink?*" said he, in a faint whisper, looking steadily at the nurse's hand.

Trixie, in fact, had but the merest smattering of German, certainly not enough to give her any clearer notion of what was meant by "Dair Vink" than if the man had said "Moonshine" in Greek.

"*Rosencreuz!*" she repeated, in a whispering but tremulous voice that might easily have betrayed her consciousness of fear.

Now the patient, doubtless realising that some trick was being played upon him, made a grin that was sickly as it was sardonic, but said not another word. But he was equal to the emergency. He seemed to be very ill.

"How do you feel now?" inquired the nurse.

"*Ich habe Kopfschmerzen!*" he moaned!

"Come!" said Trixie; "you can speak English right enough. Tell me if you want anything."

"*Ich spreche ein wenig Englisch. Bitte, sprechen Sie etwas langsamer!*" replied the other, who appeared to be in much pain.

"I want you to tell me what '*Rosencreuz*' means," she ventured, coaxingly, now with that quiet steadiness which insensibly gives strength.

"Dem as dead be for to pray!" replied the crafty Hun, still grinning, and obviously watching what effect the cunning answer would produce on his fair questioner.

"To pray for the dead, do you mean?"

"Yah!"

"Did you know that priest who was here a little while ago?"

"Père Didon—him French is! *Können Sie Deutsch lessen, Wärterin?*" Obviously, he was suspicious. The nurse understood.

"Only a little, but I cannot *speak* it. Now keep yourself quiet, please," said Trixie, seeing that the patient was getting too restless, and feeling satisfied with the result of her "experiment." His evasive answer was sufficient.

"*Wasser, bitte!*" whined the man, when the nurse was leaving him. And as she seemed not immediately to understand, "Vatter, Vatter!" he repeated; and at once Trixie fetched him a cup of filtered water, and then disappeared.

CHAPTER XII

“Be ware, ye lords, of their treachery.”

—*Chaucer.*

“O for a tongue to curse the slave
Whose treason, like a deadly blight,
Comes o’er the councils of the brave
To blast them in their hour of might!”

—*T. Moore.*

THE weeks and the months were going by, the great war was proceeding, its terrible reality being brought home to all with increasing intensity. And if events of world-wide significance were actually happening in various parts of Europe, no less extraordinary if even more sinister were the aberrations of the fevered brains and excited imaginations of the alumni of a new school of modern journalism in our midst. Vivid descriptions of mob-risings, hunger-riots, factory explosions, strikes among munitions workers, and social revolutions in Germany and Austria, supplemented editorially by phantastic prophecies, wild predictions, and woeful warnings of the grave possibility of similar occurrences at no very distant date in Great Britain herself unless every available male between fifteen and sixty were compelled to enlist, and every female not over seventy were pressed at once into some service of “national importance”—such were samples of the kind of newspaper pabulum that was provided in solid daily portions and gulped down unmasticated by a large percentage of the English public.

This was not all. Every right-minded and intelligent Briton was conscious of an uneasy feeling growing upon him that this unhealthy journalistic phenomenon was symptomatic of some deep-seated insidious disorder, if not of a lurking treachery, which neither experienced statesmen nor experts in diplomacy seemed able accurately to locate, much less correctly to diagnose. For while those journals at home that were sometimes not inaptly spoken of as "the signs of the *Zodiac*" were indulging day by day in the puerile game of whimpering, all-round fault-finding, and sheer personal abuse, attacking one minister of the Crown after another, nominating this and that fancied individual whose praises were sung in terms of unmeasured adulation as the proper personalities to supplant in office without further delay old and well-tried parliamentary hands; denouncing a certain policy here and exposing an alleged blunder or ventilating an imaginary public grievance there—while all this contemptible business of axe-grinding was proceeding at home, the enemy Press was daily growing more jubilant, exulting in the "information" which it believed itself thus enabled to glean from the tone of a group of English journals touching alleged ministerial incapacity and petty intrigues and party quarrels among the members of His Majesty's Government. In this way was Germany aided, her allies comforted, the enemy troops inspired, and the foe generally roused into a state of enthusiastic madness unparalleled in its cruelty.

Though the mischief was apparently incurable, it stirred to their very depths the indignation and patriotic instincts of all sane journalists and the mass of British public who were honourably doing their part

at home while their brave sons and brothers were bearing the brunt of the battle abroad—many of the latter occasionally writing home to their kindred pointing out the sort of effect which the aforesaid un-English method of “comforting the enemy” was calculated to produce on the minds, hearts, and spirits of some of our soldiers, if it were allowed to go on.

Worse still. That naval and military secrets of great use to the enemy were somehow or other leaking out, transmitted to Berlin, and immediately turned to infernal purposes by the quick-witted Huns, was becoming more and more patent from what appeared daily in the German papers.

How was it done? This was one of many perplexing mysteries which the authorities set themselves resolutely to untangle. That there were spies industriously at work in our midst was obvious.

Of course a close watch was kept upon the movements of all registered aliens. Many “naturalised” Germans were interned; but it was well known that many others were still at large, having “gone away and left no address.” Detectives and members of the police force were exceptionally vigilant. So likewise were patriotic Britons everywhere, as witness the attitude even of a couple of rude but sturdy navvies, whose acquaintance the gentle reader has already made.

On this occasion Bob Clinker and Bill Aspinall were engaged on a little job in another part of Snobb Lane, West, not many hundred yards from where we saw them eight or nine months ago. It was now early spring, and there were very few people about.

Bob Clinker was certainly right when he swore that he heard foreigners talking on the other side of the high wall surrounding "that there big hahse." It was dinner hour, and the men had been sitting half asleep in front of a fire which was smouldering in a "holely" iron bucket, the smell of fat on the shovel on which huge rashers of bacon had recently been fried still titillating their nostrils. Bob was now wide awake.

"Hark, Bill!" said he, putting his horny hand trumpet-like to his ear. "Can't yer 'eer them there blokes jabbrin' some'ut in a furrin' langidge?"

"Whot blokes? Y're dreamin' of, mate!" replied Bill Aspinall. "I ain't 'eering nuthink."

"Let's fetch that there bloomin' barrer, then!" And suiting the action to the word, Bob pulled the wheelbarrow and placed it against the high wall, jumped on it, and, aided by a "leg-up" given him by his mate, climbed the wall and surveyed the scene whence he believed the strange sounds had come.

"Yer can't twig nout?" Bill sneered.

"Shut yer mahth a minnit!" whispered Bob, listening again. Then, dropping himself into the wheelbarrow, and thence stepping on to the ground, "Goblahmi!" he exclaimed, "They're a-lettin' orf pijjins' o' some'ut, Bill!"

"I'll bet yer they ain't! They're not allahd, see!"

"Spies 're allahd, ain't they?" replied Bob, with scornful emphasis, as if surprised at his mate's ignorance of war-time regulations. "I'll bet yer whot yer likes, Bill! Get up an' see! I'll gi' yer a legger!"

The result was that Bill Aspinall, too, could now swear that between the trees in the ground of the old mansion he actually *did* see two men liberating pigeons. Still, he didn't think there was anything extraordinary about that.

"I'll bet yer they're spies, or some'ut!" Bob declared, presently.

"Gahn!" protested his fellow-workman, with a grinning laugh which testified his incredulity. "D'yer think spies w'd come abaht in bloomin' daylight? If they're spies why don't yer go an' tell some'un? The bloomin' pleece w'd run yer in mate!"

"I'd ha' a reword, ye b—— fool! . . . But gorblahmie! 'ere a-comes a copper!"

The policeman on the beat having from a distance observed the two workmen in the act of climbing the wall, had of course misconstrued their intentions, so he wended his slow steps towards the scene, while the possibility of being suspected of iniquitous motives had not for a moment occurred to either of these two honest men.

The officer eyed them with a suspicious scrutiny; but their awkward predicament did not dawn upon them until he began the process of circumlocutionarily questioning them. Nor did the constable seem quite satisfied with their explanation and protestations of innocence. However, he made a note of what they told him; and then walked leisurely towards the iron gates, which he found securely locked, and could see nothing unusual.

In itself, the incident was trivial enough ; but it formed a link in a long chain. First, it led to the gradual discovery by the police that the old mansion, now called The Hall, had formerly been named Spähschloss, that its erstwhile resident was a "naturalised" German, one Karl von Wachsam, that he was unregistered, and his new address unnotified ; second, that further investigation disclosed the fact that the present occupant, Sir Carolius Wideawake, Knight, was none other than Karl von Wachsam ; third, that no one had seen anything of the Knight since the beginning of the war, his present whereabouts being veiled in mystery.

Consequent upon these curious revelations, a well-planned raid on the suburban residence of Sir Carolius was successfully effected by the police, resulting in astounding discoveries. For instance, there was an ingenious installation for receiving and transmitting wireless messages ; photographic and chemical laboratories ; rooms fitted with telephones and telegraphic apparatus ; subterranean excavations, with secretly-concealed recesses containing a quantity of gold and silver, various plans and other documents, many suits of clothes, officers' uniforms, priests' habits, women's dresses, whigs, false whiskers and moustaches, and so on. In short, everything afforded unmistakable evidence that here was a centre from which an elaborate and cunningly-organised system of espionage was being operated. Yet, strange to say, the only individuals found on the premises were two or three female servants, one of these being very deaf. These were

arrested, and the house put under guard.

The constable whose sagacity was credited with first having found a clue leading to these important discoveries was promoted and handsomely rewarded ; while Bob Clinker and Bill Aspinall were still trembling in their shoes lest they might yet be apprehended and punished for climbing the wall with alleged nefarious intent.

CHAPTER XIII

“ Fie on him, he will discredit our mystery !”

—*Shakespeare.*

DANTE JEBSON, who prided himself that he knew of old how to handle a rifle, made repeated but fruitless attempts to enlist as a soldier. He had counted on being accepted in the end by the Army Service Corps, serving with which he knew of men older than himself; but now he had been finally rejected. Yet there seemed one remaining chance. He resolved to submit himself to the Field Ambulance Corps. So he made some preparatory studies, applied at headquarters, was medically examined, and told to wait a day or two, which he had reason to conclude meant at least a week.

Meanwhile, he was sitting alone in his city garret, reflecting on the quantity of literary work he had accomplished during the past few months. Other things were awaiting him, but he resolutely decided to attempt nothing more in that line pending the decision of the recruiting officers.

Thus ruminating, there were conjured up in his mind happy memories and sweet visions of the dimly-recollected pre-war days. He thought of a broken-up home, and of a sweet little baby-girl whom he had not seen for many a long year, but had never gone out of his existence; his one hope being that he might yet see her before he died. Then he pictured himself roaming at night through a wood, or sitting in

solitary meditation in a small country church, or conversing with a Friend under the shade of an old tree amid the graves. He remembered his impromptu nocturnal discourse on the Rosicrucians, and its somewhat weird winding up. He smiled as he thought of himself outlining a little book which it had been proposed he should write on that curious subject, and actually laughed aloud as he recalled the abrupt termination of the "first chapter." Then he wondered whether they—his Friend and he—would ever meet again! Once more he thought of his lost child. Ah! if he only knew where *she* was!

"What a pity," he soliloquised, "that I did not think of committing all that funny matter to writing! One never knows when stuff like that might come in useful! And how interesting it would be to be able to hand the complete little 'book' to *her* in the event of our ever coming across each other again on this side of the Invisible! But let me see! I wonder if I can recall it?"

So saying, he proceeded to type out as near as he could remember all that he had said to his Friend about the arts, pretensions, and practices of the Rosicrucians; and to that, without rising from his typewriter, he added the following:—

"Apart from fugitive scraps of translated German literature made in this country from time to time, and somewhat distorted references in the encyclopædias, there were until the year 1870 no channels of reliable information in English touching the origin, history, and teachings of this curiously mystical German sect. In that year, however, one Hargrave Jennings (1817-1890) the author of various works of occult and esoteric learning,

published a volume entitled 'The History of the Rosicrucians.' It is a work little known save to students of the curiosities of literature, although it has passed through four editions. To that work, supplemented by information gleaned from German sources, the present writer is indebted for some of the facts embodied in preceding paragraphs.

"So far as we have been able to ascertain, this strange cult of the '*crucified rose*' has long since disappeared from the land of its nativity. How the cause of the Allies might have suffered in the present struggle had the case been otherwise, it were less amusing than saddening to contemplate! What unspeakable tricks a conjurer of the Rosicrucian order might have played upon the enemies of Prussiaism! For couldn't he tell—even without reading the *Zodiac*—all that we are doing and not doing—the way in which many of us are suffering and struggling, while others are bungling and blundering through in this country—and thus encourage and hearten our foe? Couldn't he describe—even without recourse to the secret code of the Junto Press—the disposal of our armies and the plans of our generals? Couldn't he, moreover, transmute common clay into fine gold, and transform at will the soil of the earth into wholesome sustaining bread, superior even to the 'standard' brand, without the necessity of tilling the ground, or sowing, reaping, kneading, and baking! Surely such a one would have been hailed by the Kaiser as a special gift from his high majesty's 'familiar old friend' the Almighty, and welcomed by the German Chancellor as a veritable saviour of the German people!

"One may well wonder how it is that the Kaiser's journalistic aiders and abettors in this country, who cryptically write themselves down as the ideal 'English Patriots,' have not thought of this, and endeavoured to discover among the contributors to 'the signs of the *Zodiac*' some hereditary descendant of the god Hermes! Yet though the pretensions of the Huus, as well as those of their cabalistic friends in England, have since the

beginning of the war become as silly as they are many, no pretender of the exact Rosicrucian type seems to be available. Should such a freak appear in their midst at the present juncture, however, it is probable that the German people as a whole would regard him either as a charlatan or a lunatic. The riffraff of the Teutons are being deluded with all manner of official brag, military boast, and exaggerated accomplishments; yet it is hardly within the range of imaginary things that they could at this stage be deluded into believing that, by merely uttering the magic word *Rosencruez*, hard stone could be turned into digestible bread, or that the dust under their feet, even though it were manipulated by so clever a conjurer as Bethmann-Hollweg, were capable of easy transmutation into the wherewithal that scarce but necessary commodity might be bought!

“However that may be, in America—where every spurious philosophy flourishes and every phantastic religion finds devotees—in America, the refuge of every quack, sophist, charlatan, and crack-brained theorist—*there*, an attempt has already been made within recent years to resuscitate, in a somewhat modified form, the cult of the Rose Cross. The Transatlantic variety of Rosicrucianism is, if anything, more pungent than the original Teutonic brand, containing as it does many added ingredients. The apostle of the new ‘fellowship’ in America is one whose name is sufficiently suggestive of its origin. So that, although Rosicrucianism as an organised sect has died away in Germany, Rosicrucian ideas have apparently not been totally eliminated from the German mind. This would-be modern revivalist of German mysticism has written a book with a title whose meaning must be left to him to interpret who may be in possession of the mystic key. Yet, even to the uninitiated it is a production as interesting as it is curious. For a happy blending of Buddhism, Christianity, and Standard Bread; of Theosophy, Spiritualism, Hypnotism, Faith Healing, Crystal-Gazing; Hygienics, Eugenics, Psychotherapeutics, Astrology, Phrenology, Psychology, and innumerable other isms, ics, and ologies, commend us

to that book. If the German Emperor has studied it, as is not improbable, his present affliction of megalomania can easily be accounted for.

