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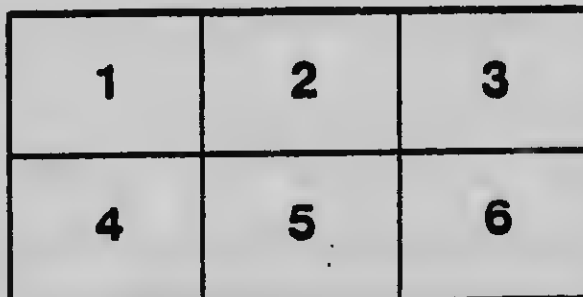
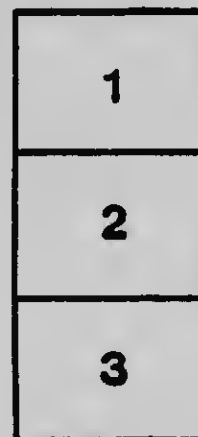
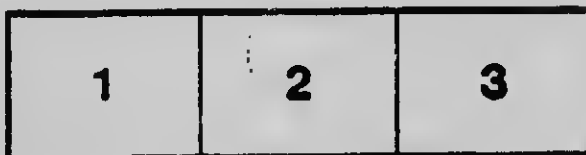
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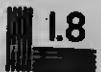
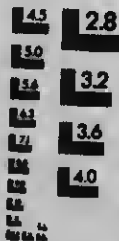
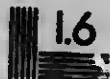
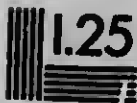
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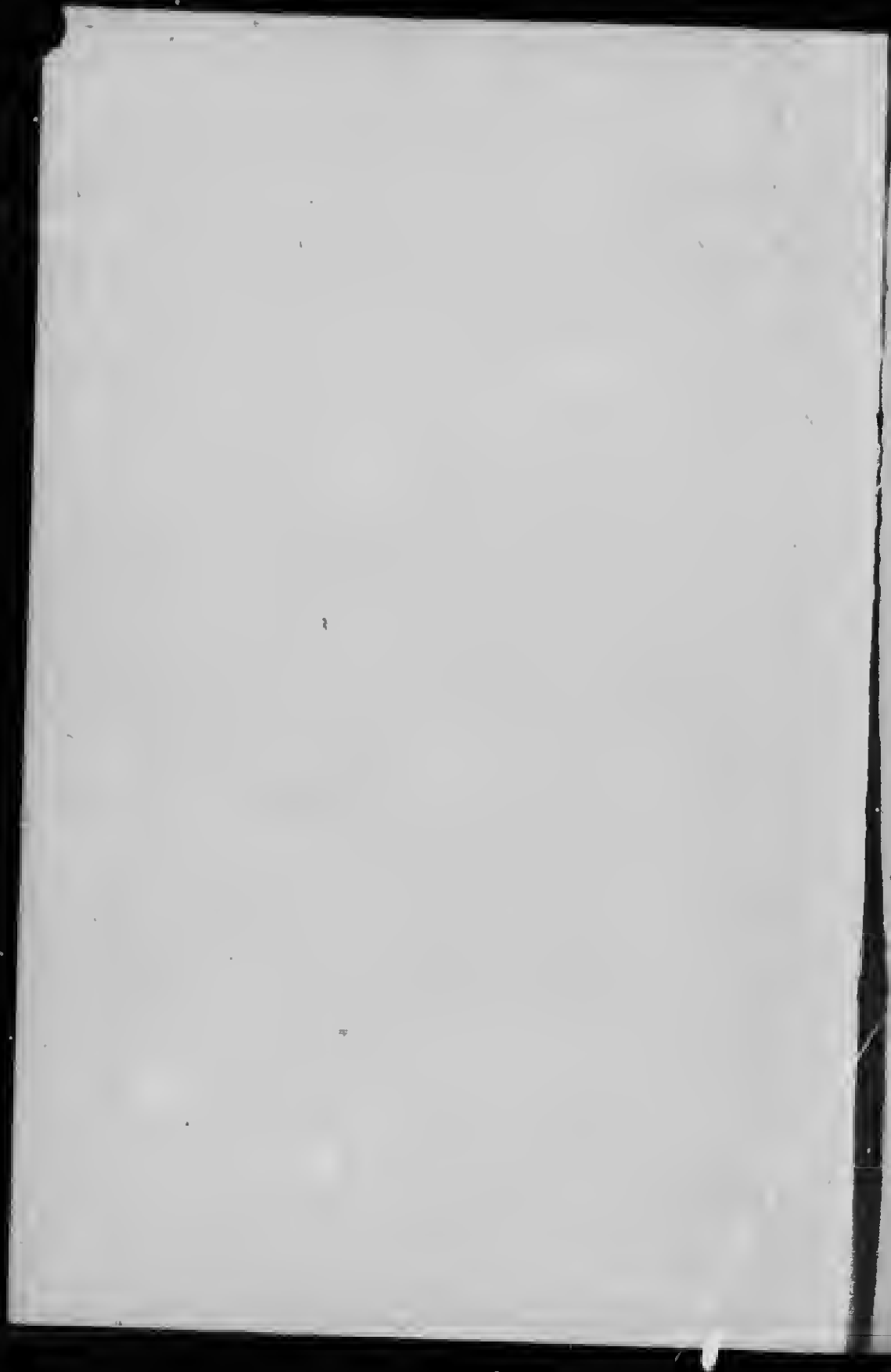
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THE
APOSTLES OF THE SOUTH EAST



