

THOSE FOLK OF BULBORO

BY

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Those Folk Of Bulboro

PROLOGUE

A LETTER FROM DR. JABEZ MANTON

"My dear Tony,—I have addressed this letter to Dr. Anthony Manton, c/o The Congo Bolobo Mission, though if you are anything like your dear father was, before he made money and was spoilt for research work, you are probably masquerading as plain Mr. Manton, and trusting to luck that your brilliant essays in the Journal of Tropical Medicines have escaped the notice of your kind hosts.

"I hate telling young men that their work is brilliant, because a little praise from a fellow-craftsman has, as a rule, a disastrous effect; but family pride, no less than the fact that the opportunities for expressing my views are not likely to be many, induce me to pay this tribute to your genius. I do not entirely agree with your monograph on the Donovan-Leichmann body; that hypothesis seems to be fairly established, but you are on the spot and may know better.

"It was not to gossip about bugs that I sat down to write to you; it is of a more serious matter, because I believe that very soon I shall be in that state where either all things will be revealed or every sense of understanding will be obliterated.

"Picture me, a stoutish and elderly gentleman, red-faced, white-haired—though I swear that my venerable appearance is often ill in keeping with the evil passions which rage in my aged breast, ascending the stairs of Lady Heron Wendall, the wife of Bulboro's rector. (I have written about this lady before; indeed, you know something about the circumstances which led to her marriage sixteen years ago—did not the erring Frenchman die most picturesquely in your care? But this is not the time to revive scandal.)

"I found her in bed, radiating that delicate beauty which a certain type of skinny woman has, which in my mind is always associated with a process of caducity. I forget now what exactly was the matter with her: I believe, when I come to think of it, she wanted to gossip about the latest curate's delinquencies. Certain it is that, for very shame's sake, she had to discuss the terms of her health. I leant over the bed to take her pulse, and then I straightened up, for I heard and felt something inside me which interested me as a doctor and saddened me as an individual. Mitral murmurs sufficiently distinct to be audible without stethoscopic examination would not bother me, indeed, have not bothered me, for I have been suspicious of the existence of some aortal thickening for some time.

"I went back to my surgery and had a little self-examination, and, my dear Tony, nothing which the musical instrument makers produce for their Christmas patrons was half as musical as my cardiac region.

"To make absolutely sure, I went up to town and saw Gregorley. He wanted to talk to me about his fans—he is a 'devil of an old woman, you know, outside his job of work, and collects all sorts of fripperies and frumperies. But I cut short his talk of Greuze and Watteau and made him begin a nice cheap examination. He positively gloated over me, and really I had that pleasing sensation which every benefactor, who gives an unexpected treat to the poor, must possess, for I recognized that I was an exceptional case.

"He tells me that I have three weeks to live, and he was anxious that I should pack myself in wadding, stretch myself calmly upon cee-springs and await dissolution like a gentleman. That, of course, is absurd. If I thought that I should go out in an inconvenient manner I should do as he suggests, but I have made up my mind to die in the library, which is a nice, cosy, cheerful room, and one in which any man, with a taste for books and good prints, would elect to die in.

"Now, the climax of this letter comes hereunder.

"I have the best practice in England in this town, and I am most anxious that you shall come along and take it. You've got plenty of money—I am leaving you some twenty-four thousand pounds to add to your fortune—this house is a beautiful old place, dating back to the Elizabethan period, and the grounds and garden have been my especial care. I want you to take charge of my papers, destroying such as you wish, and publishing the others anonymously, for I think I have collected one or two facts concerning the Renaissance.

"You will get on with my patients if you are rude to them systematically, if your attitude is one of brusqueness tempered with scepticism. Keep clear of the churches—this place is a veritable hotbed of Christianity—avoid open partisanship, vote solidly Tory, and you will be happy.

"You will find Bulboro' as full of microbes as the most pestilential of Congo swamps. The microbe which devastates this town most is the microbe of intolerance, and a genial hatred of every other person's religion is a predominant characteristic of every citizen.

"I speak of the churches, because, between them, they make up Bulboro's life. Not one of our hundred thousand but has a conviction amounting almost to a certainty, that life on the other side of the veil will hold something more precious for him than it holds for his neighbour.

"You will find Heron Wendall something of a slacker, but clever. He is the Rector, tending to the moral and spiritual needs of such as do not require salvation so much as encouragement to continue in the faith that salvation

is superfluous in their cases; they are the old soldiers of Christianity, skilled in its goose-steps, in its battalion drills and its conventional formations.

"Childe is of the rabble, a Baptist, a Saint and a Martyr (he was in Bulboro' jail for three weeks for non-payment of rates on the education question). Short, another variety of Baptist, is oleaginous, full of 'God-bless-you's!' delivered with mechanical fervour. He has a history of gastric trouble. I think you will have him on your hands one of these days.

"Stope is the Congregationalist—a lean, youngish man with a stoop, and declamatory in conversation. An ambitious man, he'll be the Liberal candidate at the next election. He is pleasant, sound on questions of research ('ware Childe, by the way, who is anti-vivisection, anti-vaccination and a vegetarian), but a dangerous man.

"The Papist is Carter, austere, tolerant as a Jesuit, a gentleman and straight. Regarding you as irretrievably damned in the next world, he will do his best to entertain you in this.

"The lesser lights I won't bother you with: there's Wastrum, who burns incense, crosses himself, and is loathed by the Kensit people. He's Oxford and enthusiastic. He has a watch-chain hung with bronze medallions, and like Catherine with her charms 'jingles like a mule'. He is suspected of having taken a vow of chastity, which has annoyed the rabid section of Nonconformity, with their teeming nurseries and overloaded bassinets, no end. (Painter does all my maternity work—you'll like him.)

"And now, dear lad, I take farewell of you, kissing you in the spirit as I kissed you as a dear child. To 'whatever God there is' I offer the record of my life for audit. I shall await you on the other side of the curtain, full of eagerness and curiosity. By the way, look after that grey filly of mine, she is by Grey Leg out of a Galopin mare. She is up to thirteen stone, and is a rare leaper. Later I should send her to stud; you might get a good foal, who knows?

"Am Tag! as the German officers said.

—Your uncle and friend,

"JABEZ MANTON."

I. TONY COMES HOME

The guide-books say that Bulboro' lies on the Avel, but you must leave Bulboro' behind to find that pleasant stream.

It is true there is a large and sluggish basin where grimy barges lie, but the water is soulless and dead and streaked with the gloomy iridescence which speaks eloquently of oil drums carelessly handled.

The banks are stark and rubbled, or overlaid with staging on which the clumsy cranes puff up and down, slowly and asthmatically.

There is, too, in the lower town, a short iron bridge, depressing in its ugliness, which spans a dark stream and is known as Avel Bridge, though, as a matter of absolute fact, no Avel, but a half-hearted canal, flows beneath.

You must travel outside Bulboro' for a glimpse of the stream as the poets know it and the painters have shown it. Away from the tall chimneys of the glass works, and the woollen mills, and the overpowering obesity of the Bulboro' Gas Light and Fuel Company's monstrous gasometers; away from the clang and the jangle of the electric cars, the melancholy drone of innumerable sirens, and the everlasting rattle of Siggises Iron Works, you will find the river flowing in its serene and natural beauty.

Bulboro' is a discoloration at the bottom of a great saucer. All the dregs of the Avel valley have drained into the town. Outside there is a beautiful land of soft breezes, of yellow cornfields (in the proper season), of ancient farm-houses, thatched and decrepit old cottages, masked by clematis and approached by the narrowest of paths, through flowers waist high, so narrow because the cottages could spare no more space for the foot of man. There are inns for the seeking, inns with low-roofed parlours and spacious fire-places. Summer or winter, the Avel valley is a joy to the stifled folk of Bulboro'. Mist stealing over the hills and entangled like thinnest gossamer, means dense yellow fog in the town. Sunlight and shadow on the waving cornfields of the valley thicken to something which is neither sunlight nor shadow in the hot streets of Bulboro'. Snow in billows of virgin white is black slush in the city.

But Bulboro' is by far too busy to devote overmuch attention to such matters as the aesthetic aspect of meteorology. In Bulboro' it is "hot" or it is "cold", or it is adjectived hot or adjectived cold—and only the adjective employed varies.

It was cold when Anthony Manton came out of the station buildings overcoated to the chin. The porter informed him that it was cold. The fly-driver paused in the operation of stacking his luggage to tell him as much, the little newsboy at the stall had handed him a paper and his change, with the respectful intimation that it was "very cold".

It was cold enough for this young man, with the brown, lean face. He shivered a little as an icy gust came swirling through the open door of the booking office, and he pulled up the collar of his coat. He was tall and strongly built. He carried himself with the freedom of a sailor and had the sailor's blue far-seeing eyes.

He was clean-shaven, save for a closely cropped moustache. His nose and the straight black eyebrows gave his features a T-square regularity. His chin was firm, and he was saved from nondescript handsomeness by a certain hollowness of cheek and an expression of severity which comes to the man who does not readily smile. Yet you might judge him to be capable of enormous laughter. There were possibilities of merriment in his solemn eyes and the uneven line of his lips.

Every man's face has a message; a message which speaks with a great eloquence to the people who are wise in the reading of faces. Anthony Manton said some things plainly, offered grounds for speculation in others. He was the observer, keen, eager, patient. There was indifference amounting almost to contempt in the lips, inflexibility in the set of his jaw, concentration in the perpendicular lines of his forehead, shrewd sure reasoning power in the lift of his eyelids.

He might have found difficulty in offering an explanation for the more elusive qualities of his face. For the moment, at any rate, he was in no mood for self-analysis, for he agreed with the porter, the newsboy, and most emphatically with the fly-driver, that it was cold.

His companion, muffled up to the eyes, his neck thickly encircled with a great woollen muffler, said nothing. His brown eyes stared impassively from under his scarlet tarbosh at a peculiarly unattractive corner of an unpleasant land. His big brown hands were thrust into the depths of an enormous ulster and his feet were protected by two pairs of woollen stockings encased in large and strange boots.

"Ho, Ahmet!" said Anthony Manton, turning gravely to the other and speaking in the bastard Arabic of the Coast, "this is a world without comfort."

Ahmet unthawed his voice huskily.

"God protect us," he said, "for my marrow is frozen, and there is a pain in my ears as though all the tsetses in the world were drawing blood. Now I think this place is hell and I am being punished for my sins, lord. For never in my life have I been so sorrowful."

Anthony's lips twitched.

"Get into this carriage," he said in the same language. "Afterwards we shall come to a place more pleasant, and you shall make me coffee of great heat and comfort."

He closed the carriage door on his servant and looked round to say good-bye to his travelling companion.

He picked him out from a tangle of passengers, for it was two days before Christmas and there were many who called Bulboro' "home" without shame.

Anthony walked swiftly to where the little man stood.

He was obviously Hebraic. The broad face, the heavy lids, the closely cropped beard were typical. He was not handsome, yet his brown eyes twinkled with good humour; his smile was quick to come, and you saw that life to him held none of the tragedy which is so unmistakably reflected on the Jew's face. The world was a "funny place" to Ambrose Cohen. That was his favourite verdict.

He was well dressed in a long, fur-lined coat, that reached to his heels; his hat a grey bowler, his cigar large and fragrant. The coat concealed most of his raiment, and you might suspect hidden brilliance of stone and precious metal to testify his wealth; but Ambrose Cohen was in many ways an extraordinary man. For the display which appealed to his compatriots he had no desire, though he was a very rich man, a magnate, even by Johannesburg standards.

Sentiment brought him to Bulboro', for in this tiny town he had first seen the day. His father, a working jeweller, was long since dead. Cohen lived in a beautiful house in West Hill, with a handsome wife and two little children whom he adored. The country attracted him because he was a keen horseman, rode regularly to hounds, and had so far overcome the prejudice of a conservative county, as to be one of the most popular members of the Hunt.

He saw Manton and came impetuously forward, offering his gloved hand.

"Good-bye," he said, his eyes dancing with good humour, "you will see me again."

"I hope not professionally," said Anthony.

The other laughed.

"I have no fear," he said. "I am so well that even a doctor could not injure me. Take my advice to heart"—he shook his gloved finger at the other jokingly—"if they want to know your religion say you're a Jew, otherwise they will fight for your body."

He spoke with a little lisp which was pleasant to hear. He could not sound his "r's" distinctly, probably a habit acquired from a boyhood spent at Newcastle, where his uncle had controlled a coastwise line.

"I shall remember," said Anthony, the ghost of a smile playing at the corner of his lips. He opened the fly door and stepped in, returning the farewell wave of the other as the fly clattered down the steep incline into the street.

Ahmet sat facing him, taking a more cheerful view of things and a faint interest in the neighbourhood. They drove over the well-paved streets; clanging tramcars passed and re-passed them; the thoroughfare was almost crowded from the standpoint of one who had lived in a country where white men are to be met at the rate of six a year.

They skirted the lower town, row after row of stone-coloured villas, through the even more crowded market street where the wives of Bulboro' came to prepare a feast for their lords. Then the jog-trot of the fly slowed down to a walk as it began the steady climb of West Hill. Gradually they shook off the shops and entered a region of small detached houses which improved in quality as they mounted. The road twisted and turned so that in one place there was an undisturbed view of the smoke-dimmed panorama of Bulboro' below.

"What think you of this place, Ahmet?" asked Anthony. The Arab turned a long and dispassionate view on the scene at his feet.

"There are many good people," he said; "for I see the towers of their mosques wherever I look. This must be a holy place."

Anthony nodded.

They came at last to "Pilgrim's Rest"; nobody knew who had named it so; certainly the doctor had taken it with its nomenclature established and had made no violent attempt to unfold the mystery of its name.

It was a small rambling house. Anthony remembered that he had likened it to a dog trying to chase its tail, and growing discouraged at the place where the stables stretched an archway across to the hot-houses. It was an inconsequent house, without any particular reason why any of it should have been built as it was. It represented in Anthony Manton's mind tangible evidence that it had come down through the hands of a dozen generations temperamentally opposed, each a little contemptuous of its predecessor and desirous, in its own erratic way, of covering one fault of architecture with a fault more glaring.

Time had softened the blunders of its dead builders, nature had thrown over it a veil of ivy here, had hung a frieze of climbing roses there, had tempered this angle with an oak; that gap with a riot of flowering plants. Nature may have been assisted, and probably was; but Anthony Manton, in his

imaginative youth, had pictured a friendly but invisible familiar who had his habitation in a disused tool-shed at the end of the garden, and who employed himself in correcting the errors which the brick men and stone men of all ages had accumulated.

The old servants were waiting to receive him, and with a nod left and right he went straight to the library, where a cheerful fire burned.

There he stood in the doorway, silent and thoughtful. Jocks, his uncle's butler, was behind him. There was no need to ask any questions: he knew from the letter which had reached him at Teneriffe that in that old cosy chair to the right of the fire-place honest and kindly Jabez Manton had passed beyond the veil.

He had no qualms in seating himself in the chair. He was too much of a doctor to worry overmuch about the sentimental aspect of his return, too much of a man also, to pass without thought the significance of that empty chair. He sat for a while thinking. Jocks came with a cup of coffee.

"The foreign person made it, sir," he said punctiliously. "He had some difficulty in conveying his wants, but fortunately poor Dr. Manton—"

"Jocks," interrupted the young man quietly.

"Yes, sir?"

"Do not refer to my uncle as 'poor Dr. Manton'—it does not please me."

The butler stiffened.

"I am sorry, sir," he said; "it is only natural, I'm sure."

"It isn't natural at all," said Anthony, "it's sentimental. You can love a man without feeling sorry for him—you don't feel sorry for Shakespeare, or for Lord Nelson, do you? However, go on with what you were saying."

"The doctor," said the ruffled servant, "had the apparatus which the native required—he does not speak English?"

"No," said Anthony.

"That's a great pity," said Jocks.

It was as great a pity that Jocks had not a working knowledge of Arabic, but this opinion Anthony did not express.

At his request the servants brought in two of his trunks, which were filled with papers, memoranda, and such books as he immediately required. He spent a busy two hours settling himself in his new surroundings. There had

been no other message for him other than the one he had received. Dr. Manton's passing had been peaceable and painless: he had complained of faintness, and Jocks had gone to bring him a glass of water. When he returned, the old doctor was dead.

Bulboro' had afforded him the magnificent funeral which the town felt was due to its dignity no less than to its sense of gratitude for favours past. For once the churches had combined with the friendly societies in the formation of a choice spectacle; and since the doctor had been something of a nonsectarian and had judiciously hidden his particular leaning in religious matters from the curious gaze of Bulboro's elect, and no wish had been expressed in his will as to the method of his burial, all the churches of Bulboro' had met at the graveside.

Anthony had learnt this from a very correctly written letter which had been dispatched to him en route by Jocks.

The entry of the young doctor into the life of the town was as undramatic as it could possibly be. At eight o'clock that night he walked into the consulting-room of the free dispensary established by his uncle, brusquely replied to the little address of welcome which the committee had thought it necessary to prepare, and devoted the evening to an examination of the applicants. His experience as a general practitioner had been practically nil, but he had doctored native people, and between the native mind and the mind of the civilized poor there is very little difference. They were equally garrulous, equally charged with an eager desire to describe their symptoms. Anthony Manton had a brief, sharp way with him and was disinclined to allow his new patients to follow the example of the committee.

"I'm sure we're all very glad to see you, Dr. Manton," said a pale-faced woman rocking a baby jerkily. "I'm sure, dear Dr. Manton—"

"Is it the baby or you?" asked Anthony.

"It's the child, sir," said the woman. "I have had a lot of trouble with him. I was saying to my sister"

"Let me look at him"

He cut short the personal reminiscence, so dear to the heart of the hypochondriac, with a sharp, almost brutal, diagnosis, sometimes to their discredit.

He had nearly finished when Dr. Painter, of whom his uncle had written, came in. He was a middle-aged florid man with an irregular beard and an abstracted manner. It had driven many an expectant father to the verge of madness, for, argued the distraught parent-to-be, what other reason for abstraction could there be than that "something had gone wrong?"

Anthony gave him a cheery welcome. He had a tremendous sympathy with his brother medicals, and the reserve which marked his intercourse with his fellows dropped away from him in their presence, and you saw something of the real man underneath.

They exchanged a few words about the dispensary.

"They're an ungrateful lot of devils," said Painter; "your uncle went to a great deal of expense and bother to get this dispensary fixed up, and naturally they think that he made a fortune out of it."

"That's the way of the poor, they never really understand charity in its best sense," said Anthony. "They cannot understand the spirit of sacrifice."

Ha, left the dispensary with Dr. Painter, and they drove together back to the house.

II. A LEADER AND SECRETARY

A raw, grey day had grown to a night of cold rain and sleet. Somewhere, where the air was purer, where great grey angry seas beat upon the rocky headlands, a sou'-westerly gale scalloped the bosom of the ocean and slashed the tops of the waves into a wild fan of steaming spray.

Here in Bulboro' only whimpering echoes of the storm came in spasms. It was lost and baffled in the narrow streets, under high walls of factory and mill, in the culs-de-sac where it fought in little mad circles for escape, rattling the frail windows of cottaged workers, blowing open incautiously unfastened doors, extinguishing oil lamps and slamming interior doors with thunderous noise.

In the High Street it came swirling round corners, driving the drenching rain before it; yet High Street was tolerably full, and the tramcars were loaded.

Wednesday night was always a little crowded in Bulboro'. There was service or an evening of mild amusement at St. Peter's; the chapels had services also, and earlier in the evening three Band of Hope meetings were held in various parts of the city.

This Band of Hope question was a serious one. Attendance and membership were on the decrease, and there were open accusations of proselytizing made by two of the sects which controlled the children's organizations.

Pastor Childe had permitted himself the luxury of a righteous rage, and this publicly, when he charged "the secret servants of the Scarlet Woman" with enticing the youth of Bulboro' to "the image-worshipping orgies of furtive papistry".

The Church complained in more sober and less direct language of the "unfortunate influences" which were being brought to bear upon the children, but named no names, for the attitude of the Church was that peculiar to a long-established newspaper in its dealings with obscure and impotent contemporaries—it ignored frankly, and reproved so sweepingly as to bring into the net of its reprobation not alone the object of its displeasure, but every other which could by every stretch of the imagination be regarded as remotely antagonistic.

The Wesleyans blamed nobody save their ministers, which is a way Wesleyans have.

The Congregationalists were not particularly affected, because the energies of the Church were directed elsewhere. Their members were far too occupied by the question of Land Proprietorship, which was to free the country from the curse of poverty, sin, drunkenness, and the encyclopaedia tale of misery which comes—so the propagandists say—in the trail of land poverty. Moreover, to the consternation of the leading Congregationalists, the Church

had almost suspended its evangelistic work, and the political spirit had so invaded the pulpit as to make Sunday morning and evening two periods which the earnest politician of Bulboro' looked forward to with something akin to joyous anticipation. Before the church were notice-boards which gave a hint of the character of the forthcoming services.

In the morning the Rev. Hartburn Gray (of Woolwich) would deliver an "address" on "If Peter were a member of the House of Lords," and in the evening the Rev. Valentine Stope would discuss "The Devil and the Whigs."

Little time had the good Congregationalists for such futilities as the Band of Hope. The "Men's Hour" on Sunday afternoon had almost destroyed the Sunday schools, which had dropped in point of attendance from one hundred to seventy during the ministry of the fiery young Radical.

Yet it was due neither to the proselytizing of Baptist, nor to the allurements of ritual, nor yet, it must be confessed, to the enlarging of Congregationalist political activities, that the growth of juvenile apathy might be traced. A new decade had witnessed the arrival of cinema palaces, had seen great white structures, for all the world like exaggerated wedding-cakes, grow out of old and unlettable shops.

A new interest had come into the lives of Bulboro's young citizens; a new world opened before their eyes. Drama there was of a healthy kind—drama, with revolvers and cowboys galloping in dusty bunches and mannish girls riding astride. But there were serious instructive pictures. Object lessons more delectable than science masters could demonstrate, with the veritable cities of the empire before your eyes and their strangely clad, scowling citizens. There was history filmed by a French house, with gallants in hose and doublet, historical happenings breathlessly portrayed.

There you followed Napoleon from triumph to triumph, grew sad over the fate of a tangible Christopher Columbus, watched Cortés at his work, lived with Leonardo da Vinci, supped with the Most Christian kings of France. The pictures were insidiously harmless.

The two theatres, the Grand and the Royal, had never drawn the youth of Bulboro' from its pleasant devotions. The antagonism between Nonconformity and the theatre was rather a matter of hereditary enmity than the growth of modern sentiment. Little Nonconformists were born with the inbred knowledge that the theatre was an evil thing, and the first breakaway from a rigid observance of the pure life was usually associated with a defiant son or an incoherent daughter "owning up" to the possession of theatre tickets.

But the cinema craze had grown with such rapidity that parents had had no time to formulate their views and ministers had given no lead in the matter.

Cinema exhibitions had come originally in the guise of entertainments in church and chapel "halls", and since churchwardens and circuit stewards had offered no objection to this type of entertainment in its original shape, they were somewhat embarrassed by its growth and popularity.

Anthony came through the chill and drizzle of the High Street buttoned up to his neck. He had been called to a case of influenza, and, to the scandal and indignation of the patient's parents, had diagnosed the case as one of scarlet fever.

"Scarlet fever, doctor?" said the stout lady of the house incredulously. "I have been a mother now for twenty years, and if I don't know scarlet fever when I see it—"

"You may be a mother, madam, for two hundred years," said Anthony in his dry way, "and still fail to qualify at the College of Physicians."

"I'll have to see another doctor," said the father.

He had been a silent but resentful listener, in accordance with the practice and tradition of a class in which the women have the monopoly of all private conferences with the family doctor.

"Certainly," said Anthony. "I think you would be wise to do so if you have any doubt on the matter in the meantime, I must notify the case."

"Are you entitled to do that?" asked the man.

He was, Anthony learnt, a well-known figure of Bulboro' society, being one of the lay preachers and orators of the Congregational Church.

"I am not only entitled, I am compelled," said Anthony patiently.

The man saw him to the door.

"Your uncle," he said bitterly, "was known as the poor man's doctor—he didn't go notifying diseases."

"Please don't talk rubbish," said the young doctor, and thereby struck from his register one of the old doctor's trying cases.

No, thought Anthony, as he made his way back through the thronged street and across the wind-swept little oval which marked the centre of the town and for some reason bore the name of "The Chad", there was little difference between the aboriginal of the cannibal forests and the aboriginal mind of Bulboro'. He stopped outside the theatre to read the bills and examine the photographs.

As he did so a girl came hurriedly through the vestibule, followed by a boy of fourteen.

The girl's face arrested him.

It was singularly pretty—that prettiness which is made up of black and white—glowing black of eye, dead black of arched eyebrow and lustrous black of hair. Her face was of that peculiar pallor which betrays city dwellers. But here there was no unhealthy patchiness in the white, and the lips were rose-red.

She hesitated fearfully in the vestibule and looked out into the street and back at the boy.

She was so close to the doctor that he took a step back, thinking that she wished to pass him.

She came down one step and as swiftly went back with a startled "Oh!"

Then she turned back and fled the way she had come, leaving the boy, bewildered and uninformed as to the cause of her panic.

"Dr. Manton."

Anthony swung round.

Tanberry, the parent of the scarlet fever patient, was standing behind him, an angry frown on his face. But the frown was not directed towards the doctor—it went past him and smote the abashed boy who still stood at the entrance of the theatre vestibule.

"James Gill," said Tanberry sternly, "what are you doing in this devil's house?"

The boy opened his mouth to speak, but no word came; he was hypnotized by the awful knowledge of his sin, by the terror of detection.

"Does your father know that you are here?" asked Tanberry.

The boy muttered something which the other took to be a negative.

"Who has enticed you here—are you alone?"

"Yes," said the boy doggedly.

Anthony created a diversion.

"Did you want to speak to me?" he asked.

"Yes," said the man shortly, "but my heart is heavy with sorrow to see this"

"I am afraid I cannot share your condemnation with the boy," said Anthony, with a little smile. "I'm rather in a hurry, though you may not think so."

The man turned his attention from the boy, and out of sheer pity Anthony Manton led the other on past the theatre to give the boy (it was the girl he was thinking of) a chance to escape.

"I want to ask you, doctor," said the man hesitatingly, "if this is scarlet fever, is there any danger—to me?"

"If you have touched the child—yes," said the doctor; "not a great danger, but still a danger. You can never be sure with infectious diseases."

Tanberry looked unhappy, stroking his short red beard.

"It would be a great misfortune if I contracted scarlet fever," he said. "You probably know, doctor, that I, under God and by His divine mercy"—he looked up at the sky swiftly—"am a leader of our little Rescue League and the secretary of the Brotherhood—in fact, it would be disastrous if I were removed from the sphere in wh—"

"It would also be disastrous if your wife were similarly removed," said Anthony brusquely; "or your children or any of your neighbours. I don't suppose you're two inches bigger in the eyes of God than anybody else. You've got to take your chance."

"If I went away, do you think?" suggested the other, too anxious to resent the offensive tone of the doctor. "I have a brother in London who'd be glad to put me up for a week or so."

Anthony's lip curled.

"I am afraid that would be fatal—to your work," he said softly. "Stay here, my friend, and labour in the vineyard, for as the good book says: 'He who fights and runs away, never lives to say hooray!'"

He left Mr. Tanberry staring after him,

"An atheist," said Tanberry at last, turning towards his stricken home. "Soften his heart, O Lord, and let him see the Light. Give him under Thy guidance, Grace and Faith." And he went on his way to call in another doctor, for he was by no means satisfied that Dr. Anthony Manton knew his business.

III. THE RECTOR AND HIS WIFE

Dr. Manton's arrival in Bulboro' was announced with prominence in the current issue of the Bulboro' Herald. It was one of those suggestive events which the town might reasonably regard as being of first consequence.

Anthony bore a name which was honoured from one end of the county to another, and whether it was in the Club, on "The Chad", or in the congested little streets which run northwest from the Crescent, it was one of the items of public news which called for repetition.

It is proper that the views of Bulboro' should be taken in order of social precedence.

The Hon. and Rev. Heron Wendall had a mansion (it would be absurd to describe it as anything less) half-way up West Hill in the shadow of St. Joseph's. St. Joseph's was Bulboro's one Catholic church, and that the shadow of its square towers should fall across the well-kept lawn of the Church House did not greatly disturb the Rector. Like many another man, he was tolerant where his inclinations ran.

He was not tolerant of the Dissenters, and had St. Joseph's been the flamboyant structure of the Congregationalists, its presence might very well have irritated him to a point beyond human endurance, but St. Joseph's was a different matter.

He had considerable respect for the old Church; would even go so far as to admit, if his audience was sufficiently intimate to hear and discreet enough to retain the views he expressed—that it was, perhaps, a pity that Henry VIII had ever lived, or that there should have arisen any difference between Rome and the Court of St. James.

On a morning a few days after the arrival of Anthony Manton, Lady Beatrice Heron Wendall had invited her nominal lord to breakfast with her in her little den. It was an invitation which she did not often extend, and the Hon. and Rev. Heron Wendall had received it with inward quaking.

He was a tall sleek man, rather bald, and inclined to breadth. His face suggested an aesthetic run to fat. There was culture and intellect in the forehead and in the eyes, and a certain refinement in the thin nose. But the mouth was a little too full, and the chin a thought too plump to please your carping physiognomist.

He had a ready smile: a smile which was even and lit up the whole of his face and would deceive the unknowing into complete confidence in its spontaneity.

But those who knew the reverend gentleman, and were sufficiently interested to study all his characteristics, knew exactly which line would

crease first, knew how the smile dawned at the edge of the lips, and how the wrinkling eyes immediately followed, might tell you, indeed, the width of every wrinkle, and the duration of every little pucker that went to make the Rector's geniality.

His voice was rich and sonorous, his hands white and perfectly manicured, his dress invariably irreproachable. He was a model of all that a Rector should be, and might with profit have been sealed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners as a pattern of habiliment, manner and deportment for all clergymen of the Church of England for all time.

The youngest son of Lord Pershore, he came to Bulboro' with the cachet of his aristocratic lineage, and Bulboro' received him with open arms as some slight token of the Bishop's regard.

There were hypercritical people, who complained that the honourable and reverend gentleman was lacking in sympathy, wanting something in humanity, and that he was wooden, heartless and cold. But there are in all probability members of the Church who are everlastingly elbowing in the direction of evangelism; people who are not satisfied with the urgent business of their own and their families' salvation, but must needs go raking about in unsavoury rag-bags for most undesirable sinners.

There were others who said he was shallow and insincere. Pierce the suavity and the veneer of him, you came upon a cotton-wool filling of stupidity.

Possibly the Hon. and Rev. Heron Wendall heard of these criticisms, but he could afford to ignore them.

He belonged to a class which for generations had chosen not only their own friends but their own enemies.

Outside the circle they had thus drawn, they accepted neither compliment nor rebuke.

A dissatisfied schismatic might cede from the Church and go over to the Wesleyans to the scandal of church-going Bulboro'. He might even arise in a public place and denounce the rulers of the Church in its relation to the poor, and find himself applauded by a large congregation of another sect, who had troubles of their own but were not averse to receiving recruits to fill the gap which their own schismatics had left.

But the Rev. Heron Wendall went on his way impassive and unmoved, smiled his quick smile, and murmured "how interesting" when the news of such a meeting was brought to him. Thereafter he would dismiss the matter from his mind as being unworthy to discuss even in the privacy of tête-à-tête luncheon with his lady wife. But did General Sir Burton Brown, aged and irascible, on the verge of senility moreover, offer criticism of a service, or present his compliments in his weak old caligraphy, drawing attention to the

unseemliness of the choir-boys' behaviour or the intonation of the curate, then the Hon. and Rev. Heron Wendall sat in his study in judgment, with choirboys and curates, and choir-masters and organist arraigned before him, and the inquisition might take the greater part of a day and spoil his rest at night.

Of all the critics he had chosen, there was none so potent a factor in his life, and of whose judgment he stood more in awe, than that noble lady whose alliance with his fortune had marked a distinct advancement in his worldly career.

"Tell your lady," he said to the trim maid who brought the message, "that I shall have pleasure in breakfasting with her."

He looked at his watch.

"At what time?" he asked.

"At eleven o'clock, sir," said the maid.

He nodded, and the girl went back with his message.

What did she want? he wondered. He was not usually favoured with such invitations.

Lady Heron Wendall was a convenient invalid who exercised all the privileges and experienced none of the discomforts of sickness. She was the autocrat of the Rectory; dominated not only the limited society of the town, but all that was most exclusive in the county. Most effectively did she dominate the Hon. and Rev. Heron Wendall.

As he sat at his desk preparing his next Sunday's sermon, he turned over in his mind every possible explanation for the summons, but without securing any great satisfaction, and at three minutes to eleven he tapped at the door of his wife's room.

Beatrice Heron Wendall was still a beautiful woman. Her pallor gave her an appearance of frailty which was unjustified, for in a sense she was a hearty woman. Her Titian red hair, her delicately pencilled eyebrows, and her long, black lashes may possibly have owed something to artificial aid. As to this, the hairdresser who came weekly from London to "do her up"—the expression was her maid's—might have supplied information which feminine Bulboro' already guessed.

She half lay, half sat, upon a settee drawn up to the window overlooking the lawn and affording a glimpse of Bulboro', half-hidden in the smoky hollow below. She nodded "Good morning" to her husband as he entered.

A chair had been placed for him, but he crossed to her, and bending over her, kissed her on the forehead.

"And how did you sleep last night, Beatrice?" he asked pleasantly. His smile lasted a little longer for her.

"I slept all right," she said carelessly. "Sit down, will you! Do not wander about the room, Edward, you fidget me."

He smiled again, pulled up his chair to the little table, and handled an egg rather daintily. He had had his breakfast two hours before, and was never less inclined to a meal than he was at that moment.

"I want you to call on this new Manton man," she said, looking out of the window.

"Which new Manton man, my love?" smiled the Rector. "There is only one Manton man I should think of mentioning," she replied, turning on him the cold and disapproving stare of her blue eyes, "the old doctor's nephew; he arrived in Bulboro' the other night. I want him to call upon me."

"My dear," protested the other in terms of genial reproach, "of course he will call upon you."

"If there was any of course about it," she said impatiently, "I should not bother you, but I knew old Manton very well, much better than you."

She might have added that he knew her very well, much better than her husband had ever known her, and that he had probed her character and found the dark places of her life which had remained hidden from the man she had married.

"This Anthony man is a scientist, and the real scientist is never impressed by local big-wigs. You have to see him and make him come here."

"Why not send for him in the ordinary way, my dear," suggested the Rector, "the next time you feel—"

"Do not talk like a fool, Edward," said Lady Heron Wendall calmly. "If I call him in he will confine himself to symptoms, and I do not feel inclined to discuss my digestive organs with a perfect stranger."

"To-day?" Her husband pursed his lips in thought.

"To-day," said Lady Heron Wendall; "I want to see him particularly."

The Rector bowed.

"Of course, if you want him I will see that he comes," he said easily.

He had no doubt in his mind as to the alacrity with which such an invitation would be accepted. An invitation from the Rectory was tantamount to a royal command.

She must have read what was passing in his mind, for suddenly she said:

"Please don't harbour any stupid ideas about this young man desiring to come. I had a letter from Bexley to-day. He says it is the talk of London that a man of Anthony Manton's abilities should bury himself in a hole like Bulboro'."

Edward Heron Wendall demurred.

"I would not call Bulboro' a hole," he said. "To my mind the town is rather a microcosm of England. We have all the same conditions, the same opportunities, the same scope"

She arrested his eloquence with a weary lift of her hand. "For God's sake, do not preach at me, Edward," she said. "I have heard all this so often."

"My dear," he protested mildly.

At that moment the door opened without any ceremony, and a girl came into the room. She was tall and straight, and exquisitely gowned. But it was her face which arrested those who beheld her for the first time. You might search all England for a face as beautiful as hers. Hair, eyes, colouring, all contributed to her loveliness. Geraldine Brand at nineteen was the most beautiful woman in England. Whenever society functions offered eager editors an excuse, her face looked down from the bookstalls from Aberdeen to Truro.

Though she was only nineteen at the time, she had received, possibly, more offers of marriage than has been the lot of any girl of her class. Often the stories concerning her were a little exaggerated. There was not in the whole of Burke a sufficiently large number of unmarried dukes to justify all the stories which were told, but that she might have been the Countess of Winboro' or Lady Pierce de Vernon admits of no doubt.

She was the spoilt child of a fond and, be it confessed, unscrupulous father.

Sir John Brand had a reputation which extended beyond the confines of his country; he was a notorious bon viveur, a good fellow to people who confound virtue with exuberance, a generous and a lax father.

No less than an indulgent parent had susceptible, eligible England contributed to her spoiling. There were people who found Geraldine Brand unbearable, but in justice to the girl, it may be said that they were mainly feminine.

The arrogance of youth is particularly trying, but to none is it more a source of irritation than to the parents and guardians, to the brothers and lovers, of other youth.

She came with a run across the room.

"Good morning, Edward." she called gaily in her high, sweet voice, and leaning over the couch where Lady Beatrice lay, she gave her a hug. The elder woman returned the caress warmly. She was very fond of the girl, and perhaps she saw in her something of her own youth and was jealous for her to secure the opportunities which had been denied to herself.

"Well, Jerry, where have you been?" she asked.

"I have been down to High Street," said the girl, seating herself perilously on one end of the settee. "I went to 'The Chad', a grisly hole, Edward."

Edward Heron Wendall was her first cousin, and she exercised a cousin's privilege, often to his embarrassment, for there was a disparity in their ages which seemed to call for more respect and deference than she felt called upon to extend to him.

"I wonder why they allow St. Peter's to stand right in the middle of that very valuable place?" she asked. "The old Chad itself looks jolly, but there is nothing beautiful or lovely or jolly about St. Peter's." She shook her head ruefully. "It is the most abominable building that has ever been erected in Bulboro'."

"Now, now," said her cousin with solemn humour, "you must not say that kind of thing, Jerry; remember that the church was erected to commemorate a most solemn"

The girl snapped her fingers

"I know all about it, it was one of those awful Jubilee things which were put up all over England."

"Why did you go to the Chad?" asked Lady Wendall curiously. "It is rather early, isn't it?"

The girl hesitated, then smiled

"If I must be honest," she said, "I went to see the new doctor."

Lady Beatrice raised her eyebrows.

"To see which new doctor?" she asked.

"Dr. Anthony thingummy," said the girl carelessly. "He is a new-comer, and I have heard all sorts of queer stories about him."

"Like—?"

The girl hesitated.

"Well," she smiled, "they say that he is half a barbarian, and that he is very good looking, and Bexley says—"

Lady Beatrice laughed.

"He has written to you, too, has he? I wonder what is his object in booming our dear Dr. Manton's nephew."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"You know Bex," she said. "He is full of weird fads, he gets so awfully keen on people—I think he met this doctor man on the Congo when he was out shooting there."

"I can tell you this"—Edward thought it an opportune moment to express his presence. "I can tell you this," he said with the gravity which the statement demanded, "our young man is an authority upon tropical diseases, and in his way is quite famous."

The girl looked at her cousin with a little twinkle in her lovely eyes.

"There is one question," she said solemnly, "that is distressing me. Does he church?"

The Rector frowned, and turned the frown with admirable dexterity into his rigid smile.

"That is a question I cannot answer," he said; "if he is like his uncle he will probably attend all the places of worship in Bulboro', and, in the course of time, be buried by them all."

He had some work to do in his study, and made a ceremonious exit, relieved to escape from an atmosphere which was never especially friendly to himself.

His relief was not unshared by the women he left behind. Geraldine pulled off her hat and flung it on to a distant chair with a sure aim, despite the murmured protest of her hostess.

"You are a perfectly extravagant girl," smiled Lady Beatrice. "I shall be rather sorry for the man you marry." The girl looked at her.

"I will be rather sorry myself," she said quietly, "but it will be such a long time before that tragedy, that I can well afford to postpone my reformation. Edward is rather keen on my marrying," she went on, settling herself in a corner of the settee as Lady Beatrice drew up her feet to give her room; "he positively gloats over the prospect of marrying me to some worthy young gentleman before the congregation of the elect. It would be awfully tough on Edward if I married a Catholic."