"The mind of the author seems to be tinctured no less by the Mahatmaism of Madam Blavatsky, the Theosophy of Mrs. Besant, the Christian Science of Mrs. Eddy, the Spiritualism of Sir Oliver Lodge, and the superb Egotism of a nameless journalist, than by the more rational ideas of the advocates of what has, for some strange reason, come to be known as the 'New Thought,' although it is older even than Rosicrucianism. Yet, while the work in question makes no mention of the aforesaid Jennings, from its pages one may gain a tolerably fair notion of what the *original* Rosicrucians were like in their outlook and pretensions, and a still better idea of what their modern imitators aim at.

"Let us admit that the book we are alluding to is such as any superficial critic or shallow reader might, after perusing but a few pages, cast aside in disgust as the production either of an unscrupulous charlatan or an enthusiastic maniac. Yet, the thoughtful, reflective, intelligent reader—such as one may see any day in train or tram poring over the *Zodiac* or one of the 'signs' thereof—cannot fail to find in it, enshrined in an astounding mass of Teutonic absurdity, much that is scientifically sound, morally healthy, politically honest, and undoubtedly true!

"So, gentle reader, if you should happen to drop upon this literary treasure in your public library, a dip into its pages may afford you a few moments' innocent amusement, and perhaps incidentally help you the better to appreciate *your* daily newspaper and at the same time enable you to interpret correctly many current items of 'news' therein, from Germany and elsewhere, which otherwise might for ever remain enigmatical."

Dante Jebson had no sooner finished the foregoing, and posted it to the editor of *Idleman's Magazine*—where in due course it was printed, and from which we have taken the liberty to transcribe it without asking anybody's leave or permission—than he remembered his promise to pay a visit to his uncle at Saltlake. After a little consideration and having looked up the train time-table, he wired that he was "coming." He went that very day.

CHAPTER XIV

“Vain mortals imagine that gods like themselves are begotten, with human sensations, and voice, and corporal members; so if oxen or lions had hands and could work in man’s fashion, and trace out with chisel or brush their conception of God-head, then would horses depict gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, each kind the Divine with its own form and nature endowing.”—*Xenophanes of Colophon*.

“In the beginning God created man in His own image, and man has ever since been returning the compliment by creating God in his.”—*Anon*.

THAT the Reverend Obadiah Truedyn was in a particularly happy frame of mind when he observed the figure of Dante Jebson in the act of alighting from the train at Saltlake station one evening, must have been very obvious to any casual eye-witness of the scene. Never was a welcome of host more sincerely spoken; never were mutual greetings between two relatives more genuinely cordial. Likewise it was very soon made perfectly evident to the nephew that his uncle’s views on the war had undergone considerable modification since their last meeting in London; for when the former, with some hesitation, intimated that—although by no means young as years count, and near a decade past military age—had attested for active service, the old gentleman expressed his admiration for his nephew’s “manly pluck” in no mistakable terms.

“That being so, Dante,” he added, “all the more reason why you should take a few days’ rest, and

make the best of it. Just now the country about here is quiet and peaceful; harbingers of spring are already in evidence, Nature is showing innumerable signs of resurrection from her winter sleep, while some birds, such as the lark and the thrush, are trilling their sweet songs; and if it were not for the newspapers we should hardly be aware of the fact that the chief nations of Europe are engaged in the most terrible war in history."

"My opinion is, uncle, that if all the daily newspapers were suspended during the procedure of hostilities, the war would come to an end at least six months sooner than it can be expected to terminate under present conditions and regulations."

"That is possible! I would even go further, and advocate the suspension of Parliament as well as the Press, delegating the conduct of the war to the Army and Navy. These chaps in the House of Commons know nothing about it! But let us hasten indoors. My good housekeeper will have a little supper ready, and I am expecting an old friend who is on a brief visit to our village, to come and spend an hour or two with us. He is a clergyman, a Dean in fact. I know you don't care much for ecclesiastics, but you will find that Dean Pengwinu is a good sort. Nor does he deem it beneath his Anglican dignity to hobnob with Non-conformists, although he and I differ as the poles are asunder on matters theological."

"I have no special dislike for ecclesiastics, Anglican or dissenting, so long as they are not arrogant bigots," Dante assured him, qualifying this affirmation somewhat by a remark which indicated his personal

doubt whether it was possible to find an Anglican clergyman, especially a Dean, who in the very nature of things could be anything else *but* an arrogant bigot. However, his uncle did not deem it worth while to argue the point with him.

They soon reached the little cottage which the elder man had made his home. It stood in the midst of a well-stocked kitchen-garden, through which a neatly-kept footpath ran from the main road. When they had crossed the threshold, they found Dean Pengwinn waiting for them, standing in his old friend's study, surveying the titles on the backs of various volumes of ancient and modern literature, the remnant of a once fine library, among which he was not a little amazed, as he mentioned later, to find so very few theological treatises. The Dean was himself an author, his publications being mainly of a sermonic or semi-devotional type—a malicious High Church critic characterised them as being of the “milk-and-water sort, with more water than milk, and lacking both originality and virility.” He was, however, a recognised champion of old-fashioned evangelical churchmanship as against the tendency to latitudinarianism on the one hand, and to sacerdotal and ritualistic extremes on the other. Still, the Dean enjoyed the reputation of being more tolerant of others' opinions than the general run of Anglican divines of the same school of thought usually are—or at any rate are usually thought to be,

The ceremony of introduction was followed by a brief but genial chat about the state of the weather and other commonplaces; and then a simple evening meal—prepared by a home-keeper who knew how to

render wholesome fare no less appetising than palatable—was thoroughly enjoyed.

Subsequently, host and guests adjourned to the study, where they soon settled down to smoke.

It was inevitable that the drift of the conversation between these three men—each representing as it were a distinct type of thought, but all three equally interested in current affairs and keenly watchful of the progress of events—should go in the direction of the war, the all-absorbing topic at the moment. And they had reached a point in the discussion which touched the question as to with whom lay the responsibility for the international calamity, when the Dean bluntly challenged Jebson to say whether or not he imagined that as a nation, we had “sought this trouble.”

“Oh no,” replied the latter, emphatically; “I am not one of those who think that, in the circumstances, we ought not to have had a hand in this war. No country having any respect for fair dealing, any sense of national honour, or a grain of courage left in its people, and placed as we were, could have done otherwise. Nor do I believe that the bulk of the German people wanted this war. The possibility is that they hate it no less than we do ourselves.”

“Yet, surely, sir,” Dean Pengwinn objected, “you will admit—which as you must know is the consensus of opinion in this country—that if there is one individual who, by lifting his little finger could have averted this catastrophe, that individual is the German Emperor?”

"Agreed. And yet, to get at the real truth of the matter, we must needs be equally ready to concede at least the *possibility* of this conclusion being erroneous. For, candidly, Mr. Dean, it appears to me that leading up to this awful business of war—quite apart from the propagation of diabolical theories such as those put forth by Bernhardt and his school—there have been influences at work of whose subtle operation the general public here as well as in Germany have been scarcely conscious. The time may come when this will be more fully realised."

"I do not quite follow you," the Dean confessed.

"I perceive your meaning, Dante, and I am more than inclined to agree with you," said Truedyn, who so far had been a silent listener. "I feel convinced in my own mind that the present international conflict is the logical and natural outcome of the teaching of certain doctrines, theological as well as political, in which the Kaiser and his parasites undoubtedly believe, and which indeed lie at the very core of the whole fabric of so-called Christian civilisation."

"Of course," said the Dean, superciliously, affecting not to heed the last remark, "I can quite realise that ordinary lay folk fail to grasp the right point of view on questions of this sort because in most cases they have not been educated on the proper lines."

"And what do you mean to imply, Mr. Dean, by what you call 'the proper lines' of education?" inquired Jebson.

"I mean," replied the cleric, with emphasis, "full,

complete, unequivocal acceptance of the Church's teaching; absolute obedience to the authority of the Church of Christ in all matters of faith and belief; unquestioning submission to her discipline and the verdict of her clergy on all points of ethics and conduct—to doubt the truth of *nothing* which the Church says is true. This, sir, is what I mean by the proper lines of education."

"Ah! So!" was the sarcastic comment of Dante Jebson. "And if we substitute any other State institution for 'the Church,' and the authority of paid officials generally for that of the clergy, we have a notion of education that is by no means uncommon in this mis-called Christian land! Yet, Mr. Dean, you must assuredly be aware that to an increasing number of thoughtful minds, genuine education implies precisely the opposite to what you would have it? Its chief business is 'not so much to make scholars as to train pioneers,' as Huxley said. In the conception of many enlightened people, real education denotes the training of the young mind to form its own conclusions from studied evidence on matters regarding which it is legitimate for opinions to differ; to rely upon no opinion as being founded upon truth—whether it emanate from what you call 'the Church' or not—if it contradicts human reason, human experience, and the facts of human history. According to a great scientist, it is a part of personal honour that the unexamined should be regarded as the unknown, and the unproven should be the unaccepted. Personally I decline to regard as evidence of truth any sort of speculation that has not been tried and tested and proved in the light of history and the established conclusions of science."

"You are saying, sir," protested the Dean, banging his hand upon the table, "that which amounts to the worst of all heresies—the heresy, so called, of 'private judgment,' but in fact the heresy of free thought!"

"But don't you, my good friend," ventured Truedyn, laughing, "admire a man who has the courage of his convictions, even though his convictions might be unsound?"

"Truedyn! courage of conviction, as you call it, is but another name for damnation!" And the Dean turned his head away, as if he would weep.

"Then," declared the wicked Jebson, "I am quite prepared to be damned for mine! Nor do I think I shall be in bad company! He who has not the courage of his convictions is the chief of cowards; he who is not intellectually honest is the most despicable of hypocrites; he who is not spiritually free is the most servile of slaves! And all these types of mentality are inevitable products of that detestable and accursed thing that we call Officialdom; and this, Mr. Dean, has always been fostered by the very Church of which *you* are an ornament! It is fostered, too, by every other organised religious body in the land, from Popery to Quakerism. Everywhere it turns heroes into cowards, honest men into knaves, free souls into slaves by the million. It creeps like a corrosive poison into every promising movement, paralyzes many noble endeavours, blights and cripples more or less every form of good work. State officialdom is bad enough, with all its formality and red tape; but the greatest curse is religious officialdom and denominational red tape!"

“Dante, brave lad!” exclaimed the old dissenting divine, “you and I know something of this, don’t we? We have both been the victims of sectarian red tape in our time. Yet, thank God, we are not much the worse for it. It has not bleached *your* hair, at all events. And now at my time of life I can laugh at it all. What think you?”

“As for me, uncle,” Jebson retorted, hilariously, “let all the doctorates of divinity ever manufactured cheaply in Germany or bought for a few dollars in America join their official red tape to that of Hell itself, and I will defy the whole infernal combine to bind my intellect or impede my spiritual pilgrimage!”

For a few minutes the good Dean had been standing erect like a lifeless statue, his eyes shut and his head bowed, as if in profound meditation. Jebson filled his pipe, handing his uncle a cigar. Uncle and nephew were in the act of lighting up to smoke, when the clerical dignitary turned towards them again. Jebson proffered him also a cigar, but this he declined with a significant shake of his very reverend head.

The Dean looked somewhat puzzled; but the frown which a few moments ago had darkened his brow, now gave place to a look of benignant pity. Another moment of awkward silence, and he lit his own cigar, and said, slowly and deliberately, looking at the dissenting divine—

“You, Truedyn, would surely not dare to deny that the Kaiser is indeed an atheist!”

Truedyn shook his head, and then turned inquiringly towards his nephew.

Jebson smiled in a kindly way. He had expected this. "Well," said he, "a writer in the *Zodiac*, not knowing of a more offensive term to apply to the Kaiser, describes him as the 'chief of atheists.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed the ex-pastor, bitterly, and looking first at Dante, then at the Dean, "Ah! Some of us know only too well the type of mind represented by the scribe you are alluding to, Dante. There are still many professedly religious folk who are fond of hurling that epithet at those who happen to disagree with them. You, Mr. Dean, may be shocked when I tell you that I have a profound respect for the people usually called 'atheists'—I mean of course intellectual 'atheists,' who more correctly would be described as agnostics. In many ways they are the finest people on earth to-day—sincere, honest, and fearless. But the Kaiser is *nothing of the sort*. Those who describe him as an 'atheist' reveal nothing so much as their own ignorance. The Kaiser actually *poses as a theologian*. He is acknowledged as a theologian by many German professors. In other words, he is *an atheist who believes in God*. He speaks of that God with a flippancy that is nauseating. And atheists who believe in God are the worst type of atheists."

"You might even go further, uncle," said Jebson, evidently pleased by this striking similarity between his uncle's way of thinking and his own, "and say that the Kaiser's conception of God is quite consistent with his own actions—or rather perhaps I should reverse the proposition and say that his actions are the inevitable result of his low, crude, anthropomorphic, materialistic conception of God!"

“That is precisely what I meant!” declared the old man, vivaciously.

“But do you really think, gentlemen,” asked the Dean, conscious of his own superior wisdom, “that there is any ground for doubting the view now generally held that the Emperor is none other than the Antichrist predicted in the Scriptures? And, as you know, Mr. Truedyn, the great sin of the Antichrist consists in his denial of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Truedyn was well familiar with that line of argument, and of course was quite ready with his answer. “You, Mr. Dean,” he said, “acquainted as you are with German literature and German thought, must know perfectly well that the Kaiser, so far from rejecting the popular ‘orthodox’ tenet regarding the character and mission of the Prophet of Nazareth, is on that point at all events as soundly ‘orthodox’ as the Bishop of Ludonia or the Dean of Albanium, which is saying a great deal—and as to the dogma you have referred to, Calvin himself could not have been firmer in it!”

The Dean seemed at a loss what to say to this, and he pulled all the harder at his cigar.

“It seems to me that what needs to be emphasised is this,” said Jebson, “that a man’s theology and a man’s character are inseparably bound together. He is himself, on a small scale, precisely what he conceives his God to be on a larger. In every age and land the pictures which men have made of God correspond to what they are themselves in thought and in character. Honest people believe in an honest God. Cruel people

have a cruel theology. It was said of old, that 'God created man in His own image,' but history shows only too plainly that everywhere and always men have been making the Deity a reflex of themselves. Thus it has been throughout the history of the Christian Church, from the time when the official 'orthodoxy' of his day crucified the Lord of Life, down to this very age. I don't wish to wound your sensibility, Mr. Dean—I know my uncle won't mind what I say—but I tell you quite frankly that I feel the truth of what I am saying most keenly in these times !"

"Don't apologise to me, my good sir !" said the Dean, quite genially. "Mr. Truedyn and I have often had talks of this nature, and I always like to hear other people's expressions of opinion."

