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KING TOMMY

By

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

AUTHOR OF

The Great Grandmother

Found Money, Etc.

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KING TOMMY

PART I. LONDON

King Tommy

CHAPTER I

I had finished breakfast and was reading the Irish news in *The Morning Post*. It gave me some pleasure to read the Irish news in *The Morning Post* in the early part of 1922. The Republicans or the Free Staters, or some other association of brigands, had burned my house in County Clare, and I liked being told that such people come to a bad end. *The Morning Post* told me that every day, wittily and with emphasis. In the security of my London flat I could appreciate the wit and enjoy the emphasis. I might not have cared for either if I had been in the position of my sister Emily Chambers. She still lives in Ireland.

Lord Norheys walked in and greeted me.

“Good morning, Uncle Bill. Had a good night? Sleep sound and all that? Chewed up a satisfactory breakfast? What I always say is, if a fellow sleeps and eats he’s fit for anything.”

I am not Norheys’ uncle, and my name is not Bill, or even William; but I have known him ever since he was born, and I suppose he has a right to stick to the nickname which he first gave me when he was a child in the nursery. His father, the eighth marquis, was my best friend. He and I and Edmund Troyte, the younger brother, were at Winchester together, and afterward at Oxford. Some of the happiest days of my boyhood—for that matter of my manhood—have been spent at Norheys Chase. I was asked to be godfather to the present marquis. It is natural enough that he should still call me Uncle Bill, and I am glad to think that he comes to me for advice when he is in trouble. I see a great deal of him, for he is very often in trouble of one sort or another. He never by any chance takes my advice. I dare say he would get into worse trouble if he did.

“Thanks,” I said. “I got through the night fairly well and the coffee was quite hot at breakfast.”

“I thought I’d inquire,” said Norheys, “because what I’ve got to tell you may give you a bit of a shock. And what I always say is this: unless a fellow is pretty well braced up it’s better to let a shock stand over for a day or two. There’s no earthly use running risks with a dicky heart. And every fellow’s heart is a bit dicky, so I’m told, even if he doesn’t know it.”

“I feel as fit this morning,” I said, “as I’m ever likely to; so unless your news is really desperate—— It’s about Miss Temple, I suppose.”

Miss Temple—Viola Temple of the advertisement hordings and the picture papers—is a very beautiful lady with a spotless reputation. At that time all London was enthusiastic about her dancing. Norheys was more enthusiastic than any one else. I hoped he did not mean to marry her, but was very much afraid he did.

“Viola doesn’t come into it at all so far,” said Norheys. “Though of course she may later on. No fellow can possibly tell who’ll come into what, can he? You might be in it yourself, Uncle Bill, before we’re actually through it.”

“That,” I said, “is an extra reason for telling me what it is.”

“It’s a new stunt of Uncle Ned’s.”

His uncle Ned—this time a real uncle—is Lord Edmond Troyte, son of the seventh Marquis, uncle of the ninth Marquis of Norheys, one of our ablest, quite our most sincerely patriotic statesman, at present Minister for Balkan affairs. Whatever the “stunt” was, it must surely be safe and decorous if Lord Edmund invented it. So I thought; but I was wrong. I might have remembered that there is a queer vein of adventurousness and daring in the Troyte family. There was a Lord Alfred who made himself a sort of Arab sheik early in the eighteenth century. Before him there was an Elizabethan Lord Edmund who came back from the Spanish Main with a shipful of gold plate. There was Lady Elizabeth Troyte who married Prince Boris of Lystria in 1762, and, after a brilliant military career, had her head cut off by the Turks, who were playing about in Lystria at that time. There were others. And that kind of thing, if it is in the blood, is very hard to eradicate. But no one would have expected it to break out in Lord Edmund, whose cool far-seeing wisdom guides the present cabinet in all Eastern questions.

“Uncle Ned,” said Norheys, “wants me to be a king.”

Norheys was perfectly right to inquire about my health before he made an announcement like that. A man who had slept badly or who had had no breakfast might have fainted through sheer astonishment.

“A king,” I said. “Good gracious! But—he can’t possibly have suggested your being a king. King of what? Where?”

“Does seem a bit of a facer just at first, doesn’t it, Uncle Bill? But the way to look at all these things is this: Why not? You may think that some fellow is pulling your leg about something, say a rank outsider that nobody ever heard of for the Grand National. But before you turn it down and hoof the fellow out you ought to say to yourself, Why not? That’s what I’ve been saying to myself ever since Uncle Ned sprang it on me.”

“Well,” I said, “when you put it that way I can see—I dare say you’d make a fairly good king of some very small country. But I still find it very difficult to believe that your Uncle Ned really proposed it. Did he mention the name of the country?”

“He did; but it’s slipped out of my head for the minute. It was the same place where my great-aunt Elizabeth went with that mucker of hers one hundred fifty years ago.”

“Lystria,” I said. “But—well, of course your Uncle Edmund knows better than I do, but I have an impression that Lystria isn’t an independent state any more.”

I was right about that. I looked the matter up after Norheys left me. Lystria, once an independent kingdom, was incorporated into the Republic of Megalia by the Treaty of Trianon. Megalia is one of those new republics which make the map of Europe very confusing to people like me who knew it before the war. No doubt the Lystrians deserved to lose their independence. The late king, Wladislaws VI, backed the wrong side in the war and like all who did that, lost his throne.

“Lystria is the spot Uncle Ned mentioned,” said Norheys. “Potty little one-horse place; but of course a fellow can’t expect to step into a first-rate job when he first goes into the king line of life. Anyhow, I shouldn’t be surprised if there was some good hunting there.”

“All I’ve ever heard of it,” I said, “is that it’s a very mountainous country. I don’t suppose it’s safe to ride anything there except mules.”

“Hunting on mules. Good lord!”

“There may be a few wild boars,” I said.

“Good. I’ve never tried pig-sticking. I’d like to.”

“But,” I said, “if you really are to be a king——”

As his godfather I felt it my duty to speak seriously to Norheys about his future. I had thought of quite a nice thing to say, but he interrupted me.

“Uncle Ned wants me to,” he said, “and what I always say is: If a fellow’s family is keen on a fellow doing any particular thing, then he ought to do it; unless it’s a thing that he bars strongly. I can’t say I’ve any particular objection to being a king. It isn’t a thing I’d have thought of going in for all on my own; but when Uncle Ned has set his heart on it—

well, no fellow with any sense of decency wants to start a family quarrel by going against his relations, unless he absolutely has to. Now what do you say, Uncle Bill?"

"I say," I replied, "that if you're to be a king you ought not to be thinking only about sport. Kings have duties."

"No fellow could possibly be keener on duties than I am. And I've been thinking things over since Uncle Ned spoke to me. My idea is that a king's duty is to make as few laws as possible, and to stop other fellows making them if he can. What I always say is this: Most fellows are all right if you leave them alone and don't go trying to make them do things they don't want to, such as drinking soda-water instead of beer. Of course if they take to batting each other on the head, then you've got to send a policeman to stop them. But otherwise—— Well, my idea of kings and presidents and people like that is that they've far too good an opinion of themselves. They always think they know what's best and want the other fellow to do it. Whereas the other fellow knows really just as well as they do. And my idea is: Let him. So long as it doesn't annoy anybody else much let him."

Norheys' political principles struck me as sound. I felt that, if ever he became King of Lystria, I should like to go and live there. Taxes ought to be light; for the greater part of our national income seems to go in paying officials to compel people to do things they don't want to. There would be no expenditure of that sort in Lystria under Norheys.

"There's another fellow in this stunt," he said, "besides Uncle Ned. Ever hear of any one called Cable?"

"I've heard of Procopius Cable," I said. "Everybody has."

"I haven't," said Norheys. "At least I hadn't till yesterday. What sort of bird is he?"

I found it a little difficult to give a clear account of Procopius Cable. Nobody knows where he came from. His Christian name sounds Greek, and I have heard it said that he was originally a Levantine Jew. If so, the Semitic strain does not show in his nose, which is short and snub. He appears to be enormously rich; but I have known several men who spent as much as Cable does and turned out in the end to have nothing at all. I could not call him a Captain of Industry, for he does not manufacture, nor drive other people to manufacture, anything. I suppose he might be described as a financier. I said so to Norheys.

"Anything to do with oil?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," I said, "but he may. It wouldn't surprise me to hear that Cable had something to do with anything in the world if there's money to be made out of it."

"I mentioned it," said Norheys, "because Uncle Ned said something about oil in Lystria. I can't say I much like the idea of living in a place that stinks of paraffin, nasty stuff, always getting into your food and dripping about. However, Uncle Ned says the good old British Empire wants oil, and if it does I'm all for its having as much as it can get. That's what I said to Uncle Ned, and what I always say to any fellow who starts talking about the Empire: The proper thing is to let the British Empire get what it wants with the least possible fuss, whether it's oil, or rubber, or whatever the thing may be. Uncle Ned seemed to think that in this case it was oil."

"Is there oil in Lystria? I never heard of it."

"That fellow Cable seems to have said so," said Norheys, "and I rather gather——mind you, I'm not saying this as a certain, sure thing. My general impression is that if I was King of Lystria, Uncle Ned and the jolly old Empire would collar the oil. See?"

I began to see.

CHAPTER II

I took the first chance I got of having a chat with Edmond Troyte. He was perfectly frank with me and told me all about the scheme for making his nephew King of Lystria.

He began with the political part of the plan. The Lystrians are, so he said, an intensely patriotic people, and they very much dislike being merged in the Republic of Megalia. In fact, Edmund admitted this to me, the framers of the Treaty of Trianon made a mistake, a bad mistake, in depriving Lystria of its independence.

“They are a people,” said Troyte, “with a strong feeling in favor of monarchy. They don’t like the republican form of government. The aristocracy doesn’t like it. The Church doesn’t like it, and in Lystria the Church counts for a lot. Whatever the patriarch says the people say after him. The patriarch’s name is Menelaus.”

“How do you manage to keep all these details in your head?” I asked. “Fancy your knowing the Christian name of the Patriarch of Lystria!”

Troyte was mildly pleased with the compliment. He went on to tell me that the Lystrians would like to have their old king back.

“But that’s impossible. The Entente powers wouldn’t stand it. Besides, that fellow Wladislaws is a bad one.”

“I met him once,” I said, “when I was attached to the legation at Sophia. He struck me as a bit gay.”

“He treated his wife badly,” said Troyte, “and she was an Englishwoman. As a matter of fact, she was a distant cousin of my own.”

Any king who treats a relative of Troyte’s badly deserves to lose his throne. I saw at once that Wladislaws had irretrievably lost his.

“The Patriarch Menelaus and the Lystrian aristocracy,” said Troyte, “know perfectly well that they can’t have Wladislaws back. So, some time ago, they asked for an Englishman. The only condition they made was that he should marry the ex-king’s daughter. Of course we turned the proposal down at once and no more was heard of it.”

“You seem to have turned it up again,” I said. “Now why?”

That, it appeared, is where Procopius Cable came in. He had found out that the Lystrian mountains were full of oil. According to the private reports of experts whom he had sent out, certain parts of the country were likely to prove the greatest oil-producing districts in the world. He naturally wanted to secure the oil. He tried to get a concession for the development of the Lystrian oil-fields. The Megalian Government hesitated and wrangled and procrastinated until Cable got tired of trying to deal with them. They had not money enough to develop the place themselves. They had not the knowledge or enterprise or energy to do it even if they had the money. And they would not let Cable do it. So he started working up patriotic feeling in Lystria, or rather financing it, for it did not need working up. He got into touch with the patriarch and he got into touch with the aristocracy through a certain Count Istvan Casimir. He gave them all the money they wanted. According to Cable’s account everything was ready for a revolution. All that was wanted was a king whom the Entente powers would recognize. The Megalian Republic would be quite helpless if England or any other great power recognized the new King of Lystria.

Having got all that settled, Cable approached Lord Edmund Troyte with a proposal that the Marquis of Norheys, my godson, should be King of Lystria. He would have to marry the princess of course. The Lystrians, being strong legitimists, insisted on that. But the princess, so Cable said, was a beautiful girl, with charming manners and far more respectable than her father had ever been.

“As a matter of fact,” said Troyte, “she’s a dancer in Berlin. Wladislaws did not succeed in carrying off a penny from Lystria, so both he and the girl have to work for their living. But that is not an insuperable objection to her.”

“Her dancing ought to be rather a recommendation to Norheys,” I said.

I was thinking of Viola Temple, who dances in London. Edmund Troyte was thinking of her too. He saw in the Lystrian marriage scheme a hope of saving his nephew from an undesirable alliance with a dancer who did not happen to be a princess. He said so to me quite frankly.

“Have you,” I said, “laid that part of the scene before Norheys, asked him whether he was willing to marry the princess?”

“Not yet.”

“I would,” I said. “If I were you I’d mention that to Norheys before going any further. Indeed, it might be as well to find out what the princess thinks about it too.”

“She’ll be all right,” said Troyte. “Her name is Calypso.”

Calypso is a pretty name, but I did not see that it gave us any guarantee that the girl would marry Norheys.

“Girls are dreadfully independent nowadays,” I said. “You can’t be sure.”

“She’s dancing in a cabaret in Berlin. So Cable says.”

“She ought to prefer being married to that,” I said. “Still if I were you I’d consult her. I should certainly consult Norheys.”

Troyte took my advice about consulting Norheys; but he did not give me the satisfaction of telling me he meant to. He went on to discuss another side of the affair.

“The main thing,” he said, “is that England should obtain control of the Lystrian oil. The civilization of the twentieth century rests on oil precisely as that of the nineteenth century rested on coal.”

Troyte is a great statesman. Only a great statesman could or would say a thing like that. Only a sincerely patriotic man would have gone on as Troyte did.

“If England is to hold her place in the van of the world’s progress she must control an adequate supply of oil. With an English king on the throne of Lystria and an English company at work in the oil-fields——”

“Is that fellow Cable an Englishman?”

“He’s a British subject,” said Troyte, “naturalized before the war.”

After that I had to listen to an account of the uses of oil in peace and war which bored me; to a description of the distribution of the present oil supply of the world and the small quantity of it controlled by England.

There, I think, lay the real motive of Troyte’s action, the explanation of his consent to the plan of setting Norheys on the throne of Lystria. No doubt it pleased him—Troyte has a great deal of family pride—to think of his nephew being a king. And the Troytes had some slight connection with the Lystrian Royal Family. No doubt he thought that marriage to the Princess Calypso would save Norheys from an undesirable entanglement with Viola Temple. Troyte hated the idea of having to welcome that young lady as the next Marchioness of Norheys. No doubt also Cable’s remarkable personality had some influence with him. Procopius Cable is accustomed to getting his own way with all sorts of people, and has persuaded several clever men to do astonishingly foolish things. Troyte likes and admires men of the Cable kind. He has a theory that the British Empire has been built up by buccaneers; in the Elizabethan days by buccaneers who went forth in ships and looted, flying the British flag for their own protection, leaving it still fluttering in the places which they sacked after they sailed away. In the eighteenth century the empire-building buccaneers called themselves merchants, or merchant adventurers, but they acted exactly as their predecessors did, looting, and then leaving the care of the conquered provinces to embarrassed statesmen at home. At the end of the nineteenth century the buccaneers became financiers. But their methods and the results of them were the same as before. Procopius Cable was the latest and ablest of these filibustering empire-builders. That was Troyte’s theory about him. And it influenced him in favor of any scheme suggested by Cable.

But the main thing was England’s need of oil, and the possibility of obtaining an enormous supply of it in Lystria. For the sake of England’s greatness he was ready to sacrifice Norheys, if sacrifice had been necessary.

There was also another consideration which weighed with Troyte. He came to it when he had finished with the oil.

“The Germans,” he said, “are scheming to put up a king of their own in Lystria.”

“Heard of the oil?”

“I don’t think it’s the oil so much as their policy of obtaining a dominating influence in the Balkans. The man they have in mind is the Prinz von Steinveldt.”

“I used to know him,” I said. “He was in the Foreign Office in Berlin. He must be a bit too old for the princess. Do you think she’d marry him?”

“The princess,” said Troyte, “will marry the man she’s told to.”

I was not so sure about that. The spirit of revolt against that doctrine of a girl’s duty laid firm hold upon the middle classes years ago. Since then it has been spreading upward, and, I dare say, downward. It would not surprise me to hear that rebellion is now openly advocated in the schoolrooms of palaces. Besides, Calypso appeared to be an emancipated young woman. If she dances in a cabaret in Berlin she must have shed most of the garments of conventionality in which most princesses are wrapped.

“By the way,” I said, “where’s King Wladislaws now? As the girl’s father he may want to have a say about her marriage.”

“Wladislaws has gone under utterly,” said Troyte. “I don’t know where he is or what he’s doing. We need not consider him.”

CHAPTER III

Two or three days later Norheys came to me in the club where I was lunching. He is a member of that club, but he very seldom enters it. The atmosphere and tone of the Senior Imperial are solid, and young men rather avoid the place. Norheys went there that day specially to meet me.

He dragged me off to a corner of the smoking-room after I had finished eating.

“Look here, Uncle Bill,” he said, “you remember my telling you the other day about my going in for being a king and that sort of thing.”

“Yes.”

“Well, Uncle Ned’s been at me again and he’s rather surprised me. Now I’m a fellow who isn’t at all easy to surprise; for what I always say is: Whatever happens—even if the jolly old sun doesn’t turn up in the morning at the proper hour—take it calmly. And that’s what I do, make a regular rule of it; but I’m bound to say Uncle Ned made me jump this time.”

“If there’s anything more surprising than being asked suddenly to be a king,” I said, “it must be something which would make an ancient Roman stoic jump.”

“You’d never think,” said Norheys, “that Uncle Ned would turn out to be a giddy matchmaker.”

I knew what he was at then. Troyte must have taken my advice and mentioned the proposed marriage.

“He wants me to marry a black princess,” said Norheys. “Now I’m not a prejudiced sort of fellow at all. What I always say about things of that sort is this: A fellow may not have been at a decent school, but he may be quite a decent sort of fellow. It’s the same with girls. Any girl may be a lady, don’t you know? and a fellow ought to marry her, supposing he wants to, like the king that the poem’s about who went round pretending to be a landscape painter and then married a beggar. I always say he was quite right there, if he really fancied the girl. But—well, hang it all, Uncle Bill, however unprejudiced a fellow is, he must draw the line somewhere, and I do think it’s a bit thick asking me to marry a black princess.”

“But,” I said, “the Princess Calypso isn’t black. What makes you think she is?”

“Sure to be. All those desert islandy places are governed by black princesses. I dare say she’s good-looking enough in her way. Uncle Ned seemed to think so. But I don’t like them black. And—well, hang it all, no fellow can possibly be expected to be pleased when he finds his wife is tattooed all over; and they all are. Quite right of her, of course, if it’s the thing to do in her own country. I’m not blaming her in the least. Only just I don’t like it.”

“My dear boy,” I said, “I’m not advising you to be a king, or to marry the lady. But I think I ought to tell you that Lystria isn’t an island. It’s miles, perhaps hundreds of miles, from the sea, and I don’t think that the Princess Calypso can possibly be black. I met her father once. He happened to be paying a visit to the Court of Sophia when I was attached to our legation there. He’s certainly white. The daughter wasn’t born at that time, but her mother was an Englishwoman and a cousin of your own. It’s most unlikely that the girl is black.”

“Even if she isn’t actually black,” said Norheys, “she’ll be dusky. Bound to be.”

“And I think, I really do think, that you may put the fear of her being tattooed out of your mind.”

“Even so,” said Norheys, “she’ll be more or less savage, and I don’t care for savages. It’s not that I’m particularly keen on civilization. What I always say about that is that a lot of it is rather rot. Still, that’s a different thing from marrying a savage. A girl ought to wear stays, you know, and go to a decent dressmaker.”

“You’re wrong about that,” I said. “The Central European aristocracy—and that’s the class she belongs to—are quite civilized. She probably speaks half a dozen languages and gets her frocks from Paris—or used to. She can’t now, poor thing, for her father is stony broke. That’s the reason she’s had to take to dancing. I don’t think you ought to blame her for that.”

“I don’t. I don’t think a bit the worse of a girl because she dances in public.”

That was certainly true. Norheys has no prejudice against Miss Temple.

“And I’m told,” I said, “that she’s quite a good-looking girl.”

“She may be,” said Norheys, “but my point is—that is to say, what I really feel is——”

There he stopped.

“If she isn’t black,” I said, “and isn’t tattooed, and has ordinary manners, and wears stays, which I’m perfectly certain she does, I don’t see what your objection is.”

“The fact is,” said Norheys, “that I’m engaged to be married to Miss Temple.”

“Did you tell your uncle that?” I asked.

“No, I didn’t. I didn’t want to ruffle the old boy, and that would have ruffled him. My idea is that you might break it to him, gently don’t you know, so as not to give him a shock. What I always say is this—if there’s a jarring kind of thing which has to be said, it’s better for a fellow to get some one else to say it.”

“You realize of course,” I said, “that if you refuse to marry Princess Calypso you can’t be King of Lystria.”

“I’d be sorry for that. I don’t mind saying that I’d rather like to be king of that country. If Viola and I could go there together——”

“Viola?”

“That’s Miss Temple. If she and I could set up there as king and queen, we could have a high old time and really make things hum. Viola would make a splendid queen, absolutely top hole.”

“You may put that idea out of your head at once,” I said.

“Uncle Ned and that stockbroker friend of his could have all the oil. We shouldn’t want a drop for ourselves, and I’d make the good old Lystrians dig like the devil. You might try to get Uncle Ned to look at it from that point of view.”

“It won’t do,” I said. “It really won’t.”

“I don’t see why not. I mean to say I think it might be worked if we went the right way about it. I’m not much of a whale on court etiquette and ecclesiastical law but I’ve always had a notion that there’s some sort of recognized dodge by which you can be married on the double if you’re a king, both marriages being perfectly O. K.”

“There are morganatic marriages,” I said.

“That’s it. I knew there was something of the sort, though I’d forgotten the word. Why can’t I go in for that?”

“It’s a left-handed and unsatisfactory arrangement,” I said. “I don’t think you ought to ask Miss Temple to agree to it.”

“I wasn’t thinking of asking her. The very last thing I want to do is to put Viola into an awkward position. In fact, I wouldn’t do it, not even to please Uncle Ned. My idea is to marry her in St. George’s, Hanover Square, with a bishop and bridesmaids and all complete. The other one, this Calypso girl, that Uncle Ned is so keen on, could be the morgan—what-do-you-call-it? I don’t suppose she’d mind.”

“My dear Norheys,” I said, “she’s a princess, the daughter of a man who was a European sovereign until a few years ago.”

“I don’t believe a black princess would be as particular as all that. She can’t be, especially if her arms and legs are all covered over with beastly tattooing. And I expect they are in spite of all you say. Look here, Uncle Bill, you’ve always been jolly good to me and all that. Just you put the morganatic scheme up to Uncle Ned. Be as persuasive as you can. I expect he’ll see his way to work it somehow. But you must make it quite clear that there’s to be no hanky-panky about Viola’s position. She may or may not be queen of Lystria, but she’s jolly well going to be Marchioness of Norheys.”

“I’ll speak to your uncle about it,” I said, “but it won’t be the slightest use. The thing’s impossible.”

“I don’t see why. Lots of these sultans and pashas and people have whole harems full of wives. I don’t want to go as far as that. At the same time, if they can do it, why can’t I?”

“Nobody’s proposing to set you up on the throne of a Moslem state,” I said. “Lystria is a Christian country.”

“Oh, come now. Christian. You can’t call those countries Christian. Hang it all, Uncle Bill, it was only last week I gave a fellow a subscription to a missionary society especially to convert the heathen. He wouldn’t want to convert them if they were Christians already, would he?”

“There’s an archbishop there,” I said. “A patriarch, which is a superior kind of archbishop. His name is Menelaus.”

“Sounds to me like the Greek grammar,” said Norheys, “for the matter of that, so does Calypso, and I’ve always barred learning Greek grammar.”

CHAPTER IV

I found a long letter from my sister Emily waiting for me when I got home.

She gave me four sheets of news about Ireland, thrillingly depressing news, with that strong dash of grotesque farce which always rescues Irish crime from sordidness. At the end of the letter came a request totally unconnected with Irish affairs.

“I want you,” she wrote, “to use your influence with Edmund Troyte to get a passport to Megalia for Janet Church. You remember Janet, I’m sure.”

I remembered Janet Church perfectly well. She is a bony lowland Scot, and when I met her at Emily’s house she was touring Ireland on behalf of a temperance society. I remember her saying at dinner that she would rather put a red-hot poker into her mouth than a glass of wine. That, I am sure, was not true. However much she might dislike wine she could always spit it out again. She could not spit out a red-hot poker. But Emily believed her. Emily would believe anything. She is a most religious woman and devoted to the Church to such an extent that she seriously embarrasses the rector of her parish.

“Janet Church,” Emily went on, “is going to Megalia as the representative of the Society for the Establishment of World Peace through the influence of the Union of Christian Churches. There seems to be a wonderful opening in Lystria, which is now part of the Republic of Megalia. The present patriarch——”

According to Emily, the present patriarch is a man of singularly plastic mind, willing to unite his church with any other in the interests of world peace.

I put Emily's letter into a nice, flat varnished basket which stands on my writing-table and is meant to contain unanswered letters. Emily gave me that basket last year as a Christmas present. I was glad to be able to use it for a letter of hers. I had of course no intention whatever of asking Troyte to get a passport for Janet Church.

But I did not get rid of the business so easily as that. Next day Janet Church called on me. In appearance she was just as I remembered her, in determination rather worse. The passport to Megalia had been refused. She attributed that to the hatred which the Foreign Office felt to the idea of a world peace and to Lord Edmund Troyte's dread of the influence of a union of the Christian Churches.

I dare say she was right in blaming Troyte. Knowing what he did about the condition of Lystria, he can not possibly have wanted to add to the confusion of the coming revolution by letting loose an earnest Scotchwoman in the country. Also, he probably thought that the Patriarch Menelaus would be too much occupied preparing for a royal marriage and coronation to have any time to spare for planning a world union of Christian Churches.

Janet Church had actually seen Troyte once, making her way to his office by means of a letter of introduction from Emily. She evidently tried to bully him, for he firmly refused to see her again. What she wanted was that I should go and bully him on her behalf.

"With the peace of Europe hanging in the balance," she said, "and the prospect of another war within ten years, it is of vital importance that the influence of the Christian Churches, of all of them——"

"All," I murmured sympathetically, "all, all."

"Should be brought to bear on our statesmen. And how is that to be done?"

"Only," I said, "by means of a union of Christian Churches."

"Especially the Church of Lystria," said Janet.

I could not see why the Lystrian Church, which must be quite a small body, should be so very important. But Janet Church evidently thought it was. So, I dare say, did Emily.

"Couldn't you," I said, "write to the patriarch instead of going to see him?"

"A personal interview is much better than a letter."

"His name," I said encouragingly, "is Menelaus. A letter addressed to His Beatitude the Patriarch Menelaus, Lystria, would be sure to find him."

"A personal interview is indispensable."

If the patriarch is the least like Troyte in character, or like me, Janet Church may have one personal interview with him but will certainly not have another. I suppose she realized that she was not likely to get into my flat again, for she refused to leave until I had promised to do what I could with Troyte about the passport.

I kept the promise and made an appeal to Troyte. He does not actually issue passports, but he could certainly have got one for her if he had liked. At first he flatly refused to do anything.

"I know all about that woman," he said. "She makes trouble wherever she goes. Two Papal Nuncios in different places, three Calvinist bishops and several Jewish rabbis have been complaining about her."

"The rabbis had no reason to grumble," I said. "It's only Christian Churches she wants to unite. She can't have been bothering them."

"Anyhow, they did complain," said Troyte, "and I can't have letters coming to me by every courier from all the legations in Europe asking me to keep that woman at home."

"If you set any value on your own peace and mine," I said, "you'll give her a passport to Lystria and then keep her there."

Don't let her back into this country.”

“I wish,” said Troyte, “that all religious women were in Heaven.”

“If you let her go to Lystria,” I said, “she probably will be in Heaven soon. I don't know the patriarch personally, but he'll execute her before she's been a week there if he's half as savage as Norheys says.”

Troyte asked what Norheys had been saying about the patriarch. I could only reply that I was mistaken in saying that he thought about the patriarch at all. The person he called savage was the princess.

“He seems quite sure,” I said, “that she's black.”

“Nonsense.”

“And tattooed all over.”

“He knows perfectly well that she's nothing of the sort,” said Troyte. “That's merely an excuse to get out of marrying her.”

I felt that this was a good opportunity for delivering Norheys' message.

“I suppose you know,” I said, “that he's formally engaged to Miss Temple and means to marry her.”

“We must get him out of that entanglement,” said Troyte. “And the best way of doing it is to push on the marriage with the Princess Calypso.”

“Until you've convinced him that she isn't black——”

“Don't talk nonsense,” said Troyte. “She's an extremely good-looking and attractive girl, far too good for him. I've given him her photograph.”

“Photos are often faked,” I said. “Couldn't you get a colored portrait so that he could see for himself that she isn't black. If you had her painted in an evening dress it would go some way to relieve his mind about the tattooing. He'd know that her arms and neck were clear, anyhow.”

“I wish you wouldn't be flippant,” said Troyte. “This is really rather a serious business. There's the question of the oil—a matter of imperial interest, and Cable says he's pushed things on so far that Lystria is on the verge of a revolution. I really don't know what would happen if the patriarch and Count Casimir were to bring off their *coup d'etat* and there was no king to put on the throne.”

I did not mean to be flippant. I had only gone on talking about the color of the Princess Calypso because I found it extremely difficult to make the proposal that Norheys had charged me with. At last I made the plunge.

“I wonder,” I said, “if anything in the way of a morganatic marriage could be arranged?”

“Certainly not.”

“It's sometimes done,” I said. “I'm sure I've heard of cases.”

“Certainly not. The last king, Wladislaws, was far too fond of that sort of thing. His life was a scandal, and the patriarch was on the verge of excommunicating him several times. The patriarch holds very strong views on the sanctity of marriage and—and—all cognate subjects.”

“If the patriarch is the sort of man who would tackle a king,” I said, “he'll probably be able to deal with Janet Church. Why not give her a passport? Look here, Troyte, let's compromise. I'll say no more about Miss Temple and the morganatic marriage if you'll let Janet Church go to Lystria. She'll worry the life out of me if you don't.”

“I'll tell you what I'll do,” said Troyte. “I'll let her have a passport to Germany, but not an inch farther. She can go to Berlin if she likes and stay there.”

“That's something,” I replied. “She'll be out of London anyhow.”

“I’m sorry for the Germans,” said Troyte.

“Oh, they deserve it. After all, what’s the use of our having won the war if we can’t do anything afterward to make them feel uncomfortable?”

I called on Janet Church in her hotel and told her my news. I was afraid she would be furious with Troyte for limiting her wanderings. To my surprise she took it very well.

“If I get as far as Germany,” she said, “I’ll manage to go on somehow.”

“I’m sure you will.”

“If I were a criminal flying from justice I should be able to tour Europe without a passport at all. They all do.”

That appears to be true.

“So the thing is evidently possible,” said Janet, “and if it’s possible I’ll do it.”

“Well,” I said, “good-bye and good luck. If you find yourself languishing in a Siberian dungeon, send a line to the nearest British consul.”

“I’m not going anywhere near Siberia,” said Janet.

“You may not mean to,” I said, “but you never know where you’ll fetch up when you start traveling in the Near East.”

CHAPTER V

Janet Church left London next day and I congratulated myself that I had escaped one worry. I actually enjoyed several peaceful days. Then Norheys came to me again.

“Did you tell Uncle Ned,” he said, “that I’m going to marry Viola and no one else?”

“No, I didn’t,” I said. “I told him exactly what you said I was to tell him; that you were determined to marry Miss Temple, but were quite ready to marry anybody else as well.”

Norheys grinned.

“How did he take that?” he asked.

“He said just what I expected him to say, that he’d never agree to your committing bigamy.”

“If that’s so,” said Norheys, “it puts the lid on the whole black princess scheme. What I always say is this: a fellow ought to knuckle under to his family—uncles and aunts and all that lot—so long as they’re asking him to do things which don’t annoy him much; but as soon as they begin chipping in in really offensive ways then he oughtn’t to. That’s my idea of a fellow’s duty, anyhow. I don’t know if it’s yours.”

I said that a great deal depended on his definition of the word offensive, and that so far as I could see, Calypso was anything but that.

“Anyhow,” said Norheys, “whether you agree with me or not, you can tell Uncle Ned what I say.”

I did; and Troyte told Procopius Cable. Norheys was back with me two days later and this time he was in a really bad temper.

“Look here, Uncle Bill,” he said, “I’m getting a bit fed up with this sort of thing. I don’t say it’s your fault, but there it is, and I’m damned if I stand any more of it.”

“What’s happened to you now?”

“Nothing has happened to me. If it had happened to me I shouldn’t have groused. But what I say is this:—and I always will say it even if Uncle Ned says the exact opposite—it’s a low-down trick to go behind a fellow’s back and start ragging a girl. Any fellow who does that ought to be jolly well thrashed and what’s more, will be if I catch him at it again.”

“Do tell me what’s happened.”

“This way of going on is simply rotten,” said Norheys. “As long as it was merely a matter of Uncle Ned persecuting me day and night and pelting me with oil paintings of Indian squaws, I didn’t mind. He’s my uncle, and I’m prepared to put up with a good deal from him rather than start a beastly whirlpool of family jars. But it’s a bit too thick when he sets on a slimy Jewish money-lender to try bribing Viola to give me up. I didn’t think Uncle Ned would have played it as low down as that.”

“I’m perfectly certain,” I said, “that he never did any such thing.”

Lord Edmund was extremely anxious to rescue the head of his family from an undesirable entanglement and he wanted to see Norheys established as a European sovereign. But he would not hire a Jew to offer bribes to Miss Temple.

“Anyhow,” said Norheys, “the brute came, a fat flabby animal, and tried to persuade Viola to take a check for ten thousand pounds. If Uncle Ned didn’t send him, who did?”

“Did you hear his name?”

“Yes, I did. He sent in his card to Viola and she kept it. Here it is.”

He handed me a visiting-card. I half expected the name I saw on it—Procopius Cable.

“That’s the same swine,” said Norheys, “who’s doing the deal with Uncle Ned about the oil.”

“Exactly. But I’m sure your uncle didn’t send him to bribe Miss Temple.”

Procopius Cable, eager to get at the Lystrian oil, had tired of Troyte’s cautious diplomacy and begun to act for himself. He had made a mess of it, a far worse mess than I knew or guessed then.

“Viola threw his dirty money in his face,” said Norheys, “and you’d have thought that would have been enough for him. But it wasn’t. When he saw she wasn’t going to be bribed he took a high moral tone with her, talked about ruining the prospects of a bright young life—mine, the beast meant, not hers. There’d have been some sense in talking about getting married ruining her prospects considering the way she dances. But what was the good of talking about ruining me? All the same, that’s what he did. He told her I stood a four to one chance of being a king if only she’d let me off my engagement. He told her all about that Calypso girl and what a scoop it would be for me to marry her. I happened to be round in Viola’s flat an hour later and I found the poor girl crying. Now, what do you think of that, Uncle Bill?”