The elder woman looked up sharply. "Do you mean Bexley?" she asked.

The girl nodded.

"What do you think?" she invited.

Lady Beatrice looked past her.

"He is a very nice boy," she said slowly, "of course he has a lot of money, and is a sort of a baronet. You might do worse. Is he keen?"

The girl nodded again, and there was laughter in her eyes. "They are all keen," she said. "I wish I could imbibe some of their enthusiasm for the blessed state."

There was a little pause. Lady Beatrice was looking thoughtfully out of the window, and the girl was occupied with her own fancies.

Beatrice withdrew her gaze from the lawn suddenly and asked:

"I suppose you will include him amongst your victims?"

"I wonder," said the girl, then asked quickly: "whom do you mean?"

Lady Beatrice smiled.

"I think we are both thinking of the same man, this new doctor."

Jerry pouted.

"I do not know that I am very keen on those people," she said, "especially the too clever ones; they want to talk about themselves and microbes, and to discuss abstract questions which, under ordinary circumstances, one can escape by avoiding the higher-priced quarterlies. I saw Mrs. Gilby in town," she went on; "she tells me that she went down with her daughter to the dispensary last night, and they had a view of our young man."

"What was Mrs. Gilby's verdict?" asked the other with a smile.

"Mrs. Gilby was very emphatic"—the girl nodded her head seriously—"she said the young doctor is a bear, and had none of the manners of his uncle."

"I do not remember his uncle's manners," said Lady Beatrice dryly. "My recollection of the dear old man was that he was something of a bear himself."

The girl rose and came over to the table and poured out a cup of tea.

"I will ring for some more," said Lady Beatrice. "For goodness' sake don't drink cold tea!"

"Don't bother, please," smiled Geraldine. "I like this. I had rather a thick time last night."

"That sounds pretty alarming," said Lady Beatrice; "exactly what does it mean?"

"We danced till four," said Geraldine carelessly, "and I was bored to tears."

"Where was this?"

"At the Colebrookes."

"Who was there?"

"Nobody of note; that little Jewish gentleman, Cohen, was one of the family—Billy Colebrooke is rather keen on him. You see, Billy wants to float his mines. Oh, yes," she said, as a sudden thought struck her, "and that Harburn woman is starting a new league."

Lady Beatrice frowned; she was suspicious of new leagues. Bulboro' was the home of quasi-philanthropic societies, in the formation of which she herself had generally taken the initiative. She did not readily forgive anything which was suggestive of rivalry, and the Harburn woman had not once, but many times, set herself in opposition to Church House.

"What is the league?" she asked.

Jerry threw back her head and laughed, a wholesome joyous laugh of genuine amusement.

"It is the league of good advice," she said. "It is so like the Harburn woman. You see, the idea is that a lot of us shall band ourselves together and we shall make a systematic tour through Bulboro' looking for somebody who really needs help. We shan't give blankets, or coal or food tickets, or anything which costs money—but we shall give"—she paused dramatically—"advice. Yes, yes," she went on, eagerly, "it is the greatest fun. We shall lay our soothing hands upon their distressed brows and tell them just how and what they have to do."

"If they want money we shall tell them who to get it from; if they want clothes we will recommend them good tailors; if they want advice on any subject under the sun, which does not cost money, we shall tell them. Billy wants to be a member; he has an idea, I think, that he might be able to work off some of those awful shares of his."

"But, seriously?" asked Lady Beatrice.

"It is perfectly true," the girl nodded, "they hope to enlist the sympathies and services of the Manton man just as soon as he gets acquainted with his uncle's patients."

Lady Beatrice rose.

"What a weird creature the woman is," she said irritably. "She is not content to pull an oar with the rest of us but she wants to captain every boat she rows in."

There was a little tap at the door, and the maid came in. She looked at Lady Beatrice and then at her visitor and hesitated. "What is it, Rachel?" asked her ladyship.

"It's a man, m'lady," stammered the girl.

Lady Beatrice Wendall's eyes narrowed, and for the space of a second there was a hardness about the mouth that the girl had never remembered seeing before.

"Who is the mysterious man?" she asked.

She could take that liberty, for they had very few secrets from one another.

Lady Beatrice shrugged her shoulders.

"It is a man I am helping, a man from the town," she said. "And he is rather a nuisance. Tell him I will see him in a few minutes," she said to the girl, and when the door closed behind her:

"You would not think anybody would have the audacity to attempt to convert me to Nonconformity?" she asked.

Jerry laughed.

"You do not mean that?"

"I do, indeed," Lady Beatrice nodded. "That is the truth," she said.

"And pray what argument is he using?" asked Geraldine.

A little frown settled between the eyes of the other. "A rather harsh one," she said shortly.

IV. A GAME OF BRIDGE

Anthony Manton made no social calls for the first three weeks of his residence in Bulboro'—he was too busily occupied with the claims of the practice. There were some who may have come to him out of sheer curiosity, but there was a genuinely large amount of sickness. Influenza seemed to have laid half the inhabitants of Bulboro' low and to have kept the doctors busy day and night.

He met men of his own profession, who did not resent his intrusion, accepting his inheritance of old Manton's kingdom without question.

It would seem that aristocratic Bulboro' shared the views of Lady Beatrice, for he was not called in to prescribe for the West End, and it seemed that they had decided to wait until they had become acquainted with him socially, before they developed any of the distressing symptoms peculiar to the idle and the moneyed classes.

He saw much of Ambrose Cohen in those days. The little man would drive over in the evenings, and spend a couple of hours in Anthony's study, smoking and discussing everything under the sun, save Bulboro' society. To this he made no further reference, and added nothing to the information which he offered at the station on the day of Tony's arrival.

The town was one of strong antagonism, Anthony gathered, but he had no further demonstration of religious feeling until one night he was called to a case in Mansfield Street.

He had been sent for by a distracted mother to find a youth of fifteen in a condition which suggested shock.

The boy was a weakling and was unfitted, physically, to accept the flogging which had been given to him.

The youngster's body was covered with weals, and the weeping mother admitted that he had suffered at the hands of his father.

It was no part of Anthony's business to interfere with the exercising of a parent's right to chastise an errant son, but here was a case which might easily develop seriously. His stethoscope discovered a suggestion of pneumonia, a complication which might very easily follow upon so cruel a beating as the boy had received. The house was a decent one, in a decent thoroughfare, and the parents of the child were evidently fairly well-to-do people.

Anthony made another examination of the shivering, moaning boy on the bed and wrote his prescription.

When he had finished he rose.

"Exactly why was this boy punished in this brutal way?" he asked.

The woman hesitated.

Before she could reply the door was flung open and a man came in. He was of the superior artisan type, below middle height, a wisp of black whisker covered the lower part of his thin face. His eyes were the eyes of a fanatic, his hair long and carefully brushed, and he faced Doctor Anthony Manton defiantly, his hands thrust in his trousers pockets, his head on one side.

"Do you want to know why I flogged that boy, sir?" he demanded.

"I have asked your wife," said Anthony calmly, "and as you seem to have been listening at the door it will be unnecessary for her to repeat my question."

The man was ripe for argument, and his first words explained his creed in so far as his eavesdropping was concerned.

"I have a right to listen to what I like in my own house," he said. "And I tell you this, that I flogged this boy to save his immortal soul."

Anthony looked at him a little amazed.

"You have considerably jeopardized his mortal body," he said dryly. "There may be a complication of pneumonia in this case, and if by any chance the boy dies I shall give evidence to this effect—in any case I shall report this matter."

The man looked at him open mouthed.

"Dies!" he said.

Anthony nodded.

"There is just a possibility that he will, in which case you will be tried for manslaughter. I do not think," he went on carefully, "that I have ever seen a more brutal case of flogging; and I have lived in a nigger country where atrocities of this character are supposed to abound. There is nothing I can imagine that the boy could have done that would have justified your cruelty."

The old defiant look returned to the father's face.

"You are speaking now, sir, to a God-fearing man, to one who has found Christ," he lifted his eyes to the ceiling automatically, "who has trod the way of salvation, who has accepted grace and redemption at his Saviour's hands. This is my son," he pointed vigorously to the bed, "a consorter with

idolatrous people, who left my house the other night with a lie on his lips, saying that he was going to a Bible-reading, and who was seen by a brother in the devil's playhouse, absorbing filth of the modern Gomorrah. It is better," he said, his voice trembling with passion, "that he should die by my hand than that his soul should go down to hell, damned beyond redemption."

Anthony stared at the man calmly and coldly, and did not speak as the other babbled on with scraps from Scripture and glib phrases of admonition.

Anthony looked at the boy again and recognized him. He was the lad he had seen in the vestibule of the theatre.

When the father had finished, the doctor picked up his hat.

"My friend," he said, and there were times when his voice had a cruel, piercing quality, "I do not know your name."

"My name is Gill," said the man.

Anthony bowed his head slightly.

"Well, Mr. Gill," he said, "I will tell you a few home-truths which may not interest you, and which you will probably reject in your arrogance"

The man started.

"I repeat, in your arrogance," said Anthony. "You will be surprised to learn that you are highly neurotic; you have no stamina, you have no particular reasoning power, and I should imagine very little education. To give way to your fury, and flog a boy as you have flogged this child, is a symptom of moral degeneracy. In other words," he said carefully, "you are almost as great a beast as any of the people you have just been abusing, only your beastliness takes another form. You can, if you wish, allow me to attend to this boy; if you do not wish you may call in another doctor. For my part, I consider it is my duty to report this matter to the police."

"I am prepared to suffer," said the man, squaring his shoulders. "I am prepared to be persecuted even as my Master was, even as my dear pastor has been."

"Oh, you are one of Pastor Childe's children," smiled Anthony.

"I am," said the man sternly. "I am, under God, the lay assistant of that blessed saint on earth, an unworthy pupil—"

"Oh, you are unworthy all right," said Anthony with a little curl of his lips. He reached the door and turned round, and for a moment the men stood face to face. "Since I am a doctor in a civilized town," said Anthony, "I am

prevented from taking the course that I should, if I were just an ordinary man and had to deal with you under these circumstances. Because," he added, half to himself, "I think I should have served you almost as badly as you have served your son. Good morning."

The man, in an ungovernable fit of rage, followed him to the landing.

"For two pins I would kick you out of the house," he said.

"My friend," said Dr. Anthony Manton with an ugly little smile, "I should desire nothing better, but you are such a puny little devil that I dare not hope that you will put your threat into execution."

He left the house unmolested.

Perhaps an ordinary doctor, similarly circumstanced, might have felt it was not his duty to go any further than warning the parent, but Anthony Manton was independent alike of the support of Bulboro', the opinions of Bulboro', or the execration of Bulboro', and he made his way to the nearest police-station and reported the case.

A week later another name was added to the list of Bulboro's martyrs, for Mr. John Gill was sent to prison for twenty-eight days without the option of a fine.

Thus was Anthony Manton introduced to Bulboro' society. In normal circumstances he might have found his action universally approved, but Bulboro' was a city of partisans: no public man could make more than six enemies. He could never possibly hope to make six friends.

You might estrange the Baptist and retain the Congregationalist, be utterly damned in the eyes of the Church, and entertained at tea by an enthusiastic Baptist congregation. You might be on speaking terms with Father Carter and his Romanist friends, and yet acquire no savour of happiness if you were to be affected by the sight of Mrs. Gamage crossing the road with great ostentation lest the fragrance of incense polluted her delicate nostrils—for Mrs. Gamage was the leader of the young women's league which was affiliated to the Baptists, and had a working arrangement with the Wesleyans.

One important feature of intercommunal life must be recorded, and it is this: that you might remain friends with every sect, and with every subsection of religious thought in Bulboro', always provided you were inclined to Wesleyanism and worshipped openly under the Reverend George Haverstock. For the Wesleyans are the Holy Romans of the Nonconformist world, have greater confidence in their method of worship than the most bigoted of Ritualists, yet are sufficiently tolerant of other methods to admit that they might be right.

Anthony Manton's action was approved by at least three sections of religious thought in Bulboro', and for three different reasons. It was approved by the Church of England because it conveyed to those uninitiated Church people, who were hovering everlastingly on the brink of Nonconformity, that that section which Mr. Gill represented was cruel to children. It was welcomed by the Congregationalists, because the unfortunate man who was serving out his martyrdom in Bulboro' jail had been the sternest critic of their political propaganda. It was welcomed by a large party made up of all sects who overtly or covertly disliked the imprisoned man.

The case revealed Anthony Manton in a light which was not favourable to himself. There was talk of an open boycott, but since the boycott could only be directed against the free dispensary, and since the free dispensary could not in any way be injured by the abstention of malcontents, the boycott was abandoned, and indeed the whole agitation, which arose like a sudden storm in an Indian ocean, died as suddenly, and the after-thunder of an electric controversy was heard only in the mutter of correspondence in the Bulboro' Herald.

Lady Beatrice read the account, but she had had a fuller report from her husband, who, in his dual capacity of ecclesiastical authority and Justice of the Peace, had attended the court.

"Of course," she said, "I am awfully glad this Gill man has got into serious trouble, but I do not know whether it was wise of our young Dr. Manton. What do you think, Jerry?"

They were dining together on the evening following the police-court proceedings. Jerry reached out for the petits-fours.

"I think he is going to be rather a bore," she said carelessly, "I rather dislike these horrible reformers, especially the melodramatic ones. Of course the man was a beast and all that, and deserved all that could be given to him, but one likes one's friends to be rather less in the limelight."

"You will have an opportunity of meeting him to-night," said the Rector.

He glanced at his wife, as he invariably did, for her approval. "I met him to-day," he went on, "and asked him to come along after dinner; he plays bridge apparently."

"But that is rather an odd way of bringing a man into one's family circle, isn't it?" Lady Beatrice asked with a frown.

"He is rather an unusual man," apologized Heron Wendall, "and he seems pretty busy."

"But why didn't you ask him to dinner?" asked his wife.

"He never dines out," the Rector hastened to explain. "I repeat, my dear, he is a most extraordinary man, and you have either got to take him just as you find him or else cut out all idea of meeting him. You will never get him to your afternoons."

She made no reply. The result of to-night's visit would prove the wisdom or otherwise of her husband's action.

Anthony came soon after nine. A thinnish man they thought him in his dress suit, though he was well shaped. His brown face showed the browner against the white of his evening dress; he was neither embarrassed by the warm greeting of Lady Beatrice nor made uncomfortable by the casual reception he received at the hands of the beautiful Miss Brand.

"We have just been hearing about you," said the girl, when the conventional exchanges had been made.

"I am sorry," he replied shortly.

The girl looked at him with interest. Was he going to be a bore or would he develop humorously?

"You are quite a hero in the eyes of Bulboro'," she said. "Which is Bulboro'?" he asked calmly, "the Bulboro' of The Chad or the Bulboro' of West Hill?"

"A little of both," she smiled.

"Bulboro's conception of heroism," he said, "is, I am afraid, rather crude."

He did not intend to be offensive—even to unconscious Bulboro'; he was stating what he thought was an obvious fact.

"It is rather a wretched place, don't you think?" he went on, "to the man who thinks and feels, it is an impossible place; it is so horribly compact, so horribly complacent, so horribly complete in itself—complete without any outside assistance. One can imagine a giant hand clipping away Bulboro' from the world and leaving frayed ends of telegraph wires and railway lines, and Bulboro' going on its way for a thousand years without realizing that it was isolated."

"What a horrible prospect!" she shuddered.

He agreed with a nod.

They had gone into the drawing-room, where card-tables had been set out.

He cut Geraldine as his partner, an unfortunate happening, because Geraldine was an expert player and was moreover somewhat imperious in her attitude towards her partners.

It was good fun if you loved Geraldine, and all men of her age loved her almost automatically. It was amusing if you were old enough to see the humorous side of it. She had never yet had the bad luck to cut with a partner who was young and sufficiently oblivious to her charms to be resentful of her criticism. He seated himself opposite with a smile and said:

"I hope, Miss Brand, that you are not a very exacting player, I am afraid my bridge is very poor."

She made a little face, but recovered herself with a laugh.

"So many people say that," she said, "only to invite expressions of admiration later on in the game."

He was not an ideal player, as she was soon to discover. He conveyed the impression (with reason) that his mind was occupied elsewhere—a fatal quality in a bridge player and especially exasperating to one who takes the game seriously.

Before the first hand had been played she had addressed two or three characteristically cutting remarks to this acquaintance of an evening.

They were such as would have passed unnoticed in her own set or excited no more than an embarrassed giggle or two from the youth of her acquaintance.

Anthony Manton began by being amused, passed into a brief stage of irritation (not unnatural) and ended by making a swift appraisal of this girl, an appraisal which was neither complimentary nor unkind.

He lost the rubber—it was auction—with five hundred points down. The girl was very serious; bridge was something more than a recreation.

She did not gamble; the money value of the points did not count, but a faux pas at bridge was a deplorable exhibition in her eyes, and a lapse of table manners. A man leading from the ace-queen stood on the same bench of social degradation as the outsider who took a dessert spoon to his peas.

"You are a perfectly awful player," she said frankly. She was flushed, and really annoyed.

"Aren't I?" agreed Anthony. "I warned you."

"I hope you are a better doctor," she said with the calm insolence of masterful youth and commanding beauty.

He looked at her oddly for a moment and held her eyes.

Lady Beatrice saw the storm brewing, and was nervous. Dr. Anthony Manton was a new type of creature for whom she had no exact formula.

"Cut, Jerry," she said. "Cut again and possibly you will get Edward; we have had all the luck."

But the girl was in her most stubborn mood. This young man had not yielded, had neither been flustered nor penitent, had not worshipped at the shrine where the knees of all manner of men had bent. Instead he regarded her with a sort of good-natured hostility.

"I do not think I will play any more," she said, and the words had hardly left her lips when she realized the extent of her gaucherie.

"You think me horrid, don't you?" she said quickly, and smiled at the young man.

"I think you are rather spoilt," he said quietly. "I have heard so much about you, and I am a little disappointed."

The girl went red and white; nobody had ever dared speak to her like this; what was left of her reason told her that the man was at least outraging certain conventions.

She might have withdrawn and carried the day with her, but this was a new experience—never before had she met a man who had dared to treat her so rudely.

"You have absolutely no right," she breathed, "to tell me you are disappointed in me; I have never had such an impertinence addressed to me."

He was still looking at her; his eyes had not left her face. He was perfectly calm and self-possessed.

"It was an impertinence on your part," he said quietly, "to refer to my play and compare my skill as a doctor with my genius as a card player. That was unpardonable, even from a young and inexperienced girl, because I suppose that even here in Bulboro' you were taught certain conventions must be observed. I suppose I had better go," he said with a smile, and received no encouragement to remain.

The Rector saw him to the door, and was murmuring polite regrets, but since he could remember no precedent to such a situation, he went back to the drawing-room with the discomfiting sense that, whatever else had happened, he would be held responsible. He came back prepared to meet a gathering storm, and was agreeably surprised to find that the girl and his wife were laughing.

"Extraordinary," he said.

"But don't you think he was abominable?"

The Rector looked at Lady Beatrice, but found no beam of light to lead him to the right path.

"It was extraordinary," he repeated safely.

V. LADY BEATRICE'S PAST

Anthony Manton did not occupy his uncle's old pew at St. Mary's on the following Sunday.

At least three pairs of eyes watched that pew furtively, but if the truth be told, Anthony had forgotten that such a thing as attendance at church was expected of him. He had lived so long in the wilds and had so concentrated his philosophy and his creed that it never occurred to him that Sunday might be spent in any other way than that in which he spent his week-days.

The sound of the discordance of church bells ringing in various tones was the first hint he received of his deflection. He looked up from the microscope at which he was engaged, and stared thoughtfully out of the window, then he walked to the fire-place and pushed the bell. He had retained all his uncle's old servants, and Jocks, the butler, answered the call.

"Oh, Jocks," said Anthony, looking over his shoulder as the other entered, "did my uncle go to church?"

"He attended places of worship, sir," said Jocks, a little solemnly.

"Exactly what places of worship?" asked Anthony. "He attended them all, sir, in their turn."

Anthony smiled.

"The dear old man, how characteristic of him I wonder if I am expected to go to church," he said, half aloud.

Jocks opened his mouth to offer a suggestion, and thought better of it. He was a Churchman, and took religion as seriously as any other respectable citizen in Bulboro'. If he might not suggest that his master could be more profitably employed seeking his soul's salvation than amusing himself with a microscope and messy little patches of dried blood, he could at least offer a point of view more in keeping with his position and affecting one who was of his class.

"Pardon me, sir," he said.

Anthony looked up.

"I have had a little conversation with cook," said Jocks in his profound way, "a Mrs. Chalmers, and a God-fearing woman, sir."

"I have no doubt," agreed Anthony gravely.

"And Mrs. Chalmers, sir," Jocks went on, "has wondered whether you would mind our endeavouring to say a word of gospel to—" He hesitated.

"Yes?" encouraged Anthony.

"Your nigger servant."

"You must not say nigger," said Anthony. "I realize that you are intensely ignorant on the question of racial distinction, but Ahmet is a Mohammedan and a Moor."

"Indeed, sir," said Jocks politely.

"Well: what about Ahmet?" asked Anthony.

He was almost prepared for the reply.

"We had thought, sir," said Jocks, with that deliberation which was so annoying to his master, "Mrs. Chalmers and I, that possibly we might lead Mr. Ahmet to what I might term a different point of view."

"Religiously speaking, I presume," said Anthony.

"Exactly, sir," said Mr. Jocks.

"In fact," said Anthony with a smile, "you would like to have the credit of converting a good heathen to your religion?"

"Yes, exactly, sir," said Mr. Jocks again.

"What religion are you converting him from, have you troubled to find out?"

Mr. Jocks smiled.

"I take it, sir, that he has no religion."

"Are you going through life," asked the irritated Anthony, "under the impression that Christianity is the only religion that is offered to the world?"

"The only true religion, sir," said the prim Jocks. Anthony thought for a moment, then he said:

"Well, try your hand on Ahmet You will find," he went on, "some slight difficulty in stating your wishes to him, and a greater difficulty I should imagine in persuading him to leave a faith, which is only sub-divided into two sections, for one which is divided into two and fifty. Also," he went on, "you might find it a task reconciling him to a form of religion which offers him little material comfort in this life and a condition in the next which would be entirely distasteful to a man of his naturally voluptuous habits."

If Mr. Jocks had any idea of including in the scheme the reformation of his master—and who else could he obtain as an interpreter?—he was doomed to disappointment.

Anthony finished the morning, and incidentally completed the work on which he was engaged, called to see three of his patients before luncheon, and spent the afternoon profitably in preparing his report of the growth of sleeping sickness in the Itrui Forest.

The evening found him at the Free Dispensary, and nine o'clock brought him back to the house again. Jocks had returned from church.

"There is a gentleman waiting to see you, sir; I have put him in the dining-room."

"To see me?" asked Anthony in surprise: he was following his uncle's practice in keeping his house free from encroachments of consultations, and to this end he had a little office on The Chad where he might be seen at set hours. He had made it known, in the short time he was in Bulboro', that his uncle's repugnance to a practice carried on at his own home was shared by himself.

"A Mr. Patten," whispered the butler, significantly.

"Patten, Patten," the name suggested nothing to Anthony. "Ask him to come into the library," he said.

A few minutes later Jocks ushered in a young man, clean shaven and smartly dressed. His dark curly hair and his dark eyes gave him a foreign appearance.

He bowed to the doctor.

"I am Augustus Patten," he said. "You probably know my name."

Anthony smiled.

"I am afraid I know very few names in England," he said. "I have been away so long. Won't you sit down?"

The young man seated himself with care, and Anthony waited.

"I owe you an apology," said the visitor, "for coming here at this hour of the night, the more so since I know that you do not care to receive patients here except in case of urgency, but I offer in extenuation the fact that I am not a patient," he smiled.

"I am very glad," said Anthony. "In what other way can I serve you?"

"Well—" The young man seemed at some loss to find the words he wanted. "I am awfully interested in this case in which you were concerned the other day, personally interested, in fact," he said. "I am the proprietor of the Theatre Royal, you will possibly see no association"

An association had dawned on Anthony's mind, but he did not assist the other.

"I am interested in a girl," said the young man slowly. Anthony looked at him.

"In a girl?" he repeated. "Which particular girl are you interested in, and how am I concerned?"

"She is the daughter of Gill," said the young man. "You probably know he has a daughter; she is sixteen, a very charming girl, leading a perfect hell of a life," he went on earnestly. "You can hardly realize, doctor, what a horrible place such a home can be to a high-spirited girl, an artist to her finger tips, a natural actress, with all the enthusiasm of youth. The boy who was punished has been a brick," he went on disjointedly. "He was really protecting his sister. She was very keen on the stage." He hesitated again. "She was in the theatre on the night this boy was seen."

"I do not wish to interrupt you," said Anthony, "but for the life of me I cannot see how I am going to help you. I happen to know that this lady was in your theatre that night, and that her father has conscientious scruples concerning the stage. But what can I do?" asked Anthony, good-humouredly. "The father is not likely to be influenced by my opinion when he comes out of jail."

"I thought you might be able to advise me," said the young man, a little crestfallen.

Anthony shook his head.

"I am sorry," he said kindly, "but you mustn't get the impression that I am a quixotic individual, wandering through life championing the oppressed. It happened in this case," he went on, "that the injury to the boy was such that no medical man could pass over without placing himself in the position of an accomplice; besides," he went on, "I do not know what advice you want."

"Isn't there a way the girl can be taken out of his care?"

"That is a question for a lawyer, not for a doctor," said Anthony shortly. "I should imagine that you will have some difficulty. You are not the only young man in the world," he said with a smile, "who wishes to find a ready-made method of removing a girl from the influence of her parents. I presume you wish to marry the lady?"

Mr. Patten laughed.

"Indeed, no!" he said, "it is really her art I am thinking about. I am certain she will be a great actress; her rendering of a part I had specially written for her was perfect."

"Then I understand your interest is purely a business one," said Anthony, as he showed his visitor out.

"In a sense, yes," said the young man

Anthony went back to his study a little thoughtful.

What was being said about him did not particularly worry him, but he had the greatest objection in the world to being bothered at all hours of the day or night, by people with grievances and causes requiring a doughty champion. That promised to be a nuisance.

He took down his pipe from the study mantelpiece and filled it abstractedly.

His mind should have been filled with the subject of the treatise he was preparing for the Journal of Tropical Medicine, but in some unaccountable way a train of thought which his visitor had set in motion had gone puffing up West Hill to Church House, through the lavender-scented hallway into a drawing-room where there had stood a very angry girl.

He had not regretted that evening any more than he would have regretted a night spent under uncomfortable circumstances in a tropical forest—if thereby he had enlarged the field of his knowledge.

The Church House drawing-room was incomparable to a tropical jungle, and Lady Beatrice might well resent the comparison.

He had not met any of the members of that unhappy card party since that night. He smiled grimly, he did not anticipate any further invitations to the rectory. If any emotion stirred in him it was one of sentimental regret that he might be spoiling a practice which his uncle had built up with much labour, and that he was, in a sense, disappointing those who had associated the name of Manton with all that was genial, and kindly, and forbearing.

Yet in his heart of hearts he knew that he had taken no action of which his uncle would not have offered his complete approval.

The girl was spoilt. She was intensely pretty, he thought, but she was too well aware of the fact. Her world had narrowed down to the limited confines of the admiring circle which constantly surrounded her, and she had restricted her outlook until it did not extend beyond the ring of bowed and carefully brushed heads by which she was everlastingly encircled.

What sort of a man would she marry, he wondered, what life would be hers? He could in a sketchy way imagine her the grand lady with social engagements booked ahead, with all the exactness of detail which might accompany the booking of a music-hall star.

He might imagine her the mother of one or two duty children, whose arrival would release her for a life of mild gaieties, free for ever from further responsibilities of motherhood, a life greatly devoted to securing the complexion and the figure of the status quo ante bellum—for that part of marriage was war to the society woman.

Dr. Anthony Manton was narrow in certain aspects. Science, if it broadens some perceptions, narrows others, and the greatest danger is that which threatens the spiritual side of those whose lives are devoted to learning the exactness of material manifestations. Science cannot reasonably allow for a soul, unless it can discover in the pure ether of abstract spirituality the merest material speck to which it may attach a label: or from it cut a segment for microscopic examination. It does not know temperament, save in its relation to digestion or the complexities of sex. Emotion is hysteria, ecstasy is madness, inspiration either demonstrates the occasionally normal, or the infrequently abnormal condition of the human brain.

Largely speaking, science does not interest itself greatly in the human ego, and it is too hasty, too precise in its diagnosis of motive, to deserve any other appellation than narrow.

Anthony Manton had spent a great part of his life amongst simple and wholesome folk, who were sheer animal, in the sense that they were able to describe their primitive ailments frankly. Such medical work as he had done in Africa had been all the easier because he had to deal with a race of people which secretly destroyed their chronic invalids, put to death their halt and their lame, and did not allow their very old people to die a natural death. Civilization and Bulboro' made a point of honour of preserving the unfit and offering its most tender succour to the superfluous.

He sat down at his table and wrote steadily up till eleven o'clock. It was at this hour that he looked up to the mantelpiece to see the time. He rang the bell. He rang twice, when the soft-footed Ahmet, with his clean white jellab, came noiselessly into the room, bearing a copper tray on which stood the paraphernalia for coffee-making.

"Oh, Ahmet," said Anthony in Arabic, "what think you of this strange town?"

The man was groping in the bosom of his blouse for a box of matches, and these he found before he answered. Then he squatted down, lighting the spirit stove under the kettle. He answered without looking up.

"Lord, I think that all towns are the same, yet I never saw people so sad on a feast day."

"On a feast day?" repeated Anthony with a smile. Ahmet nodded.

"Lord, I thought there would be great joy and fireworks," he said simply, "for the gongs were beating all over the town, bol, bol, bol," he mimicked, "and in the street there was a band of music, and a man with a great red banner, and all the people were shouting noisily, so I put on my things and went down to see such sights, but lord, the bazaars were shut up, and there was no noise in the streets. Also all the people I saw were very solemn, and they all walked by two and two slowly, carrying books. Now," he said, "it seems to me that some great man has died that these people should be so sad: they were all in black, and their women were walking two and two also, looking so mournful that they almost made me cry."

"And what did you do, Ahmet?" asked Anthony, amused.

Ahmet, with great care, was pouring the boiling water from the little copper saucepan into the brew. He waited till he had carefully fixed the lid, staring at his work with that childlike, wondering stare which is the native's special trait.

"Lord," he said, "I walked until I heard the music playing, and then I ran to it, and followed the shouting people about the town, and the music was very beautiful." He was silent for a moment, then added, "But there was no gun-play."

The picture of a disappointed Ahmet marching through the streets of Bulboro' behind a Salvation Army band and waiting for fireworks tickled Anthony.

"Lord," the man went on, "this day I met a Kano boy who cooks on one of the ships" (there is a seaport within twenty miles of Bulboro'), "and he tells me of these people, that they go in their sadness and in their blackness, walking two and two, and also that the bazaars are closed, to the glory of God. On this day there shall be no joyousness until sunset, when all the drinking shops will be opened. But these people of Bulboro' are divided into two parts," he went on, and Anthony listened without a muscle of his face moving. "These are they who worship in the morning," he ticked them off on his fingers, "and in the evening, and in the afternoon, and all the time, doing nothing which will make any man smile or happy, but being sad for this day because this is God's day. They think it pleasing to Him that they should be miserable. And there are those who worship neither in the morning, nor in the afternoon, but who wait until sunset and the drinking shops are opened, or, until the playhouse is opened, where a man may see many strange pictures of foreign lands. And these are divided thus, master," he said, "that those who go to church do not go to the pictures or to the drinking shops, and those who go to the pictures and the drinking shops do not go to

church, and the only difference between them is that one of these is happy and the other dare not be happy, lest he offend his God."

"Oh, ho!" said Anthony in polite astonishment

Ahmet's perverse lecture was interrupted by Mr. Jocks.

"May I see you a moment, sir?" he said, importantly.

"You may say anything you wish to say before Ahmet, Jocks," said Anthony. "He is not very well acquainted with our language."

"There is a lady to see you, sir," said Mr. Jocks, lowering his voice. He was all aquiver with excitement, and conveyed the impression that something immensely important had happened, as indeed in Jocks' eyes it had.

"A lady to see me?" said Anthony. He looked at the clock. "Is she ill?"

Jocks sidled to the desk, still mysterious, and unnecessarily lowering his voice to a throaty whisper, he said:

"It is Lady Heron Wendall, sir." And stepped back to see the effect of his words.

Eleven o'clock, thought Anthony, and frowned.

A word with Ahmet sent him stealing from the room, carrying his coffee utensils jealously.

"Show Lady Heron Wendall in, please."

Anthony made a hasty attempt to tidy his study; it was not the sort of place in which he would care to receive a lady visitor, but it did not occur to him to see her anywhere else.

She came in very cheerful, and conveyed no suggestion that her visit was of unusual importance. Yet he knew by the something he saw in her face that the call might well have unusual consequences. In this he was not mistaken.

"What a dear little room," said Lady Beatrice, after she had shaken hands with the doctor.

She did not sit down in the chair which he had brought forward for her, but strolled about the room in an easy confident way, looking at the pictures and the prints which had been the old doctor's delight, and examining the additions which Anthony had made to the collection of foreign arms which hung on the wall.

"I have been in this room many times, you will be surprised to learn," she said, "and although it is not exactly associated with all the happiest memories of my life, I like this study."

She turned to him.

"Doctor," she said, "I want to apologize for my guest's rudeness the other night."

"Oh, please don't talk about that," he laughed. "It is more than kind of you to put it in that way. The rudeness was all mine. You see, I am hardly civilized yet let that stand as my excuse."

"I don't think any of us are very civilized," said Lady Beatrice.

He thought she looked beautiful in the close-fitting gown she wore. The fashion of the day suited this slim woman admirably. She was cast in that aristocratic mould which excuses a delicacy of outline because of its grace of carriage. Framed in the black circle of a little hat worn low over her red-brown hair, the face was aesthetic.

She looked younger than when he had seen her before, and that quaint word that his uncle had employed in his letter to him recurred to his mind. The caducity of Lady Beatrice was not apparent. If, as the word implied, her beauty was the beauty of a dying thing, she had hidden the decay of it.

"I want to see you," she said, "and I have chosen this time for a very good reason. I might tell you that I am supposed to be on my way to the Brands, but if you can give me ten minutes, that will suffice."

"I can give you all the time you want, Lady Beatrice," said Anthony Manton. "In what way can I be of assistance to you?"

"That is horribly formal," she smiled. "But I don't see exactly what else you could say. Were you ever at a place called Mishimi?" She was examining one of the rings on her hand as she asked the question.

"Mishimi?" said Anthony. "Yes, I know Mishimi; I was stationed there for some years. It was the expedition base."

"Did you ever meet a man there?" She stopped and regarded the ring more fixedly, bringing it nearer to her eyes, as though she sought to read in the depths of the oval diamond which adorned it inspiration and encouragement for what she had to say. "A man named Lefevre?"

So that was it, thought Anthony. He had wondered exactly how the subject would rise, whether she would ever introduce it; whether she was aware that he knew her secret.

"I knew Lefevre rather well," he said quietly.

There was another long silence. Suddenly she dropped her hand and looked him straight in the face.

"He died under your care, did he not?"

Anthony nodded.

"Yes," he said; "literally, he died in my arms."

"Was he happy?"

The voice was a little sharp.

"I think he was happy," said Anthony, "as happy as a man can be for whom the world holds pleasant and precious memories."

"How did he look? I mean when you saw him. Could you describe him to me? I will sit down, because I see you are still standing."

She sat down quickly in the chair by the side of the desk.

"He was a tall man and rather a handsome man, I thought." She nodded.

"He had a little short, clipped beard, a very refined delicate face, and large brown eyes. The upper part of his face was almost effeminate."

"Yes, yes," she agreed quickly.

"When I saw him he was ill; he had a bad bout of malaria, and I think he got a chill on top of that."

"Did he ever—speak of—any of his friends?" she asked. Her face was set and eager, wistful in its desire for knowledge, hungry for the crumbs of information he could give her.

"Yes, he spoke of you," said Anthony quietly; "not by your name, but by a nickname."

"Oh, did he, did he?" she said eagerly. "What was the name?"

"Bibi."

"Ah!" she breathed, and the colour went surging up to her face and receded again, leaving her pale. But there was a light in her eyes that Anthony had never seen in the eyes of any woman. "Bibi!" she repeated. "Oh, how wonderful!"

Her hands were clasped on the desk by her side.

"And you saw him, and spoke to him, and heard him; you touched him?"

She reached out almost timidly and touched his hand.

"With that hand—with that," she said, half to herself. "You saw him, and spoke to him, and heard him; oh, what a wonderful privilege!"

She stared at him, and he saw the tears coming up into her eyes and laid his hand on her arm.

"Lady Beatrice," he said quietly, "you have to be very wise and very brave about this. I will tell you everything I know, and do everything I can to make the story easy for you, and there is nothing hard to tell," he added quickly. "He died full of courage, with a smile, and your name was the last word on his lips."

"You are saying that"—her voice trembled—"you are saying that to please me, aren't you?"

He shook his head.

"I would not lie to please you, or to please any human being in the world, I think Here I am speaking the truth. Just before he died he tried to say something, and I thought he wanted to give me some instructions, and I bent my head to listen to discover that he was unconscious, for the words he said were 'Bibi' and then 'Beatrice'."

"He said that? How—how did he say it?"

She was half in tears, half smiling.

"Did he say 'Be-ah-trice'—so?"

He nodded.

"Yes, that is how he used to say it."

She got up quickly and walked to the other end of the room.

"And you saw him!" she said. "That is wonderful. Why you are almost a sacred being, Anthony Manton. I can almost enshrine you, because I know that in the end you were as gentle, and good, and kind as an English doctor and an English gentleman could be to a man."

She walked to the end of the room, and with her back to him she dried her eyes.

"You know everything, don't you?" she said, turning. "I know you do—but you do not know how I am feeling, or how I have felt, all these long years—sixteen years," she said, "and I am thirty-five. I was eighteen when I met him. Sixteen years. Oh, Henri!" she wailed, "the father of my child! My God, my God!" And she knelt down by the side of the desk and buried her head in her arms.

Anthony stood there, looking down at the shaking shoulders of this woman, and pitied her as he had never pitied a human being before in his life. He walked to a bureau at the other end of the room, opened the drawer, and pulled out a little box. It was a square box of hard African wood, and was sealed on both sides of the lid. He came back to her and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Lady Beatrice," he said gently, "I want to tell you something, and I want to make you an offer."

She got up, drying her eyes.

"I'm so sorry," she said ruefully; "I have made quite a fool of myself."

"I want to show you something," he said again, taking no notice of her condition. "It will probably make you feel just as bad as you have been, but I must take that risk," he smiled. "Here are his belongings." He laid his hand upon the box. "I recognize that you cannot take them to your own house, or that you may not wish to. I am putting them in here." He lifted the box, and opened a neat cupboard by the side of the fireplace, which old Dr. Manton had used as a safe deposit, for the door was of inch-thick oak.

"The seals, as you see, are unbroken. I will leave the box here." He suited the action to the word. "Close the door and lock it. Here is the key," he said. "You can come in just when you like. There is a private door to Pilgrim's Rest. I will give you a time-table of the hours I am not at home. Keep the box here, and come back just as often as you like."

She held out her hand; her lips quivered, she could not trust herself to speak.

"I must go now," she said after a while. "Good-bye and thank you."

He showed her to the door, and stood in the porch as the droning motor wormed its meandering way through the drive, carrying her, as he hoped, to temporary oblivion.

VI. SIR JOHN BRAND

Mr. Augustus Patten sat in the holland-covered stalls of the Royal Theatre, and he was unusually affable. He was a notable young man, perfectly attired, and he displayed none of those errors of taste which are popularly associated with the successful theatrical manager. From the polished tips of his French boots to the crown of his correctly covered head he was soberly but expensively arrayed.