"What you have just been saying, Jebson," said Truedyn laughing, "reminds one of a remark attributed by Burnet to Queen Mary at the time when she was persecuting and torturing the heretics of her day. It certainly exemplifies the truth of your statement. 'If God is going to burn so many of them in hell,' said she, 'it must be right for me to burn a few of them on earth.' You see, she was quite logical. Her conception of God reflected her own disposition—her own creed, in fact."

"Just so !" commented Dante, becoming animated again. "And the Kaiser's theology is of the same type; his god is of the same order of being. But the point is this, that the conception of God as promulgated both in Rome and Canterbury is not one whit better ! It is not a whit more sublime, impartial, or humane. And I make bold to declare, with all due respect to our

friend the Dean here, that the whole of so-called 'orthodox' Christianity is tarred with the same brush. To the ordinary lay mind, its God is a sectarian god, an ecclesiastical god, a tribal god, a partial god—a god of bigotry, hate, tyranny, a god of Brute Force, who cares for nought but his own glory. In other words, official Christianity is on a par with German *Kultur*, which has now become a proverb in all lands. It is simply the principle that Might is Right, that the strong is privileged to crush the weak."

That the Dean was again feeling uncomfortable was evident. "As I have said," he protested, "I always like to hear an honest expression of opinion, but what you are now saying, sir, is sheer blasphemy! Truedyn, I respect *you* for the sake of a long friendship between us, but this relative of yours is obviously nothing but an infidel!" And the Dean rose and bade good-night to his old friend, saying to Jebson with becoming dignity, "I trust we shall never meet again, sir!"

"Just as I had thought!" said Jebson, apologising to his uncle after the ecclesiastic's dramatic departure.

The old Dissenter, however, seemed to enjoy the incident. "He will think over what you said, Dante," he reassured his nephew. "He is not a bad sort at heart; but you touched a sore spot in it, you see! Personally I quite agree with you; and speaking from a long experience, I venture to think that the attitude you referred to is amply manifested in the behaviour, generally speaking, of bishops, priests, and evangelical parsons of all orders and grades towards any who dare to question *their* authority in matters of faith."

“Yes,” said Jebson, “it is manifested in the quarrels and hatreds of the sects. It is shown in the persecution and abuse of independent spirits who champion the cause of the liberty of thought. As I said before, the logic of narrow ecclesiastical theology, no less than that of the arrogant German *Kultur*, is that the Almighty is a tyrant, a persecutor, a selfish monster who creates the masses of men and women sinful and erring so that He may enjoy the glory of ‘saving’ a few favourites while He hurls the remainder ruthlessly to hell fire. According to German *Kultur*, human beings, and in particular those who dare to oppose the Kaiser’s will, are only *Kanonenfutter*, food for cannon. In like manner, the average ecclesiastic maintains that all who dare to oppose *his* authority in spiritual matters, and remain outside the pale of *his* particular church, are fit only as fuel to feed the fires of hell. If there is any vital difference between the Kaiser’s theology and that of ninety-nine out of every hundred Anglican and Evangelical clergy in this country to-day, it might be a useful thing just now to have it pointed out to us.”

“I have said all along, Dante,” declared the old liberal dissenter, “that this war is really the manifestation of sectarianism on a large scale! I think, however, that it will have a purifying effect, as you said the other day; and that is why I am so glad you are going to enlist.”

“It is because I am anxious to do my share in removing the causes of it that I was prompted to seek enlistment, uncle. I would have enlisted at first if I had been accepted. You talk about sectarianism! It is the most hateful of all social and

national diseases! Since Jesus of Nazareth, a working man, taught his beautiful gospel of brotherhood and peace and goodwill among men, these establishments called churches have come into existence, with their gorgeous popes, rich bishops, and pretentious priesthoods. Surrounding themselves with forms and ceremonials, they claim to be invested by Heaven with authority over the minds and souls of men and women, and with power to damn all and sundry who question their mission or disobey their orders. They have persecuted and tortured and put to death thousands of innocent people who ventured to deny the doctrine that *Might is Right*. They have quarrelled among themselves as to who was the strongest and the mightiest. They have waged war on each other with sanguinary fury. They have hated each other with a hatred compared only to that manifested between the belligerent nations of these times. Each has claimed to be the apostles of culture, the custodians of power, God's chosen people, and the guardians of the 'true faith.' So that what we witness to-day is but the fruit of the bigotry and hatred, cherished and fostered and taught for centuries throughout the whole of evangelical Christendom. No wonder that some of the Bishops and others declare that the war is a 'punishment' from God! For they conceive of the Divine Being as they are themselves—a fanatic, a sectarian, vindictive, tyrannical, eager to assert himself, to punish men for their opinions, and to torture them if they oppose his will. This is how the Kaiser himself feels. *He is afraid of his own God*—the fruit of his own imagination and the image of his own soul—because he believes that God to be like himself."

"The great comfort is," declared Truedyn, "that our brave young men at the front know and feel that they are fighting for a higher ideal than that—the dethroning of the God of Tyranny, the God of Hate. For the glorious ideals of liberty, of right, of truth, and justice for all, they will make a noble stand. I wish I were a young man now, Dante!"

The conversation on this and cognate topics between uncle and nephew did not end here; but at this point the two went out for a nocturnal ramble before retiring. The next day, and several days following, they explored the surrounding country together; and Dante, at the end of a fortnight, despairing of hearing from the recruiting officer, made a vow to his uncle that he would make his home with him at Saltlake until one of them was "called away." An hour later a telegram arrived to call *him* away. And he answered that call in high spirits and with alacrity, and of course with his old uncle's parting benediction.

CHAPTER XV

“Where is the man with the power and skill
To stem the torrent of a woman’s will?
For if she will, she will, you may depend on ’t;
If she won’t she won’t; so there’s an end on ’t!”

BEWILDERING in the extreme were the vague notions, hazy ideas, and unformed plans which no sooner filled Trixie’s imagination than they vanished again to be followed in rapid succession by others just as uncanny and equally perplexing.

She deemed it advisable not to sound the German patient again regarding the meaning of *Rosencreuz*, and said no more to the Irishman on the matter than she could possibly help. At first O’Dooley seemed very unwilling to let the subject alone; indeed he would scarcely talk about anything else. Gradually, however, as the injury to his shoulder began to mend, he allowed himself, judging from his conversation, to forget all about the “praste” and the “spoi.” So reticent had he now become touching that affair that any one not in possession of other significant facts, as Nurse Trixie happened to be, might reasonably have concluded that Pat’s previous wild talk had been merely the outcome of a passing delusion arising out of his physical agony, causing perhaps a slight disturbance of his mental organs, and that his present silence on the subject was a tacit indication of his realising that he had been mistaken in his hasty and apparently groundless surmise. But Nurse Trixie knew different. Besides, there was a good reason for his changed

attitude; and this the sharp-witted nurse had not been slow to divine, although she kept as quiet on the matter as Patrick O'Dooley now did on the topic which had previously absorbed him.

And yet the less was actually said on the subject the deeper and firmer and clearer became the nurse's own conviction that the "priest" in question must have been nothing but a spy. She grew more and more positive in her own mind that, although it might have been simply the assertion of a sort of blind instinct on the part of the Irishman, what he had told her so obviously linked itself up with things she had both seen and heard before, that it seemed to her to form, up to a certain point, a veritable chain of circumstantial evidence. Try as she would, she could not dismiss the thought from her mind. It haunted her like a nightmare.

It is a matter of observation that with women, even educated women, logic is not a strong point, coherent reasoning is seldom a prominent mental trait. But Trixie knew at least how so to put two and two together as to see how much they would make. This she did repeatedly in her present perplexity, the resultant being invariably no more and no less than four.

From the first, nurse and patient had agreed to keep a resolute watch on the movements of the "priest" in the event of his appearing a second time at the hospital, and Pat promised to give his nurse a signal for a planned action at the critical moment, while the nurse was as vigilant as her duties permitted. But the days passed, and no such signal was visible.

Other priests came and went ; yet Pat made no comment.

At last Trixie felt that she must speak out ; her brooding reticence had reached a climax, so that she could contain herself no longer, being impelled to unburden her mind and give unequivocal vent to her profound conviction that a German spy had recently visited the hospital in the guise of a priest. First of all she broke the ice to the Matron ; but that lady treated the whole thing as a silly delusion, endeavouring to persuade the nurse not to make herself ridiculous.

“ I have stood some ridicule in my time,” retorted Trixie ; “ and a little more cannot hurt me !”

Next she sought a brief interview with a surgeon in command ; and she told him all. But he only smiled indulgently, saying there could be “ nothing in it !” Subsequently she spoke to others in authority, with similar results. And in an astonishingly brief space of time the wheeze had gone round the staff and even become a topic for fun among the patients, that Nurse Trixie was “ worried from fear of spies.” The affair was christened the Irish Joke. Against all the laughter and banter and jeering which this provoked, Trixie steeled herself with that womanly determination which not infrequently exemplifies the truth of the saying that a “ woman convinced against her will is of the same opinion still.” She took another course.

There was one, however, besides poor O’Dooley—who of course came in for a share of ridicule—that sympathised with Nurse Trixie and obviously believed in the soundness of her judgment and discernment. This was Gwennie Jones, a modestly quiet and quaintly

attractive little nurse of about twenty summers. Gwennie had reached the base several weeks after Trixie, and had been allocated duties as an immediate colleague of the latter. They had become thoroughly attached; indeed there had already grown between them a mutual sympathy such as might have been experienced by a mother and daughter who, after a long separation, had been unexpectedly re-united here in this strange place amid scenes of suffering and torture and death, and actually within hearing of the distant roar of great guns and by no means free from the terror of bombs dropped from enemy aircraft.

The elder woman was impressed not only by her junior colleague's sweetness of disposition and gentle demeanour, but likewise by her capacity as a nurse, her aptitude for the profession, and her whole-hearted devotion to duty. Moreover, Trixie's affection for the little nurse had been still deepened by the discovery that the latter had unconsciously stolen the heart of Patrick O'Dooley, whose progress towards recovery Trixie watched with almost maternal interest. Indeed Patrick confessed as much to Trixie more than once, without intending it, particularly when in a state of semi-slumber.

Gwennie's winsome ways—her neat appearance; her healthy complexion and robust physique; her black hair and hazel eyes; her soft, gentle voice, her few but always soothing words, and her quaint accent—all these characteristics were in curious contrast, viewed superficially, with the assertive traits of the humorous, talkative but large-hearted Irish lad. Of course rightly to estimate or even roughly to delineate a young man's character on the strength of evidence

gathered from mere snippets of conversation with him while he lay in hospital, were an impossible feat ; but that he had a truly great soul, a disposition open, frank, and generous, was certainly the impression he would have made upon even a casual visitor to his bedside. But Nurse Trixie was no mere superficial reader of human character. And although she had been quick to interpret the all-but-unspoken language of Pat's large and affectionate Irish heart, there was no reason to conclude that Nurse Jones herself had as yet even dreamed that any one of her patients was desperately in love with her. Nevertheless it was not long after her arrival that young O'Dooley began to forget to talk about the "praste" and the "spoi."

One evening, following her declaration with regard to the suspected priest, Nurse Trixie was quietly resting a while after a strenuous spell of trying work, when she was roused from her reverie by the gentle clasp of two arms around her neck, an affectionate kiss impressed upon her cheek, and a sweet voice saying in an undertone——

"Don't worry about that spy, Nurse dear. They are sure to catch him before long!" It was Gwennie who thus spoke.

What was more natural than that this manifestation of sympathy, simple as it was beautiful, should touch a woman of Trixie's temperament and experience of the world? She had long since abandoned the feminine habit of shedding tears ; but now her eyes filled, and her heart beat so fast that for a moment she could not speak. Then, as if stirred by the tender passion of a mother for her child, she fondly drew the girl to herself and bathed her face with her tears and kisses.

"You see," Gwennie tried to explain, consolingly, "these spies are everywhere just now, and they are being caught in all manner of unexpected ways!"

"I have sent a message to the staff headquarters," said Trixie, brightening up, "and perhaps they will make some inquiries. If I only knew where my Friend is who explained to me the meaning of that strange word, I am sure he would be able to say whether it was a sort of password to the German patients. He is a very clever man."

"Is he your husband?" Gwennie inquired, with childlike simplicity.

"I call him Comrade. He lives in London, but although I have written to him twice, I have had no reply. I am afraid he's gone away. Perhaps he is dead."

"Perhaps he has enlisted?"

"He is too old for that, you silly girl." And Trixie bestowed a benignant smile on the sweet radiant face that was looking with wonderment into her own.

"Well," retorted Gwennie, gently, "in Wales, you know, quite old men have enlisted!"

"Oh, do you come from Wales, then?"

"I came straight from there here. I had just completed my probation at a big hospital when they were asking for volunteers for Red Cross work in France, and I signed on."

"Did your people approve of it?"

"But you see I have no relatives, and only a few

friends—none who are likely to worry about me. Have *you* many friends, Nurse Trixie?"

"As I've just told you, I have *one*—to whom I have written about this matter that has been worrying me so much. Is Wales your native country, Gwennie?"

"Oh no; and Gwennie Jones is not my real name, either. You see, when I was a child, my mother, it seems, was very cruel to me, and neglected me, so that my father was forced to take me away from her and put me in the care of some people who undertook to look after me until I would be old enough to go into a school. But when I was about two, my Aunt Jones, from Wales, contrived to steal me from my guardians—(perhaps they sold me to her!)—and she never let my father know where I was. I have not seen my father since I was two years of age, and I don't remember him. I don't know if he is alive now, or anything at all about him. But my mother has been dead some time; I don't remember *her* either."

"How do you know that she is dead?"

"Well, you see, my Aunt Jones told me everything. But I knew nothing about my parents or my own history until Aunt Jones was on her death-bed, when she told me all just before she died. I do wish I could find out whether my father is alive!"

Trixie looked into the young woman's face with indescribable curiosity, loving and solicitous, as if wondering whether they had met before in some previous existence. There was something in those eyes and that face that seemed to awaken dim re-

collections of a long distant past. It was only a fancy, perhaps, thought Trixie; but certainly it revived some memories that were anything but fanciful—of that she was most vividly conscious. “And do you know your real name?” she asked.

“Oh yes; my Aunt told me that my name is Amelia—Amelia Jebson; and that my father’s name was Dante Jebson!”

Trixie did not speak. And, noticing with evident surprise that her face turned pale and that her lips were quivering, Gwennie naturally inquired if she felt unwell. Trixie answered in the negative, assuring her young friend that she “never felt better, although a bit worried about certain things.”

* * * *

Weeks more passed, without any visible sign of a possible solution of the “priest” mystery; indeed every one but Trixie appeared now to have forgotten all about it. Often in those days did Trixie express her gratitude to Gwennie for her kindness, assuring her that her greatest comfort was to have “the little nurse” close to her—but she never admitted that Gwennie’s presence at the same time intensified her longing to hear from the Friend in London—to whom she had now written no fewer than four letters without receiving a reply.

