



THE GOD of
THIS WORLD
by JOHN B.
MIDDLETON.

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THE GOD OF
"
THIS WORLD.

A STORY FOR THE TIMES.

By JOHN B. MIDDLETON.

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TO my disinherited fellow-citizens, among whom I have laboured for a lifetime, sharing in their heroic struggles for a bare subsistence, under a system which, in a country politically free and abounding in wealth, binds them to degrading toil by fetters more irksome and enduring than those of the chattel slave, I dedicate this work——

WITH the fervent hope that they may be induced by the reading of this story to strike an effective blow for Economic Freedom and the restoration of the Natural Order.

The Author.

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CHAPTER I.

THE RENUNCIATION.

ON a bright sunny day in the month of June, 1986, a young man sat in a spacious apartment in one of the large mansions which overlook the Royal Gardens in the Imperial City. Luxury surrounded him on every side. The room, which was octagonal in form, bore evidence of the refinement in taste, in art, and in science which was to be expected of that advanced age. The ceiling was a glory of artistic work, crowded with voluptuous figures, and the painted panellings of the walls, while not varying from the theme, excelled in the soft luxuriance of the scenes and the figures which were portrayed.

The appointments of this chamber were in keeping with the magnificence of its decorations. It was the library-study of its owner, and contained many thousands of richly-bound volumes, enclosed in ingeniously contrived cases, which needed only the touching of

a button to bring any required book to the hand of the reader. Indeed modern invention had made everything easy to those who could afford to pay, and most certainly the occupant of this house was such an one. Electrical appliances of various kinds were there to assist in work or amusement. Communication could be made with people far or near, not only by speech, but actual sight. Not only so, but the worker at the magnificently appointed secretaire could, by switching on electrical appliances, summon to his aid the resources of science, art, and literature stored in the great galleries, museums, or emporiums of the Empire. Did he desire to see the pages of a rare book such as was not contained on his ample shelves, he had but to ring up an attendant at the Imperial Museum, who on receiving the number and page required, would open it out for his distant reader's inspection. Had he occasion to search the stock of one of the great emporiums which faced the broad road of the business part of the Imperial City, he had but to ring up the particular tradesman he wished to consult, and the man and his wares would be set before him. The contents of the great Gallery of Arts also were at his disposal in a similar manner, but here there was a serious limitation, inasmuch as the works of the masters of bygone times had perished in the upheaval which blotted out the life of centuries, and founded the present regime.

Gerard Staunch, the sole occupant of the library, was altogether oblivious of the things we have described.

His head was sunk upon his breast, and his attitude one of deep thought, manifestly not of a pleasant character. There was a cause for the anxiety which his attitude betokened. He had been summoned by his uncle, Dr. Blount, to explain certain utterances animadverting on the religion of the State as by law established. For, both the elder and the younger men were ordained ministers of the Church, although there was of course a great disparity in their relative positions. An orphan son of a favourite sister, Gerard Staunch had been at an early age taken into the great Primate's abode, and nurtured as only a son could be. He had become dear to the heart of the great man, who had lavished upon him a wealth of love and tenderness, and his education was such as to fit him for the very highest position in the State Church.

It was no wonder therefore that Staunch so keenly felt the position he occupied on that eventful day. The feelings of tender love which he knew his uncle held towards him he thoroughly reciprocated. Up to a year ago he had never thought of questioning in any way the religion in which he had been nurtured, and of which his great relative was so eminent an exponent and representative. Then, however, he began to doubt, and subsequently, through an association he had formed with an aged man of the plebian caste, an utter revulsion took place. A flood of light broke in upon his awakened conscience, followed by joy in new and unaccustomed

spiritual life, and this engendered a loathing of the materialistic religion in which he had been educated, and to which he had sworn allegiance.

This great joy in the new birth, and dislike of the old order, did not come all at once. It could not be expected that the young man would break away suddenly from the associations and teaching of a lifetime. There were also feelings in respect to the memory of his sainted mother—his father he never knew—and the confidence with which she had placed him at her death, under the care of her brother. These, coupled with his education for the Church, and the almost filial affection he bore his uncle, made it a supremely difficult thing to break away from the associations of the old religion, and to for ever end his career in association with his uncle and the Church.

But the die had now been cast. Before a brilliant gathering in the Metropolitan Church, on the previous day, he had made his renunciation. Never before was there such a scene, within the memory of the oldest present, as when the fearless young preacher declared from the pulpit that he could no longer eat the bread of a church that he had neither faith nor confidence in. More burning words he uttered, declaiming with flashing eye and eloquent tongue against the crimes, vices, and misgovernment done in the name of a religion which he now loathed and reprobated. Men rose in their places in the magnificent church, wildly waving their arms, and ejaculating in an incoherent manner

their wrath at the young man's words, whilst women screamed and fainted. Not only so, but by the ingenuity which characterised the invention of the time, the whole was depicted before many thousands of people in various parts of the country, who were unable or unwilling to attend the service.

The alarm, not to say panic, was intensified by the fact that this was the first defection from the patrician class in the matter of the dominant religion. Ugly rumours had of late been circulated with respect to the attitude of the plebians. A strange thing had occurred. In the house of a poor widow, an old man who had been lying in a helpless state for a great number of years, was reported to have recovered not only physical health, but an almost miraculous grasp of memory, and it was in consequence of certain things he said, that restlessness was being shown by the class amongst whom he dwelt. But here was the heresy breaking out in the very centre of the social system, at the heart of government, and in the person of a near relative of the Primate himself. The whole fabric of the national religion appeared to be breaking down, and everyone knew that with it must go the power and privilege which rested on it.

All that day, therefore, and far into the night, men and women anxiously discussed the situation, and on the morning following speculation was still rife as to what would be the outcome of the bold words which the young priest had used in his renunciation. It was

known in the city that a meeting of the great Council of State, over which the Emperor presided, had been held, in the middle of the forenoon, at which the Primate and other great officers of the church were present. The church and the state were one, the only instrument of government, and exercised executive power under the Emperor.

But no report from that secret conclave was ever allowed to be made public, and such was the subservience of the press that in no case had any report or even speculation as to the nature of their proceedings ever appeared. Indeed in the morning editions no reference was made to the startling affair of the previous day, or the alarm raised and the uneasiness which prevailed in the Imperial City. The Primate was a powerful minister, his disfavour being sufficient to blast the reputation of any individual or newspaper. Nevertheless everybody felt that they were upon the eve of a crisis, and when it was known that the great churchman had returned from the Council to his residence, after a sitting extending over several hours, it was felt that he was about to take decisive action against his rebellious nephew.

“So you have consummated your folly at last, Gerard,” said Dr. Blount, as he entered the room, “notwithstanding the repeated advice and warnings I have given you.”

The young man had risen to greet his uncle, but he

was restrained by the stern look in his face, and could only answer in a low voice,

“ I was constrained by a Power higher than I have ever had any conception of under this roof to say what I did, and having made that declaration I am ready to lay down the charge you gave me, and to accept any consequences which may follow on my action.”

The young man had gained confidence as he spoke, and his last words were uttered with animation. The two as they faced each other formed a striking contrast, not only in respect to age, but in the expression of their countenances. Whilst that of the older man was constrained and cold, his nephew's face shone with a lustre of new-born enthusiasm and inspiration.

But this had no effect on the impassive demeanour of the Primate, who coldly replied,

“ It seems to me that anything further I can say will be of little use. I have on many occasions told you that the views you have been developing during the last few months are incompatible with any office held in the church.” And then with a voice of entreaty, which appeared to burst from him notwithstanding his restraint, he said,

“ Why will you persist in throwing yourself away upon a theory which was exploded three quarters of a century ago?”

“ It was never exploded, nor even entirely crushed, uncle,” replied the young man, a gleam of hope appearing in his face. “ The Master never will be without His witnesses.”

“ But the religion had its trial for 1900 years, and if what tradition says has any truth in it—there is no written record that I know of—the world appears to have been in a dreadful condition. Surely it was high time to try a change when, if we are to believe what is said, the whole world was full of corruption, war, poverty, famine, and cruelty.”

“ Oh, believe me, dear uncle, the fault was not with the religion, but lay entirely with those whom it was intended to save and bless. From its very inception that false god Mammon ——”

“ Stop,” thundered the Primate, his eyes flashing fire, “ I cannot allow our sacred religion to be libelled in that manner. You have admitted on many occasions that the god who holds the allegiance of this and all other nations reigned supremely in the hearts of his people ages before the foundation of the Christian religion. Then who was this upstart, Jesus of Nazareth? According to your own showing the profoundest mystery surrounded his birth, he was a man of no reputation, and his associates were of such a low type that no one of any standing, either then or now, would think of recognising him. Our god is great, he compasseth the earth, his disciples sit upon thrones, in

the seats of judgment, and he has power over the hearts of all men.”

“ But, dear uncle, the religion was that of One who exalted humility, to whom it was great to be counted the least among His brethren, and who told us that the meek shall inherit the earth.”

“ Bah, what nonsense is here. Where did you find the humility which you say the Founder taught? Was it in the throned kings, popes, bishops, or in any nation of antiquity? We do know that at the time of the revolution which led to the founding of the present dynasty the world was an armed camp. The followers of whom you call the meek and lowly Jesus were flying at each other's throats, and such abominations existed that it was impossible for society to go on any longer. It was in fact a vast system of organised hypocrisy. Everybody preached peace, and all followed war; a leading principle of the religious system was that to be poor was to be blessed, and yet everybody made haste to be rich, tripping over and murdering each other in the process; and instead of humility, so far as I can see, everybody was filled with blatant pride—pride of station, of caste, of the very vestments in which the priests were clothed—and instead of there being only two grades of society, as with us, there were hundreds, the members of each little coterie looking with contempt upon those of others they supposed had less wealth, who had not in their opinion quite as much intelligence as themselves, or were tradesmen or something else a little

below them in social standing. Our god alone stood supremely above and indifferent to all this, and with his few disciples, waited the coming emancipation which they knew was near at hand."

"But surely you will admit that Mammon contributed to and hastened on the catastrophe which overtook the nations of the earth?"

"Most certainly; I glory in it. Our mighty god had his evangelists in every part of the so-called civilised world. Though despised by many, they were seers and prophets, and beheld the light of the coming day. In their hands the sacred trust of our most holy religion was safe, and when the general crash came, in which the whole of humanity was involved, Mammonism was completely triumphant, and became the established religion in every land."

"You ask me of the pagan nations," went on the Primate, interpreting to his own purpose an ejaculatory remark which fell from his nephew. "Well, that was an easy conquest. They had been so badly treated by the Christians, that they were delighted to receive representatives from us who taught them the delights of Mammonism. Under the old regime not only were they divided by many clamouring sects and parties, but they were made to drink fire-water, to quarrel with each other, and ultimately their territories were filched from them."

“ And since then there has been profound peace,” continued the Churchman, with a lofty look in his handsome face, that betokened his sincerity. “ With one faith, one church, and the various countries governed on a single economic principle, there is nothing left to quarrel about. All the old shams have passed into oblivion. The sham of constitutional government, by which what was called the United Kingdom had been enslaved for centuries, may be cited as typical of the rest. The people had a fond delusion, that having the power to vote for members of the legislature, they participated in the government. This mockery was kept up until the end, amongst other things, by gradually extending the franchise until the smallest householders were included in the voters’ list, but they had no more influence in shaping the destiny of their nation than in the ordering of the universe. Rulers and those who immediately surrounded them, or acted in their stead, made wars, concluded treaties, and generally ordered the insular and foreign policy of the country without reference to the people. There was a caste known as the governing class, which a statesman, at one time the people’s idol, but who subsequently was admitted to the higher orders, described as ‘ those who toil not neither do they spin;’ these, and a large number of others known as the aristocracy and landed gentry, lived on the wealth which they extorted from the people, whilst thirteen millions of the latter existed on the border-line of starvation, and many died from lack of food.”

“ But the greatest sham of all,” continued the Primate, “ was the great western continent, known then as the Republic of the United States. In that country, where the constitution declared all men equal, chattel slavery was an institution for more than half its history as federal states, and for the remainder the whole people were held in an industrial bondage much worse than actual slavery. It was a land of millionaires, who commanded the stupid admiration of the people, much after the same fashion as that of the average Britisher, who threw up his sweaty cap and hurraged at the mere name of a lord. All these hypocritical governments have happily passed away, and given place to this one and indivisible, under the ægis of the great god.”

And then the speaker, who, warming with his subject, had become almost unconscious of the presence of his nephew, was suddenly recalled by a weird and pathetic cry uttered by the younger man, which made his blood boil, his eyes flash, and brought an angry exclamation to his lips. It was :

“ O Christ, have mercy on Thy unworthy servants, who have at all times betrayed Thy sacred trust, and given occasion to the heathen to blaspheme.”

“ Have a care !” the Primate said threateningly. “ It is quite true, owing to the fact that we have had neither heresy nor schism amongst us in all our history, we have no law dealing with such crimes as yours; but the

constitution can be amended, and transgressors against our holy religion dealt with."

"Can I not make you understand that it is the same malign influence which rendered Christianity helpless in the centuries gone by which is triumphantly established to-day?" broke in the young man. "That for which Christ shed his blood in order to overthrow is still more permanently in the ascendant than it was two thousand years ago. The benefits which you claim to have arisen from the present established religion are the inheritance of only the few, while the many are poor, helpless, degraded, and unenfranchised. But Christ still lives, and the remnant of His little flock are faithful to their trust."

"And you," sneered the uncle, "elect to be the leader of this ragged lot. You, the son of an almost regal house, destined for high position in the church, choose to throw away from you this great power for good, and become an outcast from all decent society. Be it so. Only remember that your action makes you and me henceforth strangers, and maybe enemies."

The young man turned sorrowfully away, recognising the utter hopelessness of further expostulation or appeal. He held in his hand a small book evidently of great age, for its covers were faded and worn. Out of this he had intended to read to his uncle in support of the position he had irrevocably taken, but with a groan he carefully replaced it in his pocket, and left the room.

It was a wonderful sight the Primate looked out upon as he watched his nephew walk slowly down the street. From the window of the library the young man had just left could be seen airships moving about in all directions, their graceful proportions and outlines, varying in character, lending charm to the landscape. They ascended and descended at any point their controllers desired, and were indeed as amenable to the steering and driving apparatus as any other of the great variety of carriages to be seen entering or leaving the great park. There were no horses, all these beautiful and fairy-like vehicles being self-propelled. Radium had long since rendered up to man many of its secrets, and perpetual motion had not only been established, but was understood and easily manipulated by anyone. There was nothing in the scene to offend the most fastidious taste. All the heavy traffic was conducted by subways, which followed the course of every street and road, and here also were hidden away all the objectionable things and sights which used to offend the denizens of great cities in former ages.

But none of these things had any attraction for Dr. Blount. He attentively watched the retreating figure of the young man until Staunch turned along a street at the end of the square, and then with a sigh he left the window, and sat down to realise how empty the vast mansion had become.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE BANKER'S GARDEN.

“OH, Gerard, I am so glad to see you. It seems an age since I was with you on Saturday night, and what a lot of dreadful things have happened.”

Hope Danvers, a beautifully fair girl, whose height was above the average of the tall women of her time, was in the embrace of her lover before her sentence was finished. They were screened within the inner recesses of a magnificent garden, attached to one of the noblest houses in the Imperial City, for her father, Andrew Danvers, was the head of the National Bank, and reputed to be one of the wealthiest of the citizens.

The early summer afternoon was now advancing, but everything in that lovely garden was bright and rapidly developing. No objectionable vapours hindered vegetation or blackened the outlines of the graceful trees and bushes now bursting into leaf. Electricity and its allied forces had accomplished wonders, not only in rendering unnecessary the use of coal for lighting, driving, and heating purposes, but also in the prevention

of fogs, and, where necessary, in clearing the atmosphere from damp and humidity.

“ Dearest, you are ever in my thoughts. Your love has sustained me in the trying times of the past months, and in the crisis of yesterday. Still I am distracted with an agonising thought. All last night it haunted me, and it was present when my uncle uttered his cruel words of banishment.”

“ And that, dear Gerard?”

“ It is how I am to bear the awful penalty which I must pay of being separated from you.”

“ Oh, my dream, my dream,” and the girl clung convulsively to him.

“ What was that, my darling; tell me.”

“ I slept little last night, for I was thinking of the mental distress you must be suffering after all you had passed through.”

“ It was not that, believe me. What I had done, in itself filled me with intensest joy. It was only in respect to you that my spirits forsook me, for I knew that after my renunciation, your father and mother would never look upon me with favour again. But your dream?”

“ I had been with my mother nearly all the day,” answered Hope. “ She was confined to her room, and unable through indisposition to attend the service. What you said followed in strange contrast to the

solemnity of the ritual and the richness of the music. These had come to us through the electric recorder, and when they ceased, and we saw you mount the rostrum, I had a tightness at the throat, and knew that something awful was impending. Then the words you uttered, the great excitement which followed, and the unseemly and sudden end to which the service came, were too much for my mother, who fainted away. She appeared to be fascinated with the terrible scene whilst it lasted, and when all had passed, she gave a scream and fainted. I was attending to her when my father rushed into the room, having been informed of what had happened, and he was very angry and distressed."

"He was at the meeting of the Council this morning, and it appears from what my uncle said, that it would have gone ill with me if a law had been found by which I could be proceeded against. But tell me the dream, my darling," and the young man gazed into the girl's clear blue eyes with infinite love and tenderness.

"Well," she began, "I dreamt that we, you and I, stood on the sea shore. A great stretch of boundless water was before us, and behind were long wide wastes of desert land. It seemed as though we two were the only beings left in a lost and deserted world. But I was not unhappy. You only were grave and sad, with your eyes fixed on the horizon, gazing as if expecting to see something. I tried to comfort you and make you smile, but without success, and just as I was thinking of some fresh thing

to say, your face changed and became dark as night. With one arm outstretched, and one finger pointing over the vast mighty ocean, you cried in a terrible voice, 'See, there they are. I must go, I must go.' Frightened beyond measure, I looked in the direction you were pointing, and was startled to see a large ship of bright gleaming gold. Then another appeared, and another, and another, until seven of these brilliant, shining vessels were in sight. So strange it seemed that there was no disturbance on the water, nor the slightest ripple left in their track."

She paused a moment.

"Well, sweetheart, what next? There is nothing very alarming so far. You and I were together, and ah! dearest, if that could only remain so, that we always possessed each other, would it matter what happened? If good, we would rejoice; if evil, the consolation of our love would help us to bear whatever there might be in store."

"Ah, but Gerard," she cried, a shadow crossing her lovely face, "I have not told you the worst, and if I thought it would ever come true, I am sure my strength would fail before I finished relating the rest of my dream. But it could not be. You don't believe in dreams do you?"

"Not if they make my loved one unhappy," he answered tenderly. "And if you would rather not

finish the recital of your dream, if it hurts you, why ——”

“ Oh, but I must tell you,” she interrupted eagerly. “ Then I want you to say that it will never, never be fulfilled.”

“ Dear heart,” he said, “ you know whatever happens, if my life could save yours, it would be freely given.”

“ I know, I know,” she replied, glancing up with perfect faith and trust, “ as I would give mine for you. So,” she went on, “ the seven ships came nearer and nearer, without the slightest sign of life on their decks, apparently guided by no mortal hand, and when they were a little distance from the shore, suddenly stopped and turned their broadsides towards us. How gorgeous the sight was ! The glittering sails of transparent gold swaying gently to and fro, ere they became motionless upon the smooth surface of the water. But the beauty of it to me was momentary, for I was horror-struck to find you were leaving me without a word or look, making straight for the ships, crying ‘ I must go, I must go.’ I screamed out to you not to leave me, and tried to follow, but I could not move; something seemed to hold me, and keep me rooted to the spot. You took no notice of me, but went right on to the nearest ship, which lowered its side to enable you to enter, then slowly righted itself, turned round and noiselessly glided away in the direction whence it came. The others

turned in the same manner and followed. Then a very curious thing happened. It seemed as if a thin sheet of grey visible vapour intervened between me and the golden fleet, making it appear shadowy and indistinct. I should think it would be what past generations used to call a fog. But all the time you were going further and further away from me. Terrified and despairing, I watched you and the now ghostly flotilla disappear until the last faintest shadow was gone, then with arms outstretched and uttering one long, wild, wailing shriek, I woke." The girl's voice ended with a sob.

Gerard drew her closely to him, telling her not to trouble so about what was only a dream, yet at the same time realising with a sharp pang the prophetic significance of it.

"The scream I gave on waking," she said, "has haunted me ever since, and frightened my mother. And now when you speak of the penalty of separation I am filled with the dread of some impending evil. But this stand you have made, is it final? Do you seriously intend to give up the god of your father? The god you have worshipped all these years, to whom has been given the bright happy days of your youth? Disown the god of my father and mother? Repudiate my god? No, no, you cannot do it, Gerard. See how happy we have been, paying our vows at the same shrine, at one in all things."

A pained look came into his eyes.

“Beloved,” and he reverently kissed the girl’s fair brow, “that is the agony of it, the thought that in this as in other things, we may be divided.”

“Oh, but I cannot think of being parted from you. As I understand, this Christ you have often spoken to me about is poor and friendless in the world. How can he be of any possible use to people, whether they be rich or poor? Our god is mighty in all things, and commands the homage of the rich, the learned, and the powerful. Behold all about this fair city, how wonderfully we all partake of his bounty.”

“My dearest,” answered the young man, “things are not what they seem. Mammon has, for the achievement of his purpose, made the few of his ardent disciples rich and powerful, but that is at the cost of the impoverished and enslaved many. You who have been brought up in luxury and refinement, know nothing of these things. Indeed, communication between the two classes who constitute this and other nations is strictly forbidden.”

“That I know, dear Gerard, and I have always been taught that it is a perfectly right thing, for, you know, these are the people who have to work in order that we may be provided with all the nice things that we have. They do not know any better, and besides, somebody has to do the work.”

“Dearest, I know that is exactly how you have been taught, and it is marvellous how all our people have learned the lesson. But my religion teaches that in the sight of God all men are equal; indeed, that he who is greatest in the kingdom of God is least.”

“Oh, how can you believe such things? How ever can you believe that the poor degraded people who live on the other side of the river can be at all like your noble uncle or my father?”

“You speak as you have been taught, but remember, my darling, you have never had intercourse with them, and, indeed, have rarely seen one of them.”

“But we know, Gerard, they are poor, ignorant, and degraded.”

“For our sakes Christ became poor. He laid his glory by, and came and dwelt with men in order to make them happy. With Him there is only one class. In bygone times, as I have been told, there were many classes, as there were many religions. Men changed from one religion to another, and they changed from one class to another; a man would be rich and powerful at one time, and poor and degraded at another. On the other hand, a poor man would just as suddenly achieve wealth and greatness. All the while the great bulk of the people, in what were called the civilised countries, were doomed to abject poverty and a fateful struggle for subsistence.”

“ You argue, then, that even under Christianity the common people were better off than they are now?”

“ Hope,” replied Gerard, with a sad expression, “ that is one of the mysteries I have not been able to solve. I am quite certain that Christ lived in the hearts of many. Men of boundless wealth, such as those even of to-day do not possess, put their trust in Him, and dispensed their bounty in the building of churches, schools, hospitals, and libraries, and indulged generally in what was called philanthropic work. They lived luxuriously, very much as we do, although they had not the advantages which science confers upon us. To the poor, Christ was often precious, appearing to make their burdens light, and enabling them to extract happiness from an existence which would otherwise have been one of dull, dreary, and monotonous toil. I cannot pretend to understand it, and there is much more of violent contrast which is alike inscrutable to me. But I am wearying you, beloved.”

“ No, no, Gerard, I am intensely interested.”

“ Well, as I have said, I cannot understand it all. Men and nations who professed to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus went to war and killed each other with murderous weapons. Indeed, just before the Great Upheaval, all invention was practically subordinated to the making of engines of destruction. A clergyman of the Christian church conceived the idea of those beautiful flying machines you see soaring in

the sky above us, only in his case they were destined to carry projectiles for the killing of his fellow-Christians.”

“What a horrible state of things,” ejaculated Hope. “Surely, Gerard, things are much better now. There is but one god, only two classes of society, and war does not exist.”

Gerard shook his head mournfully, and then a bright light radiating his face, exclaimed, “It is the mark of the beast, and not the will of my Saviour at all. Christ foretold that false prophets should arise, and so they did, deceiving even the children of light.”

“But how know you this, dear Gerard, and from where have you got the many wonderful things you have told me, which are in none of the books contained in my father’s great library?”