He was a handsome youth with his sallow colouring and his clean-cut features. He was talking now in tones of equality to the man at his side, who might have been of any age between forty-five and fifty-five, and was a fresh-coloured type of a good-looking Englishman, with the features and the indefinable something which tells of breed.

His eyes were kindly and inclined to laughter, his brown hair was carefully barbered as that of the young man by his side.

Sir John Brand was a man with a record of gallantry behind him. "And, please God, before me, too," he had said, when he had read an unkindly comment in a London newspaper upon his too frequent visits to the Divorce Court in one capacity or another. It might be said that only once had he gone there as a respondent, when his second wife had divorced him to the scandal of the county.

Geraldine Brand had been a small girl then. But she had grown up into a knowledge that there were certain columns of the newspaper everlastingly denied to her.

"Daddy's name is always in the paper," she had said proudly to the reproving governess, who had checked her youthful curiosity.

"Not always, my dear," said the prim maiden lady who led the child along the thorny path of knowledge; "there are some days when there is no reference to your papa at all."

She did not intend to be humorous, but only to explain in the simple language understandable to childhood, that the ban on the Daily Telegraph was not a permanent one.

Society is at once broad-minded and discriminating. If there is an exclusive set which turns its back upon the weak members of its order, or sends to Coventry the men and women who have fallen from grace, be sure that is not "Society."

Complete exclusiveness has no greater claim to true refinement than indiscriminate reception. The ducal house which bars the Jew acts in no better taste than does the successful stockbroker of humble origin who admits all and sundry to the hospitality of his home.

There are degrees and sub-divisions of vulgarity. It is undoubtedly vulgar to be mixed up in a divorce case of any kind, but there are some divorce cases which, though they might offer instances of collective vulgarity, are unmarked by any specific departure from the convention which paradoxically governs irregularities.

Sir John had never been vulgar in the particular sense of the word; moreover, he had observed certain rules of decency. He had never flaunted his weakness in the face of his friends and acquaintances, and when unfortunate circumstances made it necessary for him to go abroad, he invariably avoided those crowded spots of the earth which are as so many suburbs to London. Then you might look in vain for Sir John at St. Moritz in the months of December and January, Marienbad would not know him in August, though Monte Cattini might.

When the world of fashion was sunning itself before Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, Sir John might be found in as warm a clime, in perhaps as pleasant surroundings, but without the companionship of his kind.

He had a charming manner, spoke easily and fluently, conveying the impression that his hearer was the one person in the world with whom he wished to converse, and whose views were of any worth.

"I'm awfully obliged to you," he said after a while.

"Not at all," said Mr. Patten, "I shall be most happy to do anything I can for you, Sir John."

"Of course," the other went on with a smile, "I suppose we could have managed it, but I do not like amateur theatricals, anyway, and amateur theatricals which are produced under the direction of an amateur stage manager are perhaps the most abominable of all forms which amateurism in art can take."

"You have your cast arranged, I suppose?" asked the young manager with interest.

"Pretty well," said Sir John; "the only doubt I have in my mind is a small part which my daughter tells me she will probably get a lady of her acquaintance to take."

Mr. Patten nodded.

"There will be no difficulty at all," he said; "though perhaps it would have been better had you chosen a less amateur piece than 'The Admirable Crichton.'"

Sir John shrugged his shoulders.

"What will you?" he said. "I am the merest pawn, my daughter is rather keen on playing the part of a lady who wears breeches—a deplorable ambition," he smiled; "but since she has produced the dramatic club out of nothing, I do not doubt it will show the character in a new light."

He rose and offered his hand.

"In the event of my daughter not being able to secure the lady she wants, I suppose you could let me have one of your people to take the part?"

Augustus thought for a moment.

"I could get a girl from the town," he said, "who would be, I am sure, excellent for the part."

"An amateur?"

Augustus nodded.

"Of course," he said apologetically. "I do not know whether you want to have a townsman's daughter in it."

"I do not mind a bit," smiled Sir John. "Is she pretty?"

"She is very pretty," said Augustus enthusiastically; "one of the prettiest girls I have seen for a long time, though," he smiled, "she is not comparable to other types you may be aware of."

"Neatly saved," approved Sir John. "I am greatly obliged to you," he said at parting.

Augustus Patten saw him into his car, and he came back thoughtfully to the auditorium.

Patten was a remarkable recruit to the theatrical world. He was a man of good birth, and related to one of the oldest families in Spain.

He had many qualities which did not exactly endear him to the people of Bulboro'. His enthusiasm was apt to run away with him; he was inclined to an extravagance of promise and a certain remissness of fulfilment, which never makes for popularity. He was a man of violent tempers, violent prejudices and violent friendships.

There was, in fact, in his character a certain instability which was due rather to the Latin in him and to his youthfulness. He was hasty, easily influenced to a point, but those who turned the tender twigs of the moment, and went away satisfied that the tree would incline that way, generally returned to a grievous disillusionment. He was perhaps unique amongst his

class, in that no breath of scandal had ever been associated with his name. It was a fact that girls employed in his theatre were exposed to a minimum of temptation. A stage manager who allowed an intruder behind the scenes during a performance, or during the time that the performers were in the building, would find short shift. Patten kept his theatre clean, and was familiar neither in attitude nor speech to any of the ladies who earned their living upon the boards of his stage.

It was this fact, perhaps, which influenced the county to take him to their arms, for despite his good birth, his perfect address and his polish, they would never accept in a man who was outside their set any of the eccentricities which they tolerated amongst people in their own circles.

He sat in the middle of the stalls; the stage was cleared for a rehearsal, and a group of men and women stood about waiting for the word to commence.

"Go on," he said, and for the next two hours he sat offering criticism of voice and gesture to a large number of people, who, however much they might differ amongst themselves as to the method in which a part should be read, were unanimous in their view that the young man, who sat in state in the stalls, knew less about the subject than anybody.

Sir John had one or two calls to make before he returned to his house. He called in at the County Club and found two or three letters awaiting him, met an acquaintance or two as he strolled down the Chad, idly examined the new stock of Bulboro's leading jeweller. He stood for a moment speaking with his bailiff, whom he met at the end of the Chad.

It was an unexpected apparition to the bailiff.

"I am glad to see you, Sir John," he said, raising his hat; "you are looking very well, sir."

"I am feeling very well, too, Martin," said Sir John. "I have just returned from a hunting trip in the Rocky Mountains. What is there stirring in Bulboro'?"

The bailiff smiled, and replied according to the formula of small towns that nothing ever happened in Bulboro'. He then went on to relate quite a number of things that had.

"I have heard most of that," said Sir John. "What sort of a man is the doctor? I am rather curious to see him."

"There he is now, sir, getting out of his car."

He pointed across the road to where Anthony was alighting before his office.

"So that is he, is it?" asked Sir John, good-naturedly. "I will go along and talk to him"

He wanted to meet the nephew of old Jabez Manton, but more especially did he wish to see what manner of man it was who had dared to rebuke his daughter. He chuckled to himself. Jerry told him everything, suppressing, perhaps with some excuse, too vivid an account of her own provocative action, and Sir John had been amused.

He knew, none better, that Jerry could be a trial. She stood in awe of him and had never exercised any of her caprices to his discomfort, for he had been an interested spectator and an amused one on many occasions when Jerry's insolence had had full scope.

Anthony was delayed whilst he was giving the chauffeur directions. He had to see Pastor Childe, who had sent for him twice to discuss the question "of the unfortunate man Gill". To this Anthony had sent a politely-worded refusal. Now had come a more urgent message. Mr. Childe was unwell and Anthony, remembering a certain warning regarding gastric trouble, was obeying the summons, albeit with suspicion.

Sir John was enabled to overtake him before he reached the door of his office.

"Excuse me one moment, doctor," he said, and as Anthony turned round:

"I am Sir John Brand; you have probably heard of me. I was an old friend of your uncle's."

"I am delighted to meet you," said Anthony, realizing that this was the father of a lady with whom he had had a passage at arms. "Come along up to the office, will you, for a moment."

"I shall not keep you," said Sir John, as he was ushered into the bare room which served Anthony in his capacity of consultant. "To tell you the truth," he laughed, "I wanted to make a very close inspection of the gentleman who ragged my Jerry."

"I did not exactly rag her, did I?" said Anthony, a little embarrassed.

"I hope you did," said Sir John. "She is inclined to be a little on the commanding side, and a wholesome lesson will do her no harm at all. In fact," he suggested amiably, "you might reasonably include that little incident in your bill, for it is distinctly the kind of medical treatment that Jerry requires."

"I shall not do that," smiled Anthony.

He knew his visitor by repute. He was the type of man who was very pleasant to meet; indeed, there were many who forgave Sir John his sins on no higher or more moral grounds than his geniality.

"I should like you to come up to dinner one night," he went on. "You need not be apprehensive; Jerry will be quite tame, and there will be a lot of young men who will fight for the privilege of enduring Jerry's insolence."

"I shall be a non-combatant," said Anthony.

It was a pleasant little visit, marked by extreme frankness and kindness on the part of Sir John Brand, and by a sense of gratitude on the part of the younger man. It always pleased him when older men than himself, and worldly men at that, met him on common ground.

"I have invited your doctor to dinner," said Sir John, as he settled himself down to lunch.

"Oh, daddy, you haven't," protested the girl.

"I am afraid I have," said her father, "but he is coming to see me, so you need not be very worried."

"I shan't have to speak to him, of course," she smiled.

"Naturally," said Sir John, "since he is a guest in my house, and you will be his lady hostess."

"Don't be horrid, papa," she smiled, in spite of herself; "but he is really a terrible young man."

Sir John looked at her, a twinkle in his eye.

"Now do you know," he said combatively, "I thought he was rather a pleasant cove."

The girl put up her hands to her ears in mock horror.

"Daddy, these 'coves' of yours: Are they the product of the Rocky Mountains? The last time you came back from China it was 'feller.'"

"I rather like 'coves,'" mused Sir John; "it is so expressive. By the way, are you engaged, by any chance?" he demanded.

"When?" she asked.

"I mean are you engaged to be married?"

"Of course not," she said indignantly; "you do not suppose I should do such a thing without letting you know."

"I am blessed if I know," said Sir John, as he reached for the celery; "girls do such curious things without consulting their parents."

"Has that been your experience, daddy?" she asked innocently.

He shot a glance at her. She had reached the age when she might examine an uncensored Daily Telegraph.

"That has been my experience, Jerry," he said.

They were good comrades, this father and daughter. How much she knew and how much she guessed he never troubled to discover. It pleased him to believe that she knew a little, and placed the most charitable construction upon that.

"And how is Beatrice?" he asked.

The girl frowned.

"Not particularly bright to-day," she said. "She is changed in some extraordinary way which I cannot quite understand. Daddy, do you know anything about Beatrice?"

"Do I know anything about her?" he repeated, as she paused irresolutely. "I know she is an admirable lady who respects her husband."

"But does she?" asked the girl quietly. "I have often wondered—Edward is very trying."

"I think Edward is an ass," said Sir John. After lunch he returned to the question.

"What did you mean when you asked whether I knew anything about Beatrice?"

"I mean, has she a past?"

He looked out of the window.

"We have all got 'pasts'," he said, when at length he broke the silence.

"Do not be trite, daddy," she said with a smile. "Has she anything in her life that ought to worry her?"

"I am blest if I know," said Sir John. "As far as I am concerned, I never remember the sins or follies of my fellows, though they have an unpleasant trick of remembering mine. By the way, I have had a letter from Bexley. What a devil of a chap he is for writing letters," he said a little irritably.

"What does he want?" she asked. She had an interest in Bexley.

"I don't know what he wants except my general reformation, placing my house in order and adopting a method of life and a standard of decorum more suitable to my years and more in keeping with my position as a prospective father-in-law to a young Cabinet Minister."

"Did he say that?" asked the girl, aghast.

"He did not say that exactly," corrected her father with a smile; "but that was the general trend of the letter."

"What impertinence!" she said angrily.

"Don't get wild with the young man," said Sir John, "he is not a bad fellow, Jerry; you might do worse. He is a prig, but then all young politicians are prigs. There must be something in a youngster who has become a Minister of Education at the age of goodness knows what."

"Thirty-one," said the girl.

"Is he as old as that? How time flies! It doesn't seem more than the other day when he used to fall off his horse every time he followed hounds, and howl his ugly little head off with sheer funk at the sight of an open ditch."

He went back to the dangerous ground of Beatrice.

"Yes," said the girl in answer to a question; "she is quieter, I think, less inclined to snap at poor Edward. I have thought—"

"What do you think?" he asked as she paused.

"I have an idea that she is getting religious."

"Oh, rot!" said Sir John. "The Rector's wife getting religious! More likely it is indigestion."

"I think you are very unkind, daddy."

"Indeed I am not," he said, as he nipped off the end of his cigar with the cutters he had taken from his waistcoat pocket. "Your suggestion was that she was getting religious in the Nonconformist sense. We are all religious—I am religious—I am one of the most God-fearing men in Bulboro' in a proper established sense. You do not mean she is getting Nonconformally religious?" he asked.

The girl nodded her head.

"I don't know whether I am betraying a confidence," she said, "but some time ago she asked me if it was not remarkable that somebody was trying to turn her to Nonconformity."

"Somebody has been trying?" asked her astonished father.

"Apparently," said the girl.

"But what does she do? Does she go to chapel secretly, or go veiled and masked to Baptist Bible meetings?"

The girl smiled. The picture was irresistibly funny to her.

"No, but she walks softly, that is all I can say."

She found a difficulty in putting her thoughts and her impressions into words.

"Oh, well, she will recover from that."

Sir John dismissed the matter lightly.

He found a ready solution to all problems except those which directly affected him.

The solution was that everything was for the best, and that these matters had a trick of self-adjustment.

"What am I to do?" she asked, later in the afternoon, "when Dr. Manton comes?"

"You are to do as any other lady would do," said her father sharply; "you are to treat him as though he were your best friend; you yourself were responsible for that scene. You are a spoilt baby, Jerry, but you must not allow your prejudices or your self-importance to embarrass me."

It was very seldom that he spoke to her like this, but when he did it was effective.

"Very good, daddy," she said meekly.

She had a wholesome fear of no more than such a speech. It represented the extreme of his reproof and disapproval. Nevertheless, it did not soften her heart towards Dr. Manton, and standing before her glass that night as she dressed for dinner, she shook her tiny fist in the direction of Pilgrim's Rest.

"You wait," said she, "I will be even with you, you horrid, bad-tempered, uncivilized devil!"

Yes, she called him a devil in the privacy of her own room; it was a relaxation which she occasionally allowed herself in moments of extreme emotion.

VII. BULBORO' POLITICS

That morning Anthony kept an appointment which he had made with the Rev. Horace Childe, or, as some preferred to call him, Pastor Childe. A note brought to Anthony's house had displayed some urgency, but urgent as the message had been, the patient was by no means in the condition which the letter had suggested.

Anthony found him in the study, a big room overlooking a well-tended garden. Its walls were lined with book-shelves, the carpet was comfortable and warm, and the big table which occupied the centre of the room was adorned by a bust of Knox. The room was evidently comfortable.

The Pastor sat in a big chair before a blazing fire. His large figure was wrapped in a padded dressing-gown.

He was a big-faced man of a fleshy type, baldheaded, with a little fringe of black curly hair falling over his collar. His voice was one of those pleasant sopranos which are found in men. Usually a cheery and valiant soul—did he not serve a month in Bulboro' gaol rather than pay taxes which were levied at his conscience?—he was now depressed and wretched. There was an unhealthy pallor on his face, and his eyes were yellow and bilious.

"I am glad you have come, doctor," he said weakly.

Anthony Manton had discovered during his short practice in Bulboro' that patients were never afterwards quite so ill as they were the moment the doctor arrived.

It seemed that they must adopt a certain air, a certain attitude, even a certain intonation of voice, to justify their action in sending for a doctor at all, and this was particularly noticeable in the men; so that the weakness of voice and limpness of handshake in which Childe met him was not greatly alarming.

"I am awfully ill, doctor," said the Pastor. "Won't you sit down? I am expecting some friends here this morning, and if you do not mind, I would like you to meet them."

Anthony, who had not come to make a social call, busied himself with the questions which were peculiar to his profession, and after five minutes' probing, the application of a stethoscope to the Pastor's chest and back, a judicious series of double knocks over the apex and the lungs, and a brief examination of the eyes, Anthony prescribed.

"You have some gastric trouble, have you not?" he said. "I think my heart is out of order," said Pastor Childe sadly.

"I would not say that it was your heart, though undoubtedly there is some trouble there," said Anthony.

His words seemed to galvanize the Pastor to life, and he sat bolt upright.

"You do not mean that?" he said incredulously.

"Yes, I do," said Anthony, with a smile. "You are not surprised, are you?"

"Your uncle said my heart was all right."

"Ah, it probably was when he examined it," said Anthony; "but hearts change and deteriorate, you know, from day to day and from month to month. My uncle may not have heard the mitral murmur, but I can hear it now quite plainly."

"You do not mean I have heart disease?"

"I do not think it is anything to worry about," said Anthony reassuringly; "but you have undoubtedly some heart trouble. Why, if I made an examination half the people in Bulboro' would learn the same to their astonishment."

The news had evidently made a profound impression upon the Pastor.

"How long do you think I have to live?" he asked a little shakily.

"About twenty-five or thirty fully. I do not think I should let the question of immediate danger bother you very much."

It was at that moment when the friends of Pastor Childe arrived.

Anthony was a little annoyed. He had no desire to meet an ecclesiastical deputation, but since he had to meet these people, and since they represented in each case the heads of distinct communities, members of which were counted amongst his patients, he put on as good a face as he could, and turned to the ministers who came into the study.

"I thought it a good opportunity that you should know our friends," said the Pastor. "Although we are of different denominations, it is fitting that at the bedside of one which is grievously afflicted, is sick almost to death, we should meet, in all kindness, and discuss matters free from rancour, and under God's guidance reach a solution of a very difficult situation."

This was news to Anthony.

He was introduced one by one. There was Stope, the young politician who ministered to the spiritual needs of the Congregationalists, a man fluent of speech, vital in his every utterance and in his every action.

There was Mr. Haverstock, a small man, very bald, with an attenuated beard and a smiling eye. This was the Wesleyan, an excellent and kindly man, too absorbed in his studies to be over-popular with his exigent congregation. There was Mr. Mabson, the leader of the "Bulboro' Brotherhood", a young man who wore a white tie for no special reason unless it be to attest the purity of his motive; and last, but not least, Mr. Tanberry, with his fiery red beard.

"This represents only a section of Nonconformist thought in this town, doctor."

The figure in the dressing-gown beside the fire seemed to have shaken off all the appearance and symptoms of disease, and was now a healthy and vigorous master of ceremonies, and well enough clothed with the dignity of his self-appointed office to over-ride the incongruity of his costume.

"I suppose you know"—he cleared his throat—"that we have been very grievously wounded and very grievously injured by the persecution of our brother Gill?"

"I think his son was also grievously injured," said Anthony. He stood combatively before the fire, his hands behind him, all his intellectual bristles pointing outward. "Is there no section of religious thought to represent the feelings of a human being who has been lacerated, less by the thought of prosecution than by the actual application of an ash stick? For if there is," he said, "and if there is any means of getting him here, I should like to wait until he arrives."

"That is not the spirit in which we want to be met, Dr. Manton." It was the suave and smiling Mr. Stope, with his ready speech and his quick grasp of debate, who spoke. "The desire of all our brethren is to clear up a situation which reflects upon an earnest worker, not of my own congregation"—he spread out his hands to disclaim any self-interest—"but of one which is labouring to the same end, and with the same glorious object."

"Amen," said Pastor Childe, and it was repeated by all except Mr. Haverstock, who at that precise moment, with his eyes fixed upon the fire, was speculating as to the possibility which had been advanced in the Wesleyan Monthly that very morning as to whether Ezekiel's dream temple had ever been built.

"I do not know that I can do anything," said Anthony Manton.

If he spoke irritably it was with the knowledge that only a few days previously another deputation had called upon him to invite him to assist on behalf of a stage-struck girl.

Why did they come to him? he asked himself resentfully.

"You can help in this manner," said Pastor Childe. "I am sure all our brethren are in agreement that you can assist very materially by re-establishing this unfortunate man, who tomorrow will be released from a cold prison cell, and from the bondage into which your persecution condemned him."

Anthony put his head on one side and looked down at the other.

"If you use that word 'persecution' again, Mr. Childe, I shall go."

"I think our friend is right," said Mr. Stope. "We do not want polemic phrase, let us stick to the facts. There is no doubt at all, brother," he addressed Childe, "that our friend Gill, who is as much my friend as he is yours, did, in his righteous wrath, overstep the bounds. Probably he was carried away with zeal for an ideal, and he may possibly have injured the boy much more than he imagined. I think, too, that the doctor may have acted well within his legal rights. Now let us come to the really serious business of this gathering," he said. "Doctor Manton, you are aware that your right or wrong, has excited a vast amount of resentment in the bosoms of brethren associated with us in our work?"

"I imagined it had excited resentment only in the bosoms of those who could condone so vicious an assault upon a child," said Anthony sternly. "I do not understand the attitude of mind of any person or of any congregation which can take sides or can exhibit partisanship on a question of common humanity. Whatever you want me to do," he went on, "that may rehabilitate this man in the public esteem, you may be sure I shall not do. Let me finish," he said roughly, for Mr. Stope, with a smile, would have stopped him. "There is a law in this land which takes no cognizance of the position a man may occupy in society if that law is violated; that, I think, is clear. Behind the law there is a public opinion, evenly and uniformly adjusted to the standard of legal enactment. The law and righteous public opinion are one. I stand on that. I stand not only upon the law which condemned this man, but upon the view of all communities of civilized beings to justify any action I took, or shall take, in this matter of the boy Gill."

"But we think, doctor," said Mr. Stope, "that this is all a storm in a teacup, really not worth making a great deal of fuss about, and we feel, too, that if you could give a public expression to the effect that you had acted in haste or that you, let us say"—he shrugged his shoulders—"regretted to some extent the action you had taken, why, that would be sufficient to settle the whole matter."

"It might be sufficient for you," said Anthony, "but it would not be sufficient for me. Why should I perjure my soul to re-establish your friend in the eyes of the world? What other justification does he need than that of the approval of his fellows? If your friends elect for martyrdom, for heaven's sake let them endure the martyrdom. I do not remember that any of the illustrious men

who suffered for their faith clamoured for public approval. Your man is but a vulgar neurotic. Worse than that, he is a vicious unbalanced degenerate. What need has he of my word?

"Gentlemen, I think I have a grievance against you all," he continued. "I have been brought here because I have refused three times to be interviewed on this very question, and I have been brought here by a trick."

"Dr. Manton!" expostulated the outraged Mr. Childe.

"By a trick," repeated Anthony firmly. "And I assure you that the view I now hold I shall hold for all time. I wish you a very good morning, and may I suggest, Mr. Childe, that you find another medical practitioner to attend to you."

He was very angry indeed.

It was absurd, he thought, as he jumped into his car and was driven up West Hill, to lose one's temper with these people. He was the more angry that he had been betrayed into an evident loss of patience.

"You have got to keep a hold on your tongue," he said to himself; "this will not do at all, you are allowing these little snipe to rattle you—and big snipe, too!"

He smiled as he thought of the forthcoming dinner, and possibly Geraldine Brand would not have reflected his smile had she heard herself compared to that interesting bird.

He reached home to find Ambrose Cohen waiting, and remembered that he had invited him to lunch.

"I owe you an apology," he said, as he looked at the clock. "I have kept you waiting."

"Not at all." The little man had ensconced himself in a big arm-chair in Anthony's study, and with his pince-nez perched on the end of his nose, was engaged in a recreation to which, he confessed, he found no parallel—the study of *The Times*.

He was a keen politician without being violently so, and had a thorough knowledge of foreign politics and their relation to the money market. This was an attainment which was largely responsible for his wealth, for, curiously enough, much of his money had been made in England.

"Well, how do you find all your good people?" he asked. He put down the paper and folded his glasses.

"I find them very trying," said Anthony.

"You are too aware of them," responded Mr. Cohen.

"I don't quite understand you," said the other with a little laugh.

"I mean," explained Cohen, "you are too conscious of their existence, that they are surrounding you, and that they are thinking human beings with their minds probably occupied to your detriment. If you think this, why, you will be unhappy all the time. I have come to a place now," he said, "where I regard the rest of humanity as so many inanimate pieces of wood. It is an encouraging thought that all the rest of the world is wooden, and you are the only human thing alive. It gives one a sense of power which one can secure by no process of thought unless one is enormously rich and enormously healthy. Anyway," he concluded, "there are not sufficient grounds for irritation in Bulboro'. Bulboro' is so inevitable!"

Anthony nodded.

It was indeed, he thought, appointed from the beginning of time, ordered since the beginning of the world. That was the impression he had. He saw life, politics, commerce, even so butterfly a quality as society, passing along set grooves, moving over definitely bounded ways, and obeying absolutely ordained and settled laws.

It was not that there were no new paths which might be laid for the myriad feet to tread; only there was no place for the new paths to go. Innovation of thought and action were checked by old rights-of-way, old institutions deeply embedded; old and ancient foundations that went deep down out of sight; old antagonisms, too, that reached back through the centuries before you discovered their origin. Bulboro' had traditions which were founded, so an antiquarian had discovered, upon certain differences of opinion that led to the civil war between Charles and his Parliament. In politics Bulboro' was Radical and had always been Radical. Now, however, there seemed a chance that its politics might change. Not that any one man in Bulboro' who held an opinion was likely to revoke his views. But rather because a large woollen factory, which directly employed two thousand people and gave indirect livelihood to half as many again, had closed down, owing, as some would say, to a wholly vexatious strike, one of the many exciting periods through which Bulboro' had passed.

They (the gossips of the town, the know-alls who told their stories at the street corner or before the club fire with equally small foundation) said that Rigley, the young managing director of the company, had transferred the Bulboro' branch to Yorkshire out of sheer malice; that his looms were old, and that his business had sufficient reserve of capital to lay down new machinery, and it needed only the strike to decide the firm on consolidating its interests, and in bringing together its Yorkshire and its Bulboro' branches for economic working.

There is no doubt that the gossips spoke half the truth. The managing director had some malicious desire to punish the people who had supported the strikers and who had made life intolerable for him and for his family during the five weeks the dispute had lasted.

Be that as it may, the factory closed, and, of a sudden, support was withdrawn from three thousand people. It was a very serious matter for Bulboro'. It did not affect the churches; strangely enough, factory workers were notoriously ungodly. It half ruined a number of licensed victuallers, wholly ruined a pathetic number of small tradesmen, but most disastrous was the sequel to the agent of the Liberal party, for the wool workers had been Radical or Socialist almost to a man.

This brief history Ambrose Cohen sketched.

"I suppose a Conservative will get in this time," he said.

"Who is the Liberal candidate?" asked Anthony.

"Stope," said the other with a smile. "He is the best man they could get. He has the whole weight of Nonconformity behind him, and the people who have never voted before will vote this time. He is an excellent speaker, too."

"What sort of a preacher is he?" asked the other. Mr. Cohen smiled.

"It is against my religious principles to attend places of Christian worship," he said, "but I am told he is a most eloquent man. He is plausible, anyway. He will carry a solid vote, and it will be a near thing."

"Who is the Conservative?" asked Anthony.

Cohen shook his head.

"There is no Conservative at present," he said. "Why don't you stand?"

Anthony smiled largely.

"You are a humorist, Mr. Cohen," he said.

VIII. TONY BECOMES UNPOPULAR

John Gill came out of prison on a Monday morning, and he may have anticipated a reception something on the lines of that which had greeted his beloved Pastor. But even the partisanship of Bulboro' did not go so far as to lionize a man who had been convicted of a crime, the punishment for which could, by no stretch of imagination, be construed into martyrdom.

He found his wife weeping, or ready to weep, and Pastor Childe was chilly.

There were one or two curious people who had stopped on their way past the grim gates of the jail to watch the prisoners discharged, but there was nothing in the nature of such a welcome as Mr. John Gill, in the silence and the solitude of his cell, had pictured. He had long since forgotten the crime for which he was convicted, and he was oppressed only by a sense of his own sufferings, sufferings which had been brought about indirectly as a result of his endeavour to lead a young life from the temptations which lay waiting to trip him up. This was the crime for which Mr. John Gill was punished—it was his view at any rate.

More intelligent men have skipped the intermediate stages of cause and result when the conclusion has been to their credit.

He came out through the little wicket-gate and kissed his wife coldly, shook hands with the Pastor; but there was no smile on his pale face in response to that which his chief accorded him.

"And this is the welcome I receive?" were his first words.

Pastor Childe, who knew the variety of mind the man possessed, perhaps better than any other man in Bulboro', was a little astonished, perhaps in his secret heart a little amused.

"My brother," he said gently, "let us rejoice that you are amongst us in the fullness of your health—let us thank God for that."

"Amen," said John Gill, but without enthusiasm.

He got into the fly which was waiting, with lagging feet, and came back to Bulboro'—unconscious, uncaring, damned-to-all-eternity Bulboro'—a bitter and a hateful man.

"What about the doctor?" he asked.

The Pastor could only express his helplessness with a gesture, but told the man of the steps which a number of people were taking to induce Dr. Anthony Manton to rehabilitate his "victim" in the eyes of the world.

"We can only pray for the doctor," said Mr. Childe dryly. Gill did not pray.

Breakfast had been laid in his house, and there he found a fellow-worker and a sympathizer in William Tanberry, who greeted him with a great heartiness.

His daughter was there, an anxious girl, her lips aquiver at the sight of her father. He gave her a kiss and mumbled a word or two in reply to her tearful welcome.

He looked round the room.

"Where is he?" he asked.

There was no need to particularize the "he" he referred to. The Pastor patted him on the back encouragingly.

"Now, now, brother," he said soothingly, "let us begin anew."

"Where is the boy?" Gill asked again harshly.

"I have sent him away, dear," said his wife.

She was a large, stout woman with an impressive and an unemotional temperament, given to tears, not without reason, for Mr. Gill, saint though he might be in certain environments, preserved many of his admirable qualities for the benefit of sinners who were outside his family.

"You have sent him away; to whom did you send him?"

"I have sent him to my brother in London."

"Your brother!" He raised his eyes to the ceiling. "To that loose-liver! The responsibility is yours, Maria. However—" He sat down at the table.

They ate through a painful meal, which was broken only by the solitudes of Tanberry and the Pastor; and such conversation as they could make with no more assistance than a monosyllabic reply from their host.

He ate steadily, with hardly a word. At last he drained his teacup to the last drop, put it down deliberately on the table, then he turned to his daughter.

"Mary," he said, "I punished your brother to save his soul, understand that."

"Yes, father," said the girl timidly.

"I should punish you in exactly the same manner if you followed in his steps."

The girl's mouth moved, but no sound came.

"As for that doctor—"

"Leave him to God, brother," said the Pastor. "These things are all for a wise purpose.

"We cannot see the end, or know
Which way our Master's objects go;
We know that we are purged from sin
The heavenly gates to enter in."

"Let it rest there?"

Mr. Gill rose.

"I am a Christian man," he said. "I have served my God faithfully for five-and-twenty years."

At the finish of every sentence he smacked his lips. It was a nervous little trick of his. To those who stood in no awe of him it was provocative to laughter. To those who hung on his word it had a sinister significance.

"For five-and-twenty years I have served my God," he repeated, "and preached Christ crucified, in the public streets in the face of all men. I have been hooted and reviled and cursed by sinners and scoffers, but I have prevailed by God's help against all the agents of the devil, against all the emissaries of hell, and now I feel that Satan, that old one, has set the great test of my life. I will overcome it, and overcome him, by God's help."

"Amen," said the two other men.

The Pastor looked at the man and was unaccountably troubled.

There was an unearthly glare in his eyes, he was white to the lips.

"For five-and-twenty years," he said again, "and the devil has baffled me and set up against me the strongest of his cohorts. But I will wrestle with him, as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and I will cast him down and place him, as he placed me, in a prison cell."

His voice rose louder and louder, and became more and more shrill as he stood square to the party, his hands by his sides clenched tight.

"I think," said the Pastor, after a little pause, "we will have a word of prayer."

The party knelt at their chairs whilst Childe spoke earnestly and sincerely—who shall doubt?—in the conventional phrases of Nonconformity—he prayed desperately for this man who had come from prison, not with the chastened

spirit of a penitent offender, not with the high courage of the old apostles, but with malice and hatred and uncharity in his heart.

John Gill was by profession a carpenter, and he was employed on the estate of Sir John Brand. The estate included a number of the poorer houses in Siggley Crescent, and it was part of Gill's business to keep those in repair. It was work which offered him a large amount of leisure and paid him excellent wages.

Sir John Brand had no particular views upon religion, except he thought that it was a great pity that it was impossible to reorganize the Church system, and abolish the bells which woke him every Sunday morning two hours before he wished to rise, but he had very definite views upon the duties and responsibilities of his servants.

The day after his release Gill was sent for from the estate office on The Chad, and he was shown straight in to Sir John's office, the bailiff being the only other man present.

"You can take a chair, Gill," said Sir John kindly. "I suppose you are a little weak after your unpleasant experience."

"Thank you, Sir John," said the other moodily. "I am a little shaken."

"Now, I hope, Gill, that you are not going to bear malice against my friend, Dr. Manton." He emphasized the words "my friend", though he was not justified in doing so, but Sir John regarded all men of his class, particularly if their interests were threatened by people who were not of his class, as having a claim to the title. "I say this," Sir John went on, "because they tell me you addressed a large meeting in the Baptist Hall last night, and that you made some indirect reference to the doctor."

"I spoke according to my conscience, Sir John," said the man doggedly, "as I was called to speak, so I spoke. God directed my words."

"That I can understand," said Sir John politely; "only I wish, if you are called to speak about the doctor in the future, you will remember that I shall be very unhappy if the words put into your mouth are not a little more kindly, and, not to put too fine a point upon it, Gill, a little more civil. I am not going to bully you," said he, in his genial, hearty way, "because you have had your medicine, and I am not entitled to add to your trouble; but believe me when I say that in this life, which we have all got to live till we get to heaven by various ways, it is better to exercise as many of the Christian virtues as one possibly can, and the greatest of these, Gill, as you know, is charity. If you are going to act according to your light, you have got to forgive any fancied injuries which the doctor did you. You know you are told to forgive your enemies."

"Aye, sir," said Gill, "and we are told to hate the devil and his works."

Sir John laughed, and shrugged his shoulders. "Of course, if you recognize the doctor in that capacity, I am perfectly powerless to persuade you. I spoke to you as man to man, and now I speak to you as employer to man," he said. "You can have what faith you like, do what you like, say what you like, convert whom you like, and use what insulting language you may choose about the devil or any other individual who annoys you, but I will not have an employee of mine stirring up trouble in this town, and advocating what is tantamount to a boycott of Dr. Anthony Manton. Is that plain?"

"Perfectly, sir," said the other in a low voice.

"And if you advocate a boycott, or if you start or attempt to foster an agitation, having as its object the ruin of a gentleman who did only what I should have done, and what any other decent man would have done, I will put you off, out of my employment. That is also plain, I think, Gill?"

"Yes, sir," said the other.

"Well, let it go at that. I am sorry to have to speak like this, and you must give me credit for having tried to get at the other side of your nature. Now, I hope we are going to be all good friends."

He held out his hand; the man took it reluctantly.

"I must act according to my conscience, sir," he said.

"Oh, damn your conscience!" said Sir John, pardonably exasperated.

"There he goes," said Sir John a little later, looking through the window disgustedly, "full of self-pity and self-admiration. A monument of conceit, of super-virtue. What are you going to do with a man like that? He will take no more notice of me than if I was a fly on the wall; he will agitate, address meetings, bullyrag his wife, and play the devil all round. Oh, these Christian communities!" He shook his head, then looked at his watch. "By Jove!" he said, "my homily lasted longer than I expected. If my daughter calls tell her I am at the theatre."

"Very good, Sir John," said the bailiff.

The baronet stepped out across The Chad to the Theatre Royal, whistling a little tune, at peace with the world and with the people thereof. The men who passed him and raised their hats to him, turned to look after him, so cheerful and debonair a soul was he, and some there were who smiled, whispered ugly things about his indescribable adventures at home and abroad, but none there were who could say that this disreputable baronet of the United Kingdom was not a gallant figure of a man, and one for whose lapses excuse might not be found.

"Ah, there you are; I was just coming to see you." He caught Patten's arm as the young manager was just turning into the theatre.

"You will have to find the other girl for me—my daughter says that she cannot get the lady we want; is there any difficulty?"

He saw the doubt in the young man's face.

"There is this difficulty," said the young manager, "the girl's father hates anything to do with theatricals. She herself is a great artist, I am perfectly sure. She came to me one day," he explained, "very timidly, and asked if I would hear her recite. I did, and I expected to hear the usual 'Boy stood on the burning deck' stuff, but I was astounded at her delivery, and at her perfect command over expression. Since then I have let her rehearse as understudy, although I know I can never put her on."

"Who is this paragon?" asked Sir John with a smile.

"Well, between ourselves, Sir John, it is the daughter of the man who came out of prison the other day."

"Not Gill?" asked Sir John in surprise.

"That is the man," said Patten. He had a habit of putting his hands into his two hip pockets when he was perplexed, and now he had adopted this attitude.

"I am perfectly sure she would be fine in any part," he said, with the annoyed look of a man who found himself in a quandary. "But I do not think we can persuade the father."

"I wonder," said Sir John. "I have just left him; he is one of my workmen, and he is a pretty tough nut to crack."

"Will the account of the theatricals get into the papers?" asked Patten.

"Good Lord, no," said Sir John, shocked. "I shall take jolly good care it does not; if there is one vice in the world with which I do not wish to be associated, it is amateur theatricals. No, so far as I can manage the performance it will be very quiet, and the people who come are hardly likely to meet Miss Gill. I will ask my daughter to see what she can do to arrange things. Anyway, you can tell Miss Gill to hold herself in readiness to come up."

"Is there any excuse we can give her for wanting her?"

Sir John thought. "Yes," he said, "she can help get things ready. The only trouble may be my servants, but I will talk to them."

On that afternoon a footman came down from High Mount with a note for Mr. Gill. Would he allow his daughter to help Miss Geraldine in preparing for a forthcoming party and concert at High Mount, "in the cause of charity?" said the note cunningly—Geraldine had underlined the phrase.

That night Anthony Manton was walking down West Hill after a visit to a patient.

He had dismissed the car, for it was one of those bright, frosty nights which invited exercise. He was passing the Church House when he remembered that one of his poor patients had invited his offices to persuade the Rector, who had some influence with a London hospital, to admit her son. He turned in through the big gate to the drive, and was halfway up the avenue when he realized that he was disturbing two people who were standing in the shadow of a hedge. He caught sight of them against the whitewashed windows of a hot-house, when he was some twenty yards from them. It was a man and a woman, and at the sound of his steps he saw the woman go swiftly in the shadow of the hedge and disappear from view around the corner. He suspected no more than a harmless piece of love-making. Possibly one of the Rectory servants had stolen out to meet her inamorata, and Anthony smiled as he went on, expecting to meet the sheepish-looking young man whom he had disturbed.

It was a bright, moonlight night, and in the frosty air the light was all the brighter. The man came towards him slowly, and with a gasp Anthony recognized John Gill. The recognition was mutual; they stood looking at each other for the space of a minute. Anthony quickly recovered from his astonishment.

"Well, Gill," he said, "I hope you are not bearing any of the ill-feeling that your speech in the Baptist Hall last night suggests."

"I leave you to God, sir," said the man harshly. "I have no desire to have anything whatever to do with you. You have done your worst, and can do no more to me than you have done. I wish you a very good evening."

Anthony shrugged his shoulders and went on. He could not argue with the man, and he dismissed him from his mind. He heard his name called, and the swift footsteps of Gill behind him, and turned.

"I would like to say," said the man, "that whatever you have seen to-night is easily explained. I came up to see her ladyship on important business."

"Her ladyship?" repeated Anthony incredulously. "Do you mean to say that the lady with whom you were speaking was Lady Heron Wendall?"