The Apostles of the
South East. By Frank
T. Bullen, Author of 'The Cruise
of the Cachalot,' 'With Christ at Sea,' etc.

TORONTO

WILLIAM BRIGGS

LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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PREFACE

IN the following pages it has been my endeavour to present a picture of a phase of London life that is not very widely understood, or indeed realised. The Apostles of the South East have been drawn from real characters, only the usual literary licence being taken with them. Due allowance must be made for the difficulty of dealing with living characters, especially when belonging to a class that is keenly sensitive to any remarks that *it* construes as ridicule. It should not be necessary to say that no ridicule has been intended. Nothing but an earnest desire to set forth the difficulties, the dangers, and the triumphs, attendant upon the labours of the humble class of Christians mentioned has actuated the Writer, and if any person feels that he or she has been too closely depicted in these pages, they are implored to believe that only the kindest motives, and most sincere desire to advance the cause we all have at heart, have been the moving forces in the production of this book.

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One word more. It has been suggested in various quarters, without, I am bound to say, any adequate reason, that 'Saul Andrews' is intended to represent the Writer. This is, of course, not so—'Saul Andrews' was a far better man, and has long gone to his well-earned reward.

F. T. B.

DULWICH : *October* 1901.

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CHAPTER I

THE FIELD

LUPIN STREET, Rotherhithe, has never appealed to the fashionable slum visitor, not even in the days when slumming was in the height of favour among people in search of a new sensation, and a newly discovered slum was immediately overrun with fine lady and gentlemen visitors. Indeed, there are grave doubts whether any of its inhabitants would not have felt much annoyed at such a name being given to the street wherein so many of them had spent their lives. Several of the courts and blind alleys leading out of it, and ending abruptly in greasy, fungus-clad walls—well, there could be no doubt about their being slums; but Lupin Street! why, Mrs. Salmon, the painter's wife, who lived at No. 7, was quite the lady, and her three daughters were as well dressed and well behaved as any Blackheath gentlewomen. The peculiarity of Lupin Street was its mixture of respectable and decidedly disrespectable inhabitants. The houses, with an economy on the part of the builder that was painfully evident, were bounded sharply by the pavement—you passed out of the front door on to the common pathway without even an intervening step. They were two-storey houses, nominally of six rooms, though one of the said rooms was but an exaggerated

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cupboard with a copper in it, usually known among the population as the 'wash-us.' At the back each house was provided with a sort of gloomy bin which was dignified by the title of the 'back-yard,' and sometimes (by mild lunatics) as 'the garden.' It was really about ten feet square, with walls six feet high, and into it fell on most days a steady fine shower of 'blacks,' which made all washing hung out therein to dry to assume a speckled greyish colour that no amount of blue could ever overcome.