“Well, as I have often told you, for months now I have been unable to accept the teachings of the established religion. I could not reconcile them with the principles of eternal justice. There somehow crept into my mind a feeling that the religion we observed had supplanted one which was far better. The reign of Mammonism has been permitted by the true God because of the unworthiness of His servants in past times. But now I know the true way. I have told you of an old man who has been lying in a helpless state, most of the time unconscious, for more years than anyone living can reckon. Of late a marked improvement has taken place in his condition. Not only is

physical health returning to his frame, but his mental faculties also show signs of renewed life. He says many things which are strange and incoherent to the people about him, but they coincide with much that has been in my thoughts of late. The old man is now getting about, and saying very unfamiliar things to the people with whom he mixes. Most of them take very little heed of him, putting his declarations down as hallucinations, results of his long illness, but there are some, and the company is a growing one, who hang upon his words, and desire to learn more of his teachings. I saw him on Saturday, and he was in much distress of mind, saying what an unworthy messenger he was, and yearning for a book he called the Bible."

"What manner of book is that?" asked Hope.

"I do not yet know," answered her lover, "but I have made a discovery which I am sure is important, amongst a lot of documents and books, contained in a strong box, which were given to me by my mother before she died. I found in the box a little book entitled 'The New Testament.' That it has a bearing upon the book desired by the aged man I am quite certain, and some of its sentiments I have been telling you this afternoon. But there is much more, for it tells about the Christ of whom I have been speaking to you. But come, let us read of this Divine Being, the record of whose life transcends in marvels anything we have ever heard in connection with the state religion."

“And I,” said Hope, producing from the folds of her skirt a beautiful miniature volume, having the appearance of a note-book, “will wind up my oraphone, and it shall take down all you read, so I may ponder over it when you are away from me.”

In that fair garden, surrounded by everything that was beautiful and bright in nature, with the glow of the declining sun slanting in upon them, and adding glory to the scene, Gerard read from his little book stories of the Christ. Marvellous was all this to a girl who had been accustomed to associate religion with pomp and power, and piety with earthly wisdom. Here was the triumph of meekness, the power of non-resistance, the ever-prevailing influence of spiritual love.

“Oh, Gerard, what is this strange power I feel coming over me,” Hope said, as the reader concluded one of the more striking passages from his book. “I have never felt anything in my life like this before.”

“I do not know, dearest,” he replied, “only that you appear to be entering upon the same experiences I have been passing through the last few months, and which have become intensified since I discovered this volume.”

As they looked into each other's eyes, and he drew her close to him, their love appeared to be an entirely new thing, free from the dross and materialism which they now felt had characterised it in the past.

There were shadows in the garden, as yet unnoticed by the lovers ; the long afternoon was gliding into evening, and already the sun had sunk behind the tall trees which bounded the grounds. These were not dark shadows ; indeed they only seemed to concentrate and preserve the glorious light of the departing sun. Quite otherwise, however, was that of Andrew Danvers, banker, who for a little while had been observing his daughter and her lover, quite unseen by them. His presence was dark indeed. At the best of times the head of the National Bank was not exactly the sort of man you would become enamoured with. His big and coarse figure, crowned with a head of extraordinary proportions, and adorned with small piercing eyes, deep set under huge eyebrows, was anything but prepossessing under the most favourable circumstances. Now his face was distorted with violent passion, and when he revealed himself by standing in front of the lovers, both gave a start, and Hope instinctively clung to her companion.

“ Unhand my daughter,” Danvers roared, purposely ignoring the movement. “ How dare you lay your polluted hands upon her ? ”

“ Oh, father, how can you say such things ? ”

“ You go to your mother,” retorted the banker, “ and leave me to deal with this fellow.”

He took the girl somewhat rudely by the shoulder, and pushed her towards the house, and then with a scowl turned again to Staunch.

But his task here was a light one. The young man had already imbibed deeply of the spirit which when reviled, revileth not again, and the false accusations of the irate father, as well as his tirade of abuse, were submitted to with bowed head and a meek bearing. This was an attribute Danvers did not expect from the nephew of the proud Primate, and it so nonplussed him that he turned on his heel and walked away, just managing to ejaculate, as he did so,

“ Begone ! and never let me see your face again.”

Whither should he go? Cast out by his uncle, and now rejected by the father of the woman he loved, what wonder if the deepening shadows of the night appeared to Gerard Staunch as the symbol of a lost hope. But as he left the patrician's grounds there was a light on his face that betokened more than the optimism of youth.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT FATHER CECIL.

GERARD STAUNCH quickened his pace when he reached the street, and walked with the air of a man whose mind was made up. He felt the hand of destiny upon him, and that power drew him away altogether from the associations of his past life.

His present experience being the antithesis of his past career, it was but natural that he should seek another sphere of activity, and this he was persuaded could only be found amongst the workers of Serphton.

The Imperial City was no longer for him. Its great palaces, broad streets, and beautiful squares, the great Cathedral Church dominating over all, in grandeur and stateliness, the place in which he had held crowds spell-bound by his fervour and eloquence—he now felt he was quitting for ever.

There was no regret in Gerard's heart, indeed he had a feeling of joy born of emancipation, having a conviction that his life's work was just beginning.

“ I will go to the ancient man of God,” he mused, “ maybe the book which I have found has some connection with the Bible he is always longing for. In any case it is a wonderful revelation, and has brought joy and hope into my life. The book cannot fail therefore to also give him satisfaction.”

There were no bridges over the broad deep river which divided the patrician city from Serphton. Such things would have been a modification of the rigid aloofness existing between the inhabitants of the two places. Communication could only be made by the subways before alluded to, exit from which on the city side was forbidden the denizens of Serphton.

By ingenious contrivances the traffic which passed from one city to the other was conducted through these immense tubes, and so vast was the area of each, and so perfect the engineering in the matter of lighting and ventilation, that the difference between them and the open air was but of small degree. There was communication between all the houses and the subways, and a corresponding subterranean way was provided for the streets of the Imperial City, all carefully guarded.

It was to one of these subways Staunch bent his steps, and as he descended in the handsome and capacious lift, he felt that he had left the Imperial City for ever. Entering a light car which carried him under the river, he soon found himself standing on a busy wharf on the further side.

Here all was bustle and work. Great vessels were loading and unloading, and the travelling cranes going to and from the vast warehouses, as if they were sentient beings. There was no smoke, for the same mighty power which drove the mechanism of vehicles was also applied to the moving of ships and the lifting of great weights.

To Serphton came the fleets of the whole earth, for it was the gateway to the Imperial City, to which tribute flowed from all nations. Although the day was far spent, work was yet proceeding, and the brilliantly lighted windows of the multitudinous works and factories rivalled in outside splendour those of the palaces on the other side of the river.

Great and varied indeed were the industries carried on in Serphton, as became an adjunct to the capital of such a mighty empire. The degree of excellence by which a manufactory was measured, and its success attained, was the minuteness of floor space occupied by its machines and the velocity and the regularity of running, so that one building of workable dimensions and height would contain the whole process from the raw material to the finished article.

In Serphton human manipulation was reduced to a minimum. Machines did everything, or almost everything, with the least conceivable control by man or woman. The work was also complete and exact, for

whether it was the manufacture of textile fabrics or that of furniture, the painting of pictures, modelling in clay, or carving in granite and marble, all was completed from start to finish before the work was automatically thrust from the machine. The fine arts, science, music, were all comingled in the wonderful mechanism, which required so few human beings to control it that, but for the hum of revolving machinery, it might be supposed that no actual industry was proceeding.

But none of these things were present in the mind of the young priest as he wended his way from the busy wharfs and passed the brilliantly lighted works and factories to that portion of the town in which dwelt the people who kept these stupendous undertakings going. There was nothing of architectural merit in any of the great buildings he had passed; utility was stamped upon their uniform plainness; and in this they were surpassed by the meanness which characterised the rows of cottages he now found himself amongst.

One thing, however, these mean streets of lowly houses had in common with the lordly mansions adorning the bank on the other side of the river, and that was perfect cleanliness. Nothing was allowed to exist in Serphton which was likely to cause annoyance or prove a nuisance to the Imperial city, and therefore light, heat, water, and everything requisite for the maintenance of a perfect sanitary condition were distributed from a

centre, the whole place being also illuminated from a considerable height by such excellent artificial means as to rival the beams of the sun itself.

Staunch paused before the door of a little house, poorer looking even than most of its neighbours, and knocking lightly, answered a cheery voice by walking into the apartment, and cordially greeting a sweet-faced woman, who welcomed him with outstretched hands.

She was of striking appearance, considerably above the average height, with an abundance of beautiful grey hair which had once been golden. Her features were singularly handsome, notwithstanding traces of deep sorrow and affliction, heroically borne. Her gentle lady-like bearing contrasted strongly with the meagreness of her attire and the poverty of the room in which she met her young friend.

“ Dear, Mrs. Ilford,” he said, “ I am so glad to see you. But where is the Father? I quite expected to find him here.”

“ He has gone to prepare the room, so that he may have it ready by the time the young men have had their supper and come to commune with him.”

“ But is he well enough to undertake such a task?” anxiously enquired the young man.

“ He has made marvellous progress, and is apparently sound both in mind and body. You remember how he was when you last saw him?”

“ How shall I ever forget it ! The serene loftiness of his soul, and his purpose of drawing men to the knowledge of the one true God, filled my heart with unutterable joy.”

“ We all felt that,” said his companion, “ but I referred more particularly to his frail appearance. He really looked as though a breath of wind would do him mortal injury.”

“ Ah ! that is why I was so anxious about him when you said he had gone forth.”

“ Well, I was made to marvel at the rapid way in which he grew strong, and as he developed physically, his memory cleared, and he has told me such strange things that if I did not know him, I should be compelled to reject them as the creations of a disordered imagination. But they are all true, as true as he is himself, and have impressed themselves so much on my mind that it becomes as it were almost like my own experience.”

“ Oh, do tell me something, that I too may share this marvellous light,” and the young man bent eagerly forward.

They were now seated on a fixed wooden settee under the window in the scantily furnished room, the bareness however relieved by the simple draperies Mrs. Ilford had bestowed with artistic taste.

“ Philip will be here directly now. He too goes to hear Father Cecil, but his supper is ready, and I can talk to you until he comes.”

“ You know the Father’s name, then,” said Gerard, using the term which, by common consent, had been applied to the old man by all the people.

“ Yes, it came to him all at once this morning, as he talked with me, and it was then he told me something of his marvellous history. He was the son of a Grandee of the past time, and was born long before the present century commenced. His father was what they called in those days a Prime Minister, descended from a long line of great people they regarded as aristocrats, the like of which do not exist now. The founder of the house was the favourite of a great Queen, who lived many hundreds of years ago, and his descendants were members of the Upper Chamber of the Legislature. In those bygone days there existed a Parliament, consisting of the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and Cecil Hughes’ father, being in direct line with the founder, and a Peer of the Realm, was a member of the first-named Chamber. When he died his eldest son went to the House of Lords to succeed him. Cecil Hughes, a younger son, was a member of the House of Commons.”

“ How curious,” interrupted Stauch, “ did they call the House of Commons by that name because it was not as great and grand as the other Chamber?”

“ Curious it was, as you say. The House of Lords was the hereditary Chamber, eldest sons succeeding to their fathers’ places, the total being kept up or augmented by the creation of fresh peers. There was quite a number of different titles, which I cannot remember now, but you will hear of them. The House of Commons consisted of nearly seven hundred men, elected by constituencies in various parts of the country, and Cecil Hughes was one of these.”

“ But what were their functions? What did they do?” asked Gerard of Mrs. Ilford.

“ They were supposed to make the laws and to govern the country, but as a matter of fact they did neither, a comparatively few people of the cult to which Father Cecil belonged really controlling all affairs. About the beginning of the present century there were great wars in various parts of the world, and this country conquered a race of people who held territory in South Africa, now inhabited and ruled by the Frankensteins, who as you know are allied with our Imperial Family. All Europe, and indeed America, were armed to the teeth, and when a war broke out between a great Power of Europe and a warlike race of people inhabiting some islands in the Far East, consternation prevailed the world over. In England it brought about what was called a political crisis. At the time a cousin of Cecil Hughes was Prime Minister, who had with him a man of commanding influence, Joshua Butler by name, a

plebian, who had pushed his way by pertinacity and changing his political beliefs, in amongst the Grandees. He it was really who inaugurated the short period which Father Cecil now describes as the decline and fall of a great Empire. The population of these islands was then about forty million souls."

"What?" exclaimed Gerard, looking at her with wonder in his eyes. "However could they all live? There are not five millions of us now."

"That is the marvellous thing I am coming to. Quite a third of them were on the poverty-line, gaunt spectres, without employment, only able to obtain food on rare occasions, and huddled together sometimes three or four families in one room. The great majority of the remainder of the forty millions were always having 'hard times'—I am now quoting Father Cecil—'a difficulty in making ends meet, and keeping the wolf from the door.'"

"Very much like it is here in Serphton," muttered the young man bitterly.

"Yes," replied the widow with a sigh, "only there were eight times more of them then than now, and the various classes often lived near together."

"What do you mean? We have only two classes now, except the overlookers and some of the shop-keepers."

“ Ah, but in those days society was of a wonderful complexity, the gradation from the richest to the very poorest, although of tragic certainty, being almost imperceptible. There was the great middle-class, supposed to be a bulwark of the constitution, for what reason I know not, and these in a peculiar manner connected the very rich with the very poor. I cannot conceive how it could be, but the Father told me that sometimes people made a rapid descent from the top of the social scale, as if descending a ladder, through all the grades down to poverty and destitution, and, on rare occasions, others made the ascent.

“ It was at this time that the great statesman I have referred to began to agitate the country, apparently because of an effort which some others were making to better the lot of the great masses of the suffering people. These contended that the only way to cure the poverty and unemployment which prevailed was for the rich to surrender needless wealth and land so that they might be used for the benefit of those who were without or had little of either. They were but few in number, and not held in high esteem, being denounced as fanatics and spoliators. Followers of an American, Henry George, sometimes erroneously supposed to belong to a more numerous section of politico-social agitators, called Socialists, the bulk of the people treated with contempt, and divided themselves into two great parties, Conservatives and Liberals. Cecil Hughes belonged to the Conservatives,

as also did Butler. The struggle raged about the question of Free Trade, it being contended, on the one hand, that a Free Trade policy was best for everyone in the country, and on the other that the interests of the nation lay in the taxing of all goods coming into the ports, of which there were very many, instead of one, as we have now.

“ This latter policy, generally speaking, was the policy of the Conservative party, although there were conspicuous exceptions, such as Father Cecil. But the mere maintenance of existing institutions was not enough to alter the deplorable state of abject poverty which prevailed, and this was pointed out to Cecil Hughes by one of the Reformers, for that was the title which the few men I have mentioned bore. He told him that the nation had enjoyed what was recognised as Free Trade for more than half-a-century, and marvellous wealth had been created, but millions of their fellow-countrymen were starving, and the country was altogether in a deplorable state. He besought him as a young man who had dared, for what he conceived to be right, to oppose the members of his great family and party, and thus incur much reproach and obloquy, to take the further step and go manfully in for the restoration to the poor of the inheritance of which they had been robbed. The Father has told me of the immense struggle that letter cost him. He felt that it was the voice of more than man that spoke through it, and at one time he had almost made up his

mind to throw in his lot with what the Reformer called God's poor ; but, alas ! the prejudices of caste prevailed, and he wrote the following fateful letter to his correspondent, the words of which, together with the reply, are indelibly printed on his memory :—

Dec. 8th, 1904.

Dear sir,—I am obliged by your most kind and flattering letter, but I am afraid I am not in agreement with your suggestions.—I am, yours faithfully,
CECIL HUGHES.

The letter in reply was :—‘ Thanks for yours of the 8th instant. You are young—I am bordering on old age—that is why I write you. All I want you to do is to ponder on the subject. Think of the millions of your poor and helpless fellow-countrymen, women, and children, whom God has given an equal right to share His blessings, but to whom these blessings are denied through the cruel social conditions of this land.’ His determination was again shaken as he read and read again these epistles, but finally he laid them aside and endeavoured to convince himself that his policy was right. The cruel science they called Political Economy had really led rich men to believe that it was the will of God people should suffer poverty, vice, and degradation in order that the virtues of rich people might be developed in seeking after their welfare and ministering to their relief. They regarded themselves as the stewards of the bounties which God had committed to

their care for distribution, and accounted for the frightful destitution which prevailed by saying that it was partly the result of the people's own improvidence, but governed also by a well-known economic law, that it was the tendency of population to overtake its means of subsistence."

"What a cruel dogma," exclaimed Gerard.

"You may well say that, and it was not long before Cecil Hughes was forced to the same conclusion. Alas! it was then too late. The name of the Reformers is strong upon him now, and that is what he intends to call the assembly which he has gathered to-night. But here is Philip, and right glad will he be to see you."

As she spoke there came into the room a fair-haired young man of emaciated appearance, small and thin, but who nevertheless had an old look about him which aged him more than his score of years would otherwise have done. His careworn and dejected bearing changed somewhat when he saw the young priest, and after embracing his mother, he came eagerly forward with a cry of satisfied hope.

"I knew you would come," he said, grasping the hand of Gerard Staunch. "Did I not tell you, mother, that he would be with us when the Father told of the wonders of the past? I knew it," he went on, without pausing for an answer; "and now that he has come, we shall have him here always, helping us to find out the great secret that the Father told us of."

“ You are right, Philip, but how did you get to know that I was not going back to my uncle, the Primate?”

“ Not going back,” almost screamed the widow, “ then what is to become of Hope?” and she held the priest’s sleeve with a trembling hand and anxious face, a thing that he was utterly unable to account for.

“ What is it you know of my darling that makes you always so anxious about her welfare,” and then he added hurriedly, seeing the look of dread deepening on her face, “ Do not distress yourself, dear Mrs. Ilford, for she is well, and what is more, the word I have given her from Father Cecil has sunk deep into her heart.”

But the concluding words of his sentence fell on unheeding ears ; the widow had fallen unconscious at his feet, and raising her tenderly and reverently in his arms, he laid her gently on the settee, very greatly marvelling at the strange distress she manifested with respect to Hope Danvers.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REFORMERS.

“ I HAVE it, Father ! I have found it ! ”

The speaker was Gerard Staunch, and the words were spoken as he impetuously broke in upon an assembly the like of which no one in Serphton had ever before seen. It was the meeting referred to in the widow's house, when Staunch was told that Cecil Hughes had gone to prepare the room for the young men. There were about five hundred present, and these would be quite the majority of the men folk in that work-a-day city. For it did not take many human hands to mind machinery, which was practically automatic. Nor did their faces betoken any particularly high order of intelligence. Brains seemed to have entered more into the machinery of Serphton than into the human craniums of its denizens, at any rate so far as the operatives were concerned. Their physique also was in keeping with their mental development, and generally speaking they were a replication of Philip Ilford, but often without the signs of interest, fervour, and hope which chased each other across his face.

The assemblage was not confined to young men, neither were there many of extreme old age, to which the life in Serphton did not particularly conduce. It was noticeable, however, that everything was scrupulously clean. The poor garments in which the men were clothed, as well as the meagre appointments of the room itself—evidently used during the daytime for serving meals—were spotless. There was no filth of a material kind in Serphton, little to cause it indeed, for science had practically abolished dirt, as it had cleared and kept clean the atmosphere and the rivers.

It was into this gathering the young clergyman so suddenly thrust himself. The faces of its occupants had been turned to the further end of the room, where stood an old man, tall and spare, whose silvery-white hair and beard, together with a distinguished look he had about his face, gave him a most venerable appearance. They had all heard of his wonderful recovery, just as during the whole of their lives they had been cognisant, as also were their fathers before them, of the almost constant unconsciousness of this relic of a by-gone age. A few days previous to his complete recovery, a flutter of excitement was created in the factories, workshops, and houses—very infrequently stirred from their normal monótony—by the tidings that the old man had awakened from one of his long sleeps, and, contrary to past experience, had shown some interest in his surroundings. The excitement increased

as news came from Mrs. Ilford that he had begun to converse, and had told many wonderful things of his far past life. Then followed interviews with Gerard Staunch and others, all of which were reported by Philip Ilford in as perfect a fashion as he was able. No wonder, therefore, when it was set about that Cecil Hughes desired to speak with the young men, everyone was on the very tiptoe of expectancy, and all who could possibly attend the meeting, came to see one who might very well be described as back from the dead.

The meeting had proceeded nearly an hour when Staunch arrived, and the speaker was on good terms with his audience. He very soon took the measure of their mental capacity, and adapted his language accordingly. At first he spoke with considerable hesitancy, and some inconsequence, it being apparent to those nearest to him that a severe struggle was going on to concentrate his memory, but he eventually triumphed, and thenceforward his speech flowed with a simple eloquence that held spellbound the whole of the company. His story was mainly autobiographical. He told of the race of men he was associated with in the days of his youth. Going back further still into the dim past, unknown altogether to the inhabitants of Serphton, he spoke of the deeds of his ancestors, of the building up of kingdoms and empires, the concentration of power in the hands of an oligarchy, and the general trend of all things human to chaos and destruction.

“ And of you, Father Cecil? Tell us about yourself.”

The old man started at the sound of his name. It was the first time he had heard it in a public assembly since his recovery, and it had a weird sound to him. He quickly recovered his equanimity, however, and answered in his singularly clear and silvery tones,

“ I thought at the time, my son, that mine was a well spent youth. I was brought up in the strictest sense an aristocrat and a Churchman, holding myself as designed of God to perpetuate the sacraments of the Church, and also to hold the people in what I believed to be a proper service to that Church and to the head of the nation. A little while before the end of my career, the beliefs which I held received a severe shock, and I began to doubt the truth of what I had been taught, and my ability to conserve either the Church or the nation by such tenets.”

Cecil Hughes then proceeded to relate, in simple language, adapted to the minds of the people who hung upon his words, all that he had rehearsed in the hearing of Mrs. Ilford, and which had been related by her to Gerard Staunch. To this he added the following dramatic incident :—

“ I was speaking in a northern town, on the question of Free Trade, to a vast audience, nine-tenths of whom would be labouring men, engaged in the textile and

machinery trades. After I had spoken an hour, showing how much the wealth of the country had increased by the action of Free Trade, and what danger lurked in the policy advocated by my opponent, Butler, I sat down without uttering a word as to the millions of people who were in want caused by the greedy monopoly of that wealth by the few. Then occurred a remarkable scene. An old man rose in the midst of the great hall, and pointing his finger at me, spoke as follows, the vast audience seeming as if spellbound :

‘ We are well-persuaded of the great benefits and enormous wealth which have come to this country in consequence of Free Trade ; but we desire to know something about the distribution of that wealth. Give us a lead. Too long have we been kept standing in the ante-chamber of Free Trade ; lead us now into the banqueting hall. You bear a historic name, taking our minds back to the time when the labourer received the full reward of his toil, being sought after by the employer, and not as now. I charge you, Cecil Hughes, in the presence of the Almighty and of this audience, to come to the help of the millions of God’s poor now held in thralldom by the cruel economic laws and customs of this realm.’

I was startled, not only by the words uttered, but by the person who spoke, in whom I instinctively recognised the Reformer. But again I hardened my heart. How could that solitary old man be right, and all the wise and good people I associated with be wrong? So again I wrote him:—‘ I am obliged for the statement of your views. It opens a question that goes far beyond Free Trade.’ To this I received a reply, the last letter which passed between us, for events were now rushing on to the final catastrophe. In this I was reminded that the movement for Protection was really a campaign against the poor, and that by the mere negative policy of defence I was helping that campaign. It all, he concluded, tended to the hell of Mammonism to which we were hastening.”

“ Mammon !” exclaimed several voices in the room ;
“ why, Father, that is the god of this world.”

“ True, my poor brothers,” returned the old man,
“ and you are now suffering because of the default and sin committed by the men of my day, of whom, alas ! I was one of the chiefs.”

“ But, Father Cecil, tell us how this strange thing went on.”

“ What remains to be told can be put in few words, and was an entire fulfilment of the warnings of the Reformer. Oh, what dolts we were not to see whither it all was leading us. Events which it would take many days for me to explain to you speedily brought

about the final catastrophe. It entirely followed the power of money. All the nations were heavily in debt, and one after the other, as they became bankrupt fell into the hands of the servants of Mammon. It was, of course, not accomplished without many terrible struggles, but the people had been scattered and weakened by disastrous wars. The death struggle in the Far East ended in the defeat of the great European power, and the Yellow races speedily spread themselves over India, Africa, and Asia Minor. Meanwhile the white people of Europe and America became more and more involved in militarism, all freedom of trade and commerce was stopped, and men became the puppets of oligarchies. They manufactured and paid for the weapons with which they now began to destroy each other, and in an incredibly short time everything that was pure, holy, and of good report was destroyed in the fury that ensued."

"As for me," continued the old man, "the frightful carnage taking place, and the feeling of condemnation ever present with me, gradually broke down my reason, and the last thing I can call to mind was a terrific charge I led whilst commanding one of the King's regiments."

Father Cecil paused here, and the remorse and horror on his face infected the audience, who shivered in their seats. But this changed at once, and a look of expectant joy overspread his countenance when he heard Gerard Staunch's excited announcement of the finding of the little volume he held in his hand.