The man saw that he had blundered. He had been honestly anxious, so far as his uncomfortable conscience would allow him, to save Lady Heron Wendall the embarrassment which he thought might be hers should

Anthony subject her to such a cross-examination as Gill, from his point of view, felt was justified.

"It was Lady Heron Wendall," he said defiantly, "that is all. I feel in justice to her that I should say I was discussing a matter of private business, and more," he said exultantly, "I was discussing with her the question of her immortal soul, sir. Perhaps that will surprise you. It will surprise a good many people in this town," he went on, vigorously, "when that lady comes down to our church, and puts aside the pomp and circumstance of her quasi-papist faith and worships God, humbly and fervently approaching His footstool with a contrite heart." He said no more, but he had said too much for Anthony's peace of mind. The doctor continued his way up to the Church House, walking slowly, and trying to find an explanation for this extraordinary happening.

What induced this imperious lady to come out into the cold night to meet, in a manner which was almost clandestine, this semi-illiterate carpenter with his inconsequent jargon? Could there be truth in what the man had said, that she was going to leave the Church, and contemplated taking up Evangelism in the crudest form? It was absurd.

Heron Wendall was out, the servant told him; he had gone to London that afternoon, but Lady Beatrice was in the drawing-room if he would like to see her.

"It is not necessary," said Anthony. "I will call when the Rector is at home."

He would have gone, but Lady Beatrice came down the stairs to meet him.

"Won't you come in for a little while?" she said. "I am quite alone."

"Thank you," he said, "I am rather busy," but she opened the door of her husband's study, and he followed her.

"Did you see me speaking with that ridiculous man in the drive?" she asked.

"I did not know it was you," Anthony confessed, and she noted the embarrassment of the response.

"He is quite a peculiar person," she said calmly. "By the way, he is the man whom you got into trouble; I did not associate the two persons," she smiled.

She changed the subject readily, and asked him if he had been numbered amongst the invited guests to the amateur theatricals at High Mount.

As it happened, an invitation had arrived that day, to his profound astonishment He would have been happy to have found an excuse for declining; the purely social kind of life did not appeal to him, and he was not

sufficiently interested in the possibilities which Geraldine Brand and her attitude offered, to attend out of sheer curiosity.

"It will be rather interesting to see what Geraldine does and says," said Lady Beatrice with a smile.

Since that Sunday night in his study, her attitude of mind towards him had changed. He was transfigured: a new being had claims to her regard and her friendship which no other man in Bulboro' possessed. She had not visited Pilgrim's Rest since that night, though the key of the oaken cupboard reposed in her purse, and the door of the place was open to her.

Old Dr. Manton had followed out the traditions of the many builders who had contributed to his erratic dwelling by building his study as an annexe to the house. It was a one-storied building which flanked itself unobtrusively to the shrubbery and commanded along one side a partial view of the house. More important to Lady Beatrice Heron Wendall, there was a private entrance from the little rose garden.

Anthony had never used the door with its tiny hallway, and now he saw how it might be utilized, and had the locks oiled and the door put in order.

Mr. Jocks explained his own views on the matter to the admirable Mrs. Clements in the kitchen.

"He is starting the tricks of the old doctor," he said disparagingly. "We shall never know when he is in or when he is out. Hullo, wooden head." He addressed his remarks to the silent Ahmet, who came in at that moment to prepare the coffee. He could be extremely rude to the Moor, for no other reason than because Ahmet interpreted all remarks addressed to him in the nature of a compliment and with a grin acknowledged the imagined demonstration of friendship with his two English words, "Good evening".

"I am afraid, Mrs. Clements," said Jocks seriously, "that I shall have to hand over my work to another man. This young man is different to the old doctor; he is not what I might term so affable."

"He does not seem to be popular anywhere, Mr. Jocks," said Mrs. Clements respectfully. "In the town—"

Mr. Jocks nodded his head vigorously, and raised his hands, his palms outwards.

"His name positively smells in Bulboro', I tell you it makes me feel so awkward. People point me out in the street; they say 'There is Manton's man!' I should not be surprised if I was insulted one of these days, Mrs. Clements."

"Oh, I trust not," said the shocked Mrs. Clements.

"I suppose you know that Pennington will not serve us any more with milk?"

"You do not mean that."

"I do," said Mr. Jocks. "He sent his manager up to see us. You see, when you come into Bulboro' you must do as Bulboro' does, as the old saying goes, and the doctor has certainly aroused a lot of feeling. I was down at the meeting the other night that the Nonconformist chap addressed. I wore my oldest suit," said Mr. Jocks inconsequently, "and I do not suppose anybody recognized me."

Mr. Jocks associated Nonconformity with a disagreeable form of unwholesome poverty, and, like the good Churchman he was, regarded an excursion into the stronghold of the Dissenter as something in the nature of an adventure.

"He did not half lay it into the governor," said Mr. Jocks, polishing a silver spoon with stately strokes, "called him everything he could lay his tongue to in a genteel kind of way, quoted Scripture till my head absolutely reeled, and I did not know whether I stood on my head or my heels."

"Tut, tut," said Mrs. Clements in pained surprise. "I do not think they ought to do that sort of thing—quote Scripture at political meetings, do you?"

"All depends upon what political meeting it is," said Mr. Jocks wisely. "The names that man called the governor were too awful; Anti-Christ was one of them."

"Anti-Christ," said Mrs. Clements, to whom the phrase was new.

"Anti-Christ," repeated Mr. Jocks solemnly. "In other words, the devil. These were his words, he said there is a man here in Bulboro' who is the agent of Satan himself, a persecutor, a perjurer—oh, Lord," said Mr. Jocks in despair, "I wish I could remember all that he said; they all stood up at the end—there were about six hundred of them—and they all repeated a solemn pledge that they would not harbour—that was the word they used—harbour in their midst a man like the doctor. I heard chaps say that they would not send for him if they were dying."

"Perhaps they will change their minds then," said Mrs. Clements hopefully. "You do funny things when you are ill. A sister of mine used to think there was rabbits walking on the ceiling."

"That is delirium tremens," said Mr. Jocks definitely, as he made his way upstairs in answer to the bell. 'He was down again, and before Mrs. Clements' natural indignation had time to soothe down, before she could refer again to the subject, either to attempt to deny or explain, Mr. Jocks returned to the subject of Dr. Anthony Manton's enormities.

"Every time he goes out now he locks the study door, do you know that? The old doctor never did it all the time he was here. He told me that if I hear anybody inside, I am not to come unless I am sent for. He has given some of his friends the key to the outer door to allow them to examine some of his curiosities. What do you think of that?"

"It is strange," said Mrs. Clements.

Everything was strange to her that happened outside the kitchen.

"This place is not what it used to be, Mrs. Clements," said Mr. Jocks sadly. "There are none of the pickings, the perks, you understand my meaning"—she nodded—"which came to me in the days of the old doctor. Do you think that his clothes will fit me?" He jerked his head in the direction of the invisible Anthony with a scornful smile. "Why, it would take two of his waistcoats to get round me. Oh, you putty-faced heathen!"

He addressed Ahmet, who was squatting on the ground humming a most immoral song under his breath, and Ahmet looked up with his sweetest smile.

"Good evening," he said graciously.

It was a week after this conversation that Anthony Manton was irretrievably damned in the eyes of all Bulboro', irrespective of sect.

However divergent the views of Christian communities might be upon the question of ritual or upon the character of service, they were one and all combined in the faith that men of colour are in need of salvation. There was at that time in Bulboro' a young and enthusiastic lay preacher, a missionary who had been invalidated home from Dacca, and he had come to the city of the saints to recuperate.

Now, the busman's holiday is not a form of recreation exclusively confined to the non-intellectual classes. Your actor, wearied of a long run and seeking health in some old-world city, will accept with alacrity, and feel slighted if the invitation is not offered to him, the opportunity of producing a play for a society of amateur actors. Your journalist desires nothing better than to prowl about the office of some country paper, inhaling the scent of printer's ink. Your doctor, taking his rest cure, is a pleased man if he is called in in consultation. But of all the holiday-makers who most reasonably desire to give their friends and admirers some demonstration of their quality, there is none to whom the call to work is so urgent as in the case of the foreign missionary.

Mr. Talboy had seen Ahmet on The Chad. Ahmet spent his afternoons, when they were sunny, muffled up in a huge overcoat with a tarbosh at the back of his head, and his hands thrust into his pockets, wandering up and down

the shop fronts of The Chad, choosing imaginary presents for his innumerable relatives on the Coast. For he was of a roving Moorish family, which a century before had distributed itself in large sections in the Kano country, and in the various Coast ports where Arab acumen and shrewdness were offered scope.

One day whilst so occupied, Mr. Talboy had seen Ahmet, and had addressed a few words in Arabic to the boy, to the latter's great delight. Missionaries engaged in their proper work have a fairly extensive vocabulary, so when Mr. Talboy met Ahmet again, he spoke with considerable confidence to the Moor, and the result of three interviews (one at least carried on before the admiring gaze of Mr. Talboy's family and friends in the bow-windowed parlour of the respectable Bulboro' villa) was that Ahmet was converted to Christianity. No person in the world would have been more surprised than Ahmet had this intimation been conveyed to him, for if the truth be told he had understood very little of what Mr. Talboy in his fluent way had said, but he had agreed with "Yes" and "Praise be to God" and similar phrases which in his simple way were equivalent to yes or no, but not quite so definite. He had led the missionary to believe that he desired to embrace another faith, and here was at once an excellent story for the papers, and a splendid testimony to the value of foreign missions.

There was, as it happened, a great missionary meeting due on the Wednesday night, bills announcing this were already posted all over Bulboro'. Nothing was easier, however, than to substitute new ones and so from end to end the town was plastered with the announcement that there would appear on the platform a Mohammedan who had been converted to Christianity in Bulboro' itself.

Bulboro' was intensely interested; so also was Dr. Anthony Manton. He had read the intelligence twice before it had flashed upon him that Ahmet was the repentant sinner, and he sent for the Arab.

"Oh, Ahmet," he said, when the man came into his study, "I have read a book about you"—[a book: any written thing in the language of the Coast]—"and it says that you are no longer of the faithful, but you are now a Jesu-man."

"Lord, that is a lie," said Ahmet cheerfully, "for though I respect Jesus, as the Koran tells me to do, yet I am of the faith a believer in the one God indivisible." He went on to explain. "Lord," said he, "there is a man in this town who speaks the Kano tongue like this," and he gave a passable imitation of Mr. Talboy's pronunciation, and Anthony smiled, for Arabic is a tricky language, "and he spoke with me and he said much that I did not understand. Also he spoke certain Jesu words which I did understand, but since your Lordship told me that I must at all times be respectful to white men, I said nothing. But to-morrow I go with this Jesu-man, and he will take me to a place where I shall meet many people," he said proudly.

"Ahmet," said Anthony impatiently, "I think you are a fool."

"Lord," said the other man, "it is written that but for fools the world would not go round, and, also, lord, if there were no fools in the world to speak with, you and I would lose our voices."

"Get out!" said Anthony.

He was more annoyed when the Herald appeared with fuller details about the convert, and gave as much of his life as Ahmet had been able to describe to the enthusiastic Mr. Talboy.

That he was Anthony Manton's servant added to the piquancy of the situation. It was a perfectly ridiculous position, and one in which Anthony Manton felt himself rather helpless.

He had no strong religious feelings, but he had a sufficient desire to spare his fellow-Christians the humiliation of making fools of themselves to induce him to take strong action.

All the churches had combined to make this missionary meeting a memorable one in the history of Bulboro', which had been announced some weeks previously.

It was always an event of the first importance to all the Christian bodies of Bulboro', the one function at which all creeds met upon common ground. The fact that the Reverend and Honourable Edward Heron Wendall occupied the chair, that the principal speakers included the Reverend Horace Stope and Pastor Childe said much for its catholicity. Every section of the town life was represented in the great audience which filled the Corn Exchange. All society was there, as well as every representative of the democracy, at one in their desire to extend the blessing of their faith to Darkest Africa. Mr. Talboy, who received an enthusiastic reception as he made his way to the crowded platform, had reserved the chair by his side for his convert, and it was towards this empty chair that all eyes were directed. Empty it remained, for when the Reverend and Honourable Heron Wendall rose amidst the frantic applause of those of his own church and the good-natured approval of those who did not ordinarily approve, it was still untenanted.

"I am afraid I have a little disappointment for some of you to-night," said the chairman in his most genial manner. He held a letter in his hand. "We had expected and hoped to see present amongst us one for whose conversion we have all offered thanks. It was remarkable that in the missionary movement in Bulboro', that here in our midst, we should have had a man, of a faith which we regard as pernicious, converted to Christianity, but unfortunately our joy was possibly a little premature."

There was a dead silence whilst he fixed his glasses.

"This is a letter from Dr. Anthony Manton, the employer of our convert."

"DEAR RECTOR," (he read)

"There appears to have been some mistake in regard to my man Ahmet, who is being extensively advertised throughout Bulboro' as a convert to the Christian faith. The gentleman who was responsible for the conversion, though no doubt an excellent Arabic scholar, could not have been aware of the fact that Ahmet is Moorish, and his dialect is a little different to that in which he was canvassed.

"The long and the short of it is that I have explained exactly what is expected of Ahmet, and he is very emphatic in his desire not to change his faith. I am afraid this will disappoint a great many people, but I can testify that, whether he be Mohammedan or Christian, Ahmet is an honest and most loyal man. I am sure you would not care to have him on your platform as a convert to Christianity when he has no desire whatever to desert his own faith.

—Yours very truly,
"ANTHONY MANTON."

There was a dead silence following the reading of the letter, broken only by one or two spasmodic hisses at the far end of the hall.

"I am sure, my friends," said the Rector, "you will agree with me that Dr. Manton must be the best judge as to his actions. I put the letter before you as I have received it, and I offer no comment."

At which there was some applause. It was gratifying to the reverend and honourable gentleman who, having neither condemned nor defended, secured credit for both attitudes.

IX. AN ANONYMOUS LETTER

"You seem to have made yourself particularly popular."

It was Painter, the maternity man, who offered his smiling comment. They were coming away from a consultation together. The young man, whose mind was rather upon the case he had just quitted than the effect his letter might have produced upon the population of Bulboro', was for the moment startled.

"I see what you mean," he said with a smile. "I do, indeed, seem to be particularly unfortunate with these Bulboro' people. I wonder why it is? Do you think it is because I have lived so long in the wilderness that I have absolutely no social manners left?"

"I would not like to advance an opinion," said the judicious Painter. "My experience of over thirty years in this town is that there are only two courses open to a doctor. The one is to obliterate himself except in his professional capacity, and the other is to drop all pretence at taking his profession seriously, and give his mind and his soul to Bulboro' and its pettifogging affairs. You cannot shine in both capacities," he said. "That is what it seems you are doing without any intention on your part."

"The curious thing," said Anthony thoughtfully, "is that my practice is not falling off."

"It will not," said the other promptly. "Don't you know that people love a rude doctor?"

"Thank you," said the other with a smile.

"But, honestly," said Painter, in all seriousness, "the more brusque a doctor is, the less inclined he is to humour the fads of his patients, the more popular he is. Some people do not like it, and they will give him up and get a more genial gentleman to attend to their ailments, but they are sure to come back; there is nothing more certain than that. Only," he said regretfully, "most of us have not the courage to be offensive, although we may know that success lies at the end of it, there is always just a possibility that failure lies there too, and it is that little fear which keeps us amongst the submerged."

There was much in what Dr. Painter had said, as Anthony knew. Old General Ballington had sent for him and demanded a diagnosis and a treatment, and without realizing that he might be in any way offensive, Anthony had prescribed a certain temperance diet, to the General's intense indignation.

"I think you drink a little too much," said Anthony, "and you possibly take food which is not good for a man of your age."

"What the devil do you mean, sir?" demanded the General hotly; "my age; I am, comparatively speaking, a young man."

"As to that," said Anthony dryly, "I cannot say. If one compares you with a man of seventy, you are certainly a young man. Still, you are at an age when you can take no liberties, and my own impression is that most people who have concluded an active life and have no recreations drink far more than is good for them. Why not take up golf?"

"Bah!" snarled the General.

He wrote an offensive letter covering four pages of blue foolscap, which was framed somewhat on the lines of a confidential report to the War Office, and this Anthony read with more than ordinary amusement. The sting lay in the tail, in which the General requested to be furnished with his account up to date, and notified Anthony that he did not require his services any more.

Anthony sent in his bill, and it was settled on the second day. On the seventh an urgent message came down from Lucknow House calling for his immediate presence, and he found a very penitent old gentleman in bed, a humble old gentleman, an old gentleman who agreed to a noxious form of diet and to unthinkable abstention.

"I hope, doctor, you are not going to take any notice of my foolish letter," he said.

"No," said Anthony cheerily. "It is a testimony to your youthfulness which justifies your previous irritation."

It was not to the good that Anthony had gained a reputation for irritability. He was excused by those who would only find an excuse in the more offensive sense of the word by his long residence in Central Africa. He was the possessor of a liver, ran popular repute; there were some picturesque individuals who had seen him writhing in agony as a consequence. He was also the possessor of an obscure tropical disease which was the tragedy of his life. But the truth about Anthony Manton was, that he was impatient with false conditions, with hypocrisies, with the incidents of life as they were thrust upon him. He loathed the primness of civilization, the human undevelopment he saw around him.

It made his heart sick to see the children. He saw a race being reared with no definite object. They were crammed with information about rivers they would never see, and headlands jutting into the distant waters which would never send a beam to speed or a quick-flashing ray to welcome them across the dark seas. They were parrot-like, inane, vacuous, they knew things which they would never know again after their school term was expired. They were brought up to know Shakespeare as another form of Geography or as a tedious form of History. Shakespeare was an occurrence on a Wednesday afternoon, when their little brains must be racked to deliver

lines which had no sense or significance to them. They were taught by their parents that the Army was a sort of workhouse for juveniles, whither it was a disgrace to go. And the Navy represented the sea to their minds, the sea to which bad boys are sent as an alternative to a reformatory. These slipshod boys hung about the skirts of street crowds addressed by frantic and ignorant orators, and they learnt to jeer at God as an expression of weak men and sneer at patriotism as a party cry. They had neither love of their country nor sense of duty to their King. The political activities of the Church body which was nearest to the people, had destroyed the Sunday schools. Pleasant Sunday afternoons for men and women had taken the place of schools of religious instruction for the children. Before every child was a goal. At the age of fourteen by the law of the land he might be released with such thin wedges of knowledge as a patient teacher had been able to knock into his thick head, and turned joyfully upon the world which was mainly populated by carmen who wanted van boys, by printers who required lads to bring in men's tea, and by a host of truck owners who needed cheap boy labour to deliver their goods.

Two things they learnt at school and carried away with them: the first was to read, and the second was to write. Thus they might read the thousand and one books which were provided for the young by numerous houses of publishers. It was the blessing of God that the greatest of these houses was directed by a man of singular purity of character, and by a large and Imperial vision. He dominated the trade and provided exciting romances which were contemptuously referred to by supercritical people as penny dreadful. But the literature was healthy adventure, healthy melodrama where virtue triumphed, and villainy invariably came to grief, and wherein there was no hint or suggestion of the everlasting sex problem to taint the mind of the susceptible youth. Largely, the tendency of these magazines was for good.

Not so good perhaps was it for the youth who could read laboriously, skipping the long words, when they cultivated a taste for the evening papers, and the columns of the Press which were devoted to the day's racing.

Here was brought into play another science which the boys had carried from school. They found their arithmetic, their simple addition at any rate, fairly handy, and the knowledge that there were fourteen pounds to a stone enabled many a lad of Bulboro' to reckon up the chance of a horse in his dinnertime to his immense profit.

Anthony was appalled by the smug self-satisfaction of these people, doomed to be the very stones over which their more intelligent fellows walked. Their independence, their boasted democracy, their trembling pride in their rights, would have been laughable had it not been so horribly tragic. They were fuel ready for burning to be cast by hundreds and by thousands into the pit that cunning exploiters would dig. To be pressed and squeezed and burnt, in order that intelligence should minister to its own comfort. They were horrible waste. The organs which pandered to their vanity, Radical and

Unionist alike, told them that from their ranks was drawn the men of a thousand battlefields, that they were the backbone of the nation. Yet less than one family in a hundred contributed one member to the armed forces of the Crown. They hated the word "conscription" as they hated the devil; Bulboro' hated discipline. To be "ordered about" represented the lowest depths of social degradation to which a man might sink. The larger class of Bulboro's population was independent of everything in the world, as independent of work as they were of Dreadnoughts. They loved to be thought well of by their neighbours.

Anthony Manton, as has been pointed out, took no part in the active life of Bulboro'. He had been unwillingly dragged into the light of publicity by an action which he had never for one moment imagined would be denied the support and approval of every section of the community. On the night before the theatricals, he was more than a little surprised to receive a letter on the flap of which was inscribed the title of the Bulboro' Herald. He had avoided publicity, and it was with some apprehension that he opened the note. It was from the proprietor, Western. It was a brief request for an interview on a purely private matter.

The note was marked urgent, and there was a postscript at the bottom of the typewritten request, written in the handwriting of Mr. Gregory Western himself:

"Although it does not directly affect you, I should like to have an opportunity of talking with you."

Anthony gave Jocks instructions to call up the newspaper proprietor and fix an appointment for that night after his return from the free dispensary.

Mr. Gregory Western was a man of middle height, clean-shaven, with a particularly strong, virile face. He was acknowledged one of the greatest powers in Bulboro'. He had a quick, eager, confidential way of speaking, and was one of the few men Anthony had met who looked one straight in the eye when he spoke.

"I thought I would see you," he said. "I have had a number of letters lately that have been rather uncomplimentary to you, but it is not of that that I wish to speak to you. Do you know anything to the detriment of Lady Heron Wendall? That is an impertinence," he hastened to add, "but I speak now absolutely in confidence. I do not want you to specify anything that you may know, but I have had a very specific story sent in to me; I do not know whether the sender imagined that I should print it," he smiled, "but it is rather an alarming thing to have in hand, and I want, if I possibly can, to squash the story, and to find the man who sent it."

"What is the story?"

"The story is that Lady Heron Wendall had an affair some fifteen years ago, in fact there was rather a scandal and"—he hesitated—"there was a child. It is unnecessary for me to say that I expect you to respect my confidence just as you may anticipate that I should respect yours."

"Is that the nature of the communication?" asked Anthony calmly.

"That is it, specifically stated. The name of the man is given, a man named Lefevre."

"What do they ask you to do, to publish the facts?" Mr. Western nodded.

"It is sent anonymously, of course; I do not know the handwriting, but if it was a lie I could move in the matter; and naturally if there is any foundation of truth in it, we do not want to refer to the matter in any way whatever."

It was a delicate position for Anthony, and the only thing to be done was to take the obvious course and suggest that Western should call upon Lady Heron Wendall herself; but here again there was a difficulty.

"I think the best thing you can do," he said, "is to wait and see what other communications reach you. I can, of course, give you no information on the subject, even if I knew, and I cannot recommend you to go to Lady Heron Wendall, for obvious reasons. It is pretty beastly. Do you suspect anybody?"

"No, I do not," said Western frankly, "I wonder whether her letter to the paper has annoyed somebody."

"What letter was this? I must say," said Anthony with a quick smile, "that I am not a very diligent newspaper reader."

"Do not apologize," said the editor, "I hold no very strong views on people who do not read newspapers. I have the letter here."

He had a number of papers folded under his arm, and he found a copy of his last issue and opened it.

"There is the letter that Lady Heron Wendall wrote." Anthony bent over and read. It was headed:

"A DENIAL FROM LADY WENDALL."

It ran:

"DEAR SIR,-I hear that there are extraordinary rumours in Bulboro' to the effect that I am associating myself with the Nonconformist movement, more especially in relation to the Street League."

"The Street League, as you probably know," explained Mr. Western, in his rapid, direct way, "is an association of people who hold services at street

corners. The rumour was that Lady Heron Wendall was to regularly engage in that work."

Anthony nodded, and continued reading the letter.

< class="letter"> "I need hardly say," it went on, "that this is absolutely untrue, and whilst I wish every success to the ladies and gentlemen who are doing this excellent work, I cannot for many reasons be in any way identified with the movement.

"Yours faithfully,

"BEATRICE HERON WENDALL."

"The story came in the day after this was published; she had probably annoyed some of these people," said Western.

"I would like to be informed if any more come. I do not know whether it is within my province to ask," Anthony hesitated, "but naturally Lady Wendall is a friend of mine, and I should be glad to help discover the rascal who wrote the type of letter which you have outlined."

"You do not want to see it?" asked Mr. Western. "No, thank you," said Anthony hastily.

Mr. Western smiled.

"I presume my junior reporter will include you amongst those present at Sir John Brand's amateur theatricals?" he said, and then he frowned. "By Jove, I nearly forgot, Sir John does not want it reported; I must remember that."

"I shall be there," said Anthony, "and you, I suppose."

"All the famous people of Bulboro' will be there," said Mr. Western, with a twinkle in his eye. "Between ourselves, I loathe amateur theatricals; they alarm me and fill me full of a horrible fear before the curtain goes up, and they depress me terribly until the curtain goes down. They call into play all the hypocrisy that is within me; one has to have the patience of an angel, and the tact of a Machiavelli, to get out of the toils of your amateur play producer with any kind of credit. In this case," he said, as he picked up his hat to go, "the production will be in the hands of young Patten, so probably it will be fairly decent."

Anthony walked down to the dispensary with him. This free institution, founded by his uncle, took a great deal of his time. He loved the work, though the ingratitude and the garrulity of his patients were somewhat trying. He was learning patience himself now. By sheer training in the exercise he was enabled to listen without interruption to the longwinded stories that some of his people had to tell him. In fact, he was taking, as he called it, "a treatment" every day, and rather invited at least one intimate

recital in the course of every twenty-four hours. The lives of his people were so colourless, these people who came flocking to the dispensary to sit upon forms, jiggling puny babies and discussing their mutual troubles. They had no content and no hope. He realized this more and more, there was happiness of a negative order, but no content. They had imagination which only pictured unhappy things. That is the great tragedy of the poor, that this divine gift of imagination can only be exercised in the anticipation of unpleasant consequences to the present.

Anthony gave freely of his time, and might have been chilled by the knowledge that he was not loved by the folk for whom he made his sacrifices. It would have been in accordance with all the story-book traditions had he been idolized by the poor women he served, but this was not to be. He was living amongst real people, dealing with real facts and vital forces. There was a murmur which was carried to him that he was too fond of the knife, too ready to suggest a little operation where medicine might do. He had his bitter disappointments, he lost two or three cases of appendicitis because this fear of an operation infinitely less painful than a tooth extraction and as innocuous when performed at the proper moment, was responsible for the deaths of three children. The parents' point-blank refused to allow him to "practise on" their little ones, so one of them told him in as many words. He must stand by and see the child die, knowing that the disease had reached a point where only the knife could save, and that with little risk to the patient. He tried to explain, he even gave a lecture with anatomical drawings, but made no converts. "It is hopeless," he told Painter, "they are just brutes, with sufficient knowledge to see one side of a ten-sided question. If either of those kiddies had been in the Congo I should have put it on the table and out would come their little appendices before you could say knife."

"What does it matter?" said Painter wearily, "poor little devils! Three little van boys less to be provided for, three little clients for bookmakers the less. I tell you, Manton, that with eight out of every ten children I bring into the world, I believe I am committing an offence against humanity."

They were strolling across The Chad to the club. In front of the County Hall stood a big motor-car which was unfamiliar to Anthony, who by this time had got to know the domestic features of Bulboro's more prosperous citizens.

"Whose is it?" he asked.

"Oh, I expect that is Lord Edward Bexley; he is a sort of cousin of Sir John Brand."

"Bexley the Minister?" asked Anthony with a show of interest.

"That is the chap. Do you know him?"

"I met him on the Congo," said Anthony, "a rather good fellow and a pretty good shot."

"I suppose he is," said the other grudgingly. "He is a very lucky young man. You know he is generally believed to be engaged to Geraldine Brand."

"Geraldine Brand?" repeated Anthony. For the moment he had forgotten her existence.

X. A CLERGYMAN'S LIFE

The Rev. Heron Wendall sat at his desk, his hands covering the lower part of his face, deep in thought. He picked up the letter again and read it, folded it carefully, put it into his pocket, and made his way to his wife's room.

She was expecting him; he had told her that he wanted to see her. She knew when he came in that something unusual and something serious had happened. He was perturbed, his smile was less prolonged, and his manner a little briefer than usual.

"I have had another letter, Beatrice," he said, as he sat himself at her nod.

"Well, what is it this time?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I am so sorry to bother you," he said courteously, "but it is the same miserable old business that we both know about. The sender is probably under the impression that I know nothing, and that all he says in his beastly letter is news to me."

"I suppose he mentions the child?" said Lady Beatrice quietly.

Heron Wendall nodded.

"Yes."

He broke a silence of some minutes' duration by saying:

"Would it be offensive to you, Beatrice, if I asked you where the child is at present?"

She shook her head.

"I do not know; all that I know is that it was handed over to a tenant farmer of my father."

"Not this man?"

"No," she said in surprise. "What made you think it was he? As a matter of fact, it was his brother," she said. "That is how he comes to know of it."

"That is the threat he was holding over your head, that he would tell—who?" asked Heron Wendall.

"I do not know," she said wearily. "Tell the world, as far as the world is interested in these matters."

"I suppose it would be."

"I told him that you knew. Of course he did not believe it."

"Has he asked for money?" the Rector inquired. She shook her head.

"No; only this preposterous idea of my making some sort of open confession of my sin, I think."

He laughed a little harshly.

"It is difficult to know what men like this want. Their vocabulary is so limited, and when those vocabularies are extended at all, they employ such extraordinary meaningless phrases."

"The child was kept by his brother," she went on, "who received a certain sum a week from my father's estate. The undertaking was that the child was to be brought up as one of the family. How this man comes to know of it I do not know, because Henry Gill, the farmer to whom the child went, was a quiet, reticent man who was selected by my father for that reason."

The Rector was silent for a long time

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"I am wondering, my dear," he said, "to what other person in the town this man is sending letters."

"I have wondered," she said. "It does not matter to me, I am not thinking about myself," she went on, "it is you who will be injured, and I wanted to save you this because it is cruel."

"Please do not distress yourself on my account," he said with a smile; "it is very unfortunate, that is all. You see it would get to the bishop's ears if any more is made of it, and it might possibly affect our future."

He nearly said "my future," and she supplied the deficiency.

"It is certain to affect your future if it becomes known," she said, and her voice was heavy and expressionless.

"I wonder if Jerry knows," she asked. She was speaking more to herself. "I wonder, if she did, what her attitude would be? Of course, she is young, and she would be ready to condone that sort of thing, and think that I was rather wonderful to have had such an adventure. Do you know, Edward"—she turned to her husband suddenly with a note which he had never before heard in her voice—"there is an awful lot of truth in the Bible."

He looked at her, and for once in their married life he smiled as she could wish a man to smile, without any movement of the lips, a kindly twinkling of his eye, which showed her that somewhere hidden behind that pomposity, that veneer of mannerism and the overlaid armour of breed, there was a soul in this man.

"Have you noticed that, too?" he asked quietly. "It is curious how the most obvious things are only brought home to one in times like this. I sometimes find a lot of pleasure in the Bible," he said simply. "You see the whole scheme of things is wrong," he hesitated and withdrew into himself for the moment.

"Go on, Edward," she said. "Tell me, I want to know what you think."

"You will think I am absurd and banal and all sorts of things, but here am I—he put out his hands—"the son of a very poor peer for whom this profession was chosen. Beyond my Oxford degrees, a certain desire to live quietly and modestly, I had no call to preach the Gospel or to tread in the path in which the great saints of all the ages trod, and yet I became a preacher and spoke of Christ, and conducted services, and uttered solemn admonitions to people who were committing no worse crime than I, save that they had not been tainted with the supreme crime of hypocrisy; here am I, one of God's mercenaries, an interpreter of a wholly preposterous conception of the Almighty—playing a mechanical game according to conventional rules—I am not being blasphemous."

"I know what you mean," she said; "just an impersonal x-like thing to be spoken of in certain tones, under certain conditions to be invoked in a certain form, to be played as an all-conquering card."

"It is a sort of a game," he said with a puzzled frown; "but recently it seems to me that God has become more real and the realization of what is Godlike more obvious. God is all that is good in us. I found that out in the Bible," he smiled; "touching the Almighty," he quoted, "'we cannot find Him out. He is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice'. I have found that kind of God, and find Him very precious and very comforting."

He walked over to her, and for a moment his hands lay upon her shoulders, and the soul of her went out to him as it had never done before in all the fifteen years of their marriage.

XI. PRETENCE AND REALITY

"You know Lord Edward Bexley, I suppose?" said Geraldine.

Anthony held out his hand.

"Rather," said Lord Bexley. "We lived together for a month or so, didn't we, Manton?"

He was a good-looking young man, with prominent eyes and inclined to fleshiness, and he had all the suavity and good manners of his class.

"This man is lost here," he said, turning to the girl. "Good Lord, Manton! fancy coming away from a place like the Congo where you can shoot elephants, or go hunting bugs, according to your particular vanity and inclination, to a place like Bulboro! Don't you feel dead and buried?"

"There is a great deal here to keep one amused if one can only control one's natural irritation," said Anthony.

"Dr. Manton," said Jerry, shaking her finger solemnly, "I enjoin you to be a good Christian, and forgive and forget."

"I was not thinking of our—"

He nearly said "row."

"What was that?" asked Lord Edward eagerly. "Have you had a row with Jerry? How lovely! Who came out best? I saw this man shoot a nigger," he said, turning to the girl. "He is a terribly ferocious person."

The girl frowned at the doctor wonderingly.

"Did you really?" she asked, in a shocked voice.

"Not really," smiled Anthony. "I shot at him; but I took particular care to miss him. You see we were crossing a large, swampy country, and the carriers were inclined to be mutinous. There were only two white men, Lord Edward and myself, and matters were looking rather serious, weren't they?" He turned for confirmation to the other.

"They were, indeed," said Lord Edward, nodding his head. "I was in the bluest funk I have ever experienced."

"I just loosed off a revolver at the man," said Anthony. "It shocked the carriers to obedience."

"But do tell me about your row," said Lord Edward.

"Oh, it was nothing," protested the girl, flushing a little. "I got awfully cross at bridge. It was quite unpardonable of me, and the doctor behaved very well—for him," she added, with a smile of gentle malice.

"Has he got a bad reputation?"

"Horrible," she said solemnly. "Hardly on speaking terms with anybody in the town, are you, doctor?"

"I cannot remember anybody who is really keen on me," said Anthony with a laugh.

"And now it is all over and done with," said the girl briskly; "so do not ask a lot of impertinent questions and rake up the grisly past. Dinner will be served in five minutes, and I want to ask you men not to linger over it. I have particularly requested father to avoid the subject of the promising three-year-olds, because the play starts at half-past nine, and one of our players must be in her house by eleven."

"Who is this?" asked Bexley in surprise. "Is there a new early-to-bed movement amongst the county families?"

The girl shook her head.

"No, she is the daughter of a townsman, and there are lots of reasons why we do not want to advertise the fact. Generally it is for her sake, because her father is simply a terrible person, as the doctor knows."

"Gill's daughter," said Anthony in surprise.

"She is playing a little part, and she plays it jolly well, too. Mr. Patten—here he is to speak for her."

Patten strolled up at the moment and shook hands with the doctor.

"I was just telling Dr. Manton about the little actress that you have discovered. She is good, isn't she?"

"Excellent," said the young man. "The doctor knows I am very interested in her. We may really have discovered a great artist. But you will see for yourself."

"What does her father say?" asked Anthony in a low voice.

"He does not know," she said. "We want all account of the play to be kept out of the paper. The only danger is that the servants may speak, but father has read the riot act to Simmonds, and Simmonds has passed on daddy's awful threats to the rest of the household."

The dinner was a success, so far as Anthony was concerned. He was placed next to the girl by Sir John's instructions, it might be noted, and she was surprised to discover him not so much the dull scientist, as a very shrewd man of the world with views which were well worth listening to, and stories which she had not heard before. For this latter she was intensely grateful!

Bexley had a trick of cutting out the gems of last week's humorous papers, which in nine cases out of ten had been the choice and amusing jests of the Pharaohs.

Manton was witty, too, in his dry way, but most she was conscious of a transparent and convincing honesty. He was younger than any scientist she had met, and was less dogmatic. It was an evening of pleasant surprises for her, and she found herself wondering what manner of man he would be in his own house.

All the stories she had heard had not been to his credit; she had heard them mostly from his household. Mr. Jocks, discreet man as he was, had spoken with no particular enthusiasm of his master's domestic qualities, and his stories had carried.

He referred to the amateur theatricals.

"You must be very kindly and flattering," she warned him, "especially to Bexley, who insisted upon taking the part of the fat old uncle. Bex fancies himself horribly in these character parts, but my view is that he is rather appalling."

"Oh, rot!" said Bexley across the table. "You have never seen good acting, Jerry; you bury yourself in this beastly place, and you have nothing to compare me with. There is no sense in drawing comparisons between myself and Henry Irving."

"I quite agree with you," she said.

"Who is the fat uncle in 'Hamlet'?" asked Anthony, bewildered, and the girl smiled.

"We changed the play," she said simply. "Shakespeare didn't write the part of Ophelia to suit me."

Anthony had had a moment's opportunity for an exchange of words with Lady Heron Wendall. She was looking rather tired, he thought, and a little pinched of face, but very beautiful, despite these disadvantages.

Anthony, a privileged person, was allowed to see the "theatre." The big ballroom had been converted for this purpose.

A deep length of stage had been allowed, a perfect proscenium arch had been erected, and when half an hour later the curtain rose upon the first act of "The Admirable Crichton," the ballroom was comfortably filled by the guests who had arrived to augment the dinner-party. The chief interest for Anthony lay in watching the girl, Mary Gill. She was cast in the part of one of the sisters concerning whose fortune and the admirable valet the play was concerned.

He found himself in agreement with Patten, who sat at his side. There was, indeed, the making of a great artist in this girl. Her comedy had that right quality of restraint, and such drama as she reflected was true. It was an excellent performance from beginning to end. Only two acts of the play were given, the first of all being explained on the programme, and when the curtain fell upon the Admirable Crichton washing his hands with invisible soap before the haughty command of "Follow me" from a man who a few moments before had cringed to him, the applause was spontaneous and genuine.

One by one the artists were called before the curtain, and to none was the welcome warmer than to the delicate-featured girl who came timidly forward to make her bow.

Supper had been laid for the party, the top table reserved for the players, and here Sir John, in rare high spirits, presided. There was a little delay whilst the players changed.

Mary Gill was the first to be ready.

"I think I will go now, Miss Brand," she said hurriedly. "I am so afraid of not getting home. Father will be out till half-past eleven to-night; it is The Brotherhood annual meeting."

"Oh, but you must stay and have supper," urged Geraldine. The girl hesitated.

"I should like to very much," she said, "but I am so afraid."

"I will have the car ready for you, and I will drop you at the corner of your street," said Geraldine. "I hate to feel that you have to deceive your father in this matter, but if he would only let you go on the stage, I am sure you would be a success," she said enthusiastically. "You were simply splendid. Come along"—she patted the girl on the cheek—"there is plenty of time for you; you can have a hurried supper and go."

The girl hesitated and then accepted. She put down her hat and left her coat with the maid. She was not dressed grandly, but then none of the players wore evening dress, and her simple gown excited neither comment nor remark.

Sir John had reserved a place next to him.

"That is for our leading lady," he said.

Geraldine, to whom the honour of this title undoubtedly belonged, made a laughing grimace.

"We shall see you starring in a theatre one of these days," said Sir John with his kindly smile as he turned to the girl. "Your name will be all over—" He stopped.

Her face had suddenly gone white and tense, her eyes were fixed on the door. He followed their direction.

There stood John Gill, a look of malignant hate upon his face.

"Mary Gill," he called harshly, and the chatter at the table ceased. "What are you doing in this devil's company—this congregation of the damned?"

The girl was paralysed with terror. She could not move; she could only keep her staring eyes fixed upon his set face as he came up through the tables towards her.