Yet, in spite of the drawbacks incidental to living in such houses and in such a neighbourhood, of which more presently, there were to be found sprinkled up and down Lupin Street houses whose tenants would not be defeated in their never-ending warfare against dirt and gloom. Their windows were clean and whole; the curtains, cheap enough in all conscience (you can get a very good curtaining, warranted to wash at least twice, at the local draper's for a 'penny-three' a yard), were always white. They must have been washed and dried indoors to keep them so. Some plants, carefully attended, mostly geraniums and fuchsias, formed a bright background to the windows and hid the interior from prying eyes whose owners thought nothing, bless you, of stopping as they passed and flattening their noses against the panes. The front doors of these houses were always closed, and the threshold was as white as hearthstone (three irregular fragments a penny) lavishly applied every morning could make it. Inside those houses the same determined warfare was waged against grime and darkness. The threadbare carpets were neatly patched, the worn oilcloth was kept as clean as soap

THE FIELD

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and water could make it, and the children going to Board School always looked nice as clean pinafores and well-brushed hair and clean boots could make them.

There were fifty-two houses in Lupin Street, and out of them all ten were thus conspicuous by their cleanliness, the other forty-two were as slummy as possible. Windows begrimed with dirt, broken panes stuffed with nondescript rags. Street doors always wide open, with a frowsy smell as of unaired bedding and dirty cookery, issuing to join the anything but fresh breezes of the street. These tenants were a hard crowd, but indifferent honest—that is, there were no professional thieves among them. Keen-eyed men with bowler hats and closely buttoned overcoats never made a raid upon any of the dirty houses, and emerged, taking with them furtive-looking prisoners. No, unclean and deplorable as the street undoubtedly was in its general aspect, its denizens were of the working class, albeit the majority of them worked far less than they loafed about the 'Jack-o'-Newbury' just round the corner. It was a semi-nautical neighbourhood. From the roofs of any of the houses the masts of the ships in the Surrey Commercial Docks might be seen, and a very short walk (if you knew your way) would bring you to the riverside, whence, unless you were an eager student of waterside squalor, you would lose no time in departing again.

The few respectable houses in the street were inhabited by men who had fairly regular employment—two riggers, two stevedores, two shipwrights, a sailmaker, a tug-boat skipper, a painter, and a sweep. And, strangely enough, this little company

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of hard-working people not only leavened the whole of Lupin Street and the courts adjacent by their practice of cleanliness, but they also supplied its religious savour. The Salvation Army, for some occult reason, had never found favour in the eyes of Lupin Streeters. The Established Church and the Roman Catholic Chapel, both buildings but a very short walk distant from the street, never found one of its inhabitants among their congregations, and the Rev. Andrew Mack, incumbent of the Established Church, put down Lupin Street as a black spot where religion was not, and the people loved to have it so. It formed a special item in a certain bishop's report concerning 'Godless South London,' that report that was so fiercely resented by those of whom it was written as an evidence of the utter ignorance concerning the vast number of sincere worshippers outside of any of the orthodox folds.

But we must not get on too fast. Be it known, therefore, that in Wren Lane, a blind turning half-way down Lupin Street, there had at one time been a large cowshed and stable combined. That is, the building had once sheltered cows owned by an enterprising dairyman in the High Street, who made a great parade in his advertisements and big letters all over his shop windows of his vending only milk from his own cows—'Fresh Milk from our own Farm Twice Daily.' The unhappy cows shut up in that shed, where the light of day hardly penetrated, were fed on copious meals of brewers' grains, and the only time they smelt the fresh air was when they could no longer yield milk and were exchanged for other hapless ones. At last the County Council, with its usual meddling inter-

ference with an honest tradesman's efforts to get a livelihood, decided that the herding of cows under such conditions was filthy and unsanitary, and was moreover a direct nursery of typhoid and tuberculosis germs. So they ordered the dairy farm to be done away with entirely, while still allowing the stable to remain in use.