“That is great news,” he fervently ejaculated, “now may God be thanked that he has not left us without the witness of His Word.”

He took the little book reverently in his hands, and gazed long and lovingly at its pages.

“This is but a portion of what we called the Bible in my day,” said he, turning to the meeting. “There was the Old Testament, which appears to have perished. This is the New Testament, and it has come to us as a revelation of the divine will and a command to begin again the great work; but it must now be according to the method that Christ explicitly laid down.

“I have read much of the book,” said Staunch, “and I find it gives no authority for many of the things which were done in the old times you have been speaking about.”

“No,” replied Father Cecil; “if we had but followed its teachings, the powers of evil could not have prevailed. The Master taught that His followers were to resist not evil, that if they were reviled to revile not again, and to the smiter of one cheek to turn the other also; but, alas! we preferred to trust to an arm of flesh.”

“But, Father, if you had not to withstand the cruel men you spoke of, how then were they to be deterred from their evil deeds?”

The speaker was a young man, who sat in the centre of the front row in the room. He was of more stalwart appearance than the rest, and had an aggressive and determined expression on his face. His companions appeared to look up to him, and there was that about him also which betokened some rising revolt against the life he was compelled to lead in Serphton.

“My son,” replied the old man, “this book will inform us that He who is for us is greater than all that can be against us. We shall learn much more from the book, and will constantly give thanks that it is this rather than the Old Testament which has been preserved to us.”

“Tell us why you are so thankful,” said Philip Ilford.

“The Old Testament breathed much of the spirit which our young friend has just shown,” answered Father Cecil. “It bore the conception of God and man which an ancient people conceived, who had not the principles of Christ fully revealed to them. There was much of poetry, of beautiful and romantic story; pictures of great prophets, with the burning words they uttered, and a record of the lives of the great of the earth; but the conception of the eternal love and faithfulness we desire to associate with the Creator was not always present. So, in the days I speak of, God, who is all justice, mercy, truth, uprightness, and purity, was too often made to reflect and condone the weaknesses and selfish frailties of man. The wars and other evils

recorded in the Old Testament were made the pretext and justification of men's evil doings. When it suited their purposes, they ignored the precepts of Christ, and harked back to the often cruel and bloodthirsty teachings of the Hebrews."

"Would Christ then have no war?"

"There is no justification for the slaughter of men in the teaching of the New Testament. Christ is the embodiment of love, self-sacrifice, and service. In this book we shall learn His mind, without being distracted by the evils of the old dispensation."

Thereupon the old Christian discoursed on the life and work of Jesus Christ, reading often from the little book which the young priest had discovered amongst his dead mother's belongings, and winning the hearts of many in the assembly by the marvellous accounts of the life and deeds of the Nazarine contained in the Gospels, which he faithfully expounded.

But not all of those who heard his words were ready to take sides with the speaker. Two at least dissented, and for very different reasons.

Peter Faiban, the young man whose interruption had drawn from Cecil Hughes the declaration respecting the power of passive resistance, was still unconvinced. The iron of his servitude had entered his soul, and he came to that meeting with far different ideas of emancipation than those he had been listening to. Faiban held a

somewhat responsible position in Serphton, being deputy chief of the great works which supplied both sides of the river with power and light. The young men about him, over whom he appeared to exercise great influence, were associated with him at the works, and their occupation now needing their presence, they rose, and bidding the two men on the platform a respectful good night, left the room.

A different kind of individual altogether was Jacob Erkstein, who hovered like a dark cloud on the outskirts of the company that filled the hall. His lean face had a sinister look about it, in keeping with the shifty eyes, which had cruelty in their steely depths. Domiciled in Serphton, and filling a certain office in the town, he was always regarded with suspicion, and, wherever possible, avoided by the other inhabitants.

There was much more that Father Cecil wished to say, but the night was getting far advanced, and important business had yet to be done.

“ I want you,” he said, “ if you agree with me, to make a fresh start to-night. We are a little company, in that sense perhaps akin to those who had all things in common in that far away city of Jerusalem soon after the Master’s departure. Shall we try to lead the life which He directed, and which, alas! was so tragically departed from in the ages that have gone by ?”

A murmur of assent passed through the room, and the old man continued,

“ I have made up my mind to call this movement by the name I once despised and thought of little account. We shall therefore be The Reformers, not departing from the precepts of this book, but holding the title of Christian too high for us to assume until we have accomplished things worthy of it. It may be by suffering that we shall be led into the liberties of Christ—I know not yet.”

“ There can hardly be anything worse than has to be endured in Serphton,” said Philip Ilford, somewhat bitterly.

“ I can well believe that, my son, and it all comes from the terrible mistake made by the best of us in times past. Political freedom, religious equality, the abolition of chattel slavery, representative government, and international relations engrossed the minds of men, rather than the economic freedom and welfare of the nations. There was an attempt made to turn the Saviour himself, recorded in this book. He went about teaching economic truths, and the great enemy of souls, seizing an opportunity to turn him aside on a political issue, incited someone to ask him whether they owed allegiance to God or Cæsar. Obtaining from them a coin, and gaining the information regarding Cæsar’s superscription, he adroitly answered, ‘ Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that

are God's.' Believe me, this book will teach us that the physical, moral, and spiritual welfare of the people is the first consideration, and that being accomplished, all other things will naturally follow."

Exhaustion, which for some time had been asserting its power over the aged man, now mastered him, and a cry of alarm arose from the audience as, with a sigh, he staggered, and would have fallen to the ground had not the strong arms of Gerard Staunch supported him. When he had partially recovered, the young priest led him gently from the room, followed by murmurs of sympathy from the young men who had been eagerly listening to the counsel which fell from his lips.

The last to leave the vicinity of the hall was the slinking figure of Jacob Erkstein, the informer, for such he was, who from a dark corner outside the hall had watched every one depart ere he shuffled off to disclose what he had seen and heard to those who hired him.

CHAPTER V.

SERPHTON.

SERPHTON, like the more pretentious city on the other side of the river, was a direct product of Mammonism. Looking back at it now after the lapse of fifty years, it is easy to see that it was to the Imperial City what the Land of Bondage was to Egypt, and that the whole constitution was but another attempt to perpetuate the state of things which existed in that empire, in Babylon, or in Ancient Rome.

It is clear enough now. The wiles of the Beast, who has been for ever restrained from his evil work amongst men, had so warped the human understanding, and fostered cupidity, that men believed the most preposterous things in regard to the economy of government. A few years before the final triumph of Mammonism there was just a glimpse of the true way, as we have gathered from Father Cecil's account of the Reformer, who so earnestly sought his conversion, but sought it in vain. It is of course certain also that Christ spent the whole of His ministry on earth, by example and

precept, teaching the same truth ; but He had not long left the earth ere the god of this world again asserted his sway. John, the beloved apostle, was well aware of this when he wrote his vision, which we style the Revelation. It became the fashion of sectaries to apply his remarkable descriptions and denunciations to each other, professing to find the fulfilment of them all in their practices and teachings. Mammon desired such an interpretation. His emissaries were installed in the high places of all the churches, and this policy made his ultimate triumph easy.

This central truth of Christ's gospel, which the greed of men continuously obscured and often trampled under foot, was the economic emancipation of the human race. Christ, who went about doing good, had no real followers until the Reformers came. True it is that at times there were faint glimmerings of a better state of things—in feudal days, for instance, at the commencement of the French Revolution, or the Chartist risings in Great Britain and the contemporary restlessness on the Continent of Europe. All these, however, were ruthlessly suppressed, and men sought to follow ideas of political improvement, trade expansion, or foreign conquest and empire as the chief ends of life. In these things all the churches were with them, teaching the doctrine of personal salvation as the foundation of success in life, and useful in the acquisition of money. Wealth thus became the keystone of all enterprise, and

to the obtaining of it every human faculty was bent. It indeed forms the history of the world. Greed instigated and carried out all the great conquests, the so-called discoveries of other people's territories, the institution of slavery and all kinds of forced labour, which had never been fully uprooted whilst the old regime lasted. It was to warn against this evil spirit of Mammonism that the Apostle John raised his voice. This was the evil thing that was painted in such lurid colours in the Apocalypse. This "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

Who can reflect on the history of any people, and deny this fact? What difference was there in point of personal comfort between the great masses of the people of England and the United States of America and those of Russia? In the former was supposed to exist democratic government, and in the latter an extreme kind of despotism, but all alike were controlled by Mammon. This was a despotism compared with which any political bondage was almost freedom. Let the case of the United Kingdom itself be considered. As religious, commercial, and political freedom, as it was called, increased, poverty—accompanied by all the unnamable vices—strife, rancour, hatred, and uncharitableness grew in far greater strength, until the end came, with such hells of Mammonism as Serphton and the Imperial City. There was a time when wealth was, within certain limitations, not removed from the

reach of any man, however humble he might be. Just as the knight held from the king, so the serf held his twelve acres of land from his lord, and could not be dispossessed so long as he paid suit and service. At that time the labour of a man was sought after, and he was, to an extent never afterwards experienced, able to appropriate to his own use all that he earned. Then did the king and his nobles, impelled by the evil spirit of greed, strive with one another to acquire and retain the sources of the country's greatness, and the consequence was that the labouring man was deprived of his stake in the soil. Again in a time of stress, when a great queen occupied the throne, were four acres of land allotted to the cottier, but following on this came the series of Enclosure Acts, by which the whole of the land of the country was seized by a few strong men, and the people were left to eke out a miserable existence by the arts of industry and commerce.

Sometime, no doubt, the whole history of this horrible era will be laid bare. Here it can only be indicated in order to the understanding of this veracious narrative of the temporary triumph of the obscene god, and of his final overthrow. When his myrmidons had taken possession of the land, they invented a system of oppression known at that time as indirect taxation, with which they were able to rivet the bonds of an economic slavery about the people, a system so insidiously complete that those who suffered from it were unable to tell the cause of their misery, and indeed attributed it to other things.

The tyranny of indirect taxation grew into a science, quite beyond the understanding even of those who manipulated it, and the time came when it could be truly said that a man was taxed from his coming into the world until his departure from it. The culminating point was reached in the enactment of what were called the Corn Laws. Mammon had overreached himself, and it was found that the people had been pushed beyond the margin of existence. Not that they understood how it was they were starving; far from that. A large number of them blindly followed and cheered those in high places who sought to perpetuate the evil system. And when at last the ports were opened free not only to corn, but to many hundreds of other things upon which previously taxes had to be paid, the great mass of the people were comparatively little better off than they were in the days when food was scarce. They were still kept on the margin of poverty, and were encouraged to believe that the cause of their poverty was to be found, as some said, in political and religious inequality, and others that it arose from foreign competition and alien immigration and labour.

Then arose men who were called philosophers, teaching the most extraordinary doctrines. They all belonged to the classes raised above the very poor, some of them indeed to the extremely rich; and their teachings were received without questioning by the church as well as the state. It was most convenient this should be so,

inasmuch as it solved the awkward problem as to the responsibility for the terrible things which took place in consequence of the awful amount of poverty which prevailed. It was, they contended, God's will that these things should be. Mysterious it certainly was, but then were not the ways of God to man always enshrouded in mystery? One of their poets wrote,

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform,

and so it might well be that this was one of the marvellous dispensations of Providence, the meaning of which would only be revealed hereafter. Besides there was a significance about the matter, it was argued, which ought not to be overlooked. Look, cried these deluded slaves of Mammon, at the virtues such a state of things inculcates. The poor learn fortitude, resignation, patience, frugality, thrift, and a host of other attributes; whilst, on the other hand, those who have wealth are taught how blessed it is to give, the responsibility of being God's stewards, and many other excellent virtues appertaining to their high position!

The ministers of religion were well versed in this kind of philosophy, and when they got the poor inside their churches—which was not often, nor did they come in large numbers—they never failed to remind them of these things, and also warned the poor people to avoid the dreadful sins of envy and covetousness. They must at all times renounce the pomps and vanities of

this world, consider themselves as pilgrims and strangers, and strive for an entry, after death, into the heavenly city, whose walls were of jasper, and its streets paved with gold. The rich were told of the great privileges they possessed in ministering to the needs of the poor, and how in this way and many others they could heap up treasures in heaven, thus securing to themselves great wealth on both sides of the dark river. Many of the rich people believed this, and extraordinary sums of money were spent in a most lavish fashion. Some took to building churches, hospitals, great temples for the inculcation of the arts ; others expended enormous wealth in various philanthropic enterprises ; whilst one, who was said to have more millions than there were weeks in the year, conceived the curious idea of placing free libraries in every part of the English speaking world.

There were of course, at times, outcries from the suffering people, but generally speaking, these were of an unintelligible character, and attracted little attention. In one country the hunger of the people led to revolution, and the political change from a monarchy to a republic ; but the economic condition of the people remained very much the same ; they were deluded into the belief that, because they elected men to the Legislature, the government was in their hands. In this same country, one hundred and twenty years before the final catastrophe, in the very palace of the king, light broke in upon some students of public affairs, but from

the lessons they taught the frenzied people were turned aside by the mistaken policy of political liberty, and some of these benefactors of their race were cut off in the revolution which followed. An era of bloodshed then set in, lasting with slight intermissions during the whole of the nineteenth century. War became a virtue, was preached as a patriotic duty in the churches, and led men to forget the paths of rectitude and progress. Although Mammon had not yet set up his kingdom, there were many signs of the nearness of that era. A wild scramble for wealth took place, nations and individuals alike seeking its acquisition, and the many millions of helpless poor were kept in constant misery and starvation. There was a break in the darkness when about three-fourths of the century had elapsed. A man of lowly station, struggling with poverty in a great city on the Pacific slope of the American continent, began to teach the inalienable rights of all men to an ample living from the soil on which they were placed. The great doctrines which were buried in the French revolution seized this man's imagination, and he taught the equality and brotherhood of men, not only in a political, but also in an economic sense. He showed the wickedness of the teachings of the schools in denying the ability of the Almighty to provide for His creatures. Poverty was the corollary of great wealth, and the latter, no matter what form it took, sprang directly from the private ownership of land. The remedy was therefore clear. Land was

only valuable in consequence of the presence and labour of the people living upon it, and to them must be returned the value they put into it. This could be accomplished by desisting from the wasteful system of indirect taxation, and having only a single tax on land values.

The proposal of the Single Tax Reform stirred up the forces of Mammonism in a way that had never been equalled, and in a sense may be said to have contributed to the acceleration of the final catastrophe. Not only was the proposal stigmatised as an attempt to interfere with the sacred rights of property, but an impetus was given to forces already existing of a reactionary character. Even the Socialists were deluded into the belief that it was an attempt to divert them from their purpose of obtaining the nationalisation of all the means of subsistence. Political agitation was fomented, even a poverty-stricken country like Ireland being led to agitate for Home Rule, and its half-starved inhabitants contributed their mites to maintain men in Parliament in order to press this claim. The minds of people of every civilised country of the world were turned in the same direction, the consequence being that very little progress was made in the matter of Single Tax Reform, and in the early years of the twentieth century only a few thousands of people were enrolled members of the various associations throughout the world.

It was in Great Britain that the start was made in the

final overthrow of the so-called Christian civilisation. The agitation against the fiscal policy of the country, commenced by Butler and his associates, was triumphantly successful, owing to the wicked supineness of the professed friends of Free Trade. The Mammonites were able to point to the fact that a large proportion of the people were on the verge of starvation, to whom it mattered not at all whether the policy of the country was Free Trade or Protection. A great proportion of them, however, had votes, and being persuaded to try the change, they cast these votes in favour of Protection, and thus turned the scale which put an end to the only system of free ports which then existed in the world. It need not have been, but for the selfishness of the leaders of the Free Trade movement, who having gained wealth and power by the system, refused to share this with those who had been their instruments in obtaining it. It was a suicidal method to pursue, always fraught with danger, and certain in the end to lead to anarchy and ruin ; but these men were blinded by caste and certain false ideas of political economy, and this to such an extent that even to the very last nearly all of them did not see the advantage which this partial system of Free Trade gave to their opponents in a democratic country.

Then followed what the Free Traders predicted would happen, that is all the so-called civilised world ranged themselves against Great Britain. They had long hated

the English. International dislikes had always been kept alive by the land and other monopolists, who knew that war would be a good thing as a last resort to save their wealth and prerogatives from participation in by the people. Particularly had this been the case with the great German Empire, which, whilst having perfect Free Trade within itself, imposed high tariffs in the interests of monopolists and landowners. The English people had been persuaded that their trade with Germany was a one-sided affair, of which the Germans reaped all the benefit, and that it was an exceedingly bad thing that their rivals should send goods cheaper than they could make such goods for themselves. Consequently, when England abolished Free Trade, the German Empire was the first to be proceeded against, such high duties being imposed on all their productions sent to England that in a very short time the trade between the two countries ceased altogether, ambassadors were withdrawn, consuls discharged, and speedily following on this war declared. For such was the hold money had on the nations at that time, if they could not trade with each other in consequence of prohibitive tariffs, they almost always became deadly enemies, and were soon flying at each other's throats. This arose mainly from the fact that the great majority of the people in each country were denied access to the means of subsistence, by alienation from the land, and always led to believe that their existence depended on working for other people,

particularly for those who did not live in their country at all.

Such a war as that which took place between Germany and England had never before been witnessed in the world's history. Millions of men were engaged in it, for the great cities in both countries swarmed with people who were glad of the opportunity thus presented of obtaining all the food and other things they required. The slaughter on land was preceded by great sea fights, in which the fighting fleets of both countries were annihilated. Immense ships of war, in which the people of that age prided themselves, costing more than a million pounds each, and fitted with all the appliances which the crude and undeveloped science of that early period could supply, were brought into action with one another. They carried hundreds of fighting men in them, but thousands of men were also required to attend to the many scientific tricks and devices which their constructors said were necessary to their completeness and fighting qualities. They were not able to withstand any shock of battle, for being big and unwieldy, they soon got unmanageable, and at the mercy of any engine which projected shot at them. England was worse off than its enemies in this respect, for having placed great reliance on these structures, the building of which brought such immense profit to certain great men, most of the fleet was composed of them, and being unable to compete with the speed and manœuvring of small and easily managed craft, they were very soon

sunk, with all the lives and property they contained. Then followed the land war, in which great slaughter on both sides took place. The Germans landed in Great Britain by way of the North Sea, and the English hordes invaded Germany through the Low Countries, both armies carrying fire and destruction wherever they went. Of course, the great war fever spread, and very soon the whole of what was called the civilised world was involved. In all instances the battleships perished first, those of the United States and France, who had quarrelled about some commercial interests in Northern Africa, following quickly on the destruction of the fleets of Great Britain and United Germany. Thenceforward all was brutal slaughter of men, women, and children on land. The thin veneer of civilisation, which men vainly thought was firmly established, passed away, and was succeeded by a savagery such as the world had never before witnessed. It was a holocaust to Mammon, in which each of the armies in turn indulged as opportunity afforded. Cities were sacked, the most horrible outrages perpetrated, and whole continents laid bare with fire and sword.

But the culmination of horrors came with the advent of the Yellow Man. Triumphant in all his undertakings in the Far East, he now swarmed over the Western World. Then were fulfilled the hopes and prophecies held in the memory of the millions of the East, oppressed for centuries through the greed of the whites. After the subjugation and almost annihilation

of the white races of Australia and New Zealand, they came in countless millions over the intervening seas and continents, seizing on their way railways, ships, and all other means of transport. From Japan, China, India, the Islands of the Sea, Persia, and the very roof of the world, they came like locusts, swarming at all times over the dead bodies of their pioneers, and carrying riot, confusion, and death wherever they went. What the so-called civilised tribes of men left unfinished in the way of slaughter, the Yellow Men completed, and then tell to work consuming one another.

For they too were in the power of the god of this world, and after they had destroyed the whole of Western civilisation, burnt its records, books, works of art, and as far as they knew, left no one alive to tell the story of a pseudo-Christianity and a false civilisation, they in turn mostly perished, some of debauchery, many in war, and myriads from famine and disease consequent on the devastation of the countries they conquered.

But all did not perish, for the true God has throughout the evil history of past times always had His witnesses. In dens and caves, in dense woods, by lonely mountain streams, and in other desolate places of the earth the elect of God were in similar miraculous ways, as was the case with Cecil Hughes, preserved to testify to His latent power, and revivify in the hearts of the children of men the spark of divine fire implanted

there by the Creator at the beginning of all things. Likewise did He preserve, during the reign of the beast, sons and daughters of Zion, in order that they might transmit to the glad hereafter those who enjoy the full freedom of the sons of God, and joyfully await the second coming of the Lord, now for the first time in the long ages rendered possible.

Mammon also had preserved from the ruthless Yellow Man such of his most faithful henchmen, who were to do his will during the time that he was permitted to rule the earth. Slaves were they, bond slaves, though they knew it not, because of the treasure which blinded them, and caused them ecstatically to worship the fiend who held them bound. Then were men divided into two great divisions, the Haves and the Havenots, an application of the principles taught as Political Economy during the nineteenth century—the tendency of population to overtake its means of subsistence and the survival of the fittest—being quite sufficient to maintain their relative status, and prevent one order aspiring to that of the other.

Such then was the condition of affairs in Serphton and the Imperial City at the opening of this history over half-a-century ago—a type of all other cities and countries then sparsely scattered over the face of the globe. For the population of the world would not then exceed one hundred millions, and these were brought very near to each other by the marvellous strides which applied

science had made. The record of some of their follies, extravagances, and vices will be set down in succeeding chapters, though a veil must necessarily be drawn over the frightful crimes and hideous sins which were of hourly occurrence in these hells of Mammonism and dens of wild beasts in human form.

CHAPTER VI.

JACOB ERKSTEIN, CREMATIONIST.

NONE of the things detailed in the last chapter were in the mind of Jacob Erkstein, as he wended his way homeward from the meeting-place of the Reformers, whose proceedings he had taken full note of. His particular occupation in life was a product of the times recorded above, and now that for the present he was relieved from attention to Father Cecil and his followers, he became entirely engrossed in what he regarded as his more legitimate business. He recked little how much what he had seen transpiring bore directly upon his future.

Neither did it occur to Jacob that he owed his present position to the same economic causes which had alike produced Serphton and the Imperial City. Indeed of economics he knew just as little as the average dweller in either place. There they were; that was all he knew or cared. Across the water, where business at times led this public servant, he had some idea of what

was passing in a general way, and he also knew that people in Serphton worked hard the whole of their short lives for little gain, but that these things were a direct consequence of applied science, he knew not.

The fact is, Jacob Erkstein had his own business to attend to, a business which, as far as he possibly could, he kept to himself, only taking others into his counsel so often and so far as was necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose. If he could have done all himself no one would have shared any of his confidence, but his transactions were not only large, but varied. And although Erkstein's talents were of considerable variety, and his strength and resourcefulness of no mean order, yet after all he was but human, and so had to call in the aid of occasional help.

The ostensible calling which Jacob Erkstein followed was that of chief officer of the Serphton Crematorium, a national institution conducted altogether in accordance with the perfect system of sanitary science then, as now, well understood by all authorities. For if people died early in Serphton, and the death rate was heavy in the Imperial City itself, these things were not caused by any defect in the appliances used or the principles acted upon in regard to public health. The places were in an admirable sanitary condition, and the existence of the Crematorium was the natural corollary of this good order. The total absence of increase in population was due to an entirely different condition of things.

With regard to Serphton, this result of a stationary population was due almost entirely to the application of those principles of pseudo-Political Economy triumphant at the great upheaval, the merest outline of which was given in the chapter just completed. The economy of Serphton, if such a phrase may be used in so abominable a connection, was the direct outcome of the application of the principles taught by Malthus, Mill, Darwin, and all others of that cult, little altered in principle by the change of name affected in what was called the Austrian school of later years. The true science, as taught by those spoken of by Cecil Hughes, never had a chance, and it is now seen that Serphton fulfilled its destiny in carrying out, by illustration, and to the letter, the cruel doctrines of the older school.

But if Serphton thus fully justified the teaching of Malthus and his followers, the Imperial City was also the direct outcome of the same pernicious teachings, and with this Erkstein, although he thought not of it, had much to do. He was in fact an administrator of the state of things which inevitably followed the application of the doctrines above indicated. One city was the sequence of the other—Serphton, with its poverty and wretchedness, was the natural product of the Imperial City, with its voluptuousness, vanity, immorality, and dark deeds which cannot find a record in the pages of history. No more need be said to show how exactly the two places

carried out the pagan philosophy of the schools, and a return may now be made to the objects which Jacob Erkstein had in view.