“Did she promise to give you up?”

“Of course she didn’t. And what the devil good would it have been if she had? I wouldn’t have given her up. What I always say is this: If a fellow won’t give up a girl, there’s no use the girl’s trying to give up the fellow, especially if she happens to be fond of him. You see what I mean, don’t you, Uncle Bill? Well, after making Viola cry, which is a thing no man would do unless he was an actual devil, that octopus took to threatening her. He said that, being a princess, the Calypso girl could marry me if she chose; only had to say the word and there we were. Viola doesn’t know much about princesses, but she didn’t believe that. All the same, it made her more than a bit uncomfortable.”

It seems, as I heard afterward, to have roused Miss Temple to simple but effective action. I do not know whether she told Norheys what she had done. If she did, he did not confide in me.

“So you can tell Uncle Ned,” he said, “to keep that disgusting Semitic toad of his chained up for the future. If I catch him mouching round Viola’s flat again there’ll be murder done.”

“I’m afraid,” I said, “that this will be a disappointment to your uncle. He’s rather set his heart on seeing you King of Lystria.”

“I haven’t the slightest objection to being King of Lystria.”

“But you can’t be if you won’t marry the princess.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” said Norheys. “What I always say is this: A fellow like Uncle Ned, who is a Cabinet Minister and head bottle-washer to all the Leagues of Nations and Councils of Ambassadors and so forth, a fellow in that position can jolly well work things if he chooses. After all, if a thing can’t be done in one way it generally can in another. Just you try to make that clear to Uncle Ned. Tell him I’m an uncommonly dutiful nephew and all that, as keen as nuts on bucking up the family and pouring oil all over the good old empire; but there’s one thing I can’t and won’t do.”

“Marry the princess?”

“No. I’ll marry her if I have to, but I won’t go back on Viola.”

I never made all that clear to Troyte. Indeed, I never tried to. But Norheys succeeded in explaining himself, more or less, to his uncle, and I heard no more of the matter for some little time.

Another worry—a small, even a ridiculous one—came to make my life uneasy. My sister Emily wrote to me that she had lost a curate. She wanted me to set the whole machinery of the British Empire to work to find the creature for her. He was not, it appeared, a particularly valuable curate. Emily admitted that she did not like him. She went so far as to say that he was not the sort of man who ought to have been in Holy Orders. But he was the only curate there was in Emily’s parish and they could not get on without him, because the rector, Canon Pyke, had fallen suddenly ill.

The curate had gone off on a holiday, which, according to Emily, he did not deserve. Almost immediately after his departure Canon Pyke had broken down.

“All we’ve heard from him since he left is one post-card which came from Berlin and has a picture of a museum on it. I don’t think, considering all that happened during the war, that Berlin is a place a clergyman ought to go to for a holiday, not a good clergyman. It seems to me a callous thing to do, scarcely what I should call Christian. But I dare say I’m prejudiced. Anyhow, he went there. At least he said he was going there, and I suppose he really did, for that is where the post-card came from. He left his address before he started in case anything went wrong in the parish and we wanted him back. Directly the poor canon broke down Mrs. Pyke telegraphed to Berlin, but no answer came. Then I telegraphed. When I got no answer I telegraphed again to the manager of the hotel. I got a reply saying that he had left two days after he arrived and not given any address.

“Now I know that with your influence and all your London friends—I am sure Lord Edmund Troyte could do something to help us. . . .”

Apparently I was to set our consular service to work to find a curate who was rampaging about Central Europe. I should look a nice fool if I went to the Foreign Office with a request like that. I was inclined to agree with Emily. That curate of hers should never have been a clergyman. No curate ought to disappear leaving no address behind him, when his rector lies ill and my sister Emily is hungry for her accustomed Sunday sermon. I sympathized with her, and with Canon Pyke, and with the parish. I even sympathized slightly with the curate. But I was not going to do anything.

I slipped Emily’s letter into the “Unanswered” basket on top of her earlier letter about Janet Church. But I was not allowed to dismiss the matter from my mind. I got another letter the next day.

“I’m afraid I forgot to mention,” she wrote, “that the address he gave us was the Adlon Hotel. He said that if anything went wrong in the parish he would come back at once.”

She had not forgotten to give me that address. I remembered quite well that the curate meant to stop at the Adlon. The thing impressed itself on me because the Adlon is the most fashionable hotel in Berlin and might be supposed to be beyond a curate’s means. That letter joined the other two in my basket. What Emily had forgotten to tell me was the curate’s name. That rather tied my hands, or would have tied them if I had meant to do anything.

Next day I got a fourth letter from Emily. In it she enclosed twelve penny stamps.

“Please get our ambassador in Berlin to telegraph,” she wrote, “as soon as he finds out where our curate is. I don’t know

what it costs to send a telegram from Berlin, but I send twelve stamps which ought to be enough considering the present state of the exchange. Besides, an ambassador probably gets his telegrams sent cheap.”

That letter joined the others in the basket.

By the same post came one from Canon Pyke himself written in pencil from his bed. He began apologetically. He would never have dreamed of troubling me with his private affairs had not his friend Mrs. Chambers (my sister Emily) urged him to write to me on a subject very near to his heart at the moment—the lost curate.

“The dear fellow,” he went on, “is not in all respects exactly what a clergyman ought to be. At the same time, he is a worthy young man, full of heartiness and energy. What makes us fear that he may have involved himself in some serious difficulty is that he is by natural disposition both daring and adventurous, more so perhaps than one of our younger clergy ought to be. If you can . . .”

He, too, seemed to think that I ought to get the Foreign Office to send out a search party to Berlin or perhaps to get the ambassador and the head of the Inter-Allied Mission of Control to take the matter up.

His letter joined Emily’s in the basket.

Then Emily took to telegraphing to me. She is a frugal woman whose spare money goes to missionary societies, but she spent a lot on telegrams. The first cost two-and-sixpence, and they kept getting longer and longer. The fourth can not have been sent for less than ten shillings. There was no doubt that she was in earnest about finding that curate.

I disposed of the fourth telegram in the usual way. The pile in the basket on my desk was becoming large. If Emily means to make a habit of corresponding with me about lost curates she must give me another unanswered letter basket next Christmas.

Then my servant brought me in some letters which had just arrived by post. I glanced at the envelopes anxiously, fearing that either Emily or her dear Canon Pyke had written again. I was relieved to find that the only real letter was addressed in Edmund Troyte’s writing. Along with it was an unmistakable bill with a London post-mark on the envelope, and a post-card. I began with Edmund Troyte.

He invited me to dine with him that very evening.

“You and I,” he wrote, “nobody else. I want to talk to you about Norheys.”

I was getting a little tired of being talked to about Norheys. I admit that I am that young man’s godfather, but that does not make me responsible for all his actions. Lord Edmund ought to be capable of looking after his own nephew. Then it occurred to me that if Edmund Troyte went on worrying me I might as well have the satisfaction of worrying him. I would tell him the story of Emily’s curate and see how he liked being consulted about business which is none of his. I telephoned my acceptance of his invitation and then went back to the bill and the post-card.

The bill was totally uninteresting. The post-card came from Janet Church and announced that she had got as far as Berlin and meant to go farther. Janet is fairly well off and likes to be as comfortable as she can when traveling. She was staying in the Adlon Hotel. The address reminded me of Emily’s curate and a really brilliant idea occurred to me. Janet Church had given me a great deal of trouble. I would give her a little in return.

I wrote her a long letter in which I explained that a really valuable curate had disappeared, having been last heard of at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin. I said that foul play was suspected, which I am sure was true. Emily evidently thought that the young man had gone off on a disreputable spree, which would have been foul play on his part. Canon Pyke feared that he had been decoyed into a den of infamy and there robbed—foul play on the part of some one else. I asked Janet to stay a few days longer in Berlin to go into the matter thoroughly. It was just the sort of thing she ought to do. What is the good of working for World Peace through the Union of Christian Churches if the world, combined with the flesh and the devil, is kidnapping the clergy?

“The curate’s name,” I wrote, “has unfortunately not been told me. But that won’t be any real obstacle. There can not be many English curates at large in Berlin. If you find one at all, he’ll probably be the one we want. He has a hearty manner, is full of energy and good spirits. In all probability his face is round and plump. My sister Emily is most anxious about him, so I’m sure you’ll do your best.”

Then I wrote to Emily.

“I’m delighted to help in any way I can in the good work of finding your lost curate. I am dining with Edmund Troyte this evening and intend to put the whole case before him. He is, as you know, minister for Balkan affairs, and though Berlin is not actually in the Balkans, it is quite likely that your curate may have drifted eastward. So many people do, don’t they?—and will be found in Bukarest or Sophia. You can confidently count on everything possible being done. I have also written to Janet Church, who is in Berlin. She is just the kind of woman who will find a curate however carefully he is hidden—or, if your suspicion is justified, however carefully he has hidden himself. But I hope you are wrong about him. Poor boy. I can not help thinking of him as a nice, straightforward, merry lad, a little lacking perhaps in serious purpose, but sound at heart. It would be a thousand pities if he were permanently lost. But we need not anticipate that. The unanswered letter basket you gave me at Christmas is one of the most useful things I have ever had. I don’t know how I should get on without it. Give my kind regards to the canon.”

CHAPTER VI

Troyte and I dined very comfortably and, being wise men, talked about nothing unpleasant until the business of eating was over. When I had finished my second glass of port we went into the library for our coffee. The library in Troyte’s house in Grosvenor Street is a comfortable, and, I think, a beautiful room. There are a couple of good pictures, but for the most part the walls are covered with bookcases. Troyte has spent a great deal on books during his life, rare books, exquisite examples of printing and books which have fine bindings. I do not know that he, or indeed any one, ever reads books of that kind. It is generally easier, and pleasanter, to buy a modern edition of an old author if you want to read him at all. But there is no doubt that the presence in a room of good books, good from a bibliophile’s point of view, creates an atmosphere which is very agreeable, especially after dinner.

A Persian carpet, one of the best I have ever seen, covers the floor of the library. Some good chairs, Chinese Chippendale, stand with their backs against the bookcases. But Troyte is too sensible a man to sacrifice comfort to artistic feeling. Round the fire he has deep leather-covered chairs of thoroughly satisfactory late Victorian design. A servant put a small table between us, set coffee, cognac and cigarettes on it and then went away.

I was just about to begin the tale of Emily’s lost curate when Troyte asked me an abrupt question.

“Do you know where Norheys is?”

“At this hour,” I said, “he’s generally in the Belvedere.”

The Belvedere is the theater in which Miss Temple dances. Norheys, unless he has some important engagement elsewhere, hangs about her dressing-room until her turn is over. Then he drives her home.

“He’s not at the Belvedere to-night,” said Troyte. “In fact, he’s not in town at all.”

“He didn’t say anything to me about going away,” I said, “but then I haven’t seen him for the last two days.”

“Nobody has seen him for the last two days,” said Troyte. “I wanted to speak to him to-day and I telephoned to his rooms. His man told me that he went away the day before yesterday. He left no address, so his letters aren’t being forwarded. I made inquiries at his clubs, but he left no address at any of them. All his man could tell me was that he went off with two suit-cases and the taxi man was ordered to take him to Charing Cross.”

It occurred to me at once that Norheys, goaded to exasperation by Cable’s conduct to Miss Temple, had gone off with her and got married somewhere.

“Did you,” I asked, “find out whether Miss Temple is in London or not?”

“No, I didn’t. You surely don’t think he’s gone off with her?”

“It might be worth while finding out whether she’s in London or not.”

I went over to the telephone and rang up the Belvedere Theater. I asked whether Miss Temple was there and at what hour she might be expected to dance. Some one who was either in a hurry or a bad temper replied that Miss Temple was unable to dance owing to indisposition. He added that if I had taken the trouble to look at the advertisements of his entertainment I should have seen that Miss Temple had not danced for two nights. In that way, so he said quite plainly, I should have avoided wasting his time with silly questions. That was a plain hint to me to ring off and hang up the receiver; but I ventured on another question.

“Do you happen to know if Miss Temple is at home in her flat?”

“No, I don’t,” came the reply, “and I shouldn’t tell you if I did. We don’t encourage strangers to run after our ladies.”

I told Troyte what I had heard.

“I suppose,” I said, “that putting two and two together in the usual way we arrive at four.”

“You mean that he’s gone off with her?”

“I should have expressed myself more plainly,” I said. “I should have said that putting one and one together we arrive at another one. ‘They twain,’ you know.”

“Married?”

“He told me he was perfectly determined to marry her, and I expect he was.”

My opinion was that Troyte had driven the boy into marrying rather sooner than he meant to by continuously pushing the Princess Calypso at him and worrying him about the crown of Lystria. Cable, with his attempt at bribery and his ill-timed threats, had settled the matter. But there was no use making things worse for Troyte by telling him that it was largely his own fault. I tried to soften the blow to him.

“I’m told,” I said, “that she’s a nice, lady-like girl. He might have done worse.”

Troyte sat sipping a glass of cognac without speaking. I went on:

“And, after all, it wouldn’t have been all joy marrying a Balkan princess. I don’t know this Calypso girl personally, but I can’t help feeling that a young woman brought up among bearded brigands, with snowy mountains all round, and heavy barbaric jewels given her for birthday presents, might turn out to be what the French call *farouche*. I don’t mean to hint that she isn’t a lady; but she may be a little lacking in serenity.”

“I don’t believe he’s gone off with Miss Temple,” said Troyte.

The thing seemed so obvious to me that I could see no reason for doubting it. But the next thing Troyte said startled me.

“The fact is,” he said, “that Norheys promised me three days ago that he’d go out to Lystria. He said he’d be ready to start to-morrow.”

“Did he say he’d marry the princess?”

“No. He didn’t. If you want his exact words, he said, ‘I’ll have a go at that jolly old crown, Uncle Ned, just to please you.’”

I have never known Norheys go back on his word. If he said that he certainly meant to do it.

“And he promised to start to-morrow?” I said.

“Yes. But he may have changed his mind and started the day before yesterday. I told him that everything was ready. As a matter of fact, Cable has had an agent from Lystria waiting in Berlin for a week, ready to make a dart across the frontier the very moment Norheys arrives. Every one in Lystria is prepared for the *coup d’etat*. The patriarch and most of the leading nobles are to be in the Schloss Amberg, one of the old royal palaces. Cable has poured money into the country and has got the whole thing thoroughly organized. In fact, he told me that he’d managed to bribe the President of the Megalian Republic and three of his cabinet ministers, so that they won’t make a fuss when Lystria declares its independence. I’ve settled things with the French, more or less, that is to say, they’ve agreed to leave it to the League of

Nations.”

“Which means?”

Troyte smiled slightly.

“Talk,” he said, “and time.”

“So you really think that if Norheys has gone there——”

“Everything will go quite smoothly,” said Troyte. “But I wish he’d told me he was starting at once.”

“And it might have been better,” I said, “if he hadn’t taken Miss Temple with him.”

“I don’t believe he’s done that,” said Troyte. “Hang it all, the boy’s a gentleman. He wouldn’t go off to marry the princess with that other woman in attendance.”

I felt as sure as I could be about anything that Norheys had not gone off to marry the princess. But he might possibly have gone to Lystria to see if he could secure the crown without the princess. He told me he was anxious to please his uncle and to supply the empire with oil.

“What would happen,” I said, “if he asked for the crown and refused to marry the princess?”

“He wouldn’t get it,” said Troyte. “The Lystrians are legitimists to the backbone.”

“And if by any chance—I’m not saying that it is so, I’m only making a suggestion—if by any chance Miss Temple followed him there of her own accord, what would happen?”

“I should think,” said Troyte, “that the patriarch would probably hang Norheys and imprison Miss Temple. But that can’t have happened. The girl wouldn’t be such a fool as to go there on her own.”

Then a servant came in and murmured to Troyte that Mr. Cable wanted to see him on very important business.

“Show him in,” said Troyte.

I had never seen Procopius Cable. With Norheys’ description fresh in my mind I expected a repulsive-looking man. Norheys called him “a Semitic toad,” an “octopus,” and “a slimy money-lender.” I was agreeably surprised. He did not look like a gentleman, but there was no doubt about his being masterful and strong. I saw that he possessed ability of an uncommon kind. I could understand how it was that Troyte believed him to be an empire-builder. Clive and Warren Hastings, in earlier days Drake and Frobisher, later on perhaps Cecil Rhodes, must have been men of essentially the same sort of character. But looking at the man, it was tolerably certain that he was not by birth an Englishman. He had become English because England is the natural home of men of his type, the only country which has ever understood how to use them. But the foreign strain was unmistakable. It was not Semitic. It was not Latin. I do not think it was Slav. It was something that made him more excitable and more liable to display excitement than a man of our blood would be.

His eyes were sparkling. His face seemed to shine and his movements were jumpy when he walked into the room. When he saw me he stopped, half-way between the door and the fireplace.

Troyte introduced me formally, told him that he need not hesitate to speak in my presence and invited him to sit down. Cable still looked at me doubtfully. Troyte explained that I was Norheys’ godfather and knew all about the Lystrian business. Then Cable blurted out the news.

“I came round to tell you,” he said, “that I’ve just had a telegram from Casimir. You recollect, don’t you, Count Istvan Casimir is the most influential of the Lystrian nobles. He’s my agent in Berlin.”

“Yes,” said Troyte. “He was to receive Norheys there.”

“Everything has gone capitally so far,” said Cable. “Lord Norheys arrived in Berlin. Casimir met him. They crossed the Megalian frontier to-day.”

“To-day?” said Troyte. “Norheys and Casimir?”

“Lord Norheys and the princess,” said Cable. “Casimir couldn’t go with them. He wouldn’t have been allowed to cross the frontier. The patriarch is waiting for them in the Schloss Amberg. They ought to arrive there to-morrow evening. Next morning the wedding will be celebrated in the Royal Chapel. To-morrow afternoon the coronation will take place.”

Cable was excited, wildly excited. He stepped forward, took Troyte’s liqueur glass, filled it with cognac and raised it high above his head.

“God save the King of Lystria,” he said.

He swallowed the cognac, and, following the best precedents, threw down the glass. It ought no doubt to have emphasized the toast by being shivered to atoms. But Troyte’s Persian carpet is soft. The glass merely rolled about a little. I picked it up quite unharmed and set it on the tray.

“I suppose,” I said, “that there’s no possibility of a mistake about your news?”

“There can’t be a mistake,” said Cable. “Casimir is thoroughly reliable. The telegram is in my private code, so you couldn’t read it if I showed it to you. But you may take my word for it that it comes from Casimir. No one else has the code.”

“I don’t see any reason to suppose there is a mistake,” said Troyte. “Norheys told me he meant to go to Lystria, though I didn’t know he meant to start day before yesterday.”

“He started a week ago,” said Cable.

That puzzled me. I was quite certain that I had seen Norheys less than a week ago. Certainly Miss Temple was dancing in the Belvedere four days before. I saw her there myself. Whatever Norheys had done, she had certainly not left London a week ago.

“Does your telegram say whether there was any one else with Norheys and the princess?” I said. “You’ve told us that the Count Casimir couldn’t go with them. Did they go off to Lystria alone?”

“There was a lady with the princess,” said Cable.

“Who?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” said Cable.

“Some lady-in-waiting, of course,” said Troyte.

I was more puzzled than ever. I felt convinced that Miss Temple was with Norheys wherever he was. Unless he had succeeded in working out his plan for marrying both of them I failed to see what could have happened.

“I think,” said Troyte, “that we ought to follow Mr. Cable’s example, and drink the health of the King and Queen of Lystria.”

He rang the bell. In a few minutes we had a bottle of champagne on the table between us. Troyte filled three glasses. He and I stood up. Cable had not yet sat down.

“Long life to the king and queen,” said Troyte.

“The restored Monarchy of Lystria,” said Cable.

“Oil,” I said, “and plenty of it.”

Troyte drank. Cable hesitated, looking doubtfully at me. He suspected that I might be poking fun at him, and that kind of man always hates a joke. I held up my glass and smiled amiably.

Then—things occasionally happen in this dramatic way even in real life—Norheys and Viola Temple walked in.

“Hullo! Uncle Ned,” said Norheys, “just ran round, don’t you know, to tell you that Viola and I were married the day before yesterday. Did the trick in Dover and ran over to Paris for twenty-four hours. Excuse our not being dressed and that sort of thing. The train’s only just on.”

Troyte stared at him. So did Cable. Neither of them spoke. I felt it was my duty to break a silence that was becoming awkward.

“Oddly enough,” I said, “we were just drinking to your health when you came in.”

“Were you?” said Norheys. “Now how the devil did you know? I suppose it got into the papers somehow. What I always say is: It’s no use trying to keep things out of the papers. ‘The Marquis of Norheys and his beautiful bride leaving the church after the ceremony’ and all that sort of thing. What? With a photograph of some other fellow and quite a different girl grinning at you. I don’t know how it’s done; but there it is, you know. Anyhow, I’m glad it was broken to you, Uncle Ned. I was afraid it might be a bit of a facer at first. Not that I’m going to back out of Lystria. I always told you I was quite on for that. So’s Viola. Viola is as keen as I am and we’ll start to-morrow if you like.”

“Are you Lord Norheys?” gasped Cable.

“That exact man, and this is Lady Norheys.”

“If you’re Lord Norheys——” said Cable.

“I don’t blame you for not recognizing me,” said Norheys. “I expect the photographs you saw in the papers gave me a long white beard or something. But I’m the man, the actual and only original. Do tell him who I am, Uncle Bill. He doesn’t seem to believe me.”

“If you’re Lord Norheys, some one else must have gone off to Lystria with the princess.”

“Good old Calypso,” said Norheys. “Done a bolt on her own, I suppose. Family chauffeur perhaps. What I always say is this: If a girl has any spirit it’s a mistake to drive her up against the ropes, telling her she’s got to marry some fellow she’s never seen. They won’t stand it, and I don’t altogether blame them. Jolly independent, all of them, specially since the war.”

“If you’re Lord Norheys,” Cable said, “who has gone off to Lystria with the princess?”

He spoke in a dull flat tone. Troyte made no attempt to answer him. Norheys put his arm round his wife’s waist and winked vulgarly at me. There was a long and embarrassing silence. I broke it in the end with an idiotic answer to Cable’s question.

“Unless it’s my sister Emily’s lost curate, I don’t see who it can be.” Then I giggled nervously.

PART II. BERLIN

CHAPTER VII

It is easy to understand how the mistake was made.

Count Istvan Casimir does not know English very well. He has never been in England and at that time had never talked to any Englishman except the tutor who educated him as a boy and taught him to read Shakespeare. That tutor must have been a Shakespearean enthusiast, for Casimir has more quotations ready for use than most of us. Unfortunately, his knowledge of Shakespeare did not help him much in his correspondence with Procopius Cable. The English which Cable uses is of a modern and commercial kind. I can fancy his writing to Casimir: "Yours of even date"; or "of the 12th ult. to hand"; or "re Lystrian Monarchy, we have to regret . . ." Shakespeare did not write in that style and I do not suppose that Casimir understood half Cable wrote. Nor did Cable quite understand Casimir. He was inclined to skip the quotations of the count's letters not realizing that they conveyed the most important kinds of information. Casimir, for instance, might write: "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer." Cable would take that for mere ornament, the exuberance of a man not trained to business. He would fail to realize that Casimir meant that the restoration of the monarchy was a gloriously accomplished fact, or would be gloriously accomplished as soon as the monarch put in an appearance.

Of course the similarity of the two names deceived Casimir. He was in Berlin waiting and watching for the arrival of Lord Norheys. It was natural enough that he should think his man had come when he saw Norheys in the register of the Adlon Hotel. There is only the difference of one letter between the two names. He was further misled by the "Reverend." Tommy, in those days, was most particular about his "Reverend," and set himself down as the Reverend T. A. Norheys. Casimir was not familiar with the title. It was not, apparently, accorded to the clergy in Shakespearean days. The parson in *As You Like It* was styled "Sir"—"Sir Oliver," as if he had been a knight. On the other hand, "Reverend" was used of Venetian seigneurs and such people. Casimir took it for an English version of "*Hoch Wohlgeborne*." It left him in no doubt that Tommy was the man he wanted.

Tommy, of course, had never heard of Count Casimir. I do not suppose he had ever heard of Lord Norheys either, or of Procopius Cable, or indeed of Lystria. He had not the slightest intention of going farther east than Berlin. Indeed, he did not mean to leave Berlin during his holiday, unless perhaps for a little trip to Potsdam.

Tommy has explained to me exactly why he went to Berlin and what he meant to do there. A year or so earlier he had bought a number of German marks on the advice of a friend who professed to be a financial expert. At that time he got three hundred and forty marks for a pound and they seemed cheap enough. Tommy's friend said that very soon they would stand at twenty-five or thirty to a pound. Tommy believed him and invested every penny he possessed in German marks. I do not know how many he actually bought, but the number was considerable, and the sum he stood to gain would have been a nice little fortune. An investment which promises to multiply your capital by eleven or twelve is very attractive, even if it pays no interest for a while.

As everybody knows, the financial experts, Tommy's friend among them, were disastrously wrong, even more hopelessly wrong than experts usually are. The marks depreciated rapidly and in the spring of 1922 it took one thousand four hundred of them to buy a pound. Tommy realized he was the victim, one of the many victims, of the most gigantic swindle in human history. But being a man of cheerful and buoyant disposition, he did not wring his hands or curse fate. He thought that though marks were of very little use in England, they probably had some value in their native land; that is to say, that he would be able to buy a good many dinners, bottles of wine, theater tickets and such things with his marks in Germany. He asked for a holiday, packed his entire store of marks in a despatch-box and went to Berlin. He meant to stay there as long as the marks lasted and to have as good a time as he could. Tommy was a fool to buy the marks

originally. He was wise in his plan for getting rid of them. Things of the sort he wanted really were very cheap in Berlin in the early part of 1922.

He had never been abroad before and he did not know a word of German. He started with a return ticket, a Baedeker's *Guide to Berlin* and a German-English phrase book, which professed to give him, spelled phonetically, all that a traveler could possibly want to say.

It must have been a good phrase book, much better than most of its kind. Tommy, on the morning after his arrival, was able to ask a chambermaid for hot water, a waiter for breakfast and another man to clean his boots. Most phrase books are no use for that sort of thing. They only tell you how to say "Good morning, honored sir. Will you give me the pleasure of dining at my house to-day, bringing your gracious lady with you?" and things like that which the tourist seldom wants.

While he drank his coffee and ate the wretched little roll which the German hotel-keepers give to guests who breakfast in their bedrooms, he opened his despatch-box and counted his money.

"It was the first time in my life," he told me, "that I'd been a millionaire, and I liked the feeling. In fact, I gloated."

I do not wonder. The German notes are most opulent-looking and impressive things, far superior in size and texture to the flimsy little scraps of paper which England has to be contented with. There are large gray notes, as big as half-sheets of note-paper, worth a thousand marks each. There are beautiful thick notes for one hundred marks. Even the little "funf" markers are impressive. All Tommy's notes were perfectly new and spotlessly clean. Nobody could have helped fingering them lovingly and reverently. It was a delight to count them.

But it is poor fun feeling that you are a millionaire all by yourself in a hotel bedroom. Tommy realized that he ought to be out-of-doors enjoying himself and getting some solid good for his money. He finished his coffee, swallowed the last morsel of bread, and began to shave.

Then came a knock at the door. Tommy said "Herein." His face was covered with a thick lather of soap, and he did not care for opening his mouth very wide; but he spoke quite distinctly. And he was sure that "Herein" was the German for "come in." He had said it six times already, twice for each of the three servants, and it had been understood. This time the man outside simply went on knocking. Tommy went to the door and opened it.

He saw Count Casimir, beautifully dressed, smiling and bowing politely. Casimir is always beautifully and appropriately dressed. I have seen him at the start of a boar hunt in Lystria with a tall red feather sticking up in the front of his cap and boots that would have suited one of Prince Rupert's cavalier troopers. I have seen him in evening clothes, and nothing more perfect could be found in a drawing-room comedy on the London stage. I did not see him that morning in the Adlon Hotel. But Janet Church has given me a description of his clothes. He wore a pale gray suit with a faint blue line in it, and creases in all the right places, a mauve tie harmonized with the blue line, a waistcoat . . . I must leave a blank here and get Janet to tell me about the waistcoat again. Tommy was in crumpled gray pajamas and his face was soapy.

Count Casimir presented his card.

Tommy read the name on it—Casimir Istvan Graf—but was not much enlightened. He would if he could have read what was printed under the name. It was a large card, much larger than the visiting-cards used by ladies in England, and there were four lines of small print on it, no doubt a description of Count Casimir's position in society. Unfortunately, these were in a language which Tommy had never seen before. It seemed a very queer language. There were curious curly accents over the consonants. The letter *X* appeared with unusual frequency. There were several *R*'s with their faces turned the wrong way, looking very much as if some one had lifted them up, turned them over and set them down the wrong way. The same thing had happened to a couple of *N*'s and there was a *B* with a curious little horn attached to it. Tommy could read Greek. He had a nodding acquaintance with the Hebrew alphabet and could distinguish between German capital *B*'s and *V*'s. Count Casimir's language was none of these.

"I bid you welcome," said Count Casimir. "In the words of your great poet Shakespeare, I say, 'All's well that ends well.'"

"I'm afraid," said Tommy politely, "that there is some mistake."

At this moment Janet Church came along the corridor, wearing a pink dressing-gown, a pair of blue quilted slippers and a very ribbony cap. She was on her way to a distant bath. She saw Casimir, erect and beautiful—he is a very good-looking man—in front of Tommy’s door. She also saw Tommy, with the lather beginning to dry on his face.

Janet had been three days in Berlin, worrying the consul and the secretaries in the Embassy for permission to go on to Megalia. She had not received my letter about Emily’s lost curate. Indeed, she never did receive it. It reached Berlin after she had gone away and was finally returned to me.

Some women would have hurried on, turning their heads the other way. Tommy was in his pajamas. She herself was most imperfectly clothed. But Janet does not suffer from modesty and she loves interfering in other people’s business. She calls this being helpful, and believes it to be virtuous.

“Can I,” she said, “be of any assistance to you? I speak German fluently.”

Casimir turned, put his heels together and bowed to her. Then he kissed her hand. Janet, in a red dressing-gown and boudoir cap, must have been a surprising and rather a disgusting sight. But Casimir’s manners are as perfect as his clothes. He would have bowed as politely and kissed her hand with the same elegant devotion if she had stepped straight out of her bath to be helpful.

“Thanks,” said Tommy, “just tell this gentleman, will you, that there’s some mistake. Most likely they’ve sent him up to the wrong room. I’m not the man he wants to see.”

Janet made a long speech in German. Casimir answered her with a still longer speech. Janet replied to that, and Casimir, with an immense flow of language, answered her. Tommy declares that they talked to each other for ten minutes. Then Janet turned to him.

“He says his name is Count Istvan Casimir.”

That seemed a small result of so much conversation, and gave Tommy very little fresh information. The Casimir and the Istvan he had read on the visiting-card, though in reversed order. Graf he took to be the German for count.

“Tell him,” he said, “that there’s a mistake. He can’t possibly want to see me. Ask him who he does want, and then get him to go down again and find the number of his friend’s room.”

Janet started again. So did Casimir. This time they talked for a quarter of an hour, fast and emphatically. There is nothing in the world so irritating as hearing two people talk to each other in an unknown tongue when you know they are talking about your affairs. Tommy is the best-tempered of men, but even he began to feel impatient.

“He says,” said Janet, turning to Tommy at last, “that he’s sure your name is Norheys.”

“Is that all he said?”

“That’s all,” said Janet.

“Well, then, all I can say is that I don’t wonder the Germans lost the war. If it takes them half an hour to say ‘What’s your name?’ they can’t expect to get on at war or anything else. It must be an utterly rotten language.”

Janet, who hated all Germans with a passionate intensity during the war, has been developing a strong affection for them since the peace was signed. She can not bear, now, to hear a word said against them and has transferred her dislike to the French. When Tommy insulted the German language she turned away and stalked down the corridor toward the bath.

Casimir has an amazing facility in quotation.

“‘And the imperial votaress passed on,’” he said, “‘In maiden meditation, fancy free.’ Please.”

Casimir’s English accent was by no means perfect. Tommy, though he ought to have recognized Shakespeare’s compliment to Queen Elizabeth, seemed to have thought that the count was still talking German. He darted into his room and picked up his phrase book. He distinctly remembered that he had somewhere seen the sentence “Please go away.” That was, as I have said, a very good phrase book. “Please go away” is a thing which the traveler in a foreign land constantly wants to say, to beggars, extortionate cabmen, guides, touts, and officials who want to look at passports.

Tommy grabbed the book, turned over the pages quickly, and came to the sentence he wanted.

Unfortunately, the next sentence in the book was "Please sit down." Tommy, running his eyes hurriedly from the English to the German column, picked up the wrong phrase.

"*Bitte setzen sie sich,*" he said.

Casimir could not very well sit down on the carpet in the corridor. He took Tommy's words to be an invitation to enter the bedroom. Tommy stood exactly in the middle of the doorway. Casimir, bowing very politely tried to pass him. Tommy suddenly recollected that all his money, his piles of German marks, lay on the table in the middle of the room. A horrible explanation of Casimir's presence suggested itself. The man had made no mistake. He had not been sent to the wrong room by the clerk in the hotel office. He was a hotel thief. Tommy had heard of such people. They are immensely daring, immensely clever, and they adopt all sorts of ruses. They are often well dressed. They are always plausible.

Tommy winked knowingly at Casimir to show that he understood the situation and cherished no ill-feeling. Then he firmly shut the door in his visitor's face.

CHAPTER VIII

An hour later Tommy stepped from the lift into the great central hall of the hotel. He had discarded his clerical stock. He wore a light blue tie instead. He was still a young man, only a little more than twenty-six, not long enough in Holy Orders to have his profession recognizably written on his face. A bystander, interested in his appearance, might have guessed him to be a young barrister, or perhaps a clerk in one of the higher branches of the Civil Service. But no one appeared to be the least interested in Tommy's appearance, or to care what he was or what he did.

The large hall was full of people. Hotel porters in red jackets wheeled barrows of luggage in and out. Page-boys, as thickly decorated with buttons as any of their kind anywhere in the world, went to and fro wailing the numbers of the rooms of the guests whom they sought—guests whom visitors had come to see or for whom telephone calls had been made. Fussy travelers, newly arrived and filled with a sense of their own importance, crowded round the desk of the reception clerk and demanded rooms. Self-possessed elderly men, mostly fat and often Jewish, lounged in deep chairs with cigars in their mouths and surveyed the scene through half-closed eyes. American tourists eddied round the newspaper stall in the corner of the hall and clamored for the *New York Herald*. It was in their eyes a sign of the well-nigh inconceivable stupidity and incompetence of all European peoples that the supply of *New York Heralds* was insufficient to meet their demands. The desk of a harassed woman who sold concert and theater tickets was besieged by ladies who did not know exactly what they wanted but hoped to secure seats at some agreeable entertainment by asking questions in bad German. A boy, rather older than the pages, stood at the swinging glass door and drove it round on its pivot with vigorous pushes. He drove it faster and faster as more and more people passed in and out. His hope was that some time in the course of the morning he would succeed in hitting a slowly moving passer with the following wing of the door. Those who entered and left the hotel approached the whirling door very much in the spirit of medieval sportsmen who rode at the quintain.