Now Jemmy Maskery, the respectable sweep of Lupin Street, was not only a hard-working man; he was a preacher of righteousness and a practiser thereof of no mean order. But being very poor, he and his fellow worshippers had hitherto been driven to hold their gospel services in the open air on a piece of waste ground near by, a sort of free and open discussion forum for all sorts of religious, irreligious, and social questions on a Sunday. Their own private worship had been conducted in Jemmy's little front parlour, wherein the dozen brethren and sisters composing the 'Church' could just manage to squeeze themselves with a good deal of discomfort. Not that discomfort ever daunted these earnest souls, being their normal physical condition; but still, being thoroughly practical people in their own small, simple way, they were ready to avail themselves of any opportunity that presented itself of improving either their worldly or spiritual position if it could only be done in what they considered to be a Christian manner.

Therefore, when Jemmy heard that the quondam cowshed was going a-begging, so to speak, for a nominal rent (15% a year), a bright idea took possession of him, and for the time being crowded out the others that he usually entertained. It was nothing less than the acquirement of the cowshed as a 'hall'

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wherein the brethren might not only hold their meetings for worship, but where they might gather in such as should be saved from among their open-air audiences; where they might in winter, when the inclement weather forbade them from any lengthy holding forth on the common, announce to the world that the Gospel of the grace of God should be preached under cover.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMPAIGN

THE next morning Jemmy, with the clean face which he usually presented on Sundays and evenings only, was abnormally busy hunting up the brethren and sisters wherever they might be found. It took some little time when he did find them to infect them with his own enthusiasm on the subject of a hall, for they were all, like himself, obliged to look at both sides of a penny before spending it, and as for binding themselves to make periodical payments, well, they just shuddered at the idea. But Jemmy, trained in a school where it was accounted the last extremity of folly to take no for an answer, was not thus to be choked off his pet idea. He hammered away with smiling and voluble perseverance until he had actually communicated some of his own enthusiasm to the majority of the brethren and all the sisters, and had won from them a staid adherence to his scheme so far as it came within the narrow compass of their means.

Flushed with success, he had not noted the time—what was time in comparison with eternity, that roseate, never-ending future to which he and all his co-workers looked with a longing only heightened each day by the hopelessness of their present sur-

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roundings? He strode towards his home, murmuring softly to himself, 'They shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.' The squalor of Lupin Street had no power to make him miserable; his body moved therein, but he, the inner man of him, was uplifted, for the time supremely happy in his vision.

So rapt was he, that a heavy hand smiting him on the back brought him down to common things with quite a jerk, and he heard, uncomprehendingly at first, a cheery voice saying, 'What cheer, Jemmy, old man? How's things?' A bearded, stalwart man of about thirty-five, with a fine flavour of briny freshness about him, was standing by his side with outstretched hand and a merry twinkle in his dark eyes. Knowing Jemmy of old, he was not surprised at the dull, just awakened look on the worthy sweep's face. It quickly gave place to a wide smile of glad recognition as he said, 'Why, Saul, you're actually home again, glory be to God!'

'Amen!' said the seafarer reverently. 'The Lord's giv' me another look at the ole show, an' I tell ye I *am* glad to be here. But how is it y' ain't at work?'

Jemmy hooked his arm into Saul's, and knotting his ten grimy fingers over it, burst out into his absorbing theme—the conversion of the cowshed into a sanctuary. Saul listened intently, and as soon as Jemmy paused for breath, he burst in with:

'Why, that's what I call a great scheme. I'm in it, an' don't you forget it. Looky here!' And disengaging himself with a jerk from Jemmy's ham-

pering arm, he lugged out a little canvas bag, the contents of which jingled musically. 'Paid off this mornin,' see, Jemmy, 'n' here's my thank-off'rin'!' With which words he counted out five sovereigns into Jemmy's hand.

'Bless the Lord! bless the Lord!' was all Jemmy could say, while the big tears rolled down from beneath his reddened eyelids.

'There, there, don' take on so 'bout a little thing like that,' murmured Saul shamefacedly. 'Why, wot is it 'longside o' wot I've saved since I found the Lord in your front parlour? Don't say no more about it; makes me feel 'shamed o' myself fur doin' so little. But where y' going now?'