Being convalescent, the German patient from the small ward was duly removed to an internment camp; a week later Patrick O’Dooley, though obviously reluctant to quit the hospital, went to Blighty—but the Red Cross ship on which he sailed had probably

hardly crossed the Channel when, lo and behold! two officers belonging to the headquarters staff of the British Expeditionary Force turned up at the hospital to make inquiries. To them Nurse Trixie explained with minute detail certain events which had led her to attaching any importance at all to the conjecture of Patrick O'Dooley.

The officers seemed to listen with real interest to a story which may have struck them as savouring of romance in its opening parts; but unfortunately, as too often happens in such circumstances, in the end they treated the whole thing with an indifference suggestive of contempt. Trixie, on her part, felt more convinced than ever that the matter was too vitally important to be allowed to rest where these men, in their official wisdom, appeared to be quite content to leave it. What step, however, she would take next, did not seem at all clear to her.

CHAPTER XVI

“What is fame! The meanest have their day,
The greatest can but blaze, and pass away!”

—*Pope.*

THE second year of the great war was nearing its completion, while the *Zodiac* and the “signs” thereof were day by day growing more hopelessly hysterical. Their editorials, generally beginning in tones of whimpering sensoriousness, invariably ended in a tornado of indecent vituperation, personal abuse, and self-praise. That the scribes responsible for the intellectual fare provided in these journals—which always posed as the recognised media for the expression of “patriotic” sentiment in this country—were the mouthpieces of ambitious schemers and impotent politicians, was becoming more and more notorious, the meanness of the motives actuating their exploitation to their own ends of political weaklings who lent themselves as their tools being exceeded only by the disgust which this style of journalism engendered in the minds of all sensible Britons.

As to their “news” columns, these were mainly occupied with matter sensational as it was incredible. Not the least ludicrous bit of “authentic information” which found a channel in the *Zodiac* about this time was the announcement, made in all the glory of the clap-trap phraseology of which the disciples of Prodotes Egoman were qualifying as masters, was to the effect that “our own special correspondent” had recently discovered in an obscure corner of Berlin “a

certain old doctor named Grossritter" who was an adept in "the ancient mystic art of alchemy," long since thought to have been lost. He was apparently a "prophet" as well as a thaumaturgist, a "seer" as well as a wonder-worker; for "besides his gift of seeing into the future," he was said to be in possession of the "philosopher's stone" and the "elixir of life," and "by a simple though secret method" he practised the wonderful art of the transmutation of metals." And to cap it all, it was "our own commissioner who succeeded in bringing him into prominence." The poor people of Berlin, it was added, were flocking in their thousands to the "prophet," bringing to him pieces of copper and other inferior metal, which he immediately "transmuted into bright and precious gold," to the delight and amazement of all, "merely by uttering a magic word whose mysterious power and divine import are known only to himself," and no doubt to his confederates. It was made further to appear that the miracle-worker had already attracted the notice of the Kaiser, who was having special quarters set up for his comfort and convenience.

"With such a valuable asset at the Empire's command," proceeded the *Zodiac* scribe, "our great foe is not likely to lack gold or to suffer from scarcity of food." The possibility of such a discovery, it was modestly claimed, had long since been foreseen by Prodotes Egoman, and duly predicted in his popular prints. Nay this was but one instance of the literal fulfilment of innumerable prophecies made in the *Zodiac* and journals of that type even long before the war began!

“We,” wrote the editor of the *Zodiac* one day, apropos the afore-mentioned piece of extravagance, “are perhaps anticipating somewhat the return to England at no distant date of our special commissioner, who in a series of articles we intend to print will, we feel more than confident, literally stagger our readers by a thrilling account of his daring adventures in Germany—his re-discovery of a valuable lost art; his interviews with the Kaiser, and his conversations with leading members of the Reichstag. But not the least interesting, we honestly believe, will be our commissioner’s account of the veritable miracles wrought by the wonderful Dr. Grossritter, referred to in another column.”

Why, then, asked the editor of the *Zodiac*, was our public so foolish as to “deliberately shut its eyes to the presence of just such a man in *our* midst?” That man, as every intelligent reader ought to know, was Winne de Bagge Bustle—and no other! Therefore let Winne de Bagge Bustle be immediately created Grand Talker-in-Chief, and his mellifluous eloquence—not to say the exuberance of his verbosity—would surely in due course transform every scrap of waste paper into crisp Treasury Notes and change every real hardship into seeming enjoyment; while by that noise and eclat which dullards mistake for business, his achievements would eclipse in their far-reaching effect even those of the most mighty genius in the wonder-working line that Germany herself could boast of. Then again there was urgent need for a new Regulator of Holes and Corners—the only suitable man for this important office being Lord Humm B. Subtle, who would soon be able to convince the common people of

these islands that it was the simplest thing in the world to turn cobble stones into potatoes and convert the sand on our shores into sugar! "Nothing could be plainer," we were assured, in the same journalese strain, "than that if such appointments were made forthwith the effect would be tremendous—it would knock all the spirit out of the Kaiser and his advisers, break the spell of Dr. Grossritter's mystic art, starve the people of Germany, and bring the war to a speedy termination with a glorious victory for the Allies." And so forth. The "stunt" caught on.

It is perhaps not surprising that such spicy journalistic fare should have been eagerly gulped down and enjoyed by Government parasites with fabulous salaries, fattening profiteers, and the rag, tag, and bobtail of stay-at-homes. The marvel is that this kind of newspaper stuff proved to be palatable to the taste of certain individuals in high places, governing their course of action at almost every turn; so much so that in proportion as Prodotes Egoman's popularity was waning with the intelligent masses, his influence and power in one place at least seemed to reach no limit over the minds of a notorious type of politicians.

As might have been expected, one of the annoying things that excited the journalistic wrath of the *Zodiac* and its "signs" was the mystery which still surrounded the whereabouts of Karl von Wachsam, alias Sir Carolius Wideawake. This was a string upon which they did not cease to harp for many months. The scribes who were hired to manufacture crudely sensational "copy" for these daily prints were petulantly calling for the summary dismissal from office of every detective in the force, and urging their replace-

ment by more alert and competent men whom Prodotes Egoman was only too eager to nominate. It was even insinuated by one of the minor "signs" in its afternoon edition—issued at four o'clock with all the war news in advance up to "six-thirty"—that if "its" advice had been acted upon, no doubt the elusive spy would long since have been captured! Fortunately for the true welfare of the British Empire, all responsible officials outside the two Houses of Parliament were far too cute to be influenced in the least degree by these impatient journalistic hysterics, being confident no doubt that the arch-spy of Späher-schloss would sooner or later turn up in some unexpected place in an equally unexpected manner. Meanwhile one or two of his associates in crime had been run to earth, tried, and shot; but, so far as was known to the public, none of these accomplices had imparted any information such as might afford a clue to the hiding-place of their chief. What knowledge was actually in the possession of the military authorities at this time is another story.

CHAPTER XVII

“Orthodoxy, my lord, is my *doxy*, and heterodoxy
is another man’s *doxy*.”

—*Thomas Warburton.*

IT was the second anniversary of Great Britain’s declaration of war against Germany; and the event was celebrated in solemn fashion at meetings promoted by the “National Mission of Repentance and Hope.” Albanium, an ecclesiastical centre, was naturally in the swim. Albanium is an important city of the Home Counties, having in its vicinity, on the one side, an extensive military camp, and, on the other, great military hospitals. Its largest public building is the City Hall, and this was hired for a “united” service on the appointed day. All the local clergy were invited to attend, likewise “orthodox” Nonconformist leaders and even some “heterodox” divines the odour of whose heresy had not reached the conveners. Hence the innocent appearance of the name of the Rev. Obadiah Truedyn, M.A., of Saltlake, among the local notabilities announced to support the chairman, the Very Reverend Dean Pengwinn. The occasion was to be unique in the annals of the city, no minister of religion whose name appeared in the local directory being overlooked. It was therefore but natural that hundreds of intelligent and thoughtful soldiers in the camps and hospitals around should be more or less interested.

To one of the latter, at all events, it was a matter of intense gratification to read on the announcement posters the name of Truedyn; and for this, if for no

other reason, Private Morrisson, together with a score or two of his wounded comrades, decided to attend. Morrisson, who was a University graduate (though it was not generally known among his pals), had seen active service, having had one of his arms blown off on the battlefield. Before enlisting, he was pastor of a congregation, and in fact an alumnus of the same college as Truedyn, whom he knew well.

"The appearance of Mr. Truedyn on the same platform as a Dean could hardly have been possible before the war," said Morrisson to his companions whilst on their way to the "united" service.

"Why," came the quick response, "isn't he as good as a Dean?"

"Well," said Morrisson, "it is not a question of goodness, but a matter of 'orthodoxy' or 'heterodoxy'—"

"Quite right, Morrisson," said several voices at once; "we all understand what these Sunday words mean!"

"It is like this, you see, Truedyn lives in a different religious atmosphere, belongs to a different school of thought, and works for human improvement on entirely different lines from the Dean, and probably from most ministers of religion, about here at any rate."

"Doesn't he believe in Christianity, then?"

"Everything depends upon your definition of Christianity. This I know—he believes, and tries to live up to, the religion of Jesus, which perhaps is a different story."

“If he holds views similar to yours, Morrisson, he can't be a bad sort,” commented another of the party.

“In which case,” said a third, “he doesn't believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ.”

“Oh yes, he does, but not in his *deity*—a very different thing. He holds views which are rational, and quite in accord with known scientific truths.”

“Then if the chaps organising this ‘united’ service knew more about Truedyn,” suggested one of the Tommies, “they would never have invited him?”

“I don't know about that,” replied Morrisson. “You see, this war has made some difference. Some of the old prejudices against ‘heretics’ are passing away, and superstitious barriers between good men are crumbling down in view of the terrible conditions of to-day.”

“Don't you be too sure about that——”

The conversation was abruptly interrupted at this point, when our party was overtaken by a number of other soldiers going in the same direction. Cigarettes were exchanged, and the talk was in lighter vein.

* * * *

The City Hall was crowded, soldiers greatly outnumbering civilians. The Dean took the chair, and on the rostrum was a galaxy of clerics and ministers of various denominations. To the minute, the Chairman called upon a young curate from a neighbouring village to consecrate the proceedings with prayer. The latter rose in his place, and the vast audience reverently

assumed the customary attitude during public prayer. But instead of words of prayer, the curate said in a loud voice——

“ Mr. Dean, it is as impossible as it would be improper for me to offer prayer by the side of one on this platform who openly denies the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ !”

Every head was instantly up, and all eyes fixed on the platform. The Dean appeared thunderstruck, doubtless thinking that the allusion was to himself, consistently ‘orthodox’ though he knew himself to be. He rose, turned to the array of divines and distinguished laymen on the rostrum, and appealed to the curate to explain this staggering affront.

“ On my way hither, sir,” said the raw curate, “ I overheard a soldier telling others wearing his Majesty’s uniform that Mr. Truedyn, who occupies a place on this platform at this moment, does not believe in the deity of our blessed Lord Jesus; he therefore denies the inspiration of God’s Word, and is heterodox on the doctrine of the blessed Trinity.”

Instantly there was indescribable uproar among the audience—cat-calls, whistling, squeaking, and singing. The Dean stood up, raised both his hands and appealed for order. Several soldiers, including Morrisson, tried to speak. It was useless. The scene was that of a pandemonium. Ultimately, in sheer despair, the Dean vacated the chair and departed, being quickly followed by most of his supporters, Truedyn and two or three others only remaining, one being a popular local Tradesman of the nonconforming

evangelical persuasion. Most of the civilians also took their exit from the body of the hall.

Presently, soldiers began to shout "Chair—Truedyn—chair! Truedyn to the chair!" The old gentleman, evidently overwhelmed with astonishment, obeyed the call, but when he tried to speak, he was shaking with emotion, and at once called upon one of the remaining laymen on the platform to say a few words to the soldiers.

With great alacrity the Tradesman responded, obviously proud of the distinction and swelling with his own importance.

"My friends," said he, "this is unfortunate. But we must have our united service. We are here to thank God that we are alive and for all the good things we enjoy. We must repent of our sins, and ask forgiveness. But all we have to do is to believe in the blood of Jesus. For you see, Jesus paid it all——"

"*Did he?*" came a chorus of cries from a number of incredulous soldiers in the body of the hall, followed by more jeers and laughter.

"Half a mo, comrades!" shouted one, "let me put a plain question to him. If Jesus Christ paid it all, then why are we called upon to pay with our limbs or our lives now? In other words, if Jesus paid it all, why did this war come?"

Loud applause signified a general assent to the relevancy of the question. And as the Tradesman on the platform who had made the assertion did not seem disposed to answer, every uniformed man in the audience again clapped enthusiastically.

Private Morrisson was again on his feet, and order restored. In dignified and refined tones, he begged to be allowed to say a word or two on this vital question whether "Jesus paid it all," seeing that unwittingly he was the origin of the unseemly incident at the outset, but had not been given an opportunity to explain or to refute the unfounded charge made against his dear old friend who was now in the chair.

"Platform! Platform!" cried numerous voices. And Morrisson at once seized his opportunity. The moment he faced the audience there was tense silence.

"Comrades," he began, "you see that I have already done my bit, as many of you have. Others of you have still your bit to do. We have all to pay something. If the friend who declared just now that 'Jesus paid it all' had been in the thick of the fighting and had lost a limb, this flippant ecclesiastical phrase would soon have proved itself meaningless to him, as it has done to thousands of us. A bullet from an enemy rifle or a stab with an enemy bayonet has pricked many a theological bubble, among others this fiction of the vicarious atonement of the death of Christ, or that 'Jesus paid it all!' I tell you without the slightest hesitation that Jesus did nothing of the kind!" Again there was prolonged applause.

Morrisson was about to step down and return to his place in the audience, when he was pushed back amid deafening shouts of "Go on, Morrisson, Go on, Morrisson!" The Chairman was on his feet appealing for silence once more; but it seemed hopeless to restore order until Morrisson again faced the audience. It was an extraordinary scene at what had been

organised as a "united" service. No doubt a "united" service it would have been, as originally intended by the conveners, had not a bigoted, ignorant, arrogant, narrow-minded, small-spirited but "orthodox" Anglican cleric declined to pray beside a "heterodox" Nonconformist. As the sequel proved, however, what began with cursing ended with a blessing.

Morrisson put up his only hand, and the effect was electrical. He asked the soldiers to join him in the Lord's Prayer, which they all did in a reverent attitude and spirit. Then, "Now, Comrades," he said, "you have asked me to 'go on,' although I have already said what I had intended. But if you insist on an impromptu address from me on the text provided by a previous speaker, I will say something, necessarily in a crude fashion. Now, to give me a moment in which to collect my thoughts, shall we sing together that grand old hymn 'O God, our Help in ages past.'"

Instantly a soldier at the piano struck the familiar tune, and the whole assembly rose and sang as perhaps they had never sung before the great words of a great hymn. Then Morrisson pulled himself together, and proceeded, as follows :—

"Comrades in the Great War, I would not dare to stand before you to speak in this place had you not urged me to do so. Now, will you give me a fair hearing, and not interrupt me?"