All this delighted Tommy. He had hitherto led a quiet and uneventful life, seldom disturbed by anything more exciting than a Sunday-school treat. He watched the moving figures, gazed at the strange faces, listened to a babel of different languages, and felt that this was exactly what he had come to Berlin to enjoy. For some time he was content simply to stand watching and listening. Then he began to wonder what he had better do next. He had the whole day before him. His breast pocket was stuffed with money. He had a great city to explore.

Before leaving home he had read up Baedeker's *Guide to Berlin*, an old copy borrowed from my sister Emily. He knew that there was a street called Unter den Linden which he ought to see, a park called the Tier Garten, an avenue called the Sieges Allee, several churches and museums. There were theaters, picture galleries and restaurants, all duly named and the nature indicated by the worthy Baedeker. At the moment he felt more attracted toward a restaurant. His breakfast had been very light, and though it was only ten o'clock, he felt hungry. He wondered whether it would be possible to demand luncheon in a Berlin restaurant at that hour without exciting the derision of the waiters.

He felt a light touch on his arm and looked round. Count Casimir stood beside him.

“Just you clear off, like a good man,” said Tommy. “I’ve had enough of you for one morning.”

His mind was still full of his hotel thief theory, and he was quite determined not to be robbed by any plausible stranger. He turned away and walked across the hall toward the row of telephone boxes. He had no intention of telephoning to any one. Indeed, he knew no one in Berlin to whom he could telephone, nor could he have given a number in German. He merely wished to escape from Casimir.

But Casimir was not an easy man to shake off. He followed Tommy.

“You wish to go to the Mascotte to-night,” he said. “Please?”

The word “Please” was evidently in constant use in Casimir’s language. His repetition of it in English gave a curious effect of extreme politeness to his conversation.

Tommy had heard of the Mascotte. My nephew, Emily’s eldest boy, was in Berlin for some time as a subordinate member of the Inter-Allied Mission of Control. He knew all there was to know about the night life of the city. It is a supper place, “damned expensive,” but the dancing was “top hole.” It was not the sort of dancing which the censors of the London County Council would approve, but it was “top hole” and “not too, you know, only rather more so than you’d see at home.”

“Please, you will visit the Mascotte.”

Casimir nodded and smiled in a very confidential manner, as if he and Tommy shared a secret which no one else in the world knew anything about. Tommy revised his opinion of the man. He was not a hotel thief. He was a tout, engaged in securing customers for the Mascotte supper-room. Tommy had heard of such people. He had no intention of putting himself into the hands of one of them.

“She will be there, naturally,” said Casimir, “and”—another quotation, this time disagreeably suggestive to Tommy’s mind—

““Journays end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man’s son doth know.””

This was going too far. Tommy meant to enjoy himself on his holiday. He had discarded his clerical collar in order to do so more freely, but he had no wish to pursue unknown ladies into night clubs. In order to get rid of Casimir finally he stepped into the nearest telephone box.

It was already occupied, and, since a telephone box is always a very small thing, he bumped into a lady who held the receiver to her ear. She was so intent on what she was doing that she took no notice of Tommy. He most unwillingly heard what she was saying.

“Then let me tell you, young man, that there’ll be trouble. Lord Edmund Troyte distinctly promised that my passport would be ready for me. Yes? What’s that? I’ve been to the Consulate three times and I’m not going again. The consul is totally incompetent and his clerks are rude. It’s your business. What? Yes. I say it’s your business. You’re the third secretary, you say. That makes no difference. It’s your business to see about that passport.

“What on earth are you doing there and who are you?”

Janet Church turned at last to Tommy, who had bumped into her again. She was fully dressed this time and the light in the telephone box was dim. But he recognized her at once as the lady who had stood talking German in the corridor. He also realized that she was in an exceedingly bad temper. Casimir, with his suggestion of strange lady-loves at the Mascotte, was bad enough. Janet Church, thirsting for the blood of the third secretary, was worse. Tommy left the telephone box hurriedly.

Casimir was waiting for him outside.

“Please,” he said, “I have engaged a table for you at the Mascotte. It is catalogued—no, registered, no, I remember, you say booked, for the Graf von Norheys, please.”

“I don’t exactly know what a Graf is,” said Tommy, “but whatever it is, I’m not one.”

“Please?” said Casimir. “Ah, I see. If it were possible—in France, yes. M. le Marquis. There is no difficulty. But here. Excellenz perhaps. Or Prinz. Otherwise there is only Graf. It will not be understood if I catalogue the table for Herr Marquis. As your poet Shakespeare says, ‘As you like it.’”

The door of the telephone box opened and Janet Church came out. Casimir, like Tommy, recognized her at once, though he had only seen her once before and then in a dressing-gown and boudoir cap. He was not particularly pleased. Perhaps she had talked to him in the morning as she had been talking to the third secretary at the Embassy. He bowed to her, but he moved away.

“Please,” he said to Tommy, “half ten at the Mascotte. Till then——” He pulled himself together and produced another quotation, “‘Now, good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both.’”

With another bow he turned, crossed the hall and passed the whirling glass door, narrowly escaping a determined effort of the guardian boy to hit him in the back.

Janet Church watched him till he vanished. Then she turned to Tommy.

“I’ve been asking questions about that young man,” she said, “and I find he’s in Berlin on some kind of secret mission connected with the ex-King of Lyustria.”

“Oh, is he?” said Tommy. “I thought he was a tout for a night club.”

“That’s what he pretends to be perhaps,” said Janet, “but he is strongly suspected of being engaged in some royalist plot. The third secretary at our Embassy told me so this morning.”

If the third secretary had been indiscreet enough to tell Janet Church anything about anybody it must have been before she began talking to him about her passport. No young man, unless he was reduced to terror by threats of violence would have spoken to her at all afterward. But I do not think it at all likely that any diplomatist, even a third secretary, would have shouted confidential information into a telephone. It seemed to me much more likely that Janet Church had been making inquiries about Casimir from the head waiter or the hall porter. All porters of hotels like the Adlon know a great many things, both true and untrue.

“I suppose he’s a friend of yours,” said Janet.

“No, he isn’t,” said Tommy. “I mean neither of them is.”

He was uncertain at the moment whether she was speaking of Count Casimir or the third secretary.

“Just come over with me to a quiet place,” said Janet. “I want to talk to you.”

Tommy followed her, unwillingly, to a retired corner of the hall, and sat down beside her on a deep sofa. A waiter hovered round them and asked whether they wanted cocktails. Janet drove him away at once.

“I’m not asking you to tell me who you are,” she said, “or what you’re doing here.”

“I don’t in the least mind telling you. I’m a curate and I’m in Berlin for a holiday.”

“Very well,” said Janet grimly, “and Count Casimir is a restaurant tout, and I’m the Prima Ballerina of the Royal Opera-House in Vienna.”

Janet prides herself on the power of sarcasm. It is very useful to her when she makes speeches in favor of prohibition on political platforms. Any one who does that must have some means of self-protection.

“Surely,” said Tommy, “you can’t be——”

He was an innocent and inexperienced young man. But even to him Janet Church did not look like a Prima Ballerina.

“I’m just as much a dancer as you’re a curate. But, as I said to begin with, I don’t want to ask questions. It’s quite enough for me to know that you’re an intimate friend of Count Casimir’s.”

"I'm not," said Tommy, "but I suppose it's no use my saying so."

"And I want you to introduce me to him."

"I'll do that with the greatest pleasure," said Tommy, "if I ever see him again. But I don't expect I shall."

"You'll see him to-night at the Mascotte," said Janet.

"I'm not going to the Mascotte."

"Oh, yes, you are," said Janet. "I heard you making an appointment to meet Count Casimir there. I shall be there too and you can introduce us."

"Very well," said Tommy, helplessly. "Be there at half past ten."

"Half past nine."

"I'm sure you won't believe me," said Tommy, "but my appointment with Count Casimir is for half past ten."

"Half past nine," said Janet.

"Very well. Go there at half past nine if you like. But you'll have an hour to wait. Count Casimir distinctly said half past ten."

"He said 'half ten,'" said Janet. "But he's much more accustomed to talking German than English. In German half ten means half past nine."

"I always thought the Germans a rotten people," said Tommy. "Now I know it. Fancy saying half ten when you mean half nine. No wonder their marks have dropped to the value of waste paper."

A feeling of recklessness born of bewilderment was beginning to lay hold on Tommy. He did not in the least want to introduce Janet Church to any one. He did not at that moment even know her name. He did not want to see any more of Count Casimir. He did not want—— But a curate is only a man, and though Tommy had no intention of entangling himself with an unknown lady at the Mascotte, he thought it might be interesting to see her, speak to her, perhaps to offer her a glass of wine. Tommy was inexperienced in such matters, but he thought that any lady to be met at the Mascotte would probably expect to be offered a glass of wine.

"Of course," said Janet, "I have more or less made Count Casimir's acquaintance already." She was thinking of her interview with him in the corridor outside Tommy's bedroom. "But it's always better to have a formal introduction," she added.

Tommy was not paying much attention to what she said. He was thinking of the lady at the Mascotte and wondering whether his phrase book provided the German for "May I offer you a glass of champagne?" Champagne, he supposed, was the proper wine to offer to a lady at the Mascotte.

The waiter whom Janet had chased away when they first sat down was hovering round the table again. He seemed to be trying to listen to what Tommy and Janet were saying. This, indeed, was precisely what he was doing. Berlin at that time was the hatching nest of every plot in Europe, and all important conspirators stayed at the Adlon. Therefore there was not a waiter or even a chambermaid in the whole hotel who was not employed as a spy by some government or by somebody who wished to be a government.

With a recklessness which surprised himself Tommy ordered: "Bring two cocktails."

Janet turned on him with an acid smile.

"It's rather unusual," she said, "to find a curate drinking cocktails at ten o'clock in the morning. If you really are a curate you wouldn't do that."

Tommy did not, of course, know that he was talking to a lady whom her admirers called the Pussyfoot of Scotland. If he had known that he would not have dared to order a cocktail for her.

The waiter, who was interested in their talk, was very quick in fetching their cocktails. He set them down on a little tray in front of Tommy. Janet looked at hers with a fierce scowl. Tommy pushed the thing toward her. She looked at it again with a milder scowl. Tommy took it off the tray and set it down before her. Janet stopped scowling.

“In these continental towns,” she said, “it’s generally dangerous to drink the water.”

A strict teetotaler is always, naturally and properly, more particular about water than any one else. It is the British teetotaler who is responsible for the superstition that all water on the continent of Europe is poisonous. Having accepted that as an article of faith he holds to it firmly. He is therefore, entirely against his will, obliged to drink wine when he crosses the English Channel.

Janet tossed off her cocktail. Tommy, who did not know that cocktails ought to be swallowed in a single gulp, sipped his.

Now the effect of cocktails taken on almost empty stomachs by people unused to wine of any sort is surprising. Janet became confidential. She told Tommy that the officials of the British Foreign Office had conspired together to prevent her going to Lystria, and that Lord Edmund Troyte was the head of the conspiracy. They knew that if Janet once got into personal touch with the Patriarch of Lystria the Union of Christian Churches would be accomplished and a great World Peace established.

“They are afraid of that,” she said grimly, “afraid of it because they know that a World Peace would put an end to their trade of secret diplomacy. That is why I want to be introduced to Count Casimir.”

It was a little difficult for Tommy to follow the working of her mind. I do not know that any one at that time could have guessed exactly what she meant. Looking back over the whole thing now it seems plain that with the help of Casimir she hoped to get into Lystria without a passport. He was, as she had somehow managed to discover, a conspirator and a secret agent. He would therefore have no objection to breaking the law and would almost certainly be in a position to do so successfully. With his help she would get into touch with the patriarch, unite the churches, establish peace, and so

“The Foreign Office won’t be pleased when they hear of it,” she said vindictively, “and Lord Edmund Troyte will be furious. But the first thing is to get to Lystria. And Count Casimir can do that for me if he will.”

“I’ve no doubt he will,” said Tommy politely.

“I’m very glad to hear you say that, for, of course, you know.”

“I don’t know in the least,” said Tommy. “I don’t really know anything. Indeed, if you asked me this minute, I could not tell you where Lystria is.”

“You’re perfectly right,” said Janet. “In a place like this one can not tell who is listening or how anything one says may be misrepresented. I’ve nothing to conceal, of course. But you and Casimir ought to be careful.”

Tommy finished the last sip of his cocktail. He felt elated and extremely cheerful.

“In introducing you this evening,” he said, “shall I tell Casimir all about the World Peace and the Christian Churches, or shall I simply say that you’re my aunt?”

“I am averse to any form of deceit,” said Janet. “But——”

“There are times——” said Tommy.

“He might not grasp the full significance of my mission to Lystria.”

“Then I’d better tell him you’re my aunt,” said Tommy, “unless you’d rather I said sister.”

Janet looked at Tommy. He is only twenty-six and looks younger, owing no doubt to the virtuous life he has had to lead under the eye of my sister Emily. Janet is superior to the desire to appear younger than she is, which is supposed to be a weakness of her sex.

“You’d better say aunt,” she said.

“Very well,” said Tommy. “My aunt, who is looking after me.”

“A young man,” said Janet, “is the better of having an aunt to look after him in a city like Berlin. I feel sure that the Mascotte is a dangerous and undesirable place.”

CHAPTER IX

At half past nine Tommy drove up to the door of the Mascotte. He was received by a stately man in a handsome uniform and led up a flight of thickly carpeted marble stairs. At the top he was handed over to a supercilious young lady with startlingly red lips and very pallid cheeks, who took his overcoat and hat from him. Under the guidance of another splendidly clad retainer he passed into a very large and most impressive room. The walls were hung with tapestries and gilt mirrors. Against them stood a number of fragile chairs and sofas, all of them with gilt legs and backs. Here and there in the room were gilt tables each with a vase of flowers and a cigarette ash-tray on it. The floor was covered with a very thick carpet. The lights were dim and faintly pink. The air was heavily scented.

Tommy looked round him a little nervously. He hoped that he might see Janet Church. Her companionship would have sustained and helped him. But she was not there. Except for six servitors in gold and purple clothes, there was no one in the room.

Two of these men took charge of Tommy. They walked one on each side of him, both a little in front of him. They conducted him across the room. At the far side of it they halted in front of a pair of heavy curtains which hung over an archway. With a solemn and dignified sweep of their arms they pulled the curtains apart to right and left. Then, bowing low, they motioned Tommy to pass on.

He entered a still larger room, very brilliantly lighted, so brilliantly lighted that for a minute he stood blinking, unable to see distinctly.

A small dapper man in evening clothes came up to him and bowed. Tommy saw that thin gray hair was carefully brushed across a bald patch on top of his head. He was by no means a young man. He had small twinkling eyes and a rounded paunch. But he bore himself with a certain dignity. Even when he was bowing low there was no sign of servility in his manner. This was the head waiter of the Mascotte and he did Tommy high honor by granting him this personal reception.

“Your lordship’s table is reserved, one of our very best tables.”

He spoke with an excellent English accent. He waved his hand in the direction in which he wanted Tommy to go and then walked in front of him. There was no mistake about the dignity of the man’s bearing. It was almost kingly, just such a bearing and manner as suited the head waiter of the Mascotte.

Following the man’s lead, Tommy passed between two lines of inferior waiters, all bowing low. From tables to the right and left revelers looked up and watched him pass. They whispered to each other, inquiring who it could be who was received so impressively by the head waiter and his staff. Tommy came at last to a small table set a little apart. The head waiter pulled back a large gilt chair. Tommy noticed a small card on a silver stand in the middle of the table. It bore his name, Norreys; but not the Rev. T. A. Norreys. He was described on the card as the Markgraf von Norreys. It seemed to Tommy well worth while to be a markgraf—whatever a markgraf was—if the title secured so much consideration and respect. Tommy felt rather glad that Count Casimir had made his mistake.

The head waiter murmured confidentially in his ear:

“If your lordship will allow me to order the dinner and choose the wine—I assure you that I thoroughly understand wine.”

His English was perfect, far better than Count Casimir’s and he spoke it with the intonation and accent of a gentleman. Tommy felt sure that he might be trusted to order the very best food and wine obtainable in the Mascotte. But he had an uncomfortable feeling that the bill for the entertainment might be startling. His pockets were full of marks, stuffed with them. But it might very well take a portmanteau full of marks to pay for the dinner which the aristocratic head waiter

would order. Tommy hesitated and made a grab at the menu, intending to make sure of the worst that could befall him. The head waiter, a man of quick apprehension, guessed his thoughts. Bending low he whispered into Tommy's ear:

"I need scarcely say that your lordship will be at no expense, none whatever."

Then he turned and gave a series of orders in German to a subordinate who stood near.

Tommy leaned back in his gilt chair and looked round. He saw at once that he had been given one of the very best tables in the room. It stood at the edge of a great square of carpet which covered the center of the floor. On the carpet itself there were no tables. But diners at tables of various sizes sat round it in parties of two or four or six. Behind the tables which stood on the edge of the carpet were others. Behind these still more and these were set on a sort of platform a step above the floor of the room. Farther back among pillars and under archways in what Tommy thought of as broad side aisles, were other places for still more diners.

Gazing round curiously Tommy caught sight of a woman standing up at one of the farthest tables. She was waving her hand and signaling to him. At a second glance he recognized her—Janet Church. In a severe black dress, the only evening gown she took with her when traveling, she looked much out of place in the Mascotte. Having attracted Tommy's attention, she began to cross the room toward him, evidently with the intention of sitting down at his table. But this was not allowed. The head waiter caught sight of her and gave an order to one of his men. Janet Church was stopped, turned round and conducted to the obscure and distant table which she had left.

It would interest me though perhaps no one else, to know what Tommy had to eat and drink that night. Unfortunately, he can give me no account at all of his meal and does not know the name of the champagne he drank. He is, or was then, unaccustomed to civilized food, and even now knows nothing at all about wine. On the other hand, I have been able to get from him and from King Wladislaws of Lystria a fairly clear account of the sort of people who were in the Mascotte that night. Three-fourths of the men were Jews, and about one-fourth of the women Jewesses. The Jewish men were heavy and oily. The women were, all of them, exceedingly fat and flabby. Of the remaining men perhaps ten were Germans of the *Schieber*, our profiteer, class. Half a dozen were Americans. Another half dozen or so were Russians. There were also a few Japs. There were two Englishmen, unmistakably English. Their air of cleanness and the excellent cut of their clothes marked them off. Most of the women were Russians, exquisitely dressed but wearing no jewels of any kind. According to King Wladislaws, they had sold all their jewels in order to be able to enjoy themselves at the Mascotte and elsewhere. There were no Englishwomen except Janet Church. On that particular evening there were no American women. If there had been any it would have been impossible to have been ignorant of their presence. Their voices would have rung out clear above the polyglot babel of talk and would have risen superior to the best efforts of the band. A dozen languages were being spoken but the predominant tongue was French, an interesting fact, showing that it is possible for a conquering nation to impose its language on the vanquished.

Shortly after eleven o'clock Tommy discovered what the stretch of carpet in the middle of the room was for. The band, which had been playing some of the music of *Tosca* suddenly struck up a dance tune. Two girls appeared from a curtained recess at the far end of the room, ran down among the tables, pirouetted in the middle of the carpet, and began to dance.

Tommy had seen dancing before, on the stage at the Gayety Theater in Dublin at the time of the Christmas pantomime. But this was a very different thing. There he viewed the dancers from a distance, with an orchestra and a row of footlights between him and them. They were remote creatures, unreal, scarcely flesh and blood. Here they came close to him, so close that the whirling of their skirts as they passed him fanned the air against his face. He could smell the scent from their clothes and see the heaving of their throats as they caught their breath. And the music was far more exciting than any he had ever heard.

The waiter who attended him filled his glass with champagne. Tommy sipped it as he watched the dancers. Others took the places of the first two, dancing wildly, sometimes dancing well. The music grew louder. The whole scene began to grow dim before Tommy's eyes, as a man might watch the figures in a dream.

He was awakened to the reality of his surroundings by the sound of Casimir's voice in his ear. The count had slipped over quietly from some other part of the room and had sat down at Tommy's table.

"Please," he said, "the Princess Calypso now."

Tommy was scarcely surprised at the announcement. A princess, a queen, an empress, any kind of exalted lady, except perhaps one of Fra Angelico's angels, might have danced before him there on the Persian carpet without surprising him very much.

The princess' turn was evidently the chief performance of the evening. Even the fattest Jewesses displayed some signs of animated interest. Conversation ceased. Men set down their glasses and leaned forward in their chairs. The music of the band sank to a soft rhythmical throbbing. The violinists twitched their strings with nervous fingers. A 'cellist beat his deepest string flatly with his bow. A drum muttered softly. A girl in a dress shining with sequins stepped daintily down among the tables, stood in the middle of the carpet and curtsied low to Tommy.

He could have sworn that it was to him alone that she curtsied, that she took no notice of any one else in the room. He also had an unpleasant impression that she disliked, or perhaps despised him, and only curtsied to him because she was forced to do it.

The managers of the Mascotte, having secured the services of a real princess, made the most of her, and gave her every chance of making the most of herself. The higher lights were extinguished all over the room. Only the small shaded lamps on the diners' tables still burned. A bright beam from some hidden lamp fell on the princess and followed her wherever she moved. The twitching of the violin strings grew faster. The players drew their bows across the strings and the music came loud and tempestuous. The girl on the carpet with the light on her looked younger, fresher, more beautiful than any of the others who had danced before her.

Unfortunately, she could not dance. Her performance would scarcely have won applause in a second-rate provincial theater. Her steps and attitudes were graceful enough but were easy of accomplishment. There was no kind of spirit or any delight in her dancing. Even Tommy, who knew nothing about the art, realized that this girl was greatly the inferior of those who had gone before her. Her dancing meant nothing, conveyed nothing except a feeling that she disliked doing it and despised the people she was doing it for. It seemed to Tommy that she was dancing specially for him and that she disliked and despised him more than she did the others.

The music rose to a climax of sound. The dance came suddenly to an end. The lights blazed out again. The girl sank to the ground in a low curtsy with her skirts spread out round her, right in front of Tommy's table, within a couple of feet from him. There was a burst of applause. Fat Jewesses and pallid Russians clapped their hands. Men stood up and shouted. It was not the dancing they approved. Not a Jewess among them, not a slant-eyed Russian lady, not a profiteer, or even an American but knew perfectly well that the girl could not dance. Their applause was for themselves, not for her. It was the new rich proclaiming their triumph over the old aristocracy, over royalty itself. Risen from the slime of the war period, they acclaimed themselves masters of the old order which was there, like Samson among the Philistines, to make sport for them.

The band blared into a noisy march. The girl remained crouched at Tommy's feet, flushed and panting, the fingers of her right hand twitching at the bodice of her dress. Suddenly she rose. With a quick nod and a little motion of her hand she flicked a note across to Tommy. It fell on the plate in front of him. The girl, without glancing at him again, looking neither to the right nor to the left, walked through the applauding people and disappeared.

CHAPTER X

Tommy picked up the note.

Before he could open it he was aware that Janet Church was standing beside him. In the excitement which followed the princess' dance she had managed to leave her humble table and make her way unhindered across the room.

"You promised," she said, "to introduce me to Count Casimir."

Tommy remembered the promise, remembered also the form the introduction was to take. In the midst of the fantastic unreality of all that was happening to him there seemed nothing absurd in introducing Janet precisely as he had promised. Casimir was sitting beside him smiling gently.

“This,” said Tommy, “is my aunt. Allow me to introduce her to you.”

The count stood up, bowed, took Janet’s hand and kissed it. He showed not the slightest sign of ever having seen her before, though he must have recollected the pink dressing-gown and quilted slippers in the corridor in the morning. He did not seem to feel that Janet in her shabby frock was out of place at the Mascotte. By not so much as the tremble of an eyelid did he show his astonishment that Tommy had brought an aunt with him to Berlin.

“I’m very glad to meet you, Count Casimir,” said Janet. “There’s something I want you to do for me. I’m sure you can do it if you will. I am, as I dare say you know, acting as continental representative of the Federation for the Promotion of World Peace through the Union of Christian Churches.”

Casimir bowed again. Not even his knowledge of Shakespeare was sufficient for a quotation suitable to follow Janet’s speech.

“The Patriarch of Lystria,” said Janet, “is one of the leaders of the Christian Churches whom we are most anxious to enlist in our movement. Unfortunately, our Foreign Office——”

Casimir glanced appealingly at Tommy. The sudden appearance of this spinster aunt startled him. Her intention of interesting the patriarch in a matter of which he had never heard bewildered him.

Tommy made no reply to the unspoken appeal. He turned and walked away.

The entertainment at the Mascotte was evidently over. The men and women who had dined or supped there rose from their tables and passed out of the room. Here and there the waiters switched off lights, and queer patches of shadow invaded the brilliance of the room. Tommy edged his way through the procession of departing people and found a quiet place where there was still light enough for reading. He opened the note which the princess had flicked on to his plate, and read:

“Go back to London and marry Viola Temple. Calypso.”

Tommy stared at the words. He did not know any one called Viola Temple. He had certainly no intention of marrying any one of that name. Indeed, I do not think he had ever heard the name before. Of course, it was well enough known in London, and since her friendship with Lord Norheys became notorious, the lady’s picture had been in all the illustrated papers. But Tommy lived in a remote corner of Ireland. He heard no social or theatrical gossip, and seldom saw a paper except *The Irish Times*, which does not publish pictures of dancing girls.

Nor did he understand why this girl in the Mascotte—by far the prettiest of all he had seen—should have singled him out among the men present to be the recipient of this note and this odd command. If Viola Temple had to be married, there must surely be some one more suited for the job than he was. He remembered the scornful glances which the girl had cast at him while she danced and the mocking obeisances of her curtsies. He wondered why on earth she did these things and what she could possibly know about him.

Then slowly a little understanding, a mere glimmer, came to him.

Casimir had promised that he should meet a lady at the Mascotte, had indeed brought him there for the purpose. Well, he had met Calypso. Casimir, speaking to him just before the dance, had called her a princess, Princess Calypso. The title was no doubt a picturesque exaggeration intended as an advertisement. Tommy had heard of some one known as the “Queen of Song.” Perhaps Calypso was the “Princess of Dancing,” though he did not think that she deserved the title.

The whole thing was puzzling, confusing, utterly incomprehensible. Yet Tommy was glad that he had come to the Mascotte, very glad that he had seen the girl. She was . . .

Tommy always becomes incoherent when he tries to speak of his first feelings about Calypso. I do not wonder. He had all his life been accustomed to women like my sister Emily, some of them older than Emily, many of them of course younger. But all of them wise, sensible, respectable, like Jaeger underclothing, which though wholesome is not exciting. Calypso was utterly different. If I were to compare her to a garment—but I do not know enough about clothes to do that, and I am told that the best of these things are not exhibited in shop windows.

The fact is that Tommy, then and there, suddenly, abruptly, hopelessly, fell in love with Calypso. I do not profess to

understand love at first sight. The six or seven love-affairs I have experienced in life have all been gradual, a growth of feeling so slow that the lady had generally passed out of my reach—gone to Nice or Monte Carlo or somewhere for the winter before I found out that I was in love with her. But I am not a skeptic about the reality of these sudden passions. No sensible man can be. Literature gives us the cases of Romeo falling in love with Juliet, of Fanny Squeers falling in love with Nicholas Nickleby, and many others. In real life—at the moment I can only recall Garibaldi and Anita, but that is good enough. He fell in love when he was looking at her for the first time at a great distance through a telescope. Tommy had a better excuse than that.

Casimir tapped Tommy on the arm.

“His Majesty,” he said, “wishes to speak to you.”

Tommy looked round. The room was almost clear of visitors, who had streamed off to finish a night’s pleasure in the Palais de Dance next door. Waiters were busy clearing away the debris of meals from the tables. Most of the lights had been put out. Janet Church was standing by herself beside the table where she had been introduced to Casimir. Tommy saw no one who could possibly be supposed to be a king. Indeed, with the exception of Janet, he saw no one whom he recognized except the little head waiter. He was seated by himself at a table in a corner of the room with a bottle of champagne in front of him. Thus, it may be supposed, head waiters relax themselves and recuperate after their toils are over.

“His Majesty waits,” said Casimir.

He was standing very erect with his hands at his sides in a military attitude of attention. With a side glance he indicated the head waiter. Tommy felt that he was living through some confused and fantastic dream—dancing girls transformed into princesses and head waiters into kings. Or perhaps—it seemed wildly improbable—this might be part of the evening’s entertainment at the Mascotte, an original kind of harlequinade.

He walked slowly over to the table at which the head waiter sat. He was greeted with friendly cordiality.

“Sit down, my dear boy. Please sit down and have another glass of wine.”

Tommy stared at him in amazement. Not at all in this familiar fashion had the head waiter treated him earlier in the evening. Then he glanced at Casimir who was standing stiffly to attention.

“There’s such divinity doth hedge a king——” said Casimir.

“Explain, Casimir,” said the head waiter. “Lord Norheys does not understand.”

“Please,” said Casimir, “you are in the presence of King Wladislaws of Lystria.”

“But I don’t keep up any pretense of etiquette here,” said the king, “though Casimir insists on behaving as if we were still in Lystria. Do sit down.”

Up to that moment Tommy had never heard the name of the King of Lystria. It was a very small State, and although it took the wrong side in the war, nobody paid much attention to it. He sat down.

“How did you like Calypso’s dancing?” said the king. “Not much, eh? Well I don’t think much of it myself. In fact, she wouldn’t be dancing here if she wasn’t a princess. That’s what makes it worth while to employ her. These *nouveaux riches* are amazingly fond of royalty. In fact,”—he dropped his voice to a confidential whisper—“I should never have got the job of head waiter here if I hadn’t agreed to Calypso’s dancing. That’s how it happens that she’s here. Her screw isn’t worth much. But my job as head waiter—— However, we can talk of that later on. What I want to say to you now is that you’ll have to be very careful with Calypso. She’s got her knife into you about that other girl.”

He chuckled pleasantly, and refilled his own glass and Tommy’s.

“I don’t mind a bit myself of course,” he said, “and Casimir doesn’t mind. But Calypso! Why did you allow Miss Temple to write that letter to her? It’s made things a bit difficult, you know. You’ll have to reason with her a little. Pitch it strong. You might tell her perhaps that Miss Temple is over forty, and squints. That would soften things down a bit.”

“I shall say,” said Tommy, “that I never heard of Miss Temple in my life until this evening.”

“If you can get her to believe that——” said the king doubtfully. “But I don’t know. I never could get her mother to believe that. And Calypso is very like her in some ways. But perhaps you’ll be more successful than I was. By the way, I suppose Miss Temple can dance. Do you think—— It might help to do away with any feeling of grievance that she may have—— Do you think that she’d care for an engagement here, in Calypso’s place? We couldn’t say she was a princess; but we might advertise her as the Marchioness of Norheys. Do you think she’d care for it?”

“I don’t know her,” said Tommy, “so I can’t tell.”

The king looked at him with twinkling eyes.

“You do it very well,” he said, “far better than ever I did.”

“Before you say anything more,” said Tommy, “I want to tell you that you’re mistaken about who I am. I’m not Lord Norheys, or Lord anything else. I’m the Reverend Thomas A. Norreys, a curate.”

“That’s good,” said the king, “distinctly original. I never thought of it. But you’ll have to be very careful. It’s not only Calypso. There’s the patriarch too. You don’t know him yet. But you will. He used to worry the life out of me about—— Well, about any Miss Temple I happened to be interested in at the time. And Calypso says she’ll tell him directly she sees him. But perhaps you know how to manage the clergy. I never could.”

“I’ve just told you that I am a clergyman myself.”

“Well,” said the king, “that may be all right. In fact, the patriarch will be pleased about it, if he hears nothing about Miss Temple. But if Calypso tells him, then I am afraid your being a clergyman will only make it worse, from his point of view. Simply from his point of view, of course. I don’t mind a bit myself. In fact, I prefer clergymen with some little human failings. I’d have liked the patriarch better and got on better with him if there’d ever been——well, a Hagar, or some one of that sort. But there wasn’t.”

Janet Church, tired of standing by herself and very curious to know what was going on, edged slowly toward the table at which Tommy was sitting. The king, who has very sharp eyes, noticed her.

“By the way,” he said, “why did you bring your aunt with you? Casimir tells me that she’s your aunt. I suppose she is your aunt? I used to say cousin myself sometimes, and occasionally sister—not that any one ever believed me—but I never thought of aunt. I suppose now that she isn’t—but she can’t be, can’t possibly be. But still some men have queer fancies. I suppose she isn’t Miss Temple, is she?”

“No, she’s not,” said Tommy.

“That’s almost a pity,” said the king. “I don’t think Calypso would have objected to her. I don’t think even the patriarch would have minded. However, if she isn’t——”

He had to drop his voice at the last words, for Janet had come quite close to them. The king greeted her in the most friendly manner.

“I’m just giving your nephew a little advice,” he said. “I was talking about the financial position of Lystria. Low rate of exchange and all that, you know. But the worst of it is that the people simply won’t pay their taxes. At least, they wouldn’t in my time. Ever since I’ve been here I’ve been thinking things over and I see now that I went the wrong way about collecting taxes. All governments make the same mistake. They send round disagreeable men with large blue papers and threaten people who don’t pay up. That’s the wrong way to get money. As head waiter of the Mascotte I make more in a single month than I ever got out of Lystria in a year. I don’t threaten any one. I don’t ask any one for a tip. I simply hire waiters who know their business. A good waiter can make a man feel like a worm if he orders anything cheaper than champagne, and without speaking a word can see to it that he gets a ten per cent. tip at least on every bill that’s paid. I take fifty per cent. of what the waiters get. That’s revenue, collected without the slightest difficulty. What I’m advising your nephew to do is to try the same plan in Lystria. Sack all the existing tax collectors. They’re an utterly worthless lot, and their methods are antiquated. Hire a staff of waiters from some place like this. Employ them on a fifty-fifty basis, and just see what you get in. Now what do you think of that plan, Miss Temple?”

“My name isn’t Temple,” said Janet. “It’s——”

“Of course not,” said the king. “Norheys told me it wasn’t.”

“It’s Church. Miss Janet Church.”

She spoke stiffly. Her impression was that the king was a very drunk head waiter.

“Church,” said the king. “How very ecclesiastical! And Norheys says he’s a curate. You ought to be able to handle the patriarch between you.”