'I wuz just a-goin' 'ome w'en you stoppeu me,' answered Jemmy, 'fur I'd ben out all the mornin' stirrin' up th' Church on this bizness, 'n' I thought I wuz filled right up with joy, but you comin' on me like you did an' doing wot you 'ave done, well, I c'd just darncelike David did afore the Ark, my cup's a-runnin' over. But come along home 'n have some brekfuss 'long o' me. I ain't 'ad none yet.'

'Ali right, Jemmy, I'll come, but I don' want no brekfuss. I had mine an hour ago,' said Saul. 'How's the missus, an' the fam'ly?'

'Oh, grand, grand, brother—that is, they are now. We've had a goodish bit o' illness since you ben away—w'y, it must be twelve months and more—and I 'ad the wife in 'orspital for a couple o' months, an'—but there, God's ben *very* good to us, we've never wanted fur nothin'—our bread's ben give us an' our water's ben shore. 'Ad to be 'know; there's th' promise, ain't it?'

But the last words brought the pair to Jemmy's door, with its spotless semicircle of white hearthstone described on the pavement from door-post to door-post. Over the lintel protruded despondently the sign of Jemmy's profession—a cylinder-headed brush—not at a fierce angle, as it usually is in such cases, but, in consequence of the attentions paid it by the youth of Lupin Street, drooping out of the horizontal.

The door stood wide open, revealing a dim passage—quite dark, in fact, against the hot glare of morning sun that was ruthlessly exposing all the unloveliness of Lupin Street. Carefully stepping over the whitened patch, Jemmy and his visitor entered, but their feet were stayed on the mat. Midway of the short passage stood Mrs. Maskery, spotlessly clean to the last observable detail of her poor dress.

'Looky 'ere, ole dear,' burst out Jemmy, 'ere's Sau' Andrews come t' see yer. On'y seems like larst week 'e went away, does it? Don't bother about any brekfuss fur me. I don't feel 'sif I could eat any this mornin', an'—but by this time Mrs. Maskery had recovered her breath, and turning from her conciliatory husband to Saul, took him into her confidence.

She concluded her harangue by looking appealingly at Saul for confirmation of her views, and at the same time handing him in after her husband to the front parlour. That sanctuary was clean as labour could make it, and as exquisitely uncomfortable as an utter absence of all ideas about making a room habitable could effect. The floor was covered by a cheap oilcloth, a rag hearth-rug stood before the brunswick-blackened fender, a bunch of manila fibre decorated the cold grate. For the rest,

a small loo-table covered with slippery American cloth and garnished with gaudy books placed round its outer margin at regular intervals, a horsehair-covered sofa, looking as if a vindictive antipathy to rest was woven into its very substance, half a dozen angular 'occasional chairs,' primly arranged so as to give the room an appearance of being really furnished, and over the backs of chairs and sofa neatly laid snow-white oblongs of crochet work—antimacassars by courtesy—that were ready to slide floorwards at a touch. Over the mantelpiece hung two perfectly atrocious libels upon Jemmy and his wife—oil paintings, if you please—misrepresenting that worthy pair as two beings of an imbecility beyond description, but the choicest treasures of the household. Around the other walls framed Christmas supplements—framed, that is, by a local tradesman at about a shilling each, and looking as if they were all that money too dear.

But to Jemmy that room was a sacred apartment, to be entered only with a sense of Sunday upon one. Upon week-days it was never used except for a meeting on Thursday evening, or when Jemmy, with the last vestige of soot scalded off himself (except, indeed, that which still ornamented the ends of his finger-nails), and a spotless white shirt on, came in and sat solemnly down to the table to make certain entries concerning the funds of the church within a black-covered twopenny memorandum book. And that, being in the worthy sweep's eyes a sacred function, did not in the least alter the tabernacle-like character of his best parlour.

Having shown her guest in, Mrs. Maskery said, with a significant toss of the head, 'You'll 'ave t'

excuse me, Saul. There's the boy's dinner t' get. An' don't *you* forgit,' turning to her husband, 'at there's three orders in as you must attend to.' And with this parting salute she departed.