The unexpectedness of the apparition had paralysed the waiting footmen, and had put a silence even upon Sir John's ready tongue.

"There she sits," Gill cried out, "in the company of painted harlots and wine-bibbing men. Thank God"—he raised his eyes to the ceiling—"you are no child of mine Ladies and gentlemen"—his loud and sonorous street-preaching voice stood him in good stead—"I present to you the illegitimate child of Lady Heron Wendall, the respected wife of your Rector."

The girl had risen from her seat and shrunk back against the wall, her eyes still fixed on his face, oblivious of everything save a desire to leave the room, to flee from all those staring eyes, to find some quiet place in God's world where her horrible shame should be unknown.

She knew he spoke the truth, though it came as a revelation to her. She could not understand by what circumstance she had been brought into his house, or in what circumstance her mother had left her alone with this fierce, fanatical man.

All she desired now was the open air and a straight road, tree shadows to veil her, open ditch to hide her, anywhere away from that room, those eyes, that drawn face, and the malignant smile of Gill.

Slowly she moved, like a creature in a dream round by the wall. There was a door within half a dozen steps of her, she would make for that.

"There she is," said Gill, and then two footmen flung themselves at him, the door was thrown open, and they went out together, a struggling mass.

A dead silence fell on the room, and there was not a sound as Lady Heron Wendall rose, or indication that anything unusual had happened. She walked swiftly towards the cowering girl and put her arms about her.

"This is my daughter!" she said, and nobody in that room remembered hearing her voice sound so soft.

"My daughter," she repeated almost defiantly, and faced the scrutiny of the county, pitiful or triumphant as that scrutiny might be, without a change of colour or a tremble of lip.

Edward Heron Wendall had been at the far end of the room when the interruption had come, and now he walked with his long, swinging stride towards his wife.

By her side he stood, that pompous, cold man. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said quietly, "such of you who may remember this, may remember, and some of you who of your charity would forget, will forget. All that the man Gill said was true except one thing. I am the father of this child," and he laid his hand upon the girl's shoulder.

Beatrice saw his eyes, and for the second time in his life she saw upon his face the smile which was very beautiful.

XII. THE CHAIRWOMAN

The bright yellow sunlight of an April morning piercing its way through the space between blinds and wall fell across the dainty white bed and crept up till it touched the face of the sleeping girl. She awoke with a start and put her hands before her eyes. Then she stared about the room. Where was she? She remembered, and covered her face with her hands. It was true, then, this troubled dream which had disturbed the night. There came a gentle knock at the door.

"Come in," she said.

Her mother walked into the room with a little silver tray bearing a cup of steaming chocolate and butter and hot toast. She put the tray down on the table, bent over the girl and kissed her.

"How did you sleep, dear?" she asked.

There was a look in her eyes of infinite yearning as she scanned the face of the girl.

"Thank you so much, Lady Beatrice," began Mary, and the woman put her soft hands over the girl's mouth gently.

"If you want to make me very happy," she said, "you must call me mother."

Mary's eyes filled with tears.

"You are called Mary, are you not?" she asked. "Yon were christened that, I know."

"I hardly like to call you mother," said Mary shyly, smiling through her tears.

"You must try, dear."

Lady Beatrice sat on the edge of the bed and smoothed the girl's hair

"You know you are my own little daughter."

"It seems rather absurd, does it not?" said Mary, looking up in wonder at her mother's face. "You see it doesn't seem possible that you could be old enough to have a daughter of my age."

"It is true, though," said Lady Beatrice, with a little smile. "But it means something awful for you, doesn't it?" Mary sat up in bed and clasped her mother's hands between her own.

"Doesn't it mean something dreadful, something disgraceful? Wasn't that what he meant when he spoke so horribly in front of all those people?"

"He meant to be horrid, I think," said her mother; "instead he did me a great service. I never suspected you, I must have seen you, too," she mused. "I seem to know all the people in Bulboro', and all these years you have been living so close to me."

She looked down into the girl's face, into her eyes, and saw something which brought a little pang of delicious sorrow. She had seen eyes like those, that had looked so lovingly and as wistfully, dear eyes that lived with her day and night. "There is nothing horrid, dear, nothing disgraceful. It cannot be very disgraceful to have a daughter like you," she smiled, and patted her cheek. "I want you to lie in bed this morning because I think you had rather a trying time, and afterwards I am going to take you for a holiday. You have never been abroad, have you?"

"Oh, no," the girl said, her eyes lighting up. "To France?"

"France, if you like," smiled Lady Beatrice. "We should be in time for the snows if we went to Switzerland. It may not be too late for winter sport, but if we are there, there are many other forms of amusement. Would you like to go to Cairo?"

"Oh, I should love it," said the girl. "Do you really mean all this? Why must we go?" she asked suddenly.

"So that we can get used to one another," said her mother quickly, "so that you can learn to call me mother, and not Lady Beatrice, for one thin; so that I can realize that this beautiful child is mine." She leant down and kissed her, and a big tear dropped on the girl's face. With an impulsive gesture she put up her arms and clasped the woman about the neck.

"I am so happy," she sobbed, "so very, very happy."

"So am I, dear," said Lady Beatrice as she gently disengaged the arms, "and so you shall be for all time, dearie, and you must think and feel to me always nicely and sweetly, and forgivingly, because you have a great deal to forgive. You will be older some day," she said with a smile; "it is a trick we have, and then you will be asking yourself all sorts of questions, and you will be wondering why I did this or I did not do that, and there will be an inclination on your part to condemn me, and probably if I were in your place I also would condemn, but I hope you will be a little charitable to me, remembering that a woman is a very powerless kind of being. She is born to slavery, pleasant or unpleasant, but none the less slavery. She has no right to do what she wishes, must stand at the bidding of some man or other, whether he be her father or her husband."

She bent over the girl and kissed her again.

"But there are some very nice men in the world," she said, and her mind at that moment was on her husband.

Whatever doubts Lady Heron Wendall may have had about the attitude Jerry would adopt were dispelled a few minutes later. She had gone down to her little boudoir, and had seated herself at her writing-table, when the door burst open and Jerry flew in. Without a word she went straight to the elder woman and clasped her in her arms.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," she said, "it was so brave of you, so splendid of you!"

Lady Beatrice kissed the fresh young cheek and held her out at arms' length, her hands upon her shoulder's.

"Now, Jerry," she warned her with a little laugh, though the tears in her eyes betrayed how deeply she felt, "you must not get excited views about a woman who has committed a sin and has continued in a cowardly action for fifteen years. Even though she makes reparation at a moment when from purely physical weariness and boredom she does not care one way or other what people think."

"Oh, but it was so brave of you," said Jerry. "I just love you. I have told everybody I am going to stand by you, whatever happens."

A little frown gathered for a moment on the forehead of Lady Heron Wendall, but it was immediately dispelled, and she laughed.

"Why, Jerry, you are a wonderful champion, but championship implies the necessity for championing. I think you had better not speak about it, dearie," she said kindly. "Edward is the only hero in the piece."

The girl nodded. She was on the verge of tears herself. "He was fine, wasn't he?" she said. "I never thought Edward had it in him."

"The older one gets," said Beatrice, as she went with the girl to the big settee, "the more one realizes that the human heart is a wonderful, mysterious thing. I have lived with Edward in a sort of a way," she smiled, "for fourteen years, and I never knew him as I know him now."

"What are you going to do?" asked the girl.

"Edward is leaving this diocese," she said. "It is awfully hard upon him, because he loves the work here. But he has been most generous and kind; we talked it all out last night. The living, of course, is nothing, but I am afraid it is going to spoil Edward's chance of promotion." She smiled faintly. "It is an awful pity. Edward would have made such a lovely bishop."

"Can I see?" asked the girl hesitatingly.

"I do not think you had better," said Beatrice. "Poor little girl, she is scared and troubled with the excitement of these unusual happenings. We are going away this morning."

"This morning?" asked the girl, startled.

Lady Beatrice nodded.

"If we stay for a day we may as well stay for ever," she said. "The car will take us to London, and from there I have mapped out a little tour for Mary."

Jerry was silent.

"Daddy says—" she began.

"What does daddy say?" asked Beatrice interestedly.

"Daddy says that he wants to do anything that is possible for you and Mary. He says," she went on naively, "that if you by any chance should think of going on the Continent, he knows quite a lot of nice quiet places."

Lady Heron Wendall laughed the first laugh of genuine amusement the girl had ever heard from her.

"I dare say he does," she said dryly.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the girl in wonder.

"Oh, nothing," smiled Lady Beatrice. "You are to tell your daddy he is a good soul, and that I shall remember him very kindly."

The girl looked at her in dismay.

"Beatrice," she said, "you are talking as though we are never going to see you again."

"Of course you are going to see me again," said Beatrice. "We are going to meet lots of times. I shall want you to know my Mary. I think she will be worth knowing; she is worth knowing now," she corrected herself. "This reminds me that Mrs. Gill is coming up to see her this morning. I have sent down asking her to come. Poor soul, I am rather sorry for her. Evidently, from what Mary told me last night, Mrs. Gill has been most kind and motherly to her." She shrugged her shoulders.

"You will think it curious," she said, "but I feel jealous of Mrs. Gill already."

The car, with the baggage on top, passed Anthony Manton as he was driving from seeing a patient who lived a few miles outside the town. They passed in a narrow road, where both cars slowed, down, and Anthony had time to rise and wave a cheery farewell.

Lady Beatrice signalled him to stop, and he went back to her. She leaned over the car.

"I only wanted to say," she said, lowering her voice, "that I am tasting some of the happiness which has been so long denied to me."

He held out his hand and gripped hers.

"I think you are getting near to the realities of life," he said.

He nodded cheerfully to the girl, and with a word or two as to the road, and to the possibility of their meeting in the near future, they parted.

Anthony walked back to the car light of heart. He was becoming more humanized, the people were growing in interest, he was part of the domestic system of Bulboro'. tainted perhaps with some of its conventions, but a consciousness of propriety is not an unpleasing sensation.

In the course of the next few days he had occasion to meet Geraldine Brand, not once but many times. One of the innumerable "movements" to which the leisure and the temperament of Bulboro' gave birth was in the throes of inception. And since it had to do directly with medicine, he was called in with the other doctors as an honorary member of the committee.

The movement was rendered necessary by the abortive attempt of a few genial and enthusiastic souls to create an Advisory League in Bulboro'. They had attempted the impossible, and had failed to their intense astonishment. For, setting out with the object of helping with words, they had come into conflict with hundreds of families which had words to spare, but needed some more tangible means of assistance than a cheerful quotation from the classics.

The new scheme was the foundation of a women's and children's hospital on a modest scale. Beyond the dispensary and the infirmary and the little cottage hospital, which was mainly supported by the proprietors of the tin works, who also furnished most of the patients, there was no hospital accommodation in Bulboro' for the women and children.

The League of Good Advice, if it had accomplished no more than this, had discovered the urgent necessity for such an institution.

There were members of the rank and file of this admirable body who were anxious to see some result of their labours, and these had concentrated upon the question of the women's hospital.

Anthony was an attendant, and fairly interested listener, at all the meetings. Much that was said was superfluous, much that was argued was nonsensical; the views of amateurs are always irritating to the professional man and the Utopian schemes which were outlined, the dream fabrics which were erected, first exasperated and then amused.

He was pleased to note that of all the suggestions put forward, Jerry's were the most practical. He had no idea as to why he derived any pleasure from seeing her shine in those assemblies, and analysing his feelings in his scientific way, he came to the conclusion that he owed her a debt of approval which it was a pleasure to pay. The first meeting had been cheerful, the second wildly optimistic. It was at the third meeting that gloom fell upon the little committee. The county had been canvassed, and the promises of assistance had not been encouraging.

Sir John Brand had headed the subscription list with a thousand guineas in his generous way.

An unfortunate donation it proved, for the remainder of the county, appalled by the largeness of the figure and not desirous of showing too great a gap between their own contributions and Sir John's, had found many excellent reasons for not subscribing anything.

The committee meeting was a representative one. Not only was the medical profession well represented, but the possible builders, the proprietors of the land on which the women's hospital was to be erected, and the likely furnisher of the building when it was built, had also been invited to attend.

The estimates now lay before Jerry, who had been elected chairwoman, and now she sat with Lord Bexley on her right hand and her father on her left, admirable cicerones and sufficient guarantee that the conduct of the meeting would be irreproachably in order, and the gloom which had struck the room was reflected on her face.

"It seems fairly hopeless, doesn't it?" she said, as she pushed back the pad upon which she had been scribbling. "I think the county has been most mean about this."

"Do not report that," said Sir John to the reporter who sat behind, and the smiling scribe nodded.

"We want forty thousand pounds," she went on, "and we have got exactly eighteen. How much are you giving, Bexley?"

She was an unconventional chairwoman, and the young man at her side wriggled.

"I shall give five hundred pounds," he said. "Haven't you got it down?"

"I have written a thousand," she said gloomily; "that makes another five hundred to find."

"Steady the Buffs, dearie," whispered her father. "You will have nothing if you are not careful."

"Do you think," somebody asked at the other end of the table, "it would be a wise plan to let the matter stand over for a year until things are better?"

"Things will never be better," said Geraldine, darkly. "I have been alive quite a long time, and I have never known things to be prosperous. They are either going to be or they have been. National prosperity has no present," she said, and the knowledge that she had perpetrated an epigram cheered her up. "Here is the fact, we want twenty-two thousand pounds," she said, "and here is another fact, that the hospital is necessary. You agree with me, Dr. Manton?"

"Absolutely," he said. "I think it is a crying shame that Bulboro' has not a women's hospital, and in this I think I am voicing the opinion of all members of my profession." He looked round, and there was a murmur of approval.

"This is not the first time the hospital has been projected," said the girl. "Three years ago we tried to get a fund together, but whenever there is money to be spent," she said bitterly, "it is employed in the erection of ridiculous drinking fountains or jubilee clocks—like that horrible and unnecessary thing we have on The Chad—I am astounded that Bulboro' can be so foolish with its money."

Anthony smiled behind his hand. She was so young and bright and illogical, and so full of energy in the attainment of her object.

"Is it absolutely certain," he asked, "that you will get no more money from anybody in the county?"

"Absolutely certain," said the girl. "My last hope was old Lady Burdin, but she has definitely declined owing to the extraordinary demand made upon her income by the new land taxes."

She mimicked her parsimonious ladyship rather neatly. "Jerry, Jerry," warned her father, "for the Lord's sake, be careful."

"I do not care," said the girl wrathfully. "I am tired of this town; they will not do anything for themselves, they won't raise or stir a finger for their own good. The poor want charity, and the rich seem only willing to extend it if they are allowed freedom from taxation."

"Hear, hear," said the Radical minister by her side.

There was a long and an empty silence, if silence could have that quality, which Anthony broke.

"I would like to say something before we disperse," he said. "You all knew my uncle, and you all know that I am practically a new-comer amongst you, and that I have not had much opportunity of making myself acquainted with the people of this town. But such opportunity as I have had has demonstrated to me that my uncle was universally beloved."

"That is so," said a voice. "Everybody loved old Jabez Manton."

"So I understand," said Anthony, "and so I can well believe, for he was a lovable man, the only lovable man I have ever met in my life," he said thoughtfully. "Therefore I feel that he would like me to do something to perpetuate a memory, and not only perpetuate it, but to give some material proof of the love for this town. I have much pleasure, therefore, on his behalf, and to his memory, in making up the sum to the required amount."

"But," said the girl, aghast, "that means twenty-two thousand pounds."

"Twenty-two thousand five hundred," said Anthony, with a smile, and caught Lord Edward's eye.

The smile was reflected.

"Make it twenty-two thousand, doctor; I will bring up my subscription to the even thousand."

There was a burst of applause, and Geraldine felt happy but uncomfortable.

It was splendid of the doctor, but had he not been dragged into it?

She was frankness itself, she had not yet learned the value of discretion.

"But you have been bullied into this, doctor?" she said with a smile. "I feel horribly responsible. If I had not grumbled you would not have felt the need."

"Indeed, I should," he said. "I had made up my mind that you would have a deficiency from the very start, and I had also made up my mind to supply whatever that deficiency was. I do not want this matter to get into the papers," he said, with a stern eye on the reporter, "and I should be greatly obliged to our friend if he would refrain from recording the fact."

But the gentleman closed his notebook resolutely.

For two hours, at the whispered request of Sir John Brand, he had been erasing the indiscretions of Geraldine Brand from his notebook—indiscretions which would have made a very interesting story.

"I am afraid I cannot oblige you," he said. "There are certain things which must necessarily be made public."

Reporters as a rule do not address county committees, but this reporter was an unusual young man. He was also the editor of the Bulboro' Herald, and had had a London training, which totally unfits a man for any form of respect for the landed gentry.

Anthony would have hurried away, but the girl came out to him when she saw him making a move from the room.

"Doctor, I still feel guilty," she said, "and I think you have behaved magnificently, but—"

"There is no 'but' about it. This is the course I set out to adopt, and this is the course in which you must allow me to continue. It so happens that you and I have hit upon Bulboro's one need independently, and I want you to believe that I am not the sort of man to be bullied into giving away largesse." He smiled, and offered his hand, and the girl took it.

"I think we shall all be good friends one of these days," she said, with that open laugh of hers.

"I wonder," he said, half to himself. "I am afraid I am not a great social success."

"You are a very bad bridge player, aren't you?"

"I admit that," he said humbly, "but then, I am a pretty good doctor."

"I admit that," she said graciously. "We have reached a solid foundation for friendship, anyway."

She went back to Bexley with a thoughtful little frown. "What is troubling you, Jerry?" asked Bexley. "Thoughts," she said.

"I say, how stunning of old Manton to give that."

"Which is old Manton?" she asked in surprise.

"I mean the doctor man I always think that all doctors are old, or ought to be."

"I always think that Cabinet Ministers are old, or should pretend to be," she said severely. "You behaved very meanly, too. I have a bone to pick with you."

"Pick it at tea," he said, "for I am starving."

They drove up together. Sir John had business in the town, and they took their meal alone.

Bexley was nervous and the girl was a little dismayed. She knew the symptoms too well, and was unusually perturbed, for she liked Bexley too well to hurt him.

"I have something to ask you," he said after the tea-things had been cleared away.

"Come along and get it over," she smiled. "What is it?"

"Well, Jerry," he said awkwardly for him, "I have known you for quite a long time, and we have practically grown up as boy and girl together. I am a Catholic and all that sort of thing, and you are Church, but I do not think that need make any difference. In fact," he stammered, "I want you to marry me."

She looked at him with genuine affection in her eyes.

"Bexley," she said, "I would like to do anything for you, because you are really a good sort but I just do not want to marry—that is all."

"Perhaps in a year or two," he suggested.

"I don't think it would be wise," she said, "to depend on me even in a year or two. I am an erratic individual; I would not trust myself a week."

"Oh!" he said.

He took the rebuff manfully.

"I suppose it would not be fair to ask if there was anybody else."

"There are about twenty others," she smiled; "but there is not one of them to whom I feel exactly as I feel towards you."

He nodded.

"Well, that is over," he said with a sigh.

"I do not want this to make any difference to us, Jerry. You are too sweet a girl, too inspiring a friend, to surrender, and I would rather anything happen than that you should think—" He hesitated for a word.

"What can I think," she said gently, "but that you are a dear, good man, and that I have led you quite an awful dance and have probably in all deliberation set myself out to make you think that I cared for you."

"Oh no, you haven't," he protested, that is one of the illusions I have never had."

"Anyway, I have encouraged you," she went on; "but then it has been because we were boy and girl together, Bex. We have grown up to depend on one another rather."

"Let us say no more about it, old girl," he said, and patted her affectionately on the shoulder. "I dare say a very nice man will come along one of these days and whisk you off between the first and second dinner-gongs."

She laughed.

"I could wish for nothing less expeditious, when he comes," she said. "I don't want to think; I am a perfectly rotten thinker, Bex. No sooner do I start worrying out the wherefores and the whys of any situation, than I realize that whatever I have done and whatever I am likely to do must be wrong."

"Your philosophy is of the German school," he said cheerfully, "and that is horribly old-fashioned. We are all optimistic nowadays."

"Jerry," he said after a pause, "you will not think I am a beast if I ask you a question when you have answered it practically?"

She was looking out of a window which commanded a view of the drive up to High Mount.

"It is not he, is it?" asked Bexley.

"Who? Mr. Stope?" She turned her startled face to him. "Mr. Stope?" he said, bewildered. "What the dickens are you talking about? No, I mean the doctor."

She laughed a full ringing peal of laughter.

"My dear Bexley," she said, "how absurd you are; of all people in the world, the doctor!"

"Why did you say Mr. Stope?" he asked.

"Because he was coming up the drive at that particular moment."

"Here?" Bexley was genuinely surprised.

"Why not?" she said. "Mr. Stope and I are quite good friends. Come along and meet him."

"Oh, I know him all right," smiled Bexley; "he is to be our candidate at the election."

"When is that going to happen?" she asked.

She was not particularly interested. Few women are interested in politics, but at some labour she had acquired a working knowledge of the subject for Bexley's sake.

"In a month or so," he answered.

"Am I supposed to wish you people luck?" she asked as they went down the stairs together.

He made a little face.

"If you have seriously decided to engage in a career of hypocrisy you might as well start in that pleasant way," he suggested. "What is Stope's immediate business?"

"I expect it is about that unfortunate man Gill," she answered, with a serious little frown. "Daddy dismissed him, you know, and Mr. Stope is trying to persuade us to take him back again."

Mr. Stope had all the charm and all the drawing-room manner which his confrères lacked. He could walk into a drawing-room without arousing in the breast of the most earnest Churchwoman the slightest apprehension that his full-skirted coat would destroy the bric-à-brac incautiously displayed on spindle-legged tables.

A tall man, he gave, because of the narrowing influence of his sombre uniform, an impression of thinness which was undeserved. He had a slight stoop which was unnoticed in the pulpit, but which was very noticeable closer at hand. It was an attitude symbolical of his life-work. He was for ever leaning over his people—he stooped to the world and was conscious of the fact. Mr. Stope's face was long, and his complexion good. He had a slight fair moustache, and long golden-brown hair which was swept back from his forehead but had a trick of reappearing on his face by way of his temples. He wore a double stand-up collar and a little white tie, not unlike that affected by the journeyman undertaker. Whatever might be said to his detriment—and he had a few bitter critics even in his own church—and however his political tendencies might be condemned, he was an attractive personality. There was a kindliness and an intelligence in his eye which was utterly at variance with the drastic uncharity of his worldly views. For Mr. Stope was, in addition to being a moving preacher, a most enthusiastic supporter of the Liberal party.

He, perhaps more than any other, was the hope of Radicalism in the county. Bulshire was strictly Tory. Bulboro' itself a Radical stronghold lying at its

very heart, irradicable, unchangeable and unabashed. There had always been located in the town one strong forceful individual, who had stood a rallying point against the combined attacks of the vested interests of Torydom. That he was inviting the town to return him to Parliament was all to the good up to a point, for he seemed pretty certain to succeed even with the defection of so large a body of the electorate as that which had recently carried dismay to the agent. Yet, in a sense, his parliamentary candidature was a weakness; because the party leaders had a shrewd suspicion that his success at the polls would entail his retirement from active work in Bulboro', and (which was almost as important) from the service of the church. He was an ambitious, though a very sincere, man, and his eyes had turned to a larger sphere of influence and to the virgin field of statesmanship, perhaps. He hoped, as how many others similarly placed, that success at the election would secure for him the larger opportunities which the metropolis offered. There was even the probability that a "call" might be extended to him which would carry with it the pastorship of one of the four great congregations of America. These represented the plums of his profession. There is no suggestion that Mr. Stope was not either a genuine Christian or an earnest reformer; he lived in a period which made little demand upon religious fervour, and was tolerant of self-seeking. He was one of a batch of young Nonconformist ministers who had seen the value of partisanship as a means of securing personal advancement. It is no sin for men who preach the Gospel to be possessed of personal ambition, though he and his friends were at pains to protest to the few shocked Nonconformists who felt that this life, especially in the case of a minister, should be in a sense a painful probation for an idyllic future, that he served religion best by concentrating his attention upon the bodily and material needs of God's creatures. For how might a man be spiritually sweet, if he were sweated by Tory employers, and penned in foul slums by Tory landlords?

As for himself—one must live; even the apostles followed their worldly ambitions up to a point, and might not a minister of the Gospel exercise his influence to God's glory in the worldly atmosphere of the House of Commons?

Might not a young zealot, fired with an enthusiasm for his fellows' welfare, filled with a divine love of humanity which his calling had produced and fostered, be at an advantage in the councils of the nation? There was so much that wanted doing in the world, and in England. So many wrongs to right, so many crying injustices which pressed heavily upon the poor and upon the suffering and upon the helpless, which a man going about his Master's business might rectify with the sheer weight of his righteousness. And it was easier for a parson to enter the precincts of the House of Commons than it was for the rich man to enter heaven.

His pulpit was an ideal platform. Convention did not allow the interruption, the heckling, the denial or the expression of disapproval when views, however drastic and however obnoxious to some of his hearers, were expressed from the floor beneath the sounding-board.

A minister had unique opportunities, and perfectly sincere men engaged in the chapels and churches of England had realized the possibilities which their calling offered to them.

Stope himself was one of the pioneers of the political Church movement. He had gathered into his fold men who were politicians and Christians.

Whether they were politicians first and Christians afterwards is not a matter for discussion, since none but a bigot could dogmatize upon the subject.

It was a powerful testimony to Stope's eloquence that he persuaded men who had no other business in life but the salvation of their souls that the way of salvation lay in the direction of labour, and that that labour was provided by the cause, and for the objects, he represented.

He was a well-educated man—the son of a Lincolnshire farmer who had been well-to-do, and who had left him a competence which had been increased by other legacies to something which was nearly approaching to a fortune.

He was an Oxford graduate, not an unusual circumstance, for the branch of Nonconformity for which he stood offered bigger prizes to the educated classes than the Church into which so many University men found their way. He had the suavity and the good manners which are generally inseparable from the educated classes, a fact which made him not only tolerated but liked by people who would give short shrift to a St. Peter if he ate with his knife.

Now he met Geraldine with a frank smile which lighted up his face and gave to it an expression which was almost angelic. He shook hands cordially with Bexley, and exchanged a few words on the Parliamentary outlook before he came to the business in hand.

"You do not mind my cousin knowing all about this unfortunate business?" asked Geraldine.

"Not at all," smiled Mr. Stope. "It is an unfortunate business all round. You see, Gill is useful to me in two capacities, though it is, of course, as a Christian man that I regard him as most useful. He is really one of Pastor Childe's men, but he is associated with me in a number of ways—Childe and I work together in many of the Christian organizations of Bulboro'. And the awkward thing is," he went on despairingly, "that I am perfectly satisfied in my mind with the justice of Sir John's action. It was a most dreadful thing that Gill did—unpardonable. The man is frenetic and entirely unmanageable. Of course," he went on quickly, "I have a great deal of sympathy with Gill, because I realize something of his sincerity, however mistaken he may be, and I do so want to persuade Sir John to give the man another chance."

The girl looked dubious. "I don't know how successful we are going to be, Mr. Stope," she doubted, "because a more powerful advocate even than I has written to Sir John—Lady Heron Wendall herself."

Mr. Stope murmured something which was complimentary to Lady Beatrice.

"And daddy's point is that he will only reinstate Gill on condition that he undertakes to make a public apology to Lady Beatrice."

"That he will not do, I am afraid," said Stope regretfully; "he is perfectly satisfied in his own mind that he was justified in the action he took."

"That is not your view, of course, Mr. Stope," said Bexley quietly.

Stope shook his head.

"There is nothing that Gill has done in this matter of which I approve," he said. "I thought it was pretty beastly of him to beat the boy in the first place, and though I think the sentence was unnecessarily harsh, still there was a central germ of justice in his punishment. We have to deal with very curious forces in Bulboro'—with people who are good people in every sense of the word, but who are out of touch with the true spirit of Christianity. It is the 'Old Testament Christian' who is the most contradictory, and it is an unfortunate and embarrassing fact that the two books are not absolutely harmonious in the spirit of their teaching. The Mosaic law is incompatible with the exercise of Christian charity to a very great extent, but there are some ingenious souls who have so completely reconciled turning their cheek to the smiter with the eye for an eye' doctrine, that they are able to justify their conduct by both injunctions. Gill is an out-and-out eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' man whom it is almost impossible to argue out of his settled view."

"Why don't you see Dr. Manton?" suggested the girl. Mr. Stope smiled.

"I am afraid Dr. Manton is almost as impossible as Gill," he said dryly. "We tried to approach him on the matter once before. I know it was done rather tactlessly. I had nothing to do with it," he excused himself, "but he might perhaps have been a little more yielding. I am sorry about Manton," he went on thoughtfully. "There is a lot that I greatly admire. But he seems determined to adopt an attitude of passive hostility to the Christian bodies of Bulboro'; at least, that is the general impression."

He stayed for a while talking, and Bexley accompanied him back to the town.

The girl, left alone, had much to occupy her thoughts. There was some real hard work awaiting her as a result of the astonishing meeting of that afternoon; letters to be dictated, plans to be formulated.

But for some reason which she could not explain to herself her enthusiasm for the Cottage Hospital had been a little damped by the unexpected success of the scheme. It was not the failure of the county to respond to her appeal which depressed her, though she realized that had the result been as she anticipated, and had the subscriptions been made up of a large number of small but sympathetic donations, the cause of her depression would have vanished.

She was a little uncomfortable at the thought that she had dragooned Anthony into his munificence, in spite of his protest and in spite of the plausibility of his statement.

Nor was her present state of mind to be traced to the reaction of accomplishment.

She was puzzled, and sought about for an explanation. In her mental travels she came upon Anthony Manton not once but many times, and each vision provoked a little frown, which was not of annoyance, which was not exactly of fear, and which was not wholly of wonder.

She analysed her condition of discontent down to the fact that she was under an obligation to a man whom she had originally started out to dislike, and no sooner had this analysis been completed than she dismissed it as one which for some reason or other she had no desire to perpetuate. It occurred to her that it would be a graceful act upon her part to send him some little souvenir of that meeting, even if it only took the form of a tiny letter of thanks for his generosity.

There was on her desk, in her own little snugery, a large portrait of herself which had recently arrived from London and had passed her critical scrutiny. It showed only her head and shoulders, and the photographer had succeeded in presenting not only the likeness of a beautiful girl, not only something of the colouring of her fair wavy hair and her clear grey eyes, but, too, a hint of the character which lay behind the mask of beauty and was not altogether thrust into the background by the retoucher's art.

She picked it up and removed it from its transparent envelope. It would be rather a theatrical thing to do, to send him the portrait, and an inscription scribbled upon its rough border might be even more theatrical. Yet for some indefinable reason she wanted him to have this picture.

She was all at sea as to the propriety of such an act—she who was an acknowledged authority upon what constituted correctness in social intercourse. She went to her father's study in the hope and the fear that he had returned. In hope, since one half of her demanded support and approval in an act which she told herself might be foolish; in fear, lest he confirmed her in her suspicion of theatricality. He had not returned, however, and she searched the table for an envelope to carry the photograph, a search which

told her to her own surprise that she had already made up her mind as to the course of action she would take.

She compromised on the question of inscription, enclosing a little note instead.

"DEAR DR. MANTON,—I am sending you a picture of myself, not that it may have any particular value, but that you may on some future occasion in recounting to yourself the pleasure you have given to a great number of people—for I suppose we all have in our lives a period of depression when some such flattering reflection is welcome—you may recall the spectre of an embarrassed chairwoman whom you saved from social extinction. I am indeed very very grateful to you."

She signed the letter, after some contemplation, "Yours sincerely ", and no sooner had the photograph been dispatched than she wished most heartily that she had confined herself to a conventional note of thanks.

XIII. INCREASING PAIN

"HOTEL DES ALPES, "CHAMONIX.

"MY DEAR TRUSTY MAN,—Here we are resting at the foot of Mont Blanc, my dear daughter, big-eyed with wonder at the new world which ten pounds' worth of railway tickets have secured for her.

"We stayed for a day or so in Geneva, but the weather was bad, a horrible gloomy mist lay on the lake and a chill damp wind made life intolerable. Yet she was happy enough in the very strangeness of the surroundings, and when in irony, jesting at my own expense, I suggested a motor-boat trip on that terrible lake, she was all glee. Everything pleases her: the quaint chalets, the unusual dress of the peasants, even that ridiculous little horn with which the railway guards are armed are a constant source of bubbling joy.

"It is becoming so real thing to me—this motherhood; I almost glory in what was once a bitter memory. It was a name, a terrible experience then, now it has become something which inspires pride and thankfulness. I have a thousand plans for her future—but I am getting away from my narrative. The prospect of a rheumatic cruise on Lake Lemman filled me with a panic—I 'remembered' that we should see the Alps. So here we are in a big airy suite, with old Mont Blanc, his absurdly smooth head gilded by the rising sun, serenely upraised before me as I write. The Saison d'hiver has not concluded, happily, and I have equipped Mary with the livery of the sport.

"At this moment she is moving very gingerly round the rink on the arm of a fat German skating-master. There are few English people here just now—they come mostly in the summer, so the place is quite unspoilt by tourists. Everybody is most charming—your French gentleman on his holiday is a cheery soul.

"I find the possession of a daughter a very absorbing occupation. More than this, I am humiliated by my profound ignorance, for though the child has gone beyond the age of everlasting interrogation, yet she is eager to learn, and I, alas! am quite incompetent to instruct her. Par exemple—I have invariably accepted the Alps as rather an imposing collection of mountains designed by nature to put puny mankind in its place, with a sense of his own insignificance. Mont Blanc is a lazy old round-headed mountain which has been climbed by divers persons at divers times. But Mary has gone beyond me.

"Do you know the Aiguille Verte? That it is the next highest in the range to Mont Blanc itself, that the Aiguille de la Republique has only been climbed once, and that by the aid of a rope shot across the top by a cross-bow? Mary knows this and has told me to my astonishment. She is so sweetly grave when she tells me such things as these. Her great dark eyes are fixed on me

with a look of interest which almost breaks my heart to see. For you know there were eyes like hers once in this world, eyes that you saw and that I see all the time.

"She speaks French already—is it not extraordinary? My French is horribly English. I can write perfectly, but just as soon as I begin talking there comes into the French listener's face that worried straining look which is eloquent of my terrible pronunciation. Mary has nothing like my vocabulary, but she just says the words she knows so naturally that everybody understands her.

"She speaks kindly of Mr. Gill, though I wince every time she makes a slip and calls him 'father.' Of her own father she seldom speaks. I have given her one of the two photographs which you brought home with you showing him in his tropical uniform, and I have told her how he accepted service under the Congo Government to organize the police in that great stretch of barbarous country. She does not ask inconvenient questions—I do not think she could. Thank God for breed—Henri, as you know, was a son of the Duc d'Avilliers.

"This is a rambling letter, dear doctor man, but I felt constrained to write, even though I had no other excuse than my desire to let you know I think of you with gratitude—and because, perhaps, there is none other in the world with whom I can talk with perfect freedom.

"We shall be here or hereabouts for some time. We sleigh to-day to Argentière to meet the proprietor of Le Planet Hotel, who (so Mary tells me!) is a famous guide.

"Yours very sincerely,

"BEATRICE HERON WENDALL."

Anthony Manton received the letter at breakfast, and it was a coincidence that with the letter Jocks had brought word that Gill was waiting to see the doctor.

"What does he want?" asked Anthony in surprise.

"He did not say, sir," said Jocks, "though I pointed out to him that you never under any circumstances saw patients here—he simply said that he wanted to see you on an urgent matter of business."

"Let him wait in the drawing-room," said Anthony.

He finished his breakfast and locked away his correspondence before he went into the room where Gill waited.

The man was looking white and ill, Anthony thought, but he was in no sense subdued, as his first words went to prove.

"Dr. Manton," he said in his high, harsh voice as Anthony entered the room, "I have come to discuss with you your soul's salvation."

Anthony looked at him thoughtfully and made no reply.

"Though I am persecuted," said the man, "though I am wasted by sickness, I have felt the call of the Saviour, and I have come to wrestle with you in prayer, even as Paul of Tarsus—"

"Mr. Gill," said Anthony quietly, "how do you know that you are competent to convince me that your way is right and my way is wrong? How do you know that I have not as keen a perception of good and evil as you?"

"There is only one way to the Cross," said the other exultantly, "and that is by the most precious blood of the Lord Jesus. 'Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.' The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin.' I come to tell you this, though you are my mortal enemy, though you have hounded me from my occupation, though you have ruined my home and despoiled it of my dear daughter"—his voice broke—"yet because Christ laid it upon me, to deliver you from the bondage of Satan and lead you to One who hath taken the burden of the world, I stand before you a sinner confessed, glorifying my Master."

Still Anthony stood watching him; his keen eyes searching the face of this enthusiast. The illogical, inconsequent outburst, with its hackneyed phraseology, was less interesting to him than the whole attitude of the man. He was transfixed, a being aglow with strange fires.

"Savonarola in corduroys," thought Anthony, and said aloud, remembering the absurdity of arguing with the man:

"Perhaps you would like to know, Mr. Gill, that Mary is very happy."

"Happy!" laughed the man, and threw up his imploring hands to heaven. "Thou God seest me! To serve Thee, O my Lord, I handed the child of my heart to the snare of the harlot and the gilded halls of the wastrel!"

Anthony was amazed. He had never suspected this man of any affection for the girl. Now he saw the anguish on the wasted face, the beads of perspiration which stood on his forehead, and realized something of the intense mental agony which racked him.

But in a second Gill had mastered himself.

"Dr. Manton," he said, quicker than usual, "I have asked my Master to help me in my struggle with the powers which you represent. My God is all-powerful and all-knowing. He is not mocked! He is greater than kings, most potent of Rulers—"

Anthony listened, all patience as the man went on. In his muddled way he had concentrated all the blame for his own misfortune upon that single action which had sent him for a month to Bulboro' Jail. Anthony wondered whether he would have been so embittered had there been prepared for him such a reception as had been offered to Pastor Childe on his release after serving a term of imprisonment for non-payment of rates. The young doctor was without illusions. To whatever cause Gill might attribute his zeal, in whatever divine sources he might see the spring of his inspiration, there was to be found a leaven of vanity, sordid, vulgar, commonplace vanity, in Gill's speech and action. A vanity such as afflicts sinner and saint alike, if they lack the sense of humour and breadth of intelligence to see all round their motives.

It was an absurd waste of time this discussion—one might as well argue with a mountain stream.

The man sought his levels by the nearest way. He obeyed a law that he had created for himself. He saw in Anthony Manton a soul damned almost beyond redemption.

There was no clarity in Gill's view, there was much which was pathetically illogical. Thus, Pastor Childe had suggested that prayer might soften the hard heart of the persecutor, and Mr. Stope, himself an extremist, had hinted that the doctor might be brought to a realization of his unworthiness by arguments more subtle than Gill could advance.

The man was satisfied, however, that Anthony's salvation lay in another way. It could only come as a result of Gill's own efforts. He had visualized the scene of self-abnegation when Anthony would confess himself before God. It is no blasphemy to say that Gill saw God in himself—he was the epitome of a stern and vengeful Being who demanded sacrifice. He thought of God as a wasted man with a beard, consumed with the fires of righteous wrath. Gill held God's power of attorney—you could not disabuse him of that faith.

"But, exactly, what do you want me to do?" asked Anthony. "After all, my sin seems to have been mainly a personal one as between you and me. Are you perfectly satisfied that you are of sufficient importance in the world or out of it to excite God's unjustifiable partisanship?"

Gill drew a long breath.

"Blasphemer!" he rebuked sternly, "our Lord is just and terrible. He is not mocked; whatever a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

"You are an absurd, illogical, unreasonable man," said Anthony, rising from the chair in which he had seated himself, "and I am wasting my time with you. If God were the thing you think He is, He would be contemptible. Years

ago, Mr. Gill," he smiled "there was a very clever Frenchman who said that God created man after His own image—and man returned the compliment. I do not respect your God—He is the least attractive of deities. He is the God of a diseased and unamiable mind."