“I’m going to Lystria,” said Janet, “to enlist the patriarch’s sympathies in the cause of World Peace through the Union of Christian Churches.”

The king looked at her for a moment with a little puzzled frown on his forehead. Then he turned to Tommy.

“I must say you’re managing this uncommonly well,” he said. “If you can start the patriarch arguing about religion, he’ll forget—— It’s an extraordinarily ingenious plan. I wish I’d thought of it in my time. But then I never had an aunt who could have done it. I wish I could be there, Miss Church. I’d like to hear you and the patriarch at it together. But I can’t go. They’d never let me cross the frontier. Besides, I must hold on to my job here. It’s all I have to live on.”

Janet turned away. Drunken head waiters who babbled neither amused nor interested her. She left the room with great dignity. Half an hour later, after receiving a great deal more good advice, Tommy managed to get off and go back to his hotel.

CHAPTER XI

I have had several talks with Tommy about what happened in Berlin. It was easy, or fairly easy to get at the facts. It was very much more difficult to find out what Tommy thought about it all.

“But didn’t the whole thing strike you as odd?” I asked him.

“Of course it did,” said Tommy. “Odd is hardly the word for it. It was simply mad.”

“Still, you went on with it. I mean to say, you didn’t try to clear things up.”

“I did nothing else except try to clear things up,” said Tommy. “I kept on trying. I told every one I met there’d been a mistake, that I wasn’t the man they took me for; but they wouldn’t believe me.”

“So at last you made up your mind to take the goods the gods provided, a princess and a throne?”

“Well, of course, there was Calypso,” said Tommy. “I didn’t really think at first that I had much chance of getting her, marrying her, I mean. Well, I told you how I was feeling about her.”

“Yes. I understand that. But all the same,—what I’m trying to get at is this: what did you think was happening? How did you explain it all to yourself? Did you try to think it out?”

“I thought it out all that night,” said Tommy, “at least as long as I stayed awake. I dare say I was awake for as much as an hour or an hour and a half after I got into bed, and I was thinking hard all the time, partly about Calypso, of course. But _____”

“Mostly about Calypso, I expect.”

“Well, you may say mostly,” said Tommy. “Still, I did think about the others, Casimir and the king, and about the absurd way they were going on, insisting that I was some one I wasn’t and all that.”

“And what conclusion did you come to? How did you explain it to yourself?”

“It sounds rather absurd,” said Tommy, “and I dare say you’ll think me a fool. But you know the way that fellow Casimir keeps on quoting Shakespeare?”

“I have heard him do it and marveled.”

“Evidently he’d read a lot of Shakespeare,” said Tommy, “and admired him and all that.”

“These mid-European peoples,” I said, “all admire Shakespeare immensely. They know him a great deal better than we do.”

“That’s what I’m getting at,” said Tommy. “Casimir admires Shakespeare tremendously, and I dare say the king does too. I don’t profess myself to know all the plays off by heart. Still I’ve read them. At least, I’ve read most of them. Do you remember the beginning of one of the plays—didn’t remember which it was at the time, but I’ve looked it up since, and it’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. At the beginning of it there’s a kind of little play which hasn’t anything to do with the shrew, or the taming or anything else.”

No more than Tommy am I a Shakespearean scholar. But I recollected that there was a kind of prologue to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

“It’s about a sort of spoof,” said Tommy, “which a lot of people played off on a ragged beggar called Christopher Sly, pretending to believe that the poor man was a king or a great lord or something until they very nearly persuaded him that he was!”

I remembered the scene when Tommy described it. A certain lord, returning from hunting with his attendants, all of them in merry mood, found a beggar in bed in an inn. And out of sheer gaiety of heart set to work to persuade him that he was a wealthy nobleman.

“My idea was,” said Tommy, “that they were trying that trick on with me. I don’t know how the game ended in Shakespeare. In fact I don’t think it did end. But I thought I might just as well go through with it and see what happened. There was Calypso, you see.”

“Yes,” I said. “You’ve told me how you felt about her. Did you believe she was a princess?”

“Of course, I didn’t,” said Tommy. “At least, not at first. I thought she was just a dancing girl. And I thought her father was a head waiter, and that Casimir was a silly ass, who’d got Shakespeare on the brain. I’d have chucked the whole thing and kicked Casimir next time I saw him, only that I really did want to——”

“You wanted to marry Calypso?”

“Most frightfully,” said Tommy, who is a very simple soul.

“Considering your position,” I said, “and your profession, and—and my sister Emily, don’t you think you ought to have hesitated about marrying a girl like that?”

“I suppose I ought,” said Tommy. “But I didn’t. A fellow doesn’t, you know, when he’s—— I told you that Calypso laid me out, absolutely a gone man, the very moment I saw her.”

That is all very well; but I still think Tommy ought to have thought what he was doing. If he married her, supposing her to be, as he thought, simply a German dancing girl, he would have had to take her home with him and she would have been the curate’s wife in my sister Emily’s parish. What sort of example was Calypso likely to set to members of the Girls’ Friendly Society? What would the members of the Mothers’ Union have thought about her, those worthy women to whom Tommy was accustomed to read aloud the poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox while they sewed shirts for their babies? The young men of the Christian Association might have remained young men—might even have been more really young men than they had been before—when they had seen Calypso dance. Would they still have been associated Christians in the strict sense of the term? What would dear old Canon Pyke, simplest, gentlest, most innocent of men, have thought of a curate’s wife who kicked her legs into the air on the platform of his parochial hall at the annual entertainment of the Temperance Society?

And Emily herself? My imagination utterly failed when I tried to imagine Emily’s reception of Calypso. She had not a very high opinion of Tommy before he went to Berlin. In her original letter to me about his disappearance she had said that he was not altogether suited to be a clergyman. She would have been confirmed in that opinion when he came back with Calypso for a wife. There was no real harm in the girl. She was as thoroughly respectable as Viola Temple was.

But Edmund Troyte, who was a man of the world, shied at the idea of his nephew marrying her. Emily, who is a lady not of this world but of the next, would have been outraged and scandalized, if Canon Pyke's curate, a man who preached to her on Sundays, brought home Calypso as a wife. How would Calypso have taught a class in Sunday-school? Emily would regard it as part of the duty of a curate's wife to teach a class in Sunday-school.

There are things which Tommy certainly ought to have thought about; but did not. As he said, "a fellow doesn't" when he has fallen suddenly and violently in love. And, of course, there were other considerations. Calypso really was a princess. Tommy did not know that, at the time. Perhaps no one in the parish would have known it at first; but in the end it would have leaked out. What would have happened then? My sister is no more a snob than the rest of us; but, like all decent people, she has a respect for royalty. She might severely condemn the manners, customs and morals of a Berlin cabaret dancer; but she is not the woman to do more than whisper nasty things about a princess. Her position would be really awkward. A curate's wife occupies a definite, quite humble place in a parish. But a princess in any well-regulated church is received at the door by the clergy in full canonicals, has a gilt and crimson chair to sit on, instead of being herded into a pew like other people, and is often prayed for by name in the course of the service. What could be done about a princess who is also the curate's wife?

But these complicated problems did not trouble Tommy. He was able to go to sleep after little more than an hour's wakefulness, rest quietly and awake next morning prepared to play out to the end what he supposed to be Casimir's game.

When he came down next morning he went to the head clerk in the reception office and asked whether Count Casimir had called or sent any message. Casimir had done neither. But the head clerk, who felt it his duty to watch over his guests, told Tommy that he ought to go to the police office at once to show his passport and obtain permission to remain in Berlin. This, he said, was necessary in the case of all foreigners who wished to stay more than two days. The whole business, so he assured Tommy, was purely formal, tiresome, but nothing worse. Tommy had nothing to do except display his passport. He would immediately receive the necessary written permit. It was called—Tommy wrote down the word to make sure of remembering it—an *Ausweis*.

Janet Church was wandering about the central hall looking out for some one in whose business she could interfere, helpfully of course. Janet always wants to be helpful. When she saw Tommy at the desk of the reception office she walked over and joined him. She agreed with the head clerk that an *Ausweis* was necessary, and showed the one which the Berlin police had granted to her. Then she offered to take a look at Tommy's passport just to see that it was in order. It was. Tommy's mouth, nose, eyes and hair were described in the usual official style. His photograph, not in the least like him, was stuck in the proper place and duly stamped by the Foreign Office. All the visas were there, as illegible as usual. But Janet raised her eyebrows in surprise. Taking Tommy by the arm she led him away from the desk.

"You'd better be careful with that passport," she said. "The German police know more than you'd think."

"But it's all right, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's all right, of course, for the Rev. T. A. Norreys, an Irish clergyman."

"And that's who I am."

"I don't see what good you expect to do by keeping up that pretense with me," said Janet.

"I assure you——"

"And I assure you," said Janet, "that no ordinary Irish clergyman—that's what you profess to be, isn't it?——"

"Quite ordinary," said Tommy, "not even an archdeacon."

"No ordinary clergyman, English, Scotch or Irish, would have Count Casimir calling on him the moment he arrived in Berlin. Everybody knows that Casimir is up to his neck in international plots. What would he want with an ordinary clergyman? And if you're nothing but a curate, how do you account for the way you were received at the Mascotte last night? I was there when you arrived. The whole staff simply bowed down to you and you were given the best table in the room. Everybody turned round and stared at you when you came in. The head waiter, who was drunk later on, served you himself. And that's a thing head waiters don't do in the case of ordinary curates."

“I know it looks odd,” said Tommy, “but, all the same, I really am——”

“I hope for your sake,” said Janet, “that the police will believe you. I don’t know who you really are, and it isn’t my business to find out; but if the police believe that curate story I shall be surprised. Don’t you be under any mistake about the Berlin police. They’ll know that Casimir called on you yesterday. They’ll know exactly what happened last night at the Mascotte, and in all probability they know, what I don’t, exactly who you are and what you’re doing in Berlin.”

This made Tommy a little uneasy, but he was not seriously anxious. His passport was in perfect order. He had papers in his pocket, a check-book and some letters, which ought to be enough to establish his identity. He took a cab to the police office.

He found his way, after some trouble, into a small, grimy, badly overheated room. It was filled with shabby-looking people, men and women of various nationalities who stood in an irregular ill-formed queue. Tommy took his place behind a smelly Polish Jew and waited. After about half an hour he found himself standing opposite a desk at which a young man in plain clothes was writing. This man was smoking a bedraggled cigarette, which looked as if he had licked it all over before lighting it. He was very badly shaved and nearly as grimy as his office. His temper, like the atmosphere of his room, was overheated.

He asked Tommy a number of questions rapidly. Tommy did not understand a word that was said to him and shook his head amiably. The young man asked his questions over again more loudly. Tommy did not understand any better than before, but he tried the experiment of saying “*ja*” in an agreeable tone to each question. This merely irritated the young man, so Tommy, who was beginning to learn a little German, said, “*Ja, bitte schön.*” Even this appeared to be unsatisfactory, and the young man was getting seriously annoyed. Tommy tried “*nein,*” and then, aiming at politeness, “*nein, danke.*” The young man repeated his questions in a very loud and threatening tone. A fat woman, far back in the queue, tried to help matters forward by translating the questions into her own language, which happened to be Hungarian. This was no use to Tommy, and made the police official angrier than before.

Tommy, still confident that everything must go well in the end, got out his passport and handed it across the table. It contained all the information which even the most inquisitive policeman could desire, his name, his profession, the date and place of his birth were all there. His height was stated, and the color of his eyes and the shape of his mouth and a large number of other things. It certainly seemed as if every possible question was answered.

The police officer opened the passport with a jerk of his hand and allowed the ash of his cigarette to fall on the paper in order to show his disdain of everything English. There was really very little of it he could read or understand, for he knew no English; but he pretended to study it with a sort of contemptuous attention. Suddenly he became really alert. His eye had lit on Tommy’s name, which happened to be written very legibly. He stared at it, looked at Tommy, and then began searching through a pile of documents at the side of his desk. He came on the one he wanted, opened it out beside Tommy’s passport and compared the two. He took the cigarette out of his mouth and looked at Tommy with a smile of malicious triumph. He made a remark in a tone which was evidently meant to be insulting. Then he gave an order to a couple of men in uniform who stood at the door of the room. The men stepped forward, touched Tommy on the arm and motioned him to follow.

Tommy, puzzled and rather suspicious, followed the constable into an inner office. There he found himself in the presence of another police officer, evidently a man of superior rank, for he was smoking a cigar. The constable made a short report and handed over Tommy’s passport. The superior officer stared curiously, then he, too, began to ask questions, a large number of questions. Tommy could neither understand nor answer. All he could do was to point to his passport. But it was evidently in some way unsatisfactory. The oftener the police officer looked at it the more insistently he repeated his questions. At last, thoroughly dissatisfied both with Tommy and the passport, he rang the office bell sharply.

Two minutes later Tommy found himself under arrest. He was not actually handcuffed, but it was made quite clear to him that he was under the charge of two policemen who stood one on each side of him.

The police officer laid his cigar down carefully and took up a telephone receiver which stood on his desk. Then followed a long conversation, or rather a series of conversations. Tommy, listening and watching carefully, realized that the officer was repeating his story several times over, with long pauses between each telling, during which it seemed to Tommy that he was being switched off from one listener to another. Tommy did not understand a word he said, but he

caught his name occasionally, very badly pronounced. After a while he began to recognize the words “*junger Englander*.” Tommy, who was still in quite a friendly mood, turned to one of the policemen beside him.

“It’s a pity,” he said, “that he doesn’t try broadcasting. That must be the fifth time he’s told his story.”

The policeman scowled, which was amusing. He also put his hand on the hilt of his sword, which was still more amusing. Such a gesture might have frightened some people, but Tommy came from Ireland, where the art of killing is thoroughly understood. He knew that nothing serious is ever done with swords.

After the police officer had talked into his telephone for half an hour, he gave an order to his two men and Tommy was led off. They shut him up in a small inner room and left him there. Tommy began to feel slightly annoyed, but was not in the least frightened. It was evident that the hotel clerk had been wrong in saying that the police proceedings were purely formal, and Janet Church right when she warned him that he was likely to have a great deal of trouble before he got permission to stay in Berlin.

When Tommy had been incarcerated for about an hour he was taken out and put in a taxi. His two guards went with him. They were perfectly civil, but they never took their eyes off him for an instant.

The cab stopped opposite an immense, floridly decorated doorway. Tommy was led through it, into what seemed to be a public office. He was conducted along a corridor, taken up in a lift, led along two other corridors and finally with immense ceremony, ushered into a very handsomely furnished office.

A tall, fierce-looking man, elderly, grizzled and most imperfectly shaved, sat at a large table covered with papers. He was evidently a person of great importance and Tommy took a good look at him. His short gray hair stood upright on his head like the bristles of a brush. There were large rolls of fat on his neck. He had even less back to his head than most Germans, which Tommy took to be a sign that he was a Prussian of the purest breed, probably a member of the aristocracy. In this Tommy was perfectly right. He did not know it till afterward, but he was in the presence of the Prince von Steinveldt, Head of the German Ministry for the Control of Aliens.

“You speak not German good,” said von Steinveldt stiffly.

“I don’t speak it at all,” said Tommy, “except ‘*ja*,’ ‘*nein*,’ ‘*heisz wasser*’ and ‘*bitte schön*,’ I don’t believe I know a single word. It’s a great relief to me to hear you talk English. You can’t imagine how I’ve been worried all the morning by people asking me questions which I couldn’t understand. If there’s anything you really want to know, I’ll be delighted to tell you provided you ask in English.”

“Your name?”

“Norreys,” said Tommy, “Rev. Thomas A. Norreys, M. A. T. C. D.”

“*Ach*, so?”

“Yes,” said Tommy pleasantly, “just so. I see you’ve got my passport there. If you look at it you’ll see my photograph. My nose is of normal size, my face oval, my eyes of a bluish color——”

“So?”

“Exactly so,” said Tommy, and then waited.

The German referred to some papers which lay before him and then took another look at Tommy’s passport.

“Your Name,” he said, “is Norreys, but it is here in the passport not altogether rightly spelled.”

“N-o-r-r-e-y-s,” said Tommy.

“Here,” said the German, tapping one of his own papers, “I your name N-o-r-h-e-y-s spelled find. Not true?”

“Not in the very least true,” said Tommy.

“Herr Marquis,” said the German, “we are of your coming to this country and of your plan for the restoration of the monarchy of Lyustria and of the so-deep-gripping plots of your Minister of Balkan affairs good informed. The police

Ausweis permitting you longer to remain in Berlin will not ge-granted be.”

“I suppose you know,” said Tommy, “that all that rigmarole about plots and monarchies and marquises has nothing whatever to do with me, and my name is spelled exactly as it is on my passport.”

“The in English so-called bluff do I most perfectly understand,” said the German. “Within the borders of the German State may you no longer remain.”

“That,” said Tommy, “is a bit rough on me. I came over here simply to get rid of a lot of your money which I happened to have. I don’t want to say anything insulting to Germany or to hurt your feelings in any way, but you must know that your money isn’t very highly thought of anywhere else in the world. I don’t suppose the most unsophisticated South Sea Islander would give you a coco-nut for a whole sackful of marks. If you turn me out of Germany I don’t see how I am to get rid of that money at all.”

“In Germany,” said von Steinveldt, “for you to remain is strongly forbidden.”

Tommy had begun to feel irritated with the ridiculously pompous old man who sat before him. He had tried to annoy him by speaking of the worthlessness of German marks. But the attempt had not been a success. He tried again. This time a different sort of taunt.

“Very well,” he said, “if you expel me from Germany, I shall go to Strasburg and make a tour of Alsace and Lorraine. They’re not in Germany any longer, you know.”

“To cross the frontier,” said von Steinveldt, “is without the police *Ausweis* entirely impossible.”

Tommy thought this over carefully for a minute and then realized the absurdity of the position.

“You say I can’t stay in Berlin?” he said.

“Anywhere in Germany,” said von Steinveldt, “is for you strongly forbidden.”

“And at the same time you say I can’t go.”

“To cross the frontier without the police *Ausweis* impossible is.”

“So far as I can see,” said Tommy, “the only thing left for me to do is to fade away gradually like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, and I can’t do that. The only kind of man I ever heard of who could do that is a Mahatma, with an astral body, and I’m not one. But I dare say you’re simply making what you believe to be a joke. I always heard that German jokes are a bit difficult to see.”

“For entering Germany with a false passport,” said von Steinveldt, “you shall in prison forthwith enclosed be.”

“Do try not to be quite so cocksure that you’re always right,” said Tommy. “As a matter of fact, my passport isn’t false, as you call it, in any single particular. My face is oval, my nose is of normal shape, and my mouth is more or less round when open, which is just what the passport says. If you don’t believe me and can’t bear to look me in the face—which I can understand you don’t care to do after sticking me with your marks in the way you did—just take a glance at the photo on the passport.”

This apparently struck von Steinveldt as a thing which he ought to do. He took a long look at the photograph, which indeed bore very little resemblance to Tommy. Then, instead of comparing it with Tommy’s face, he rapidly turned over the pile of papers on the desk in front of him. From among them he drew out another photograph and looked carefully at it. He placed both photographs side by side and stared at them. Then, suddenly, he looked up at Tommy.

“Of what height are you?” he asked.

“Five foot, ten and a half, see passport,” said Tommy, “forehead broad, eyes blue, nose normal, face oval. Mouth round when opened. It’s all there.”

For the first time during the interview von Steinveldt smiled. It was a grim smile, with more than a suggestion of malice in it; but Tommy was glad to see a smile of any kind.

“I think,” said von Steinveldt, “that there has a mistake been.”

“I’ve thought so all along,” said Tommy.

“That damned fool Count Casimir has this time himself a mistake made.”

“I don’t know that Casimir is more of a fool than any one else,” said Tommy. “You made the same mistake yourself. I don’t even now profess to understand what it is. But you made it. So did two of your police officers.”

“But I,” said von Steinveldt, “the mistake discovered have.”

“You can’t take much credit for that,” said Tommy. “You’d have discovered it long ago, in fact, you’d never have made it if you’d listened to me and believed what I said.”

“Soon,” said von Steinveldt, “the damned Casimir will the mistake also discover. Then you can say to him and your Lord Troyte, and to Herr Cable that another bridegroom for the fair Calypso arranged has been.”

He sat up straight in his chair, pulled his bristly white mustache and looked so pleased that Tommy began to think that he must himself be the “arranged” bridegroom. The thought of Calypso being married against her will—Tommy felt certain it would be against her will—to this bristly-headed German made Tommy seriously angry.

“Do you mean to tell me,” he said, “that you have the nerve to think of marrying her yourself?”

“So,” said von Steinveldt. “Her equal in birth I certainly am.”

“Well, just listen to me for a minute,” said Tommy. “You’ve swindled me with your beastly marks of yours in a way that a third-rate Jew money-lender would have been ashamed of. You’ve set on nasty, slimy police officers to arrest me. You’ve dragged me about Berlin in a taxi-cab. You’ve kept me standing here for half an hour with nothing but your face to look at. Very well. I’m not going to ask for compensation, though I ought to get it. I’m not even going to demand an apology, though if you had as much decent feeling as a Hottentot you’d apologize without being asked. But I’ll just tell you one thing before I go. I mean to marry Calypso myself.”

Von Steinveldt was genuinely astonished. He had been brought up to regard royal persons of all kinds and members of aristocracies as sacred. A pastor—he now quite believed that Tommy was a curate—belongs to the rank of the bourgeoisie, is *bürgerlich*. For such a one to marry——

“But she is a princess,” he said.

“I don’t know anything about that,” said Tommy, “but whether she is or not, I mean to marry her if she will have me. And I may say that if it’s a choice between you and me, I expect I have the better chance.”

“So, Herr Pastor,” said von Steinveldt.

He had sufficiently recovered from his first surprise to realize that Tommy’s threat was absurd. No princess could possibly marry a curate. Such a thing would be worse than a wave of Bolshevism. Central European society would be shaken to its foundations. Wladislaws, as von Steinveldt knew, was a disreputable wreck of a king. Calypso was highly unconventional in her manner of life. But even they could not possibly contemplate an alliance with a curate. The sneer on von Steinveldt’s face became quite unmistakable.

“*Ach* so, Herr English Pastor,” he said.

“And even if she won’t marry me,” said Tommy, “and I mean to have a pretty good try at persuading her, I feel pretty certain she won’t marry you. No girl would. Good-by. Or perhaps I ought to say, ‘*Ach* so, Herr Bridegroom arranged.’”

CHAPTER XII

It was at half past ten that Casimir entered the Adlon Hotel the morning after the party at the Mascotte. He did not find

Tommy, who by that time had gone off to the police office. He did find Janet Church, whom he rather wished to avoid. But Janet Church is not an easy woman to avoid. She at once attached herself to Casimir and reminded him of his promise to arrange for her visit to Lystria.

Casimir was quite civil to her. He is the kind of man who is civil to any woman anywhere and at any time. He had a reason for treating Janet with special politeness. He believed her to be Tommy's, or rather Norheys', aunt.

"Certainly," he said. "Everything will be settled about your journey. There will be no difficulty at all. I shall get you a passport."

In talking to Janet he spoke German and was therefore able to express himself without quoting Shakespeare.

"I don't see how you can get me a passport," said Janet. "The consul here, and the passport officer, and the people at the Embassy refuse to allow me to have one. If I travel at all, it must be without a passport. That's what I expect you to manage for me."

"You shall have an excellent passport," said Casimir, "a British passport, which no one will question."

"You can't get me that," said Janet. "It's impossible."

Casimir smiled indulgently.

They were sitting together near the door of the hall. A lady, middle-aged, very neatly dressed, unmistakably English, passed them, going toward the swinging door.

"That," said Casimir, "is Miss Gisborne. Miss May Gisborne. She is the Secretary of Colonel Heard, who is the head of the British Graves Registration Commission."

Janet looked without particular interest at Miss May Gisborne.

"In seeking for British graves," said Casimir, "Colonel Heard, who is sometimes accompanied by his wife, goes through various parts of Germany, and beyond Germany into all the countries of Eastern Europe. Miss Gisborne often goes with him, in order, I suppose, to register the graves which are found. Colonel Heard has a diplomatic passport. So has Miss Gisborne. I propose that you should use Miss Gisborne's passport."

I do not suppose that Janet Church has any particular scruples about traveling with a false passport. For the sake of a noble cause—and what could be nobler than World Peace?—she would willingly do far worse things than that. But she was startled at the cool way in which Casimir assumed that Miss Gisborne's passport would be at her disposal.

"But she isn't in the least likely to lend it to me," said Janet.

"No," said Casimir. "I shall steal it."

Even Janet shied a little at that. The word "steal" used in that way has a very nasty sound, and I suppose, as a worker in the cause of Christian unity, Janet felt herself more or less committed to the Ten Commandments.

"Steal!" said Janet. "But I couldn't agree——"

"Even Shakespeare," said Casimir, "is occasionally wrong. You recollect——?" He gave his quotation in English. "'Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing; 'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands, but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed.' There Shakespeare was mistaken. If I took the purse of Miss Gisborne I should make her poorer. But if I take her name, that is to say, the passport of the gracious *fräulein*, I do her no harm, for she gets another at once—another passport, you understand, not another name. Whereas I make you rich in what you want. With the passport of Miss Gisborne you can travel anywhere."

I do not know whether that line of reasoning quieted Janet's scruples, or whether the joy of being able to go to Lystria smothered the cries of her conscience. She ceased to object to the stealing of the passport, and became exceedingly curious to know how it was to be done.

"That," said Casimir, "is easy. The English seldom lock up anything. In England, I suppose, it is not necessary to lock

things up. No doubt all the English are so rich that they do not want to take what is not theirs. Why should they when they have all they want? So here in Berlin Colonel Heard does not lock up his own passport or Miss Gisborne's. If sometimes, by chance, he does lock them up, he always leaves the key in the pocket of the trousers he wore the day before. It is thus that English colonels always behave, for the English are a truly great nation, and the English gentlemen is so noble that he suspects no one. He would not himself steal anything, ever. Therefore he leaves his keys in the pockets of his yesterday's trousers."

"All the same," said Janet, "he'll lock the door of his bedroom. We all do that."

"That," said Casimir, "is nothing."

Then he went on to explain to Janet how the theft was to be effected, and the explanation left her gasping.

The Countess Olga, Casimir's only sister, was at that time a housemaid in the Adlon Hotel. As a housemaid she had, of course, a master key which opened all the doors on the floor on which she served. The room occupied by Colonel and Mrs. Heard and that of Miss Gisborne were under her care. She could enter them at any time she chose, stay in them as long as she chose and not excite the smallest suspicion. She was familiar with Colonel Heard's habit of leaving his keys in his trousers pockets.

The first feeling which this frank confession aroused in Janet's mind was pity for the countess. It must be a dreadful thing for a highborn lady, no doubt a delicately-natured lady, to be reduced to earning her living as a housemaid in a hotel. Casimir explained that her pity was wasted.

"It is not for the sake of wages that Olga is a housemaid," he said. "She has money enough to live otherwise, and if she had not, I would give it to her. We Lystrian nobles are not rich, but we would not allow our sisters to earn wages as servants. No. Olga is a patriot. She is a housemaid just as I was a soldier in the war for the sake of our beloved land, ours for fifteen hundred years, now taken from us. I fought, but it was no use. Olga collects information, letters, documents, telegrams——"

"From people who leave their keys about," said Janet.

"And, if necessary, passports," said Casimir, smiling.

Janet is not, I suppose, an entirely unscrupulous woman. There are things she would not do, though very few, for the sake of a cause she had at heart. She made no further protest against the theft of Miss Gisborne's passport; but she did not want to go on talking about it. She changed the subject.

"By the way," she said, "talking of passports. That young friend of yours who was with you last night in the Mascotte _____"

"Your nephew," said Casimir.

Janet recollected herself.

"My nephew, yes. I am afraid he is likely to get into trouble with his passport."

"But how?" said Casimir. "Surely in London they gave him a correct passport."

"On his passport he is described as the Reverend Thomas A. Norreys. Now he's not that."

"He is certainly not that," said Casimir.

"I thought not."

"It was foolish," said Casimir, "to put that on his passport, foolish and quite unnecessary."

"If the police suspect anything wrong——"

"The police will not see that passport."

"They will," said Janet. "By this time I expect they have. He went off to the police office this morning to obtain his

Ausweis, taking the passport with him.”

“God in Heaven!” said Casimir. “He has gone to the police office!”

“That’s what I’m trying to tell you,” said Janet, “and I’m very much afraid there’ll be trouble.”

“Trouble! They will imprison him. They will deport him. They will—— But not even von Steinveldt would dare to shoot him. But—— Excuse me. I must act at once or all is lost. The princess! My beloved country! But I have friends and I have money. The king has friends. Perhaps it is not yet too late.”

He hurried across the hall toward the door. Janet hurried after him. Tommy was in serious trouble. Casimir was excited and frightened. She could not bear the thought of not being helpful in a crisis as desperate as this. She caught Casimir by the arm just as he reached the door.

“Shall I ring up our Embassy?” she said. “The third secretary is a friend of mine. At least, I’ve often talked to him over the telephone. After all, your friend—I mean my nephew—is a British subject. The ambassador must do something. I shall insist on his moving in the matter.”

Casimir turned on her. He must have felt extremely irritated, but his politeness did not fail him.

“Gracious lady,” he said, “I can think of only one thing in the world which would make this affair worse than it is, and that is the interference of the British Ambassador.”

Janet says that his face was white, drawn and tragic when he spoke, and that beads of perspiration had gathered on his forehead. But Janet is inclined to exaggerate in the interests of the picturesque. I do not suppose that Casimir was in the state she described. He was upset about what had happened and foresaw a great deal of trouble. But he had no doubt that he could straighten things out even if the police had arrested Tommy.

When he left the hotel Casimir went straight to his bank and cashed a check for ten thousand marks. In Germany it takes a long time to cash a check and it was half an hour before Casimir actually got the money. Then he drove to the police office and walked into the room into which Tommy had gone that morning. There was still a long queue of Poles, Russians, Slavs, Ukrainians and other foreigners waiting to approach the police officer’s desk. But Casimir did not take his place at the end of the line. He handed twenty marks to the policeman who kept watch at the door and was immediately placed at the head of the queue. In return for another twenty marks the policeman ordered all the other waiting people out of the room. They were allowed to draw a breath of fresh air in the passage until Casimir finished his business. This was good for them, but they did not like it.

For some months the German mark had been falling rapidly. Official salaries, from those of cabinet ministers to those of simple policemen, had in March only about one-tenth of their supposed value and a large class of more or less deserving people found themselves starving. This, though disagreeable for them, was a great advantage to any one who controlled money in a stable currency. Casimir had Procopius Cable’s English pounds to draw on. He felt confident of being able to persuade any official to do what he wanted done.

He began his interview with the police officer by laying a thousand marks on the table in front of him. Then he said he wanted an *Ausweis*, duly signed and in proper form, for a young Englishman called Norheys. The police officer stood up and bowed respectfully to Casimir. Then he fixed his eyes, hopefully at first, sadly afterward, on the thousand marks. He began to apologize.

If he had known a little earlier that the highborn gentleman wished for an *Ausweis*—— The young Englishman had been there, in that very office—— There had been a trifling irregularity in his passport, very trifling, nothing that mattered. If he had known—— Now, unfortunately, he could do nothing. The young Englishman had been passed on to his superior officer.

The poor man eyed the thousand marks hungrily. He had a wife and two children at home. They had very little food and no firing. A thousand marks would have made life a much pleasanter affair to him.

“*Ach*, most high-born sir,” he said, “I can not now issue the *Ausweis*, though how willingly I would do so if I could.”

Casimir is not a man who pays for what he does not get. He picked up the thousand marks again.

Then he laid down a note for a hundred marks, and asked to see the superior officer who had taken charge of Tommy.

This time the young man, standing behind his desk, bowed gratefully. Certainly the high-born gentleman should see the superior officer at once. Casimir was shown into the inner room. The young man at the desk pocketed the hundred-mark note. Perhaps he spent half of it on a piece of soap. His face looked as if he had none at home.

Casimir dealt with the superior officer in much the same way, except that this time he laid down two thousand marks. He was received with almost groveling civility. This officer looked at money not so much hungrily as greedily. He had neither wife nor children and was not actually hungry. But he was a man who liked enjoying himself, and in the good old days before the mark fell he was accustomed to spend his evening in pleasure resorts less sumptuous and much less respectable than the Mascotte. From these delights he had been cut off for some months. With two thousand marks a man can buy a great deal of pleasure in Berlin. For two thousand marks most government officials would have done a great deal.

Casimir said what he wanted, an *Ausweis* for Tommy.

The officer, his eyes fixed on the money, cursed himself, his bad luck, his government, the late war, the French nation, the English nation, the Reparations Commission and the International Military Control. He cursed fluently, blasphemously and obscenely. At last he told Casimir that Tommy had been sent on to the Prince von Steinveldt. He himself could do nothing in the matter of the *Ausweis*.

The information was worth something and Casimir paid for it.

Then he went back to his bank and drew out, not marks this time, but five hundred pounds sterling.

Even with that sum in his pocket he did not feel quite sure of being able to deal with Prince von Steinveldt. He drove to the flat which King Wladislaws occupied and took counsel with him.

The king listened to the story.

“The difficulty is,” said the king, “that von Steinveldt wants to step into my shoes himself. He can’t of course. The Entente powers would never allow a German to sit on the throne of Lystria. And, besides, Calypso wouldn’t marry him. But that’s not the point. He thinks he’ll be able to manage it and of course he’ll want to get Norheys out of the way.”

“Fortunately,” said Casimir, “and thanks to the excellent Cable, we have plenty of money.”

“There’s no use offering von Steinveldt marks,” said the king. “He understands all about marks and knows exactly what’s going to happen to them.”

“Naturally,” said Casimir. “I should not offer him marks. I have in my pocket five hundred pounds sterling.”

“That ought to be enough,” said the king. “He wouldn’t make that much clear profit, after paying all expenses, out of Lystria in two years unless he is a great deal cleverer than I am. But you’ll have to be careful, Casimir. He’ll take the money all right. But he’s a prince. You must allow him to keep up his self-respect.”

“I had thought,” said Casimir, “of laying the money on his desk without saying anything about it.”

“I should be rather inclined,” said the king, “to hand it over to him openly, saying that I sent it as a donation to whatever charity in Berlin he thinks most worthy of support. Tell him at the same time that I want to remain anonymous and desire no receipt for the money.”

The king, who had been lounging in a chair, got up, went over to his writing-table and unlocked a drawer. He took from it a small case made of real morocco leather.

“You may as well offer him this at the same time,” said the king.

He opened the box and displayed a small golden snake. It was curled up so that its tail was in its mouth. Its eyes, which had a fierce expression, were garnets. Casimir looked at it with reverence. It was the sign of “The Most Noble Order of the Golden Adder of Lystria,” an order granted to very few people and worn by no Lystrian except the king himself.