As before hinted, this chief of the National Crematorium had other business besides his ostensible calling, and it was because of the suspicion of this, as well as the distrust his ordinary demeanour evoked, that he was always shunned by his fellows of Serphton. The fact was, Jacob passed other things through the furnaces than that which might be regarded as legitimate business. High as the death-rate was on both sides of the river, there was a shrewd suspicion that much ghastly work was done in his office that was not accounted for by the Registrar General, and there were passing to and from the Imperial City through his hands affairs known only to himself and his employers. For Erkstein was an importing and exporting merchant, his merchandise being mostly of the invisible order, but which notwithstanding was of consequence to those for whom he acted, and therefore to himself. In fact, putting the matter as plain as can be in a work of this nature, this man combined with his public duties, that of jackall to the human beasts of the Imperial City, and also disposed of their waste products, when they had ceased to use them.

This very night he was engaged in a nefarious transaction of this order, being a case of importation, and not one of the home trade. The destination of this

particular piece of human merchandise may shortly be ascertained, but just now let the reader, if he can, catch a glimpse of the dark workings of the mind of this wretched man. He had forebodings. Things had not proceeded well in his last transaction. It was the case of a young girl of the working order of Serphton. Notwithstanding the nature of their life, and the conditions under which they were nurtured, the women of Serphton at times combined wondrous beauty with a grace and charm which exemplified the fact that Nature desired to hold against a better time the best she could produce. But it was a dangerous thing for a woman to be beautiful in Serphton, and the case of Mary Bourne was no exception to the rule. Her growing charms were watched by the jackall, and in due time reported to his best customer, that very distinguished banker, Andrew Danvers, whose acquaintance the reader has already made.

But there was another factor in the case, which was not known by these corrupt individuals. The pure mind and charming person of Mary Bourne had attracted the affections of Peter Faiban, the young man whose spirit at the Reformers' meeting rebelled against the pacific teaching of Father Cecil. His love was reciprocated, and although Erkstein was unaware of the fact, the two were known as lovers in Serphton. It would, of course, have made no difference if he had known, so far as his base intentions were concerned,

for there had during his business career been numerous cases of the mysterious disappearance of girls who had occupied exactly similar positions to that of Mary Bourne, and of whose fate no one in Serphton had been made aware. But in Faiban, although he was unaware of the fact, he had an opponent whose astuteness and ability far transcended anything which Erkstein possessed. From the moment he had begun to notice Mary, a year or two before his open declaration, she, all unknowingly, became the subject of his vigilant care. When, therefore, in consequence of her personal charms, the procurer made her the object of his evil trade, as he intuitively knew he would, it became Faiban's life-work to preserve her from the horrible fate to which she was then destined by the official cremator.

Peter Faiban had an advantage over his opponent apart from his superior ability and adroitness. This consisted in the fact that Erkstein had no suspicion of his relations with the proposed victim, or that he knew of the nefarious work which was on hand. Long before the time became ripe for the girl's abduction, all Faiban's plans were matured, and he would have compassed the destruction of Erkstein and all his patrons rather than allow him to hurt a hair of the girl's head. His anxiety for her safety had led him into quite a number of discoveries, to which his position in the chief station for the lighting, power, etc., of the district, lent him every facility he required. Unknown to his chiefs, he had "tapped" the trunk wires, and whilst engaged

repairing at Erkstein's house adjacent to the Crematorium, he had so arranged an electrical communication that all the wretched man's private business was known to him. His knowledge and invention gave him extraordinary power over anybody he desired to influence. The necessity to circumvent the nefarious intentions of Erkstein towards the woman he loved, stirred up and quickened all the latent inventive genius of which he somehow knew he was possessed, and the manufacture and perfection of appliances followed speedily upon each other. He was in fact as much, or even more advanced in the science of applied electricity, radium, and other forces of nature as the present enlightened era is over the dark days when the obscene god held almost undisputed sway. Advancing step by step, he subjected all his inventions to practical tests, often making his superiors at the works the mediums of his experiments, although they knew it not, and always attributed their uncomfortable sensations to occult causes associated with their calling not yet revealed to them. Thus has the name of Faiban become associated with the progressive period of applied science, a synonym in fact, a starting point for all that is now the proud possession of our race, and is doing so much for their general welfare.

Possessed of these enormous powers, it will be seen that the young lover held the cremationist and his herd of lascivious patrons in the hollow of his hand. Vastly more than this came out of his genius and untiring

industry, as will be seen ; but just now his skill was to be applied in the protection and, if necessary, the rescue of Mary Bourne. Without unduly alarming her, and knowing in a general way that she had been warned by her mother, as all others of her class had been, he passed her through a slight course of instruction.

“ You know,” he said to her one day, “ that we have at all times to be on our guard against some people, and I must be careful not to let it be known even that we come together. This little package I want you always to keep about you, and if at any time you desire my help or presence, all you need do is to break it open and cast it from you.”

“ But how can this simple thing be made to convey a message, unless somebody takes it to you?”

“ Never mind that, dearest, just now. It would take me too long to explain, and I fear you would have great difficulty in understanding me if I did so. Only trust me in this, as I am sure you will do in all things.”

“ That I will always,” replied the girl, looking into his face with eyes which were full of love and confidence. “ But I hope there will be no necessity for it. I wonder what we poor people have done that we should be tormented, not only with the wretched hard life we have to endure, but also in the way my mother has told me of, and to which I am sure you are now alluding.”

“Keep a good heart, dear Mary,” said her sweetheart, returning her look of love, and bending down to kiss the girl’s fair little hand. “No harm shall ever come to you, nor indeed shall any Serphton girl from this time forward fall into the hands of those scoundrels.”

“How can you prevent it, Peter?”

“Trust me,” he replied, with a confident air. “I have that within my power which will circumvent all their vile designs. Here is something else for you,” and he handed her a prettily designed armlet, explaining at the same time a secret spring by which it was fastened. “It is important that you should always wear this, for if I am ever called to your help, it will give you immunity from the spell which I shall be obliged to work on all who are about you.”

“Why it is like a charm which ignorant people used to wear in the old days.”

“So it may appear, but in reality it is a scientific insulator or non-conductor I have made for your protection and mine.”

No great time elapsed before Mary Bourne had to undergo the indignity of being kidnapped by Erkstein and his assistants, and the consequent putting to the test of her lover’s scheme. It all happened as he anticipated, and he knew almost to the moment when the thing would be attempted. Relying on the

assurances of Faiban, Mary did not even call out or make a disturbance when, one night as she was returning home from a call at the house of Mrs. Ilford—where she had seen and conversed with Father Cecil—she was followed by three men. Just as they rushed upon her she broke and threw away the packet she had been instructed to carry about with her. Then a most extraordinary thing occurred. Flashes of light, which singularly enough, as it appeared to her, did not distress her in the least, altogether disconcerted her would-be abductors, who at once relinquished their hold of her, and went groping about as if they had lost their sight.

“And indeed that is about their condition for an hour or two,” whispered a well-known voice at her side, interpreting her thoughts. “Perhaps they will think their god is against them in this matter, and wont come again in a hurry. Anyhow, you will be ready for them when they do.”

Thankfully the girl accepted the escort of her lover to her home, and parting with him there, received the assurance of his ability to protect her in any like emergency, if only she was careful to observe the conditions he imposed.

* * * * *

After the perusal of the foregoing, the reader will not be surprised at the perturbation which had taken possession of Jacob Erkstein. He was one of the three who

attempted the abduction, and had received a shaking up he was not likely to forget. Baffled and enraged at the non-success of his plan, disconcerted also by his inability to even surmise the cause of it, a further trial awaited him when he was forced to report his defeat to the banker. The degraded lives of both men made them naturally superstitious, but Danvers affected to believe that the three men had been imbibing too freely, and he ordered Erkstein to carry out the undertaking on a future occasion.

The affair Erkstein had now on hand was of the import order, a young girl brought from the Continent, and destined for the house of a friend of Andrew Danvers, a fellow-member of the Imperial Council. The procuror shivered as he thought of what might happen in the transfer of this girl from his house across the river, a matter which had been fixed for that night.

Whilst pondering on these things Jacob had reached his house, situated at the southern extremity of the little town of Serphton, on the banks of the river, and immediately adjacent to the Crematorium. He was met at the door by a woman about his own age, of spare figure and careworn face, who greeted him in a querulous manner,

“Why, Jacob, whatever has kept you till this time of night?”

“What has that got to do with you?” sharply retorted her ill-favoured husband. “Have they come?”

“ They are all three in the kitchen, and they don’t like the job, I can tell you. Neither do I, and besides I will not have that evil-looking woman coming here. This is the fifth time she has brought young girls to this house, and sooner or later some awful thing is sure to happen.”

Jacob Erkstein’s sallow cheeks blanched somewhat at the remembrance of his last escapade, but he roughly pushed the woman aside, and entering the kitchen, asked the men if their boat was ready.

The leader, replacing a glass he had just drained on the table, replied, “ Aye, aye, sir.”

“ Then go down to the landing place and I will follow shortly,” he said, and having seen them on their way, Erkstein proceeded to his office on the further side of the dwelling, where he found two persons, one an elderly woman well-dressed, but not of very prepossessing appearance, and the other a tall, good-looking girl, evidently of about eighteen years, who had an apprehensive look in her eyes, and to whom her companion was addressing soothing remarks, in a language with which Erkstein was unacquainted.

“ We are quite ready now, if you are,” remarked Erkstein.

“ Then let us go at once,” said the woman, with a strong foreign accent; “ I am tired of this girl’s whinings.”

“Are you quite sure she does not understand what we say?” asked Jacob, somewhat anxiously.

“Not a word,” replied the other, “but she seems very uneasy, from what cause I cannot make out.”

Then turning to the young woman, she said something to her, on which both rose, and all three proceeded to the boat.

The men were ready in their places, two of them having oars, the other sitting astern attending to the steering, and as soon as Erkstein and his two companions had seated themselves, the boatmen pushed off, and headed for the other side of the river.

But that boat was not destined to reach the opposite bank. There were two causes operating to prevent this, one the purpose of Peter Faiban, a desperate resolve to destroy all concerned rather than to allow the foul outrage to proceed. To do this a confederate had concealed in the boat an infernal machine, which would have exploded before the landing in the Imperial City had been effected. But a higher power ruled otherwise. Just as the boat entered a strong current about the centre of the river, the girl, with the suddenness of a flash of lightning, leapt from the boat, and in an instant was carried far down the river.

“Oh, mine gott,” shrieked Jacob’s ugly agent, as she sprang to her feet, her heavy body swaying to the

side. This was too much for her equilibrium, and also for the safety of the boat, for as she fell over the side, the frail vessel overturned, the occupants in less time than it takes to write these words, being engaged in a life and death struggle in the middle of the stream.

That ended the career of the evil woman who pandered to the base desires of certain gentry of the Imperial City. It did not, however, end this horrible import trade, for in those bad days there were plenty of human beings, miscalled women, who were willing for pelf's sake, to sacrifice the bodies and souls of their fellow-creatures to the obscene god. It was afterwards reported that the girl was rescued and returned to her parents, but the three boatmen were drowned.

Jacob Erkstein had a narrow escape. He was sadly buffeted about, but being an expert swimmer, he managed to reach the bank, not far from his dwelling. It will be as well to finish, as far as possible, the unsavoury tone he gives to this impartial history, and so, shortly, it will suffice to state that this night's work ended his import trade, and although he made some other attempts in the home department, they were always failures, the young engineer, Faiban, check-mating him in each instance, although the cremationist did not know how the thing was done.

CHAPTER VII.

ANDREW DANVERS, BANKER.

THE principal of the great International Bank sat within hearing of the chink of coin and the rustling of notes passing to and fro across the high counters in the adjacent hall. Indeed, by an ingenious contrivance in connection with the telephone, he had both customers and clerks under observation did he choose at any time to use it. For in that great banking house, as elsewhere, in all other businesses carried on at the time, no one trusted his neighbour farther than he could see him. Andrew Danvers might be said to combine in himself all the characteristics of the age, and if it were possible to lay bare what passed in his mind, a complete estimate could be formed of the character as well as the condition of the scramblers for wealth who had transactions with him. These exploiters of labour presented themselves in various aspects to the banker, though in relation to the general principle of money-grubbing, there was no conceivable variety. There was only one door to anywhere, and the paths always radiated, as it were from the National Bank—

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon
days like these,
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to
golden keys.

And to think of the bank was to recollect Andrew Danvers, whose personality stood for all. This was the storehouse of all the ill-gotten wealth the land yielded, worked now in the fullness of the old approved fashion of the welfare of the few. This was the direct and certain result of the policy stigmatised by a seer of old when he said: "The world dishonours its workmen, stones its prophets, crucifies its Saviour, but bows its neck before wealth, and shouts till the welkin rings again, Long live violence and fraud."

And were the people of the Imperial City happy? Andrew Danvers well knew they were not. He was anything but in that frame of mind on this particular morning, for not only had certain private concerns he had lately engaged in with Jacob Erkstein persisted in going altogether awry, but with all his smartness, affairs at the bank were in such a condition as to afford him but small satisfaction. He was like his customers, always anxious, grasping, restless, and suspicious of those about him.

The banker, therefore, was not in boisterous spirits when his old friend, Jasper Stainforth, came in, a fellow-member of the Imperial Council and a barrister of great repute.

“What makes you so glum this morning?” asked Stainforth; “you look as if someone was after you.”

“You can form a very accurate judgment in the matter, if you choose,” replied Danvers.

“Oh, it’s the blundering of that fellow Erkstein,” rejoined his visitor. “Well, it certainly is a very curious affair. Do you think Jacob is fooling us?”

“There can be no suspicion of that. It wouldn’t be worth his while. Besides, he knows I have him too securely to risk any trickery.”

“Ah, well, we shall see. But that is not what I have come about. First of all have you heard of Redding’s death?”

“Yes, confound him, he has run the bank into over fifty thousand. He shot himself as he left the casino last night.”

“Phew!” whistled Stainforth, “I had an idea there was something of that kind. But the chief matter I have come to see you about is your daughter. You know I have long desired to enter into matrimonial relations with your family, but neither you nor I could interfere while the Primate’s nephew stood in the way. Now, however, that he has made such a fool of himself, the coast is clear, and I presume I may go in and win?”

“Yes, I suppose you may go in, but as for winning, that is an entirely different matter. I have my doubts.”

“ Well, we shall see,” said Stainforth. “ Of course I shall expect you to exercise the pressure of parental authority.”

The conversation then turned on to other topics, of which there were plenty the two men could discuss. Besides their own private affairs, most of the scandals connected with the idle, dissolute life of the place were known to them, and the barrister was not over scrupulous in the keeping of family secrets, which came to him in a professional way. The two men left the bank together, Stainforth having accepted an invitation to lunch at his prospective father-in-law's house, after which he was to be given an opportunity of proposing to Hope Danvers.

Meanwhile, a very different scene was being enacted within the walls of the banker's mansion. For some time Mrs. Danvers had been in failing health, requiring the constant care of her devoted daughter. Her relations with her husband had never been of an ideal nature. Her disposition rebelled against his sordid habits, and the riotous life with which he was associated. By his domineering and pugnacious demeanour towards her, he had broken her gentle spirit, and now that she was approaching the end, she had a satisfaction not felt for many years. There was something on her mind, however, affecting the beloved being so constantly at her side, which she knew must be disclosed, and it brought a pang to her heart.

“ Hope, the beautiful story you told me the other day has made such a difference to me. I never really feared death, but before hearing of the Saviour all seemed a blank, for I had not thought happiness could exist in a hereafter following on a life such as we live in this place. It is all so different with Christ. One has a feeling that when we die we do but continue the happiness we realise here, only that somehow we shall be better fitted for it, and perhaps more deserving.”

“ Yes, dear mother,” replied the girl, as she leaned over the bed and gently stroked the face of the invalid. “ Gerard said the reason why Christianity failed was that people did not realise that it was first of all a thing of this life. People divided themselves, as it were, into two parts, sacred and secular, which was so unlike Christ. But then, you see, we got to know Him through His own life and teaching, whereas, in the old days, both were much obscured by theology, and the qualifications and explanations of very learned people they called commentators.”

“ Ah, that would surely lead to much confusion.”

“ Yes, indeed, a perfect Babel, there being hundreds of forms of the same religion, each particular sect believing theirs to be the true one. They quarrelled also, and frequently shed each other's blood. That was because they did not live the life of Christ on earth, but believed and taught that it was the life hereafter which was important. Gerard says the circumstances

of their social life, the inequalities that existed, and the grinding poverty which oppressed the greater part of the people, led to this, for of course, if they lived the life of Christ there could have been no such disparity. There would have been no one very rich, nor very poor. In those days men used to be richer than thousands of people at present all added together. Gerard is sure that the true religion must now win its way."

"I am sure too, and may you both see it, dear Hope. But I have something to tell you now which is of great importance, and I fear, without the new faith we both have, I would not have been able to disclose it. The confession probably will be a shock to you, but we must not forget, whatever happens, we are always related in Christ."

"What is it you mean, mother, by such strange words?" asked the girl, the colour leaving her cheeks.

"Well, my darling," said Mrs. Danvers, throwing her arms about the trembling girl, "what I have to reveal to you is rendered easier because I know that when you lose me, you will gain your real mother, herself one with us in Christ."

"Mother, what is this that you say? Surely your illness has not turned your brain?"

"It has not, though I know I am very near the end. I mean that in the sense of the natural relationship, you

are not my daughter, much as I love you, and as you, I am sure, regard me. But let me go on," said Mrs. Danvers, as Hope was about to interrupt her, "for time is pressing. I had been married to Andrew Danvers more than six years, and was childless, a thing with which he frequently reproached me, and when a child was born dead, and of such form that I cannot describe to you, I feared for my life. I had good friends about me at the time, and an exchange was effected, by the sacrifice of a noble woman, whose child was born on the same day as mine, and who had lost her husband a month before."

"And my mother?"

"Is Mrs. Ilford, a sister of Andrew Danvers, who is really not what he seems, though only I, Mrs. Ilford, and one other man (Jacob Erkstein) are aware of it. But that is the lunch gong, and, as you know, Mr. Danvers has telephoned his desire for you to be there to meet his friend, for what reason I know not. I very much dislike Stainforth."

The girl was now too full to speak, but she lovingly embraced the woman who had always been to her all that a mother could possibly be, and then reluctantly left the chamber.

* * * * *

It was neither a pleasant nor talkative trio that assembled at Andrew Danvers' table that day. Hope

had never felt the affection for him that an ordinary father would have inspired—his bad treatment of his wife killed that—and now that she knew he was not her father, a growing feeling of repugnance possessed her. Of the other man she knew little ; when she had met him, his manners were those of a gentleman, and beyond the fact that he was Danvers' friend, she had no particular dislike to the man. It was a relief when the meal came to an end, and the girl was thoroughly self-possessed when she was told Stainforth desired to speak to her, and the banker left them in the drawing-room together. She instinctively knew what was coming, and was prepared accordingly.

“ Miss Danvers, I have the permission of your father to mention to you a matter of supreme importance. For a considerable time you have been to me the one desire of my life, and the fact is I have come here to ask you if you will be my wife.”

This was not all Jasper Stainforth intended to say. He had prepared a neat little address, quite in the approved style, and intended to introduce considerable show of sentiment into his proposal. But he was altogether disconcerted, not to say annoyed, by the girl's quiet and impassive manner. If she had been composed of marble, that would have accounted for her appearance.

“ I thank you, Mr. Stainforth, for the offer you have made me,” she said with quiet dignity, “ which I must

nevertheless definitely decline, and I must ask you on no account to repeat the offer."

"I desire you to understand, Miss Danvers, that I am here by your father's permission, and I may say approval. Also that I am not a man to be trifled with."

There was an evil look in the man's face which startled the girl. He was quick to notice her fear, and followed up with the remark,

"I hope what I have said will have due weight with you, and that another matter to which I need not refer, and which has for ever passed beyond the bounds of possibility, will not influence you to decline an offer which your father considers a most advantageous one."

"Under no circumstances," quickly retorted Hope, who had regained her self-possession, mainly by reason of the somewhat disparaging allusion Stainforth had made to her engagement to Gerard Stauch, "can I entertain for a moment any such offer as you have made, and I ask you not to insult me with attentions I regard as objectionable."

"I will make you suffer for this," said Stainforth, his angry passion now thoroughly aroused, and his whole figure shaking with fury, "no one yet has thwarted Jasper Stainforth without knowing of it afterwards, and the next time we meet our relations will be very different from what they are now."

With that he flung himself out of the room, leaving the girl almost in a state of collapse, and filled with apprehensions with regard to the future.

* * * * *

Andrew Danvers' face grew dark when, a little while after the above occurrence, Stainforth came into his room at the bank, and informed him of Hope's rejection of his offer.

"See me again in two hours from now," Danvers said to the rejected suitor, "and I will have something to say to you then."

The banker little dreamed then of what awaited him in the interview he was about to seek with his wife, and therefore of the very different direction he would give to Stainforth at their next meeting. His base nature was filled with bitterness towards the helpless woman who had the misfortune to be tied to him, and he sought her out now but to utter words of reproach on the false charge of instigating his daughter to a defiance of his will.

"Andrew Danvers," said the dying woman, as she raised herself with difficulty into a sitting position, but with a strange calmness which awed him into silence, "I am not going to justify myself in this as in the many other things I have borne with patience during many long past years. I have to tell you that Hope

is not our daughter, and that therefore neither of us has any right to control her." She then detailed to the bewildered man the account she gave to Hope earlier in the day, adding that the proofs of her statement were readily obtainable.

"And does the girl know this?" sternly demanded the banker, quickly recovering from his dismay, and receiving a feeble answer in the affirmative, he cursed both the women, and left the house.

Andrew Danvers never saw his wife again. Shocked and exhausted by this last evidence of his heartlessness and brutality, the sick woman survived but sufficient time for Hope to reach her bedside, and then expired with blessings on her lips to the girl who had been to her the one bright gleam in a sombre life, and with a quiet peace in her heart, born of the new faith.

Jasper Stainforth was not waiting at the bank when Danvers returned, having determined to invoke the aid of Jacob Erkstein for the purpose of abducting Hope Danvers. But it was a false step from his point of view, inasmuch as his visit to the Crematorium revealed his plan to Peter Faiban, who, as we know, was connected up with Erkstein's office, and on this particular afternoon had leisure which enabled him to keep Jacob under observation. He therefore heard the details of the plot, and determined to circumvent it.

"Well, have you managed to arrange the matter for

me?" said Stainforth to the banker, as he re-entered his office an hour later than had been appointed.

"You can just go and do what you like with the girl," curtly answered the banker; "she has nothing to do with me."

"What have you got on now?" asked Stainforth, incredulously.

"I tell you she is no daughter of mine," roughly retorted Danvers, and he then related what had passed between his wife and him.

"Phew!" whistled his friend; "by jove, Danvers, I always thought there was little love lost between you and that girl. However, it is an ill-wind that blows nobody any luck, and my turn comes in now."

He then told the banker of his plot for that evening, and left him to pass the intervening time away as best he could.

The meeting with Hope Danvers came about as Stainforth expected, but the termination of that meeting neither he nor Erkstein had ever thought of. Had these two villains any conception of it they would have been very chary of entering the banker's garden. They were powerful, and had the co-operation of the banker, for it was he who arranged that Hope should be in the garden as night fell; but they knew not of the higher power which dogged all their steps, and was about to

put an end for ever to their villainies. The young electrician followed Erkstein to the place of meeting, and unnoticed by either of the men took up his position amongst some shrubbery within hearing of what they said.

They had been waiting about half-an-hour, when Stainforth somewhat impatiently said,

“ She is a long time coming out of the house ; I hope Danvers has not played me false.”

“ Or the young lady declined to face the night air,” added Jacob.

“ Careful, here she comes,” ejaculated Stainforth ; “ have you got the cap ready?”

“ Aye, sir, here it is,” answered the cremationist, as he shook out a large piece of woollen cloth, “ and it is fairly well soaked. If she manages to scream after this gets over her head, I’ll let her go altogether.”

“ Will you,” said his companion, viciously, “ but I wont, for she is fairly within my grasp now,” and he became so excited with anticipation that the other had to control him.

As Hope came near, the two men perceived another figure stepping up by her side, and at first thought it was her lover, Staunch. Stainforth put himself in front of her, with the remark, as calmly uttered as was possible under the circumstances,

“ Good evening, Miss Danvers, I did not know you were also bringing Mr. Stauch to our interview.”

Hope started, but regaining her composure at once, replied, “ How dare you address yourself to me,” and then realising her peril, and imagining that all three men were about to seize her, looked helplessly round for a means of escape.

“ Courage,” whispered the man nearest to her, who then turned on the other with, “ What is it you desire from Miss Danvers?”

“ Why, if it is not that rascal, Faiban,” muttered Erkstein ; “ I’ll make you smart for this, my man.”

“ Now look here, my dear fellow,” added Stainforth, “ this is all a mistake on your part. This is not Miss Danvers at all, and we are here by direction of Mr. Danvers in order to remove her—to her mother, ah, that’s it.”