"First of all, then, we have been told that 'Jesus paid it all!' Some of you have noticed that legend printed in large type upon a notice-board outside a hut in the camp not many hundred yards away from this place, together with an invitation to all and sundry to step inside and 'be saved.' *Jesus paid it all!*—that was

the cheerful little refrain which some of us used to sing at evangelistic meetings in happier days. Sometimes we sang it gratefully; sometimes thoughtlessly. Thoughtlessly, no doubt, more often than otherwise. If we reflected at all, perhaps we believed that Jesus *did* pay 'it' all. But now that little 'it' has enlarged, and we have discovered that we ourselves must pay for a great deal that we receive from life. We have learnt, many of us, that most of the desirable things in life have their price, and that if we gain them we must needs pay a price for them.

"For instance, friendship is almost as necessary for us as the oxygen in the air we breathe. But friendship must be paid for! It must be paid for in kind. Although men and women of wealth can surround themselves with listeners and flatterers—with what has been called 'salaried attendance'—yet in order to gain real friends, who share your life and would stand by you in adversity, you must pay the price, which is love, sympathy, devotion, and service. Nothing less will purchase it. And no one else, not even a noble soul like Jesus, can pay that price *instead* of you. You must pay it yourself!

"Again, many people try to gain health without paying the price in self-restraint, patience, and judgment. Such people bargain with a physician, and seek their goal by some short cut. They expect to build themselves into physical strength, by some sort of magic, in a day or a week. They consume bottles of panacea mixture, and refuse to walk in the plain rugged path which leads to health. They are wilfully, self-indulgently bent upon paying only the price which they themselves have designated. But Nature will take payment in no coin save that upon which her own image is stamped. Nor will she accept payment from any one else but the person immediately concerned. That is a price which even Jesus never paid and never could pay!

"Many parents desire to have their children grow up into noble manhood and womanhood, and are ready

to pay the kind of price which they choose to name such. They provide nurses and governesses, day-schools and Sunday-schools, and they think they will secure what they have aimed at. But the only coin whose outputting can raise up children into creditable maturity, which can pay for intelligence and sincerity and nobility in unfolding young natures, is parental love, sympathy, patience, self-restraint, loyalty to truth, application, and breadth of view over the whole of life. These characteristics, incarnated in a father or mother or both, and incorporated in the family life—these are the pound notes, the 'fives' and 'tens' and 'twenties,' which pay for the manhood and womanhood of the growing generation. Jesus did not and could not pay that for the parents of to-day!

“There are some people who seek wealth. Yet even this must be paid for. The young clerk or salesman or mechanic becomes impatient with the slow accretions of his savings. He envies the rich men about him. He tries to gain wealth by some 'get-rich-quick' method. He seeks to evade payment in terms of frugality, patience, close application, and persevering toil, and attempts to climb the ladder of prosperity in some other way than by stepping from rung to rung. He copies the tricks of unscrupulous profit-mongers or listens to the seductive voice which conveys tips of certainty. Or he clutches at the phantom of wild-cat investments. He wanders from the clear, plain path of duty and honest effort, is dazzled by some rainbow speculation, and hopes to find at the base of the rainbow the fabled pot of gold. Usually he fails; often he passes into despair. He has sought to gain something without paying its price in the proper coin. Jesus never paid for him!

“Likewise with what is called 'success in life.' This is a desideratum which all covet, more or less keenly; but few are willing to pay for success in the only coin which will buy it. Here and there, perhaps, some brilliant genius comes along and gets to his goal with but little apparent effort. But geniuses of this type are rare;

among the truly successful men hard workers are the rule. Occasionally there are men who seem to sail into the Garden of the Hesperides with but slight effort, while other mariners toil hard with oars and sail; these favourites of Fortune appear to be borne along, by the very currents of the sea, to the plucking of the golden apples. Yet a closer inspection of their gracefully-garlanded craft will reveal the hidden screw-propeller of tireless and ceaseless effort. Nearly always you will find, if you take the trouble to look, that successful geniuses toil terribly—they are great labourers, untiring plodders—they pay the price of their success, and grudge not the cost of their victories. For these, Jesus never paid.

“It is precisely the same in the higher realms of the spirit. Here too the human soul must pay for its pearls and palms. James Russell Lowell was only following the fancy and fervour of the moment when he declared—

“For cap and bells our lives we pay,
 Baubles we buy with a whole soul's tasking;
 'Tis Heaven alone that is given away,
 'Tis only God may be had for the asking !”

But, Comrades, be not deluded! Heaven is *not* given away without a price. To gain Immortality you must pay the price, and that price is absolute consecration to the Highest and Best, so that you can say, as Jesus could say, ‘I and the Father are one.’ This is the only qualification for Heaven. The fullness of the knowledge of God is not to be gained by the mere prayer of a pulse-throb. Jesus has not purchased even this for us! We must all pay the price ourselves. The saints and martyrs of old knew this perfectly well. Jesus himself knew it. When he petitioned in Gethsemane, his prayer of anguish was only a final prayer of many prayers of spiritual communion and self-consecration. Jesus paid for *himself alone*, thereby showing that we too must pay.

“Do you remember how, in that little Gospel story, the mother of Zebedee's children requested the Master to allow them to share in his glory? It was a casual request—as simple as it was motherly. It seemed quite

natural, and was just the kind of request that thoughtless mothers often make. But the lesson of the story is in the Master's reply—it is as pointed as it is dignified: 'If these young men wish to share my glory, can they drink of my cup of sorrow, and enter into my baptism of suffering?' Here Jesus was really setting before that loving mother the only price at which the desired glory could be bought. Jesus could not pay it for these young men. Nor has he paid it for you and me, Comrades! Jesus does not pay for our advances in character and our achievements in service. He does not pay one jot or one tittle of the price of sacrifice for conscience sake or of the devotion to stern duty which is or has been or will be demanded of each one of us.

"As we have witnessed only this very evening in this city hall, there are men and women who seek the consolations of religion, who desire to find the rock of faith upon which they may plant their weary feet. But they will not pay the price—the price of love and sympathy and helpful fellowship. There are some who are willing to pay in the coin of the realm for priests to pray for them, for clergymen to think for them; they will pay colleges to honour them and beneficent institutions to hand their names down to posterity; these they readily pay. But the sacrifice of self, of preconceived notions, of sect or of party, they will not make. Jesus they say, has 'paid it all!' Jesus struggled, suffered, and died, that *they* might live! I tell you that a greater delusion never possessed the mind of man!

"Comrades, if Jesus struggled, and suffered, and died for principles in which he believed, which he was convinced would, if adopted, help this struggling, suffering, sinning human world, he did it not *instead* or on behalf of any of us, but *that we too might have faith and courage and will to struggle and suffer and die for principles whose application we believe will eventually save the many from miseries brought upon them by the greedy, selfish, ambitious few who will not pay the price.* The humbling of the spirit, the eviction of hatred and malice

and grabbing greed from the heart—these are the price of peace of soul, the price of a vital faith in a living God. But this price the selfish few will not pay. Nor has Jesus paid it for them.

“There are to-day, Comrades—and our venerable Chairman will understand me when I say this—there are to-day, believe me, in the free and creedless Church which has my adherence many ministers and laymen who rejoice in their freedom among men and their confidence before the face of the Eternal; but many of these bought their freedom and fearless sincerity with a great price. They have withstood the blandishments of an effete theology—the theology of sectarianism, the theology of that type of ‘orthodoxy’ which is too limited, too small, too narrow, too mean to be able to express its aspirations in prayer alongside of a nobler spirit who has thrown away the shackles of official ecclesiasticism and the tyranny of professional priestcraft. They have dared to count themselves companions of the plain but honest man who often stands upon the scaffold whilst painted Wrong lolls upon a throne! They have paid the price; and because they have paid the price they have their treasure. In the silent watches of the night their hearts do not condemn them, and in the day-time they walk freely with God—as all men can walk who have known and loved the truth, and whom the truth has made free.

“Comrades, in conclusion, let me remind you of a little story which you will find in your pocket Testament, but upon which perhaps few of you have ever reflected. It is about debtors who had nothing to pay. As if a man’s debt could be wiped off by merely forgiving it! Jesus knew better; and the story he tells his hearers is very touching—he assures them that even *forgiveness* must be paid for. And the price of forgiveness is love. ‘Seest thou this woman?’ he said to thoughtless Simon. ‘I entered thine house—thou gavest me no water for my feet; but *she* has wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but *she*, since I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet!

My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but *she* hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her; for she loved much.' The price of forgiveness is love—which each one must pay for himself. Jesus did NOT pay it ALL."

The speaker sat down amid profound and reverent silence. There was not a whisper. No one dared to clap. No one ventured to ask a question. After a minute or two, the first note of the Doxology was struck, and the crowd rose as one man. Never was such singing heard in Albanium. After this, the Rev. Obadiah Truedyn pronounced the Benediction, thus—"May the spirit of all Thy best children in all ages and lands—the spirit of divine sonship and human brotherhood—be with us all, making us one in faith, one in hope, one in love, one in worship, one in service, one with Thee, now and for ever more."

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Outside the hall after this truly "united" service, various little groups of civilians and soldiers discussed the address of Private Morrisson, many of the men in khaki expressing the hope that they might have another opportunity of hearing him again before they were off to the Front. The only adverse criticism came from the Prosperous Tradesman who had volunteered to address the meeting, but whose very crude remarks had been interrupted almost at the outset.

"It is all very well, gentlemen," he protested, pompously, "for old Truedyn and that one-armed soldier who spoke, to boast that *they* belong to a 'free' church which has no creed and no dogmas! But a

church of that type does not and cannot save souls ; all it can do is to preach a series of denials.”

“Look here, my good friend,” said a young soldier, “you do not know what you are talking about. You are simply repeating like a parrot what you have heard from some stripling of a curate or some fanatical evangelist. Let me tell you that I was myself brought up in a church such as that to which Private Morrisson alluded, and I can vouch for the truth of what he said.”

“What church is that?” inquired the Tradesman.

“Why, the Church of the Open Way !”

“I never heard of it ! Where is it ?”

“Never mind *where* it is. The point is what it stands for and what it teaches.”

“It seems to me,” observed a second soldier, who had seen active service, and had been wounded, “that there are those who would fain imagine that since the war broke out all theological differences and sectarian hatreds have been put to rest. But from personal observation, and experience of people with whom one is occasionally brought into touch in this town—curiously confirmed by the conduct of that curate and this gentleman to-night—so far as one can see, the leaders of what is called ‘orthodoxy’ were never more bitter against liberal-minded folks or what they call ‘heretics,’ than they are at the present time.”

“Mate,” said the soldier who had first spoken, “they hate us with a hatred born of bigotry. And yet with all our hearts we love them in return. At least we try to. But just now we are all living in a time when the fighting blood is boiling in our veins.”

When the Prosperous Tradesman heard this allusion to "fighting," he curtly bade good night to the little crowd, and beat a hurried retreat, to the intense amusement of the soldiers, who laughed most heartily. The soldier who had first spoken, however, had not yet finished, and the others were obviously eager to hear what more he had to say, for although his point of view was somewhat new to them, they somehow felt themselves in agreement with him, seeing that he agreed with the point of view of Truedyn and Morrisson.

"We liberal Christians," said he, "that is to say, the people who consistently hold views like those of Mr. Truedyn and Private Morrisson, have never been advocates of fighting for fighting's sake. Nor on the other hand have we ever cared for peace at any price. We believe in taking up our stand for righteousness, for fair play, and the square deal. For a century and more, we have been strenuously fighting, with the sword of the spirit, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith—for the very principles of liberty and justice on behalf of which we men are at the present moment called to fight with rifle and cannon."

"But," said one of the company, "you cannot call yourselves religious people if you don't believe in the Bible, in Christ, and in God?"

"Well, this opens up a big question, which I am afraid it would take me too long to try to explain. You see, the fact of the matter is, that people who accuse us of these denials are absolutely and hopelessly ignorant of our position. Their only guide in criticising us is prejudice, or sectarian hatred. In the

nature of things, as liberal thinkers, we are interested in every honest and fair criticism of our religious faith—our love of Jesus, our reverence for the Bible, and our trust in the justice and goodness of God. For one of the rights which we have always claimed for ourselves, and extend to our opponents, is the right of criticism, which is surely a phase of the right of private judgment, of freedom, of reason, and of conscience.”

“Then,” said one who had not spoken before, “that fat gentleman was right in saying that these free churches of which you speak do not save souls?”

“I cannot speak for anyone else, or for any of our liberal churches. I can speak only for myself, simply as one who believes in the mission of these churches. But it seems to me that the popular phrase ‘saving of souls’ can hardly be applied with any fairness to the thought and purpose of these churches. For in the evangelical view of things, that phrase has had a meaning which it cannot have, and never had, to a majority of the people who habitually attend the churches to which I refer. In their whole philosophy of the present life, and their outlook upon the life to come, they differ radically from all schools of what is called evangelicalism. Any such views of God, of Jesus, of Atonement, of heaven and hell, as are usually presented by the so-called ‘orthodox’ churches, have no place and no meaning in our teaching. Our free and liberal and open churches exist simply because there are thousands of people who do not and can not believe in the current evangelical philosophy of life and death. They do not and can not accept the

teaching that the universe is constructed on the 'plan of salvation' laid down in the set creeds of Christendom. And I know many noble and devout souls to whom Jesus Christ does not in any sense whatever stand providentially as the only and indispensable factor in the salvation of the human race."

"You admit, then," said two speakers at once, "that the preachers of this religion are not out to save souls?"

"Can't you see," protested another, speaking for the first time, "that they are not out so much to *save* souls as to *make* souls worth saving?"

With this witty observation the whole company seemed entirely to agree. It appeared for the moment to have clinched the argument in favour of the liberal-minded soldier. But, evidently encouraged by this apparent agreement, another soldier, probably the oldest among the group, said: "Comrades, before we go, may I put in my say?"

"Certainly!" was the answer, in chorus; "say on, mate."

"Well, then," said he, "we have been told to-night that the Church to which Truedyn, and Morrisson, and our young friend here belong, is not 'saving souls.' I am prompted to ask: What convincing evidence is there that *any* of the 'orthodox' churches are saving souls? In the view of the glaring municipal corruption, the oppression and greed of great landlords and land proprietors, employers, company promoters, financiers, and all sorts of social tyrants who amass big fortunes at the expense of their

fellows—in view of the frequent exposures of the moral rottenness of leading politicians, big combines, and the revelations of the law courts—what evidence is there that these men are ‘saved’? What evidence is there that the aristocrats who are members of good standing in the Anglican and the evangelical churches and live and thrive on the poverty of the poor—what evidence is there that these people are ‘saved’? For if *salvation* does not mean a new and adequate conscience, a new life, a new man, a new citizen, its genuineness is hopelessly discounted. I tell you, Comrades, Jesus was right—a man may gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul. Is there not the same danger with regard to churches? The policy of the evangelical churches has all along been to gain the whole world—are they sure that they have not already lost their own soul in their effort to gain more than they can hold? What do you say to that?”