'An' now, Saul,' said Jemmy, as if in continuation of a conversation that had only just been momentarily interrupted, '*you* know how, afore you went away to the Heast Hinjies this voy'ge, we was alwus a-strivin' with the Lord ter let us git inter a temple of our own, where we could arsk in the sinners out er the rain an' the cold. Well, some o' the brethring do seem to 'ave grown lookwarm in this matter; but I ben a-believin' for it, an', praise the Lord, it's almost *come*.' At the last word his voice rose ecstatically, but suddenly he dropped his head upon his hand, and said solemnly, almost wearily:

'Saul, my son in the faith, I know how you love the Lord's work and also His peepul—how ever since you found Him at our open-air you've ben our joy an' crown. I ain't got no fear but wot you'll 'elp us all you know 'ow w'ile you're 'ome. But we must pray in faith, nothin' doubtin', as well as do all He shows us ter do. Let's 'ave a word o' pray'r now.'

And without further preamble Jemmy dropped from his chair to his knees, followed immediately by the sailor, and thus raised his petition:

'Ho Gord, hour Father, Thou knowest 'ow our 'earts is set on 'avin' a place where we can come apart an' rest awhile, Thou knowest 'ow 'ard it is in our little 'omes to 'ave the quiet wusship we wants, the separatin' of ourselves to Thee for the breakin' of bread. An' Thou knowest, too, Lord, 'at we ain't

got no place to bring the people in outer the 'igh-ways and 'edges, as Thou 'ast kermarnded. But we do believe, yes, Lord, I believe—Giory be to Thy 'Oly Name—I feels shore 'at You're goin' ter give us a place for to wusship hin. Let it be soon, Ho Gord, let it be soon. We don't care wot it corsts *us*—all we've got ('tain't much, Thou knowest, Lord)—all we've got an' all we are is Thine.

' Bless our brother 'ere 'oo You've brort 'ome to us agen over the mighty hoshun in 'elth an' stren'th an' love 'of Thee. Bless 'im, ho Lord, an' make 'im a pillar in Thy 'ouse as well as a stren'thener an' cheerer-up of us all. Ho F'ather, 'ear us, an' arnser us speederly, fer Jeesus Christes sake, Amen.'

Saul, according to well-established precedent, waited silently for a moment or two after his hearty echo of Jemmy's 'Amen,' and then in his turn lifted up his voice :

' Dear Friend and Father God, I thank You with all my soul for bringin' me to life. I was dead, an' worse than dead, because I was walkin' about doin' harm to everybody—I come in contact with. An' You, through Your dear Son, put out Your hand an' touched me, as You did the leper. You brought me to life, You made me clean, You give me a healthy appetite, an' now I only live by the life You've give me. All I am an' all I've got is Yours. My brother Jemmy here 'as a heavy load laid on him, but You know its weight to a hounce, an' You'll see that it's carried right to the journey's end. Stir up all of us who know an' love him to do our bit, an' what we can't do we know You'll make up. Grant him the desire of 'is 'eart—a little 'ouse, where we shall be

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at 'ome with You and shut out from the hard world. Tell him that it's all right, that You ain't likely to let Your work suffer from want of anything, an' let us see great things. Do, Father, for Jesus' sake, Amen.'

CHAPTER III

BREASTING THE TIDE

THE pair rose from their knees with faces aglow as men who do not merely believe in orthodox fashion the truths they enunciate, but who know, with a knowledge that is proof against argument, that God is, and is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Jemmy furtively wiped away a tear with the back of his grimy hand, being, like all men who believe in permanent communication with the Fountain of Love, of a very tender heart. But they had hardly returned to the heavy realities of every-day life when Mrs. Maskery's voice was heard in the passage volubly exchanging words with some caller. Suddenly she burst into the room saying, 'Ere's Mrs. Williams 'as sent 'round t' say 'at they've ben a-waitin' fer ye ever sence six o'clock this morn'n'; *wot* shall I tell the little gel Williams?'

'Course I'll go at once,' cried Jemmy, making a grab at his cap as he sprang to his feet, but his wife, interposing her sinewy arm, said scornfully, 'Yes, but not in them close. It's easy to see 'at you don't do the washin'. Go an' change 'em. I'll tell the gel you'll be roun' there in ten minutes.'