“ I know you both, and what your business is,” calmly said Faiban, “ and I have come to prevent it. Too long has the earth been cursed with your presence. You, Erkstein, have had repeated warnings by your failures, and at least one narrow escape from drowning. As for your employer, words would be wasted upon such as he.”

All the time he was speaking the young man kept watchful eyes on his adversaries, appearing to know

what was about to happen. Both men drew revolvers, but before they could take aim at him, an irresistible power bent their arms round until Stainforth fired at Erkstein, just as his companion had, in like manner, turned his weapon and fired at him. There was no report, only a slight flash, and the two men fell prostrate at the feet of Hope, who turned shudderingly away.

“Do not distress yourself,” said Faiban, as he gently led her from the spot. “Is it true that Stainforth said you are not Miss Danvers?”

“It is quite true,” she answered, “and how glad I am that there is no relationship between me and these wicked people.”

She then told the young man of what had passed between her and the dying woman who had been to her a mother, and at the girl's request Faiban took her to the house of Mrs. Ilford.

Next morning the banker's attention was drawn to the extraordinary spectacle of the two dead men lying close together in his garden, each grasping a revolver. No explanation that he or anybody else offered could clear up the mystery, that the men should fall by each other's hands, as was manifestly the case, for the bullets extracted from the bodies corresponded with the one empty barrel in each revolver. People shrugged their shoulders, and wondered what brought Stainforth into

the banker's garden—and in such horrid low company, too. Then they went and straightway forgot all about it, for strange things very often happened in the Imperial City, and no man, or woman either, cared to enquire very carefully into the affairs of Andrew Danvers, banker.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FAMILY RE-UNION.

“MY mother.”

Hope's head rested on Mrs. Ilford's shoulder as she tremblingly uttered these words. The widow, too full to speak as yet, lovingly caressed the daughter from whom she had so long been parted, and, until lately, feared she would never be able to claim again. But the daily presence of Gerard Staunch, and the knowledge that Hope returned his love, had filled her with new expectations, which not even the risks the young man was constantly exposed to of apprehension by the Imperial Council, could dissipate.

That Staunch was in daily peril there could be no doubt. He was hard at work every day with Father Cecil amongst the people of Serphton, teaching them the great truths he had learned from the old man, and also the reading of the wonderful little book he found amongst his dead mother's effects. The result of that faithful teaching upon the workpeople he addressed

was exactly the same as that produced by the Master himself two thousand years ago. It was bound to be so, because the teaching was untrammelled by the heresies which Mammonism introduced into the gospel in the old days, in order to bolster up and maintain a small minority of the people in places of honour and emolument. The gospel now, as at the first, taught them that all men had equal rights to the earth, that God was the Father of all, and consequently all men were brothers. This came home to the denizens of Serphton because of the fact that they were made to toil for the benefit of the patricians, only being able to secure for themselves a bare subsistence. Economic degradation and slavery had been carried out to the furthest limit. Chattel slavery there was none, nor was there need of it, for men long since found out there could be no more galling and effectual bond than that which bound men to labour, in competition with each other, for a mere living.

Philip Ilford was a great help to these missionaries, for he carried the tidings of the equal rights of humanity into the workshops, factories, and amongst the people generally. Many dull eyes brightened at the announcement of this new hope of ransom from the dreary and exhausting toil which bore such little fruit to the toiler. The young priest and the venerable Cecil Hughes were, therefore, eagerly waited for and rapturously listened to on all occasions on which they spoke. There was consequently much ferment in the town, men and

women moving about with greater alacrity than had been known in all its previous history, and it was therefore not surprising that the widow dreaded that the great interest and movement amongst the people would bring dire results to its authors.

But she determined to say nothing of the matter as yet to the fair girl who had been so providentially restored to her. Hope told her mother what had happened to her, and also as much as she knew of the base conduct of Danvers, who had connived at the intended abduction. This treachery of course rendered it impossible for her to return to the house of the banker, however much she might wish to see again the dear form of the woman who had been to her, since childhood, all that a mother possibly could be.

“ Yes, she was a gentle soul,” said Mrs. Ilford, “ and always suffered in consequence from that brute of a husband. It was to save her from his violence that I parted from you as a child, a terrible struggle, but it was done for her sake.”

“ How good you are,” replied Hope. “ I feel that my life has been a failure—a round of pleasure and frivolity ; and you have been bearing so much here.”

“ Don’t mind that, dear ; it was not your fault, and we are all in a better atmosphere now. Since Father Cecil recovered, he has filled us with new hopes,

and if the Power above is so great as he believes, then the future is bright.”

“ Oh, it is great indeed, dear mother, and besides, Peter Faiban, who rescued me in such a wonderful manner, says we have nothing to fear. He gave me this little packet, and told me also to wear a bangle he put on my arm. If anybody attempts to assault me in any way, I have to break the packet and throw it away, then all will be well.”

Mrs. Ilford sighed, but quickly recovering herself, replied, “ He appears to have some wonderful power, unknown to anybody, and the masters do not know he possesses it, or I cannot tell what might happen. I pray God that it be rightly used, and that the young man may come to no harm. Father Cecil can make but little impression on him or his associates.”

“ But he seems as good as he possibly can be, and he told me how he had to rescue his own sweetheart out of the clutches of that dreadful man, Erkstein,” and Hope shuddered at the thought of what she had passed through, and the dreadful fate which had overtaken her assailants.

“ Yes,” said the mother, as she folded the trembling girl in her arms, “ and he has saved others from an awful fate during the past weeks. But Father Cecil does not believe in violence, because the Saviour said

we were to turn the other cheek to the smiter, and when we are reviled, to revile not again."

"Peter Faiban told me that he uses no violence, but merely calls in the aid of nature to check these bad men. They are continually setting the laws of nature at defiance, and are accordingly punished by those great forces which they outrage. He was exceedingly kind to me on my way here, and talked about all sorts of interesting things in order to divert my attention and memory from the fearful scenes through which I had passed. No one suspects him of possessing the wonderful power he exercises, and if they did, he told me he has that always at call which can shield him from any number of enemies. Until someone else makes the same discovery he is absolute master of the situation."

"It is truly wonderful," said Mrs. Ilford, "and he is so modest and retiring, notwithstanding all the great power he wields. He went away just now saying he had a most important appointment, and it seemed to me that he was embarrassed with our expressions of gratitude. But it is getting time Mr. Staunch and Philip were here, and I know how glad both of them will be to see you."

Hope, while blushing with pleasure at the mention of her lover, did not forget to express her gladness that she was about to meet her brother. They had not long to wait, for Faiban had hastened away in the first

place to the lodgings of Father Cecil and the young priest, and apprised them of the arrival of Hope, without, however, disclosing the important part he had played in that event.

The lover, stronger in limb and filled with more expectancy, outran his companion Philip Ilford, who had been with him at the lodgings, and bursting into the widow's house, speedily had Hope folded in his arms.

"My darling," said he almost breathless, "this is a delight, all the greater because unexpected."

"Yes," replied Hope, "I feel it so, and realise it all the more because of how near I have been to a disaster which would have prevented me ever seeing you again," and Hope shivered at the remembrance of what she had gone through earlier that same evening.

"Whatever can you mean?" inquired Gerard, in alarm.

"That is a long story," interposed Mrs. Ilford, "and before it is told I want you to know that Hope is my own daughter, and that I can now claim her, for the poor woman who has had her ever since she was a baby, and been all that a mother could be to her, is dead."

"Dead!" The young priest had been listening with gradually distending eyes, his arm all the while

holding securely the girl by his side. "Dead! I knew it would come to that. Her sweet patience was lost on Danvers, and I have known for years he was gradually killing her. But this you say about Hope explains the great interest you always manifested in her welfare, and the distress my advent here, and the consequent leaving of Hope, occasioned you. Then she is really not the daughter of Danvers?" and a look of glad anticipation went out with the question.

"No, I am not a patrician at all," answered Hope, "but only a very poor Serphton girl, and in no way equal to the nephew of the Primate."

Notwithstanding her words, she looked up into his face with fond confidence, and he quickly replied,

"I have learnt many things since I left my uncle, and renounced the wicked foolishness of the religion which he represents. But there is one thing I have realised above all else, and that is the noble virtues of the poor of this place. Coming from a society in which greed, ambition, and vice are the leading characteristics, it took me a little while to realise the genuine self-sacrifice, the pity, and sympathy of the people with whom my lot is now cast. The presence among them of Father Cecil, and his utter helplessness during the long years of unconsciousness, appear to have been to the people here a heavenly ministry, keeping their hearts tender, their love and solicitude active, and indeed of a truth preparing the way for

what we are all sure is about to happen—the ransom of this people from the bonds which now oppress them.”

“ How I would like to see that dear old man,” interrupted Hope. “ I seem linked to him by the faith that passed from him through you to me, and gave to my poor dead mother, in her last hours, about the only joy she ever experienced.”

“ You shall see him soon, for he is even now on his way here.”

The speaker was Philip Ilford, who at that moment entered the cottage. The brother and sister looked at each other, and as they did so, formed a striking contrast, the robust, healthy looking girl towering above the slight and emaciated figure of the youth. But it hardly needed the explanation of relationship from the mother, for there was that in Philip's face so akin to the healthier features of his sister, that she hesitated not, and before the words were well out of her mother's lips, Hope held the young man in a loving embrace, and showered kisses on his cheek.”

“ My poor dear brother,” she said, “ what a shame it is you should suffer like this. But I have come now to help you, and we shall be very happy, I know.”

The young man was at first embarrassed, but quickly comprehending the situation, returned her caresses, and with enthusiasm in his fine eyes, exclaimed,

“ Oh, it will soon be all over, now that Father Cecil is well again, I am sure of that. God preserved him to us for our help ; his sickness was a training for all of us, and now that he is better, God intends him as an instrument for the overthrow of the false religion which causes our hurt.”

“ How nice it must be to receive counsel from the lips of one who, like Father Cecil, has for so many years known the dear Lord,” said Hope.

“ You are right there,” answered Philip. “ He is the joy not only of this house, but of all with whom he comes in contact, and that you may be sure means most of the people in Serphton. But he does not appear to realise it. Although cheerful, and with bright words for all he meets, he often tells us that he has been a most unprofitable servant, and is unworthy of the great mission he is entrusted with. He bemoans what he calls the folly of the past ages, when Christians failed to carry out the will of their Lord, and so gave the opportunity for triumph to the god of this world.”

“ But we are always cheering him up with good news of the progress of our cause,” said Staunch. “ The ranks of the Reformers will soon embrace the whole of the adult population of Serphton, and I am sanguine yet of winning over to our side even Faiban and the young men who are associated with him.”

“ He could not be better whatever he professed,” broke in Hope, “ as I have good reason to know.”

Both the young men turned inquiring eyes on the girl, whereupon she related the adventure through which she had passed, as well as the explanation she received from the young engineer. They listened in wonder, and when the narrative was complete, Gerard said,

“ You may depend upon it, Faiban has discovered some marvellous new force which nature conceals from the shallow scientists of to-day, who are mostly concerned with frivolity, and treat electricity and radium more as playthings than anything else. I trust he will use this mighty power he evidently possesses for good only.”

“ I am sure of that,” said Philip. “ Indeed it is practically certain the freedom from outrage the town at present enjoys is owing to him. But how are you getting on with the building?”

“ What building is that?” asked Hope.

“ Father Cecil and I are engaged putting up a little church in a quiet place about two miles from here, and not far from the river,” replied Gerard.

“ And are you not afraid, dear Gerard, that the Council will get to hear of it?” asked Hope, in some alarm.

“ There is some risk, certainly,” replied the young priest, “ but we have never seen any one near the place,

nor have we a suspicion that our movements are followed or even observed. Father Cecil is quite fearless, and tells me we must pursue our work whatever may happen, leaving the result of such action to God."

Here also, though they knew it not, the power exercised by Peter Faiban surrounded them as a shield, covering all their movements, and deterring the oppressors from either hidden or overt acts calculated to do them harm.

"The site is a very secluded one," said Philip, "and not likely to attract attention. How it has escaped fencing in I cannot understand. It is about the only bit of land I know of that has not been treated in that way. If we go out of the town, we have to keep on the roads or take to the river, for there is no other unappropriated land than this in all the district."

"Yes," added Gerard, "and it is not because land is used. Very much is given up to game preserving, and vast expanses laid out for pasture, whilst there is very little under real cultivation, and in my journeyings I have seen thousands of acres of securely fenced in land, from which people are excluded, lying unused, and in many cases relapsing into a wild state."

"That, my son, is an evil heritage from a bygone age, and accounts for the deplorable state of things we find in Serphton. A people divorced from the land become the slaves of those who possess it. It was the

failure to grasp this fact which misled me in the days when I advocated what I thought was Free Trade. I was unable to see that the poverty which existed then, and the consequent vice and disorder, were caused by the monopoly of the land by the class to which I belonged. Only a comparatively small number of the people—followers of an American philosopher called Henry George—perceived this vital truth, that no matter what industry a man followed, its relation was to the land, upon which it was directly dependent, and that all the profit which the worker realised, above a bare subsistence, must therefore go to those who held the land. This monopoly has now been carried to the extreme limit, and places like Serphton are the direct result.”

The old man had come amongst them while they conversed, and they all turned to listen to him. His eyes fell upon Hope, as she stood beside her lover, and having respectfully saluted her, and bade her welcome to their little community, he proceeded,

“ I have seen the fencing in of which Gerard spoke. It is the logical outcome of things as they existed in my day. Then land, held as now, by private owners, was treated just as it suited their purpose. Sometimes it was cultivated, at others allowed to go back to its natural state, and no one questioned the absolute right of owners to do what they pleased with it. Access was denied those who desired to make the most out of the

land. The population of this country was so great, probably more by eight times than it is now, that this monopoly of land meant starvation to many, and a weary struggle for subsistence to most of the people. And yet I and others did not see that it was this which caused all the misery. Various opinions were held. Many of the class to which I belonged thought that if trade was kept free, and the people properly educated, all would be well, and so we contended against those who tried to upset the Free Trade policy of the country. But what I now know to be a very blasphemous doctrine was generally held, first promulgated by a clergyman whose name was Malthus. This was in effect that as people increased upon the earth, the return for labour from the land diminished, and consequently there would not be food for them. The doctrine ignored both the providence of God and the productive power of man, but so firm a hold did it take on the understanding that rich and poor alike regarded as a matter of course the decimation of population by war, vice, disease, and starvation. In these days that dreadful doctrine has achieved its final triumph, and having reduced the population, I presume all over the world, keeps it at the present low level by a denial to the great majority of a free access to the means of subsistence."

"Yes, I understand it now," said Stauch. "These things used to puzzle me before I came to Serphton, but under your guidance I now quite see how Mammon has contrived this great wickedness. Not only so, but it is

the evil way of living which exists amongst the people of the Imperial City that accounts for the population being stationary there.”

“Quite right, my son,” replied the old man; “they, too, appear to have perfected the system which already had its inception before the Great Upheaval. In those days the birth-rate was much lower amongst the wealthy than amongst the poor. The reason is clear, needing not to be stated by me, and now you have the same thing in a very much more highly developed form.”

Many conversations such as the above were engaged in during the days that followed. They were happy days in many respects, notwithstanding the uncertainty of things in regard to their relations with the Imperial Council. Father Cecil spoke often of past times, giving them vivid glimpses of periods in their country’s history rendered brilliant alternately by the valour and endurance of his ancestors. But more particularly did he dwell upon the ways of men in regard to the great problem of the natural order in social life, showing how that once having deserted the right path, they endeavoured to make everything in science and philosophy bend to establish a falsehood.

But his attitude was distinctly one of hope for the future. Founding his teaching upon the New Testament, with the whole of which they rapidly became fully

acquainted, he drew graphic pictures of the coming time when Christ would again appear, and establish among men an era of righteousness, peace, and equity. Thus were they prepared for the tragic events which they were all soon after called upon to pass through.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

THE secret discovered by Peter Faiban has since made his name the synonym for all the powers, electrical and atmospherical, now controlled by mankind. He learned how to harness the forces of the air. In his day, as in preceding ages, so-called philosophers and scientists spoke learnedly about the marvellous properties of the atmosphere, and wrote ponderous volumes upon chemical analysis and synthesis, in which atoms and molecules were defined in almost endless ways. Their aim at all times was to discover the secret of life, and on this vain quest much valuable time and energy were wasted. There was also latent infidelity. One of their philosophers constructed a machine which he said would run for a million years, but because he believed it would then stop, he claimed that matter was not eternal.

There had at one time seemed a likelihood of the discovery and utilisation of the great forces of nature. The demonstrator of the law of gravitation, Isaac Newton, familiarised the world with the conception of molecular

force, and a century later an obscure north country schoolmaster established what came to be called the Atomic Theory.

But these great truths did not get beyond an elementary stage, for, although it was said of Dalton that he "brought the elements themselves under his intellectual domination," his work, like that of Newton, was entirely misapprehended, and it was not until half-a-century or more after his death, that it dawned upon men's minds his ideas were built up, not so much on chemical analysis, as upon purely physical considerations. Then began a season of speculative science, the so-called division of atoms, and the belief in the generation of life in what was said to be absolutely inanimate matter. But a subsequent further development of the powers of the microscope dissipated the theory, although it did not deter men from this fruitless search into the unknowable.

After more than the lapse of a century, Dalton followed Newton in the path which ought to have led the people of the succeeding generation to an apprehension of the great physical truths which are now the common property of the race. But it was left to a poor, self-educated young man of the down-trodden people of Serphton finally to establish this law. His predecessors had imagined it to be possible to solve the problem of the generation of animal and vegetable life. A subtle connection between the active forces of substances and

the mysterious thing we call life, led them to the conclusion that at the very root of the Atomic Theory there lay the great secret, and they pursued this idea in the nineteenth century with all the assiduity of the pseudo-scientists of an earlier age in the search for the philosopher's stone.

The truth of this was manifest in the remarks of an eminent chemist towards the end of the century, who, discoursing upon the subject of blood corpuscles, said that for the time being the building up of the power of chemistry stopped at the finding of the fact that the two halves of a globule were not the same as a whole globule, from which he deduced the certainty that there was not much hope of the discovery of the secret of the generation of animal and vegetable life. Herein lay the evidence of the old sin of humanity, that which drove our first parents from Eden, the atheistic attempt to solve a mystery which must remain whilst the world stands.

That was not what Newton aimed at, nor was it the object for which Dalton gave his life's work. Both these great minds were attracted by atmospheric phenomena, and to the solution of these physical problems they devoted much attention. Newton was hindered by the crude notions concerning chemistry prevailing in his day, and the fact that his great successor had to earn his bread by mixing various materials for manufacturers, led both his contemporaries and the next gen-

eration to most erroneous views respecting his main object.

In many respects it was unfortunate for the true interests of science that Dalton's great discovery coincided with the enormous developments of the commercial and manufacturing period of the nineteenth century. The desire to accumulate great wealth swallowed up all other considerations, and to a great extent infected the scientific world, so that invention was confined entirely to the utilitarian side of things, ideas only being esteemed according to their practical value in the market. Chemists and other scientists, as well as most philosophers, joined in the mad rush for wealth, and the unseemly spectacle was frequent of old men, otherwise estimable because of their life-long devotion to science and philosophy, becoming the partizans of grabbing politicians and place-seekers, who strove with each other for office and emolument in the state.

Peter Faiban knew nothing of these things. He came fresh and with an open mind to the study of natural phenomena, and very soon mastered the elementary facts in relation to electricity, both atmospheric and that found in radium and other substances. Although he knew not the names of the great ones of a former age, their work was familiar to him, as indeed it was to all who were at that time engaged in the production and utilisation of these great forces.

But his detached mind refused to stay in what he re-

garded as only the vestibule of scientific discovery. Neither could he be chained to the conclusions which for nearly a century had dominated all thought and prevented true advance. He very soon arrived at the belief that it could in no case be necessary to continue on the old lines for the production of force. The hard toil which he and others had to endure in their every day work quickened and developed his imagination first, and then his inventive faculties. The working miner, who in the bowels of the earth laboured day and night in wrenching from nature coal for combustion, the then source of all force; the engineer and machinist, constructing means by which the force obtained from the mineral could be utilised; and those, even after this, who were employed in the various departments of distribution—he had long felt that this was wasted energy.

Worse than all, he had been made aware that he and those who worked with him were the slaves of idle and dissolute people, who had reduced the tyranny of wealth to a fine art. All the benefits which accrued from invention, concentration and division of labour, and the wit and energy which his class put into the work they did, flowed from them into the coffers of those he knew had no right to their possession, and whose appropriation left him and his fellows in the beggarly condition we know the inhabitants of Serphton lived.

It was no wonder, therefore, his natural genius was stirred to great effort, and knowing the acquisition of

power which enabled him to control atmospheric forces would render him superior to those who then held him in bondage, he spared no exertion, but with unwearying zeal pursued his experiments, until at last the light broke in upon him. He then marvelled how that for centuries men had been content slavishly to follow certain tenets which necessitated so roundabout and incomplete a method of obtaining the power so lavishly provided by nature.

His triumph was complete. There is not now to be learned anything further than the development and adaptation of his great discovery. At that time—the hour of sore need of the oppressed races of which Serph-ton was the type, when the new spirit of Christianity was threatened by the whole power of Mammon—this control of the forces of the air became to Faiban the weapon most needed for the great purpose of defeating the machinations of the enemies of Christ's flock.

“I cannot now explain it to you. The system, although its issue is of the simplest nature, and capable of being understood by almost any of you, is at the same time somewhat complicated. But I am reducing it all to writing, and very soon hope to make this power the common property of all who are sworn with me to put an end to the intolerable state of bondage under which we are now held.”

“Meanwhile,” he continued, “no one here need have any fear that we shall be molested. I know all that is

passing in respect to the action contemplated by the Imperial Council, and to-night I have so arranged that it is utterly impossible for either friend or foe to approach this hall without my knowledge and ability to prevent their further movements."

The group of young men who stood with Faiban was, with one or two exceptions, the same as that the reader will remember sat about him at the Reformers' meeting. He had attracted them as a strong man always will attract, and they had come to look up to him in the desperate undertaking in which they were engaged. There were not more than a score of them all told, and they had grown together with a common understanding arising out of the fearful tyranny they were subjected to.

"Have you heard who has been appointed to the care of the Crematorium?" asked one of the young men.

"Yes, and I know all about the man," replied Faiban. "He is not at all likely to give us any trouble, and whether or not, I know what is going on there, as elsewhere, and can easily circumvent him if necessary."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Ludwig Enteract, and he comes from a northern French town. He speaks English perfectly, and has been accustomed to the work he will be required to do here. None of us were considered good enough

for the post, and indeed they are getting very doubtful about the people of Serphton altogether."

"Is that so?" somewhat anxiously asked the young man who had before spoken. "Then I fear something is going to happen."

"Well, let them do their worst," confidently said Faiban. "I don't think there is anything immediate intended, but when they are ready, so shall we be. The Imperial Council had a long meeting yesterday to arrange the details of the festival, and they also determined to summon Staunch and Father Cecil before them."

"How know you that?" came from several voices.

"Oh, I can switch any of them on whenever I like, and shall make a big stir at the festival, I can tell you. Only let us keep our own counsel for the present, and all will go well. They have appointed the villain Jeffreys in the place of Stainforth, whom Jacob Erkstein shot."

"Jeffreys!" ejaculated the group.

"Aye, Jeffreys," responded Faiban, "but the mystery of the deaths of the cremationist and the councillor is as great to him as to anyone else, with all his cleverness. None of them feel very comfortable. They are bothered just now with conjecture as to the power which Cecil Hughes may possess, poor helpless old man. They little know him. The new law against what they call strange

doctrines will be promulgated at the Festival of Mammon, and then they intend to take immediate action. As far as I can see we are in for stirring times, and things will occur which the world has never before seen, and that the Imperial Council little dream of."

The young man drew himself up with the consciousness of his power, but although his companions, gaining confidence from the inspiration of his presence, applauded him with enthusiasm, and gathered about him with unconscious homage as their protector, there was nothing of vanity or braggadocio about him as he resumed,

"Their first attack will be on the old prophet and the young priest," he said quietly, "but not a hair of their heads shall be injured. They will be brought before the Council and warned, and of course they will pay no heed to the warning, although it be accompanied with the threat of the electrocution chair. I am certain of my ability to shield them from any harm attempted by the Imperial Council. I only wish I was as well able to read the future as I am to do that."

"But this much I can do," he added in a brighter tone, "and that is to invite you all to a double wedding."

"A wedding!" repeated half the company, in great surprise.

"Yes. The building which Father Cecil and Staunch have been working on for several weeks is nearly finish-

ed, and the father calls it a church. In it this wedding is to take place, Staunch being united to Hope Ilford and I—well you know to whom.”

“We do that,” fervently ejaculated the young men, and the one who had acted as spokesman wished Faiban every joy. “You are worthy of each other, and it will be a happy day that you have told us of. Already Serphton is a different place to what it used to be. What with your strong confidence, and the pleasure of the intercourse with Mr. Staunch, we all seem to have gained new hope in our hearts.”