“He may like to have it,” said the king, “though I don’t know why he should. It’s only nine carat gold, and the creature’s

eyes aren't rubies. Still, he may like it. Try him, and you might say if at any time he wants a good table at the Mascotte, he has nothing to do but ring me up and I'll arrange it. What's more, I'll take fifty per cent. off his bill, and he won't be expected to tip the waiters. Tell him all that, will you?"

CHAPTER XIII

Casimir went off to von Steinveldt's office in good spirits and full of confidence. He did not expect that his interview would be pleasant, but he had no doubt that he would be successful in obtaining Tommy's release. Von Steinveldt would probably try to bully him. He usually did try to bully any one he met. He would certainly bargain and the haggling might be prolonged. Casimir expected bullying and bargaining; but he felt that no living German would resist the offer of five hundred pounds in English bank-notes, a decoration to pin on his coat and the chance of supper at the Mascotte whenever he liked at half the usual price.

Never was any diplomatist, engaged in a *demarche* of an important kind, more surprised than Casimir was.

Von Steinveldt made no attempt to bully him. He received him with extreme politeness and showed every kind of courtesy and consideration. This made Casimir suspicious. He knew von Steinveldt fairly well and had never seen him behave like a gentleman before.

"His Majesty the King of Lystria——" Casimir began.

"Ah, poor King Wladislaws," said von Steinveldt. "My heart bleeds for him. Such a position for one who has been a king. Tell me, how is he getting on?"

Casimir did not believe that von Steinveldt's heart ever bled for any one. He felt sure that he did not care whether King Wladislaws starved or not. His suspicions, already awakened by von Steinveldt's politeness, became acute.

"His Majesty," he said, "sent me to place a small sum of money in Your Excellency's hands. He knows little of the needs of the poor in Berlin and he hopes that Your Excellency will be kind enough to spend this money in the way that you think wisest."

He drew from his pocket his packet of English bank-notes and laid it on the table. Von Steinveldt picked it up. There were fifty Bank of England notes for ten pounds each. Von Steinveldt hated and despised almost everything English. But he had a deep respect and a genuine liking for English bank-notes. He became almost genial, certainly facetious, while counting the notes. The feel of the paper between his finger and thumb gave him a sense of physical pleasure.

"King Wladislaws," he said, "seems to have been doing pretty well at the Mascotte."

"His Majesty," said Casimir stiffly, "wishes his gift to be anonymous, and hopes that you will make no acknowledgment of the receipt of the money."

Von Steinveldt pocketed the notes.

"Among the German aristocracy," he said, "there are many who have suffered severely by the fall of the mark. Their pride forbids them to make any public complaint of their poverty. I think, if your king approves, that this money would be well spent, perhaps best spent, in relieving their distress."

Casimir had little doubt that the German aristocracy—at all events one member of it—would benefit by the five hundred pounds.

"It is," said von Steinveldt, "a most generous gift. I beg of you to convey to your king my warmest thanks."

Casimir took out of his pocket the crimson case which contained the Golden Adder of Lystria.

"His Majesty," he said, "is deeply conscious of your kindness in acting as his almoner, and is not unmindful of the many services which you have rendered in the past to the unfortunate kingdom of Lystria. He begs your acceptance of the

Order of the Golden Adder of Lystria.”

Von Steinveldt picked the adder out of its box and held it suspended by the pink ribbon attached to it. Then, standing up and bowing deeply to Casimir, he pinned the decoration to the breast of his tunic. It hung there, the last in the second row of decorations which von Steinveldt wore. There were twenty-nine of them and the Golden Adder made the thirtieth.

“I accept it,” he said, “in recognition, not of the services I have rendered, but of those I hope to render to your native land. I think you understand me, Count Casimir.”

Casimir did, or thought he did. No doubt von Steinveldt was of opinion that he would render valuable services to Lystria by marrying the princess and ascending the throne.

“I am also charged by His Majesty,” he said, “to inform Your Excellenz that if at any time you should wish to visit the Mascotte a table will be reserved for you and a proper deduction, fifty per cent. in fact, will be made to your bill.”

“I shall certainly accept the invitation,” said von Steinveldt. “I have long wished to see the Princess Calypso dance. She is still dancing there, I hope.”

“She danced last night.”

“And to-night? No, to-night I am engaged, and the night after. Will the Princess Calypso be dancing next Monday night?”

Casimir sincerely hoped not. If his plans worked out as he wished, the princess would be well on her way to Lystria on Monday night. But he did not want to say that to von Steinveldt. He made an effort to get away from the subject of the Princess Calypso.

“His Majesty,” he said, “hopes to engage an English dancer for the Mascotte. She is, I am told, well known and greatly appreciated in London. If Your Excellenz will come and see her when she arrives you will no doubt be pleased. Her name is Temple, Viola Temple.”

“Ah,” said von Steinveldt. “I think I know the name. Let me see. I hear a little of the gossip of the London clubs, though I should no longer be admitted as a member of one of them. Is not that the lady to whom young Lord Norheys is so deeply attached?”

Casimir felt that the time had come for getting at the real object of his mission. This chance mention of Norheys’ name gave him his opportunity.

“Speaking of Lord Norheys,” he said, “reminds me that His Majesty asked me to say to you——”

Von Steinveldt interrupted him.

“That Lord Norheys is in Berlin. But I know it already. I had a visit from him this morning. A very charming young man. Perhaps he is over here to take care of Miss Temple.”

Casimir, who had been uneasy all through the interview, became actually uncomfortable. He did not understand what von Steinveldt meant.

“Miss Temple,” he said, “has not yet arrived in Berlin.”

“Indeed. Then perhaps there is no truth in the rumor that he intends to marry Miss Temple. Indeed, I have heard it whispered that another and much more desirable marriage has been planned for that fortunate young man. The Princess Calypso is, I understand, a very beautiful young lady.”

Casimir was not surprised to find that von Steinveldt knew all about the scheme for the marriage of Calypso and Norheys, but he was startled, puzzled and frightened to hear the matter spoken of in this way.

“Lord Norheys is a rich man, I believe,” von Steinveldt went on. “He will no doubt make an excellent King of Lystria, a post which could hardly be accepted by a man without private means. And if your oil-fields are developed, he will see to it that England obtains control of them. Well, England gets everything nowadays. To the victors the spoils. It is enough for us poor Germans that we are allowed to live. Please tell the king that I do not grudge Lord Norheys his good fortune. I found him a most attractive young man. I have seldom enjoyed a chat more than the one I had with him this morning.”

Casimir felt perfectly certain that von Steinveldt would grudge the princess and the throne of Lystria to Lord Norheys or any one else except himself. He was equally sure that no German would be content to see England in control of the Lystrian oil. He felt that he was being played with, laughed at, and that some very disagreeable surprise awaited him. He began to be angry and to lose confidence in himself.

“What brought Lord Norheys here?” he asked abruptly.

“There was some trifling irregularity about his passport,” said von Steinveldt, “and he very properly brought it straight to me.”

Casimir knew, or thought he knew, all about Tommy’s passport and that the irregularity was anything but trifling. He also knew that Tommy had not gone to von Steinveldt’s office of his own free will. He had been arrested and taken there. He jumped to the conclusion that von Steinveldt had already sent Lord Norheys back to England and was now enjoying his triumph in a disagreeable and spiteful manner.

“I was so glad to be able to set the matter right for him at once,” said von Steinveldt.

“I suppose,” said Casimir, “that you have deported him.”

Von Steinveldt raised his eyebrows in well-feigned surprise.

“My dear Count Casimir,” he said. “Why should I deport Lord Norheys? That excellent young man is at the present moment enjoying the sights of Berlin, in company, perhaps, with Miss Temple. Or did you say that she had not yet arrived? I suppose in any case he does not mean actually to marry her. It would be very awkward for you and King Wladislaws if any formal promise of marriage existed. It might be difficult to buy off Miss Temple. I imagine that you would have to pay *her* more than five hundred pounds. Perhaps the king might offer her the Gold Adder of Lystria.”

He fingered the pink ribbon on his breast as he spoke.

“Or a table at the Mascotte and fifty per cent. off her bill. But I forgot. She has already been engaged to dance there.”

Casimir was by this time nervous as well as angry. Von Steinveldt would scarcely venture to laugh at him so openly unless he were very sure that he had the best of the game.

“I suppose,” he said, “that you have imprisoned Lord Norheys if you haven’t deported him.”

“Even if I wished to imprison him,” said von Steinveldt, “I daren’t. We poor Germans lost the war, you know. The hand of the conqueror lies heavy on us. If I arrested an English nobleman in the streets of Berlin, I should probably be tried for my life by the League of Nations. My property would certainly be confiscated. But I need not talk of such things. Even if I could do so with impunity, I should not want to interfere with Lord Norheys or to curtail his liberty in any way.”

Casimir has the temper of a healthy and therefore amiable child. But like most children and simple-minded people, he is liable to sudden gusts of passion which he can not control.

“You’ve just taken five hundred pounds of our money——” he said.

“For the impoverished German aristocracy,” said von Steinveldt, “and I assure it will be well spent.”

“You have accepted the Order of the Golden Adder——”

“In return for services which you hoped I would render to your country. Is not that so, Count Casimir? Well, I have rendered them before you asked me. Three hours ago your friend Lord Norheys left this room entirely free to go where he chose and do what he liked.”

“I don’t believe you,” said Casimir.

“If you will inquire at his hotel,” said von Steinveldt, “or at Miss Temple’s hotel—— But I keep forgetting. You said she was not in Berlin. Or perhaps he has taken the princess out to luncheon somewhere. Or he may be making arrangements for his journey to Lystria. You will find him somewhere no doubt if you look for him. He is certainly at liberty.”

Casimir rose from his chair and crossed the room.

“I don’t know what you expect to gain,” he said angrily, “by treating the king and myself as you have; but if you think that after this the Lystrians will ever accept you as a king, you are very badly mistaken.”

He opened the door as he spoke. When he had finished speaking he passed through it and slammed it violently behind him.

I have no doubt that von Steinveldt smiled. He probably chuckled when Casimir left him. The mistake about Tommy’s identity was sure to be discovered sooner or later. When it was discovered every one concerned would feel so foolish that there would be no further talk about an English candidate for the throne of Lystria. Once Lord Norheys was out of the way, von Steinveldt’s own chances would be greatly improved.

CHAPTER XIV

Casimir spent a harassed and trying time for the rest of the day.

He was convinced, and the king agreed with him, that von Steinveldt meant to play a trick of some kind.

It was conceivable—indeed, likely enough—that the German would have accepted a bribe. That he had allowed Lord Norheys to go free before he was bribed was a thing which neither the king nor Casimir could believe. But they did not know and could not guess what kind of trick von Steinveldt meant to play, or what trick he could play. The simplest thing to do was to send the princess and Tommy off to Lystria at once.

Unfortunately, this was not possible.

The arrangements for crossing the frontier and their reception in the Schloss Ambray were not yet complete. The plan which Casimir had made was that the patriarch and the leading notables of Lystria should be waiting at the Schloss to celebrate the wedding and the coronation immediately after the princess and Lord Norheys arrived. But the patriarch was not there, and nothing could be done without him. Only a few of the nobility were actually in the Schloss. Casimir required three days to have everything ready.

But if von Steinveldt had any card in his hand and meant to play it, it was plainly unwise to keep the princess and Lord Norheys in Berlin. He and the king decided to send them to Breslau. There they would be within easy reach of the frontier, and when they crossed it would at once be among the mountains of Lystria. If they stayed there quietly, von Steinveldt might not guess where they were, and they would, at worst, be farther out of his reach than if they stayed in Berlin.

Casimir’s original plan had been that his sister, the Countess Olga, should accompany the princess as lady-in-waiting. Neither he nor the king could go with her. They would be closely watched and stopped at the frontier. But he had every hope that, with the passports he meant to provide, the princess, Lord Norheys and the Countess Olga would be able to get into Lystria.

That part of the plan was spoiled by the unexpected appearance of Janet Church. She insisted on going to Lystria, and, when he came to think it over, Casimir was not altogether sorry. The Countess Olga might be suspected. Janet Church, a wandering English spinster of a type perfectly well known all over Europe, was as safe a traveling companion as could possibly be found for a pair of political conspirators.

Casimir and the king agreed that the party should start for Breslau next morning. Then Casimir’s work began. He engaged seats in the train. He telegraphed for rooms at the best hotel in Breslau. He sent long telegrams in code to the patriarch, to his cousin Count Albert Casimir and to several other people in Lystria. He warned his sister that Colonel Heard’s passports must be secured during the day. If by some unfortunate chance the colonel had not left his keys lying about, the Countess Olga would have to cut open a suit-case or a despatch-box. If necessary she could go to prison for a while as a dishonest housemaid, but the passports must be got.

Then he tried to find Tommy in order to warn him to be ready. He came on Janet Church having her afternoon tea in the hall of the Adlon Hotel, but she knew nothing about Tommy. She had not seen him since he left the hotel in the morning to go to the police office. She very willingly agreed to help Casimir to find him. They went out and searched Berlin. Janet made a round of all the picture galleries, museums and churches, a long business, and entirely futile. All public buildings in Berlin are shut in the afternoon and by six o'clock it is not possible to enter even a church. Casimir, who knew Berlin better than Janet did, rushed round the chief picture palaces and a number of likely restaurants. He failed to find Tommy.

I asked Tommy afterward how he spent that afternoon. He told me that after lunching comfortably in a restaurant, he determined to see the city in a simple and inexpensive way. He got into the first tram-car he saw, went in it till it stopped and came back again to the place from which he started. Then took another tram and did the same thing. Altogether he seems to have worked over the courses of fourteen different trams. I can not imagine a better way of eluding a pursuer. I shall certainly try it if I ever want to keep out of the clutches of the police for a few hours. At nine o'clock Tommy went back to the hotel, changed his clothes and took a taxi to the Mascotte. He was determined to see Calypso again, and that was the only place he could think of where he was likely to meet her. He did not meet her there, for she was at home packing up her clothes. He did not even meet the king, who had taken an evening's holiday, no doubt in order to give some final advice to his daughter. Tommy, seated by himself at a table in a corner of the great room, was glad to see Casimir when he came in. He was tired after his long search through Berlin, and was so pleased at finding Tommy that he ordered two bottles of champagne.

I dare say he drank too much of it. Tommy did not. He remained perfectly clear-headed and he thoroughly understood what Casimir said to him. He agreed to go to Breslau and from there to Lystria. He would have promised quite as readily to go to Timbuctoo and thence to the Fiji Islands in company with Calypso. But he insisted that he must explain to Calypso, to the king, and, at once, to Casimir, that he was not Lord Norheys. On that point he was absolutely determined. He refused to go adventuring under another man's name. If he was to marry Calypso, which he very much wanted to do, it must be as the Rev T. A. Norreys; not as a marquis or any one else.

Casimir was tired, worried, over-excited and was drinking too much champagne. In his soberest senses he does not understand English very well. He certainly did not understand what was said to him then. But he readily promised that Tommy should have every opportunity of explaining himself to the king and Calypso. The king, so he said, meant to travel with the party as far as Breslau. Tommy could talk to him in the train. He would have several hours in which to say all he wanted. Afterward he could talk to the princess, all day long if he chose for three whole days. It would be at least three days before they could leave Breslau.

Next morning Tommy and Janet Church went to the Friedrich Strasse Station in good time for the train to Breslau. They found the king and Calypso waiting for them. Casimir arrived a few minutes later and saw them off.

The princess and Janet Church traveled together. The king and Tommy took their places in a smoking compartment. Fortunately they had it to themselves. As soon as the train started Tommy braced himself for an effort. He wanted to get an explanation of what had been happening, and he was quite determined to make his own position clear.

It was the king who began the conversation.

"I'm glad," he said, "that we have this carriage to ourselves. I want to have a little talk with you."

"And I want to talk to you," said Tommy.

By way of showing that this talk was going to be of a very serious kind he stood up and set his back against the door of the compartment. The king settled down in a corner and lit a cigar.

"Are you, or are you not really a king?"

The king turned his cigar over between his fingers thoughtfully.

"That," he said, "is rather a hard question to answer. I certainly was a king once. If you asked Casimir he'd say I am a king still, since I haven't abdicated. On the other hand, the statesmen of the Entente powers, if you asked them, would say that I am not a king, because they definitely turned me out. However,"—here he smiled pleasantly,—“it doesn't really matter, does it? As I told you last night, I don't keep up any kind of state now. You needn't remain standing up. I'd much rather you sat down and were comfortable. Have a cigar.”

Tommy sat down and took a cigar.

“Now,” said the king, “let’s talk about this unlucky Miss Temple business. I’m sorry to tell you that Calypso feels very strongly about it, absurdly strongly. In fact, I had the greatest difficulty in getting her to start this morning. If I hadn’t come with her myself, which I didn’t particularly want to do, I shouldn’t have been able to get her into the train.”

Tommy felt that his opportunity had come. He stood up again. He felt firmer and more determined when he was standing up.

“I want to make it perfectly clear to you,” he said, “that I am not Lord Norheys. I know that you’ve somehow mixed me up with him, you and Count Casimir. But it’s a mistake. It really is. I AM NOT LORD NORHEYS.”

“That,” said the king, “is exactly what I told Calypso. You said as much to me last night, and I’ve been repeating it to her all day. I told her that you knew nothing about Miss Temple, that you’d never seen the girl, that you’d never even heard of her, that, in fact, YOU ARE NOT LORD NORHEYS.”

The king gave a pleasant and smiling imitation of Tommy’s emphatic assertion.

“I don’t think you quite understand me even now. I really am not Lord Norheys.”

The king waved his hand airily.

“That’s a tremendous comfort to me,” he said. “It gets us out of the Miss Temple difficulty, and, to tell the truth, that affair was becoming serious.”

“Who on earth is Miss Temple?” said Tommy desperately.

“Oh, an actress, I believe,” said the king, smiling. “Or a dancer. But it doesn’t matter, does it? Lord Norheys, it seems, has foolishly promised to marry her. Even that wouldn’t really have mattered. You could have kept her in the background _____”

“Don’t say ‘you,’” said Tommy. “I’ve told you over and over again that I am not Lord Norheys.”

“Of course you’re not. I know that and I’m very glad of it. It simplifies things immensely, for though Lord Norheys might have married Calypso in spite of Miss Temple, I’m afraid Calypso wouldn’t have married him. Miss Temple wrote a letter to my daughter, a most pathetic letter, begging her not to take Lord Norheys away from her. It affected Calypso greatly. There was something in it about a ‘one ewe lamb,’ and Calypso, having lots of flocks and herds, it seemed to me rather an odd description of a young man. The patriarch used to quote that parable to me, but then it always was—well, a ewe lamb. That stuff never made much impression on me, but Calypso wept when she read it. She said that if you’d promised to marry Miss Temple——”

“But I haven’t.”

“So I told Calypso. I told her that she must not mix you up with Lord Norheys. She said that even if you hadn’t actually promised to marry her, you had certainly stolen away her young affections.”

“I haven’t,” said Tommy.

“Of course not. Their affections are very seldom as young as all that. At least, that’s my experience. Those ewe lambs are generally pretty well able to take care of themselves. But, of course, it would have been no good saying that to Calypso, or for the matter of that, to the patriarch. The patriarch is a very simple-minded old man. He believes in young affections and broken hearts and all that sort of thing. However, fortunately, we haven’t got to argue with him and Calypso along those lines. All we’ve got to do is make them believe that you are not Lord Norheys. Once they believe that, all our difficulties vanish. The marriage can go on.”

“Do you mean to say,” said Tommy, “that you’re still willing to allow me to marry your daughter?”

“Of course I am,” said the king. “I always was. I never took that Miss Temple business in the least seriously. These things will happen. Everybody except Calypso and the patriarch knows that.”

“But it hasn’t happened,” said Tommy. “At least, it hasn’t happened to me. It may possibly have happened to Lord

Norheys. I don't know anything about that."

"Just what I said to Calypso, and just what you'll have to say to the patriarch. Then the only obstacle to the marriage vanishes."

"No, it doesn't," said Tommy. "At least, that one may. But there's another obstacle, a much worse one."

"If there's another," said the king, "for heaven's sake don't let her write to Calypso. Who is she? Don't say it's Miss Church. If it is, we're done."

"I never saw Miss Church in my life till yesterday," said Tommy.

"I thought it could hardly be her. She really is rather too old for that sort of thing. But if it had been her, it would have been awkward, very awkward indeed. She'd have gone in person to the patriarch, and nothing you could have said would have straightened things out. However, if it isn't her, it doesn't really matter, so long as the other one doesn't telegraph or write."

"There isn't another one."

"You've just told me there is," said the king. "You said, 'another and a much worse one.'"

"I said another obstacle," said Tommy, "not another girl. As a matter of fact, there's no girl at all and never was. The obstacle I mean is far worse than any girl."

"Couldn't possibly be worse," said the king, "from the point of view of the patriarch."

"The obstacle is this," said Tommy. "I'm only a curate."

"I don't regard that as an obstacle at all," said the king. "Our patriarch doesn't believe in the celibacy of the clergy. He isn't married himself, but lots of our priests are, and the patriarch hasn't the slightest objection to it."

"That's not my point at all. As a matter of fact, I'm not a Roman Catholic curate and I'm perfectly free to marry if I like."

"That wouldn't have mattered, anyhow," said the king. "The patriarch would have absolved you from any vow you might have made. He's terrifically powerful in that sort of way and can give you absolution for practically anything. The trouble about him isn't that he can't give absolution; but that sometimes he won't."

"How can a curate marry a princess?" said Tommy. "That's my point. If she really is a princess——"

"She is," said the king. "From the point of view of any one who accepts legitimist theories, she's most certainly a royal princess. But I hope I needn't say that I don't attach any importance to the fact. We are living in a world that has been made safe for democracy and nobody cares a pin for those old-fashioned ideas. There's nothing to prevent any princess from marrying an English marquis."

"But I'm not an English marquis," said Tommy. "I keep on telling you that and you won't believe me."

"It isn't that I don't believe you," said the king. "It's simply that I find it very hard to remember. However, the main thing is not to let any old-fashioned ideas about disparity of rank trouble you. The whole matter has been arranged."

"I wish I knew who arranged that I am to marry a princess."

"Well," said the king. "There were several people in it. I was one."

"Why?" said Tommy. "Why did you make such an extraordinary arrangement?"

"There were a good many reasons," said the king. "I couldn't go back to Lystria myself. The League of Nations wouldn't let me. I'm not sure that I want to even if they would. I'm earning much more in the Mascotte than you'll ever get out of Lystria. But I'd be glad to see Calypso back on her ancestral throne. It'll be some sort of provision for her, poor girl, and she hates dancing in the Mascotte. You may think I ought to provide for her: but I can't. At least, I'd much rather not. I'm earning a good enough salary, but the cost of living is terrific. We middle-class professional men—that's the class I belong to now—are being squeezed out of existence everywhere in Europe. That's the reason I want to see Calypso

safely married and on a throne.”

“But why did you choose me?”

“I didn’t choose you. The fact is that the Lystrians knew very well that they couldn’t get a king at all unless he was an Englishman. The Entente powers would have turned down any one else. And the Lystrians wanted a king, all of them. There’s the patriarch, for instance. He hates playing second fiddle to a Megalian man who’s merely an archimandrite, but has taken to wearing a gold chain round his neck much thicker than our patriarch’s. Of course, as soon as Lystria gets back into the position of an independent kingdom, our patriarch will be top dog of the two. Then there are the Casimirs. There are eight or ten Casimirs, all counts, and there’s the rest of the aristocracy. They’re nobodies in a large republic like Megalia, but they’re very important people in Lystria. Besides, they like having a court to hang about. You can’t imagine how those fellows love dressing up in uniforms, putting on swords and attending State balls. And the way they eat! I assure you that a bullock roasted whole and a couple of pigs go no distance at a supper table in Lystria. It used to be a frightful expense to me. I needn’t tell you the Megalian President doesn’t do that kind of thing. He can’t, poor fellow. His salary won’t run to it. That’s another example of the straitened circumstances of the middle classes.”

“I still don’t see why the Lystrians chose me,” said Tommy, “if they did.”

“Strictly speaking,” said the king, “they didn’t choose you. Lord Edmund Troyte did that, he and Procopius Cable between them. There had to be a revolution, of course, and our aristocracy couldn’t afford to pay for it. Nor could the patriarch. Revolutions are appallingly expensive things, far more expensive than you’d think. Cable had the money and I’m bound to say he spent it generously. He flooded Lystria with English money to such an extent that the Megalian rate of exchange went up, which of course enraged the Megalians, who had been making a very good thing out of the *valuta* by paying off their debts in depreciated currency. The Lystrians are becoming actually rich. But neither Cable nor the patriarch nor any of the rest of us could have managed without Lord Edmund Troyte. Without his help we couldn’t have got any one to recognize the new king, and then of course we couldn’t have had a monarchy.”

“I suppose not,” said Tommy. “But even yet I don’t quite see——”

“That gave Lord Edmund Troyte a sort of right to nominate the king, and—— But really they ought to have explained all this to you before you left London.”

“Nobody explained anything to me,” said Tommy.

“Well, I’ve explained it all now,” said the king. “Lord Edmund Troyte nominated you.”

“I’m perfectly certain he didn’t. If he nominated any one, it must have been Lord Norheys, and I keep on telling you that I’m not Lord Norheys.”

“And I keep on forgetting,” said the king. “But that doesn’t really matter when we’re alone, does it?”

Tommy sat silent for a while. The king had at last made the position clear to him. He saw exactly what Casimir’s original mistake had been. He realized that for some reason—very likely because of Miss Temple—the real Marquis of Norheys had not arrived in Berlin. But even if he had arrived, he could not have married the princess. Miss Temple’s letter had settled that point. Calypso was perfectly determined, and behind her was the terrifying figure of the puritan patriarch.

Why should he not step into Lord Norheys’ empty position? Casimir was apparently quite ready to accept any one as king who would seat the princess on the throne beside him. The patriarch had no objection to a curate, so long as he was a respectable curate. And Tommy was perfectly respectable. The head waiter ex-king was delighted to accept him as a son-in-law. So long as he was perfectly straightforward and made his position plain to every one, Tommy did not see that he could be blamed afterward if he accepted a bride and a throne which were almost forced upon him. And, besides—in judging him we must always remember this—he had fallen in love with Calypso.

“The only person who doesn’t seem to have been consulted,” said Tommy, “is the princess herself.”

“Calypso won’t raise any objections,” said the king, “once the Miss Temple difficulty is removed. She’s a good girl, always was. Takes after her mother. You didn’t know the late queen, did you?”

“No.”

“A thoroughly good woman,” said the king. “In fact, the only objection to her was that she was too good, certainly much too good for me. She brought up Calypso with very strict ideas, she and the patriarch between them.”

“But I’ve no reason to suppose she’ll marry me,” said Tommy.

“Oh, she will,” said the king. “The only down she ever had on you was that little muddle-up with Miss Temple. Until she heard of that she hadn’t any objection to you at all.”

“But that isn’t an objection to me,” said Tommy. “It’s an objection to Lord Norheys.”

“Exactly,” said the king. “That’s what I’m saying. And now that you’ve cleared up the Miss Temple scandal, there’s nothing at all against you that I can see. And I must say that you’ve cleared it up thoroughly and completely. There’s not the smallest vestige of a stain left on your character. I couldn’t have believed beforehand that you could have cleared it up so well. I don’t see how either Calypso or the patriarch can have a word left to say about it.”

“All the same,” said Tommy, “I’d like to ask her myself.”

“So you shall,” said the king. “And you needn’t be a bit nervous. Once you’ve convinced her that you never had anything to do with Miss Temple, she’ll be perfectly ready to marry you.”

“But I should like to ask her before we get to Lystria. I suppose we’re on our way there now.”

“You are,” said the king. “I’m not. I’m going to see you into your hotel at Breslau and then take the night mail back to Berlin. You will be there for two days at least. Casimir is doing his best, but he can’t have arrangements at the Schloss made any sooner. You can spend the whole time asking Calypso to marry you if necessary. But I don’t expect you’ll require more than half an hour.”

“Of course, I must see her privately,” said Tommy.

“Ah,” said the king. “I see your difficulty. That aunt of yours.”

“She’s not my aunt.”

“I meant to say that aunt of Lord Norheys?” said the king. “She looks as if she’d be a little difficult to get rid of. But I’ll manage that for you. I’ll manage it at once. I’ll take Miss Church off to lunch with me in the restaurant car and I’ll fix things up so that you and Calypso will have to lunch later. That will give you a clear hour all to yourselves. You ought to be able to explain away Miss Temple in far less than an hour.”

Tommy hoped and believed that he would be able to explain to the princess that he was not Lord Norheys, if he got a chance of talking to her. But he remembered the note she had flung at him in the Mascotte. It seemed to him quite likely that she would not allow him to talk to her at all.

“But even if you take Miss Church away,” said Tommy, “will the princess talk to me?”

“Of course she will,” said the king. “She’ll love to. She takes after her mother, and the late queen was almost passionately fond of talking to me, especially about Miss Temple—I mean of course whoever the Miss Temple happened to be at the moment. The number of times she talked to me on that subject would amaze you. And Calypso is exactly like her in many ways. I assure you, my dear boy, whatever else you may have to complain of in married life, you’ll never have it to say that your wife won’t talk to you. And the same thing is true of the patriarch.”

CHAPTER XV

The Princess Calypso, it appeared, was not so fond as her mother had been of talks on uncomfortable and embarrassing subjects.

The king took Janet Church away to the restaurant car. By an exercise of skill and tact of which only a man trained as a king would have been capable, he left Calypso and Tommy behind. They had a carriage to themselves. They were safe from interruption for an hour. Tommy ought to have been able to explain his position to her. He failed, because Calypso refused to listen to him.

She turned her back on him and stared out of the window. This was discouraging, but Tommy was not going to be defeated by her manner. He took the corner seat opposite her. Calypso immediately got up and crossed to the other end of the compartment. Tommy did not venture to follow her the whole way. He sat down in the middle of the seat opposite to her.

"I hope," he said, "that you will allow me to explain myself, to tell you who I am and what I'm doing here. This letter which you wrote to me——"

He took from his breast pocket the note which Calypso had thrown to him in the Mascotte. She was staring steadily into the corridor outside, and she did not turn her head; but she knew perfectly well what Tommy was talking about.

"I don't want to listen to any explanation," she said, "and I've nothing to say to you except what I said in that letter. Go back to Miss Temple."

"But you must allow me to explain," said Tommy.

Calypso had no answer to give him except a muttered repetition of the words, "Go back to Miss Temple."

"I must say this," said Tommy. "I'm not the man you think I am."

"You're a very heartless and cruel man," said Calypso. "If you weren't heartless and cruel, you wouldn't be breaking Miss Temple's heart. Why won't you go back to her?"

"I can't go back to her, because I've never spoken to her and I don't know who she is."

"How can you say a thing like that when you're deserting her?"

Tommy, in his eagerness to be listened to, had edged his way across the carriage until he sat exactly opposite to Calypso. She crossed the carriage again to get away from him and once more Tommy followed her half-way.

"I don't want to worry you," he said, "but I think you really ought to listen to me."

"You are worrying me. You're doing worse, you're persecuting me."

"The last thing in the world I want to do is to annoy you in any way. But for your own sake as well as mine, and for Lord Norheys' sake, and for Miss Temple's sake you ought to listen to me."

"I won't," said Calypso, "and if you're a gentleman you'll go away."

"I'll go away if you like, after you've heard what I've got to say."

"I thought all Englishmen were gentlemen," said Calypso.

"Not quite all. I've met one or two who weren't. And I'm Irish, not English."

"If you won't go away, I must," said Calypso.

She stood up as she spoke, intending to go out into the corridor. But to do that she would have been forced to pass quite close to Tommy. He was leaning forward in his eagerness to make her listen, so she might have had to touch him as she passed. She hesitated.

"If you like," said Tommy, "I'll telegraph to Miss Temple and ask her to say that she doesn't know me and doesn't want to have anything to do with me."

"How can she say that, when she wrote to me that she loved you with all her heart?"

She began to push past Tommy. But he proved that he had a gentleman's consideration for her feelings. Rather than allow

her to go out into a draughty and uncomfortable corridor, he got up and went there himself. He stayed there smoking unhappily until the king and Janet Church came back from the restaurant car. Then Tommy went off and had his own luncheon. Calypso contented herself with a few biscuits and an apple which Janet Church produced from one of her bags. Wherever Janet travels she always carries biscuits and apples with her.

The king made himself very agreeable to Janet in the restaurant car, and no monarch in Europe has better manners than he has. Perhaps he had never before exerted himself to be agreeable to a lady of Janet's age and appearance. The result was excellent. Janet was pleased and flattered.

"I am so very glad," he said, "that you are accompanying my daughter to Lystria. I feel that I can rely on you, on your kindness, your discretion, your wisdom. When all is said and done, a young girl can not have a better companion than an English lady. My dear wife was English."

"I'm Scotch," said Janet.

"My dear wife," said the king, "was half Scotch, and if there's anything in the world to be preferred to an English lady as a companion to a young and impressionable girl, it is a Scotch lady."

A waiter flung three dishes of varied *hors d'œuvres* on the table. The king helped Janet tenderly to a sardine, an oily slice of tomato and a small salted eel. Then he ordered a bottle of Burgundy.

"At a time like this——" he said. "After all, marriage is a great occasion in a girl's life. The help and advice of a wise lady a little older than herself—you won't mind my saying a little older, will you?"

"I'm fifty-two," said Janet, "and not in the least ashamed of it."

"I knew you wouldn't be ashamed of it. I could see that at once. Your firm mouth, your clear, far-seeing eyes. Your calm strong outlook upon life, your profound idealism——"

Janet is far less sensible than she looks. She bridled with pleasure at the king's compliments. He filled her glass with Burgundy, and Janet so far forgot herself and her principles as to sip it without saying that all continental water is poison.

"A young girl," said the king, "is apt to take exaggerated views of things which you and I regard as—what shall I say?—not right, certainly not right. But inevitable."

The waiter whisked away Janet's plate, gave her another and dumped an enormous spoonful of omelette on it. She sipped her Burgundy again. The king's manner was caressing. The wine was strong. The omelette was excellent. But it takes more than wine, food and caresses to dull Janet's conscience.

"If you're alluding to that unfortunate young man's entanglement with a London actress——" she said.

"Young men," said the king, "will be young men."

"They ought not to be," said Janet firmly.

"However," said the king cheerfully. "I'm not really nervous about Calypso. She'll get over it after a while. Her poor dear mother always got over it after a while."

"Got over what?"

"Come now," said the king, "you can hardly expect me to answer that. Of course you said you were forty-two, but——"

"Fifty-two," said Janet.

"Even so," said the king, "you can scarcely expect me to answer that question in detail. Even at the age of forty-five, if you really are forty-five——"

"Fifty-two."

"At any age," said the king, "such confessions are embarrassing, embarrassing for both of us. Besides, it isn't only with

Calypso that I want you to use your influence. There's the patriarch. Do you know our patriarch?"

"I hope to. I'm going to Lystria in order to enlist his sympathies in our great movement."