The question was greeted with unanimous and prolonged applause. And thus encouraged, the speaker resumed, with added confidence: “The editorial pages of our *best* daily papers may perhaps be taken as a fair reflection of the general intelligence and moral sense of the country, and even before this war these had been for a long time showing that among thoughtful people the evangelical philosophy of life was utterly discredited. For the truth is, that the bulk of men and women do *not* believe that souls are lost without acceptance of the ‘orthodox’ theory regarding the Christ of the creeds. I know it is sometimes said that the whole ground of evangelical theology has changed, and that now the goal of salvation and of religious effort is a new conscience, a new life, a new citizenship,

a new man. But if this be so, we have a right to ask: What conclusive evidence is there that the preaching of evangelical theology to-day is effective in that direction? I submit, then—although till to-night I never thought I was a religious man—that it would be well for the so-called ‘orthodox’ sects to consider the *beam* in their own eye before being so eager to pluck the *mote* from the eye of the ‘heterodox’ religion of men like Mr. Truedyn, Morrisson, and our comrade here.’

Again there was hand-clapping. The soldier who first spoke was once more urged to say something, although it was getting late. “Well,” said he, “I can only say this: Let us liberal and free religious thinkers have the same chance as the ‘orthodox’ churches have had. How much have the latter contributed to the making of good citizens in proportion to their numbers and opportunities? The widespread lack of the ethical or moral sense in public life, in places of trust, in civic management, in national politics high and low, whose fruits we are reaping to-day to the disgrace of the national Church and the scandal of so-called ‘Christian’ civilisation—all this has grown up and thriven side by side with the enormous growth of all the ‘orthodox’ churches of this and other lands. And the conclusion the world is arriving at is, that so-called ‘orthodox’ Christianity is a huge, hopeless, complete failure. Something else will have to be tried! After this great War, there is going to be an enormous reaction and a general revulsion of popular feeling against the current interpretation of Christianity. Already many people are beginning to think, and are asking *whether this is the way in which the ‘orthodox’ churches of Christendom are ‘saving souls.’*”

The remark provoked laughter, and the company dispersed. The soldiers wended their way in two's, three's, and four's, some towards the camp, some towards the hospital, others in the direction of the various Army huts. But the subject of the "united" service and the open-air discussion formed the topic of conversation between the men on many a subsequent occasion. One diligent scribe located at the camp kept a record of comments heard among his comrades, and he put them at the disposal of the narrator of these events. Here is a selection :—

"The production of a new conscience; a new citizen, a new type of related human society, of a righteous social man, or a man righteous in social relationship—this has never been fundamental, nor in any conspicuous degree incidental, to 'orthodox' Christianity. It has all along been *assumed*, and is still assumed, that if you can only succeed in 'converting' men to the point of view of the standard theology, the rest will take care of itself. But to-day, we see only too plainly that this line of religious work has been not only barren of good results, but fruitful of results that are *destructive*. It has not succeeded, and never will succeed. And there is a good reason why."

* * * *

"Men and women are social beings. They are members of one another. They are fractions—whether they know it or not, of a larger social unity, functions of the social organism which is the basis of the moral and spiritual life. A righteous human society—which can be seen with the naked eye and felt with the naked conscience of ordinary men—is a more necessary religious symbol, a more available and effective moral and spiritual motive-power, than any sort of conformity to ecclesiasticism and set creeds."

* * * *

“The saving of souls is something more than the preservation of ghosts. It is the making of personalities, in which the sense of immortality may really be born. Hence the question of importance is, not What is some future world going to do to these millions of human souls around us?—but What is this earthly existence going to do to them and for them?”

* * * *

“He must have a very small thought of religion who imagines that its claims are being adequately presented to the minds and hearts and consciences of men and women on one day out of every seven in the antiquated teaching of the evangelical churches and temples of our land! The ministry of religion is incomparably larger than any outward symbols or forms of public worship can express. It must be the ministry of every national, political, social, and commercial relationship, of all the economic structure of our human life, of the various occupations in which men and women are permitted or compelled to expend their daily energies of body and mind. No town, city, state, or nation is morally tolerable unless it is frankly religious in this sense.”

* * * *

“You tell me that this is not the Christian view of history. I care nothing whether it is or not. But I believe the time must come when all history will have to be interpreted on these lines. For if it is not seen to be at least human, so-called Christian history must be largely a story of moral and spiritual disappointment.”

* * * *

“Any religion which is intellectually conceivable must be all-inclusive theoretically, while its material symbol must be universal in its scope.”

* * * *

“Of one thing I personally feel sure—that is neither the true Church of God nor the real Church of Man which leaves one human soul, good or bad, outside its pale. That is not worthy to be called a religious faith which is not easily available for every human child. So long as—either in theory or in practice—religion is held to be a ‘mystery’ which only ordained priests can interpret, and into which ordinary men and women must be ‘initiated’ by mystical rites and set ceremonials, so long will it continue to be a synonym of impotence and an object of scorn to every seriously thoughtful individual.”

* * * *

“We are learning, slowly it is true, that we cannot have a real democracy unless we have it in all the business and occupations of life; sooner or later we shall learn likewise that we cannot have genuine religion until it is made the meaning and inspiration of all our daily thoughts and daily tasks.”

* * * *

“I was struck by what our friend said the other night, that the aim of religion, as he conceived it, was not so much the saving of souls as to make souls worth saving. It is, as I understand it, to make men and women what men and women ought to be and are capable of becoming—and to bring life into its normal fulfilment and human relations into a state of universal brotherhood. That seems to me the highest purpose of religion; and if I were a clergyman I should have no desire to save souls in any other sense.”

CHAPTER XVIII

“’Tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar!”

—*Shakespeare.*

PATRICK O'DOOLEY had sufficiently recovered from the effects of his wounds to be able to return across the Channel so as to re-join his battalion serving at the Western Front. He was now a corporal; and was temporarily discharging responsible duties with the guard of an internment camp not many miles behind the firing line.

One fine day early in the third year of the Great War, no sooner had a batch of recently-captured German prisoners been brought into safe custody than a military automobile drove up to one of the sentry posts that were practically in the charge of Corporal O'Dooley. The car contained an English officer of high rank, accompanied by a civilian whose outward appearance and general bearing conveyed the impression that he was some individual of distinction if not of authority. This notability attracted much attention to himself. He wore a well-fitting Norfolk jacket, knee breeches, and brown leggings with a pair of elaborately-punched brown boots to match; while on his head he had a cap somewhat resembling the conventional tourist style, but of a unique pattern. There was indeed something about his aspect which suggested to the close observer that he was neither an Englishman nor a Frenchman, not even a blend of the two, while his short pointed

beard—surmounted by a monkey's lick and a clean-shaven upper lip—was calculated to tell a tale of its own to any curious but silent inquisitor. Of such there were not a few about the camp, and every decent Tommy treated them with contempt mingled with suspicion.

Formally challenged by the sentry, officer and civilian just as formally produced their credentials, and with due observance of military rules and etiquette were escorted round the camp, where the civilian, who could speak German, was afforded every facility to make inspections and converse freely with the prisoners, noting down what they told him. The half-dazed Huns stared at their visitor with unconcealed curiosity; indeed, as it subsequently transpired, some of them at first sight concluded that he was none other than the King of England, a delusion which no doubt was soon dissipated when they had a hint of the real truth of his nefarious mission from one or two of their more keen-witted fellow-captives.

Having completed their peregrination among the prisoners, the civilian and his escort stood a while beside their car outside the camp, apparently engaged in the discussion of some matter of secrecy. It was now, in particular, that the somewhat strange, not to say grotesque attire and attitude of the civilian notability attracted the attention of the soldiers on guard, whose unspoken comments and suppressed jeers were by no means complimentary.

Obedying a word of command from the Colonel, Corporal O'Dooley approached the officer and saluted

in right military fashion, subsequently answering some questions put to him by the former with that frankness and freedom which are eminently characteristic of the often misunderstood Irish race. When, however, the civilian asked him about the number of prisoners brought into the camp that day, Pat's demeanour underwent a wonderful change, although this transformation of outward attitude did but bring into still greater prominence some of the sterling qualities of his true Irish soul. For, the moment the subaltern's interrogator opened his mouth to speak, the hardy Irishman shuddered visibly; while instead of answering his question he stared blankly into the man's glaring eyes as if he had been suddenly struck speechless. Then, to the utter amazement and discomfiture of the Colonel, O'Dooley scrutinised the object in front of him from face to foot; and as he in a second afterwards glanced towards his superior officer, the latter was still more amazed to observe that Pat was actually smiling. Nor did it need an expert reader of thought to discern that Patrick's smile on this occasion was a smile produced by the feeling of contempt.

For an instant the Colonel seemed to hesitate whether to indulge in an uproarious laugh, or otherwise to vent his soul to the utmost limit of his military vocabulary; but no less instinctively than swiftly he adopted the second alternative as being presumably the only proper course open to him if he were consistently to discharge his high duties and preserve his dignity in the estimation of subordinates. Besides, how was the officer to know whether O'Dooley's indubitable contempt was inspired by

himself or the other man? However, the Colonel summoned all the sternness at his command and spoke in his gruffest voice, pointing out to the Corporal that the gentleman present was an *eminent American citizen* who, as a neutral, had been touring in Germany, was in fact commissioned by his Majesty's Government to obtain certain information, and was moreover acting in the capacity of a correspondent for a group of great British newspapers. If, declared the Colonel, the Corporal did not choose to answer him without further nonsense, he would render himself liable to condign punishment.

Neither this explanation of the strange man's tremendous importance nor the Colonel's implied threat seemed to affect in the least degree the Irishman's comical attitude. But with the coolness of a cucumber he actually dared to invite the officer to retire with him but a few paces, saying that he would impart a bit of information that would stagger him!

To this piece of audacity the Colonel replied in an outburst of unprintable eloquence; and with a thundering oath threatened the "insolent Paddy" either with a charge from his pistol or a taste of the edge of his sword! Nor was there now any possibility of misapprehending the reality of the Colonel's wrath; he obviously meant what he said—at least that was the impression he made on the minds of the soldiers within hearing.

"An' shure yer honour whon't spill the precious blood of Ould Oireland without any rasonable rason!" objected Pat, speaking in tones indicative not of

actual defiance but of intense disgust, yet still retaining his smile of supreme contempt for the civilian gent whom he once more surveyed the whole length, and the cynical glare in whose eyes was not lost upon him. "For truth Oi be tellin' yer Honour," he added, "declinin' Oi am the bethraial of Ould England to a blarney Jurrmun spoi!"

Swayed apparently by ungovernable rage, the Colonel emitted a second series of imprecatory adjectives and unparliamentary epithets, declaring that if this was not an act of insubordination deserving of the death penalty without the formality of court-martial, he knew not what he was! He ordered the instant arrest of Corporal O'Dooley!

At this unhappy juncture the civilian affected the airs of one indeed wielding authority. He appealed to the magnanimity of the Colonel, pleaded for leniency on behalf of the "deluded, superstitious, and hot-headed Irishman," whose real grit he professed to admire no less than his "loyalty to King and country!" And as the military escort was approaching to remove the recalcitrant Corporal, the civilian notability produced from his waistcoat pocket a small ivory card, and, with great dignity, as if saying "See who I am!" held it before O'Dooley's eyes.

The latter, with a contemptuous laugh, glanced at the card—which bore the name "LETTIM DUPEM"—snatched it from the man's hand, tore it into shreds and threw them with a curse into his face.

At that moment soldiers with fixed bayonets were given the word of command to march off with

the prisoner, who shouted at the top of a voice less sonorous than humorous—

“ An’ bejabez, yer honour can shure tell phwot Oi be thinkin’ ’boot a sham praste blatherin’ to a Jurrmun cratur in hospital an’ sez ‘Wosenquoits!’ ”

Dupem laughed out loudly at this unaccountable flow of Irishisms. But the sequel proved for him less humorous than awkward. On the other hand, the Colonel’s wrath was visibly and rapidly undergoing the process of cooling into a state of sheer bewilderment. More so as he perceived the diabolical contortions of the countenance of the sardonically-grinning personage before him.

The soldiers and their prisoner had not advanced many yards when the Colonel suddenly called a halt ! Yet he appeared completely at a loss—what orders to give next, the soldiers looking equally puzzled. Without another word, he took out a tiny memorandum book and rapidly turned over the leaves as if searching for a forgotten entry. It may have seemed to him a long time, but less than half-a-minute elapsed ere he appeared to have discovered what he wanted, and with that discovery his face turned ashy pale.

“ Mr. Dupem ! ” he said, in a voice low and tremulous, “ can you offer an explanation ? ”

“ In what way, Colonel ? ” inquired the other, sneeringly.

“ Why, sir, ” retorted the officer, now in a voice more firm and pitched in a higher key, the colour returning to his face and his eyes flashing fire—“ Why, sir, the import of that strange word just spoken by the man under arrest ! ”

Dupem grinned like a gargoyle as he attempted to evade the point, saying, "Perhaps the deluded Corporal has a good store of Irish whiskey by him!"

"Release the Corporal!" commanded the Colonel, in a tone of voice which curiously contrasted with his previous orders. "Dupem!" he added, sternly, at the same time signalling to Corporal O'Dooley and the soldiers—who but a few seconds previously had arrested and then released the Corporal himself—"Dupem! I place you under arrest!"

Throughout all this predicament, the Corporal never for a moment lost control of either his nerves or his wits, while now he seemed to grasp the situation with an intelligence that would have done credit to a well-trained and experienced detective. The astounded Tommies, however, no doubt felt as bewildered as they looked in consequence of this dramatic, and, to them, inexplicable turn of events.

* * * *

The suspect having been duly searched and relieved of a small revolver and certain incriminating documents found concealed in the lining of his jacket, was lodged in security pending communication with the headquarters staff.

Meanwhile Colonel and Corporal held a private confab with a view to discovering how far they understood each other and to justify the drastic course finally adopted on the responsibility of the officer. Yet the Colonel felt convinced in his own mind that in taking that course he had wisely acted in consequence of clearly apprehending the meaning of O'Dooley's

strange behaviour but a few minutes previously. That O'Dooley felt equally positive that the supposed priest, whom he had heard whispering a mystic word to the wounded, and this alleged American citizen were in reality one and the same individual, and a spy at that, left no room for doubt. The moment the word was given to release him, the Corporal understood that suspicion of treason had flashed like lightning across the Officer's mind. Yet probably neither of them dreamed for a moment that there had all along been going on between their respective mental apparatus anything in the nature of thought-transference—perhaps neither had ever heard even of the possibility of such a psychological process as telepathy.

Be that as it may, the Colonel had the whole matter very soon cleared up for him so far as it concerned O'Dooley. Nor was the sudden flash of suspicion which had arisen in the Officer's own mind and so quickly developed into firm conviction, any more difficult to account for. He had heard a version of O'Dooley's story from another source. It had formed the tail end, as it were, of a still more weird recital, the romantic details of which had been instantly recalled by the Corporal's quaint utterance of that magic word *Rosenkreuz*.