"O Lord, soften this man's heart," groaned Gill.

"And give you intelligence," said Anthony irritably, as he showed his visitor out.

He was angry with himself that he had displayed any irritation, the more so since an indescribable change had come over him of late, a placidity of view and a larger benevolence of bearing which enabled him to listen with patience to the recital of views which a month or two before would have aroused him to an angry interruption.

He had told himself, with a smile, that he was growing rusty, but as against this, his latest contribution to the literature of tropical medicine had been received with unstinted praise. One medical journal had even detected "an enlargement of view" of Dr. Anthony Manton, to his astonishment.

His life was a very full one. From seven in the morning to nine o'clock at night his time was fully occupied. The demands of Bulboro' citizens were fairly heavy. It became a fashion to call in Dr. Manton, and so far as it was possible to combine a general practice with that of a consultant, he accepted the extra work.

He was above everything an excellent surgeon (for this virtue he was regarded with suspicion by his poorer patients), and seldom went astray in his diagnosis of disease.

His quickness to detect and his readiness to operate for certain diseases brought into being a new catch-phrase which spread from the club to the slums in Bulboro' in an incredibly short space of time.

It was "This won't hurt you—and it will do you a lot of good," and men who invited one another to drink at the club bar repeated the formula with gravity.

Geraldine Brand found herself repeating the words one day at lunch, and Bexley, who was the only other present besides Sir John, laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" she asked quickly. "Have I been guilty of a vulgarism?"

"In a way—everybody is using that sentence in town just now; it is Manton's favourite phrase."

She shivered a little, and Sir John shot a sharp glance in her direction.

"Cold, Jerry?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"No, daddy—only the words suggest—it is rather horrid being a doctor, isn't it?"

Sir John smiled.

"It is rather horrid being Manton just now," he said dryly. "There's a faction organized against him—they stoned his car last night going through The Chad."

"Why?" she asked, startled.

Her father shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't suppose the blackguards know themselves. Gill is at the bottom of the trouble, and he and a few kindred spirits have agreed apparently to put our doctor out of Bulboro'—or to make it so jolly uncomfortable for him that he won't stay."

"I wondered how Manton would get on," said Bexley, nibbling a biscuit reflectively. "You see, he doesn't fit in—he hasn't the suaviter in modo either to settle down amongst us or to make himself agreeable to people who don't count one way or the other. You see, he's a highly educated gentleman with an imagination, and that's an awful handicap to a chap—a simple gentleman can rank himself with his fellows and keep out of the low-born's way except to tip him or order him around, but education brings you just enough into the other fellow's line of vision to enable you to see how badly he is situated and to feel wild that he doesn't help himself out of it in the way which is obvious to everybody except the victim."

"Have you any imagination, Bexley?" asked Sir John. "Yes, Sir John," said Bexley, "I'm a Junior Lord of the Treasury."

Sir John laughed.

"You are almost wasted on the Cabinet," he said. "You always remind me of those adventurous devils one meets in Algeria—by Jove!"

"Have you forgotten an appointment, daddy?" asked the girl.

Sir John shook his head.

"No—but I have been wondering where I had seen a man like Manton before. There was a sergeant of the Foreign Legion I met in Algeria eight years ago—a boyish, pleasant young man who was obviously an Englishman. I met him," said Sir John reminiscantly, "when I was—er—taking a vacation."

Bexley smiled to himself.

"He came to the hotel with a message for the Colonel of the Chasseurs d'Afrique—let me think—yes—he was a young medical man; I remember the Colonel telling me. Now I wonder—"

Bexley nodded.

"That was Manton," he said. "He spent two years in the Foreign Legion."

"Why?" asked the girl in surprise. "I thought only people who had got into trouble joined the Legion."

"Manton didn't get into trouble," smiled Lord Bexley; "but he went in his deliberate way to become acclimatized and to make a man of himself—he told me that in those words when I was on the Congo."

"Tell me some more about him," said Geraldine.

Bexley looked at her strangely, and she felt herself go red and was angry that she had said anything which might suggest that she took more than a passing interest in this uncomfortable doctor. She remembered, too, Bexley's ridiculous question concerning the doctor and herself.

"Please don't be horrid, Bexley," she said severely. "I am interested in this young man, and I have grown so provincial from living in Bulboro' that to pretend any lack of curiosity where Dr. Manton is concerned would be monstrous."

"There is very little to tell about him," Bexley reflected. "He was always a very quiet man, one never got really to the inside of his mind, because he devoted all his time and most of his conversation to malarial-bearing insects. He is an excellent surgeon, rather unusual in a bacteriologist, and he was very popular with the natives. That is all I know about Anthony."

The girl was silent, then:

"Do you think that the explanation he offered for joining the Foreign Legion was quite a true one?" she asked. Bexley raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Why shouldn't it be?"

"But really, don't people"—she hesitated—"don't people join that regiment in—in desperation?"

"I don't quite follow you," said the other.

"She has been reading Ouida," said Sir John, "and scents the story of a young gentleman who kills another young gentleman, and dashes off to the Foreign Legion—falls in love with a vivandiere and is romantically rescued by a young lady garbed in a short skirt and a barrel of coyness."

"Don't be silly, daddy," she protested. "But isn't it a fact that few people join the Foreign Legion unless there is some sinister reason for their enlistment?"

Bexley shook his head.

"I've a dim idea that men do enlist because they have trouble with their parents or are disappointed in love, or something of that sort, but Anthony had no trouble with his parents; his father was very, very fond of him. Old Sir Guy Manton was a brilliant surgeon and very rich, and Anthony went into the Foreign Legion with his full consent. As to being disappointed in love, I cannot imagine Anthony Manton being in love under any circumstances."

"Why not?" she asked.

There was something in her tone which made Bexley stare at her.

"Why not?" he repeated. "Well, he is not a particularly lovable gentleman, is he?"

"I am not taking my point of view," she said quickly. "It is possible that I may not think him very lovable or very bearable, but I am only seeking to get a man's view of another man. Why is he not lovable? Tell me."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, tell her something," said Sir John impatiently. "And do in future, Jerry, keep your psychological discussions until I am out of the way. If there is one thing I loathe more than another," he went on, "it is to be an unwilling witness, and an unwilling audience at these motive-vivisections. It always gives me an uncomfortable feeling that people discuss me in exactly the same way."

The girl smiled faintly, but her attention was on Bexley. For some reason or other she wanted information on a subject which had occupied her mind of late. Bexley's reference to Anthony's unpopularity was a cause for worry. Anthony Manton was nothing whatever to her; she could not regard herself as being even remotely the keeper of his conscience, but she had sought very fairly and very disinterestedly, so she told herself, for an explanation, and could find no other reason for the scowls which met his grey motor-car as it passed through The Chad, for the imprecations which were hurled after him as he walked in the streets of Bulboro', than the fact that he had identified himself as one who was actively opposed to Bulboro's main interest.

Even the least godly of the town's inhabitants took a pride in the religious spirit of the place. There is on record the notorious instance of Montague Silver, a well-known and indescribable sinner, who had canvassed every public-house in the neighbouring town of Merton, challenging all and sundry who might question Bulboro's sanctity to fight him on the public highway.

That Silver was drunk only emphasizes more strongly how and to what strange lengths spiritual pride may go. Silver, that drunken printer, had profited by his championship, spiritually and materially, for his conversion, no less than his truculence, had proved one of the sensations of a year in which wandering revivalists had wrought many miracles in Bulboro'.

Anthony had offended the town in its most tender spot, and though the Bulboro' folk, and especially the poorer classes, came to him for succour, and though his work was rather on the increase than otherwise, and his reputation as a skilled surgeon had grown from day to day, there existed undoubtedly a strong feeling of antagonism against him.

Anthony had sent the girl a charming little note in acknowledgment of her portrait, and there seemed a possibility that they would become more closely acquainted, though in a manner which Geraldine of all people did not desire.

On the morning of the conversation, there had occurred something which had possibly done much to keep the talk in the direction of Pilgrim's Rest and its unlovable occupant!

Geraldine had risen at her ordinary time, had her bath, and was sitting before her glass arranging her hair with the assistance of her maid, when she had been attacked with a pain of extraordinary poignancy, a pain which was so sudden, so unexpected, that for a moment she thought she was stabbed in the side. The maid saw the girl's face go suddenly pale, and had caught her in her arms as she fell backward swooning. Worse than this, she had, after she had laid her young mistress on the bed, gone for Sir John Brand, and Sir John had come in his dressing-gown in a flurry of anxiety.

"It is nothing," said the girl. She was smiling and sitting up when he arrived. "Nothing more romantic than a growing-pain."

"You look pretty rotten, Jerry," said Sir John fretfully; "you had better see the doctor."

"Which doctor?" she asked sharply.

"Anthony Manton."

"I will do nothing of the kind, daddy," she said firmly. She was in an unaccountable panic. "I beg of you not to send for him—if you do I shall be

very ill. There is no more the matter with me than there is with your own dear, silly self."

Sir John would have overridden his daughter's wishes, but she had made such a quick recovery, and he hated anything that had the appearance of unnecessary fuss.

Nevertheless, whilst the girl was working out the trouble of the doctor's unpopularity, Sir John made his way to Pilgrim's Rest, and was fortunate enough to find Anthony at home.

"It is probably nothing," said Anthony after Sir John had given an entirely unsatisfactory and inaccurate description of his daughter's symptoms. "It sounds very much like prosaic indigestion, but I will not speak to her about it. I quite understand her desire to have some other doctor," he smiled.

"It isn't that," said Sir John hurriedly. "My dear chap, she never suggested anybody else."

"Still, I think an older man would be better," said Anthony. "Get Grimthorpe; he is fairly sound, and he is old enough to inspire confidence in Miss Brand."

"What do you think it is?" asked Sir John anxiously. Anthony smiled.

"It is most difficult to give you any opinion," he said, "but I should imagine it was just what Miss Brand suggested, a sharp attack of indigestion, which will, in all probability, pass off without leaving any consequences."

Unfortunately, Jerry had been vague as to the location of the pain, and there was very little to go upon, but what Sir John had described did not in any way alarm the doctor.

"I shall be going over to Paris in a day or two," said Anthony, by way of making conversation and changing the subject from Geraldine's indisposition, "and Grimthorpe is looking after my practice while I am away."

"What is this—a holiday jaunt?"

Anthony smiled.

"No, not exactly," he said dryly; "there is a rather interesting fly which has been sent from the Congo to the College of Medicine, and which I am anxious to see; also I am going to meet Lady Heron Wendall, who is coming back from Chamonix. She is going on to Nice, but she has asked me to meet her at Paris."

"What is happening there?" asked Sir John interestedly. "I hear no news whatever except that Heron Wendall is leaving the diocese and another chap is taking his place."

"That is by no means certain as far as I can gather," replied Anthony. "The bishop is not at all keen on allowing Heron Wendall to go. You see, the man who takes this living has a pretty tough row to hoe, and unless Heron Wendall is going to retire from the Church altogether, I do not see exactly what advantage there is in him leaving Bulboro'. England is a very small place, and these stories get round."

"You are taking almost an enthusiastic interest in the Church," said Sir John, with a smile.

"I suppose I am," said Anthony thoughtfully, "but if one does not take an interest in some church or other in Bulboro', and if one does not also play golf, there seems to be no reason in the world why one should be alive."

Sir John was half-way down the hill when Anthony ran after him bareheaded.

"If there is any more trouble with Miss Brand," he said, "I wish you would let me know."

"You mean let Dr. Grimthorpe know?" asked Sir John. Anthony shook his head.

"No," he said, "let me know also, please."

"You are a rum devil," said Sir John.

"Am I not?" replied Anthony innocently; and Sir John noted with amusement that there was a little more colour in his face than the east wind or the exercise of running twenty yards could excuse.

XIV. A POSTCARD FROM PARIS

In Pembridge Street, Bulboro', there dwelt Montague Silver. There are people who say that Monty was of a faith that gathered on Saturday morning in a little Synagogue built by Ambrose Cohen on one corner of his town estate. But as to this Mr. Cohen himself was doubtful. There were Silvers and Montagues—who had no trace of Hebraic blood in their veins. And certainly there was nothing about Montague Silver himself to suggest that he had descended from Jewish stock. He was a Very short man, and at one time had been immensely fat. Now, however, that distressing affliction had been removed from him; not without some unhappy consequence to his personal appearance.

He was a printer in a fair way of business, but there was a time when Montague had been a reproach to the town of Bulboro', when his little printing plant worked secretly in the night to produce illegal lottery tickets for Continental firms, football coupons for bookmakers who were situated in Flushing, and when, too, there had in fact been no illegal work which a printer might not do that he had not done for profit.

Twice he had been raided by the police and heavily fined, but he continued his guilty way with a cynical disregard for the feelings of his shocked and outraged fellow-citizens.

This was not his only drawback in the eyes of respectable people, for Montague Silver was a notorious bibber of wine, or to be more exact, if less poetical, of four-ale. And in his cups he was, though small of stature, a terrible man, a breaker of windows on The Chad, a challenger of tall policemen, and a loud and strident offender possessed of a vocabulary which was neither wholesome nor gentle.

This was years ago, before the revival meetings, when there had come to the town a most fiery young man with a mop of hair and a silvery tongue who had produced spiritual earthquakes.

Not the least of his conquests had been Montague, who responded alike to the eloquence of the revivalist and to the solicitations of those customers whom he did not wish to offend, for he had a legitimate business besides that from which he drew a large portion of his income.

He had paid a visit to the chapel, and was miraculously converted. Yet his conversion was not an immediate one. It is on record that he negotiated for the printing of at least three Christian societies, that he secured the private orders of a number of influential Wesleyans, and that he did obtain fairly adequate compensation for the Continental trade he must necessarily abandon before he came to a true condition of penitence. This is not told against the religious bodies which helped the man to a more sober and a more commendable life, rather is it told against Montague Silver, who above all things was a business man.

It was said of him that he was a humbug; probably the description was justified. At any rate, if he was a humbug he was a good craftsman, and there is no reason in the world why he should not have had a large share of Bulboro's printing, though necessarily the Herald, with its up-to-date plant, secured the bulk of the orders that were going. The Herald devoted columns to all the churches, irrespective of creed, and artfully gave them alphabetical preference, thus securing a large share of business from saint and sinner alike.

There was quite enough remaining, however, to keep Mr. Montague Silver very busy. He picked up more than the unconsidered trifles, and on more occasions than one, the Herald had fought strenuously in competition for some of the orders Montague had secured. If Montague Silver's tenders were higher, there was the indisputable fact that he was of, and in, many of the movements to the furtherance of which printing was required. That his shiny bald head was to be seen just topping the pew at their Sunday services, and that high above the pleasant rumble of the singing congregation of the Baptist Church might be heard the shrill falsetto of one who had gained no little reputation in the old days for his rendering of "White Wings."

He was sitting in his shop on a Saturday afternoon reading the Bulboro' Herald column of advertisements relating to its plant and its facilities for carrying out of printing work in the most prompt and effective manner, and was reading it, moreover, with a most unchristian-like sneer upon his creased face, when Gill called upon him. Montague folded up the paper and rose.

"How do you do, brother Gill?" he asked politely. He had a harsh voice, the result of overmuch indulgence. It had that peculiar husky quality to which it was pleasant to listen. There was in his attitude a bland and open acknowledgment of his former sins. He would speak of his disreputable past both in private and in public (for he was one of the Street League) without shame and with something of enjoyment. Whatever pride he might have in his sinless present seemed to be eclipsed by the improper pride he had in his unrepentant past. The one sorrow which religion had brought to him was to be found in the necessity—since the necessity apparently existed—for donning a collar and a tie. Mr. Silver said that during the greater portion of his forty-five years of vice he had never worn a collar except on the occasion of his wife's funeral, a day which he always looked back upon with resentment for that reason.

Indeed, the memory of that rasping edge about his ears had outlived the recollection of the faded woman who had suffered matrimony at his hands.

"I want to see you," said Gill calmly, "on a matter of business."

Monty looked at him over his glasses.

"To see me, brother Gill," he said in mild surprise.

Was it the printing account of the Brotherhood, or was it the possibly excessive bill which he had put in to cover the cost of production of a wholly unnecessary balance sheet issued by the Street League, which had brought this ominous visitation?

Apparently it was neither, for Gill made no reference to the exorbitant charges, and the pricking conscience of Mr. Monty Silver was soothed.

"Can I see you privately?" asked Gill.

His manner of talking was a little brusque. He had no kindness even to those outside his own family; a dour, ungenial man, he excited no feeling of friendliness even amongst the men who respected him for the sincerity of his opinions. To Montague Silver he was especially obnoxious, yet the converted printer lived in some fear of the man who had been more than any other responsible for his discovery of grace.

There were passages in Silver's life which in a moment of contrition he had confided to Gill, and which in a less chastened moment he had regretted, that placed him to some extent in the other's power. Gill knew too much, and was not above implying that he had not forgotten all that he had learnt.

"Certainly, you can see me privately," said Mr. Silver courteously, and led the way to his inner parlour. He lived alone, an old woman tending to his needs in the morning and cleaning up the two rooms which formed his living apartments. The little back parlour was cosily furnished, for Montague had carried with him to his new life something of his old taste for comfort.

Gill closed the door himself, and walking to the little door which communicated with the kitchen, opened it and looked out.

"There is nobody there," said Mr. Silver, rather surprised.

It was reminiscent of the old days, when the agents of the Continental bookmakers came to make secret arrangements for their printing, and when every footstep which passed the closed door of the shop had brought a silence to the conspirators. Gill walked slowly back and stood by the table, looking down at Mr. Silver, for the printer never knelt when he could stand, or stood when it was possible to sit.

"My brother," said Gill with that sharp, acid brusqueness of his, "in the days of long ago, before you found salvation, you did many things and took many risks for the devil."

"That is quite true, brother," agreed Mr. Silver cheerfully. He never thought unkindly of the devil, who was associated in his mind with many happy

days and nights, and his mental attitude to the enemy of mankind was of that respectful admiration which the petty thief reserves for the successful robber.

"Now I want you to take a risk for the salvation of a human soul, for the cleansing of one impure of heart, and for the glory of our God."

Mr. Silver looked at him narrowly. His mind ran to print naturally, and he saw only in the outburst the prospect of a new commission. "What do you mean?" he said, without seeing anything of the kind.

Gill did not explain for a moment what he meant, then:

"All the powers of darkness are arrayed against the efforts of any single man who desires only the salvation and the upraising of sinful humanity. I have sent a number of letters to the Editor of the Herald—letters which it would have been well for him to have printed," he said.

"I see," said Mr. Silver, with a wise inclination of his head.

Gill paced the apartment restlessly, his nervous hands clasping and unclasping. "What has been told to the few must be told to the many. God breaks the hardened heart and brings it in sorrow to righteousness."

"Exactly," said Montague, beginning to see daylight. "Something in long primer, Mr. Gill?" he ventured. "Something on that new blue paper we have got? A good idea, I think. White tracts ain't much use—I'm always tellin' our dear friends: what you want is a bit of colour."

He was vague as to what Gill was driving at, but had smelt a tract. He had made a bid for the printing of tracts, but the local societies had found it easier to buy their literature from headquarters. It was much cheaper, and they were relieved from the responsibility of authorship.

"I have got a range of new blocks," he went on; "poor boys crying in the snow, little gels feeding the birds, angels hovering over beds, a regular job line I bought in London last year. Or," he went on slowly, pursuing a pleasant thought, "something about the devil. I have got one or two devils that have never been seen before. There ain't enough devils nowadays," said Mr. Silver, shaking his head mournfully. "When I was a boy you couldn't get away from him; now you can hardly see him mentioned. I've got a two-colour devil that I bought from Hatuns, red an' black; very effective, too. It doesn't cost much more to have a bit of colour on a tract, an' if you have colour you can always run a red border round it which makes it ever so much more genteel," he suggested enticingly.

Mr. Gill shook his head.

"This is not a tract," he said; "it is a great revelation, a soul-searing, heart-breaking revelation."

He sat down, and, talking rapidly, he sketched the story of Lady Heron Wendall's sin. He produced copies of the letters he had addressed to the Editor of the Bulboro' Herald, and Mr. Silver took them reluctantly, adjusted his glasses, and read them.

When he had finished he folded the letters up and handed them back.

"No," he said, "this ain't a tract, this is libel."

"Well, what of it?" demanded Gill impatiently. "What do I care what the world may call it? What do I care what punishment may come to me so long as I can only bring a hardened soul to the seat of grace?"

"Don't talk about the punishment that would come to you," begged Mr. Silver. "They wouldn't touch you—they'd pinch me!"

"You have taken this risk before," said Gill severely. "You have done things which are vile and abominable in the eyes of God, and you have done these to serve the creatures of the devil."

"I know," said Mr. Silver convincingly; "but that was before I found grace."

He said this with emphasis and meaning. "Before I found grace," he repeated. "Now I know what's right and what's wrong—thanks be!" And he raised his eyes to the ceiling.

"No," he went on regretfully, "I couldn't print this for you, Mr. Gill; it would be against my conscience and against the law; and I should get nothing out of it anyway. After all," he said, "a man has got to live."

"Four years ago, Mr. Silver," said Gill sternly, "you did something which was more risky than this."

Mr. Silver wriggled uncomfortably.

"Don't go throwing that up into my face, brother; that was before I had realized the error of my ways."

"A receiver of stolen property, my brother," said Gill grimly, "may well see the error of his ways."

Mr. Silver looked at him through his narrow eyes, and Gill was at that moment nearer to being violently assaulted than he had ever been in his life.

The printer had been a man of some pugilistic quality before the days of his conversion, and he was no less formidable now.

But with an effort he restrained his natural desire to express his sense of resentment in the easiest way.

Gill stood for business—and business was business. "Leave them with me," he grumbled at last. "I suppose I shall have to do it for you."

He took the letters from Gill and put them away in a cupboard.

How would it do to shove in a couple of blanks in place of the name? "he suggested as a last endeavour to relieve himself of responsibility.

"That letter must be published as it is," said Gill sternly, "every name, including mine; I will stand the consequences."

"You don't want devils or anything on it?" asked Mr. Silver, delicately satirical, "or an old man resting on a heap of stones and a young gel giving him food, nothing about faith' or hope or charity?"

Mr. Gill did not wait to continue the discussion, and with a curt nod he made his way out through the shop into the street, and Silver followed him to the door and stood gazing after him as he made his way along the narrow street which led to The Chad.

"You'll be a nice bloke to have knocking about in heaven, you will," said Mr. Silver to the retreating figure, and added, "I don't think!"

But Gill was superior to human judgment; he had found a mission in life for himself, and his release from regular employment gave him greater opportunity for carrying his plans into, effect.

He had been a frugal man and had saved money during the many years he had been employed on Sir John Brand's estate, and there was no fear as to his immediate future. Moreover, his friends and admirers gave him odd jobs to do which ensured a steady if smaller income than that to which he had been accustomed. He had money in the Post Office Savings Bank, and money invested in a building society. He had been frugal to a point of meanness, and was one of those fortunate men who pride themselves upon their justice, meaning that he measured exactly the favours he bestowed and took for granted the charity he received.

Anthony Manton, who was utterly oblivious of the comparative prosperity of Gill, had been considerably exercised when he learned that Sir John had dismissed the man from his employment. He felt indirectly responsible for Gill's future, and whilst he did not feel called upon to offer advice to Sir John concerning the man's employment, he used his personal influence in the direction of securing Gill adequate employment.

The day before he left London for Paris he called Jocks into his study and informed him of his intended trip.

"I shall only be away for a few days," he said, "and there are one or two things that I would like you to do in my absence. The side gate leading on to the road needs a new panel, some of the windows could do with repair, and there are half a dozen other jobs need doing which I have. Whilst I am away I want you to get the man Gill and let him do as much as he can in four days."

"That doorway in your study, sir, ought to be made draught-proof," suggested Jocks. "Dr. Manton used to complain about it. Of course he didn't use it very much—he found it rather inconvenient. My own opinion, sir," ventured Jocks, "is that it would be as well to have that side door fastened up altogether, because you don't use it."

"When I want," began Anthony, and then checked himself. "I do not quite agree with you," he said.

It was not exactly what he had intended saying, but his training was bearing fruit, and he smiled as he used the amended phrase.

"Do you intend taking Ahmet, sir?" asked Jocks respectfully.

"No, he can stay, if you promise me that you will not allow the people of Bulboro' to convert him."

Mr. Jocks did not even smile.

"That is outside my province, sir."

Anthony's brows met, but again he stopped the sharp word that rose to his lips. "I will confine myself to your province," he said humorously, "which in this case is the scheme of repairs necessary to the house. My address, by the way, will be the Hôtel Gerible."

Jocks made a laborious note.

"And I shall be back on Saturday afternoon. Have you ever been to Paris, Jocks?" he asked as he settled himself to his desk.

"Me, sir?" said Mr. Jocks, a little shocked. "No, sir, I have never been to Paris."

His disclaimer was very definite, and he spoke with the air of one who was rather grateful than otherwise that he had not endured such an experience. Anthony looked up quickly with a smile on his face.

"You seem to be rather congratulating yourself, Jocks, that you have missed that adventure?"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Jocks, drawing a long breath. "Paris by all accounts is not a place where a God-fearing man can live. There are certain things about Paris which I will not pollute your ear with, sir."

"Do not worry," said Anthony dryly. "It takes a great deal to pollute the ears of a medical man. I presume you mean that Paris is wholly given over to the pursuit of pleasure of a dubious kind."

"So I understand, sir," said Mr. Jocks gravely. "I have read several books on the subject, such as the Night Life of Paris, and one or two other books which I am happy to say I destroyed."

"It is very curious," said Anthony half to himself.

Mr. Jocks would have liked to have known what was so curious. He had an impression that his employer had formed an opinion of him which was not exactly complimentary. In this he was right. Jocks was a member of a social grade which had strict and settled views upon such matters as national characteristics.

He knew, of course, that the Parisians were immensely immoral, that Germans loved sausages, and that Italians ate macaroni. He also was aware of the fact that the Spaniards were very fiery people who killed one another on the slightest pretext, and that Russia was a land where people threw bombs, and were sent to Siberia. For the rest, the world was made up of India, the Colonies, and America, the latter being a place whither people fled when they desired to avoid arrest; such an experience having happened to Mr. Jocks in his own family, though he never discussed it for reasons of family pride.

The French woman, to Mr. Jocks, was an object of curiosity. He regarded her as immoral from birth, with lax views on the sanctity of marriage if she ever got married at all.

Mr. Jocks had on one occasion expressed surprise that such people should ever go through the formality of a wedding service. And he was only one of many thousands who, despite the broadening and enlightening influence of popular education and the subsequent growth of new forms of healthy literature, held similar views.

Anthony left for Paris the next morning, and found to his surprise that he had a pleasant travelling companion, as far as London at any rate, in Mr. Ambrose Cohen, who was paying one of his periodical visits to town.

They stood on the platform chatting until the train came in, and then had the good fortune to find a first-class smoker to themselves.

"I am following your progress with a great deal of interest," said the little man, those dancing eyes of his watching the other with apparent amusement. "You have succeeded more completely than I could have imagined in setting Bulboro' by the ears."

Anthony smiled ruefully.

"It is very curious, isn't it? And I am an individual who hates publicity, and loathes anything in the nature of a sensation."

"You have not been very tactful," said the other, shaking his head; "and I rather fancy a little self-righteous."

Anthony looked at the little man in amazement. If the other had told him that he had been intemperate of habit and uncleanly of life, Anthony could not have been more astounded.

"Self-righteous?" he repeated incredulously.

"I think that is the word I should apply," said Ambrose thoughtfully. "I cannot think of another which is quite as inoffensive."

"Do you mean to suggest that I have been rather a prig—don't mind saying so," said Anthony with a smile. "I am taking quite a wholesome interest in myself."

"A healthy sign," said Ambrose. "You see, there is always a danger that a man who has seen much more of the world than his less fortunate fellows will get things almost as much out of proportion as the stay-at-home clod, who never stirs outside the town's limits. That is the point of view which I think will rather appeal to you as a scientific man."

"I wonder," said Anthony slowly. "Of course, I took it for granted that all these people were on another plane to myself—yes, and that plane was a lower one."

Ambrose laughed.

"Perhaps there are no lower planes," suggested Cohen. "That all the planes are set without regard to priority. I never think of 'planes' when I am sizing up the creatures of the world, but rather of that big filing cabinet in my study. It is filled with hundreds of folders, none of which have priority of importance, but each of which contains some more or less important factor in my everyday life. It would be absurd for the contents of one envelope to be contemptuous of the contents of another—absurd and a little pitiable."

"You think I am a little too keen on the exclusiveness of my folder?" asked Anthony, interested, and the other nodded.

Anthony felt just a little irritated.

"I rather like your lecture, Cohen," he said. "Considering that you were my first guide to the eccentricities of Bulboro'."

"I told you to keep yourself away from the churches," said Ambrose, with that little laugh of his, "instead of which you went along and dumped yourself into the middle of every religious controversy which existed. You are the worst pupil I ever had," he said admiringly; "and certainly the best doctor. Where do you go now?"

He changed the conversation, seeing that Anthony was not in the mood for anything that bore the slightest resemblance to criticism.

"I am going over to Paris," said the doctor. "I suppose you are not journeying my way?"

"I shall come with you as far as Calais," said Ambrose. "I am going on to Liège and from there to Amsterdam. Our friend Gill is somewhat interested in foreign cities, by the way," he said as the thought occurred to him suddenly, "he came up to see me the other day, and asked in a very mysterious way for exact information as to how one might get to Chamonix."

Anthony's brows met in a frown.

"I hope he is not going to bother those people," he said.

"I don't know which people you are referring to," said Ambrose; "but if it is Lady Heron Wendall I should imagine from one or two remarks he dropped that that was his intention. However," smiled the little Hebrew, "I think it very unlikely that he will go; he was simply appalled when I took down my Bradshaw and discovered the fare."

Anthony nodded.

"I doubt very much whether he will leave England," he said. "It is perhaps as well that he does not know that Lady Heron Wendall is in Paris."

It happened, however, that on that very afternoon Mary Heron Wendall, elated at the unusual experience of an ascent to the second stage of the Eiffel Tower, sent off a number of postcards to people to announce her accomplishment. One of these cards, with the Eiffel Tower postmark, revealing the great engineering achievement on one side, was addressed to Dr. Anthony Manton; and John Gill, engaged in fitting the doctor's study door, recognized the handwriting, and caught a glimpse of the picture on the card. Even he, no less than Mr. Jocks, knew the Eiffel Tower was in Paris, and that Paris was, according to all the railway advertisements, within seven hours' journey from London.

XV. MISSING DOCUMENTS

There is an hour of the day when Paris hesitates between the red and gold of the sky, and the twinkle of lights in her streets, as though in doubt which form of illumination would serve her best.

Then it is that the city is at her darkest; her Opera House like a squat giant wedding-cake, all prickly with trimmings, sits in placid gloom against the sunset, and offers no solution to the problem which Paris must worry out for herself.

Darker grows the sky, there is a deeper gold, more livid red in the west, and a richer blue in the east, and Paris decides hurriedly.

Suddenly from one end of the city to the other the street lights dawn in a brilliant and unexpected blaze.

Vast yellow lights, cold white lights, lights that twinkle or blaze furiously in electric signs, lights that glow sedately in magazin windows, all come flickering and glowing together. Even the Rue de la Paix cannot show so gorgeous a rope of brilliants as that which bedecks the street itself. The whole body of the congregation of the Senate, brilliant in another sense, must stand abashed before the sedate congress of illumination which throngs the Place de la Concorde.

Alone, and punctuating the irresponsible glitter of light yellow and warm red, are the soft green lamps showing the Arrêt Stations, where the buses will stop on demand.

A soothing light, thought Anthony, as he strolled from the Scrib and turned into the Boulevard des Italiens smoking a reflective cigar. Paris was at its best at this hour, for there is no garish blaze of arc-lamps that other cities know. The lights of Paris are soft and harmonious, and before all things immensely soothing. He walked slowly, for he had plenty of time before him, and at every few yards he found something to hold his attention. He had spent the afternoon profitably at the College of Medicines, where he enjoyed some little fame, making microscopic examinations of a new variety of tsetse fly which an exploring savant had found on the Sangar Rides, and to the satisfaction of a good dinner was added that of a good conscience at a day well spent.

Lady Heron Wendall had arrived that afternoon, and was staying at the Bristol, and he had telephoned making an appointment with her. He found the night cold; he made this discovery when he was taking his coffee outside the De la Paix, and walked back to the hotel for his overcoat and found a telegram was waiting for him; it had arrived after he had left the hotel. He opened the blue envelope, expecting to read an inquiry from his locum tenens. He read the wire and jumped.

It was dated Bulboro', and had been handed in at six o'clock. "I hope you will enjoy your holiday. Will you please keep in touch with us if you leave Paris?"

It was signed "Geraldine Brand."

He read the telegram again. It was the most unexpected thing that had ever happened to him in his life. Why Geraldine Brand should take the trouble to wire him he could not understand, and why he should keep in touch with her was no less beyond his comprehension.

She had procured his address from Jocks, he gathered. But why? Here was food for thought—a little mystery which defied his unravelling.

He put the slip in his pocket and went out again, and making his way across the road to the Rue de la Paix, walked slowly down to the Bristol.

The Bristol is one of the most sedate of the Parisian hotels. It stands in the Place Vendôme, and is a popular hostelry with members of the British aristocracy.

Mary had gone to bed when he arrived. Lady Heron Wendall received him in her sitting-room.

"It is awfully good of you to come," she said, shaking hands warmly. "It is unpardonable of me to bring you here, but there are so many things I want to talk to you about, and I know nobody else in Bulboro', no, no." She shook her head laughingly. "There is really nobody else with whom I could discuss them."

Edward had seen the bishop apparently, and the bishop had advised a long holiday for both Edward and his wife, and a return to Bulboro' at its conclusion. To this course Edward had agreed for many reasons, not the least of which had been furnished by the sympathy which had been extended to him by the county.

"He is a wonderful man, really," she mused. "He has a whole reservoir of loving kindness underneath that curious manner of his which has so irritated me for fourteen years."

She smiled at Anthony.

"I can say that to you because you will understand," she added. "I suggested that he should go back alone," she went on, "but he very properly refused, and it was rather selfish of me to suggest that course, because it would have made people talk. At any rate, he will be alone for six months, and the separation will do neither of us any great harm."

Lady Heron Wendall had the trick of retaining an impression of youthful freshness, and now as Anthony saw her in the black chiffon velvet gown, with its little edging of skunk, and its low-cut bodice, he smiled at the thought that this was the mother of a girl of sixteen. She looked twenty-five, and not a day older. Care had passed her over, and if the cheeks had sunk a little it only created that sense of ethereal and delicate beauty which was an attraction rather than a reproach.

She had a way of gesticulating which he had often noticed before; her hands were eloquent of her thoughts when she was easy in her mind as to the friendliness of her audience.

All the drawl and the fine lady air had dropped away from her; she was a very human and lovable woman, Anthony thought.

"There is one other thing I want to speak about," she said; "and that perhaps the most important," she smiled. "You remember you gave me this key to go to a cupboard in your study."

He nodded.

"I have only availed myself once of the privilege—probably you are unaware that I went even once. I took the box out, but I could not endure the strain of a very complete examination."

Her voice quivered a little, then she was silent. After a while she recovered her self-control.

"There are a number of letters there, as you know, and two little diaries in which he speaks of me. I intended taking them away, but I left Bulboro' in such a hurry that I had not time, and I want you to be so kind, Anthony Manton, to send them to me."

"With all the pleasure in life," said Anthony in surprise. "If you had written I should have been most happy—"

"I know," she said hastily. "I have been very, very selfish to send for you."

"Not at all," he said laughingly. "I am glad of the opportunity to get away from Bulboro'."

"Somehow I wanted an excuse for seeing you. Isn't that a selfish confession?"

"It is a very flattering one," he said, with his quiet smile. "I must confess I have enjoyed the rush across England to France, and I have no regrets, and if at any other time," he said, with mock earnestness, "you can find an excuse for sending me into the wilds of Switzerland or to the Black Forest or to Paris even, I shall be ever your most devoted and obliging servant."

They chatted about the people of Bulboro' for some time.

"I suppose you never see our friend, Jerry?" she asked.

"I have seen her pretty frequently," he said, and was on the point of telling her about the telegram he had received when something stopped him. He could not even then account for his reticence in the matter, only he was satisfied that she would rather it remained a secret between themselves.

There was a delicious little sense of intimacy in preserving that secret. He felt rather than knew that Jerry had sent it on an impulse of the moment; he had analysed her character so far as to know that such a course would be quite consistent with her erratic temperament.

Curiously enough, it did not occur to him at that moment that the girl might have sent a telegram for no other reason than because he had played a very prominent part in the creation of the new Bulboro' women's hospital, and that, as chairwoman of the committee controlling its destinies, she would necessarily wish to keep in touch with the largest subscriber.

It is something more than a coincidence that even Geraldine Brand had not thought of that explanation to be put upon her telegram.

"They will have to be awfully careful with Jerry," said Lady Heron Wendall thoughtfully. She is wild, and she will take a great deal of training."

"I suppose Sir John is sufficiently man of the world to be able to keep her in good shape?"

Lady Beatrice shook her head.

"I suspect these men of the world; their worldliness is purely selfish. They think only of themselves, and they very often find it impossible to imagine a crisis in some other person's affairs, particularly if that other person is a woman."

"But I thought Sir John was a—" Anthony hesitated.

She laughed.

"He is, indeed," she said dryly; "but that does not mean that he knows how women feel. Of course, Jerry is a very wise little bird, and is pretty sure to make a good match. The men adore her. Don't you find yourself in that category?" she inquired.

"I am sorry if my reply disappoints you," he laughed; "but so far I have not reached farther along the road towards adoration than a wholesome respect for her powers of organization," and he told Lady Beatrice about the

women's hospital, brushing over such part as he had played with a vague reference to the terms of his uncle's will.

"It is curious that she never wrote to me about that, but possibly there are letters waiting at Nice for me—you see, I did not tell anybody I was coming to Paris."

There was a little pause.

"Who is the fortunate man?" asked Anthony after a while.

"The fortunate man." She raised her eyebrows. "You are speaking of Jerry. There is no fortunate man, so far as I know. They all consider themselves fortunate to be admitted into the charmed circle of her favour."

"Perhaps, Bexley?"

She knit her brows and pursed her lips.

"No, I don't think Bexley," she said after a while. "Bexley would bore Jerry to tears. I don't think there is anybody, doctor," she said gaily. "The field is open for you."

"People are always suggesting impossible things to me," he laughed. "Ambrose Cohen wants me to stand for Parliament as a Unionist candidate."

"Why don't you?" she asked.

"Because Parliament would bore me as much as Bexley would bore Miss Brand," he said. "Parliament is a tremendous occupation for an idle man—but I am not an idle man."

He made no further reference to Geraldine and her matrimonial prospects. He had a feeling that it was rather a delicate subject to pursue, though why he should think so he could not for the life of him understand. Also reference to Geraldine's multifarious lovers had unaccountably annoyed him. Later in the evening, when he was getting into his pyjamas in the narrow space which the wagon-lit apartment afforded him, he wondered why the question of Geraldine Brand and her lovers should allow of anything more than the faintest interest in so scientific minded a person as himself.

"I suppose it is the narrowing influence of Bulboro'," he complained to himself as he sat on the edge of his bed and lit his final pipe. Bulboro' was making him domestic, was implanting in him all the characteristics of a confirmed gossip. He was getting provincial in this one sense. "Blow Bulboro'!" he said as he turned over on his pillow and went to sleep.

He had expected to be absent for three days, for it had occurred to him from the urgent character of Lady Heron Wendall's wire that she would need his

services for that time at least. But she had shown no disposition to detain him, and he had welcomed rather than otherwise the excuse for returning to London.

London offered a thousand amusements and a thousand attractions, but he heeded neither. A more important inducement to him to tarry was the fact that he had given instructions for certain renovations and repairs to be made in his absence, repairs which would not be completed if he returned at once, and since the presence of workmen in the house would seriously interfere with his comfort, he decided to stay for a couple of days in London, and put in the time usefully at one of the laboratories of the Tropical School of Medicine.