"And I'm sure you'll succeed," said the king. "Our patriarch is full of sympathy with all good causes, and I'm certain that your movement is one of the best."

Janet helped herself to some of the veal which a waiter was pushing at her in a large dish. The king refilled her glass. She had sipped away almost half of what was in it.

"It's the establishment of World Peace," she said, "through the mediation of the United Christian Churches."

"In that case," said the king, "you can count with certainly on our patriarch. There's nothing, absolutely nothing, he likes better than the establishment of World Peace except perhaps the Unity of Christian Churches, though perhaps he's a little inclined to take the view that the other churches should unite with his and not his with them. I mean to say, he thinks that if there's to be a compromise, it must be on the basis of every one else giving way. But all ecclesiastics are like that. Our patriarch isn't peculiar."

"When we speak of the Union of Churches," said Janet, "we mean a concordat based on the essentials of the Christian Creed."

"Of course," said the king, "and you'll find our patriarch absolutely agrees with you about that so long as you don't ask him to shake hands with the Megalian Archimandrite. He might draw the line there, though, as I said, he's always on for anything really good. A good cause simply fascinates him. If he has a weakness—as we all have—it is that he's not so fond as he might be of the things which aren't quite so good as the Causes. Take young men now. As you very rightly said a few minutes ago, young men are young men."

"I said they ought not to be."

"But they are," said the king, "and that's what the patriarch can not be got to see, but I am sure I can rely on you to put the thing before him in the proper light. After all, Miss Temple is a long way off. It isn't as if she was in the least likely to turn up in Lystria."

"I fear that I can scarcely undertake——"

Janet was softened, perhaps for the first time in her life. If it had not been for the wine, the good food, and the king's charming manners, she would no doubt have replied to him much more blankly than she did. She might even have spoken fiercely.

"I fear," she said, "I can not undertake to persuade the patriarch that Miss Temple doesn't exist."

"Well, perhaps not," said the king. "After all, the patriarch is a very difficult man to persuade. I never could do it. I dare say it will really be better if he doesn't hear about Miss Temple at all. And he never will if Calypso doesn't tell him."

"I shall not consider it my duty to tell him," said Janet. "My business with him——"

"Is world unity through peaceful Christian Churches."

"World Peace," said Janet, "through the Unity of Christian Churches."

"Quite so," said the king, "and even if it had been World Churches through the Unity of Christian Peace, it would still be far more important than our little affairs. Still, if you could persuade Calypso not to tell the patriarch——"

If Casimir had been there he might have said that the king, like poor old Lear's worst daughter, gave "sweet œillades and most speaking glances" to Janet. I doubt very much whether any one had ever made eyes at her before. The treatment had a certain effect.

"I shall not," said Janet, "advise that the patriarch be told."

I dare say Janet's conscience was gnawing her a little. She had drunk a glass and a half of Burgundy and the king was putting a liqueur glass full of cognac beside her coffee. That was enough to make her uneasy. She had promised to

conceal, or help in concealing a scandal. I suppose she had never before in her whole life agreed to do such a thing, and no doubt the thought of it was unpleasant. By way of compounding with her conscience and so quieting it, she made up her mind to say something really nasty about Tommy.

“Are you aware,” she said, “that the young man about whom we have been speaking is not what he pretends to be?”

“He pretends to be a curate?” said the king.

“Exactly, and I’m perfectly certain he’s nothing of the sort.”

“I thought not,” said the king. “I thought not. I’m glad you’ve confirmed my suspicion.”

“I’ve known many curates,” said Janet, “perhaps hundreds of them, and I’ve never known one yet who behaved as this one does. He drinks cocktails in the morning and goes to the Mascotte in the evenings.”

“The patriarch wouldn’t dream of doing such things,” said the king.

“Which makes me certain that he’s not a curate or indeed a clergyman at all.”

“That,” said the king, “is more the sort of way a young man like Lord Norheys might behave.”

“Very possibly. I don’t know Lord Norheys.”

“At the same time,” said the king, “it is not our business to expose the unfortunate young man. Deplorable as his conduct is, I don’t see that we need warn the patriarch against him.”

“For the sake of the reputation of the Church of England,” said Janet, “I feel that I ought to make it clear that he is not one of our clergy.”

“If he does anything scandalous while he is in Lystria,” said the king, “kisses a housemaid, or anything like that, of course you’ll have to tell the patriarch and Calypso too, that he isn’t a clergyman. You’d be bound to do that for the sake of the Church of England. But if he behaves with ordinary decorum—— After all, he may have good reasons for pretending to be a clergyman. I’m pretending to be a head waiter in order to earn my living. There’s nothing really wicked about that. I don’t see that either you or I are bound to tell the patriarch that he’s not a curate.”

“So long as you know the facts I don’t see that it’s anybody else’s business.”

“And I do know them, thoroughly.”

“I felt bound to tell you,” said Janet, “but I don’t see that I need tell any one else.”

“Thanks,” said the king.

PART III. LYSTRIA

CHAPTER XVI

It took Casimir two days to complete his arrangements for the reception of the princess at the Schloss. The little party,—Tommy, the princess and Janet Church—stayed in the best hotel in Breslau. The king took rooms for them before he went back to Berlin, a bedroom for Tommy, two bedrooms and a sitting-room for the ladies. The head waiter of the Mascotte is an important person in hotel-keeping and restaurant circles in Germany. Tommy's party was treated with the greatest courtesy and consideration.

But the two days in Breslau were not very pleasant for Tommy. He saw but little of the princess, and he never saw her alone. They met at meals; but Janet Church was always there. Afterward the princess and Janet either retired to their own sitting-room, or took a walk without asking Tommy to go with them. He got no chance of explaining himself to the princess or trying to convince her that he knew nothing of Miss Temple. This worried him. On the other hand, the princess' manner became gradually more and more agreeable. The extreme hostility with which she had greeted him in the Mascotte and afterward in the train gave way to ordinary politeness and at last to friendliness.

Janet, of course, was with the princess all day and talked to her incessantly, almost always about World Peace and the Unity of Christian Churches. This would have inclined any girl to feel kindly toward a young man, even if he were the callous breaker of another girl's heart. And Calypso came to be doubtful whether Tommy had really broken Miss Temple's heart. Janet, when her mind could be diverted from the Union of Churches, dropped hints about Tommy which set Calypso wondering. She said, for instance, that Tommy was not the man he professed to be. So far as Calypso knew, Tommy professed to be Lord Norheys, and the thought that he might be somebody else gave her a queer little thrill of pleasure. If he were not Lord Norheys, then he was not bound in honor to marry Miss Temple.

She began to look at Tommy with interest, at first as a man whom it might be her duty to marry, later on as a man whom she might be content to marry even if it were not her duty. Her view of Miss Temple changed in an odd way. It occurred to her as possible that this London dancer might be one of those wicked women who lure young men into entanglements and then hold them to their half-made promises. She came by degrees to think of Miss Temple as a nuisance, some one who had no right to be there at all, certainly no right to interfere with Lord Norheys' life.

Tommy could not fail to observe the change in Calypso's manner, and the thought that her feelings toward him were becoming more friendly filled him with a determination to go through with his adventure whatever happened.

There were difficulties. One, trifling in itself, but singularly embarrassing, met him almost at once.

On the evening of his arrival, while he was smoking a pipe before going to bed, Tommy was greeted by a cheerful, intelligent-looking young Englishman.

"Excuse me, sir, but aren't you Colonel Heard?"

Tommy was not Colonel Heard any more than he was Lord Norheys; but he knew that he had Colonel Heard's passport in his pocket and his party were entered in the hotel register as Colonel and Mrs. Heard and Miss Gisborne. The king had done that for them before he went back to Berlin.

"My name," said the stranger, "is Allen. I don't think we've ever met."

"Never," said Tommy firmly, thankful that Allen was not one of Colonel Heard's oldest friends.

"But when I saw your name in the hotel register," said Allen, "I thought I'd introduce myself. I'm doing Reparations, you

know.”

He gave that piece of information as if it formed some excuse for having seen Colonel Heard's name in the register book. Perhaps it was an excuse. Any one concerned with Reparations is bound to be filled with curiosity and ought to investigate everything he comes across. How else is he to know whether the conquered nations can or can not pay the fines imposed on them?

“I hope,” Allen went on, “that you'll introduce me to Mrs. Heard. I'd like to tell my sister that I've met her.”

Tommy could not do anything else but promise to introduce Allan to Mrs. Heard next morning. But he could not help wondering which of his two ladies were the better suited for the part. Janet Church was almost the age that colonels' wives generally are. But Tommy knew that he himself looked absurdly young. There can not be many instances of colonels of twenty-six years old married to ladies fifty-two, and Janet looked every day of her age. On the other hand, one of his two ladies had to pose as the Secretary of the Graves Registration Commission. Calypso did not look like a secretary and it would be difficult to convince any one that she was chiefly occupied with graves. Janet, with her face and figure, looked exactly like a lady who spent her time in typing letters about tombstones. Tommy made up his mind that Calypso must be Mrs. Heard.

“I want to thank Mrs. Heard,” said Allen, “for all her kindness to my sister in 1915. She was like a mother to the girls in that canteen, and she kept a tight hand over them too. Quite right. They needed it.”

The date gave Tommy a shock. In 1915 Calypso was at the utmost fourteen years of age and could not possibly have kept a tight hand over any one, except perhaps the inhabitants of a dolls' house. Tommy altered his plan. Janet would have to be Mrs. Heard. But he was by no means certain of how Janet would like that. She had already accepted the position of his aunt, and it is distinctly laid down in the Prayer Book that an aunt may not marry her nephew. Janet, with her strong ecclesiastical instincts, might very well object to committing herself to a breach of the marriage laws of the Church.

In the end Tommy got out of his difficulty in a way which struck him as neat. He led Allen across the dining-room at luncheon next day and brought him to the table where the princess and Janet sat.

“Allow me to introduce Mr. Allen to you,” he said. Then, turning to Allen, he murmured: “My wife, and my secretary, Miss Gisborne.”

That left Allen to decide for himself which was the wife and which the secretary. He was puzzled. He looked at Janet and then at Tommy. He looked at Calypso, and thought of his sister and the other unruly maidens in the canteen. At last he decided in favor of Janet.

“I want to thank you,” he said to her, “for all your kindness to my sister.”

Janet took that very well. She had been kind, after her own fashion, to so many different people that she could not possibly recollect them all. She inquired graciously for Miss Allen, and received an account of her marriage to a young officer she had met at the canteen.

The introduction passed off surprisingly well; but Tommy was by no means done with Allen. That evening they met again.

“Ever see any of the fellows from the old regiment nowadays?” said Allen.

Tommy would have been glad to know what the old regiment was. He wished very much that he had thought of asking Casimir and the king for a little more information before he undertook to be Colonel Heard.

“I ran into Simpson the other day,” said Allen. “You remember Soapy Simpson and the old French-woman in the rest billets behind Givenchy.”

“Rather,” said Tommy heartily, “that's how he got the name Soapy, wasn't it?”

Allen seemed a little puzzled at this.

“Was it?” he said. “But there wasn't any soap in that business, was there?”

“It may have been cheese,” said Tommy. “One gets confused about these things.”

“Oh,” said Allen, “you’re thinking of Collins. They always said it was on account of that cheese that you recommended Collins for the D.S.O.”

“That,” said Tommy, “is a gross slander. As a matter of fact, Collins’ recommendation for the D.S.O. went in before any one heard a word about the cheese.”

He felt that he owed that much to Colonel Heard’s reputation. Whatever Collins had done about the cheese, whether he had eaten it, refrained from eating it, stolen it, or baited a mouse-trap with it, no conscientious colonel would have recommended him for a D.S.O. on that account alone.

“Oddly enough,” said Allen, “I heard from Collins the other day. I suppose you know he married that little red-haired V.A.D. who used to be at Wimereux.”

“I always expected he would,” said Tommy, “though in my opinion she was a great deal too good for him. I can’t imagine what any girl could see in Soapy Simpson.”

“It was Collins who married her, not Simpson. Did I say Simpson?”

“Oh, Collins,” said Tommy. “That’s different of course. What’s Collins doing now?”

“He and she are running a chicken farm in Monte Carlo,” said Allen, “making quite a good thing out of it, I believe.”

After that Tommy escaped and went to bed. But Allen came at him again the next evening. He had a passion for reminiscence, and seemed to have known every single officer in “the old regiment” except Colonel Heard himself. Young Bright had come to grief over a dud check which he cashed in a night club in London. Tommy expressed great regret for his fate. Poor Styles was still limping about and would never get back the use of his leg. Tommy regretted that too. After a while Allen got back to the subject of his sister, and Mrs. Heard and the canteen.

“She’ll be surprised when I tell her I’ve met Mrs. Heard out here,” said Allen. “That last letter I had from her she said she’d been invited to meet Mrs. Heard at a tea-party somewhere in Kensington. Unfortunately she couldn’t go.”

“That must have been a long while ago,” said Tommy.

“Not so long,” said Allen. “I only got the letter last week.”

“If your sister had gone to that tea-party,” said Tommy, “she wouldn’t have met my wife. She’s been out here for the last six months.”

That, he felt, ought to put a stop to any chance meeting in London between Mrs. Heard and Miss Allen, whose name of course was not Allen any longer, for she had married an officer whom she met in the canteen—a thing which showed that Mrs. Heard had not kept a tight enough hand over her.

Tommy went to bed very well satisfied with himself. It had proved surprisingly easy to play the part of Colonel Heard. It would, no doubt, have been equally easy to play that of Lord Norheys. He began to feel sorry that he had not done so instead of claiming his own name and position. Then he remembered Miss Temple and felt glad that he had refused to be Lord Norheys. Miss Temple would, apparently, have been a hopeless obstacle to his marriage with Calypso. He wondered a little whether the existence of a Mrs. Heard would be another obstacle. If Calypso objected to a man who was engaged to be married, she might very well object even more strongly to a man who had been married for at least seven years.

CHAPTER XVII

The princess, Janet Church and Tommy sat at lunch on the third day after their arrival in Breslau. Thanks to the king’s influence with the manager of the hotel, they had a very pleasant table, placed in a bow window from which they had a

view of the town's market-place.

A large motor-car drove slowly across the square and pulled up at the door of the hotel. The driver was remarkable. He wore a high cap of black fur with two long black ribbons hanging from the back of it, a brown overcoat, double-breasted and adorned with great silver buttons. The collar and cuffs of the coat were of curly black fur. Even while he sat at the steering-wheel it could be seen that he was a very big man, probably tall, certainly broad and strongly built. A thick black mustache covered his mouth. He had heavy eyebrows which met across his forehead. His face was almost mahogany-colored.

Tommy stared at him with interest and pointed him out to the princess. The moment she saw him she jumped to her feet and clapped her hands in excitement and delight.

"It's Sandor," she said, "Sandor from the Schloss. He has come to take me home."

Tommy realized that they were entering on a new stage of their adventure, that the journey into Lystria was to begin.

They hurried over luncheon. They spent half an hour in frenzied packing. Hotel porters dragged down bags and rugs. The little party gathered in the porch of the hotel. But the start was delayed.

An official in uniform, perhaps a policeman, perhaps a military officer, appeared from the room of the hotel manager, and walked up to Tommy. He halted, saluted and in a long speech asked to be allowed to see the passports of the party. Tommy did not understand anything the man said except the word passport. That made him uneasy. Breslau is not a frontier town. The examination of traveler's passports there is unusual, and in most cases unnecessary. Tommy turned to Janet.

"Is it our passports he wants?"

Janet, who knew she was traveling with a stolen passport, became nervous. She spoke to the officer bad-temperedly, asking him what right he had to inspect their passports. It was the worst thing she could have done. Her nervous irritation aroused the man's suspicions. Her question did not frighten him at all. His uniform gave him a right to do almost anything he chose.

"Come on," said Calypso. "We can't stand here all day."

She seized Janet Church by the arm and pulled her into the car. The officer hesitated and stepped forward to stop them. He was a shade too late, but he stood between Tommy and the car, clearly determined that he at least should not get into it.

Tommy's mind worked quickly. One of two things had happened. Perhaps Colonel Heard had discovered the loss of his passports and set the German police looking for them. In that case Tommy saw no hope at all for himself and his party. Colonel Heard's passports would be recognized at once. But perhaps it was Prince von Steinveldt who had set the police in motion. He might have changed his mind about leaving Tommy free to go where he liked. He might not care to run the risk of allowing the princess to enter Lystria. But he would not know what passports the party held. It might be possible to persuade this troublesome officer that he was Colonel Heard and that the two ladies were his wife and secretary.

He took the passports out of his pocket and handed them over. The officer scrutinized them carefully. He appeared to read through all the visas and to examine all the official stamps. At last he fixed his eyes on the photograph. As a rule, passport photographs are totally useless for the purposes of identification and might just as well represent any one else. But Colonel Heard had a heavy mustache. Tommy was clean-shaved. The officer looked at the photograph, looked at Tommy, looked at the photograph and became suspicious.

Mrs. Heard was a plump, good-natured lady of about forty-five, with round cheeks, a double chin and fuzzy hair. The officer looked at her photo and compared it with Janet's lean face and sinewy neck. Then he tried to see if it in any way resembled Calypso. It did not.

"These are not your passports," he said.

Tommy was actually uncomfortable; but he was not yet desperate. The officer was not searching for Colonel Heard's

passports. He was merely looking out for suspicious travelers. It was possible that a bold attempt at bluff might cow the man.

“Here,” he said, “I’ve had about enough of this tomfoolery. Hand over those passports at once and let us get away out of this.”

The man did not understand a word that was said to him, but he was impressed by the confidence with which Tommy spoke. He might possibly have given back the passports, if the princess had not tried a plan of her own for getting away. She leaned forward and whispered to the driver of her car.

The man stepped out of the car and stood, a huge and threatening figure, in front of the officer. He deliberately unbuttoned his long overcoat, flung it open and displayed a whole row of weapons tucked into his belt. There were two large pistols, silver mounted, with very long barrels. They looked as if they might be of some value as antiques. There was also a heavy modern revolver which was certainly valuable as a weapon of offense. There were five large knives, two of them straight and pointed like daggers, the other three curved in a manner that struck Tommy as horribly murderous. These were evidently the man’s favorite weapons. His fingers closed round the handle of one of them.

But the police officer was a man of courage. He had, besides, help at hand. From various parts of the market square uniformed men appeared, all of them with swords, some of them with revolvers. They gathered round the group in front of the hotel.

The swarthy driver was not at all dismayed. His heavy eyebrows were slightly raised. The eyes under them shone with a joyful anticipation of battle. He gripped his revolver with his left hand. His right hand held the curved knife.

Tommy was frightened. A fight in the streets of Breslau might end in a victory for the German police, or it might end—that seemed almost probable—in a victory for the militant chauffeur. Either way Tommy and his party would get into serious trouble.

“Look here,” he said to the officer, “if you don’t believe we’re the people we say we are, send in to the hotel and ask for Mr. Allen. He’ll identify us.”

The officer, who did not understand a word Tommy said, stared at him angrily.

“Oh, hang it,” said Tommy. “Why, can’t the fool understand plain English? Say it to him,” he turned to Janet, “in German or some language he does understand. And at the same time tell this swashbuckler to stop fiddling with his revolver and get back into the car.”

Janet, who was quite as frightened as Tommy was, began with the orders to the chauffeur. She gave them in German, and the man took no notice of them at all. He understood German no better than the officer understood English.

“You tell him,” said Tommy to the princess.

Calypso spoke to the man in a language which sounded as if several hungry ducks were quacking, all at the same time. The man replied with a number of deep bass quacks, which sounded threatening. Calypso quacked back at him. The man bowed low to her, kissed her hand, and stepped back into the car.

Then Janet talked to the police officer in German. He was evidently relieved by the withdrawal of the threatening chauffeur and was quite ready to send for Allen.

There was an awkward silence for five minutes. Then Allen appeared and took command of things at once. He began by taking the passports out of the officer’s hands and giving them back to Tommy. Then he made a speech. It began mildly. It increased in speed as it went on. It became domineering and even threatening toward the end. The police officer was visibly uneasy while Allen spoke. Before the speech finished he was completely cowed. Allen had vouched for Tommy’s identity with Colonel Heard and had spoken with an assurance which carried conviction.

“I told him,” he explained to Tommy, “who you were, and that you were here to search for the graves of British soldiers. I said to him that if he interfered with you in any way I’d see to it that Germany’s bill for Reparations was doubled and that he wouldn’t be particularly popular with his own people when that happened and it came out that it was his fault. I said that the way he was behaving looked uncommonly as if he had something in this neighborhood to conceal and that if

you found a single British soldier in an unsuitable grave, I'd put a fine of a million and a half marks on the city. I couldn't have done it, of course, any more than I could have doubled the Reparations, but he didn't know that."

Tommy felt deeply thankful that Mrs. Heard had been kind to Allen's sister in her canteen in 1915. He was glad that he had not shrunk from discussing Soapy Simpson, and Collins, who married the red-haired V.A.D., and the other members of "the old regiment." Allen could not have spoken as he did unless he had felt that Colonel Heard was a familiar friend of his.

"I say," said Allen cheerfully, "what a funny-looking bird your chauffeur is. Where did you get him?"

"Oh, just picked him up," said Tommy. "I fancy he's a Pole or a Russian."

"Looks to me like a brigand," said Allen. "The sort of fellow I shouldn't care to be left alone with on a dark night if I had any money in my pocket. Well, good-bye, and good luck."

Tommy shook hands with him gratefully and stepped forward toward the car.

Then an odd thing happened. The tall chauffeur left his place, opened the door of the tonneau of the car, took Janet Church by the wrist, and, quite gently, pulled her out. For the moment Janet was too much astonished to protest or resist. The man, bowing low, motioned Tommy to enter the car and take the seat beside the princess.

"I thought he was an odd-looking bird," said Allen, "and he is. Fancy his dragging Mrs. Heard about like that."

Janet, furious at being treated with a total want of respect, forgot that the man knew no German. She told him angrily that she was a representative of the League for establishing World Peace through the Unity of Christian Churches, and that she would sit where she chose in the car. The only effect of this speech was to astonish Allen, who understood it, and to make Tommy uncomfortable because he did not.

Fortunately Calypso kept her presence of mind and quacked out a series of orders to the chauffeur.

"It's all right," she said, "he's mistaken you for my maid. That's all."

Janet took her seat again sulkily. Tommy sat down beside the chauffeur. Allen, really bewildered, waved a feeble farewell. He found it difficult to believe that any chauffeur, even a Pole, could mistake his master's wife for the maid of a secretary typist.

Two days later he wrote a letter to Collins, at the Monte Carlo chicken farm, and told him that Heard was running a regular rig about Europe with a damned good-looking girl, who certainly wasn't Mrs. Heard but must be pretty well off because she traveled about in a big motor with her own maid. Colonel Heard, a most respectable man, spent months contradicting that story.

CHAPTER XVIII

The chauffeur, who was a Lystrian, looked like a brigand and no doubt was far from being completely civilized. But he was a good driver and competent mechanic. The car threaded its way through the traffic of the Breslau streets smoothly and evenly. When it reached the open country the speed increased to thirty-five miles an hour along a good road. Once, at about eleven a. m., something went wrong with the engine. The tall chauffeur understood what the trouble was and set it right in two minutes.

Shortly after five o'clock, the car turned off the broad main road on which it had been traveling. The chauffeur, who seemed to know exactly where he was, drove confidently along a number of by-roads which were often little better than muddy lanes. At about seven o'clock they entered a thickly-wooded district. The last glimmerings of daylight faded away among the trees. The car's head-lights were switched on and for a while they traveled along a moving patch of white light between two walls of impenetrable darkness. Soon after eight o'clock they reached a little village. At one end of the street stood an inn with brightly lighted windows. The party was received by a fat and obsequious innkeeper, who treated them as guests whom he had been expecting. Whether it was Count Casimir or the Lystrian chauffeur who

made the arrangements for the journey, the thing was well done. An excellent warm supper was ready. On the table were set jugs of hot *Tisch Wein* pleasantly spiced. Tommy, at least, probably the princess, slept soundly in marvelously soft feather beds. Perhaps Janet Church slept well too; but she ought to have lain awake tormented by her conscience. For the third time since she came to Germany she had been false to her temperance principles. But hot spiced *Tisch Wein* is a sleepy drink. It may have overpowered even Janet's conscience.

Next morning the party started early and drove along roads which were even worse than those of the evening before, roads with vile surfaces, sharp corners and sudden steep gradients. The chauffeur was forced to drive cautiously, but he kept up a good pace. After a while they emerged from the woodland and Tommy saw that they were among the foot-hills of a range of mountains.

Stunted trees grew on the hill slopes. Now and then there were glimpses of tall mountains in front. Streams gurgled and splashed over stony courses. Houses and cottages were few and far between. The cattle which grazed in the open spaces were small and lean. At rare intervals the car slowed down to allow a peasant to coax a frightened mule past it. This plainly was a country in which motor-cars were few.

Shortly after one o'clock the car stopped and the chauffeur got out. He said something to the princess and held open the door of the car.

"He wants us to get out and have lunch," said Calypso.

"Good," said Tommy. "I feel nearly starved. This sort of driving makes one furiously hungry and the Germans, though they have an excellent idea of dinner, simply don't understand breakfast at all."

"I always make a point," said Janet, "of carrying some malted milk lozenges in my pocket."

That is the sort of thing I should expect of Janet. I have never to my knowledge seen a malted milk lozenge. I have certainly never tasted one. But I have a feeling that, like temperance drinks and vegetarian diet, they are insipid and slightly sickening.

The chauffeur took the rugs and cushions from the car and spread them on the wiry grass which grew upon the rocks beside the road. He made a kind of throne for Calypso, much, I suppose, as the Israelitish captains did for Jehu with their garments. Then, when she sat down, he bowed before her three times, so low that his forehead touched the ground. After that he kissed the toes of each of her shoes. Calypso received the homage with dignity.

Tommy was invited to sit down on an inferior throne and was only given one bow. Janet was left to settle herself as best she could on a single rug laid flat on the ground. The chauffeur did not bow to her at all, and though her feet stuck out when she sat down, he made no attempt to kiss them.

The chauffeur brought luncheon baskets from the car. The meal was excellent. The wine, there were two bottles of a red wine new to Tommy, was very good. There were knives, silver forks beautifully polished, fine china plates and napkins. At last came coffee, hot from a large thermos flask. The chauffeur was evidently by no means such a savage as he looked. Tommy enjoyed his luncheon thoroughly, all the more because Calypso talked to him amiably and pleasantly while they were eating it. She was by that time exceedingly tired of Janet, who had been discussing the plans of the society for establishing World Peace ever since they left Breslau. Tommy might be—she only half believed he was—an unscrupulous betrayer of innocent maidens like Miss Temple and herself. But even a Lothario is a pleasant change after hours of Janet Church.

After luncheon the chauffeur made a long speech to the princess. He spoke earnestly and pointed forward along the road with outstretched hand.

"He tells me," said Calypso, "that we are quite near the German frontier post. We'll reach it in another twenty minutes and of course there'll be an examination of our passports."

"I hope it'll be all right," said Tommy. "We passed the man at Breslau, thanks to Allen. I dare say these people won't stop us."

"A few yards beyond the German post," said the princess, "we'll come to the Megalian frontier guards. They'll want our passports too."

“Well,” said Tommy, “the passports are all right in themselves, properly fixed up with diplomatic visas and all that. No one ought to object to them.”

“Let me look at them,” said Janet.

Tommy took them from his pocket and Janet examined them carefully.

“We don’t any of us look much like the photos,” she said. “You,” she looked at Tommy, “ought to have a mustache.”

“A man might shave off his mustache,” said Tommy. “Lots of fellows do, quite suddenly, without telling the Foreign Office or asking for new passports.”

“And Miss——looks a great many years younger than I am,” said Janet.

“Let me look,” said Calypso. She studied the photographs of the two ladies. “It seems to me,” she said at last, “that I’d better be Miss Gisborne.”

“But then,” said Janet, “I should have to be Mrs. Heard. That is to say,” she looked fiercely at Tommy as she spoke, “your wife.”

“Only quite temporarily,” said Tommy.

“Well, I won’t,” said Janet.

“One of you has got to be,” said Tommy, “and we’d better decide which before we get there, in case we’re asked, and very likely we shall be asked.”

“I can’t possibly say I’m his wife,” said Calypso to Janet.

“Why not?” said Janet. “He’s going to marry you, Isn’t he?”

“He’s going to marry Miss Temple,” said Calypso.

“No, I’m not,” said Tommy. “If you’d only allow me to explain——”

But Calypso, having recollected Miss Temple’s pathetic appeal to her, was not going to listen to anything Tommy had to say.

“*You* must,” she said to Janet.

“No, I won’t,” said Janet.

“One of you will have to,” said Tommy, “or else we’ll certainly be stopped and probably be arrested.”

“I won’t,” said Janet doggedly.

“I promise faithfully,” said Tommy, “that I won’t take any advantage of the position.”

Calypso, I am sorry to say, giggled. It was a vulgar thing to do and she checked herself immediately. Janet became very angry. Tommy got red and stumbled on.

“I mean, that I won’t hold your hand or—or—kiss you, or anything like that.”

The princess went beyond giggling. She laughed aloud.

“You appear to forget,” said Janet, “that I’m a Scotchwoman.”

“I don’t see how that can make any difference,” said Tommy.

“According to Scotch law,” said Janet, “if I say that you’re my husband, and you say that I am your wife in the presence of witnesses, then we are married.”

“Is that really the law?” said Calypso. “How dreadful it must be for actors and actresses on the stage with lots and lots

of witnesses listening.”

“It’s Scotch law,” said Janet.

“But we’re not in Scotland,” said Tommy.

“Wherever a Scot happens to be,” said Janet, “is Scotland.”

“The law can’t really be exactly like that,” said the princess. “It would be too inconvenient.”

“That is the law,” said Janet. “If I say that I’m married to him, I shall be, and there’ll be no getting out of it. That would be intolerable.”

“It wouldn’t be particularly pleasant for me either,” said Tommy.

He ought not to have said that; but he was getting angry with Janet. A woman has a perfect right to refuse to marry any man who asks her; but she ought not to tell him to his face that he is intolerable. No man can be expected to submit tamely to that, particularly when he has not really offered himself as a husband.

“Besides,” said Calypso, “if he married you, what would happen to poor Miss Temple?”

“I wish to goodness Miss Temple was here,” said Tommy; “you won’t listen to me. But if she were here she wouldn’t want to marry me any more than either of you does. But, anyhow, if we’re to go on at all, one of you must own up to being my wife. I’ll leave you to settle it between yourselves.”

He walked off, walked to the car and looked at it, walked a little way along the road and back again, finally sat down on a stone and looked at the river, which ran, turbid and yellow, under a little bridge.

But Tommy’s ill temper never lasts long, and he is a man of active and resourceful mind. In a quarter of an hour he was back with a proposal to meet the difficulty.

“According to that Scotch law of yours,” he said to Janet, “would you be married to a man if you said you were his wife, but he didn’t say he was your husband?”

“Of course not,” said Janet.

“Even if there were witnesses present?”

“That wouldn’t matter,” said Janet. “Unless we both said we were married we wouldn’t be married.”

“And supposing while you were saying you were his wife another man said he was your husband—quite a different man who you didn’t claim at all—which of them would you be married to?”

“I shouldn’t be married to either,” said Janet.

“Even according to Scotch law?”

“Of course I shouldn’t.”

“Very well,” said Tommy, “when we get to that frontier post you say that Colonel Heard is your husband. He can’t say that you’re his wife because he won’t be there. Therefore you won’t be married to him. I shall say that you’re my wife, but if you don’t claim me as a husband, which you won’t, having already claimed Colonel Heard, then you won’t be married to me and I shan’t be married to you. In fact, we shan’t either of us be married to any one, even by Scotch law. That will be all right, won’t it?”

“Besides,” said Calypso, “Colonel Heard seems to be married already, and nothing you could say would make any difference to that, would it?”

“Exactly,” said Tommy. “That’s another point. Even Scotch law can’t let a man in for bigamy, in that casual way, especially against his will, and I don’t suppose Heard particularly wants to marry you.”

“So that’s settled,” said Calypso.

Janet did not seem satisfied, and I can scarcely wonder. A woman as intimately connected as she is with the movement for reuniting the Christian Churches of the world has to be very careful of her reputation. It would be a terrible thing for her if it were to become generally known that she claimed a married man as her husband. That is the sort of thing a woman never quite succeeds in living down, and the world, especially the religious world, is censorious.

The men at the German frontier post turned out to be peaceful and quiet. They looked at the passports but made no comment on them. They inquired whether the travelers were taking any new clothes, gramophones, photographic apparatus, surgical instruments, telescopes or dyes out of Germany. The princess said that their dresses were years old, that they all hated gramophones and never took photographs. Janet added solemnly that the party did not possess a single lancet or a telescope. Tommy, when he understood what was happening, said "*Nein*" four or five times emphatically. Then there were some inquiries about the car. The princess asked the bearded chauffeur to produce his papers. In getting at an inside pocket he displayed his pistols and knives to great advantage. The Germans asked no more questions about the car, did not look at the papers and permitted the travelers to go on. Very likely, like Dogberry's watch, they thanked God they were well rid of a knave.

The Megalians, when the car reached their post, turned out to be men of quite a different kind. They looked as savage and were quite as well armed as the chauffeur. They spoke a tongue which was neither German nor the quacking language of the Lystrians. Tommy and Janet did not understand a word of it. Even the princess seemed puzzled.

"As well as I can make out," she said, "they're saying that the photographs on the passports are not in the least like us."

"Tell them," said Tommy, "that that's a matter of opinion, and that if they know anything about the recent Cubist and Vorticist developments they'll see at once that these photographs represent our subconscious selves and are exactly like them."

"I don't believe I could say all that even in German," said Calypso, "and I don't know two hundred words of Megalian, which is what they're talking."

The chauffeur, seeing that something had gone wrong, left his car and approached the Megalians with his overcoat flying wide open. They were less impressed than the Germans by his display of weapons. In fact they were not impressed at all. All they did was unbutton their own coats and show that they possessed weapons of similar kinds.

"This," said Tommy, "is getting quite like Ireland."

The chauffeur quacked at the Megalians in Lystrian. They replied in Megalian, a language which consists principally of sounds like hisses. He quacked again, but mingled a few hisses with his quacks. They hissed in reply, but uttered a few quacks too. Gradually the speakers drew together until the Megalians were quacking nearly as much as they hissed and the chauffeur was hissing frequently. The princess understood about half of what each party said.

"They've just asked him," she said, "which of us is your wife?"

"Tell him," said Janet, "to say I'm not."

But it was too late to tell him anything. He was making a long speech in mingled hisses and quacks.

The princess giggled again.

"He's just told them," she said, "that I'm Mrs. Heard, and that we're all French subjects."

"I won't be called French," said Janet.

"I hope he'll be careful," said Tommy. "I can't talk French any more than I can German. Why didn't he say we were English?"