The solution is simple. The Colonel happened to have been one of the two officers who, many months previously, had treated but too lightly a hint given by an intelligent nurse at a base hospital—a hint which in the light of the present incident was prompted by no sort of mental aberration. Had it been quickly apprehended and intelligently acted upon, it might long since have led to important revelations.

CHAPTER XIX

“This is the soldier brave enough to tell
The glory-dazzled world that ‘war is hell,’
Lover of peace, he looks beyond the strife
And rides through hell to save his country’s life.”

—*Henry van Dyke.*

So, Dante Jebson had managed to enlist. He was but one of thousands of men of fifty and more who answered their country’s call during the greatest crisis in its history. Drafted to the front with the Royal Army Medical Corps, his duties necessarily took him right up to the firing line, so that almost continuously during those long and perilous months he was under the direct firing of the enemy with equally devoted and patriotic comrades administering first aid to the wounded and otherwise succouring brave brothers stricken down in the thick of the fighting. “There is a man in the field to-day,” as one who has been there writes, “upon whom falls the most arduous and most dangerous work of the war. Night and day, in the battle or in lull of battle, the orderly of the Royal Army Medical Corps is working desperately to relieve the sufferings of the men who have ‘caught it’ on the day of battle. All day long while the battle is raging and the trenches are spitting fire, the little stretcher squads crouch awaiting their work. A man is down, and, stooping low, the squad go swiftly to his side. A glance is almost enough to tell the corporal in charge the nature of the injury. A doctor is there and makes a rough examination ; while all the time the kneeling figures beside the prostrate man are a mark for the

bullets that sweep across the field. The injury is diagnosed, the first dressing is applied. Deft and skilful hands lift the man to the stretcher, and the Red Cross men carry him to where, somewhere under cover, an ambulance waggon is waiting. Further in the rear, away from the range of the guns, is a field hospital, where the injury will be examined with greater care, the limb set if it is necessary to set it, and the larger and more elaborate dressing arranged. Here, too, it may be possible to keep the patient for a day or so if there is any danger in moving him. In one large, light tent, the surgeons, enveloped in their white coats or bare-armed, are operating where immediate operations are necessary. Behind the surgeon, or dodging under his arm, now with the knife that the doctor wants, now with a needle or ligature or forceps, is the operating orderly. So far up the front one does not see a woman; the nurse appears later, when the hospital train has reached the base hospital. It is the orderly who is the first man to the smitten, the orderly who keeps his silent vigil throughout the night by the dying on the field."

Through all such experiences Dante Jebson had passed before he himself was smitten in his leg by a stray bullet after it had passed through the body and killing instantly his fellow-stretcher bearer. It was evening, and there was a lull succeeding a fierce battle which had raged for many hours, though snipers were at their deadly work and shells were bursting here and there from distant enemy guns. Jebson struggled to get on his feet, but the effort was hopeless. Nothing daunted, he lifted his wounded charge off the stretcher; and literally upon his knees he crawled with his load

some hundreds of yards in the direction of the field hospital; then he fell exhausted, covered with the blood of the helpless brother in his arms. As he lay there in the gloaming twilight during that brief lull of battle the memory flashed across his mind of times of peace when he had been lonely and friendless. But here was loneliness in all its terrible reality and unutterable anguish! Mustering all the strength and courage at his command, he made a desperate effort to rise with his unconscious human burden in his arms, but that moment a shell exploded with terrific force some distance away, hurling earth and fragments whizzing through the air in all directions; this being followed in a second or two by still another deafening explosion close by, and Dante Jebson dropped his burden and fell as helplessly to the ground.

* * * *

Naturally, Jebson was very confused as he slowly began to recover self-consciousness at the base hospital two days later. It was some time ere he was able to form anything like an intelligently clear notion of either where he was or what had happened to him. Nor is it to be wondered at that Nurse Trixie—under whose care he was providentially placed, and in the very bed on which Patrick O'Dooley had lain for many weeks—was not at first even remotely cognizant of the identity of her new charge. Brought into the small ward upon a stretcher, his leg in splints and his head swathed in bandages, like hundreds of other wounded soldiers conveyed to the hospital from time to time, how could she know him? The primary concern of the Red Cross workers, whether in hospital or on the

field, is not as to the personal identity of the wounded—that may not even be a matter of secondary interest; their first concern is to attend to their injuries, to heal their bruises, to set their broken bones, to assuage their agony, and administer to their immediate needs. Nurse Trixie did not know, and in all probability would not have believed had she been informed, that Dante Jebson had actually enlisted for foreign service more than a year ago. All she was aware of was that she had repeatedly written to him without result at an address in London where it was understood he passed most of his time in the diligent pursuit of his literary profession. And perhaps after all it was just as well that the revelation of the truth did not come upon her with striking suddenness, but slowly.

The nurses were in the act of re-bandaging the man's head after bathing and cleansing his wound preparatory to a surgical operation, when he began to mumble incoherently in low moaning tones. To be sure, there was nothing unusual in this—it was of more than daily occurrence—so that neither Trixie nor her junior Red Cross sister took any more notice of it than they did in scores of similar cases with which they had constantly to deal.

And yet, Trixie thought to herself, there was something in the man's voice, low and murmuring though it was, that curiously reminded her of the voice of her Comrade in one of his well-remembered moods. Nevertheless, the possibility did certainly not occur to her that she might be then and there actually succouring the one man in the world with whom she would like to have spoken during the past perplexing months, but of seeing or hearing from whom she had

at last almost despaired. However, the bandaging finished, and prompted perhaps by the thought of *him*, Nurse Trixie lifted the wounded man's wrist to examine his identification disc, a cold shudder creeping through her on finding that the small brass plate had been so battered out of shape that both name and number were undecipherable. It must have been struck by something harder than a bullet; the probability being, as Nurse Jones suggested, that the piece of projectile thus arrested in its course "might otherwise have gone through him!"

All having been done for the momentary relief and comfort of the patient pending the operation, the nurses left him to himself whilst they attended to other urgent duties. But a very long interval did not elapse before Trixie again stepped into the small ward to see if any one of the three occupants thereof needed attention. Two, having recently undergone rather tricky operations, were passing through critical stages of uncertainty. The new patient, she perceived, was now in a state of semi-consciousness, his suffering obviously growing all the more acute—a symptom which of course she knew was in his favour. She looked into what was left visible of his weather-beaten, unshaven face, which bore unmistakable evidence of the terrible experiences through which the man had passed. In a moment, although the nurse's movements were as cautious as they were silent, the poor sufferer opened his eyes and stared at her imploringly. And as he did so, the truth of his identity began to dawn upon her.

"I see that you are a little better," she whispered. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Where am I?" he moaned, almost inaudibly.

"In the hospital. You have been injured; but you'll soon be alright again."

The patient's eyes closed once more. And once more the nurse left him to go on similar errands of mercy in other parts of the institution, all the time wondering as she moved about whether it were really possible that there indeed, with his head and body bruised and battered on the battlefield, was none other than Dante Jebson!

In due course the ministering angel was again at Dante's bedside.

"Is an operation imperative, Nurse?" he inquired, speaking so rationally and in such a clear though feeble voice that the nurse was really startled. That he had quite recovered self-consciousness, realised where he was and knew what had happened, was plain. Equally plain was it now made to Nurse Trixie that it was—really—*he!*

"Yes," she replied, softly; "and very soon—a fragment of something is embedded in your head, and it must be removed as quickly as the surgeons can get ready."

"My leg is broken, then?" And he put forth his hand as if endeavouring to feel for the splints.

"Slightly; but that will soon get right, too."

"I wonder if I am to go under, after all, without seeing my child!"

"You are not afraid of the operation, *are you?*" said the nurse, sympathetically.

"No!" replied the wounded man, confidently. "I am not afraid to die—why should I be *afraid?* But all through I have had a fondly-cherished presentiment that I was destined to survive even the perils of the war that I might continue to search for my long-lost little daughter until I found her! Still, I will neither rebel nor even complain if the realisation of my dream is to be denied me. God bless and protect my little daughter!"

Although Nurse Trixie was as mentally brave as she was physically robust, and quite inured to hearing dying men's last words and even their confessions, she now certainly did experience some difficulty in keeping her emotions under control. But she succeeded.

"Don't you know me?" she said, cheeringly, not thinking quickly enough of anything else to say, and yet eager to reveal her own identity—by degrees, as it were.

"Yes," he replied, calmly; "you are my Friend!"

That this unexpected declaration utterly astonished the nurse, is but very inadequately to describe her feeling. All the same, she had, quite naturally, been labouring under the idea that he had not yet recognised her. She tried hard to restrain the hot tears as they rushed into her eyes; but she could not speak.

"You are my *Friend!*" he repeated, emphasising in his feeble way the last word, opening his eyes wide, and smiling faintly. Then, closing his eyes again, and

speaking vaguely as if falling to sleep—" You did not apprehend when, long, long ago, I hinted how Tragedy had kissed me on the heart."

" Comrade !" she said, gently, " I understood much even then ; now I understand all !"

" If I should die under operation——"

" But you must *not* die !"

" My little daughter——"

" Your daughter will come to see you if you make up your mind not to die—yet ! The operation will be quickly over ; you will soon be well again ; and——"

He had relapsed in a comatose ere Trixie could finish her sentence. Nor did he again come to himself until after the surgical process of removing the fragment of German shell from his skull was successfully accomplished.

* * * *

" Ah, poor man !" exclaimed Gwennie Jones, on hearing the patient—gradually overcoming the after-effects of the anæsthetics—calling in his semi-delirium for his " little daughter." Her next comment was—" Perhaps some wicked people stole *his* ' little daughter' from *him* just as I was stolen from *my* father !"

" When he is strong enough, Gwennie," said Trixie, benignly, " we must ask him to tell us all about that ' little daughter' of his, and you should tell him your own story—it may help him to get well again."

The man, however, was no sooner restored to a state of normal mentality than the "little nurse" eagerly inquired of him what his name was; and when he told her, she induced him to relate the details of his own story and that of his lost child. But much sooner than a complete mutual recognition could have been established by the recital of events through the inadequate media of mere words, that spirit in man which we call "instinct" had asserted itself with unequivocal certainty.

* * * *

War, in itself a terrible tragedy, has yet its humorous interludes as well as its many pathetic and sometimes romantic episodes. The element of romance which characterised these dramatic discoveries at the base hospital, particularly this welcome re-union of father and daughter after nearly twenty years of cruel separation, was such as could not easily be kept a secret between the three persons immediately concerned. Indeed the news quickly spread through all parts of the hospital; it served to break a dreary monotony for a little while, afforded a topic for conversation, and gave cause for general rejoicing among such of the patients as were not too seriously ill to take note of what was going on around them. Some of the men enthusiastically declared that "a book must be written about it," and a hot discussion followed on the question of the best title for the story; while one crippled hero, hobbling about the wards on crutches, bubbled out

into impromptu "poetry" which another at once committed to writing and began to sing—

 " Oh, somewhere in France,
 You boys let us dance
 On crutches or beds in this shanty ;
 For a wounded man's groans,
Through a hole in his head and cracks in his bones
Discovered her father to Nurse Gwennie Jones
 And restored his lost daughter to Dante !"

CHAPTER XX

"The great he-rogue with his wonderful brogue—
The fighting, rioting Irishman!"

—*William Maginn.*

A TELEPHONE bell in O'Dooley's tent rang vigorously for several minutes before the Corporal was able to answer it. When at last he got there, "Hulloa!" he shouted.

"Are you there?" came the preliminary formal inquiry, as if a telephone call could be answered by any one who was *not* there!

"An' begorrah Oi am! Arre *you*?"

"C.O. h.q.s. speaking. Is that Number Six g.p. camp?"

"An' shure it is!"

"Has Colonel Goodheart been round to-day with a civil gent?"

"Oi am thinkin' yer honour be maning an uncivil varlet!"

"Curse on your damned Irish brogue! If you don't stop that bloomin' comicality and answer me I'll have you court-martialled! . . . Has Colonel Goodheart been to the camp this morning?"

"An' plase, yer honour, Currnol Goodheart be neerr at hand this minnitt phwile Oi be spaking!"

"Tell him he's wanted at the phone."

Another second, and the gallant Colonel held the receiver to his ear. "Are you there? Colonel Goodheart speaking!"

"I say, Goodheart, send that damned Irish blockhead out of hearing, and speak softly, please—something important! Are you there? . . . Cypher message from London says Dupem is a suspect! Keep an eye upon him!"

"Great Scott! But the London message is a bit stale! I have already put that rascal Dupem under arrest. Evidence beyond question—thanks to the wits of the 'Irish Blockhead' as you call him! Send an escort to bring up Dupem. No men to spare here."

"Right ho! Are you there! . . . Believed to be one of the von Wachsam gang!"

"Heavens! Very likely, though, damn it all, I didn't think of that! But hurry up with those men! Good bye! . . . I say, Dooley, they're coming to fetch that villain to h.q. Meanwhile I'll walk round and see if I can glean any bit of useful information about Dupem's insidious designs from some of the vermin!"

"An' plase, sorr, an' shure yer honour be takin' a garrd!" suggested the sagacious O'Dooley.

"No, Dooley, I'd better go alone. Perhaps one or two of the better sort may be disposed to give me a hint as to the meaning of Dupem's damned catchword!"

The Colonel of course had his own way, although

on that point the Corporal did not feel quite easy. He thought the Officer was courting unnecessary trouble — perhaps running too great a risk. So he acted accordingly. For while the great majority of that medley herd of dispirited, jaded, half-exhausted remnants of humanity from the enemy trenches were as quiet and perhaps as innocent as lambs, and too full of gratitude for being where they were not to behave themselves; yet among them were doubtless a few dare-devils who would be ready to seize upon any perceptible loophole for venting what fighting spirit they had still left in them. Treacherous more by training than by nature, perhaps, some there were beyond question who, if they saw a chance, would not hesitate to incite their fellow-captives to open revolt. Hence the wise precautions of the vigilant Corporal in charge—and O'Dooley was certainly not such a "blockhead" as his uncouth Irish brogue might lead some less intelligent but more highly-placed individuals to imagine.

A few minutes later, whilst Colonel Goodheart was in the act of questioning one of the prisoners, the Corporal—being specially on the alert at a coign of vantage—was startled to observe a villainous member of the Hunnish crowd actually whipping out a revolver and deliberately aiming it at the officer from behind; but swifter than lightning a deadly bullet whizzed out of O'Dooley's rifle and sent the designing miscreant reeling on the ground ere he could achieve his object. Another prisoner rushed to snatch up his ill-fated kamerad's weapon, and as quickly he too met with a like fate.

Instantly these shots were fired the scene became

one of indescribable confusion, the air being filled with shouts, shrieks, and yells, the great majority of the German varlets huddling themselves together with a tremendous crush into a corner of the camp like a flock of afrighted sheep surrounded by wolves, but a dozen or so made a furious attack upon the Colonel, endeavouring to get his sword and pistol and setting upon him savagely with fists and feet, while revolvers cracked forth at various points in the rear, every shot luckily felling a Hun; others of the maddened crew rushed desperately at the guards in face of a shower of bullets which sent their souls into eternity!