He notified Jocks as to his change of address and plans and gave himself over for two days to the pursuit of a small and virulent microbe who bore a name disproportionate to its size.

He arrived back in Bulboro' in the afternoon of the fourth day and was welcomed correctly by Mr. Jocks.

"Nothing has happened, sir," said Jocks. "All your instructions have been carried out. Mr. Gill was here for two days, but the third day he did not turn up, so I got another man to finish the work."

"Didn't turn up," said Anthony in surprise. "Is he ill?"

"No, sir," said Jocks. "I have seen him in the town, and he has also addressed a meeting last night."

"He came, then?" asked Anthony, as he busied himself with the accumulation of correspondence at the desk.

"Yes, sir," said Jocks. "He came without any hesitation; I must confess that I did not expect he would, knowing his feelings about you, but he accepted the offer I made him, and has done a lot of work. He fixed this door"—he pointed to the door—"he has mended the old greenhouse, and has put a new step to the kitchen."

"You need not bother to give me a detailed list," said Anthony, "as long as his work was satisfactory. Has he been paid?"

"No, sir, he never came to be paid."

"Very good," said Anthony, and with a nod dismissed the butler. He was in the midst of his work when Lady Heron Wendall's commission occurred to him. He took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and going to the safe at the side of the fire-place, unlocked the little door. The box was there, and he lifted it out.

"This ought to be locked, too," he muttered, as he placed the receptacle upon the table.

It was secured by a strap.

Something about that strap arrested his attention; it was fastened very tightly and strapped down to the last possible hole.

"That's very curious," said Anthony, and tried to release it. For some time it defied his efforts, but at last the strap gave and the steel tongue came out of the hole. "I wonder who fastened that?" asked Anthony in wonder. He remembered that Lady Heron Wendall had been to the cupboard, but she would not have fixed it so tightly.

He threw the box open and uttered an exclamation.

There should have been a big bundle of letters and two diaries fastened together with a rubber band; these and a few oddments comprised the contents of the box. But the letters and the diaries had gone.

XVI. BROTHERS DISAGREE

Two days before the return of Anthony Manton to Bulboro', and on the second day of his engagement, Mr. Gill found himself alone in the cosy study of his enemy. It was a big room—a billiard-room without a table, as somebody had described it—yet for all its size it conveyed the impression of cosiness, with its engravings, its big chairs, and its old-fashioned open hearth. One wall was half hidden by bookshelves, the wall in which the fire-place was placed was so crowded with pictures and china that there was little of the wall itself to be seen.

John Gill looked round with a look of grim satisfaction on his face. So this was Manton's study—he was here alone.

It was in the hope that he might find himself so circumstanced that he had accepted the commission.

This Anthony Manton, man of the world and accredited agent of the devil, was fair game for his cunning and his wisdom. Gill needed support for the case he was preparing against the doctor.

Already he had accumulated, with a most earnest and diligent effort, evidence to Anthony's discredit. He had canvassed Bulboro' most thoroughly; he had interviewed parents of children who had died under treatment, he had procured sworn statements (or they amounted to sworn statements in his view) from dissatisfied patients of every kind, which he had planned should form in the aggregate the most damning indictment that had ever been arrayed against one man. More than this, he had fostered most sedulously the discontent which undoubtedly existed amongst a certain class with Anthony Manton's line of treatment.

The very poor and the very ignorant have certain conventions in their dealings with the medical profession, conventions which can only be outraged at some cost to the reputation of the person affected.

For instance, a doctor must at all times express his opinion that the use of the knife is unnecessary, and that anything from appendicitis to toothache can be cured by the judicious administration of drugs. A surgeon who employs the knife too readily is self-confessed an ignorant person, who has not thoroughly acquired a knowledge of the healing art, and is covering his deficiencies by a drastic resort to surgery. There had grown, too, a persistent rumour that Anthony was a vivisectionist, and that the rambling dwelling he occupied was a veritable repository of horrors.

It stood to reason, said the folk of poorer Bulboro', that a man who was, so to speak, a foreign doctor, and who had spent all his life amongst savages and cannibals, could not be possessed of those proper feelings which would enable him to appreciate the demands which the civilization of Bulboro' put upon him.

There was the case of the dog whom Anthony had been seen leading into the house, and who, according to all reports, had never emerged again. The dog in question had a broken forefoot, and Anthony had taken the poor brute into his surgery and attempted to mend him up. When it was apparent that the wretched animal was too far gone to benefit by his skill, he had painlessly chloroformed him out of his misery.

Rumour grows on nothing; it springs to life quicker than the mushroom, and, like the mushroom, grows best in dark and noisome places. Gill had no doubt in his own mind that rumour spoke the truth; indeed, he had accepted the nebulous stories of Anthony's evil practice readily, even eagerly.

Now he hoped to discover in his search some evidence more damaging than that which he at present possessed.

The drawers of Anthony Manton's desk had presented considerable difficulty, and after one or two vain and ineffectual attempts to open them the man had abandoned his quest, with the satisfying thought, however, that their contents could hardly assist him, since, if they referred at all to the outrageous practices, they would be couched in Latin, a language which Gill in common with many other people, imagined was the private and exclusive property of the medical profession, and chiefly employed to deceive the ignorant as to the constituents of the prescription. But the cupboard at the side of the fireplace had offered him greater opportunity with less labour. He had waited for a favourable moment until he knew that Mr. Jocks was in the town making his morning purchases, and then he had tried a variety of keys upon the little oaken safe.

Here the way lay clear before him; he found the box strapped loosely round, and the warning label, "Not to be opened under any circumstances, except by its owner," was all the incentive he required.

With trembling hands he carried the box to the desk, unfastened the strap, and threw the lid back. To his disappointment, there was no evidence here of vivisection, nothing more than a bundle of letters, a few scraps of African equipment, a revolver of foreign make, and a canvas cartridge-belt. He looked at the letters, extracted one, and read it.

He had no scruples, because he was of that variety of human being which reserves its best and noblest emotions for direct transmission to its Maker and is unhampered by any feeling of necessity for offering its tribute through the indirect homage of charity.

He read one letter, and two pink spots coloured his cheeks as he realized the importance of the find. The second letter was in French, and he put it aside. For an hour he read, until he saw from where he stood Mr. Jocks' sedate form marching up the drive to the servants' entrance. He hastily slipped the

diary and letters into his pocket, re-strapped the box, using perhaps a little more force than he would have done had he been moved by less poignant emotions, replaced it in its cupboard and locked the door. He had finished his task; there was no further need to stay in the doctor's house. His course of action, his line of conduct, had been revealed to him in a flash.

With all possible haste he made his way to the shop where Mr. Montague Silver was engaged at that moment in chiding two idle apprentices on their tardiness, which had resulted in the handbills for the Street League being undelivered on the previous night.

"It is something sickening," said Silver, properly indignant. "I took more trouble with that handbill than ever I have taken with anything in my life, and here you go and botch it up. Can't you be trusted without me?" he asked.

"No, sir," confessed one of the apprentices disconcertingly. The frankness somewhat embarrassed Mr. Silver.

"All the afternoon I stood making up that handbill," he said, "puttin' rules round it, and justifying* them four angels I got especially down from London, and now they won't take the delivery. It's enough to make a man—" Montague Silver checked the coarseness of his illustration at the sight of Gill.

[* Justifying is employed here as a printer's term.]

"I want to see you at once," said Gill, and passed through the shop to the parlour behind, Silver following reluctantly.

"I have got that letter of yours set up. I was going to send you a proof this afternoon.'

"What is that?" asked the other. He had for the moment forgotten his previous commission.

"The letter to the editor," explained Silver. "I had to do it when my apprentices were out; you see I couldn't let them know."

"You needn't trouble about it now," said Gill.

"Thank the Lord for that," said Mr. Silver with genuine relief. "I was afraid of it."

"Look at this," interrupted Gill. He pulled out a bundle of papers and slammed them on the table. "Here is evidence, my brother, if evidence is needed, of this sinful woman's crime."

Mr. Montague Silver lifted up the letters and examined them.

"What are you going to do with those?" he asked blandly, well knowing the reply he would receive.

"I am going to print them and distribute them, that all the world may know what this woman is."

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Silver politely. "And who is going to print 'em?"

"You are," said the other.

Silver took up the letter which he had first examined, and adjusting his glasses on his nose, read it again. He read it through with an air of conscientious thoroughness from the very beginning to the very end.

"You are not going to print a letter like this, brother?" he asked, looking over his spectacles, his mouth open, his scrappy eyebrows raised.

"I am," said Gill firmly.

"Oh," said Montague Silver.

He took his glasses off, wiped them carefully, and put them into his waistcoat pocket.

"You can print them if you like," he said, "but I won't."

"You won't? Why?"

"Because it's a rotten thing to do," said Mr. Silver. "And I ain't going to do any more rotten things."

"You are going to print these," said Gill, white with passion. "I tell you I will have them printed if I have to ruin myself to do it."

"You can ruin yourself as much as you like," said Mr. Silver, gazing at the ceiling with a blank and immovable gaze, "but you ain't going to ruin me."

"Nobody would know," said Gill.

"What about God?" said Mr. Silver, his eyes still fixed on the ceiling. "There ain't nothing in the world which God don't know—at least it's my idea of Scripture."

"Such an act would be pleasing in the eyes of God," said the other harshly. "You are leading a woman from the paths of sin by way of tribulation to the mercy-seat."

"I dare say," said Mr. Silver, unconvinced.

"Do you refuse to do as I wish?" asked Gill.

"That's so, you've hit it," said Silver, with marked patience. "Do you know where I can go?"

"You can go to 'ell," said Mr. Silver, lapsing entirely and absolutely from grace.

Gill stepped back as though he had been shot.

"You!" he said in a shocked voice, "you, brother!"

"Brother, be damned," said Mr. Silver, enjoying, as it seemed, his unaccustomed debauch. "Don't you come brothering me; I am sick of you, I am tired of the whole damn shoot of you; you can go along and split if you like. I'll do three months with pleasure; it will give me time to forget some of the muck I have been listening to for the last year or two. I am tired of you," he repeated loudly, "all of you—the brotherhood, the bloomin' league, and the bloomin' chapel, too. I am tired of being a Christian. I would sooner be a bookmaker Yes, I would," he went on sinfully and rapidly. "I would sooner stand up at point-to-point meetings, shout the odds an' chisel the rungs. I would sooner go welshing, I would sooner be a poacher, I would sooner pass counterfeit coin, I would sooner do anything in the world than put up with fellows like you. Why," he said, and pointed his accusing finger at the letter on the table, "there ain't a three-card man who would print a letter like that—from a poor woman who has done you no harm, an' if you can show me a printer who would, I would go after the ——" (here he employed a phrase which was beyond pardon, and certainly beyond recording) "an' I would wring his bloomin' neck, I would indeed."

He went to a corner of his parlour and lifted down his jacket, put it on carefully, and took down his hat.

"Go to the police," he said, "if you like, and tell them all you know about me. If you want me"—he stood dramatically at the door, a stout and unrepentant figure—"if you want me you will find me at the 'Blue Boar', on The Chad."

He went out slamming the door behind him, and left Mr. Gill staring.

The door opened again, and Montague Silver's head came peeping back. "And gettin' drunk," he added joyously.

Gill did not go to the station-house, and there was very good reason why he should not.

He had no very complete evidence to assist him in convincing the emissaries of the law that Silver was the malefactor which Gill knew him to be. Moreover, self-preservation played some part in his decision. Even in his

fanaticism he saw that the magistrates would put a very unfavourable construction upon the demand which he had made of Silver. There must be another way of spreading the story of Beatrice Heron Wendall's infamy, something more subtle. In the end, after much cogitation, he found a typewriting office, and by carefully copying such of the letters as he wanted to use and eliminating the names, and, moreover, representing that the necessity for copying these letters was not totally unconnected with a law case in which he was concerned, he succeeded in having a hundred mimeograph copies made of four of the letters. He left the names blank, and spent two pleasant evenings filling those blanks in, in his own handwriting. It was a labour of love. Beatrice Heron Wendall had offended him deeply, wounding his self-pride in her refusal to agree to the mad scheme he had formulated. These institutions with which he was associated were the very life-blood of John Gill. He lived for them, particularly for the Brotherhood and the Street League. He may have harboured in his secret heart an ambition to create from the seed of the Brotherhood (at once an offshoot and a feeder to three sects) a separate and distinct Church with himself as its head.

His greatest efforts were in the direction of securing recruits to these healthy branches of the Christian army, and the refusal of Beatrice had been a bitter blow. For there is no vanity so unreasoning as the vanity of that peculiar order of mind which is self-described as the "professing Christian ". It is a vanity which is elated less by the quality of salvation than the quantity of the saved, and is flung into the fits of gloom not so much by reason of the fact that the human heart is hard and difficult to move as by the reflection upon their own powers of persuasiveness which failure advertises to rival Christians. He had now another reason for his hatred. This woman had stolen his daughter from him. So he argued, wilfully blind to every circumstance. In his own way he had been fond of the child, he had not realized how fond until she was taken from him, as a result of his own wilfulness and malice.

A labour of love! Say rather a labour of hate—the hate which righteous men have for the evil with which they credit their enemies.

XVII. TWO SUMMONSES

Anthony lost no time in pursuing his inquiries. He more than suspected the thief, and a brief examination of the agitated Mr. Jocks confirmed his suspicions. The theft explained the hasty retirement of Mr. Gill from the scene of his labours. That evening Anthony handed over the duties of the dispensary to Dr. Painter and walked down to Gill's house.

Mrs. Gill was a little flustered at seeing him, and a little fearful, too, so fearful that she had not the courage to invite him into her parlour, a remissness outrageous to her sense of hospitality. Her husband was out; he had been out all the afternoon. She hesitated when Anthony questioned her as to where the man was to be found.

Poor soul, she needed news of her "daughter ", and was cheerful at the mention of her, but Anthony had no time for sentiment at the moment. He came back to the subject of the man he sought.

He might be in one of three places. She compromised to that extent. Probably he would be at the little office of the Brotherhood in Market Street. The Brotherhood shared with the Street League the rent of a small hall, and one corner of the bleak room had been partitioned off to make a bureau for the diligent secretary. It was here that Anthony found his man. A light shining through one of the windows betrayed his presence, but the door which Anthony tried was locked. He knocked, and Gill's voice demanded who was there.

"It is I," said Anthony, "Dr. Manton."

There was a long silence and a little thud. Anthony walked in as the door was unfastened, and looked quickly round the apartment.

There was a small safe in which the books not only of the Brotherhood, but of several other organizations in which Gill was interested, were kept.

That was a likely receptacle, and damning evidence of the use to which Gill intended putting his "find" was to be read in a sheet of mimeographed paper which had been rejected because of faint printing, and which now lay on the floor.

A man of quick observation was Anthony Manton. He saw a pad on which one or two words had been blotted so incessantly as to create something of a pattern on the paper. His quick eyes read one inscription plainly. "Lady Heron Wendall," it said again and again. He could only guess the work on which the man had been engaged.

The room was innocent of furniture save for a plain deal table and a chair, and the table by the side of which Gill was standing was empty.

The light of a hanging oil lamp shone on his face, and his accusing and tragic eyes were turned upon Anthony.

"What do you want, Dr. Anthony Manton?" he asked. He had a practice of calling people by their full names in such a manner as to suggest that the name in itself was a possession of unwholesome potency.

"I want to see you," said Anthony, peeling his gloves slowly, and placing his hat without invitation upon the table.

Gill shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know why you should want to see me," he said insolently, "unless you have thought better of our conversation the other day."

"That is not exactly the truth, is it?" asked Anthony. "I rather imagine you expected to see me, and expected me to come in a less reasonable frame of mind than I am in." The other was silent.

"Because," the doctor went on with some emphasis, "when you commit a robbery in a house in which you are engaged out of pure kindness, it is usual to expect the owner of that house, and, for the moment at any rate, of the stolen goods, to make an urgent call."

"I have stolen nothing," said Gill doggedly.

Anthony looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"Curiously enough," he said, "I did not expect you to deny it."

"I have stolen nothing," repeated Gill.

"Have you taken anything from the cupboard by the fireplace in my room?"

The man made no answer.

"Yes or no?"

"I have done that which I have been directed to do," said Gill.

Anthony was very patient. He knew that this was tantamount to a confession, and as near to an admission of guilt as he was likely to secure. He could never quite accustom himself to listen without resentment to Bulboro' and a certain section of Bulboro's people deputizing their Calvarys.

"You will please hand me back the things you have taken, and there the matter will end," he said quietly.

Gill made no response to the request. There was a stubborn set to his jaw, and no indication of compromise or penitence in his lean face.

"You have heard what I said," repeated Anthony. "I want the papers you took from that cupboard in my study."

"I heard what you said," replied the other.

After a moment's hesitation he went to the safe and unlocked it. Anthony saw the familiar bundle which he knew so well.

"Everything is there," said the man.

"What are those papers at the bottom of the safe?" asked Anthony with pardonable curiosity.

"That is nothing to do with you."

"May I see one?"

"You can see nothing," said Gill, and made as if to shut the safe, but Anthony caught the door and swung it back. He grasped a handful of the sheets and pulled them out. A moment's glance was sufficient to show him the purport of the copies.

"So that is the idea, is it?" His voice was sharp and angry, and a dull red crept up into his cheeks.

"You insufferable blackguard!" he cried. "What object do you expect to serve in betraying a woman's precious secrets?"

"I can lead her to Christ," said the man quietly.

"You are hopeless," said Anthony, controlling his rising indignation.

"I can lead her to the fountain of blood which cleanses us from all sins," the man went on, his voice rising. "I can break her hard heart, and bring her in humbleness to the feet of God."

"Why she?" asked Anthony, humouring the man. "Why not I? I am a much more hardened sinner. Why attack the weak and the helpless? Is it because they cannot strike back at you, Gill? Is the drastic method of creating converts to be restricted only to the boys you can thrash and the women whom you can shame? Concentrate your attention on men—it will be fairer."

"In God's good time you will all find grace," said the man; "you who have persecuted me, the other man who shamefully drove me from my employment because of my convictions, and the harlot who taught my daughter to deceive me."

"Which particular harlot are you referring to?" asked the weary Anthony. "I cannot keep track of them."

The man glowered at him

"The harlot," he almost hissed, "Geraldine Brand—who—"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Anthony struck him, and he fell back with a crash into a corner of the room. He picked himself up slowly and put his hand to his bruised cheek.

"You will be sorry for that, Dr. Manton," he said.

"I am sorry for it now," said Anthony, white as death. "I am sorry that I allowed my temper to get the better of me." He pulled open the door of the safe, Gill making no attempt to prevent him, and carefully cleared out the whole of the mimeographed copies of the stolen letters, tied them into a rough bundle, and thrust them into his overcoat pocket.

It had not been a wholly profitable evening, he thought, as he made his way up to Pilgrim's Rest. He was very angry with himself—it seemed to have become a normal state of mind with him. And yet, he thought, he had been known for his remarkable equanimity in the days when neither hot nor breathless nights nor intermittent sickness ruffled his serenity.

He reached the house without having arrived at an excuse for his remarkable departure from placidity, and found a message awaiting him from High Mount. It was in Sir John's handwriting, and was brief.

"Come up at once," it ran, "Geraldine has had a fresh attack. Grimthorpe has diagnosed the trouble as appendicitis, and says an immediate operation is necessary. Geraldine insists upon your performing the operation."

For a moment the words swam in front of Anthony's eyes, and his hands shook. Never in his life had such a communication produced that effect upon him. He walked up and down the study striving to collect his whirling thoughts.

For the moment he experienced a physical nausea—a horrible sinking sensation that left his heart beating uncomfortably. Then a fear gripped him, and perspiration stood upon his forehead and his very knees trembled.

"Malaria," he said, but knew that he was wilfully misinterpreting the symptoms.

He turned to the chauffeur who had brought the summons. "Tell Sir John I shall be up immediately. Did you bring the car with you? I thought I saw one outside the gate."

"Yes, sir," said the man.

"I will not be long. Just wait outside for me, will you?"

He braced himself to his task, and, opening his surgical case, carefully selected the instruments he would require. He got on the telephone to Westlake, a young doctor of the East side, a man who was an excellent anaesthetist. Ten minutes later he was with Sir John Brand in the library of High Mount. The face of the baronet was grey and drawn with anxiety.

"By Jove! I'm glad you've come," he said thankfully. "I am afraid there is no doubt about it being appendicitis. Grimthorpe is here, and he is quite willing that you should perform the operation. It is a terrible business, Manton."

He had lost all the buoyant gaiety of manner which was peculiarly his.

"Not so very terrible," said Anthony cheerfully—it was curious how quickly he had recovered his hold over himself, but the sight of the other's distress nerved and strengthened him.

"Geraldine told me to bring you up the minute you came," Sir John said, and led the way up the broad stairway to the floor above. "You really don't think that there is any—"

"Danger—bless my soul, no!" replied Anthony.

Sir John heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thank God!" he said.

He could not see inside Anthony's mind or gather from his unmoved face the panic that came and went gustily in the doctor's breast.

Geraldine's room was in the right wing of High Mount, and was in every way the best suite of apartments the old house afforded. Her father had spared nothing in the way of expense to make her life as happy and as pleasing as possible. The room itself was big and well lighted; it was more like the bower of an Eastern princess, thought Anthony, as he entered the room, for a big carpet specially woven to Sir John's order covered the whole of the floor, and two great hanging lamps of silver and tortoiseshell afforded light and added something to the Eastern character of the room. In the midst of this great room the tiny rosewood bedstead was pitifully small and the figure that smiled a welcome to Anthony seemed swallowed up and lost in an immensity of space.

She flushed pink and offered him her hand.

"Isn't it dreadful, doctor?" she complained with a pathetic little smile, "and yet I have suspected it for weeks—that is why I wired you in Paris."

"Oh!" he said blankly.

He did not know exactly what else to say. He was divided between his professional instinct to get at the trouble, and the working of a new desire for the inception of which Bulboro' and its life was mainly responsible—the desire to be conventionally pleasant.

He pulled up a chair to the side of the bed and seated himself. "You know I haven't a very good bedside manner," he said, with a smile.

"Nor I either," she responded, with brave gaiety. "But my side of the bed is perhaps more trying than yours. It is so awfully unromantic, isn't it? I'm sure heroines in stories never have appendicitis—I don't know exactly, though, why I am weaving myself out a story and discovering heroic qualities in myself."

"Yes, all the best heroines nowadays have appendicitis," said Anthony untruthfully, "and heroines out of books, too."

"Do you read novels?" she asked.

"No—I must admit that I don't," he confessed. "Life in Bulboro' is too serious a thing to encourage that kind of frivolity."

He was feeling her pulse; there was no doubt whatever about it as far as the pulse showed. That rapid, irregular beat was one of the most significant symptoms of the disease.

"I wanted you to operate." She lowered her voice as she spoke and looked across with a tender glance to where her father stood. He had walked to the window and was staring out into the darkness.

"Somehow I trust you," she went on, and caught his hand as she turned her face to him. "I like to feel when I go down to the edge of life, that there is some one near me who is young and buoyant, and who knows just how wistfully I am looking at the world I leave, and perhaps one who"—she hesitated—"who likes me, though I am a most capricious girl with little or no manners," she smiled.

He did not speak. She was making things very hard for him if she did but know. It was heart-breaking to look down into the clear depths of her grey eyes and to see the soul of the woman shining through. To read in that intense and trusting scrutiny of hers all that her heart spoke. He clenched his teeth at the thought of what an hour might bring forth. Suppose they had left the operation until too late—suppose there were any of the complications which came from a tardiness of treatment, suppose He shut his eyes to blot Out the vision which his fear had conjured.

"If I look over the edge," she was saying, "I shall know, though I am unconscious, though my soul and my mind are far away from here, that your strong arm and your strong hand can pull me back again. That is a selfish thought, but I wanted you because"—her voice was little above a whisper—"because if death should come to me I know you would help me along the rougher part of the road."

He looked down at her, a new tenderness in his eyes.

"My child," he said softly, and took her hand in a reassuring grasp, "there must be no talk of dying, because you aren't to die—because there is no danger of your dying"—he spoke slowly and deliberately—"and because this operation is hardly worth being called an operation. It is infinitely less dangerous than having your tonsils cut, and much less painful than having a tooth out. I am going to ask one of the other doctors to send your father away."

The men he had summoned had arrived a little later. They made their brief examination of the girl, and all the time her eyes were fixed on Anthony Manton's face.

At last there was a short consultation; a table was requisitioned and wheeled into the room, a screen placed where she might not see the gruesome preparations which were being made, and then Anthony and the anesthetist approached her.

"First of all we shall try an experiment which will not be at all painful," said Anthony, with a smile, "but in case it is I am going to see that you go right off to the land of never-never."

He took the cone from Westlake's hand, for he felt instinctively that she would rather he did all that was visible to her and all of which she was conscious. He sprinkled a few drops from his crystal bottle on to the lint-covered cone.

"It isn't very bad, is it?" he smiled. He sat on the edge of the bed. She could see his face over the sides of the cone, and the smile reassured her.

"Not so very," she answered. "Should I not be on a table or something?"

"Not on your life," said Anthony cheerfully. "I should never think of putting you on so hard a thing as a table. This is just going to be a little mild experiment."

He dropped some more on to the cone and held it over her mouth.

"It is very sickly stuff, isn't it?" she murmured.

"Perfectly horrible," he admitted; "but I have become so used to it that I prefer it to eau-de-Cologne."

Her eyes met his; he was still smiling, and her lips moved in response.

"Does anything happen?" she asked through the cone.

"In good time," said Anthony, "especially if you take nice deep breaths—imagine that you're taking a holiday at some place and filling your lungs full of inexpensive ozone. You see," he reproved her, "you are such an impatient young party, we shall have to discover one of those famous drugs one reads about in novels—the drug which is chucked in the face of the hero, rendering him immediately unconscious." By the time he had finished his speech the little drops were falling like rain.

"It does seem a long, long time," she said fretfully.

"I rather think you are very strong," said Anthony; "at least, I like to tell you so, because it cheers a patient to think that she is stronger than her unfortunate fellows. Don't you smell something like roses?"

She made a little face.

"Close your eyes and smell," he said.

She closed her eyes obediently. She felt the cold draught of air as it rushed into her lungs with a curious roaring. She had never so completely realized how much work the lungs were called upon to perform as she did at that moment.

She felt, it seemed, every atom of air, if air be in atoms, rushing busily through the passages of respiration and as busily rushing out again, its beneficent work accomplished. Now the roaring noise was in her ears and her heart began to flutter uncomfortably.

"I don't think I like this very much," she murmured.

"I don't suppose you do," said Anthony, "but you are doing famously."

"I really don't think I like it," she said again; then she ceased to take very much interest in Anthony, for she was absorbed in gazing down a long, black tunnel at the end of which was one white, steady light.

What was it? She realized after some thought that she was really looking up at the chloroform cone. But that was impossible because it really did not touch her eyes; perhaps they had left the blinds up and the light was shining through the window? That could not be, said her reason, because it was night. Then she saw as the light grew brighter the figure of a woman

who carried a child in her arms and that woman was Beatrice Heron Wendall. She laughed a little.

"I am having such a weird dream," she murmured. "A weird dream, have you?" said Anthony's voice. "Please stop the chloroforming for a little while, I want to tell you about it," she said.

"Certainly," agreed the accommodating Anthony. "Try to get all that noxious vapour out of your lungs and tell me."

She was breathing now with difficulty. The pain which had tortured her for days had gone, and in its place was a certain numbness which was less of a pain than a discomfort.

"I thought I saw Beatrice Heron Wendall," she explained drowsily.

"Open your eyes and tell us all about it," commanded Anthony. "You spoil the story by keeping your eyes shut."

"I am too tired to open my eyes," she said, and smiled.

"Oh, but you must open your eyes," said Anthony in a tone of authority. "Good heavens! half the art of story-telling is to speak with your eyes, you know."

He said this very, very deliberately, it seemed to the girl, and she opened her eyes and looked up. He had changed. That was the first thought which occurred to her. There were dark shadows under his eyes and a hard little line to his mouth. He was pale with a sort of greyness which she had never seen. It was as though the pallor was fighting to show itself through the tan of his face.

"You look so funny, Anthony," she said. "Have you made your experiment?" It seemed quite natural for her to say Anthony, and his face betrayed no surprise.

"Don't move," he said gently. "Do you feel comfortable?"

"When are you going to operate?" she asked.

He smiled.

"The operation was over some ten minutes ago," he said, "and you are on the high-road to recovery. If you will be a good patient, and obedient girl, you will be up and about in a fortnight."

"All over?" she said. "How perfectly ripping."

She closed her eyes and fell into a dreamless slumber.

Anthony went back to the disordered table, dried his instruments with care and replaced them in the case. He gave a few words of instruction to the two nurses, hastily summoned from the cottage hospital, and went down to Sir John.

"How is she?" asked the baronet. He was tense and old with the anxiety of his long wait.

"She is doing well," said Anthony, and his voice was sharp and shrill. Sir John forgot his own anxiety in the sight of the young man's face.

"What is the matter with you, Manton?—you look perfectly ghastly"

"Do I?" said Anthony. "Well, you see I have had a pretty ghastly time. Doctors are not unlike other human beings, you know, Sir John," he said.

Sir John Brand's eyes searched his face. "Do you know," he said slowly, "that never occurred to me."

He said this very quietly, and the grave eyes that surveyed Anthony Manton had all the tender sympathy of a woman.

On the second day following the operation Anthony came back from High Mount perfectly satisfied with the progress the girl was making. She would be perfectly well in a fortnight, and there was cause for unspeakable relief in that.

He found an unexpected visitor in the person of a police inspector on his arrival at the house. Mr. Jocks had dreadful news to impart.

"I thought it was an inquest, sir," he said confidentially, "but apparently it is something much more serious."

"Much more serious?" asked Anthony, with a smile. "Exactly what do you call serious, Jocks?"

"I understand, sir," said Mr. Jocks in a hushed voice, "that it is a summons for assault."

Anthony looked his astonishment.

"That is indeed very serious," he agreed, and went to unravel the mystery.

He found the genial inspector very apologetic.

"I am very sorry to bother you, doctor," he said, "but the magistrates have granted a summons against you for assaulting John Gill on the evening of the twenty-eighth of March."

So that was it. For two days Anthony had been oblivious of the existence of John Gill and he came back to the world of realities with a jar.

"I remember the circumstances, and I am afraid I was in fault. I particularly do not wish this case to go into court for reasons which would be apparent to you 'if you knew the details. Is there any chance of offering this man some sort of compensation which he would accept?"

"I'm afraid not, sir," said the inspector regretfully. "By the way he went on before their worships, I should say he wouldn't be satisfied with anything less than his pound of flesh."

Anthony nodded. "Very good, then, we shall have to be summoned," he said, with a wry face.

The summons was annoying for many reasons. It might necessitate the introduction of Geraldine's name. He did not doubt that the charge which the man had formulated would be dismissed if the case came to a hearing, but he had no particular wish to go into a witness-box and confess that he had lost his temper, nor yet the cause of his lapse. There was neither honour nor glory nor satisfaction of any kind to be gained. The only thing to do was to see the obliging editor of the Herald and put the circumstances before him. Mr. Western was the recipient of most of Bulboro's public troubles, and not a few of those which were strictly private.

"Of course," he said when Anthony had told him the story, "the man is a blackguard, and there is no excuse for him, and so far as our paper is concerned, and the other journal, too, for the matter of that, there will be no publication; but you cannot stop these devils talking." He was referring to the folk of Bulboro' in these uncomplimentary terms.

"When is the case coming on?"

"In a week."

"I will see what I can do; personally, I don't think I have much influence with Mr. Gill; he is rather sore with me, and he bombards me daily with most unpleasant predictions as to my future state. We had better try Stope."

He went to the telephone and called a number.

"Is Mr. Stope in?" he asked. "Yes, it's Western speaking. I want to see you about something which is rather important to Dr. Manton. Can we come round? Thank you."

He hung the receiver up.

"He will see us now," he said.

Anthony's car was at the door, and they drove to the beautiful little house which the Congregationalists had built for their pastor.

Mr. Stope was a man of cultivated tastes, and his house, though small, was one of the most attractive that Anthony had entered since he had come to Bulboro'.

More than this, Mr. Stope was the most kindly of hosts. In no circumstances did he show to greater advantage than in his intercourse with men and women of his own class. "Come to the dining-room," he said. "Have you had any lunch?" he asked, as he showed the two men in.

"I have not thought of that," said Anthony, "but don't let us bother you."

"Not at all," said Mr. Stope. "One has to feed, and I am quite alone."

Over the meal Anthony put the circumstances very clearly to the pastor.

"Unpardonable," was Stope's comment, and he was genuinely annoyed with his faithful follower.

"You cannot stop these people from applying Biblical epithets," he smiled, "and, of course"—he shook his head reproachfully at Anthony—"you were rather to blame."

"I was an ass, but under the circumstances I felt justified."

"You know best," said the pastor quietly, "whether any gentleman is justified in losing his temper. My point is that he is not, but that is beside the question. I understand that Miss Brand is very ill just now."

"She is recovering from an operation," said Anthony.

"That is bad luck—I mean the operation," said Stope, "but in a way it is providential. She won't hear anything about the case until it is ancient history."

"Can you think of no way of stopping it, then?" asked the editor.

Mr. Stope shrugged his shoulders.

"You know my friend Gill almost as well as I. A very worthy man—don't be carried away by prejudice into imagining that he is anything else. He is very hot for salvation, only unfortunately his way is not an inoffensive way, nor is it a way which commends itself to people who, like myself, think it is quite possible to be fervent without being extravagant—I'll do whatever is possible," he went on in the dubious tone of one who did not anticipate a

successful issue to his endeavours; "but I warn you that my influence over Mr. Gill is of a somewhat uncertain character."

It was a perfectly ridiculous position to be in—Anthony saw that, and found himself during the next few days explaining his conduct to the many people whom he desired should not hear of his mistaken prowess from other sources.

"I don't see what else you could have done," said the baronet, who naturally was one of those most nearly affected; "I should probably have done the same, my boy. After all, it doesn't matter very much what the rascal says. Jerry needn't know of it—poor little girl! What made you so very angry?" he asked.

"I'm blest if I know," said the rueful Anthony. "I just flamed up and hit him. It was a stupid thing to do. The knowledge of my stupidity annoys me more than anything."

Anthony had some thought of approaching Gill himself, but dismissed the idea as an unprofitable one. He saw the man twice in the course of the next few days. On the first occasion he was addressing a fairly large meeting at the corner of The Chad. The open-air meetings of the Street League were invariably well attended if the weather was propitious. Only by a stretch of imagination might be so described the evening Gill had his *bête noire* amongst his audience. The evening was cold and a fine rain was falling. There must be something unusual in a man's discourse to keep a crowd together under these conditions, and Anthony made his way to the outskirts of the throng, actuated to some extent by curiosity as to the man's powers of oratory, to which Bulboro' readily bore testimony, and partly, too, in the expectation that the man would make some reference to himself. It was dark, and there was no fear that he would be recognized. Mr. Gill spoke from a shaky little extemporized platform, flanked by two great oil lamps, which advertised the meeting as being under the auspices of the Street League, and his theme was one of corruption in high places, of the persecution of the holy by the modern representatives of Dives, of the rottenness of the age and the need for a Knox.

His high, strident voice carried across The Chad, his impassioned accents impressed even Anthony with the genuine nature of his faith. However mistaken this man might be, he believed in his mistakes more earnestly than most people believed in the things of which they had every reason to be sure.

"Oh, for a John Knox!" cried the voice which, powerful and piercing as it was, seemed to Anthony to be a long way off. Yet every word, every syllable, the very burr in the man's speech, carried across to where he stood.

"Oh, for some God-sent reformer to cleanse the defiled temple of God, to flog the money-changers of the temple, to abase the hypocrites and the

mercenaries of God. I have been persecuted, my friends, for my convictions. I can praise God that He allows me to stand here to-night on this platform, in the face of the world and of this congregation, determined to speak the Word of the Lord before mankind. I praise God," he went on, his voice rising higher, "that I have been ill-treated for my Lord's sake, that I have been smitten, and cast into prison even as He was cast into prison by Pontius Pilate, and that I can still stand before you to-day as testifying to the power of my God."

He wore no overcoat, though the rain had now increased to almost a downpour. His low collar was open, exposing his throat to the bitter winds. His threadbare jacket was saturated and his face shone with moisture.

"Is there any one of those standing around me to-night," he asked, "who can justify all that has passed, all the persecution which I have suffered at the hands of the unrighteous?"

He paused a moment. He had the true oratoric instinct for dramatic effect. It was not customary that these pauses should be filled by any member of the audience, certainly not of such an audience as this, but somebody broke through convention.

"Yes, there is," said a voice, "and a jolly good reason, too—you 'umbugging blighter!"

There was an instant stirring of the crowd, and every man craned his head to see the interrupter.

"Have you given your reason, my brother?" asked Gill, leaning forward over the rostrum, both hands outspread, along the narrow rails. "Can you give me a reason for my persecution other than my love for the Lord?"

"I can," said the voice. "I can, old friend, and don't you call me 'my brother', or I'll come up after you."

It was Montague Silver, in a condition of advanced inebriety.

"You ain't persecuted, but you ought to be prosecuted," said the voice, "you and all your long-faced pals of the Brotherhood." He was addressing a little meeting of his own now. "I've got the little shop down in Market Street," said Montague, remembering that on such public occasions as these no great harm was done by calling attention to his profession; "and if any of you gentlemen want cards printed, or handbills printed, or lists of runners and jockeys printed—anything bar tracts—I'm about from nine to six."

He shook his head resolutely.

"I bar tracts," he said with violence, "and anybody who wants cherub 'cads, weeping gents over gravestones, or ole gents bein' fed by kind young ladies,

can call me up and he shall have the pick of 'em at a knock-out price. Montague Silver," he repeated noisily. "Don't forget the old firm"

They heard his voice rumbling into the distance as he made his way back to the Blue Boar, from whence the lure of John Gill and the voice of conscience had aroused him.

XVIII. FORGIVENESS

Anthony went on without waiting to hear Gill's rejoinder. He had no wish to be seen by any member of the fast-dwindling congregation. He was to see Gill again two days afterwards, when he was visiting a poor patient at the eastern end of the town. As he knocked at the door Gill came out. He scowled for a moment and then brushed past him.

Then it was that Anthony learned for the first time of the strenuous attempt the man was making to secure evidence of his misdoings. Apparently Gill had very carefully canvassed all the dispensary patients who had been under Anthony's care to this end. Anthony was first annoyed, then amused. It explained in part the reluctance which his patients had shown in certain circumstances. It convinced him, too, that Gill was a formidable enemy and one who had to be seriously considered.

Anthony, however, was saved the supreme annoyance of appearing at court, for on the night before the case was due to be heard, Gill was stricken down with bronchitis, a result of his open-air oratory under unfavourable climatic conditions. Without being exactly pleased by the man's misfortune, Anthony was considerably relieved when, in the absence of the prosecutor, the summons was allowed to lapse.

"It's a jolly good thing for you," said Ambrose Cohen over the telephone, "that you didn't adopt my suggestion and stand for Parliament. You would have had a very poor chance in face of your having assaulted one of the dominant party."

"Who is standing in the Conservative interest?" asked Anthony, who of late had found himself readily interested in Bulboro' doings.

A little laugh came from the end of the wire. "I am," said Ambrose. "Funny, isn't it? The county hardly knows how to take it, but there seems to be no likelihood of finding a better candidate, so the local people have asked me to stand."

"What is your chance?"

"A fairly good one," replied the other dubiously, so dubiously that Anthony smiled.

"I wish you good luck. You were the first friend I made in Bulboro', and I'll be the first man to vote for you."

"Keep that fact to yourself, then," warned Ambrose. "You are not supposed to have any political opinions."

The election promised to be short and sharp. It came upon Bulboro' with a rush in spite of the fact that both sides had made very elaborate preparations for months previous.