“Oh, it is the future that makes me sad,” said Faiban. “I know how to defeat any attempt the Imperial Council may make upon us, but supposing they are all overthrown, and we take the power into our own hands, as I am quite sure we can do, what then? Are we to become as they are? I would rather remain the slave that I am than live the dastardly, cruel, and selfish life that they do.”

“I am sure we shall not be like them.” The young men turned in the direction whence the voice proceeded, and this with surprise, for it was seldom the speaker, an old-looking young man, of emaciated appearance, had been known to have anything to say at their gatherings, although they knew that he could be trusted to the utmost in regard to his fidelity.

“And another thing,” he added, “Father Cecil, al-

though not thinking as we think in these matters, knows all about what will happen when the present state of affairs is ended. To him you must go, and he will dispel all your doubts."

Whilst he spoke a light broke in upon Faiban, and his countenance cleared.

"You are right there, Luke. Cecil has had wonderful experience, and without doubt has learned much. I shall certainly have a talk with him. It is curious that it never struck me, seeing that I have had so anxious a time of it during the past many weeks."

"He will be able to give you all information. Don't you remember how he said at the meeting that the present state of things was entirely owing to the false conceptions of the men of his day? He knows now how things went wrong, and if only there is another chance, he can show you how to set everything right."

"Yes, it may be he will be able to clear up things which are now all obscured in darkness. I am quite certain I have the power to end the present state of things, but what must follow that? Ah, we, have a visitor."

His companions started, not having heard anything, and intently watched Faiban as he carried on a conversation with some one whose answers they were unable to hear. The conversation, however, can be given.

"So you have arrived at last," was the first thing their leader said.

“Oh, what is the matter with me?” came back to him in a voice of terror; “I am quite paralysed, and can’t stir.”

“Well, what are you doing there, anyhow?” queried Faiban, without answering the other’s question. “It is no very creditable business you are after, Ludwig Enteract.”

“Well, that is marvellous. How do you know me, and where are you?”

“Never mind that,” returned Faiban. “It may not be good for you to know. You will do well to get away home as quickly as possible.”

“But I can’t stir, one way or another.”

“Well, try now; turn your back on what you intended doing, and make straight tracks for the Crematorium, not looking to the right or to the left. Your purpose, you know, was a base one, and if you turn your back on it, I daresay you will manage all right.”

Faiban listened to the receding steps of the Frenchman for a little while, and then turning to the young men remarked, “I have not done with him yet, but I don’t think he will come this way again, if he can avoid it.”

* * * * *

When Enteract rushed into his office half-an-hour later his terror-stricken appearance, reflected in a mir-

ror, made him feel sorry for himself. He had hardly recovered when he was again mightily shaken by hearing the same voice which held him in the stairway of the dining-hall, and he fell to the floor in abject terror.

“Now, Enteract, what were you after to-night?”

It was a little while before he summoned up courage to lift his head, in order to see his enemy, and when he did so, and turned in the direction he believed the voice came, no form met his bewildered gaze. On the question being repeated, in threatening tones, he faltered,

“Oh have mercy upon me, a poor miserable stranger. Whatever did I come to this country for?”

“It was an evil day certainly when you set out,” replied the invisible speaker, “and it will be exceedingly bad for you if ever you again meddle with Serphton affairs.”

“But I have already two commissions to carry out,” faltered the Frenchman.

“I know all about that evil business,” and now the voice had grown threatening, and Enteract shuddered with fear of the renewal of his trouble; “but you had better not attempt to carry out your vile instructions. Both you and your employers will have something else to attend to in a few days, and if you raise a finger towards carrying out your order, what you have felt to-night will be a mere pin-prick to the punishment which will of a certainty overtake you.”

The voice ceased, but a long time elapsed before Ludwig Enteract dared to lift his gaze from the office floor, and a longer time still before he summoned up courage enough to get upon his feet.

CHAPTER X.

MAMMON.

THE exceedingly well-to-do citizens of the Imperial City were not happy. They had very much of creature comforts, not to say luxuries, but their minds could hardly be said to be in a settled condition. Quite apart from the reasons which have had to be hinted at rather than related in this history, because of their nature, there was a restlessness and undefined terror pervading all classes that rendered happiness, or even the possession of a quiet mind, a matter of impossibility.

For above all things they were superstitious. The worship of Mammon led to this, and events occurring of late had very much perturbed them. The very mysterious deaths of Stainforth and Erkstein, and the remarkable rising of a new sect under that resuscitated relic of the past, Father Cecil, and he whom they regarded as the renegade priest, Gerard Staunch, had filled the city with grave misgivings, all the worse for being vague, which led to exaggerated forebodings, so that most of the people went about their business or pleasure in anything but a cheerful frame of mind.

This was the state of things existing on the morning of the Festival of Mammon, when public holiday was observed, and thousands gathered in the great square of the Cathedral Church, in front of which the god was erected. The proclamation calling together this vast assemblage was in the following terms :—

Gotchkin, by the grace of Mammon, King and Emperor.

It being our royal desire and pleasure to publicly acknowledge the indebtedness of this realm to our great and magnanimous god, to whom we owe all things connected with the prosperity of this Empire, we hereby declare our intention to hold a High Festival to Mammon, in the Palace Square of the Imperial City, on the Nineteenth day of October, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty Six, when I command all my faithful lieges to be there present, together with the High Officers of State, Primate, Priests, and Deacons of our most Holy Church, in order to celebrate the proper functions appertaining to the Imperial Service.

Occasion will be taken at this solemn Festival to promulgate the new law rendered necessary by certain untoward events lately transpiring in another part of this realm. Hitherto one faith has uniformly been observed by our people, but it has come to our knowledge that an attempt is being made to revive an ancient form of superstition, now happily long forgotten, and no procedure of the ordinary law being found adequate to deal with the matter, the Im-

perial Council have adopted an ordinance whereby it is hoped any further mischief will be prevented.

The old man, by name Cecil Hughes, who, for a period of time beyond the memory of anyone living, has been existing in a partially unconscious state in the neighbouring town of Serphton, but now restored and active, and the renegade priest, Gerard Staunch, have accordingly been warned that if they do not desist from certain distracting and superstitious practices, they will be dealt with under the penal clauses of the new ordinance. Hitherto one faith has sufficed for our people, the faith to which we owe all our material prosperity, and the greatness of this Empire, and no dissent from that faith can be tolerated under any circumstances whatever. This has been represented to the two principal offenders by our officers, and, should it become necessary, the loyal people of this realm may depend upon action being taken to maintain the faith of our fathers.

Given under our hand and seal this first day of October, Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-six.

The immense Palace Square, in which were situated not only the Imperial dwellings and the great Cathedral, but also the principal buildings of State, was on the eventful morning of the Festival a busy scene from an early hour. The preparations, which had been proceeding for many days, were receiving the finishing touches, and the citizens gradually filed into their places. There was no crush or confusion, as all the

places had been balloted for, except in respect to the Court, the Officers of State, and the Hierarchy, whose apportionments had been separately arranged.

It was a brilliant scene the sun shone upon from a cloudless sky. All was gold; the gleam of the Cathedral towers, catching the direct rays of the sun, reflected on the turrets of the Imperial Palace, also decorated in the same costly fashion. Everywhere signs appeared of the great wealth possessed by the nation. Not only was this apparent in the public buildings, but in the people also. The flashing diamonds and glittering gold trappings of the Imperial family outshone, of course, the adornments of the citizens; but that was only a question of degree, for the whole of the vast company were resplendently appalled, the Officers of State and the Bishops and Priests of the Church being particularly noticeable on that account.

But what must be said of the image of the god? The huge figure, partly upright and partly recumbent, was placed in front of the main entrance to the Cathedral. Here was pure gold itself. A dead weight of immense ponderosity. The upper part of the image represented the bust of a man, and the lower had scales and terminals like unto a monster of the deep. Gorgeously arrayed, the whole presentment of the figure most truly conveyed the idea of fickleness and transition. Blind it was because of Mammon's indiscriminate distribution of wealth; without legs or feet in order to show how slow wealth came to the sons of men; but there were wings, emblematic of the fact that wealth flew away with greater facility than it approached mankind.

Mammon could not be said to stand erect. That he never did, for from the ancient time when first his ideas were evolved of defeating the Divine purpose concerning man he has been described as—

The least erected spirit that fell
From heaven; for even in heaven his looks and
thoughts
Were always downward bent; admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else, enjoyed
In vision beatific.

In the Imperial City his sway was absolute, gold being the only power which received universal homage. In that worship there was no hypocrisy, and from its uniformity there had not arisen, within the memory of the oldest living man, until now, any dissent. It had been truly said that Mammonism was the only power that received universal homage. It was worshipped in this and all other lands without dissent, and often had it been able to boast of having armies for its priesthood and hecatombs of human victims for its sacrifices. Where war had slain its thousands Mammonism had slaughtered its millions; for while the former operated only with the local and fitful terrors of the earthquake, the destructive influence of the latter was universal and unceasing. Indeed war itself, what had it often been but the art of gain practised on the largest scale? The covetousness of people resolved on gain, impatient of delay, and leading on its subjects to deeds of rapine and blood? Its history was the history of slavery and oppression in all past ages. On the particular day of

which this record bears testimony—when the people were gathered to attest their fealty to the god—what a gigantic empire could it boast! The mine with its unnatural drudgery; the manufactory, with its swarms of squalid misery; the plantation, with its imbruted agonies; and the market and exchange, with their furrowed and careworn countenances. Titles and honours were among its rewards, and social distinction at its disposal. What elements were not yoked to its car! Philosophy had become a mercenary in its pay, and all religion was prostrate at its shrine.

Now the loud-sounding vocalaphone is heard in the great square, commanding silence for the Imperial Proclamation. This instrument, whose immense volume of sound, giving forth the Emperor's speech and the Proclamation of the new Heresy Law, was indicative of the artificiality of the age. Invention half a century ago had reached that stage when it was made to contribute to the luxury of the rich and the debasement and oppression of the poor. Nothing was done by these luxurious people for themselves which could be accomplished by machinery. Public meetings were unknown and newspapers few, for the use of the vocalaphone, transmitting to each household the thoughts and addresses of rulers and writers, rendered needless the attendance at meetings or the trouble of reading newspapers. If it had not been for the penal clauses of the Law of Public Worship, the same thing would have obtained in regard to religious rites, as indeed it often did, on the plea of indisposition, and the telephone was then, if desired, brought into operation.

This was the prelude to the ceremony of the day, which the ecclesiastical authorities now took in hand. First of all was the procession from within the Cathedral, consisting of the Primate, Bishops, Priests, and Choristers, who, as they passed through the lofty and spacious doors, chanted a hymn of praise to the god. After marching past the royal portion of the great assemblage, the brilliantly decorated procession deployed in front of the great image, where incense was offered up, incantations recited, and much other ceremony gone through.

But all at once, before the invocation was half completed, a cry arose from the onlookers that the great figure of the god was shaking, and all eyes were henceforth rivetted upon it. There truly a marvellous development was taking place. From a perfectly quiescent state the figure began to show signs as if of life. Its head appeared to roll, its mouth to move, and its limbs to tremble. Fascinated by the strange phenomenon, both priests and people gazed intently at it, oblivious at first of the fact that a raging fire was from the inside gradually consuming the figure, and it was not until many in the immediate vicinity had been scorched with the terrible heat that they drew back in horror and fear.

In the sight of all the people the great image gradually melted away in the intense heat, the terror-stricken multitude not knowing what to do under the circumstances, and it was not until it was seen that the Cathedral was also on fire, by contact with the idol, that someone was roused to a consciousness of the great

peril, and an alarm was raised. The figure of Mammon lay a heap of molten metal in the great square, and before the fire engines could be got fairly to work, the conflagration, having first consumed the doors of the Cathedral, spread rapidly beyond all control, so that those who had witnessed the destruction of the god also saw his temple, in an incredible short space of time, reduced by the same fiery element to a smouldering heap of ruins.

* * * * *

Whilst the scenes above described were being enacted in the great square of the Imperial City, an interested group, known to the reader, also watched their development with dilated eyes. They were not on the spot, and no one of the vast company knew of their whereabouts or the business in which they were engaged. The group was composed of characters known in this history, and they met, by invitation of Peter Faiban, in the workmen's dining-room of Serphton, to which on former occasions we have had recourse. Besides Faiban and some of the young men who were his associates and assistants, there were also present Father Cecil, Gerard Stauch, Mrs. Ilford, and the two girls who claimed Stauch and Faiban as their lovers.

On a large screen were depicted the scenes as they happened, exactly at the same period of time, and with all the realistic effects produced on the spectators in the Imperial Square, making the onlookers forget that they were in the commonplace room at Serphton, quite two miles away. Consequently they saw everything, from

the time that the artificers put the finishing touches to the preparations in the early morning until the final catastrophe—the destruction of the idol and the burning of his temple. Not only so, but the vocal proceedings were fully heard by this little group of earnest people. To them also came the Imperial Proclamation, the ceremonies before the effigy, and the roar of the conflagration, as it reduced the immense pile of building to a heap of debris.

To say that they were astonished is but feebly to express the amazement which filled all their breasts, and held them spell-bound during the hours of the progress of these eventful proceedings. When all was passed, and they saw the panic-stricken crowds fly from the square as if pursued by a merciless enemy, and the Emperor and his courtiers retire with white faces and set teeth, they unanimously turned to Faiban for an explanation of the wonders they had seen.

The young man stood by his instrument, which now reflected an almost deserted square, with little human life stirring, but still to a large extent pervaded by the smoke from the smouldering ruins, and he was perfectly calm and self-possessed. That which appeared marvellous to his friends was to him the ordinary routine of life and work. He betrayed no feeling of elation or pride, but was the modest and withal manly young fellow they had always been accustomed to regard him.

“ I had my rotating camera fixed to one of the telephone poles,” he said, “ where I knew it commanded shots at everything that passed, and this receiver and

lantern do the rest. I can by these means, and the connecting wires—which, of course, are the ordinary ones used in the service of the country—see all that is going on. I alone am responsible for the destruction of the god, but only in a secondary sense had I anything to do with the burning of the Cathedral. Let me explain. Through my knowledge of the construction of the immense image, I was able to establish communication and direct so powerful a current as to ensure complete combustion. In this I was aided by the deception practised in the construction of the interior of the image, which, like most of the pretensions of the priesthood, was not what it seemed. Outside all appeared solid gold and precious stones, and this was true, as far as it went ; but inside it could be seen that all this was surface only, the greater part of the structure being of wood and a light metal, of a very combustible nature. This being set on fire, helped in the melting of the harder metal, and altogether so fierce a heat was set up that the great doors of the Cathedral caught fire. So far I may be said to be directly responsible for the destruction of the great church, but here again the duplicity of the priests really accomplished what I had not intended, although I conceived it to be a very possible contingency. All over the Cathedral were electrical appliances for carrying out the practices by which the priests made the superstitious people believe that the supernatural had much to do with the services. These wires and instruments acted as conductors, and as you have seen, from the first breaking out of the fire only a few minutes elapsed ere

a simultaneous outburst took place in every part of the building. The oil paintings and other decorations in highly inflammable metal, together with an abundance of flags and draperies, added fuel to the conflagration, and you have seen the result."

"A truly marvellous display of power, or so it seems to us who are not familiar with this force, of which you appear to have so complete a knowledge," said Gerard Staunch; "but no doubt it is a simple matter to you."

Faiban nodded assent in his unpretentious way, and was again about to speak, when Hope Ilford exclaimed :

"But the gold and precious stones, see how they are allowed to lie there, and no one appears to take any notice of them."

"Yes," replied Faiban, "and watch that villain Danvers, how he hovers about as if gold was a magnet to him, as indeed I believe it is. But no one will be able to touch it just now, for it is still very hot. Ah, I thought as much ; he has burnt his fingers."

All eyes were turned again to the canvas screen, and the banker was seen jumping about with the pain caused through getting hold of a piece of the hot metal. He passed round by the ruins, and as he disappeared from sight, another figure appeared, walked across the square, and shook his fist, evidently at the retreating banker.

"That is Ludwig Enteract," said Faiban, "the new manager at the Crematorium. I have had to check

him on one or two occasions, and I very much fear he will get into trouble, for despite my warnings, he will keep meddling with affairs that to him will prove dangerous."

"Does he suspect us?" anxiously inquired the widow.

"I can't tell what he suspects exactly yet, but he is certainly somewhat on the track, and will have to be dealt with."

"But you would not take into your own hands, my son, that which belongs only to the living God?" The voice was that of Father Cecil, and he continued, "Let us not be guilty of the evil deeds of these men, but leave all to our Heavenly Father, who will preserve his children."

"They will have no qualms," retorted Faiban. "Let them once get on our track—and this man will help them—they will never rest until our destruction has been accomplished—that is if they are able to carry out their purpose. But have no fear. They are powerless to hurt any of us, if only we are faithful to one another. And as for anything I shall do, you may rely upon it, Father Cecil, that I shall go no further than restraint, at all events until I have had the interview you promised me this morning."

"It shall be after the ceremony to-morrow, my son, and may God be with us until then and always."

Just then there was an exclamation from several present, and it was seen that the screen was blank. Faiban sprang to his instrument, and exclaimed,

“Enteract has discovered my camera, and has taken it down. He is looking about to see if there is anything else to account for it, but it will puzzle him to find out how I can now take stock of his movements. He is on the wrong track, and at present suspects Danvers of having something to do with the disturbances which have occurred of late. In any case I must keep a sharp look out on him, and it will be well for us now to disperse, and go about our ordinary business as if we knew nothing of what has occurred on this eventful morning.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

“ I PRAY that the richest blessing of God may rest upon you, my children, that in the coming time you may partake of the abundance He has provided for all His creatures, now cruelly held back through the folly and ignorance of wicked men, and that you may be made the instruments, in His hands, of restoring to this suffering realm and to the world the inheritance from which they have long been banished.”

With a few additions, the persons who listened to Cecil Hughes' voice were the same as those who witnessed the stirring events of the previous day in the dining hall at Serphton. The additions included the parents of Mary Bourne, now united in marriage to Peter Faiban, and about half-a-dozen young girls, who evidently had come on the invitation of the electrician's companions.

The ceremony which bound together in the bonds of matrimony Gerard Staunch and Peter Faiban to Hope Ilford and Mary Bourne, following on the legal forms entered into at the Serphton registry office, was just

completed in the modest church, built on a vacant site not far from the river bank, but a mile or so from the town, and still preserved as a memorial of the emancipation of the people. It is now the Mecca of all nations, a sort of sign manual of the freedom which from the first appeared to be part of its atmosphere, an exhilaration felt by the wedding party on this eventful day.

The old man performed the ceremony, and when the words of the Christian marriage service, never before heard by those present, were pronounced it was felt that a new interest was added to life. Such beautiful and solemn words had never before fallen on their ears, and the contract to them therefore bore an importance, felt in no previous service known to any of them. Here was hope indeed, the springing up of new life, for in this contract there was the eternal promise of life and happiness to all generations. "Blessed are they that fear the Lord and walk in His ways. The Lord from out of Sion shall so bless thee that thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long; yea, thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel."

This comfort came to some who had walked to that gathering with heavy hearts and foreboding thoughts. Their way had lain through a stretch of country, access to which was denied them. Fences and high walls enclosed land held for sport or whim, without improvement of any kind, and to such things their attention was called from time to time by Father Cecil, who explained how it was that their miseries were caused by the withholding of the land from them.

"I knew it not in the old days," he had said to them.

“The life we lived was almost as artificial as that which is forced upon you now, and I understand your oppressors also lead. Alas! that I should have been so blind, and with others believed that it was the will of God it should be so. The revelation of the terrible wrong came to me as I lay on my bed in Serphton, and learned from Gerard Stauch of your oppression, and the scandalous lives which were being led by those for whom you toiled. Now I can understand how it was Christianity made no progress, and was for so long a period set aside by the false god of this world.”

The sweet words of the marriage hymn, which Stauch had taught some of them to sing, now filled the little building, and congratulations followed, after which they all gathered about Faiban, who had an important announcement to make.

“First of all,” he said, “I have to read a letter I received this morning from Ludwig Enteract, and here it is:—

‘The Crematorium, Tuesday, 7 30.

‘Mr. P. Faiban.

‘Sir,—I desire to see you on a matter of some moment respecting a novel discovery I made yesterday, after the disastrous fire in the Imperial Square. My attention was drawn to a small instrument affixed to one of the telephone poles, and connected up, which has the appearance of a photographic camera, but the mechanism I cannot make out. I think you will be able to assist me in this matter. I am endeavouring to trace the cause

of certain circumstances lately transpiring, and which in a manner come within the scope of your department. There is evidently some kind of conspiracy afloat, and those engaged in it have more knowledge of the use of electrical appliances than I have, although I flattered myself on coming here that I had nothing to learn. Of course the fire of yesterday, and the destruction of the god, were the work of an incendiary, but how accomplished I do not know as yet ; I shall know before I have done with the business. I trust I may rely upon your intelligent help in this matter. If you will fix a time, I will come to see you, or it may be convenient for you to come up here. I may say that the Imperial Council have offered a reward of £10,000 for such information as will lead to the discovery of the persons who are engaged in this conspiracy, and half of this of course will be yours, if together we are able to unravel the mystery and track out the criminals, which I somehow think, working together, we can do.—Yours faithfully,

LUDWIG ENTBRACK.'

You see," he added, " I have an opportunity of becoming rich quite suddenly. I could tell him that it would be easy to get hold of a much larger sum, and that without betraying my friends, were I so minded, but it is not well with those who have it, as far as I can see."

" And cannot be otherwise, my son," said Cecil Hughes, " when it becomes their god. Happy will be that time when men's thoughts are not set on the

acquisition of wealth, but when works of love, or service, and of beauty will be the only standard of value."

"What have you said to him?" asked Staunch.

"Nothing yet. I wrote him a short note, in most courteous terms, saying I had an important engagement to-day, but that I would communicate with him to-morrow. I shall have to keep him in hand as well as I can. I am glad I disguised my voice when speaking to him on two notable occasions that he is not likely to forget. I must think over the matter. Of course I cannot enter into it with him, and if I can help it he will not try to meet me. No doubt he means mischief, and he is more capable of achieving it than anybody else I know in the service of our enemies. He has, however, a very great deal to learn before he becomes formidable."

"But I have other things to tell," continued the young man, and this affects you, Father Cecil, and Mr. Staunch. Don't be afraid," he added, quickly, noticing a movement of alarm amongst the women; "I am not going to hide from you the fact that the situation is serious, and even threatening, but, unless I am much mistaken in my ability, they will not be able to do you any injury whatever. It has been decided to bring you before the Imperial Council to answer the charge of teaching a strange doctrine."

"Strange, alas, it is," said Cecil Hughes, "and for that I take much blame to myself, inasmuch as I had the

opportunity, with the great influence I possessed, of doing much to prevent the blotting out of the memory of Christianity, which took place eighty years ago, in so marvellous a manner. Would that I could, by the sacrifice of this poor worn-out life, bring in again the power of my Master."

The eyes of the little company were turned to the old man with manifest affection and reverence. The circumstances of his long sleep, his marvellous awakening, and the fulness of his life since in going about doing good, had endeared Father Cecil to all. In this little church he had erected his friends gathered about him, testifying their love, and willingness to die rather than allow him to be taken. It was an inspiring moment, an augury of the human freedom and emancipation yet to come.

"God will bring all things right," he said, as he gazed lovingly upon them. "He will not forsake us, and we have many evidences of His intention to bring about the deliverance of His poor people. My own marvellous recovery, the assistance, counsel, and loving care I have received from Gerard Staunch, and the raising up of this young man and his wonderful electrical genius, all are true signs of the Lord's early advent, and the triumph of His cause."

"Indeed, father, I am sure you are right," said Faiban, "for my confidence grows every day, as I realise what is about to occur. I feel the inspiration of the same spirit which guides you always, and which led Mr. Staunch to lay by all the greatness that was his,

if he had continued with his uncle. A far more important future, I feel sure, is before him and all of us than the past has ever contained. But, father, tell me how the state of this land can be altered. There seems to be no way out other than by force, and after that, supposing the present ruling power be overthrown, what guarantee have we that others who take up the government will be able or inclined to rule in any different way. The desire to obtain wealth appears to be the all-conquering spirit pervading mankind, and really it seems difficult to conceive of life carried on successfully without it. These are the thoughts that have held me back, for I have for some time possessed the power to utterly overthrow the present cruel conditions of government, but know not what manner of rule could take its place."

"Fear not, my son," answered Cecil Hughes. "All that is required to bring back the spirit of Christ into the world is the restoration of the natural order. We must not think that men are all debased, and that under proper conditions they will continue to prostrate themselves at the shrine of Mammon. When the world comes to see that all human creatures have an equal right to the use of the earth, the mad desire to acquire wealth will cease. It is because wealth secures to the holder power and distinction that it is sought after, and when it is found that no longer will mere wealth do this, men will turn their thoughts to other and better things."