"It's no use saying that to the Megalians," said the princess. "They think the English never send armies anywhere or do anything except pay other people's debts for them. But they're desperately frightened of the French."

The chauffeur quacked and hissed a little more.

"I'm awfully sorry," said Calypso to Janet, "but he's just told them that you're my maid."

The man had been treating Janet as if she were a servant ever since the party left Breslau. She was determined to assert herself and not to leave the Megalians under a false impression.

“Please tell him at once,” she said, “to say that I’m the European representative of the League for establishing World Peace through the Union of Christian Churches.”

She spoke so fiercely that Calypso dared do nothing but obey her. She did her best to explain to the chauffeur Janet Church’s position in the religious world. I do not know what the chauffeur thought or how much he understood of what was said to him. Nor is there any way of finding out what he told the Megalian soldiers, or how much they understood. But the effect on them was excellent.

They all took off their hats, knelt down and crossed themselves piously.

They must somehow have gathered that Janet was an ecclesiastic of an unusual kind. They continued to kneel for several minutes in hope of a benediction which Janet did not give them.

Troyte tells me that the Megalians have the reputation of being the most religious people in Europe, more religious even than the Irish. They take the greatest delight in Passion Plays, which they continually perform, keep rows of spittoons in their churches (a sign of real reverence) and have several well authenticated miracles every year.

As soon as they realized that Janet was a priestess, deaconess or abbess, they made no difficulties about allowing the party to go on.

CHAPTER XIX

Calypso’s spirits rose after passing the frontier posts. That corner of the Megalian territory consisted of the old Kingdom of Lystria, so that the princess was at last back in her own land. The few peasants who were herding cattle on the hill-sides were Lystrians and no doubt talked to one another in the quacking language which the chauffeur used. The cattle were Lystrian cattle, long-horned, active little beasts, which looked as if they afforded little milk when alive and not much meat when dead. The cottages were Lystrian, the roads, the heather, the mountains themselves, all were Lystrian. Calypso drew deep breaths of Lystrian air with keen delight, pointed out one thing after another to Janet, who was not deeply interested. Now and then she clapped her hands with joy.

The spirits of the brigand chauffeur rose too. He still drove carefully. Any other kind of driving would have brought swift disaster on the Lystrian roads. But he blew his horn whenever he saw a man, woman or child, however distant. He threw off his cap and let the mountain air blow freely through his thick curly hair. Once, for a short while, he quickened the car’s pace and pursued a hare which was foolish enough to run straight along the road. After a while he began to sing, mere snatches of song at first, in the end whole verses. This was highly unconventional behavior in a chauffeur driving a royal car. But Calypso did not resent it. She seemed actually pleased. Soon she joined him in singing. When the man heard her high treble ring out he dropped naturally into a bass part. The Lystrians, like most half-civilized people, are very musical, and every kind of singing is a delight to them.

Calypso started the Lystrian National Anthem, a wild tune, as exciting as the *Marseillaise*, with something in it of the grandeur of the old Russian czarist national air. The chauffeur joined in with a kind of fierce enthusiasm. They sang the tune through together three or four times. Then Calypso leaned forward and laid her hand on Tommy’s shoulder.

“Join in,” she said. “You sing too. Let’s all sing.”

She shook up Janet, who was dozing, and told her to sing.

Janet has no more ear for music than a crow has. Hymns are the only things she ever attempts to sing, and I am told that when she does the rest of the congregation suffers acutely.

It was her attempt at the Lystrian National Anthem which put a stop to the singing in the end. Janet, who is quite unconscious of her infirmity, sang loud when she began to enjoy herself. She has a very powerful voice. The chauffeur

must have been actually musical, more musical than either Tommy or the princess. His face twitched when Janet's high notes reached him. His steering became very erratic and once or twice he ran the car dangerously near the edge of the road. He tried to assuage his misery by sounding his horn fiercely when he knew a high note was coming in the song. I suppose this only made the discord more intolerable. At last he stopped the car, turned round, and quacked out an angry speech to the princess.

Calypso understood what he said well enough. She would probably have understood his feelings even if he had not spoken, for she was sitting beside Janet. But she was very tactful.

“Sandor says that we had better stop singing. The mountain air is bad for the voice and we shall have sore throats tomorrow if we go on.”

What Sandor really said was that unless the English housemaid stopped squalling he would be forced by uncontrollable emotion to stab her and throw her out of the car.

They drove on without singing for the rest of the afternoon, steadily climbing into the mountains by twisting and sometimes perilous roads. At about six o'clock they reached the highest point of a lofty pass. On each side the mountains rose to snow-clad peaks. In front the road dipped steeply into a narrow valley. Beyond the valley stood, steep and frowning, another mountain. On its side, perched on a plateau—Sandor gripped Tommy's arm and pointed forward—there, a gray pile of masonry, stood the Schloss, oldest, most impressive and least comfortable of the palaces of the Lystrian kings.

The car plunged into the valley, out of the sunshine into deep shadow. Above them the Schloss, with the light still bright on it, looked like a fairy palace. They crawled over a narrow bridge which crossed a foaming torrent. They began a winding ascent along a singularly stony road.

Casimir's preparations for the reception of the princess were complete. The greater part of the Lystrian army was there to greet her, drawn up on each side of the road. As the car passed the men fired their rifles into the air, each one shooting off round after round, refilling his magazine when it was exhausted. There was plenty of ammunition, which showed that some of Cable's money was wisely spent. No doubt it was his money too which had provided new uniforms for the whole army, not dingy khaki tunics and breeches like those worn by unimaginative soldiers of western lands, but fine blue cloaks and crimson tunics and great boots with fur tops to them and wide black trousers or short pleated petticoats like Highland Scottish kilts. Some of the men wore caps with tall green feathers in them. Some had shiny metal helmets.

At the gate of the palace stood a group of the magnates of Lystria, the very least of them a count by right of four or five hundred years' descent from other counts. Perhaps half of them were Casimirs, members of one branch or other of the family of which Count Istvan was the head. They, like the soldiers, were splendidly clad. Some of Cable's money had gone in providing gold-laced coats, fur-lined cloaks and green breeches. But their jewels were their own. Blue turquoises, red garnets and green stones like emeralds shone on the gilt metal belts which held their swords, on the broad collars round their necks, on multitudinous buttons of their clothes, on tall cap badges, even on their spurs.

In the middle of the group of nobles stood the patriarch, perhaps the tallest, certainly the broadest man there. He wore a long purple cassock and a purple cape lined with white fur. Round his neck, on a heavy gold chain hung a double-armed Greek cross, thickly studded with jewels. On his head was a shiny mitre. Behind him stood four priests, white-robed, with long black silky beards. One of them held the patriarch's immense pastoral staff. Another carried a tall ebony pole with a gold star on it, a very large and splendid star with sharp pointed rays sticking out of it in all directions. The other two held aloft a kind of canopy made of embroidered silk, not unlike a huge two-handled umbrella. If they had held it, as they should, over the patriarch's head, it might have kept the dew from settling on his mitre. Held crooked, a little behind him, it served no useful purpose. But it was highly striking and ornamental.

Calypso, now at last a veritable princess, stepped from the car, paced slowly forward to where the patriarch stood while the magnates cheered wildly and the army fired off its guns. Calypso knelt. There was silence at once. The patriarch raised a plump, pudgy hand in benediction. The four priests behind him wailed a loud Amen. The nobles shouted and the guns fired. Calypso stood erect. The patriarch, a heavy man, afflicted with rheumatism in his legs, knelt slowly and stiffly. He gravely kissed Calypso's hand.

Then one by one the nobles stepped forward, headed by Count Albert Casimir. They bent until their foreheads touched the ground and then kissed the toe of one of Calypso's boots. The patriarch was, I gathered, the only man entitled by his

rank to kiss her hand. Cheers and more firing of guns greeted each act of homage. When the last was accomplished a band, set on the battlements above the gate of the Schloss, began to play the national anthem, the same tune which Calypso and the chauffeur had sung in the car earlier in the afternoon. The whole mass of men, the patriarch and his priests, the nobles and the army, down to the remotest of them, shouted the song whole-heartedly. Tommy, excited by all he had seen, joined in and sang as bravely as the best. Janet Church would no doubt have sung too, but Sandor, the chauffeur, stood beside her with the most murderous-looking of his knives in his hand. He made it clear to Janet—indeed she could scarcely have mistaken his meaning—that if she attempted to sing she would immediately be killed.

When the whole ceremony was over the princess and Janet Church were led away together to the state apartments in the Schloss. Count Albert Casimir conducted Tommy to a suite of rooms which had been prepared for him. Albert's English was not nearly so good as Istvan's. Indeed, he seemed to be able to say very little except "Please." He said that every time he said anything, and he always smiled in a friendly way. But language, for the simpler affairs of life, is not really necessary. Tommy understood without difficulty that the rooms were entirely for his use, that a bearded savage, who bowed to the ground every time any one looked at him, was his servant, that there was hot water for the bath, and that as soon as he was ready he could descend to—— There he would have been thankful for a few intelligible words. He had to descend somewhere and supper would be waiting for him when he did, but where the place was Tommy could not make out.

Half an hour later, washed, brushed and very hungry, Tommy was led by his servant to a large stone-paved hall. It was an immense room with a vaulted roof, high-placed tiny windows, and a raised dais at one end. On this dais a small table was spread. Four servants stood stiffly behind the chair set for a solitary dinner. They wore dark green liveries decked with silver buttons nearly as big as half-crowns, and had silver epaulettes on their shoulders. The whole scene was strikingly medieval, and Tommy, who was fond of Scott's novels, appreciated it. There was just one jarring note. A stone-flagged vaulted hall in a medieval Schloss ought to be lit with torches stuck into iron brackets on the walls, or—and even this would have been a concession to modernity—with tall wax candles in silver sconces. But King Wladislaws, who used to come to the Schloss occasionally, had conceived the idea of making use of the water power supplied by the torrent in the valley. The whole castle, from turret to dungeon, was lit by electric light. Bright groups of bulbs hung from the vaulted roof of the hall. On Tommy's table stood a silk-shaded lamp, like those in use on the tables in the Mascotte.

After supper, just as Tommy had lit his first cigarette, the patriarch entered the room. He came in some state, clad in his purple cassock, accompanied by Count Albert Casimir and two of the Lystrian clergy.

Tommy, rather uncertain how he ought to receive such company, laid down his cigarette, stood up and bowed. The patriarch bowed, a little stiffly. He was a portly man and had no doubt supped somewhere else. The girdle of his cassock seemed a little tight for him. One of the four servants set a chair for him and he sat down. The two clergymen bowed, muttering softly as they did so. What they said may have been the Lystrian equivalent of the American "Vurry, vurry glad to meet you," or they may have felt it their duty to offer a short prayer. They sat down. Count Albert clicked his heels together, bowed and saluted. Tommy failed to click his heels together, though he tried; but he managed a fair imitation of a military salute. He and Count Albert sat down. The patriarch gave an order and a servant brought a fresh bottle of wine. One of the priests drew a box of cigarettes from some pocket among the folds of his cassock and handed it round.

Then the business of the meeting began. Count Albert acted as interpreter.

"*Sprechen Sie Deutsch*, please," he said.

Tommy understood that and replied emphatically that he did not.

"*Französische?*"

Tommy with an effort recognized *Französische* as the German for French.

"*Nein*," he said. "That is to say *Non*, at least nothing worth mentioning, though of course I know a few words like *petit déjeuner*, and *bonjour*, and *l'état c'est moi*."

"*Italianisch?*" said Count Albert, but not very hopefully.

“No,” said Tommy, “I don’t. Nor Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Russian, nor modern Greek. In fact, I may as well own up at once, that it’s English or nothing for me.”

It was evidently very difficult to communicate with Tommy. There was consultation in the course of which one of the priests made a suggestion which was regarded as hopeful. Count Albert turned to Tommy.

“Patriarch,” he said, pointing to him. “*Lateinisch*.”

“All right,” said Tommy, “I’ll try. I’ve learned Latin of course and I used to know it quite well, but not conversationally.”

The patriarch was not so fluent with his Latin as he might have been. It is the ecclesiastical language of the whole world, but—— Well, I once knew an Irish priest who asked whether *temere* in the title of the famous *Ne Temere* Bull was a second or a third conjugation verb. Yet that man read his Breviary faithfully. There was more excuse for the patriarch than for him. The services of the Lystrian church are not said in Latin.

But even if the patriarch’s Latin had been much better than it was, there would have been difficulties. Our English schools have, of late years, altered their way of pronouncing Latin. No doubt the new sounds are better than the English *a*’s, *i*’s, and soft *c*’s, to which I was brought up, but we have not yet achieved the true Italian ecclesiastical whine. Tommy did not understand the patriarch, nor could he make the patriarch understand him.

“*Es ist trauerlich*,” said Count Albert at last. “A pity, not so?”

Every one, especially the stout patriarch, was extremely good-humored, but no one knew how to say what had to be said to Tommy.

“If . . .” Count Albert’s English came very slowly. “If . . . here . . . were . . . Casimir Istvan Graf . . . *Ach!*”

“I say,” said Tommy. “What about getting the princess to come and interpret? She knows all the languages there are.”

He must have pronounced the word “princess” very badly, for no one knew what he meant.

“Calypso,” he tried.

This time the patriarch understood; but he shook his head decisively. For some reason the presence of the princess was not desirable.

“Well, then, try Miss Church,” said Tommy. “She knows German though she can’t talk Lystrian.”

“Mees Zurz?” said Count Albert doubtfully.

“Yes,” said Tommy. “Miss Church; Fräulein Kirche. That is to say, if you really speak French, Mademoiselle Eglise, or”—here he turned to the patriarch and spoke very clearly—“Ecclesia—Virgo Janetta Ecclesia.”

The party of Lystrians was entirely bewildered; but Tommy was not beaten yet. He took a pencil and a piece of paper from his pocket and made a rapid sketch of Janet. Tommy was no artist, and any resemblance his picture bore to Janet must have been that of a caricature. But it was instantly recognized and greeted with applauding laughter.

“*Ach so*,” said Count Albert. And the patriarch made sounds which are the Lystrian equivalent of “*Ach so*.”

One of the priests was sent to fetch Janet. The patriarch ordered a fresh bottle of wine. The cigarettes were handed round and the party settled down very comfortably to wait. There was no conversation, for the Lystrians were much too well bred to talk to one another in a language which their guest did not understand. But everybody smiled amiably at everybody else.

Janet had gone to bed; but the priest who was sent to fetch her was a determined man. A quarter of an hour later he led her into the hall. She was clad in the pink dressing-gown and the slippers which she had worn when Tommy first saw her in the corridor of the Adlon Hotel.

Janet was not in the least embarrassed by her costume, or by the company in which she found herself; but she was very much annoyed at being roused out of her first sleep.

“I wish to goodness,” she said to Tommy, “that you’d learn enough German to be able to get on without perpetually appealing to me.”

The patriarch unfortunately shared the view of Sandor, the chauffeur, that Janet was the princess’s maid. He neither stood up to greet her nor invited her to sit down. This, very naturally, increased her feeling of irritation. If Tommy had not rushed off to get a chair for her, the chances of the reunion of the other Christian Churches with that of Lystria would have been compromised.

The patriarch spoke to her. Janet listened for a while and then cut the poor man short in the middle of a sentence.

“He says,” she told Tommy, “that the marriage is fixed for to-morrow morning.”

“Marriage! The princess and I?”

“I suppose so,” said Janet. “It’s certainly not you and I.”

“But he can’t do that,” said Tommy. “Marriages can’t be rushed in that way. It takes a fortnight to get a licence. If he calls the bans it’ll take three weeks.”

Janet said something to the patriarch and he replied.

“He’s surprised,” she said to Tommy, “to hear that you are unwilling to marry the princess.”

“I’m not in the least unwilling,” said Tommy. “Tell him there’s nothing in the world I’d like better. Make that clear to him, will you? It’s a most important point, and I don’t want any misunderstanding about it.”

Janet translated; but Tommy did not altogether trust her. He tried an explanation of his own in Latin.

“*Jucundus et laetus ero,*” he said, “*reginam in matrimonium ducere,* any time you like.”

Either Janet had translated faithfully, or the patriarch understood this Latin. He smiled benignantly.

“But,” said Tommy, “or rather *sed nolo*—— Oh, look here, Miss Church, tell him that I won’t have Calypso driven into marrying me, if she doesn’t want to. She said in Berlin that she wouldn’t marry me, and if she feels the same way still, she mustn’t be bullied into it.”

The patriarch explained at some length that the princess’s feelings did not matter in the least. He had brought her up himself and taught her the duties of a princess. She would marry the man she was told to marry. This did not satisfy Tommy.

“Tell the patriarch,” he said to Janet, “that unless the princess agrees of her own free will, I won’t stir a foot in the matter.”

But Janet thought the conference had lasted long enough and she was getting chilly about the legs. A stone-floored hall is apt to be draughty at night and she had no stockings on. She said good night to the patriarch and walked off to bed. Tommy was left to his own resources.

He got out his note-book and pencil again. He could not draw a picture of himself refusing the hand of an unwilling princess in the Lystrian Chapel Royal; so he wrote down a Latin sentence. The patriarch did not understand the language as Tommy spoke it, but he must surely be able to read it.

“*Nisi regina ne amat,*” he wrote, “*nihil faciam in re.*”

That, if not in Ciceronian style, was a plain statement of his meaning. The patriarch understood it, smiled and waved his pudgy hand. Then he patted Tommy on the shoulder in a most friendly and confidential manner. Count Albert attempted an explanation in English.

“That is good,” he said. “*Sehr gut,* right. Not true? Please?”

The patriarch ordered more wine. There was much drinking of healths, Tommy’s health, the patriarch’s, Count Albert’s, the health of each attendant priest, Calypso’s (all standing), and finally Janet’s. The patriarch held up Tommy’s sketch of

her while he drank.

The party broke up, all sober, but as Tommy said afterward, "Another bottle would have finished us."

The Patriarch Menelaus would not be happy in America. His strict views about marriage would get him into trouble with the people who appreciate the advantages of divorce. And he would never understand the American belief that sin and sorrow will vanish from the world when iced water is drunk everywhere.

CHAPTER XX

Tommy slept soundly.

At six o'clock in the morning he was half wakened by the sound of a motor-cycle passing close under the window of his room. He felt slightly surprised that there should be such things as motor-bicycles in Lystria. But the subject was not interesting enough to rouse him thoroughly. He slept again.

At half past eight he was wakened again, this time thoroughly, and saw Count Albert standing at his bedside. Tommy looked up and bade him a cheerful good morning. The count bowed stiffly. He held two large, leather-covered books, one under each arm. It would have been difficult for him to bow otherwise than stiffly. Behind the count, standing rigidly at attention at the door of the room, were two soldiers with long rifles on which the bayonets were fixed. This surprised Tommy a little, but he bade the soldiers a friendly good morning. He supposed that it must be the custom in Lystria to send part of the army to waken an honored guest in the morning.

Count Albert laid one of his books on Tommy's bed and began turning over the pages of the other. It was a Lystrian-English dictionary. Its compilation had been the life work of the tutor who had taught Count Istvan to read Shakespeare. It had been printed at the expense of King Wladislaws, and was that monarch's solitary contribution to the cause of literature. Ten copies in all had been published. Six of them were lost. One lay on a shelf in the palace of Count Istvan. One was in the cathedral library under the charge of the patriarch. One was kept by the head clerk of the Lystrian House of Lords. The remaining one, which Count Albert was using, was in the Royal Schloss.

Count Albert found the word he wanted, marked it by digging his thumbnail into the paper, and then handed the book to Tommy. Like most Lystrian words, it was thickly covered with accents, and the letter *X* was in it several times. The English translation was given as: "Impostor—pretender (historical). One who assumes an identity other than his own. Deceiver."

Count Albert frowned severely to show that he meant everything the dictionary said. The two soldiers held their rifles at the present to show that they meant it all too.

Count Albert took up the second volume of the dictionary and looked up another word. This time the English translation was: "Arrested." To prevent any possibility of mistake, he pointed first to Tommy, then to the two soldiers, and then, once more, to the word. Tommy had no excuse for not understanding what his position was.

Count Albert looked out a third word, and once more handed the book to Tommy. This was a short word, consisting of three letters, one of which was an *X*, and three accents. It meant: "Place of execution," and, according to Count Istvan's Shakespearean tutor, might also be translated: "Gallows, scaffold or guillotine." Count Albert nodded grimly and pointed to the soldiers. Then he said, "Please."

"But not at this hour," said Tommy firmly. "It's simply never done as late as this. The regular time for shooting a man is dawn and that's passed for to-day. There won't be another till to-morrow. Besides, you're bound to give me some sort of trial."

He took the dictionary with the intention of looking out "shoot," "dawn," "to-morrow" and "trial," believing in that way to make his meaning clear. Unfortunately, there was no English-Lystrian part of the dictionary, so the book was useless to him. Count Albert, with the air of a great nation which delivers an ultimatum to a troublesome little tribe, turned to leave the room. Tommy jumped out of bed and stopped him. He could not speak Lystrian and he could not use the

dictionary. But he was not quite at the end of his resources. He tore out a blank sheet from the end of the dictionary and wrote a letter.

“Ad Reverendissimum beatissimum, excellentissimum Patriarchum, Lystriæ, Archiepiscopum, cum Janetta Ecclesia (Miss Church) conversari volo.”

Then he remembered that both Count Istvan and Count Albert used the word “Please” with extraordinary frequency in the most unlikely connections. It was evidently a word to which the Lystrians attached great importance. The ancient Romans apparently did not, for he could not remember a Latin equivalent for it. He added “*Si vis*” to the end of his letter, and then, in order to make it quite plain that he wanted to be polite, wrote, “*Bitte. S’il vous plait*, please.” He handed the note to Count Albert.

“Patriarch,” he said. “Beatitude, Archbishop, please.”

Count Albert scowled, but he took the note. He walked over to the door, opened it, turned, said a farewell “Please,” to Tommy, and then went out, leaving the two soldiers on guard.

Tommy got up and dressed. That took him nearly half an hour. Then he smoked a pipe. Then he looked out of the window for a while. The view was entirely uninteresting, for his room looked out on a small courtyard, but it cheered him to observe that there were no signs of the erection of a scaffold. In all the romances he had ever read the scaffolds for the execution of the heroes are put up under the windows of their cells, and they are obliged to listen to the sounds of hammering and sawing even if they have enough strength of mind not to look out.

At ten o’clock the door of his room was opened and a soldier came in bringing some breakfast. The Lystrians, alone among Central, Southern and Eastern Europeans, have a good idea of what breakfast ought to be. Except that there was no marmalade, Tommy could not have done better in a first-rate London hotel.

At half past ten, before he had finished eating, Janet Church was shown in. Tommy greeted her with an eager flood of questions.

“What’s happened?” he asked. “Why am I shut up? Why did that ass, Albert Casimir, wake me up this morning by scowling at me. Why did he shove a great dictionary with the word impostor in it—an enormous dictionary in two volumes? Why did he threaten to hang me or shoot me or guillotine me? I don’t know which he meant; but he certainly intends to execute me in some way. And what’s the Lystrian for marmalade? I’d like some just to finish off a really good breakfast.”

“Who are you?” said Janet.

“I’m the Reverend Thomas A. Norreys, M.A.,” said Tommy. “You saw my passport in Berlin, so you ought to know.”

“Not Lord Norheys?”

“I’ve told you, I’ve told the other Casimir, I’ve told the king, I would have told the princess if she’d have listened to me—— I’ve told every one I’ve met that I am not Lord Norheys. It would be just as sensible, in fact more sensible, to insist that I’m Colonel Heard. But no matter what I said, nobody ever believed me, except that pompous ass, von Steinveldt. I think he did. If necessary I’ll swear I’m not Lord Norheys. I’ll swear it on Casimir’s dictionary if you like, and that’s the most impressive-looking book I ever saw.”

“They believe you now,” said Janet.

“What convinced them? I’d like to know; for I never could manage to do it myself.”

“Two telegrams arrived this morning early,” said Janet, “one from Count Istvan Casimir, sent from Berlin, and one from Lord Edmund Troyte, from London. A motor-cyclist brought them. They said that you’re an impostor, and that the real Lord Norheys is in London. Lord Edmund Troyte is Lord Norhey’s uncle, so he’s certain to know.”

“I expect he’ll be Miss Temple’s aunt soon. I mean to say, she’ll be his niece, if half I’ve heard about her is true. I never was so plagued about anything in my life as I have been about that woman. How did the princess take the news?”

“The patriarch wakened her about seven o’clock to tell her. She came into my room about two minutes later and I never

saw a girl so pleased.”

“I call that heartless of her,” said Tommy. “Worse than heartless, malicious. I never did her any harm. Why on earth should she be pleased at my being hanged?”

“She’s not pleased at that. She doesn’t think you will be hanged. Nor do I. What delighted her was the thought that you really had nothing to do with Miss Temple.”

“If she would have listened to me,” said Tommy, “she’d have known that long ago. However, I’m glad she doesn’t want to hang me. Perhaps she’ll let me out of prison. Why have they shut me up?”

“I’ve just told you that,” said Janet. “They believed you were Lord Norheys and when it turned out you weren’t, they imprisoned you, of course.”

“I don’t see any ‘of course’ about it. They can’t mean to imprison every one who turned out not to be Lord Norheys. If they did that the prisons would be horribly overcrowded. Don’t you think that you could explain that to the patriarch?”

Janet looked doubtful.

“It’s a complex idea,” said Tommy, “and probably quite new to him. Still, with your knowledge of German——”

Janet had no doubt at all about her ability to explain anything in German.

“I’m afraid,” she said, “that the patriarch isn’t as good at German as he thinks he is. He can understand simple things all right, but when anything unexpected is said to him he doesn’t take it in. After the princess and I were dressed this morning he came in and had a long consultation with her. They were still at it when I left. They began in German, but the princess had to give that up and talk Lystrian after half an hour or so.”

“Were they talking about anything very abstruse? metaphysics, for instance?”

“They were talking about you,” said Janet. “The princess said that she was extremely glad to hear that you were not Lord Norheys, because nothing on earth would have induced her to marry him. She told the patriarch all about Miss Temple and showed him some letter or other.”

“I know all about that letter,” said Tommy. “How did the patriarch take it?”

“He said the princess was perfectly right, and that no man who behaved as Lord Norheys did could possibly be allowed to be King of Lystria. I gathered that he thought there’d been enough of that sort of thing when the late king was here. I hadn’t heard it before, but from what the patriarch said I understand that King Wladislaws was a thoroughly immoral man.”

“All the same,” said Tommy, “I don’t think the patriarch ought to have talked that way to the princess about her father.”

“The princess evidently felt that herself,” said Janet. “She changed the subject abruptly, and—well, she beat about the bush a bit, and it was rather hard to make out exactly what she meant. But I think she was trying to explain to the patriarch that she had no objection to marrying you. Of course, that wasn’t a thing she could very well say straight out in plain words, and evidently the patriarch didn’t quite grasp what she was at.”

“How did it end?” said Tommy. “I’m not asking simply out of curiosity. It’s really rather an important matter for me.”

“I can’t tell you how it ended,” said Janet. “That tall count man came in who was at supper with you last night.”

“Albert Casimir.”

“That’s his name. He came in and told me that I might come here to see you.”

“I wish you’d waited a little,” said Tommy.

“I waited as long as I could. I waited till I was practically ordered out of the room. But I shouldn’t have been much wiser if I’d stayed. They were all three talking nothing but Lystrian. As soon as the princess realized that the patriarch wasn’t taking in what she said, she dropped German and spoke Lystrian. So did the count. All I can say is that it sounded

as if they were arguing.”

“It always sounds as if people were arguing when they talk a language one doesn’t understand. Generally, they appear to be quarreling. Which side was Casimir on, the princess’s, or the patriarch’s?”

“It seemed to me,” said Janet, “that they were all three on different sides.”

“Well,” said Tommy, “I suppose it’s all settled by this time. I wish I knew how.”

“From the way they were speaking,” said Janet, “I should say the discussion might go on for hours. They all seemed to have a lot to say.”

“I wish you’d go back,” said Tommy, “and try what you can do in the way of influencing the patriarch.”

“I don’t see that I’ve any right to interfere.”

“Still, I think you ought to try. It’s a frightfully serious thing for me. As far as I can make out, I’m either going to be hanged or married.”

“I’m afraid I’ve no influence with the patriarch.”

“Oh, yes, you have,” said Tommy, “as a representative of the League of Christian Churches, you must have. Suppose you were to offer the patriarch to make him president of a World Conference of Religions, to be held at Chicago or some place like that where a conference of the kind might be held. He’d love that. And at the same time you could tell Casimir that I don’t in the least mind whether I’m King of Lystria or not. If I’m allowed to marry Calypso I’d every bit as soon go home as stay here.”

“That young woman,” said Janet, “is totally unsuited to be a curate’s wife.”

“She is,” said Tommy. “I know that. Perhaps it would be better for you to say to Casimir that I’d make quite a good king from his point of view—give any amount of balls and dinners, keep up the Opera, not have any Income Tax; and all that sort of thing. The late king told me exactly what’s wanted and I’m prepared to do it. It will be easy enough to talk over Casimir. The real trouble is the patriarch. Look here, Miss Church, if you manage to persuade him, I’ll promise faithfully to use all my influence as king to unite the Lystrian Church to any Christian body in the world you choose to name. Even if we have to wait till the present patriarch dies and I have the appointment of a new one, we’ll pull the thing off in the end.”

That must have been a strong temptation to Janet. I dare say she would have given way to it and gone to the patriarch with a proposal that he should be president of some sort of world conference. Whether he would have accepted the position or not no one will ever know. Before Janet had made any reply to Tommy, Count Albert Casimir entered the room.

He immediately ordered the two soldiers who stood on guard to go away. He spoke to them in a manner that was actually savage, just as if they had forced their way into Tommy’s apartments against orders which he had repeatedly given them.

Then he marched over to the window, where Tommy was standing, and saluted. After that he marched back to the door, flung it open, stood to attention at one side of it and said, “Please.”

It was evident that Tommy was at liberty again.

Janet, eagerly questioning Casimir, scarcely pausing to translate his answers to Tommy, got an outline of what had happened.

The princess had carried her point. Casimir, who did not much care who was King of Lystria, so long as there was a king of some sort, backed her up. The patriarch, who was a kind-hearted old gentleman and really fond of the princess, had given way in the end.

PART IV. LONDON AND LYSTRIA

CHAPTER XXI

I find myself at last, to my own great satisfaction, able to return to a part of the story in which I myself bore a part. I am no longer writing from hearsay, but narrating what I actually saw and heard.

The scene in Lord Edmund Troyte's library in Grosvenor Street, when Lord Norheys and his bride walked in, remains vividly pictured in my mind. Troyte sat bolt upright on the edge of a deep chair in which he had been lounging. At his elbow was a little table with the empty coffee cups and the liqueurs on it. Behind it sat Procopius Cable, staring at Norheys with an expression of angry amazement on his face. Half-way between the door and the fireplace stood Norheys and his bride. I had never before seen Viola Temple off the stage, and her appearance surprised me. I expected her to be pretty, of course. I did not expect her to look gentle, shy and even timid. A girl who has faced huge audiences hundreds of times would not, one might suppose, be frightened of three old gentlemen sitting round a fire. But she was. Norheys' attitude was protective. He held one of her hands, and kept her close beside him.

I, the fifth person present, and by far the least important, leaned back in my chair and giggled feebly.

"Unless it's Emily's curate who's gone to Lystria," I repeated, "I don't know who it can be."

Procopius Cable turned and glared at me with ferocity and contempt. I had been guilty of an ill-timed attempt at a joke in the middle of a very serious crisis. I stopped giggling abruptly and murmured an apology. After that, for a while, nobody spoke.

Troyte was the first to recover his self-possession. He rose from his chair and walked over to where Norheys and his bride were standing.

"My dear Viola," he said, "this stupid husband of yours has never introduced me to you, so I must introduce myself as your uncle. Won't you come over to the fire and sit down?"

He took her by the hand and led her to his own chair. He set her in it and placed a footstool at her feet. The recognition had been a little long in coming, but there were excuses to be made for the delay. Nothing could have been more courteous than Troyte's manner when he got over the shock of her sudden appearance and made up his mind to accept the inevitable. The girl looked up at him with timid gratitude and blushed in the most charming manner.

"Good old Uncle Ned," said Norheys, "I knew you'd take it like a man. What I always said to Viola was this: Uncle Ned may be a Member of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister and all that, but he's still a gentleman."

Cable, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, stood scowling.

"What's happened in Lystria?" he said.

"It seems to me," said Norheys, "that some other blighter has chipped in."

Cable strode over to Troyte's writing-table, seized a pen and began to scribble at a terrific pace, faster than any one I've ever seen write, except on the stage. He talked while he wrote, another thing which reminded me of the theater.

"I shall wire to Berlin at once. Casimir is still in Berlin. I shall wire to King Wladislaws. I shall wire to the patriarch in Lystria."

"Seems a pity, doesn't it?" said Norheys, "to butt in like that. What I always say is: If a thing's done, then it is done,

even if it happens to be the thing which a fellow would rather wasn't done."

Troyte passed his hand over his forehead anxiously.

"There'll be trouble in the Balkans," he said. "I don't see how this business can end without fresh trouble in the Balkans."

"The marriage has probably not taken place yet," said Cable. "We may be in time to stop it."

"Even if we do," said Troyte, "there'll be trouble."

"I don't see why," said Norheys. "Of course I'm only an outsider and this is your job, Uncle Ned. But I don't see why. It seems to me things ought to settle down. These mountainy fellows in what-you-call the place——"

"Lystria," I prompted.

"The good old Lystrians," said Norheys, "wanted a king, and they've got one. That dusky queen of yours, Uncle Ned, wanted a husband and she's got one, or will very soon if we don't interfere. He may be a wrong 'un. Seems rather as if he is, but if she's satisfied I don't see that it matters to us. The great thing is not to start interfering with other people's business. That never does any good."

Troyte, who was seriously troubled, murmured something about a war in the Balkans which it might be impossible to localize. Cable crossed the room from the writing-table with three sheets of note-paper in his hand.

"This," he said, holding out one of them, "is a telegram to Casimir. The other two are to the king and to the patriarch. Can you get them sent off at once, Lord Edmund?"

"I think so," said Troyte. "I can send them round to the Foreign Office, and they'll get them off for me. But I doubt if there'll be any operators on duty at this hour in the post-offices abroad. I shall have to write some telegrams myself. I must communicate at once with our ambassador in Berlin, and with our ministers in Prague and Bukarest and——"

"Seems a pity, doesn't it?" said Norheys. "After all, Uncle Ned, that fellow, whoever he is, evidently wants the princess. And what I always say is: Why shouldn't he have her if he does?"

"The patriarch will probably have him shot out of hand when he gets my telegram," said Cable bitterly.

"I hope not," said Norheys. "He may be quite a decent fellow, not a wrong 'un at all. And it isn't every one who'd take on that princess of yours, Uncle Ned. Color, you know, and that sort of thing. Lots of men don't like it."