But in a night and a day the whole of the hoardings of Bulboro' were covered with exhortations addressed to the independent elector. Exhortations which warned him alike as to the size of his loaf in the event of one party being returned to power, and promising him the wherewithal to provide himself with any size of loaf which his caprice might favour if the other were dominant. The Bulboro' hoardings became a riot of vivid colour and unveracious typography. Bulboro' was warned that the eyes of England were upon it.

Whatever Bulboro' did would be right and equally wrong from one point of view or the other. Ordinarily sober individuals, who never under any circumstances displayed the slightest evidence of emotion, became hilarious and pugnacious; intelligent and conservative beings who would have shrunk from the barbarity of a pink tie, went about unashamed with huge rosettes of orange and of blue in the lapels of their respectable coats, and gaudy streamers of red and white floating from their whips.

The electors of Bulboro' bore a strong family likeness to the electors of most other constituencies, in that they were traditionally Conservative or traditionally Liberal, and all the bill-posting and all the arguments which experienced and plausible speakers, especially imported from Westminster, employed, were so much effort wasted upon ninety-eight out of every hundred of the population.

There were, indeed, two or three in every hundred, perhaps, who had no settled convictions one way or the other, and these possibly regretted bitterly the passing of that gorgeous and glorious period in electoral history when a man's vote was worth at least the price of a drink. There were people who said that Bulboro' was corrupt; that it was one of the few "rotten boroughs" remaining, and it is certain that formerly there was seldom an election that was not followed by a petition.

The spectacle of a Jew standing in the Unionist cause and a parson contesting the borough in the Radical colours was excuse and reason enough for recriminations and personalities, but beyond a few sly references which Mr. Stope had made to the Mosaic law, there was little said on either side likely to create rancour in the most sensitive bosom. It was a beautiful and touching sight to see Pastor Childe, ordinarily something of a rival to Mr Stope in popular affection, conducting a vigorous campaign as Stope's first lieutenant.

Pastor Childe had benefited considerably from his acquaintance with the party machinery of Bulboro', and it was on the cards that at the next General Election he himself would be invited to contest a seat in the North of England. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of supporting Mr.

Stope's candidature, and his numerous followers followed his lead as ardently and as energetically as though they were working for their own beloved leader.

The political sermon was now preached openly. Political pastors, one of whom already had the magical letters "M.P." after his name, came down from London to take the services, and the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons carried the good work of propaganda over the week-end. Every schoolroom, every branch and institution of church work which had association with the two chapels, worked diligently to secure the return of their man. Mr. Stope preached a sermon which was to excite more enthusiasm amongst his friends than any which had ever been heard in Bulboro'. The trend of that address was that if Christ had lived in the present age He would have been unpopular with the House of Lords, those hereditary enemies of progress. "We want light!" said Stope, and there was a chorus of "Amens" in the packed hall. It was light that the people were crying for; the cry was. "More bread, cheaper food, better dwelling-places, greater opportunities!" They were crying, in fact, for most of the things which the Liberal candidate at that moment had promised, in his electoral address, to secure for his constituency.

One of the great London editors, a man who controlled the destinies of a Liberal group of journals, came down to Bulboro', and at Anthony's invitation stayed at Pilgrim's Rest—they had met before, were, in fact, old school friends, and Anthony welcomed the opportunity of offering his hospitality.

After dinner, one night, the question of the religious candidate came up for discussion.

"It's pretty beastly, isn't it," said the journalist with a smile. "But what are we to do? We can't turn down these fellows and say, because they are earnest Christians, that they can't be good Liberals. You've the same embarrassment on your side—I take it for granted that you are now a hardened Tory. Think of the parson jackass who introduces his political ideas and his puerile points of view into his sermons and his parish magazines. Fortunately the discipline in the Church of England is more strict, and there is always a bishop to sit on a budding Wolsey's head. But your bishops are politicians, anyway—and Tory almost to a man. The political Nonconformist parson represents the reaction against the bishop legislator. Everybody agrees that a political parson is a nuisance and something of an embarrassment, too—you see, we've got to support and to find fuel for him. In politics all things are fair, but I often think that the political parson is the unfairest aspect of the game. He has all the advantages, too, he has his audiences ready-made. The unassailable sanctity of his profession, his freedom from heckling, and in addition, and this is rather important, the fact that nine out of ten of his people say, 'Whatever this man is, he must be sincere because of his profession.'"

"Suppose Stope is returned—what will happen? Is he the kind of man to make a stir in Parliament?"

The journalist smiled sardonically. "He will go to Westminster with a half a dozen speeches ready for delivery, speeches which will establish him as firmly in Parliament as he is established in Bulboro'. The whip will give him one opportunity, and one only. He may probably make two speeches throughout the session, and only the first will be listened to. It's a rum game, politics."

"Very," said Anthony. He had followed Cohen's advice and made no open demonstration of partisanship on the question of the hour.

Pastor Childe, with rare courage, had come, in the best of good humour and kindest of moods, to persuade him to vote Liberal.

"I don't think it matters very much which way I vote," said Anthony, with a smile. "If one has no very strong convictions and one must vote, why there is little to do but allow friendship to influence one."

"And Mr. Cohen is your friend, I presume?"

"Mr. Stope is also my friend," parried Anthony.

"Which is the particular friend you are voting for this time?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Anthony mysteriously.

Childe was going away and had reached the door.

"Have you heard anything about that unfortunate man, Gill?" he asked.

"No, what is the matter with him?" asked Anthony.

"He is in a terrible way, apparently. I have just seen my doctor, and he has asked—" He hesitated.

"Suggested I should be called in?" smiled Anthony.

"He did, as a matter of fact," said the other frankly, "but I thought it might upset Gill."

Anthony nodded. "I think you are right. What is the trouble—bronchitis?"

"There is another complication which I fear is rather serious."

"I shall be most happy to do anything I can, but I agree with you that the man would probably only be upset by the sight of me."

"It is a great pity," said Pastor Childe regretfully. "I've known him now for seventeen years; in fact, I suppose I'm the oldest friend he has in Bulboro'. He has been a very competent worker," and with a conventional remark or two Pastor Childe toddled away to seek a more encouraging voter on whom he might exercise his blandishments.

Geraldine Brand was making excellent progress. She was up now, and in a day or two she would be able to take carriage exercise.

Anthony had seen very little of her since the operation; he had paid one or two necessary visits and had then handed the case over to Grimthorpe. Sir John asked him up to lunch and he availed himself of the opportunity without the hesitation which he usually displayed when invitations to luncheon came his way. He arrived at High Mount to discover the big oak-panelled hall filled with flowers, flowers in baskets of various degrees of ornamentation. Daffodils rooted in voluptuous splendour over the hall table, great masses of delicate-scented lilac, beribboned and becarded, were stocked about the armoured figures at the foot of the wide stairs, Easter lilies, violets, all the spring glories of England, were to be found amongst the tributes of susceptible youth to their stricken favourite.

Sir John came out into the hall to greet him, and found Anthony admiring the blooms.

"It looks as though we were running a flower-show, doesn't it?" he said, with a laugh.

"What are these?" said Anthony. "Floral offerings from?"

"From the young and the impressionable," said Sir John with a chuckle. "Every petal a sigh and each blossom a prayer."

Anthony nodded. "I forgot those people. I suppose they were very much upset?"

"My secretary was busy day and night answering their telegrams. It was an infernal nuisance, though of course it was awfully nice to know that my dear old Jerry is so immensely popular," he added.

"Very," said Anthony, as he unfolded his napkin. "I wonder now that I dared to operate, remembering the revengeful jeunesse dorée who would have been thirsting for my blood, if anything had gone wrong."

Sir John shuddered. "My dear chap, don't talk about anything going wrong."

"I'm sorry," said Anthony hastily; "but the thought is no less unpleasant to me—and I only express it from the safe distance of convalescence."

"It was Jerry's idea sending for you," the baronet said after a while. "She's frightfully keen on you as a doctor."

"I'm rather glad somebody's frightfully keen on me," confessed Anthony ruefully. "I'm certainly not the most popular man in Bulboro'."

"I've been having a chat with your friend Cohen," said Sir John. "He's a most brilliant little man. I think he has a sporting chance of getting in."

"Isn't there some prejudice against him as a Jew?"

"I don't think so," hesitated the other. "The county, after all, is a very sporting county, and Cohen has none of the disagreeable characteristics of the Jew who has become suddenly rich. He is a pleasant type of a Jewish gentleman. The only regret I have," he said, a regret which found expression in his voice, "is that we can't rag the Nonconformists about their parson candidate. Stope is an engaging devil who contradicts the more exciting varieties of criticism."

"I don't think that is a drawback," replied Anthony.

After he had smoked a cigar with his host a message came from Geraldine that she was ready to see him, and he went up alone. She was sitting in a big chair drawn up to the window of her sitting-room. She looked exquisitely beautiful, he thought, and stood for a second in the doorway looking at her. She wore a dark blue kimono with patterns delicately worked in gold thread, and a touch of colour which a dull rose sash afforded threw the otherwise sombre garment into relief. Her hair was braided in two long plaits which hung over either shoulder. It made her look absurdly girlish, he thought; this was a new Geraldine Brand to the one he had known. He crossed to her and took her hand.

"Thin and wasted by disease," she described it.

"Your theories of recovery are working out splendidly," she said. "I can't realize I've had an operation. You must come along and operate any day you find time hanging on your hands."

"Thank you so much," he said gravely.

"Really I couldn't have imagined that anything like this could have happened, and that I could have survived it," she said wonderingly, and then as a thought struck her she turned to the little table at her side and searched for something about which she wanted to speak.

"I've just had a letter from Beatrice—she's full of your praises."

"That makes two people who have—" He stopped himself.

"Two people who have—?" she asked mischievously.

"Two people—I was going to say—" he stammered.

"Exactly what embarrasses you, doctor?" she asked.

The word "doctor" revived him.

"What I intended saying when you interrupted me," he said severely, "was that you make the second person to-day who has been complimentary to me."

"Who was the other?" she asked.

"One of my patients," he said, with truth, "and I heard it at second hand."

"You are speaking of me?" she challenged. "Now please don't deny it. I am always talking to daddy about you. In fact you are appointed my special surgeon—surgeon-in-ordinary, is that the phrase?"

"Sergeant-surgeon, I think it is," he said, "and you will give me a baronetcy or something because I am so clever."

She looked at him thoughtfully, too engrossed to be amused. "I have been hearing lots of things about you," she pursued. He looked at her half doubtfully.

"Lots of things" meant unpleasant things in his experience, particularly when they applied to him.

"Which particular thing have you heard?" he asked. "Daddy told me about Gill."

If he went very red it was in spite of himself. Would the memory of that infernal error of his never be allowed to die the death?

"Your daddy must be severely cautioned," he said. "To gossip with a delicate invalid and retail unpleasant truths about her doctor is to shake her confidence in his judgment."

Still she was serious and was not to be diverted by his flippancy.

"I am not going to say that you were wrong in what you did," she said; "but why were you so suddenly wrathful? I am sure he must have called other people by horrid names."

"I'm blest if I know," said Anthony. "Let us get on to some other subject, will you? How do you feel?"

She raised her finger warningly.

"I beg of you not to ask questions as a friend which you are only privileged to ask as a doctor."

"What are your plans?" he asked.

"We are going away to Nice. I want to see Beatrice on my way through Paris."

"Is she still there?"

The girl nodded.

"It seems thousands of years," he said, "since I was in Paris."

"Yet it is less than a month ago," she smiled.

"Only a month. How ridiculous!" he said. "Things happen that obliterate all one's ideas of time."

There was a new look in the eyes that examined his face so attentively.

"What is the thing that has happened," she asked, "which has so destroyed your sense of proportion?"

"Oh, many things," he answered vaguely. "For instance, the election."

"That does not destroy your sense of time," said Jerry scornfully, "that only destroys your sense of veracity. What else?"

"Let me say your operation," he suggested, with a show of extravagance.

"Did that make any difference?"

"In a sense, yes," he went on seriously. "I am not quite so callous as I probably shall be in a few years' time. When I see a young girl—as young as you—and as charming as you—with so perfectly splendid a future as I know you will have, when I see her in danger of her life, why, that makes all the difference, don't you know?" It was not a brilliant effort either in its lucidity or its consequence, but he was neither master of himself nor of the rules which govern English composition.

"I suppose it does," she mused; "but then there must be many young people with whom you have been brought into contact, Dr. Manton, quite as young as I, and with futures just as promising. Did they—did they destroy your sense of time?"

"I forget," he said; "it is so long ago since I had a patient as interesting as you, or as obedient," he said mischievously. She laid her hand upon his arm.

"Did I"—she hesitated and flushed a deeper red—"did I say anything when I was under chloroform? I have a horrible fear that I was rather rude to you."

He laughed.

"As a matter of fact, you did not utter a word until you came round from the anesthetic, though what you could have said that you would not care for all the world to know, Lord only knows."

"I have a sort of dream memory," she persisted, "that I called you by your Christian name."

"I have no recollection of the fact," lied Anthony nobly. "You may have sworn a little," he added gravely, "but such things we overlook."

"There are lots of things that I should not care for the world to know," she said. "Secrets are not a question of age, and I would have you understand, Dr. Manton, that I am a safe deposit of half the county's guilty confessions."

"Boaster!" said Anthony, as he rose to go. "I suppose you will want me to certify you as fit to travel soon?"

"I am going away next week," she said, as he took her hand, firm and warm despite her condition of convalescence.

There was one of those little intervals of silence which are so charged with meaning when they occur between imaginative people.

"I wish you luck and a quick recovery," he said.

"Shan't I see you again?" she asked, as he was at the door. He hesitated.

"I would like to see you before you go," he said.

"Will you come up to tea on Wednesday?" she asked. He bowed.

"That is the day following the election, and popular excitement will be sufficiently diminished to make the journey a safe one. Yes, I will."

"You are not very keen about it," she challenged.

"I was thinking that I must be rather a bore, and that you are asking me out of politeness."

She laughed. It was good to hear the ring in that laugh again.

"You cannot seriously imagine me doing things out of sheer politeness, can you?" she asked.

"I could," he persisted.

She was well enough to walk across the room to the door with him, and watched him go down the stairs into the hall. Half-way down she leant over.

"Please don't destroy any more earnest Nonconformists, for my sake," she begged.

He looked up with a guilty smile.

"They are spared," he said, with mock solemnity, and went out into a world which had become a much brighter and more beautiful place.

"Local feeling running very high," reported Sir John Brand, meeting Anthony on The Chad. "Here comes your pal Cohen. What is the state of the poll, Cohen?"

The little man was smoking a big cigar, a copy of The Times newspaper was tucked away under his arm, and his grey bowler hat was on the back of his head. With his ready smile for all he met, he was the picture of cheer and content.

"We are getting along," he said cautiously.

"That is not very definite," replied Sir John, with a smile. "You ought to know exactly how you stand. This is the stage of an election when both candidates are sanguine of a majority."

"I think we may get a small majority," said the other. "I hope you will."

"Do you?" asked the other doubtfully.

"Of course. But don't you?"

"I don't know," said Ambrose Cohen, taking out his cigar and examining the end of it severely. "I don't think it matters very much whether I get in or Stope."

John Brand laughed and clapped the other on the shoulder. "Does anything matter very much?" he asked.

"I don't think it does," replied Cohen.
Anthony raised his eyes to the heavens.

"Listen to them," he implored. "Here we are on the brink of an election which is to be the death knell of the Government if you succeed, and you are openly confessing that it does not matter two straws which candidate wins."

Whatever breadth of view Mr. Cohen displayed, or however philanthropical might be his outlook upon politics, his views were not shared either by his supporters or by the enthusiasts on the other side. The day before the polling there was something approaching a small riot, a riot which found its origin in the neighbourhood of Mr. Montague Silver's shop; for from being a most earnest Liberal and a supporter of all the institutional life of the town, Mr. Silver had so far fallen from grace as to address meetings on behalf of what he termed "the party of gentlemen and sportsmen." It may be said in extenuation of Mr. Silver, who had not been a speaker until he had learned the trick of oratory from his whilom friends, that he seldom addressed an audience unless he had made adequate preparation for the ordeal by a visit to the Blue Boar.

So far the offensiveness had been all on one side. The abuse, the unrestrained deluge of mud which had been poured in considerable quantities over the other side, had owed its origin to the good Liberals of Bulboro'. Silver was an exponent in the new style of debate, and supplied a long-felt want in Bulboro'—a Tory demagogue, no less effective because he spoke under alcoholic stress. His speeches were delivered with charming directness, and at the end of his "greetings" he was usually escorted from his extemporized rostrum by such police as happened to be in the vicinity, and whose Homeric rushes to save him from his furious fellow-citizens were worthy of a better cause. To these gentlemen there can be no doubt that he owed his life for what it was worth. On the evening before the poll there was a free fight which ran from The Chad to Church Street, culminating in window-smashing on an extensive scale; a further incident of the evening was that a meeting which Mr. Childe had arranged to address in The Chad Lane mission-hall was rendered impossible by the presence of a very large and representative body of enlightened electors who came to offer passionate protest against any other form of light than that which illuminated their own views.

Mr. Childe, however, enjoyed the experience. He was in the best of spirits, for he was to be the principal speaker of the last great meeting which Mr. Stope was holding, a meeting to be attended by a member of the Cabinet, Bexley no less, and to which the vast majority of Bulboro' people looked forward by the promise of Mr. Childe's address.

For though Stope might be an eloquent speaker, an educated man, and a master of logical illustration, Childe was the admitted orator of the town, and his periods, perhaps a little less polished and a little less elegant, carried greater conviction and aroused a deeper interest than the utterances of any other man who would be present at that meeting.

Anthony out of curiosity had written to Stope for a ticket. The presence of a Cabinet Minister had made it necessary that it should be a ticket meeting.

The meeting was due to be held at the Royal Theatre, which had been taken for that night, and Mr. Stope very readily placed a box at Dr. Anthony Manton's disposal. Anthony spent the afternoon at home. He had a great deal of work to do, so much so that he was at this time considering the advisability of securing an assistant. The afternoon had turned out miserably and unpleasantly. Grey skies overhung Bulboro', sweeping mists of cloud hung low above the house-tops, shedding that fine rain which was a climatic peculiarity of the town.

Anthony ate his solitary dinner and went back to his study. Rain was still falling, and it was not a night on which ordinarily he would venture out. But he was curious to hear Childe, of whose eloquence he had received abundant testimony.

He was fated, however, to be deprived of that pleasure, for at seven o'clock, an hour and a half before the meeting was to begin, he was interrupted in his studies by the arrival of Westlake, a young doctor with a flourishing practice on the east side of the town.

"Awfully sorry to bother you," apologized the intruder, "but I want to call you in. Pastor Childe thought I had better."

"Who is it—Gill?" asked Anthony quickly.

The other man nodded.

"Take your coat off and sit down for a minute," invited Anthony, for the rough coat of the visitor was aglitter with moisture.

"It is a beastly night," agreed Westlake, slipping the coat from his shoulders.

"What is the matter with Gill?" asked Anthony. Westlake gave a significant little tilt of his chin.

"Everything: throat septic, lungs septic—he's hopeless," he said. "I fancy there must have been some weakness there for a long time."

"Is there any chance for him?" asked Anthony.

Westlake shook his head as he tapped his cigarette on the mantelpiece. "Not an earthly," he said briefly. "We have done all we possibly can. We have used the needle, but without any beneficial result. I would like you to see him; you will be a bit surprised to learn that he is anxious to see you."

"To see me?" asked Anthony in astonishment.

The visitor nodded. He looked round the cosy study with an eye of approval.

"What a lucky beggar you are," he said enviously, "to come right into such a stunning practice as this is, with all the cream of Bulboro' to skim. Here am I working my head off at a bob a visit."

Anthony laughed. He had the most friendly feeling for men of his profession, and the envy of the other's tone was not of an aggressive character.

"I am working my head off at less than a bob a visit," was his rejoinder, "but the patients have been falling off just lately."

"The dispensary people?"

Anthony nodded, and the other grinned his amusement.

"Yes; they say you are a vivisectionist, amongst other unpleasant things—aren't they rum devils?"

"Very," agreed Anthony heartily.

It did not take him long to make his preparations. He had his car brought round, and together the two men drove through the town, striking, as it happened, the tail end of a most disorderly meeting which was emerging from Market Street Chapel School. They reached Gill's a few minutes after eight.

Anthony will carry to the end of his days an impression of Mrs. Gill as one who spent her life in weeping; he had never seen her except in a condition of lachrymose misery. That she had reason enough he realized, and felt sorry for her now, in this moment of her supreme trial. If all that Westlake had said was true, the end must be very near; how near he saw for himself as he entered the little bedroom over the parlour. Gill lay in the centre of a large bed, breathing with difficulty, his eyes staring upwards at the ceiling, his white hands idly picking the threads of the bed-cover.

"I am sorry to see you so bad, Gill," said Anthony as he took the man's wrist in his hand.

Gill nodded. Talking was a matter of some difficulty with him, and it seemed that, knowing how near he was to his end, he was conserving his scanty vitality for some final effort.

Anthony had never overcome his sense of awe at the demonstrations of the great mystery of death, and now there arose in him a wave of pity for this fierce man whose fault was zeal, whose virtue was his faith.

"You wanted to see me," said Anthony in that soft voice of his which few had heard him employ.

"Yes," said Gill painfully. "Lying here, doctor, I have understood how my pride and my arrogance have led me astray. I am only a feeble, pitiful sinner, perhaps more of a sinner than some of the people I have been condemning. Somehow it was hard to think I was wrong," he went on reflectively. He spoke with long intervals of silence between each little group of words. "Hard to say I am wrong. I never knew what terrible pride there was in my heart until God in His merciful wisdom laid me upon this bed of sickness. I have been uncharitable, doctor. I wonder if you can forgive me."

"You have been no more uncharitable than I," said Anthony, laying his hands upon the other's. "We are all human beings, Gill, and uncharity seems the first law of nature, because it is difficult to be charitable and preserve oneself—it is I who am owed forgiveness."

Gill looked up at him, searching his face earnestly.

"I wanted that off my mind," he said. "I praise God that He sent in you one who was strong enough to check me in my evil career. Yes, evil it was." He nodded slowly to emphasize his words. "And now that I am so close to the mercy-seat of God"—he smiled the happy smile of the weary man near to his rest—"I feel more peaceful and more happy than ever I have felt in my life, Dr. Manton. It is a wonderful sense of peace," he said half to himself, "after all the care and the labour of life; it makes death almost bearable, and all else than death petty and small and unworthy of effort. I sent for my little boy to-day," he said, "the little boy whom in my wrath and to my shame I so deeply wronged. He came this afternoon, and it seemed that I only wanted to see you, doctor, and perhaps Lady Heron Wendall, to make all things well." He spoke with difficulty. "God will send her my message, and she will know that this poor penitent heart of mine waxed humble at the end."

He spoke with increasing labour, and Anthony went to the door to summon Westlake, though he knew that nothing could be done for him Gill beckoned him back. His face was pinched and drawn, and his lips were blue.

"Tell my dear pastor," he whispered, and a smile that was beautiful to see shone upon his face; "say to that beloved man of God that I need him now, for I stand in the valley of the shadow of death."

Anthony stole from the room, and downstairs he saw Westlake and sent him to the patient.

His car was waiting at the door. He remembered that the pastor was speaking at the theatre and, looking at his watch, he knew the meeting would have just begun. He went as fast as his car could do the short distance, and made his way to the stage-door.

The doorkeeper recognized him and touched his hat.

"Is Pastor Childe on the stage?" asked Anthony quickly.

"Just going on, sir," said the doorkeeper. "There is a tremendous house," he went on enthusiastically. "The pastor won't half get a reception to-night."

Anthony traversed the narrow passage-ways under the stage, climbed a steep flight of stairs, and came to the stage level.

The theatre was packed from ceiling to floor. Anthony saw this across the glare of the footlights from where he stood. The chairman had finished his introductory remarks, and Pastor Childe was standing in the wings ready to enter. He had a sense of the theatrical strongly developed, and understood the value of an entrance as well as the oldest and most wily of tragedians. The house was calling for him, and the smile on his face was indicative of the pleasure he felt in this popular tribute. "Childe! Childe! Childe!" they were shouting monotonously from the auditorium, and already smiling faces were turned from the stage to where Childe waited. He had taken one step forward when Anthony caught him by the arm.

"Pastor," he said hurriedly, "I want a word with you." Childe looked with an exclamation of annoyance.

"Not now, my dear fellow," he said; "I am just going on to make my speech."

"But this is important," Anthony said, speaking rapidly, "more important than your speech—Gill is dying."

"Dying!" said Childe. "You don't mean that?"

"I do, indeed," replied the doctor. "He has sent for you, and he wants you."

"But I cannot come now," said the pastor. He spread out his hands helplessly. "How can I? I am due to make a speech here, and I must make it. I will come directly I have finished"

"He will be dead by then," said Anthony brutally. "You see," he drawled as he invariably did when he was being wilfully offensive, "this unfortunate man is under the impression that you are gifted by God with a certain super-power; he is also going out of this life in the vain imagination that a pastor, a disciple of God, a man of Christ, call it what you will, has only one job in life, and that it is the salvation of souls and the helping of the helpless over hard places. He does not know, of course, that a pastor can be a hell of a speaker, or that he can desire the applause of a theatre-load of rabid politicians more than he can wish for the thanks of a man going out to the darkness of death. Listen." He dropped his hands upon the pastor's shoulders, and gripped them, looking down at the man's face. His voice was vibrant with indignant anger—an anger which dominated him as nothing else had done in his life. "Do you believe, Pastor Childe, that there is such a thing as God? Do you believe that Christ was the Son of God and came into this world to save sinful men? Do you believe it to be true, or is it a lie faked

upon which a most prosperous business has been founded? It is either one or the other, my man. Either you are a liar, and every action and word of you is a lie, and the whole of your life a black and bitter sham, or else you are doing a monstrous thing in leaving this man to go out of life without the comfort he desires."

They were still shouting from the audience. Stope saw there was some trouble, and leaving his seat, hurriedly came to the wings.

"What is it?"

"Oh, it is nothing," said Anthony, with a hard laugh; "only I was trying to persuade Pastor Childe to go to Mr. Gill. He is dying, but Pastor Childe is so full of his speech that Gill, who loves him and trusts him more than any human being in the world, must die alone—that is all."

"My dear chap," said Stope, "you must be a little reasonable. The pastor will not be more than twenty minutes."

"He can be twenty hours as far as I am concerned," said Anthony roughly, and, turning his back upon the stage, he walked out of the theatre.

The audience rose as the pastor came slowly to, the centre of the stage. They rose and cheered the stout man with the large, genial face and the curly hair.

But these cheers awoke no response in him. He stood, his hands clasped before him, his face pale and his lips atremble. They thought he was overcome by the warmth of his reception and cheered all the louder, stamping their feet to add volume to the din of approval. Presently they were silent and his speech commenced. As it proceeded the privileged people on the platform looked at one another in amazement. Was this the orator of Bulboro'—this lame-speaking man with his stammering, nervous delivery, his halting illustrations, his toneless denunciations of a conventional enemy?

Sitting behind him, leaning back in his chair, his arms folded, one hand caressing his chin, Stope knew. He knew, and knowing, made a rapid review which comprehended motives and consequences. He made up his mind long before Childe, and to Stope's face, as he saw his way clearly marked, came a look of infinite relief. Western, sitting amongst his reporters, saw that look and wondered. It was as though the candidate had heard through some invisible agency the most wonderful and most cheering of messages. It was incomprehensible, for Childe was floundering through a speech which was almost painful to listen to. Then he suddenly stopped and covered his face with his hands. They thought he was ill, and a deadly silence fell upon the assembly. Stope had risen and had gone swiftly to the speaker's side.

"Childe," he said in a low voice, "if God has spoken to you as He has spoken to me, there is great work for us in Bulboro'." The other nodded. He took his hands from his face, and they saw that he had suddenly gone old. He raised his hand to the audience and the little buzz of excited conversation which had broken forth as the two men spoke, was hushed.

"I desire the prayers of all men for my friend John Gill," he said brokenly, "whom I failed this night in the hour of his dire necessity—whom I deserted for my own profit and my own advancement...God have mercy on me."

And before the breathless throng he wept.

Half an hour later Pastor Childe drove hurriedly to the door of Gill's house. It was opened by Dr. Westlake. "You have come a little too late, pastor," he said, "Gill has gone."

"Did he speak of me?" asked the pastor huskily.

"He asked for nobody else; he was conscious till the very last second. I am sorry you could not come."

"I am sorry, too," muttered the other, and went homewards a humbled man.

XIX. A VISION OF HAPPINESS

"And what did Bexley say about it?" asked Anthony. He was fulfilling his promise to take tea with Geraldine, and they were sitting in the big library at High Mount, a pleasing fire of logs crackling on the hearth and the vision of Geraldine officiating at the tea-table to complete the engaging picture. Every day was making a difference to her now, and her improvement even during this week was a testimony alike to her constitution and the happy order of her mind.

"Bexley saw it was uncanny," she replied, holding up a piece of sugar with an inquiring lift of the brow. "One? Yes, uncanny, that was Bexley's own word. It was awful rough luck on the Government, because the seat was sure, but Stope gave it away. You see," this very wisely, "you can't tell a fervid audience that whilst you will go to Parliament if you are sent, you'd just as soon stay on in Bulboro' attending to the souls of your fellow-creatures, without losing a lot of support, because to a lot of people the kind of Member of Parliament a man is going to get, is ever so much more important than the place in heaven somebody else is going to get, and that speech lost Stope his place, in Westminster."

"He doesn't seem depressed," said Anthony. "I saw him an hour ago, and he was awfully cheerful. He is going to re-establish the Sunday School, and he is cutting politics right out. Stope is a finer man than I thought."

"And Childe?" she asked.

He nodded.

"And Childe also," he agreed. "He was splendid last night—it takes little short of a hero to come out as he did—I have been rather hasty in my judgment of Childe."

There was laughter in the grey eyes of Geraldine Brand as she surveyed him; there was a whole world of kindness, too.

"Is Bulboro' going to discover that it has been hasty about you?" she asked half seriously. "Will it ever learn to whom it owes the conversion of Mr. Stope and the pastor?"

"To whom it owes?" He was genuinely puzzled.

"They say you bullied Mr. Childe into penitence."

He went red. She had the power of making him feel extremely embarrassed.

"I don't think you realize," she went on quietly, "how much of a reformer you are, or how devoted a Christian you are either."

"Oh, nonsense!" the uncomfortable Anthony wriggled uneasily; "I'm not a Christian—I'm next door to heathenism." She met his eyes and he held them.

"Yet I am glad you have illusions about me," he went on slowly, "and it requires an effort on my part to undeceive you."

"Why?"

He made no direct response, and she repeated the question as a woman will, who knows as she asks that the answer is one to be feared and courted.

"Because I rather think—I love you," he said, and she dropped her eyes.

They did not speak for a long time, then she held out her hand shyly and he took it.

"Write to me when I am away," she said, and raised her lips to his.

A discontented Ahmet called upon his master in the morning following the return to Parliament of Ambrose Cohen by the slender majority of seven, and Ahmet had a complaint to make.

"Lord," he said, "I have served you many months in this terrible city, and though I have made you coffee and you have spoken good words to me, I am tired and desire to return to my own people."

"This is sudden," said Anthony in Arabic. "Why are you weary of this land?"

"There are very good reasons, lord," said the man. "First, there is no woman here whom I care for, for as your lordship knows, it is forbidden—"

"That I know," said Anthony hastily; "but why do you not wait a little longer, Ahmet?"

"Lord, this is a cold place, and very uncomfortable."

"But soon the summer will be here," humoured Anthony, "and the flowers put a new heart into you."

But Ahmet shook his head.

"I do not like these people," he persisted, "nor the fat man of your house who is full of solemn words, nor the fat woman who cooks."

"Yet wait," said Anthony, "for who knows what the morrow brings forth; leave it with God, Ahmet"

Ahmet grunted and went away. He had in some mysterious manner learned that Mr. Jocks was a little less than polite in the language he used to him, for Mr. Jocks, depending entirely upon the heathen's ignorance of the elements of the English language, had not chosen his epithets with care, and Ahmet, who had occupied his time wisely during his leisure hours, had picked up sufficient English to reply, on the first occasion which offered, in the spirit in which he was addressed. It was unfortunate that Ahmet's language was very crude and unacceptable even to an English manservant. Jocks had reported the matter, and Anthony had soothed him down. "You are sure you were not rude to him?" he asked.

"I was not knowingly offensive to Ahmet," replied Jocks carefully. "I may have been a little comic."

The spectacle of a comic Jocks appealed to Anthony, but he kept a serious face.

"I only want to warn you," he said, "that Ahmet is picking up English at a rapid rate, as you discovered this morning, and you cannot expect to say even comic things to him with impunity. I thought I heard you the other day," he went on carelessly, "addressing him in terms which were not in keeping with the dignity of a God-fearing butler, Mr. Jocks."

Mr. Jocks was taken aback.

"I was not aware," he stammered, "that I—"

"I know you were not," said Anthony. "I was wandering about the garden, and unfortunately I happened to be in the neighbourhood of the kitchen window without my being aware of the fact until I heard your voice—and your kitchen manners. Anyway, no great harm is done. Leave Ahmet alone. These Moors are very bad men to make enemies of, as you probably know."

Thereafter a new terror was added to Mr. Jocks's life.

He was aware that all black people were more or less barbarians, and that the barbarian equivalent for what in England is assault and battery, is, in the wilder parts of the world, something nearly approaching wilful murder. Also that foreigners used knives of a peculiar and bloodthirsty pattern.

From that day Mr. Jocks became a little more deferential, and Ahmet, as he realized the change, a trifle more insolent, and the strange relationship had ended by Jocks being chased through the orchard by a wrathful Arab, knife in hand.

Fortunately, Anthony had been at hand to call off the vengeful man, and he had addressed a few remarks concerning Ahmet and his ancestry which, translated, might well have placed the worthy young doctor in the category of Bulboro's impossible people.

Thereafter Ahmet nursed a grudge against all the world, and the outcome of his unhappiness was his application to be released from the service to return to his beloved Coast. Though Mr. Jocks had frequently referred to his intention of retiring from a position which no longer offered him the opportunities of yore, he was by no means anxious to surrender a good job where the pay was excellent, and the work not particularly hard. But now for the first time in his life he began to ponder the problem of retirement, Ahmet being the main cause.

Anthony, watching the trend of events, saw with regret that he would have to return his wilful servant to his native home, though he would miss the coffee which only Ahmet could make. Ahmet was one of his vanities; he realized this with a start. He had brought him as his servant because he resented in a dim kind of way being transplanted from his unique isolation into the association of ordinary men. The attachment of Ahmet to himself had been typical of that spirit of superiority which he had brought to Bulboro'. It was, when he came to consider the matter logically, just as absurd for him to have imported a native of the Coast to make his coffee as it would have been had he taken a fat English cook to the Congo because she was an adept in the preparation of beef-steak pudding. Against that point of view (so he argued in desperation, since no man cares to admit to himself a weakness, which, if it were true, might conceivably be apparent to the rest of the world) was the fact that he had had Ahmet as his servant for some four or five years. But he had had other servants equally useful. He had had a Kroo boy who could have assisted him in his scientific work. No, he reluctantly admitted, he had retained Ahmet because he was picturesque. Now Ahmet was making himself a nuisance; and an hour after he urged his turbulent servant to exercise patience, he sent for the man, and Ahmet came a little sulkily.

"Oh, Ahmet," said Anthony, with a smile, "when this moon is gone you go in a ship across the black waters for your own land."

"God be praised," said Ahmet, "for I am tired of this land where there is neither sun nor beauty. But you, my lord, do you go also?"

Anthony shook his head.

"I stay," he said, "there being much work to do here."

Ahmet looked thoughtfully at his master, and twiddled his bare toes—he invariably left his slippers at the door.

"Lord, I do not go far," he said; "and it has been told me by the Christ man that by the favour of God I might pass across land to my destination."

"To whither?" asked Anthony, and looked up in surprise. "To Tangier," replied the man promptly, "for that is my home, lord."

"Certainly, Ahmet, you may go to Tangier. There is no reason why you should not," said Anthony. "But what of your friends on the Coast?"

Ahmet smiled broadly. "Lord," said he, without shame, "those on the Coast I do not like any more, for I have thought of them for a long time, and behold, it has been revealed to me that they are not good people."

"But wherefore?" asked Anthony, interested.

"Anito," said the man, giving him his Coast name, "of my faith there are two classes, the Suni and the Shiah, and I am of the Suni, worshipping God in the true way, and believing in certain revelations which were not made to these other dogs."

Anthony laughed. "Get out," he said, "you beastly sectarian."

Ahmet departed a few days later. He left by the train which carried Geraldine Brand to London, and Anthony was able to combine a pleasure with a duty.

Geraldine was going on to the South of France for a much-needed change, and her travelling companion was Sir John.

"And I can wish for no one nicer," said Geraldine gaily. "Daddy is an ideal travelling companion."

Daddy, who had been a charming travelling companion to so many, smiled, and found it convenient to move off to the bookstall to buy the magazines which Geraldine had indicated.

"I shall miss you," said Anthony quite naturally, and wondered why he had said so banal a thing.

"I am afraid you will not miss me as much as you pretend," she laughed, but there was a serious look in her lovely grey eyes.

"I don't know why I should miss you," he said half to himself. "I have seen so little of you, but somehow the knowledge that you were in Bulboro' was enough."

"Enough for what?" she challenged.

"Enough to satisfy so humble a soul as mine"

"Are you so humble?" she asked quietly.

"I think I am getting to be that way," he answered. "You see, it has been borne in upon me that I am rather a prig, and I am trying to convert myself

to a more lowly frame of mind. There goes my last affectation." He pointed to the tarboshed head of Ahmet, which was stuck out of a third-class carriage regarding the interested spectators on the platform with amusement and, it must be confessed, no small derision.

"My last affectation," he said again; "he goes back to Tangier and to happiness."

"It would be pleasant to know that happiness lay at the end of a railway journey," she said, looking at him absently.

"If one could only take a ticket to happiness! That would never pay the railway companies," he smiled; "there would be very few return tickets issued."

She shook her head.

"I don't know," she said; "poor humanity is never satisfied, and sitting in the happy valley one may well regret the faraway plains."

There was a little silence, which she broke.

"I wonder," she asked thoughtfully, "whether your life is not so full already, that if you could find happiness at the end of a railway journey you would trouble to take even the single ticket?"

"I think I should," he said quietly, looking up into her face, "and I think I might find it in a very humble way."

"That is twice you have used the word humble," she smiled; "it is a word which comes oddly from you. Exactly, what is your idea of taking your pleasures humbly?"

"Perhaps," he said, avoiding her eyes, "I could make holiday in some southern place, where in a quiet hotel, with a big garden full of roses at this season of the year, a man might find rest. And every day I could stroll on the quay by the blue sea, and presently I should be rewarded perhaps by the most beautiful sight that any man could wish to see—the vision of a sweet, brave, English girl walking in the sunshine, effacing the memories of a bad-tempered doctor man who once was over-bold. I should not intrude upon her, but watch her at a distance, and find happiness in that."

"But she, practical sort," smiled the girl in protest, "would rather you crossed the road to her and carried her off to one of the innumerable cafés of Nice, and made her drink a dish of chocolate."

"You are spoiling the romance," he smiled.

Sir John came running back as the guard's warning cry rang along the platform.

"Au revoir," said Anthony, and taking her hand he held it for a long minute. "Come back well and strong, because there is an army of young men in this county who will be waiting most anxiously for your return."

She stepped back to allow her father to enter the carriage. When the door closed behind him, she came back to the place at the window.'

"Poor army," she said with a smile; "when I reach Bulboro' again I shall look only for one face."

She lowered her voice as she spoke, and she held out her hand as the train made its first slow move. He took the hand that rested in his and kissed it.

Ahmet was an interested and excited spectator of the action. "Look," said he proudly, "that man is my master; praise be to God, he has found a woman at last!"

His hearer, Mr. Montague Silver, dressed in some extravagance for a visit to town, heard the rapid flow of Arabic uncomprehendingly, but feeling that some show of politeness was due, he answered in a language quite as foreign:

"Oui, oui."

THE END