Meanwhile the Corporal and a few of his men were rescuing Colonel Goodheart from his perilous predicament, bayoneting his infuriated assailants one after the other in quick succession until they were all finally despatched and the mutiny quelled.

The mad furore lasted only a few minutes, yet scores of German carcasses were prostrate within a radius of two or three hundred yards, while several others of the diabolical gang lay mortally wounded—quickly to be given their well-merited quietus. Subsequently no fewer than half-a-dozen revolvers and two or three small daggers were picked up at various points in the contiguity of the scene.

A message to headquarters brought with marvellous promptitude a contingent in reinforcement; and the soldiers stood with fixed bayonets whilst each one of the thousand and more surviving Teutons, dazed and terrorised, was minutely scrutinised and carefully searched. Only upon one of them, however, was a weapon of any sort found—a tiny five-chambered

revolver, brand new, of the same make and type as those already picked up. Its possessor protested that he had not fired a shot—the obvious reason being that he had no cartridges ; and he volunteered to tell all that he knew about the ring-leading miscreant who had instigated the revolt, apparently with the idea that he might thereby contrive to save his own skin. But no hope of leniency was held out to him by those stern Britons who had him in their grip.

* * * *

That the weapons employed by the culprits had been cleverly smuggled into the camp by a cunningly secret device of Lettim Dupem, left no room for even the shadow of doubt. Nevertheless the cowardly Hun who declared his readiness to act the part of the Iscariot was, at a preliminary court-martial which followed, duly afforded ample latitude to give his own version of the plot.

When asked what he knew about Lettim Dupem, the prisoner shook his head dubiously, protesting on oath that he had never heard that name before ! His answers to further interrogations, however, revealed the fact that the individual who, in the morning of the same day, had been privileged to hold converse with inmates of the camp, was understood among the mutineers to be none other than Dr. Grossritter, the inspiring genius of an elaborate organisation of espionage extending its ramifications far and wide throughout the German army and navy. It transpired, moreover, that by means of a secret password and a

symbolic sign, German agents moving circumspectly about in various guises in England and the allied countries were able to disclose the sinister nature of their mission to wounded Germans in hospitals and to German prisoners in the hands of the Allies. The method whereby they accomplished their designs, according to the traitorous informant, was as follows: Whenever a German soldier or sailor—provided of course that he was already initiated into the secret rite—happened to hear the mystic word *Rosencreuz*, he would answer, either audibly or by means of a symbolic contortion of the facial muscles, by saying *Der Wink!* (pronounced something like “Dair Ving”)—which being interpreted means “Show the Sign!” On being thus challenged, the agent—or as we say in plain English, the spy—would substantiate his identity by exhibiting the *crucified rose*, formed of a “transparent red stone, with a red cross on the one side and a red rose on the other,” and as a rule set in a gold ring worn on the little finger of his right hand by the accredited agent.

But not infrequently, added the divulging Hun, this method was reversed, the German agent contriving silently, trickily, to hold the “sign” to view, when the initiated beholder would signalise his apprehension either by whispering *Rosencreuz* or by symbolising its equivalent in a peculiar movement of the face, thus at once putting into action an unsuspected means of intercommunication through a system of code-words and grimaces.

This ingenious scheme, it appeared, had been planned and elaborated by the great Dr. Grossritter

himself, who alone was believed to be in possession of the original magic Rosy Cross Jewel which had descended through a succession of inspired German "prophets" from time immemorial. All other leading devotees of the cult of the Crucified Rose carried only an exact imitation of the mystic jewel; and although it was not supposed that these imitations possessed the same virtuous powers and wonder-working qualities as the ancient article, they nevertheless served as the key to the agents' identity and the seal of their office in the secret service of his All-Highness Wilhelm.

CHAPTER XXI

“Love will find out the way.”

—*Sparagus Garden.*

“Love is the art of hearts and heart of arts.”

—*Bailey.*

THE news of the capture of the long searched-for arch-spy of Späherschloss spread like wildfire among all classes of the populations of France and England, despite the embargo put on the daily newspapers, which were permitted to state only the bare fact that a prominent individual—a suspected plotter in the secret service of the enemy—had been arrested under dramatic circumstances by the military authorities at the Western front. A topic of general comment in this connection was the inexplicable silence preserved by the *Zodiac* and its “signs,” as if they knew nothing about it or that they deemed it a matter of no “public interest.” For this silence, however, there may have been “patriotic” reasons. It was also significant that after a day or two all newspapers were strictly forbidden by the Press Censor to print anything whatever either in the way of news or comment regarding the discovery of the German plot, pending the trial of the chief culprit, concerning the date and place of which event there were (though not in the Press) all manner of conflicting rumours.

Meanwhile at the base hospital in France, where Dante Jebson was making satisfactory progress under the tender care of both his Friend and his daughter,

there was considerable surprise among the surgeons and the nursing staff generally when it became a matter of gossip that Nurse Trixie's original theory concerning the alleged "priest" was shown by events now reported to have been based upon no mere feminine delusion. If any one still entertained a vestige of doubt on the matter, it was destined soon to be finally dissipated by the sequel to a missive received by Nurse Trixie, and reading as follows:—

Dear Nurse Trixie,—I wonder if you are still there, and have forgotten your former troublesome patient Pat O'Dooley. But Pat can never forget Nurse Trixie.

Many a time have I thought of writing to thank you and the little nurse once more for your great kindness to me when I lay helpless under your gentle hands. But all the time I have been putting it off for no other reason than want of pluck—not knowing just how to say what I wished. Now something has happened, and I am impelled to write to you.

You were right; Gwennie—God bless her!—was right; and Patrick was right too! That priest *was* a spy. He has now been captured, in which pleasant little business Corporal Patrick O'Dooley of the Loyal Cork Rifles had a hand. He is to be tried in England, some time sooner or later, and P. O'D. is to go as a witness. Perhaps the evidence of Nurse Trixie will also be required. Please hold yourself in readiness, and if the little nurse can come, too, then we shall be a merry party. By the way I wish I had sounded her little heart. But never mind, Pat hopes to see her soon.

Patrick has been mentioned in despatches, and they say he is to have a medal—but the only Medal he is wanting to possess for life and ever after is—well, never mind, I will tell Gwennie herself when I see her.

Your obedient servant for ever and ever,

PATRICK O'DOOLEY, Cpl.

“Good gracious !” exclaimed Gwennie, when the document was shown to her. “If this is really from Patrick O’Dooley he has wonderfully changed since he left the hospital !”

“Changed, my dear ! What makes you think so ?” Trixie inquired, with an air of surprise at such a comment. “Do you mean for better or for worse, dear ?”

“Neither ! But surely he has not been long enough in England to be cured of his Irish brogue as well as of his broken shoulder !”

“Ah ! I see what you mean, my dear ! Perhaps he took care not to put his brogue into his writing. Few people speak as they write, Gwennie.”

“That may be. But Patrick O’Dooley could surely write as he speaks, couldn’t he now ?”

Trixie laughed sweetly—a laugh, however, provoked more by the younger woman’s seriousness than her humour.

“If he had done that,” continued Gwennie, “then I should have known for certain that this was really written by him. Do you know, Trixie, I rather like that brogue of his !”

“Well,” remarked Trixie, even more amused than before, “there certainly was something pretty—or perhaps I should say ‘piquant’—about it. But what do you think about his ‘piquant’ reference to you, dear ?”

“To *me* ?”

“Yes, my dear, to you ! He says he loves you !”

“ He could easily have told me that before he left the hospital. It would have been much easier than to take such a long time to write about it. And I had no one to love me then. Now, you see, I have my father, and no one could love me better than *he* does. Isn't it wonderful how we have met! Life seems so different now that I have found my father. I am *so* glad that he is getting well!”

“ Yes, Gwennie dear, it *is* wonderful! And I hope you and your father will never lose each other again, either in this world or the next. He is *so* happy since he discovered his ‘little daughter’ . . . But good gracious! Look who is talking with the Matron!”

Why, it was Patrick O'Dooley himself. The artful lad had sent the letter simply to herald his own coming.

“ An' shure an' Oi be behoulding me swate nurse as a little bhoy moight behould his own mither!” shouted the young Corporal. “ An' little nurse an' all, an' all! Come Nursie, an' shure ye be knowin' Patrick O'Dooley as be goin' about catchin' prastes an' spoils!”

The patients in the great ward where this brief oration was spoken at once broke out into shouts of “ Bravo, Pat!” accompanied by as lusty a “ three cheers ” as their lungs would permit. The members of the staff shook hands heartily with the young hero, warmly congratulating him on his recent adventures and the promotion in the ranks which it was understood was coming.

Nurse Gwennie, who had so far stood in amused

silence, now, without the slightest sign of embarrassment, yet modestly, put a finishing touch to the little drama, simply stepping forward and holding out her two arms as if about to embrace the handsome Irishman, who responded instinctively by leaning forward and bestowing on the little nurse a kiss as gentle as it was natural, to the intense amusement of the beholders and the evident delight of the object of Pat's affection.

Subsequently, acting on a hint from Nurse Trixie, Gwennie conducted her lover to the small ward, where Dante Jebson, now with his head unbandaged but his leg still in "sticks," listened with unconcealed interest to the brave Corporal's lurid story of the "praste" and the "spoi," and an even more amusing account of his own recent exploits.

"Of course, Corporal," Jebson suggested, "there is no doubt about the identity of this man? Presumably he has posed as a prominent English gentleman?"

"Shure, yer honour," replied Pat, "an' a spoi nivver took a morre 'propprate name!"

"May I inquire what his name is, then, Corporal?"

"There be no sacret in it, at all, at all, sorr. For shure his carrd borre testhimony an' trruth. An' his name—LETTIM DUPEM!"

Dante Jebson startled, looking as if he had been suddenly stricken dumb. His thoughts swiftly reverted to an incident that had happened more than two years previously at Woodville Spring. He visualised himself at the Spring Hotel picking up a visiting card, looking at it with some curiosity, and afterwards in the Pine Woods in the dead silence of the night

handing the same to his Friend. But only once since then—namely that day when he quitted the office of the *Zodiac* with a mixed feeling of disgust and indignation—had he been reminded of the visiting-card incident, and tried in vain to recall the name. From that night in the Woods till now the name LETTIM DUPEM had never once recurred to his memory.

Whilst the patient was silently indulging in this train of reminiscences, O'Dooley was all the time talking at the rate of twenty to the dozen, but his "listener" was as oblivious to his eloquence as a sleepy "audience" might be imagined to be in "listening" to the sermon of a dull preacher, although had Jebson been in a normal state of mind to heed it, he would doubtless have voted Corporal O'Dooley's discourse anything but dull.

The Corporal's business at the hospital was *officially* to inform Nurse Trixie of the arrest of the "spoi," and that notability's forthcoming trial in London, where Trixie's presence as an important witness was imperative; and, incidentally—though of infinitely more moment from Patrick's point of view—*personally* to declare his love to "the little nurse." This two-fold mission having been satisfactorily accomplished, he mounted his motor-cycle and saluted good-bye amid the vociferous shouts of patients and staff alike.

* * * *

"Gentle Nurse and sweet Friend," said Jebson, when presently Trixie was close to him in the little ward, "Do you remember my once handing you a visiting card with some curious signs written upon it?"

"Can I ever forget it?" she said, smiling as she sighed.

“Have you still got that card?”

“No, Comrade! I enclosed it, together with the copy I made of it, in the first letter I addressed to you. Twice did I write to tell you about my suspicions regarding the visit to the hospital of that mysterious ‘Priest,’ and twice again did I write to say that I had discovered your ‘little daughter.’ Obviously none of my missives reached your hands.”

“A fortnight before I actually enlisted, I locked up my office and went to the country, and have not opened the door since. I left no indication to the postman that I was away. So that, when I *do* return, I shall doubtless find a pile of letters of all descriptions awaiting my attention.”

“Some of them at least need not be opened, Comrade! You know all now, and much more than my letters could tell.”

“Shall we be going soon, sweet Friend? Of course Gwennie will come too!”

“The trial in London, it seems, cannot proceed without us; but it must wait until you are well enough to go. The spy is not likely to object to having his life prolonged until you are in a fit state to travel. Your evidence, not mine, is of primary importance; for had it not been for your knowledge of the Rosicrucians and their mystical ways, Lettim Dupem might still have been at his nefarious work. I am very glad they have caught him at last, thanks to that brave Irish lad. Yes, Comrade, Gwennie is coming too—Patrick O’Dooley has made all the arrangements. Now, get well as soon as you can!”

EPILOGUE.

Two months later, the subjoined item of "official" news was communicated to the Press, and it appeared simultaneously in all respectable morning newspapers:—

"The sentence of death by shooting was yesterday duly carried out upon Karl von Wachsen, naturalised British subject; otherwise Sir Carolius Wideawake, 'English gentleman'; alias Dr. Grossritter, 'German magician'; alias Lettim Dupem, 'American journalist,' along with a round dozen of his accomplices—all of whom were recently found guilty on charges of treason and espionage, the trial being held in camera."

The *Zodiac* and its "signs," it need hardly be added, did not print this news.

On the same day, all respectable newspapers likewise entertained their readers with a descriptive account of an interesting double wedding which took place at a historic Roman Catholic Church in London—"Private Dante Jebson, D.C.M. (of the R.A.M.C.), the popular lecturer and author, being married to Miss Beatrice Harlington, a noted artist (who since the beginning of the great war has served as a Red Cross nurse at a base hospital in France, and is known to thousands of wounded soldiers as 'Nurse 'Trixie'); while at the same time and place Lieutenant Patrick O'Dooley, V.C. (of the Loyal Corks), was united to Amelia, known as 'Gwennie' (also a Red Cross nurse), daughter of Private Dante Jebson. The principal celebrant was the Rev. Father

O'Flynn, the service being undoubtedly unique in the annals of ecclesiastical Christendom inasmuch as the priest was assisted at the ceremony by an Anglican divine, the Very Reverend the Dean of Albanium, and also by a retired liberal-dissenting pastor in the person of the Rev. Obadiah Truedyn, M.A. The best man for Lieutenant O'Dooley was Colonel Goodheart (of the Headquarters Staff British Expeditionary Force), the bride being given away by her father; while the best man for the latter was a wounded Red Cross comrade, Private Freeman Morrisson, whose spirited book entitled 'Echoes from the Battlefield,' recently published, called forth the unbounded admiration of a host of intelligent readers, but stirred up the ire of a few profiteers and pious arm-chair philosophers of an antiquated school of thought."

"Thus," commented one optimistic newspaper scribe, "has the Great War helped to break down some at least of the ancient sectarian barriers which for ages have marred the beautiful religion of the Son of Man and hindered the progress of enlightened civilisation. Whether this longed-for state of things at home will survive the world-conflict, which has brought it into vogue for the time being, Time alone can show."

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