Jemmy retired upstairs, and Saul, intensely amused in a quiet way, resigned himself to a

further exposition by Mrs. Maskery of the failings of her husband. Yet after she had 'run on' for a few minutes, she suddenly seemed smitten with a sense of having done her meek spouse an injustice, for, leaning forward toward the listener, she said, 'Ye know, Saul, if he *has* got aggravatin' ways, and I'd like to know who hasn't, he's a good man. I'm sure I try him enough, for I haven't got a bit o' patience with people that's got so full of the next world that they forgets this. But when I'm laid by and feels ready to fret myself to death with the way things is goin' on without me to manage 'em, it does put new life into me to see his happy face as nothin'k seems to darken for more than a minute or two at a time 'ceptin' the sut 'ee gets on it w'ile 'ee's at work.' And a few big tears rolled silently down Mrs. Maskery's care-worn cheeks. Wiping them away with her apron, and by a strong effort subduing the working of that rebellious mouth, she said, as she sprang to her feet, 'There 'ee goes,' and rushing out into the passage as he passed along it she called loudly, 'An' don't forget the Simmons's chimbley after you're done the Williams's.'

But the last few words were lost upon Jemmy, who was half-way up Lupin Street at his peculiar shuffling trot, the uneasy gait of a man who can always feel the chill or damp of the footway in contact with his feet through the vacancies in his boot soles. He was a quaint yet pathetic figure when equipped for work. He always wore an old cloth cap, tight-fitting, with a downward sloping leathern peak, a cap that had served him so long and faithfully that it was now as shiny as a piece of oiled silk. A

snuff-coloured neckerchief was tied tightly round his throat, a 'morning' coat of indefinite antiquity hung angularly about his trunk, and his trousers, suspended by string, were two cylinders of no particular shape. On his left shoulder he bore his bundle of brass-ended canes, which, screwed into each other, enabled him to reach the summit of any chimney in the neighbourhood, in his left hand he grasped a few fibres of the circular-headed brush made of whalebone that he screwed on to the uppermost joint of his extending machine, and under the same arm he carried a soot-sack and a hand broom. In his right hand he bore a wide, flat, short-handled shovel. Yet in spite of this queer decoration, in spite of his generally quaint appearance, there were few passers-by who did not give him salutation and receive in exchange his cheery good-day, for Jemmy was without doubt the best-known character in the neighbourhood. As he was wont to say in the open-air meeting, 'Bless th' Lawd, who puts 'is children in a place w'ere they feels they dassent go wrong. W'y, ef I was to do anythin' I oughtn't ter, wouldn't all the naybourwood know it 'fore the next mornin'? Corse they wood!'

He was undoubtedly right. The fierce light that beats upon a throne is privacy itself compared with the blaze of publicity in which such a man as Jemmy Maskery lives and moves. Normally, a man or woman may live their life in London's poor streets with not merely the people in the next house knowing nothing about them, but even the people in the next room. But when a man or woman comes boldly out as a witness for God and His truth under the same circumstances, every action of their lives

immediately becomes a matter of public interest, to be discussed with the most minute attention to detail at every street corner, on every doorstep, over every public-house bar; often with a wealth of lurid embellishment when those taking part in the discussion are what they are pleased to call 'a bit on,' otherwise more or less drunk.

But, leaving Jemmy for a moment, let us return to Saul and Mrs. Maskery. The conversation, momentarily interrupted by the passing of Jemmy out into the street, was resumed with some difficulty.

And at last Saul said, rising, 'I got ter be on the move. I've a-kep you tálkin' quite long enough, but don't you forget to let your ole fren' know if there's a southerly wind in the bread-barge [if the cupboard is getting empty]. If I was to give ye all I earn I couldn't ever pay back wot I owe Jemmy. You don't see it in the same light as I do, of course; but I can't forget that it was a-lissnin' to 'im a-preachin' the Word that set me free from the dreadful misery I was in. God bless 'im an' you, and the kids, an' the mission. So long fur the present,' and with a hearty handshake Saul passed out of the little parlour and set his face dockward.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAILY ROUND