"I've told you all along," I said, "that the princess Calypso is as white as you are."

"Still, there's always a risk," said Norheys. "A throw-back, don't you know. What scientific Johnnies call atavism. You never can tell when a perfectly coal-black baby might turn up. Horrid things, black babies. What I always say is that if a fellow is prepared to take the risk, why not let him? No particular business of ours, is it, if the babies turn out to be black, or even brown?"

Troyte was attending to Viola, taking her coat from her, offering her cushions, trying to induce her to drink champagne. Cable grew impatient.

"Perhaps," he said, "you will phone these telegrams through to the Foreign Office, or would you rather I sent a messenger with them?"

Troyte got up and went to the telephone. Norheys talked on, addressing no one in particular.

"What I can't see," he said, "is, why we should butt in. So far as I can make out, I'm the only one of us with a shadow of a grievance, and I don't want to trot it out. I can't well take an action for Breach of Promise against an Indian Queen. I'd look such an ass, wouldn't I, Uncle Bill?"

He turned to me because Troyte was at the telephone and Cable had turned his back on us.

"I know you'll say she's not an Indian," said Norheys, "but Persians seem to me just as bad."

“She’s not Persian either,” I said.

“All Asia Minor is more or less Persian,” said Norheys, “and, anyway, I don’t want to take an action against her. I don’t believe I could even if I wanted to, on account of having got married myself before she did. So that’s that; and there’s no use worrying.”

Troyte was talking fast to some one in the Foreign Office.

“There’ll be the devil of a fuss,” said Norheys, “if Uncle Ned stirs up all those ambassadors and people. And they won’t like it. Nobody would like it. I say, Uncle Ned!”

Troyte, working steadily through Cable’s telegrams, waved an impatient hand at Norheys.

“It’s all very fine,” said Norheys to me. “Uncle Ned may say what he likes, but they won’t like it. No ambassador would like being pulled out of his bed at this hour of the night and set on to chase a princess up and down the Himalaya Mountains, as if she was a goat or a chamois or something of that kind. And what I always say is: If nobody wants a thing done, why do it? There are lots of unpleasant things every fellow has to do. Why chip in with unnecessary ones and make every one uncomfortable?”

“Notify the Legations at Sophia,” said Troyte into the telephone, “and Prague, and Bukarest, and Warsaw, and Budapest, and Belgrade——”

“Just listen to him,” said Norheys. “Jolly glad I didn’t go into the diplomatic service. They wanted me to. You remember that, Uncle Bill? But I was firm about that. ‘Not my line at all,’ I said. ‘Hate complications and always did.’ Now I see I was quite right. I simply couldn’t stand being set on to persecute some poor girl who’d run off with the chauffeur. And I expect that’s what’s happened. Looks like it anyhow. What I always say is: If a girl wants to marry a chauffeur, let her, and be jolly thankful it’s no worse.”

Cable had edged over to the table at which Troyte was sitting at the telephone.

“Tell them,” he said, “to engage places for us in the Warsaw Express. We must go to-morrow.”

“I suppose we must,” said Troyte with a sigh.

“Of course we must,” said Cable. “Heaven knows what muddle there’ll be if we’re not there. It’s a complicated business and you and I are the only two people who understand the whole of it. Tell them to book two sleepers for us.”

“I say,” said Norheys. “I say, Uncle Ned, are you really going off to this what-you call-’em place to see the princess?”

Troyte took no notice of this, so I answered for him.

“He must,” I said. “As minister for Balkan affairs, it’s his duty to have his hand on the helm when the ship is in the rapids.”

Norheys turned to his wife, who had been sitting quietly and very comfortably where Troyte left her.

“I say, Vi, old thing, what about it?”

She understood him at once, though I confess that I did not.

“I should simply love it,” she said, “and you promised that we should have a honeymoon.”

“Righto,” said Norheys. “I say, Uncle Ned, tell him to book four sleepers, will you. Vi and I are going to trot along with you.”

Troyte very nearly dropped the receiver in his astonishment. I was a little startled myself. The very last place a man ought to take his wife for a honeymoon is into the middle of a Balkan war, and that, if I could trust Troyte’s judgment, was just what there was going to be.

“You can’t go with us,” said Troyte.

“I’m damned if you do,” said Cable.

“You ought to be pleased to have us,” said Norheys. “We’d cheer you up and all that when you’re feeling a bit down and out.”

“You’ve done mischief enough already,” said Cable. “You shan’t go near Lystria if I can stop you.”

“I don’t suppose you can stop us,” said Norheys. “I say, Uncle Ned, do book those sleepers. I promised Vi that she should see the black princess, and she wants to, don’t you, Vi?”

“I should like to see Lystria,” she said.

“So there you are, Uncle Ned,” said Norheys. “You can’t go back on Vi when she comes rushing home all the way from Paris just to tell you that she’d married me. Very few girls would have done that.”

“I protest strongly——” said Cable.

“That’s no use,” said Norheys. “If Uncle Ned won’t book the sleepers for us we’ll have to go without them. I’ve got my passport all right. You gave it to me yourself, Uncle Ned, and I’ll manage to slip Viola through somehow. You generally can, you know, if you tip the right man. Besides, I might come in useful. You never know. That princess has run off with the chauffeur and the Lystrians may not want him for a king. It’s a bit awkward for them. A fellow who’s touching his hat to you one day and you have to take yours off to him next day. Nobody likes to be let in for that sort of thing. Well, you know, if the worst comes to the worst and they still want a king, I’ll be there.”

Cable, who had been drumming impatiently with his fingers on the table, moved over suddenly and looked hard at Norheys. I do not know whether he actually thought that it might still be possible to make Norheys King of Lystria. If the thing were possible, it would certainly be a way out of a nasty situation. Even the Balkan war might be averted.

“I always said,” said Norheys, “that I’d no objection to being a king, so long as I didn’t have to marry that princess. Well, that part of the program is off now. But if the Lystrians don’t care for the chauffeur, why not pop me and Viola on to a couple of thrones? Not that we want to hoof out the princess. We don’t. Only just if she happens to have done herself in by skipping off with the chauffeur. And that’s the sort of thing it takes a girl a long time to get over—specially if she happens to be a princess—why, in that case what I say is: Why not us?”

Cable is an adventurer with no sense of responsibility and little regard for convention. He may have seriously contemplated financing another revolution in Lystria and setting up Norheys as a king at the end of it. But Troyte is a serious statesman. He could not possibly have regarded Norheys’ plan as worthy of consideration. Nevertheless, he agreed to take the young couple to Lystria. It was Viola who persuaded him.

She left her seat, went over to him in the prettiest possible manner, put one arm round his neck and set her cheek quite close to his. “Do take us,” she said. “We want to go most awfully, and I ought to have a honeymoon, oughtn’t I?”

Troyte picked up the telephone receiver again.

“Hullo!” he said. “Yes, Foreign Office. Lord Edmund Troyte speaking again. Did I say two sleepers on the Warsaw Express? Well, four will be wanted. Engage four.”

“Say five,” I said, “I’d rather like to go too.”

Troyte took no notice of me. He laid down the receiver, crossed the room holding Viola’s hand, and sat down.

“Why on earth do *you* want to go?” said Cable.

“Well,” I said, “I’m thinking of applying for shares in that oil company of yours, so, of course, I’d like to look into things for myself. And Lord Norheys is my godson, so if you’re going to make him a king, I ought to be there to help to crown him. Godparents have duties as well as rights. And, besides, I want to find out who that princess has run away with. I believe myself that my sister Emily’s curate has got her, and that Janet Church has gone along with them to be bridesmaid.”

I picked up the telephone receiver as I spoke, and asked for the Foreign Office. Cable growled. Troyte lit a cigarette and poured himself out a glass of brandy. Norheys clapped me on the back.

“Good old Uncle Bill!” he said. “I always knew you were a sport. Tell us all about that curate, won’t you?”

“That the Foreign Office?” I shouted down the telephone. “Yes. I’m speaking for Lord Edmund Troyte. Please engage five sleepers in the Warsaw Express to-morrow instead of four. If they haven’t that number vacant tell them to put on another coach. Yes. A whole coach. Never mind about the expense. Mr. Cable will settle that whatever it is.”

CHAPTER XXII

I did not enjoy the first part of the journey to Lystria, for I was left almost entirely alone. That is always disagreeable to me, for I am a man of sociable disposition with a very strongly formed habit of conversation. I could not blame Norheys and his wife for deserting me. They were on a honeymoon and it was natural enough that they should shut themselves up together in their own compartment of the *wagon-lits*. I did not see them, except at meals in the restaurant car. Troyte and Cable ignored me. Cable resented my being with the party at all and kept Troyte to himself in another compartment on pretense of talking business. They could not talk business in any useful way because they did not know what had happened in Lystria. All they could do was to speculate, and I might have been useful to them there. In fact, my guess about Emily’s curate was the only good guess any of them made.

Casimir, Count Istvan, who lives somewhere in that neighborhood, got into the train at Charlottenberg Station, just outside Berlin. King Wladislaws joined us at the Friedrichstrasse Station farther on. There is not enough room for four people to be comfortable in a *wagon-lit*’s compartment, so Cable, who does not care what he spends, engaged an ordinary first-class compartment farther down the train. There the four, Troyte, Cable, Casimir and the king, settled down. I was not invited to join the party.

Neither the king nor Casimir could cross the frontier into Megalia, but they were willing to go as far as Breslau and tell all they knew about what had happened. Unfortunately, they did not know very much.

Casimir explained that he had all along believed Tommy to be the Lord Norheys. He had regarded the “Reverend Thomas A. Norreys” passport as a clever trick intended to deceive von Steinveldt and the Germans while conveying to him the news that Lord Norheys had arrived in Berlin. That would have been an ingenious plan, much more ingenious than anything Troyte or Cable had thought of. It did make Casimir certain that Lord Norheys had arrived. It would, apparently, have deceived von Steinveldt and his police if their suspicions had not been awakened by what happened in the Mascotte the night after Tommy’s arrival. Von Steinveldt heard all about that from one of his spy waiters.

The king also believed that Tommy was Lord Norheys; but he understood the passport differently. His view was that Norheys pretended to be a curate in order to clear himself of the charge of being entangled with Miss Temple. Here he expressed the greatest desire to see Viola, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Troyte kept him from wandering along the train to look for Norheys’ compartment. He said that he had particularly admired the way in which Lord Norheys had kept up his pretense, even acting the part of a curate when there was no real need for it.

Then came the question of who the Reverend Thomas A. Norreys really was. The king did not know. Nor did Casimir. Casimir could tell exactly what was on the passport, and the king repeated all that Tommy had said about himself. But that got them no further. They had to send for me. Cable was unwilling to do so; but Troyte insisted. He remembered that I had said something about a curate.

When I heard the story told by the king and Casimir, I saw at once that my guess was very likely to be right.

“My sister Emily lost a curate early last week,” I said. “He was last heard of at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin, where he stayed two nights and then disappeared. The dates——”

We discussed the dates and they fitted in with each other very well. I could not help looking at Cable with an expression of satisfaction. The man had been abominably rude to me since we left London and had snubbed me pitilessly. I did not actually say “I told you so.” But I looked as if I thought it.

“Anyhow,” said Cable, “no curate would dare to marry the princess.”

Like many successful business men, Cable underestimates the courage and ability of the clergy. In all probability he never speaks to a clergyman at all and only sees one once in two years or so clad in a surplice, at some wedding or funeral which he's obliged to attend. A curate in a surplice looks innocent and mild, not at all the kind of man who would seize a vacant European throne. The same curate on the golf links is a very different person. Besides, Tommy was an exceptional curate. I told them what Emily and Canon Pyke had said about him.

"And I think," I said, "that you scarcely do justice to the courage which our younger clergy undoubtedly possess. A man who would face a Mothers' Union two days in a week and would take charge of a Girls' Friendly Society for an outing in the country, must be daring enough for any adventure."

"No curate," said Cable sullenly, "would venture to marry a princess."

"Do you happen to know our patriarch?" said the king. "No, I thought not. You wouldn't talk that way about curates if you did. I assure you, Mr. Cable, that our patriarch would do anything. Wouldn't he, Casimir?"

"He 'dares do all that may become a man,'" said Casimir. "'Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, the armed rhinoceros, or——'"

"Your patriarch," said Cable, "isn't a curate."

"But he was once," said the king. "He must have been, though before my time, of course. They all begin by being curates. And I assure you he wouldn't have hesitated—except for moral reasons, of course—to marry two or three princesses, and their mothers, who would be queens, if he'd wanted to. When I tell you that our patriarch has often gone for me without a sign of nervousness, and used language you'd scarcely believe over some trumpety little affair about a girl—and that was when I was a king, an absolute monarch, remember, with an army and all that sort of thing. No, there's no use saying that the clergy daren't do things."

The discussion was degenerating into a wrangle of purely academic interest. It was Troyte who brought us all back to the business on hand.

"The real question," he said, "is not what a curate or a bishop might do, but what has actually happened since the—er—the fugitives reached Lystria. I sent a telegram to the patriarch saying that the man was an impostor. He surely wouldn't go on with the marriage after that."

"Curate or not," said Cable, "I hope the patriarch has shot him."

"He lies," said Casimir, "in durance vile. This very morning I received from the patriarch a telegram——"

He produced it from his pocket. The king translated it for us. It told us that Tommy had been put under arrest.

"That is perhaps the best thing which could have happened," said Troyte.

But it was, even on his showing, a very bad best. The situation in Lystria was extremely critical. A revolution, carefully planned and organized, had actually taken place. The patriarch and the nobles, the only people who counted in Lystria, were perfectly determined to have a king of their own seated on the historic throne of Wladislaws the Hunter, the founder of the Lystrian dynasty, famous a thousand years ago for his skill in killing boars. They wanted to place on somebody's head the silver-gilt fillet which that monarch had bequeathed to his successors. But if they did anything of the sort every Balkan State would mobilize at once and nothing could avert a war unless England recognized the new king and declared herself ready to support him. That, and the benevolent neutrality of France, might save the situation. But how could England recognize a revolution which had either put no king on the throne or set up some impossible person like Emily's curate?

Troyte explained all that to us, slowly and carefully.

"But I thought," said Cable, "that you'd squared the League of Nations and all that lot."

Troyte objected to the word "squared." I dare say the League of Nations would have objected to it too. What he had done, so he said, was to create an atmosphere favorable to the consideration of the claims of an English King to the Lystrian throne.

“Meaning Lord Norheys?” said Cable.

Troyte nodded. He certainly had not meant his “atmosphere” to envelop Emily’s curate.

“In my opinion,” said the king, “the best thing for us to do is to leave things as they are.”

“Surely,” I said, “not exactly as they are. That curate belongs more or less to my sister Emily and she’s bent on finding him. There’ll be a frightful row if she discovers him lying in a dungeon in Lystria.”

“Nobody need ever know,” said Cable.

“The English lady who accompanied them,” said the king, “must be aware of the facts, and if I judge her character correctly, she will certainly tell what she knows.”

“What English lady?” said Cable.

“Her name,” said the king, “is Church, Miss Church, and unless I’m mistaken about her——”

“If Janet Church is there,” I said, “she’s certain to have telegraphed to every ambassador in Europe and also to the prime minister, and the Leader of the Labor Party and all the different Liberal Parties there are, demanding the instant release of Emily’s curate.”

“What I want to know,” said Cable, “is what’s going to happen about my oil concession?”

Nobody could give him any information about that. It had not been granted by the Megalian Government. Indeed, it had not been granted by anybody. All Cable really had in writing was a promise that it would be granted by the king of Lystria when he was safe on his throne.

“That,” said King Wladislaws, “is why I say that things had better be left as they are.”

“But they can’t,” I said. “Emily’s curate can’t be left in prison. You don’t know my sister Emily or you wouldn’t suggest it. Besides, there’s Janet Church to be reckoned with.”

“I think,” said the king, “that by this time the young man has probably been released, perhaps married, possibly even crowned.”

“Good God!” said Troyte. “You don’t mean to say you actually think——”

The king waved his hand cheerfully.

“The patriarch,” he said, “is a man of unbounded patriotism, devoted to the cause of Lystrian independence. And he dislikes, intensely dislikes the Archimandrite of Megalia. The Lystrian nobility wish for a king, an English king, a sportsman.”

“Emily’s curate seems to be that,” I said.

“My daughter——” said the king. “I am now speaking very confidentially—my daughter rather liked that young man. I liked him myself. Casimir liked him. Every one liked him. My daughter’s only objection to marrying him was the existence of a certain Miss Temple. Now it appears that in his case there is no Miss Temple. It is likely—I do not say certain, but very likely—that Calypso will insist on the patriarch releasing him. She may even suggest that the marriage should take place at once.”

Then Norheys slid back the door which divided the compartment from the corridor.

“Thought I’d look in,” he said, “just to see how you’re all getting on. Viola has dropped off into a doze, and I was feeling a bit hipped with no one to talk to.”

He looked round with an amiable smile, as if he were sure of a warm welcome. He got nothing of the sort. Troyte and Cable scowled at him. The king regarded him as an inconvenient outsider. I looked the other way. Casimir was the only one who spoke. He quoted Shakespeare in allusion to Lady Norheys’ doze:

““Sleep that knits up the ravell’d sleeve of care.””

“Hit it in one,” said Norheys, settling down between Cable and the king. “Well, Uncle Ned, settled up the affairs of Eastern Europe?”

“No,” said Troyte.

“Well,” said Norheys. “I don’t want to chip in, don’t you know. I hate fellows who shove their oars in when not asked. Still, what I always say is this: An ordinary sort of fellow with no particular brains and that kind of thing often gets there, though you don’t expect him to. That’s why I’m offering to help. It seems to me the position is this—you’ll pick me up if I’m wrong about facts, won’t you, Uncle Ned? I’m often a bit weak on facts.”

“Facts in this case,” I said, “are much more like fancies.”

“That’s just where I come in,” said Norheys. “A fact might have knocked me out, but when it comes to fancies, I’m there all the time. Well now, these Lystrian johnnies seem to want a king. Don’t see why they do myself; but there it is. They’ve got a princess, but that doesn’t satisfy them.”

“It doesn’t satisfy the League of Nations,” said the king, “or the Entente powers. That’s where the trouble is. The Lystrians would be quite satisfied with Calypso. In fact, they’d be very glad to have me back again, all of them except the patriarch. But the Entente powers simply won’t stand me.”

“That comes to exactly the same thing as what I said,” said Norheys. “Well, along comes some fellow we don’t know, dropping like what-d’you-call-him from the thing-a-me-bob. What?”

“A *deus ex machina*,” I suggested.

“That’s not what I meant,” said Norheys. “I meant a jolly old bolt from the blue. But whatever we call him, thunderbolt or little tin god, there he is, quite ready to take on the job, princess and all. That’s the way things stand, isn’t it, Uncle Ned?”

Troyte was looking out of the window. Casimir murmured something about a Daniel coming to judgment. Norheys went on:

“Well then, why not let him? That’s what I always say: If there’s a fellow who’ll buck in where wanted, then let him buck in; so long as he doesn’t interfere with us.”

“Unfortunately,” said Troyte coldly, “you’ve left out of consideration the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles and the policy of the Allied Powers.”

“What I say about all that,” said Norheys, “is this: What did we fight the war for? I don’t know, of course, not so to speak out of my own inside. I just fought because all the other fellows I knew did too. But I do know what you said at the time, Uncle Ned, and it’s no use your saying you didn’t, for you did. What we fought for was the self-determination of small nationalities. Well, there you are, and you can’t go back on it now. Lystria is a small nationality, isn’t it?”

“Two and a half millions before the war,” said the king. “Probably about two millions now.”

“Couldn’t possibly have a smaller nationality,” said Norheys, “and what I always say is this, Uncle Ned: If you’ve said a thing, you’ve jolly well got to stick to it, even if you wish you’d said something else, which of course everybody generally does.”

I felt quite sorry for Troyte. He really did talk about small nationalities and self-determination several times during the later years of the war. I dare say he deserved to be twitted with it. But I felt I must speak a word for him.

“You forget,” I said to Norheys, “that you also fought to make the world safe for democracy. Setting up an absolute monarch in Lystria is not democracy.”

“When I talk about democracy,” said Norheys, “or rather when other fellows like you, Uncle Bill, talk about democracy, for it’s a thing I never mention myself either in a club or anywhere else, I always say that the first thing is to settle: What is democracy?”

We all felt, I think, that Norheys had better be left to answer his own question. Troyte, I know, distrusts the American

formula—"By, with, for, to, at, in, the people." None of the rest of us had a formula at all.

"Democracy," said Norheys, "simply means being able to say, 'You go to hell' to any fellow who tries to come it over you, whether in the matter of getting a drink in the middle of the night or any other way. That's my idea of democracy, and you may say what you like, Uncle Bill, that's what most of us jolly well fought for. Though what I always say is this: We were rather let down in the end. Still there is, don't you know, a sacred principle and all that, the sort of thing no decent fellow ever goes back on."

"The Lystrians," I said, "are evidently out-and-out democrats. 'You go to hell' seems exactly to describe their attitude toward the rest of Europe."

"Well, then, there you are," said Norheys. "And if you're there, what's the use of worrying?"

The attendant from the restaurant car came along and told us that luncheon was served. Norheys rushed off to waken Viola. The rest of us staggered along the swaying corridor. Troyte's forehead was lined with a deep frown, always a sign that he was engaged in serious thought. I remembered exactly the same wrinkles when he was bothered over the writing of Greek iambics at school, which were considered in our day a necessary part of the education of an English gentleman.

CHAPTER XXIII

The king and Casimir left us at Breslau. There was no help for that. Neither one nor other of them would have been allowed to cross the frontier. The Megalian Government was determined not to have Wladislaws on the throne of Lystria again. And they knew Casimir for a persistent plotter.

They said good-by to us with regret which was quite unfeigned. It must have been intensely annoying to Casimir to miss the last scene of the drama he had planned. It was not working out exactly as he planned it, which made the end all the more exciting for him. What should we find at the Schloss Amberg when we got there? What would Casimir have found if he could have been with us? A wedding and a coronation? The public execution of a Pretender to the Throne? A counter-revolution, with the Megalian troops in possession of the Schloss? A patriarch prime minister under a new monarchy, or—such things have happened in Russia, which is not very far away—a martyred archbishop?

For King Wladislaws the turn of events was even more thrilling. He had developed a personal liking for Tommy, and, in his own way, he was really fond of Calypso. For all he knew when he said good-by to us at Breslau, she might be a queen, a prisoner of State, a fugitive among the mountains, a widow, a bride, or an exceedingly indignant young woman anxious for vengeance on every one concerned in the trick which had been played on her.

I felt very sorry for the king when he had to say good-by to us at Breslau. He is the only king I ever met personally and I liked him. I do not wonder that there is a strong monarchical reaction in Europe at present. If there are many kings like Wladislaws, it is natural enough that their people should want to have them back. Democratic institutions are all very well in their way, but they invariably end in elected presidents. Presidents—I have known three or four in my time—are stodgy compared to King Wladislaws, and Europe does nowadays want a little brightness.

The next part of our journey was accomplished in much faster time than Tommy and the princess had done it in. We crossed the frontier in a train, for we had no fear of being stopped, and did not feel, as they did, the necessity for keeping off the main traffic routes. We had only twenty-five miles to go by motor. I fancy that we had the same car and the same driver that Tommy had; though I can not be sure about this. Men of the bearded brigand type are common enough in Lystria and many of them may be chauffeurs. If I kept a car in London—a thing which I can not afford to do—I should try to persuade that Lystrian chauffeur to come home with me. He would give an air of aristocratic distinction to a Ford.

If I had time and an aptitude for the literary guide-book style of writing I should describe our journey through that beautiful and little known part of Europe. I am sure that people would like to read about the mountains, torrents, villages, long-horned oxen, ruined fortresses and so forth. However, the thing will be done, far more competently than I could hope to do it. Cable has conceived the idea of developing Lystria as a tourist resort as soon as he has the oil industry in

working order. He intends to hire a couple of our best-known literary men—he even mentioned the names of those he had in mind—to write the country up. “Lotus Eating in Lystria,” I suppose, “with Six Colored Illustrations”; and perhaps “The Beautiful Bypaths Series. Lystria by—— With ten photographs of the author.” Cable is extraordinarily thorough. He is writing to an American literary paper for the name of the best-known poetess “raised on their side.” He means to commission her to do some Lystrian Lyrics. It is plainly no use my entering into competition with such people by describing the scenery, manners, costumes, customs and morals of the Lystrians.

We caught our first glimpse of the Schloss Amberg just as Tommy did, from the top of the hill on the other side of the valley. It was decked with flags. They hung out of every window, fluttered from every flagstaff—there were a good many flagstuffs—and were festooned along the walls.

“I wonder what that means,” said Troyte.

“Looks like a king’s birthday show,” said Norheys. “Wladislaws might have told us what to expect.”

“Much more likely to be the princess’ wedding,” said Cable.

“Perhaps,” I said, “it may be a public rejoicing at the death of Emily’s curate. I shall be sorry if they’ve executed him.”

The car crossed the bridge and began to climb up the twisty road to the gate of the Schloss. Suddenly a salute was fired by the guns on the walls. They did not all go off at once, and they were not very big guns, but they made quite an impressive amount of noise. Every rifle about the place was shot off at or about the same time, adding a clatter to the din. Our bearded chauffeur, who had been getting more and more excited since we saw the flags, lost control of himself altogether when he heard the guns. He stood up, waved his arms wildly and shouted. There are nasty steep banks on each side of that road. If Norheys, who was sitting in front of the car, had not grabbed the steering-wheel, we should certainly have left the road and gone rolling over and over till we reached the river in the valley. In that case we should none of us have heard what had happened about the princess and Tommy. I should have been sorry, for I was full of curiosity.

We left the car at the gate of the Schloss and passed into the courtyard. It was half full of soldiers. I fancy that the whole Lystrian army was drawn up there in a square. Many of them were still firing off their rifles. The officers were waving their swords.

We were just in time. Through the door of the chapel at the opposite side of the courtyard came the sound of the wedding march, played on the organ. Tommy, with the princess on his arm, walked out amid deafening cheers. Immediately behind them came Janet Church, a solitary and most unattractive-looking bridesmaid. Behind her thronged the Lystrian nobility. All the Count Casimirs were there, except Istvan. The half-dozen or so nobles with other names were also there. Janet, in an old gray tweed dress, and our party in our traveling clothes, were the only commonplace people. The princess was splendid in a dress much finer, also much longer, than the one she had worn when she danced at the Mascotte. Tommy had been fitted out by Count Albert Casimir in a very handsome crimson silk suit with a jacket laced, hussar fashion, with gold. I noticed that he wore one of his own clerical collars round his neck. Perhaps that was his idea of full dress for a ceremonial occasion. Perhaps he did it to please the patriarch. The nobles were gorgeous. No one who has not seen the Lystrian nobility in their best clothes has any idea how magnificent clothes can be. People who understand dressing-up as the Lystrians do ought to have a king of their own. They would be wasted in the drab monotony of a republic. I think Troyte felt this as he looked at the magnificent scene before us. Fortunately, the sun shone brightly. Every color had its full value. Everything that could glitter glittered brilliantly.

Last of all, attended by an amazing number of clergy, the patriarch came from the chapel door. He wore—but I am not well up in the language of ecclesiastical millinery. His garments may have been copes, chasubles, dalmatics or albs. Whatever they were, they seemed to me to be made of shimmering gold. If they ever disestablish and disendow the Church in Lystria, the sale of the patriarch’s vestments will go a long way toward paying off the national debt.

The procession moved slowly across the square until Tommy caught sight of us. The moment he did he stopped, and of course every one else stopped too. He had never seen any of us before and though we knew who he must be, he could only guess at who we were. He turned to Janet Church for help.

Janet knew me and introduced me. I presented the rest of the party. At least, I began the presentation. I had only got as far as Norheys when the princess interrupted me. She rushed forward, threw her arms around Viola’s neck and kissed her heartily on both cheeks.

“I know you’re Miss Temple,” she said.

“Lady Norheys,” I corrected.

“You may call her Viola Temple if you like,” said Norheys. “What I always say is: When anybody has a name which everybody else knows them by, why not call them it? That’s what I said when fellows began to stop calling me Bunny, after I became Norheys, don’t you know? I dare say now,” he said to Tommy, “that you’ve often heard of me as Bunny Troyte, and scarcely know me as Norheys. It’s just the same with Viola, only of course more so, on account of her being much more famous than any of the rest of us.”

The princess, one arm still round Viola’s neck, cooed into her ear.

“I’m so glad you’ve got him safe. I wouldn’t have taken him from you for anything. And now I’m married too. Isn’t it splendid? And only for your beautiful letter perhaps neither ever would have been.”

“I should like,” said Troyte with dignity, “to have some conversation with the patriarch.”

The patriarch, it seemed, wanted to have some conversation with Troyte. He had been pushing his way through the excited nobles while the princess was kissing Viola. As soon as he had secured a place for himself in the front row, he made a speech.

It was partly in Lystrian and partly in German. Troyte understands neither language. He turned to me to interpret for him.

“What’s he saying?” he asked.

My German is rusty through long disuse, and I never knew any Lystrian. However, I think I picked up the main thing the patriarch wanted to say.

“As far as I can make out,” I said, “he’s trying to tell you that one Lord Norheys will do quite as well as another. The coronation is to be this afternoon.”

“But,” said Troyte, “this young man isn’t Lord Norheys. Tell him that.”

I told him. After I had finished, Janet Church told him again, in much better German than mine. We did not make much impression on the patriarch. All he said in reply was that if the Lystrians could not have Graf Bunny Norheys, they would be perfectly satisfied with Graf Tommy.

“Tell him,” said Troyte, “that this young man isn’t a count and isn’t Norheys at all.”

Then Tommy joined in.

“There’s no use saying I’m not Norheys when I am,” he said, “though I spell my name with two *r*’s instead of an *rh*, which strikes me as a more sensible way of doing it. As for my not being a count, if you can get that into the patriarch’s head, you’ll do more than I can. I’ve been at him all morning and so has Miss Church. We’ve assured him over and over again that I’m not a count. But he can’t be got to understand. Not that I care what he calls me, only I didn’t want any irregularity about the marriage, which there might have been if I was married under a wrong name.”

“The confusion,” I said, “in the patriarch’s mind probably arises from the custom, prevalent all over Europe, of every member of a titled family using the title. Take the Casimir family, for instance. I don’t know how many Casimirs there are——”

“They’re all Casimirs,” said Tommy, waving his hand toward a group of Lystrian nobles. “All except seven.”

“And I’m sure,” I said, “that they’re all counts.”

“Every single one of them,” said Tommy.

“So you see,” I said to Troyte, “how the patriarch’s mistake arose. He naturally thought that every one called Norheys must be a marquis.”

“But he isn’t,” said Troyte.

“Is it worth while,” I said, “correcting the mistake now?”

Apparently Troyte thought it was. He insisted on having what he called a conference with the patriarch. I do not think the patriarch liked it, for there was a wedding feast waiting to be eaten in the great hall of the castle. But Troyte was firm. He and the patriarch and Cable went off, taking Janet with them to act as interpreter. The princess and Lady Norheys went away together, their arms round each other. Poor Lady Norheys had been traveling fast for days. I think she wanted a bath and some clothes before she sat down to the banquet amid the magnificent nobles of Lystria.

Norheys took Tommy by the arm and spoke to him confidentially.

“I say, you know, about your being king instead of me and all that, I’m jolly glad. Never really wanted the job a bit. Only promised to take it on to please Uncle Ned. All the same, don’t you know, I think you owe me a good turn. Only for my sticking to Viola through thick and thin in spite of everything that everybody said, you wouldn’t be here, would you?”

“If there’s any mortal thing I can do for you in any way,” said Tommy, “just tell me what it is.”

“Thanks,” said Norheys. “Well, I’ve married Viola, you know, and of course she’s Marchioness of Norheys and all that, which ought to be good enough and is good enough. All the same, the world’s full of old cats. I’m not talking of Uncle Ned now. But there are cats, aunts, you know, and lots more who aren’t even aunts. They’ll be inclined to sniff a bit at Viola, on account of her being a dancer on the stage and that sort of thing. Now, what I always say is this: I don’t care a damn what a girl was, dancer or anything else. No more do you. No more does any sensible man. But if there are cats in the world—and there’s no use denying that—what I say is, that it’s better to have them purring than mewing.”

I did not see how Tommy could prevent Norhey’s aunts, and the other ladies who were not his aunts, from mewing if they wanted to. Norheys explained.

“If a fellow—I mean to say, a girl, is properly received at Court, accepted by Royalty, don’t you know?—then she’s all right. It doesn’t make a bit of difference in reality, of course, but the sort of people I’m thinking about believe it does. Now if you could see your way—you and Calypso—when you’re king and queen—if you’d take Viola into the Royal Circle, why nobody could say a word after that, could they?”

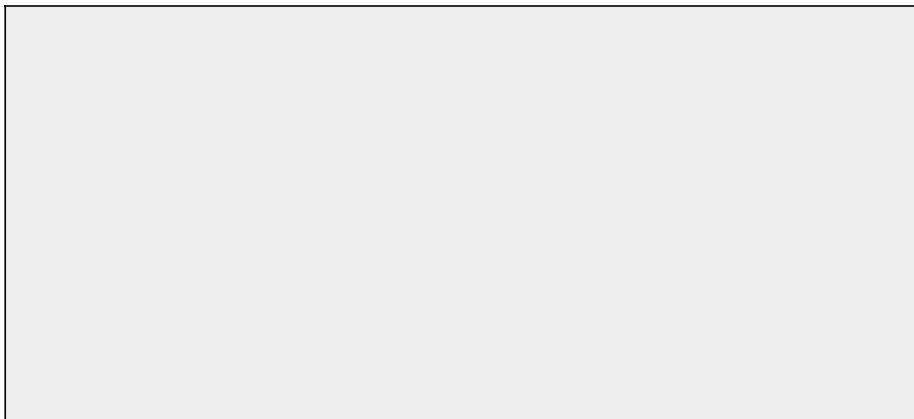
I saw Norheys’ point at last. In the days of King Wladislaws a lady’s reputation might not have been established by the fact that she was a favorite at the Lystrian Court. But things would be quite different when Tommy reigned.

“Whatever we can do,” said Tommy heartily, “will be done at once. Lady of the Bedchamber now? or Keeper of the Royal Robes? I don’t know much about these jobs. But the best of them, whatever it is, will be Lady Norheys’ this evening. And if I have an Order to bestow—I haven’t inquired yet, but I suppose I have——”

“There’s the Golden Adder of Lystria,” I said. “Very few people outside the Royal Family have it.”

“It shall be yours,” said Tommy to Norheys, “the very minute I can lay my hands on it.”

THE END



Transcriber's notes:

In Chapter IV, the sentence *That appears to be true* may be dialog, but did not appear in quotation marks in the original.

Obvious typographical errors have been silently corrected.

[The end of *King Tommy* by James Owen Hannay]