"But by what law or other instrument of power will you accomplish so great a thing?"

“Not any of such means will be required. Law as administered in my day, and I presume it to be much more the case now, was the force used to secure to the usurper of other people's rights and property a continuance of the injustice. But when men understand that there must only be a common ownership of land, there need be no law, for public opinion will be sufficient to maintain equal rights.”

“Then does the restoration of equal rights to the whole of the people involve surrender on the part of some?”

“In appearance, certainly, but not in reality. At present the whole fabric of society is based upon inequality. Some have too much, and many have too little of the good things of this life, and law and custom are used for the purpose of maintaining this very bad state of things. The privileged classes think that if equal rights are allowed, they will go short. But this is by no means to be anticipated. There is plenty for all in this world. The mistake which was made in past time, and I suppose the doctrine is even more strongly held now, was that population has a tendency to outgrow its means of subsistence, and that the earth yields only in diminishing quantities to the requirements of men. This policy, which is really a denial of the ability of God to provide for His creatures, led to the miserly practice of storing up wealth and keeping land out of cultivation. This is now, it appears to me, carried to absurd lengths.”

“Indeed, it is,” said Gerard Stauch. “Very little of the land is cultivated, and the art of agriculture is but

slightly known. Most of the land that is used is for the purpose of preserving what they call wild game—periodically hunted with electrical contrivances, which inflict horrid tortures on the poor animals—and grazing cattle. Nearly all the food stuffs are imported, and that is why the people of Serphton have to toil so hard. The productions of the factories and workshops of Serphton are enormous in quantity, and very little is consumed in this country.”

“ Ah, that is the inevitable outgrowth of the folly of my day,” said Father Cecil. “ All of us, Free Traders and Protectionists alike, used to believe that the country could not flourish unless we had great exports. So anxious were we to attain this that we sent men to all the principal cities of the world. These were called consuls, ambassadors, and representatives, and their chief work was to induce other nations to accept our services. The consequence of this infatuation was that seven-eighths of the good things we manufactured were sent out of the country, while millions of people who would have been very glad of the use and enjoyment of them in our own land, went without, and often suffered terribly. So anxious were we to work for other people, that often war was declared against another nation because they placed obstacles in our way of sending them the goods which our starving people were denied the enjoyment of. We would also go to war with people who desired to do the work for us, and by means of what were called Aliens Acts we sought to prevent men and women from other lands coming to help us to do the hard work we had therefore alone to perform.”

“ There is no need for ambassadors or consuls now-a-days,” said Staunch. “ You see we have such marvellous and complete telegraphic and telephonic communication, together with facilities to converse, in a manner which is really face to face, with people in any part of the world, that such representatives are entirely unnecessary. But the curse of money hunting is now a fine art, and leads to all manner of corruption, fraud, and deceit. There is only one thing the patricians are agreed upon, and that is keeping the plebians at work, They must furnish the sinews of war, about which their so-called betters quarrel over and gamble with.”

“ It shall not last,” exclaimed Faiban; “ the cruel tyranny by which our people are ground in order that these idle and vicious men may continue their wretched career must surely come to an end. I have faith that what Father Cecil says will come to pass, and that when the horrible nightmare of Mammonism is dispelled, men will at once learn to lead the new life.”

“ And I know,” said Cecil Hughes, “ that we are under the guidance of God, who will accomplish His purpose, not only here, but in all lands. It may be that some of us will be called upon to suffer, but that will not alter our allegiance, or frustrate the divine scheme for the redemption of His people.”

“ The moment of their apparent triumph,” added Faiban, “ will be that of their overthrow, for certain I am that our enemies cannot withstand what will be brought to bear upon them. There is only one man of whom I have the slightest fear, Ludwig Enteract,

who is a marvellous electrician. He has applied himself to the study of natural phenomena in a manner that has led him far beyond any of his associates ; but he appears to lack the originality and depth of thought which would lead him on the track of my operations, and already my scheme for dealing with him approaches completion."

" Meanwhile," continued the young electrician, who for an intense moment had been gazing across the river, " I have to tell you that the officers of the Imperial Council are on their way to Serphton to arrest Father Cecil and Mr. Staunch. I shall be able to follow all the proceedings, for my apparatus is perfected, both as regards the Council Chamber and everywhere else. You also I have prepared, and if my instructions are followed out, no possible harm can come to either of you. There is that about you which when used will prevent anyone laying hands upon you, and I shall keep a diligent and constant watch. I know that you will have courage, and all that I desire is that you follow out my instructions exactly, knowing how much depends upon that. Wherever they may put you, I have given you the means of communicating with me, only be careful at all times not to allow anyone to divine the secret of the power you possess."

" Fear not for that, my son," answered Father Cecil. " Seeing that I have your assurance that there will be no personal violence used, I can cheerfully carry out your plans to the letter. Let us now return to our homes and await events, feeling sure that the Almighty will bring good out of all our trouble."

Sadness was not the chief characteristic of the little wedding party as it wended its way back to Serphton, for the confidence shown by the principal actors in the drama communicated itself to the rest, and imparted a feeling of hope. The certainty of the nearness of their deprivation of their aged friend and the energetic young priest, however, was a great grief, particularly as they realised the dismay which their apprehension would cause to those in Serphton who had not been made aware of what was passing.

“ I shall be terribly anxious when you are taken away from me,” said Hope, as she clung to her husband, and raised her lovely eyes, now filled with tears, to his steadfast face. “ The uncertainty of the future fills me with dread.”

“ But you will be brave, I know,” replied Gerard, “ and the consciousness of that will enable me to go through it all, knowing that I shall be speedily restored to you. Personally it would have been sweet had this arrest been delayed, but when I contemplate the misery and suffering I have seen since I began to understand Serphton, I am glad the crisis is near, and that the deliverance of this people must also be at hand.”

“ For your sake and that of the cause I will be brave,” murmured the girl. “ With you I have confidence as to the result.”

It all fell out as Peter Faiban had said. To the consternation of the people of Serphton, that evening a posse of the Imperial Guard came into the town, and

marching straight to the house occupied by Father Cecil and Gerard Staunch, demanded and received the surrender of the two men, carrying them away to the Imperial City, to await their appearance before the Council on the following day.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

“**YOU**, Cecil Hughes, and you, Gerard Staunch, have been brought before the Emperor and his Council that you may explain why you agitate and trouble the people of Serphton with strange doctrines, unfitting them for their work by raising false hopes of a condition of things which is impossible of realisation.”

The speaker was the Primate, who sat in a chair immediately below the Emperor, a voluptuous figure, reclining on a magnificent divan raised above the other members of the Council, who were ranged about a capacious table in a lofty chamber of the Palace. Dr. Blount was in many respects different from the man introduced to the reader many weeks before, when he banished his nephew from his house. A sad air of pensiveness and care could be detected in his somewhat haggard features, and there was an appearance of irresolution about his eyes not usual with this strong-minded head of the church. The prevalent but vague and undefined fears of the time, together with a consideration of the strange events which had taken place of late, showed their effect upon him, and it could be seen by the close observer that he was anything but at ease with himself.

Apart from the Emperor, who at the outset did not appear to concern himself much about the proceedings, and was interested more in his splendid apparel and the rich decorations surrounding him than in the business engaging the attention of the Council, there was only another person in the room to whom the reader's attention need be directed. This was Andrew Danvers, the banker, whose evil deeds have impressed themselves upon the records of this history. His was an extreme type of the frightful passion of money-grubbing which characterised the age. His methods were becoming obnoxious to those about him, and suspected by his fellow-members of the Council. Ludwig Enteract, from the time he entered upon his duties, had somehow connected the banker with the cause of the disturbing influences rife in the city of late, and his mysterious conduct on the day of the Festival of Mammon, coupled with his well-known inordinate greed, certainly lent some kind of support to the suspicions aroused. But he was as bold-faced and truculent as ever, knowing the power he possessed through advances made by the bank to the Royal House and other dignitaries of the state. He sat in his chair apparently oblivious of the charges he knew to be formulating against him, and with an eagerly aggressive attitude towards the two men who stood unquakingly before the Council. He knew that it was Father Cecil and the young priest who troubled the state, and that their success meant greater disaster to him than anything which could be accomplished by his enemies in the Imperial City and their tool, Ludwig Enteract.

The two men addressed by the Primate, in the words

which head this chapter, showed a striking contrast to the other occupants of the room. They had on their serene countenances evidence of a lofty purpose, not unmingled with pity and commiseration for their judges, in the depths of depravity to which they had sunk. The tall spare figure of Cecil Hughes showed no other signs of great age than the white hair and beard and the entire colourlessness of his face. There was an alertness about him which betokened extreme mental activity and culture, and his keen bright eyes appeared to read into the souls of his accusers.

The young priest, no longer arrayed in the uniform of the church he had renounced, but attired in the homely costume of Serphton artisans, whose companion and friend he had become, had nevertheless that about him which marked him out as no common man. There was an air of firmness and decision in his clear eyes, and his handsome face shone with the confidence he felt in his work.

The Primate averted his eyes as he put the question to the two prisoners, for he was uneasy under their scrutiny, and anything but confident in respect to his own position.

“I have no wish to add to the trouble the people of Serphton have always to bear,” was the answer that came with unfaltering voice from the old man. “Neither do I believe that my wonderful restoration to health, and the friendship and co-operation this young man freely and lovingly renders me, have in any way added to the sorrows and burdens of the distressed people.

Indeed the hope of better things now so generally held has already had a good effect on the people, who have developed a cheerfulness and patience utterly unknown in the past.

“Who are you?” asked the Emperor, now for the first time evincing a languid interest in the proceedings.

“So far as I can see,” answered Father Cecil, “I am the only survivor of a departed race. When I became unconscious I was one of forty millions inhabiting these islands, who have all passed away, either by the great upheaval in which I was stricken, or by the flux of time. I come of an almost royal house, members of which filled the highest offices of state, and about the time I speak of they and their friends held supreme power. This city appears to have been built upon the site of a far greater one, whose population was larger than they tell me is the population of the whole of these islands now.”

“And can't you see,” put in Danvers, “that any attempt to revive such a horrible state of things is impossible, and, even if it could be achieved, would prove disastrous?”

“God forbid that I or any man should attempt to bring back those cruel days, for which I and my class were responsible, excepting so far as the worship of the true God is concerned. I am convinced there was a remnant left of God's people, not swallowed up by the lust of gold and power, and that even now there will be found those who put their trust in the one God, and wait patiently for His appearing.”

The Primate's face darkened as the words fell from the lips of the old man, but he repressed the rising storm, and said, almost with a sneer,

“ But you confess yourself what a great failure the system was. In an address you delivered at Serphton, a report of which I have here, you tell of the vices and crimes prevalent at the time, of the starvation which was the lot of a large proportion of the densely-crowded country, and the great indifference to these things generally prevailing.”

“ Alas ! that we should have been so blind,” answered Cecil Hughes, the tears now falling down his noble face. “ We were held fast bound by certain doctrines of Satan, convinced that it was the divine will there should be rich and poor, in order that the virtues of the one class should be developed by ministering to the necessities of the other, and that poverty was made their lot to teach them thrift, patience, and reliance upon God. Our theology and general literature were permeated with this ghastly teaching. A system of political economy had been invented which taught that the labourer must rely on the capitalist, and that the fact of his numbers increasing beyond the ability of capital to pay him wages always tended to make and keep him poor.”

“ Good sound doctrine too,” blurted out the banker. “ I wonder what would become of the people of Serphton if we did not find the money to pay for their labour ?”

“ But I have now learned,” quietly persisted the old man, “ that all this was false teaching, arising from

misconception, and the desire to maintain class distinction. Men earn their wages before they receive them, another form of saying that they build up the wages fund from which they extract so insignificant a proportion as their share ; and so long as by their labour they go on increasing wealth, there can be no possibility of exhausting their means of subsistence."

" But all this highly speculative matter," said Dr. Blount, breaking in upon the old man's discourse, " has never been demonstrated, and is incapable of proof. If, as you say such nostrums were disbelieved eighty years ago, how can you expect them to find acceptance in these advanced days? Is there no hope of uprooting this foolish doctrine from your brain, evidently the disordered imaginations of your long affliction, and in some strange way communicated to this impulsive and sentimental nephew of mine."

There was a slight unbending from his imperious manner, as he alluded to the young man, and it was not hard to discern that he still felt kindly towards him, as well as solicitous on his behalf, a feeling not overlooked by the young priest.

" My doubts of the truth of the religion in which I was nurtured, and whose minister I became, are older than my acquaintance with Cecil Hughes," he answered. " Long before I knew who or what he was, when he lay unconscious, and had uttered no word to indicate the bent of his mind, I came to the conclusion that this religion I had been trained to teach was utterly inadequate for the salvation of the people either of the

Imperial City, from their vices, or the wretched inhabitants of Serphton from the poverty and misery to which they are chained. And yet I knew not what to do. But when Father Cecil made his wonderful recovery, and I learnt how exactly the religion of Jesus Christ fitted in with true government, equal rights, and the brotherhood of men, founded upon these things, then indeed the light came, and I have been able to apprehend how the welfare and happiness of all can only be attained by putting into practice the principles taught by Christ, and shunning altogether the horrible greed that holds the people here in bondage of soul, and makes industrial slaves of our brethren beyond the river. Would that I could obtain of you, dear uncle, the opportunity to show how easily the wonderful change could be wrought, and happiness reign, where now there is only strife, wickedness, and misery.”

There was a yearning in his manner, and deep earnestness, as he gazed on the Primate, all of which affected his appeal ; but the great churchman had recovered from his momentary lapse into tenderness, and sternly replied :

“ I have listened before to this nonsense, and have to tell you both that not only do we not regard it with toleration, but must call upon you to renounce it at once. Such idle dreaming is a dangerous function, and calculated to lead the subjects of the Emperor away from their allegiance. You evidently do not realise the extreme danger into which you are leading the people foolish enough to hearken to your false teaching. But the duty of this Council to the Emperor and the

state is clear. I have to ask you both to at once desist from the practice of this disquieting and hopeless religion. Yourselves to renounce belief in it, and confess anew allegiance to the faith of this state and obedience to the Emperor, ceasing thenceforth from disturbing our people with the preaching of false and illusory doctrines. What say you, Cecil Hughes?"

"I have to tell you that I never owned allegiance to Mammon," replied the old man, with a lofty resolution depicted on his noble countenance. "Throughout the short and I fear useless life I led, my purpose was always to honour the true God, and to promote His glory. My heart was right, but as I now see, my judgment, like that of my fellows, was entirely wrong, led away by the snares of the god of this world. But steadfast I was, and so I remain, to the true God, clear in my soul that He will shortly deliver His people from the bondage of the sins of greed, cruelty, and oppression. A feeble instrument I know I am in the promotion of the great cause, but my heart is fixed, and I must say to this Council that nothing will alter my resolution, or, short of violence, prevent the word being preached to such as will lend their ears to it."

"And you, Gerard Staunch," asked the Primate, "what say you in regard to this matter, touching the security of the public peace?"

"I, too, have made up my mind that, come what may, my voice shall be raised for my Saviour and the suffering poor He gave His life to redeem. My object is to bring about peace, in the restoration of Christ's

poor to the heritage from which they have long been exiled. This I am sure will now speedily be brought about, no matter what this Council do to these poor frail bodies of ours."

"Then I have to declare, on behalf of the Emperor and this Council, that you, Cecil Hughes, and you, Gerard Staunch, shall be placed beyond the possibility of disturbing the peace of this realm. By an order rendered necessary through your contumacious proceedings, it has been determined to put a summary stop to this foolish and wicked work, and the sentence of this Council on you both is that you be taken from this place back to your prison, and in the forenoon of to-morrow you be taken to the Hall of Assembly, and there, in the presence of the Emperor and his loyal subjects, be put to the final test of the electrocution chair, where, if you continue to hold yourselves in contempt of the order of this Council, you shall forfeit your lives as a penalty. To the test you shall go, to be carried out in the presence of an insulted people, and of the constituted authority, whom you have set at defiance, and we then shall see in whom rests the power to determine the destiny of this state."

The voice of the Primate was now hard and stern. There was a cruel expression on his dark face which boded ill to the doomed men, and effectually ended appeal or remonstrance.

Nor did the prisoners hope for any mercy from that assembly. The awful fate pronounced on them made no difference in the calm demeanour they had main-

tained throughout, and now, bowing with quiet dignity to their persecutors, they submitted themselves to the charge of their gaolors.

* * * * *

At this particular moment a scene of quite another character was being enacted in the office of the Crematorium. Ludwig Enteract, the only occupant of the room in which, on a previous occasion, we have seen him tremble under the power exercised by Peter Faiban, was not in the best of tempers. Matters did not by any means run in the groove he desired, and his efforts to obtain a clue to the mystery of recent events had been completely unsuccessful. Notwithstanding the fact that the two chief actors in what he regarded as a gigantic conspiracy were safely under lock and key, and at that moment had been called before the Imperial Council, he had an uneasy feeling that the power he greatly dreaded was not locked up with them. For many days and nights, almost unceasingly, he endeavoured to think out the problem. His own power with and knowledge of the forces of electricity, and the many things he was able to do, had very much lessened the superstition he in common with most people had held in regard to occult things ; but here was something altogether beyond his power to understand, and he was both perplexed and irritated because of his inability to unravel the mystery or detect the person, if such there be, who was using this great influence against him.

This was the morning appointed for the interview between him and Peter Faiban, and he had a little while

ago rung him up to tell him he was coming for the purpose of conferring with him. He wondered whether Faiban was in any way connected with the unseen and incomprehensible power which continued to thwart his efforts, and he had endeavoured, with such means as he possessed, to thoroughly test the capacity of this man.

But the interview sought by Enteract was not to be held, and he was hurried on to the final act of this drama without finding out the impelling force controlling him and all events yet to take place.

“Ludwig Enteract,” came the mysterious voice, whence he knew not, but in a commanding tone that made him tremble. He looked furtively around, in great fear of the torture he had before experienced, but still with a longing to solve the mystery.

“I know your thoughts,” continued the voice, “and am aware of your efforts to understand the power that holds you. Until the time appointed arrives you will not know how these things are accomplished. But you still are bent on troubling the unfortunate people of Serphton, and the interview you seek with Faiban is for the purpose of ascertaining how far he may be mixed up with the movement which has for the present placed Cecil Hughes and Gerard Stauch in the cruel clutches of the Imperial Council. But their execution will not take place, neither will you any more attempt to raid Serphton in order to execute your evil designs.”

“But who will prevent my carrying out the Emperor’s

instructions?" burst out Enteract, in sudden passion, and springing to his feet.

In that moment he felt all power to act had left him. He was rooted to the spot, his limbs being paralysed. He experienced no pain, but a feeling as if the atmosphere had closed in upon him with binding force. The mental distress, however, was very great, for the strong man felt himself under the control of a power he knew nothing about, and was unable to counteract.

"Listen," came again the voice. "You shall act out your part and perform the duty which on the morrow will take you to the Hall of Assembly, in order to carry out the execution of the test pronounced by the Council. But you shall tell no man what has happened or in any way disclose what you may know of the unseen power now controlling events. Should you disobey these instructions, I will subject you to such a process that what you have already felt will in comparison be merely child's play. Do you desire that I should give you any proof of my power to do this?"

"Oh, no, no!" replied the terrified man.

"Then you pledge your word to keep as an inviolate secret what has happened, and all you know as to this business?"

"I will promise to do all you bid me faithfully," replied Enteract. "Release me from this terrible state."

"It shall be done, but remember that if you by word

or deed seek to break the solemn agreement now entered into, I will rend you in pieces. You cannot get beyond my power, and I can as easily tear you limb from limb as I now hold you powerless in my grasp. I have no desire to hurt you, and if you obey, not a hair of your head shall be injured. But remember that it is to your own interest, and also the well-being of the whole community, that you faithfully discharge the instructions I have given you."

The voice ceased, and gradually the limbs of Ludwig Enteract relaxed their rigidity. Then he sat down to ponder upon the wonderful power which controlled him, and to speculate upon the events of the morrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEST.

THE spectacle the people of the Imperial City met to witness on the morning following that on which the events recorded in the last chapter took place, was unique in the annals of the country. Never before within the memory of the oldest living, had the state religion been called in question, or any attempt made to start another faith, as was now the case with regard to the heresy of the young priest and his mysterious companion, Cecil Hughes. Heresy indeed was unknown, for in a condition of things where public worship meant a dedication to the pursuit of wealth, with all that that implied, it could hardly be expected there would be any nonconformity. There were differences, no doubt; men and women by the thousands sick unto death of the struggle which in one form or another was waged by all Mammon's followers; others also amongst the younger people who were to some extent careless of the allurements of gold; but none doubted the reality of the creed which was the acknowledged religion of the world.

Curiosity therefore ran high when in every household

it was announced that the dread formula of the test was to be applied to the two men, and the Hall of Assembly was filled in every part, the royal enclosure being particularly well occupied by the Imperial family and the great officers of State.

The gathering was in its character identical with that which a few days previously had witnessed such strange things before the great Cathedral, and the remembrance of what took place there was still vivid in the minds of all now assembled, filling their breasts with undefined fear.

When the Emperor and his ministers had taken up their several positions, Councillor Jeffreys, who had been appointed to the office made vacant by the death of Stainforth, stood forth, and in a loud voice, called—

“ Produce the prisoners ! ”

The great gates on the opposite side of the circle to the royal seats, and which formed the base of the vast amphitheatre, swung open, and Cecil Hughes and Gerard Staunch came forth, followed by their gaolers. They had the same calm and dignified bearing which characterised them on the previous day before the Imperial Council, and the murmur which passed through the great assembly betokened the effect which it produced. Most of the people now looked for the first time on the aged man whose wonderful preservation had for some time been the cause of much gossip and speculation. Never since his recovery of consciousness had he appeared so strikingly handsome and distinguished, and most of

those who saw him had considerable difficulty in repressing ejaculations of admiration.

It was a little while before the Imperial officers obtained silence, and then the voice of Councillor Jeffreys was again heard,

“Prisoners, have you considered well the judgment by the Council?”

“We have,” came in clear ringing tones from Cecil Hughes, whose general appearance was more striking as he approached the crisis of his fate.

“And what say you?” again asked the councillor, whose eyes, as he glanced from one to the other of the doomed men, had a cruel glitter in them.

“There is little to add to what passed from us yesterday, except to express the confident hope that the true God will find some method of reaching the hearts of the Emperor and these people, now sunk in the depraved worship of Mammon.”

“Then shall you be put to the test. To the chairs you see placed in the centre of that arena you shall be conducted, and a current of electricity passed through you, gradually increased in intensity by my manipulation. Faint it shall be at first, and until the third degree is reached, to be marked by the striking of a gong, you will be able to announce submission to the Emperor. After that you will have neither power nor speech to arrest the fate then speedily to crush you. Any effort you may make to rise from the chairs after being placed

in them will be utterly vain. Officers, do your duty."

Amid the breathless interest of the great crowd of spectators the prisoners, making no resistance, were quietly conducted to the two chairs composed of brazen metal, bearing the crest of Mammon, and taking their seats calmly, turned their faces to their persecutors.

Their serenity was in no wise disturbed when the current, having been switched on by Jeffreys, gradually increased to the third and what under ordinary circumstances would have been the fatal degree. Neither of them made any sign of distress, but continued steadfastly to gaze calmly at the men who had willed their deaths.

There was nothing wrong with the apparatus. That had been tested a few hours previously, and now, the power being reduced to the first degree, Ludwig Enteract applied the test of his own hands to both chairs, and found it correct. But notwithstanding the fact that the current was increased in intensity beyond what any living creature could withstand, these two servants of the Most High remained unharmed, and calmly gazed upon the perplexed countenances of their would-be tormentors.

"Who are these men that they can escape the power of this state, and by what science are they delivered from us?" exclaimed the Emperor, in great perturbation, whilst the people remained transfixed in their seats, utterly unable either to speak or move.

"By a power over which neither you nor your pro-

fessors in electrical science have any control, and which holds you now in its grasp."

The voice which uttered these words filled every corner in the great hall. Ludwig Enteract shuddered, for in it he recognised the tones of the mysterious personage who had of late controlled his destiny. The two prisoners knew who it was who spoke, and comfort and courage came into their hearts as they realised that their friend was able to carry out all he said he would do.

"Who are you who thus interrupt the course of justice, and by some occult power step in between these prisoners and the law?" asked the Emperor.

"I am but a messenger and an instrument in the hands of One who has heard the cry of His suffering people, and comes to accomplish their salvation," came back the answer, in a voice all could easily hear. "An end will now be put to the evil state of things so long prevailing in this state, and men only be lifted up and distinguished by their virtues. Led by these servants of the living God, whom you have cruelly attempted to destroy, the people shall go up out of this den of infamy, of shame, and of crime, to work out their destiny in a purer atmosphere and a perfect personal freedom."

"To prove to you this is no mere trick or child's play, you shall now see Father Cecil and his companion rise from their seats unscathed, whilst all others in the hall shall be for a time unable to leave their places, and utterly incapable of movement or speech."

It was even as the mysterious voice said. Cecil

Hughes and Staunch rose from the execution chairs, and proceeded solemnly, with upturned faces, round the arena, leaving the building by the main entrance, not one of their gaolers, or any amongst the vast assemblage, being able to prevent them. Then came the voice again, this time with pity and compassion in its tones :

“ And now I have to tell you that no one is outside the mercy of the living God, who is all compassion, and desires to give all of you a chance of living a better life. The selfish and indulgent existence led here in the past is for ever at an end, but those who desire may begin another and a better life, in which the common good will be uppermost, and freedom enjoyed from the unnatural conditions now prevailing amongst men. In regard to opportunity there will be no difference between you and the people of Serphton, and to mark the obliteration of this vicious and corrupt distinction and caste system, which in the past has condemned the many to suffer for the gratification of the few, both cities will this very day be utterly destroyed. I beseech you therefore, without delay, to leave this place, with your families, and such things as are necessary for your sustenance and comfort during the short time that must necessarily elapse before the new settlement takes place. Get you to the high ground of the hills over above the river, and you shall this very night behold the destruction of this place of corruption and evil, and also see the last of Serphton, with its symbols of degradation. Henceforth the people of God shall lead a natural life. For some time preparations have been in process for the reception and bodily comfort of all who desire to flee from these places

of bondage, and to learn to live the better life.”

As the voice ceased the spell which held the vast throng was relaxed, and men and women were able to discourse with their neighbours. With mingled feelings they fled from the great hall, which shortly after, as if to emphasise the warnings that had been given, began to rock from its foundations, fire streamed from various windows, and in an incredibly short time it was razed by a consuming conflagration to the ground.

Not one raised a hand to stay the course of the fire. The teaching had immediate effect. From that time forward the citizens saw that this centre of corruption was doomed, and speeded on their preparations for an exodus. No one was left in ignorance as to what was about to happen. The few who were not in the Hall of Assembly to hear and witness the remarkable events there transpiring, soon learnt what had happened, and being as much convinced as those who were actually present, joined feverishly in the partial panic that followed.

There were still many incentives to speed on departure given by the destruction of other public buildings in the same mysterious fashion as the burning of the Hall of Assembly, and in this group were included the immense piles of the Imperial Palace, and the Offices of State. The National Bank was one of the first great edifices to fall, and quickly following were the municipal buildings, museums, libraries, and art galleries, with their almost priceless contents, as well as the immense emporiums of commerce.

As the intelligence of this great destruction passed quickly from house to house in the Imperial City, the people made haste to obey the mandate so wonderfully given them in the Hall of Assembly, and in a short time the city presented a deserted appearance, the great squares, the shops, and the houses alike being without human life.

There were a few, however, who disobeyed this command to go forth, and amongst these were some known to the reader. The banker Danvers, to the last true to his creed, made personal efforts—for no one would aid him—to save some of the wealth and securities lodged in the strong room of the National Bank, and perished miserably in the attempt. The Primate, a melancholy spectacle of irresolution, and still clinging to the false religion he had done so much to promote, retired from the Hall of Assembly, and convincing some of his associates that there was no truth in the statements which had been made, spent the day offering strange invocations to Mammon in the private chapel of his magnificent mansion, until they also were overwhelmed in the general destruction. As for the strange being who occupied the Imperial throne, and whose debauched career it has not been necessary—nor would it be seemly—to detail in this history, he with his abandoned creatures passed from one disgraceful revelry to another until the demolition of his palace put an end, at one and the same time, to their evil courses and degraded lives.

As to the people of Serphton, theirs indeed was a veritable exodus from the house of bondage. Faiban and his companions took care to have all in readiness,

so that events in the two places should synchronise. With the power he possessed, the securing of the Emperor's officers in the works and factories was easily accomplished, and without exception they were persuaded to make common cause with the emancipated people.

It was a joyous throng therefore which, in the middle of the forenoon, passed away from the mean houses into the open country, taking care as they went along to destroy the walls and fences which, like their degrading conditions of employment, had so long been symbols of servitude. For a short space the vast majority paused in front of the modest little sanctuary in which the service of the true God had been held, and His beneficence proclaimed.

Great was their joy when through its portals they saw emerging the ancient man of God and Gerard Staunch, who had come straight from the Imperial City, and after leading the thanksgivings of the people, told of their wonderful deliverance, and the doom of both that place and Serphton.

On the table land high above the scenes described, assembled a vast multitude of spectators, gazing at a wonderful atmospheric picture, the latest achievement of the genius of Peter Faiban. The destruction of the two cities then in progress was by his manipulation of electrical and atmospheric forces, reflected in the air immediately in front of the people, so that they were able to see the progress and completion of the great drama. First by fire and then by water the entire

obliteration of the two cities was accomplished. On both sides of the river the fiery agent raged amongst buildings, warehouses, shops, and even ships in the harbour, until there seemed nothing left to burn. Then immense subsidences took place. The great subways which tunnelled both cities gave way, the embankments and breakwaters were overthrown, and soon what had been two large and populous centres of life became only a vast lake.

A great sigh escaped the lips of the assembled multitude, and the stillness which had befallen them whilst they followed the spectacle of the destruction of the doomed cities, merged into awe and wonder. Then was heard the voice of the venerable leader, Cecil Hughes, who in words of wise counsel and encouragement, discoursed of the good providence of God, who had not left them to perish miserably in the ruin they had been witnesses of, but brought them forth to a new, a better, and a higher life. He reasoned of the utter folly of the life they had by law and custom been condemned to lead on both sides of the river—of the unproductive idleness on the one hand, and the industrial slavery on the other. He spoke of the happy medium, the natural order in which both labour and leisure became dignified, one being the corollary of the other. Where all had plenty and to spare there could be no miserable strife for precedence. At the well-filled table, with seats allotted for all the guests, no desire or necessity existed for scrambling, each deferring to the other, knowing that all their wants would be amply supplied. This was the provision made by the bounti-

ful Father for all His creatures. Wealth and opportunities for the creation of further wealth abounded. Why then should anyone desire to accumulate, what he did not need for personal wants, that which had been given for the common use?

Then the old man explained his plan for the promotion of the future welfare of the people, which was as simple as it was complete. Based on a common right of use to all of the bounties so liberally provided by Nature, strictly reserving to the community that which belonged to the people as a whole, whilst jealously guarding the right of the individual to the full reward of his industry, it was seen at once that on this basis alone could public peace and amity be maintained, for all alike were interested in preserving what would become the common good. The line was exactly drawn between that which belonged to the community and what was the property of the individual, and many breathed freer as they listened to the old man and felt that the bondage of the past could thus easily be swept away.

But the shades deepened in the valley of the great lake, and the orb of day, now sunk below the horizon, left a glorious effulgence of brightness athwart the western sky. With the people on the downs there was still light, but over the drowned cities the blackness increased, as if the more to obliterate the bad past hidden by the covering waters. The shades lengthened on the hill sides, and the broad light mellowed into twilight, and this again into the calm subdued tints of autumn night. One by one the twinkling lights of the

vast camp were extinguished, and all sank to rest, the darkness as it were hiding away for ever the evil things which for so many ages had troubled and distressed the people of God.

And then another dawn began to appear, for the world is ever born anew. Far away in the eastern sky a dim greyness spread about, fitful and weak at first, as if timorous and uncertain of its power over the prevailing darkness, but soon enlarged in strength and confidence. It was the new hope, coming to life as men slept, and preparing for them a pathway of rectitude and glory. The sun was yet at rest, but although unseen, its influence was felt in the gradually dispersing gloom, the dawn coming first to the higher works of nature, and lighting up the topmost peaks of the hills. But lo! now follows the fulness of the sun's rising, the very depths of darkness being dispelled, and men go forth to a new world, in which to follow the example of the natural order Nature's God has so abundantly set before them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EPILOGUE.

“CHILDREN, run, I think your grandfather is coming.”

The speaker, who stood at the door of a wondrously beautiful house, and looked along a well kept garden towards the outer gate, was a woman with the bloom of young life still upon her, but in her general appearance matured as befitted the mother of the trio of fine children she had spoken to. They were two girls and a boy, the latter evidently the eldest, who although startled at first into a run, felt the dignity of his sixteen years so great, that he afterwards modified this into a manly stride, and was consequently outdistanced by his sisters.

The girls had hardly passed through the gate before they were in the arms of a handsome man, who but for his white hair and beard, could not be considered old enough to deserve the distinction which had been given him.

Releasing himself from the attentions of the girls, and heartily shaking the boy's hand, he met the mother

half-way down the path, whither she had advanced to meet him.

“ Well, Hope, and how are you this beautiful morning?” he enquired.

Hope indeed it was, but not that Hope the reader has known, though the resemblance was so striking as to at once establish the relationship between the two, if not to make one forget that half-a-century has passed away since the events recorded in the foregoing chapters.

“ I am quite well, father, thank you, and I see you are, as always, bright as the day. Is mother better?”

“ Better than she was,” replied Gerard Staunch, for it was he, as the reader has already surmised. “ But your mother is not what I would like in regard to health,” and a shade crossed his thoughtful face, as he gazed in the direction whence he came, his manner plainly indicating where his heart was set.

“ Ah, well, we must hope for the best,” returned his daughter, not without a sigh, “ and not forget how good the Lord has been to us in the past.”

“ You were always your mother over again, with your patient resignation and cheerfulness in trial,” he said, looking fondly into her sweet face. “ How is Cecil?”

“ Oh, he is very well, and, as you know, still away on the mission to the far Eastern States.”

“ Well, they ought not to be long in settling the matter now.”

“ I think they are just about doing so. He rang me up an hour ago to display to the children and me the wonderful gathering of Far Eastern peoples, met in a great hall at Calcutta, in order to finally settle with the European and American nations the terms of treaty between West and East. It was China that held out the longest. Being the oldest of all the nations, and I presume the instigator of much of the mischief done in the old bad times, they have been most difficult to deal with. In fact, if it had not been for the good offices of the Japanese representatives, and the marvellous influence they exercised, I really do not know when the matter would have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.”

“ Ah!” said her father, “ I always thought the Japs would be steadfast. From the very first they have grasped the situation with more intelligence than some of the European nationalities.”

“ Yes, indeed the cause of progress owes much to them,” replied Hope. “ By example and precept, constant drilling into the minds of backward Eastern races, a liberal use of their marvellous electrical appliances for reflecting the happy condition of things existing in their own country and amongst Western peoples, and lecturing all through the continents and islands of the South Seas, they have achieved wonders during the last quarter of a century. The good work is to be crowned this very day by the ratification of the

universal treaty of amity, brotherhood, and the securing of equal rights, for China has at last come into the Convention."

"Thank God!" piously ejaculated the father. "Now indeed will the earth be His, and all men have a common right to the use of it."

"It is truly a matter for gratitude and congratulation that we are nearing the end of this great work," said Hope. "In a few hours we shall know all, for Cecil will ring up again, so that we may witness the final scene. Meanwhile, dear father, the children are almost dying to hear the completion of your history of the recovery of our country from the domination of Mammon."

"Oh, yes, do tell us grandfather," appealed Gerard, for that was the name of the tall and handsome lad to whom we have already been introduced. "Let us all sit down here in the garden, and you shall see how we can listen."

"There is not much to relate now," began the grandfather. "I was telling you of the death of Father Cecil, which somehow we never could well bring ourselves to call by that dread name, so peaceful was his passing. He was full of years, and had what he considered the unspeakable privilege of seeing his work set on a firm foundation both in this and other countries."

"I am glad my father is called by his name," said

the boy. "Tell us something of what the work was he had to do."

"Well, as you have conjectured from what I have previously told you, things were practically in a state of chaos. The old evil and corrupt life which the worshippers of Mammon led passed away with the dethronement and captivity of the god and the destruction of the cities which were emblems of his power ; but the new order had to be brought in, and for this purpose some kind of organisation became necessary. It was not as if all things were new ; there were still the people to deal with who had ingrained habits and prejudices, which had to be uprooted. Matters would have shaped themselves had this not been the case, just as Father Cecil used to tell us took place in the far off and early days of the world, before men were seized with the sins of covetousness and greed, making them unsatisfied with the fulness of the bounties they possessed to satisfy all their wants, and leading to the enslavement of their fellow-men, first in what was known as chattel slavery, and afterwards, through the teaching of a false science, by economic serfdom."

"O ! I am sure you must have had endless trouble, grandfather."

"Well, perhaps you are right ; but we were all inspired by the sublime patience and cheerfulness of Father Cecil, who seemed always to live in the future and have the accomplishment of his great work before him. So we plodded on, advising here and correcting there, until we got matters into something like the

ship-shape order you see them now. One of our great difficulties was convincing people that to begin with we had to go back to first principles. What, we were asked, after all the centuries of evolution and progress which have passed, are we to be taken back to semi-barbarism? Then they had to be shown that the reform we sought to accomplish was real progress, the only thing which could be called such, and that the bad past, wherein the minority got most of the good things of life and the majority had little, and very often went without altogether, was certainly not progress, and if evolution, then it was the evolution of wickedness. By practical demonstration the people were shown how greatly their productive powers could be raised by social adjustments which made the growth of the wealth of the community, apart from the reward of individual industry, the possession of the whole of the community, and not of some of them. This freeing of labour, as we now know, they were told would lead to the invention and utilisation of important processes, making toil easy, and the general intelligence and mental activity arising from all this could not be comprehended by the human imagination. Not only so, but these happy reforms, always tending to equalisation in the distribution of wealth, the pursuit of wealth would no longer be the chief aim of men. For why should they seek more than would satisfy their reasonable desires, when they knew that by the action of this natural law, applied to the affairs of men, wealth constantly tended to find new channels of distribution. The lesson taught by the early Reformers was also pressed home, and throughout the country men were told that 'In a

condition of society in which no one need fear poverty, no one would desire great wealth—at least, no one would take the trouble to strive and to strain for it as men do now. For, certainly, the spectacle of men who have only a few years to live, slaving away their time for the sake of dying rich, is in itself so unnatural and absurd, that in a state of society where the abolition of the fear of want had dissipated the envious admiration with which the masses of men now regard the possession of great riches, whoever would toil to acquire more than he cared to use would be looked upon as we would look upon a man who would thatch his head with half a dozen hats, or walk about in the hot sun with an overcoat on. When every one is sure of being able to get enough, no one will care to make a packhorse of himself.' ”

“ And was there no aid given by any of this multitude? ” asked the boy.

“ Great help was afforded us in our arduous task by many of the people themselves, especially those who in the past had been industrial slaves, but profited greatly from the advice given by Father Cecil, and the practical directions imparted to them by Peter Faiban. Great assistance came to us also from America and the Continent. Father Cecil was right in his conclusion that the work was proceeding elsewhere than in this country, for we found that almost simultaneously with our movement, Reformers were springing up in all parts of the world, and the progress they made against the dominant spirit of Mammonism was quite as marvellous as in our case. Then the wonderful discoveries made

by Faiban in relation to electricity and atmospheric organisation came rapidly into operation, and by these and other means, which I need not specify, assistance was rendered to each other in the great work."

"Was there any particular period when more progress was made than at any other time?"

"Yes, something like 25 years ago, when most of the grown-ups of the age of Mammonism had passed away. It was to be expected that so great a change in the social life and habits of the people, beneficent as it was, could not possibly come into full operation during one generation, notwithstanding that the evil genius of the times had been placed in eternal chains. With these it was hard to make headway, and I fear that in many cases they died very much as they had lived. But it was very different with the young. They took naturally to the new order, and these, together with the children who came into the world subsequent to the overthrow of Mammon, made the cause of Reform triumph when your father was a boy."

"And now, dear children, I think you have about wearied your grandfather, and as our midday meal is ready, and directly after that we shall hear of something of interest from the Far East, we must again adjourn this most important conference."

It was the musical voice of the mother which reached them, and in obedience to the call, they followed her into the house, and partook of the simple meal provided. The conversation turned to the subject which that day

was engaging the attention of the world, and reference to which has already been made in this chapter. But in this home thought was also going out to the father, who in the service of mankind, had left the quiet household to attend the great Congress in Calcutta.

“It can't be long now before we receive the final message,” said Hope.

“And then we shall soon have father with us again,” put in one of the girls.

“Many hundreds of thousands of people are, like ourselves, waiting for the announcement of the signing of the treaty, which will be simultaneously witnessed in all houses and public places throughout the country where instruments have been set up,” added Gerard Stauch. “It is a great day, and there are many who wish that Father Cecil might have been spared to witness it. This is the topstone of the great superstructure whose foundations he so well and truly laid in the little cottage of your grandmother, in the buried city of Serphton.”

“How little that dear woman knew of what she was doing when, through the long years, she gave shelter and sustenance to the great Emancipator,” replied Hope. “That indeed was a case of entertaining an angel unawares.”

“She had her reward, if only in the restoration of her daughter, and the recovery to robust health of her son, to say nothing of the emancipation of the people of Serphton, whom she loved so much.”

“ I hear the bell, mother,” said the younger Gerard, and the little party hurried away to the library in answer to the call.

Looking into the disc of the instrument, they beheld the interior of a large hall, in which were gathered people of many nationalities, whose picturesque costumes at once attracted their attention. Besides the richly attired Indians, Arabians, and Chinese, there were wondrously-dressed representatives from the Islands of the South Seas, the Antarctic Continent (of late brought within the pale of civilisation), and the very roof of the world.

A venerable man, with white flowing beard, and richly attired, was addressing the assembly from the presidential chair, whilst numerous interpreters translated his words to the various peoples. He was congratulating them on the successful conclusion of their labours, and the unanimous applause that his utterances met with, showed how much all appreciated the services he had rendered to the sacred cause of liberty and human brotherhood.

He was the senior member of the Brotherhood of the Thousand Isles, for many years restored, through his wise counsels, to right thinking in the affairs of life, this sounder judgment being marked by the resumption of the picturesque costume of earlier days. When he had done speaking, he raised his right hand, and forthwith there appeared in large characters on the walls of the great hall the terms of the Convention, which the

delegates had now signed, couched in many languages, but which may be freely translated :—

This Convention entered into on the Seventh Day of October, 2036, the Contracting Peoples being the Combined Nations of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, and signed at Calcutta by the Accredited Representatives of the Nations, in the presence of all men showeth—

I.—That men are free as to the possession of their bodies and the fruits of their labour ; that they shall henceforth pursue their pleasures, businesses, and all other objects they desire without let or hindrance, having regard only to the like liberties in others.

II.—To secure this franchise, all war shall cease, the high contracting parties undertaking not to hold or maintain any standing armies, and also to see that all men shall labour, so that no one may live on the labour of others.

III.—Seeing that human freedom altogether depends upon freedom of access to the means of subsistence, this Convention stipulates that henceforward there shall be no private property in land, the common right of all being established to it by this instrument, all accruing value to be the property of the community.

IV.—The appropriation by the community of all value arising from the land shall be achieved by means of a Single Tax in each country upon land

values, no other tax, direct or indirect, being imposed.

V.—The community having no right to appropriate private property, men shall be protected by this Convention in the possession of all that by their labour they at any time create.

VI.—As all are equal, there shall be no subjects, no man having any right to compel the service of his fellow-men, but all being servants and friends, shall in love minister to one another.

VII.—No interference, therefore, is recognised by any so-called governments or authorities, further than that which, by the common consent of each nation, may be required to contribute to the well-being, solidarity, and convenience of the various communities.



Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.—Jesus Christ.

And they shall build houses, and inhabit them : and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit ; they shall not plant and another eat ; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble ; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.—Isaiah.

APPENDIX.

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD.

In considering the causes of and remedies for the social evils and inequalities which afflict society, regard must undoubtedly be had to the terrible sin of Mammonism. We once heard a great divine say that whilst the churches may be said to be saved from the evil of drunkenness—the members, by their environment, being prevented going into excess—they were peculiarly liable to the temptations of greed. The returning prodigal, having renounced his spendthrift habits, begins to lead a careful life, and thrift gets the better of him. Indeed, from youth up this thrift is a precept urged upon people, and those are commended who have what are called saving habits. The State, it appears to us, may do absolutely what it chooses in respect to expenditure; it may pass beyond the limit of economical control; but not so with the individual, for in his case he is commended only when of thrifty and saving habits. We have, therefore, sharp divisions in all else but this, and in all grades of society the sin of greed is found. Lives are devoted to the acquisition of wealth. Men desire to amass more money than they can ever spend, and the habit becomes so overpowering that the practice is continued to the very verge of the grave. This worship of the god of this world is purely materialistic, and also exclusive. The sin of Mammonism is often spoken of as worldliness, the pride of life, and indulgence in sensual pleasures;

but not one of these things adequately describes it. Neither is it confined to the miser, who hoards up his gold, but may be found in the poverty-stricken housewife, who has been taught the power of money by grinding distress. Everywhere, therefore, not only is there tragedy in the fearful haste to get rich, but also in the scramble for and displacement of well-paid labour by those whose necessity drives them to work at a cheaper rate.

Just imagine what we could have and enjoy were the greed of gain abolished. In the first place there could be no poverty, for there being enough and to spare for all God's creatures, and men ceasing to act the dog-in-the-manger policy of guarding that which they cannot use themselves, wealth would flow freely to all. If we will only give the matter a little thought, it will be clearly seen that there can be no real necessity for want of employment, short time, or over-production. These things arise only because some people are so greedy that they hold on to the means of production, and so prevent the access of those who really need them. There could be very little crime if greed were abolished, for that is the greatest of all crime, the root of all evil. When you come to think of it, money is concerned in nearly all the cases which come before the magistrates or the judges of assize. There is money in the temptations which are held out to men to drink, to gamble, or to commit the many offences, mentionable and unthinkable, which go to make this glorious old world of ours so seedy and disreputable at all times. It is not alone in vice and crime that this fearful evil so predominates. How comes it that in business the common saying is that the weak must go to the wall? The late Dr. Parker graphically described an experience he had on Waterloo Bridge, when he saw the business-men crowding city-wards from the railway terminus, "with murder in their eyes." That may sound an extreme way of putting it, but what after all is meant by the application of the survival of the fittest

theory to our methods of business? What about the Stock Exchange? Who can conceive the state of things which existed last year and the greater part of this in Lancashire, apart from the desire of some men to grow rich? The cry of the children, the weary spectacle of strong and willing workers parading helplessly about the streets, all this would be non-existent if men were not greedy of gain. With the death of Mammonism, we could have the abolition of poverty, fair and honest trading without extreme competition, and the removal of temptations from the paths of our people.

But can the evils of Mammonism be abolished? We believe they can, if the people will only follow Sir John Gorst's advice, cease to heed those who would divert their attention to foreign affairs or confuse them with the intricacies of fiscal questions, and fix their attention for a while on social reforms. Let us ask ourselves what is the comparative value of these things. The world outside may very well be left for a little time to take care of itself, and we shall profit much if we turn a deaf ear to the rich men of the Tariff Reform League, who desire to obtain a monopoly of more wealth by the imposition of further indirect taxation. Instead of a rich man's league for the further taxation of the producers, we must have a workers' organisation for the promotion of natural taxation. The highway to the eradication of the great sin of Mammonism lies along the prevention of the making of great fortunes. If the nation determines on this then public spirit will grow, and men will waken up to the utter folly of this awful passion. It is no use urging the old statement that you cannot make men good by Act of Parliament. Acts of Parliaments—rich men's Parliaments, landlords' Parliaments—have saddled on the bulk of the people who are poor heavy charges of government, and what has been done we can surely proceed to undo. Yes, it is possible to put a drag on the wheel of the Juggernaut car of the god of this world, and we shall

try to show how it can be done. In respect to the value attaching to land, of which the people have been robbed, and which is an essential of their existence, it must be subjected to a system of taxation gradually rising until the whole of it goes into the coffers of the State. Then we must have a sweeping re-adjustment of the Income Tax, by which men of small incomes shall be relieved of the burden ; put the impost on large incomes, say over one thousand pounds yearly, so graduated that the greater part of them shall represent the tax. Lastly, if men still desire to accumulate wealth, which under the circumstances we doubt, a reformed system of Death Duties would sweep into the National Exchequer nine-tenths of all that men left over a certain amount at death. In this way would Mammonism be scotched, if not killed outright, and men would strive for the higher and more beautiful things which the world offers to those who will seek the better life. To achieve this great reform, however, we must make up our minds to combine, and casting aside all such things as party ties and sectarian differences, go in for this one thing, which will end most of the disputes and unhappy divergencies which now divide and embitter the lot of the human race.—“Middleton Guardian.” Nov. 5th, 1904

“ Guardian ” Printing Works, Middleton, Manchester.