MEANWHILE Jemmy had reached his destination, a house in a somewhat superior street, whose tenants were a little inclined to patronise him from the height of a steady income of two guineas a week. They were chapel people, Baptists, whose proud consciousness of the feat they had performed and were daily performing, by living respectably, paying their way and holding their own socially with people pecuniarily far above them, did perhaps as much to nerve them for the incessant struggle as the religion that they professed. For it cannot be denied that there is a large stratum of our people in London who, belonging to religious bodies professedly excluding all but those who are consciously new creatures, have no real claim to be considered as Christians whatever. Always assuming, of course, that a Christian, as distinguished from a professor of religion, is one who has fulfilled the essential requirement of Christ and become born again. They have been brought up in the aroma of respectability, from earliest childhood they have had a seat in the chapel, no startling sin has ever disturbed their level lives, and they have gradually developed into important members of the congregation without having once asked themselves the solemn question,

'Am I really acquainted with God?' Yet notwithstanding all this, such people are a power for good. Good citizens, good parents, good exemplars, how shall anyone dare to cavil at them for their lack of spirituality? Most of the loss is their own. They feel heavily the obligations of religion without enjoying its consolations, the conscious delights that are summed up in the personal friendship of the Son of God.

Naturally, and very properly too, Mrs. Williams, a fair example of this class, was a great stickler for punctuality, the accurate performance of engagements made, and a due recognition of what was owing to herself and her husband as living embodiments of these useful virtues. So when Jemmy, panting with his haste, appeared at her door, she met him with a countenance expressive of the most severe displeasure. Ostentatiously rubbing his decrepit shoes upon the door-mat until the soles of his feet burned again, he said hurriedly, 'Good mornin', Misses Willyums, thank yer, mum, kindly. I 'ardly know 'ow t' er 'pollergize fur my frightful bad memory. I clean fergot all about your order, I did indeed. Ye see——' But lifting a warning hand, Mrs. Williams froze the rushing torrent of his eloquence by saying, 'That will do, Mr. Maskery. Now that you *are* here, pr'aps you'll be good enough to get t' work done as soon as possible.'

Meekly Jemmy replied, 'Yes, 'um, cert'ny, mum,' following with bowed head as she led the way into the living-room, where all had been ready for his operations since six o'clock that morning. Down went his bundle of canes on the bare boards with a crash,

and hastily unfolding from his bag a square of some mysterious material, Jemmy made the time-honoured request for a couple of forks wherewith to pin it up at the corners of the mantelpiece in order that the descending soot from the chimney should not fly about the room. Through a bordered hole in the middle of this screen Jemmy thrust the first joint of his machine, and after a brief struggle amid a sooty cloud succeeded in screwing on the whalebone head, which he then by a vigorous thrust of the cane pushed up the chimney.

By the time his shilling was earned Mrs. Williams had prepared a substantial meal, and meeting him in the passage as he was about to deposit his begrimed paraphernalia outside in the gutter, she said with a benevolent smile, 'Won't you have a mouthful of lunch, Mr. Maskery? It's all ready for you.'

Now Jemmy had long passed the stage of false pride; besides, his yearning stomach was reminding him importunately that since his supper of a 'pennorth an' 'aporth' (a pennyworth of fried fish and a half-pennyworth of fried potatoes) the previous evening, his healthy appetite had remained unsolaced. So, with a futile attempt to dust the thick of the soot from his hands, he followed her into the kitchen, where she had spread a newspaper over the Windsor chair for his reception. Gratefully but eagerly he attacked the food, murmuring his thanks meanwhile, along with such scraps of information about his pet project as came uppermost to his mind. To Mrs. Williams his story was almost unintelligible. The idea of a mere chimney sweep concerning himself about the building of a sanctuary for the gathering

together of the Lord's people, along with such as should be saved, pointed to a bewildering condition of things. Yet dimly and afar off, as it were, she could not help realising that she was in the presence of a rare and beautiful soul, shining superior to its hampering, disfiguring environment. In some non-expressible way she was aware that here was one of God's chosen ones, possessed of the faith that removed mountains and bridges and oceans, the faith that refuses to recognise any hindrance to God's work but sin among His own people.

It had been in her mind to read him a small lesson upon minding his own business better, to reprove him gently for his forgetfulness of mundane affairs, but, somehow, the worldly-wise remarks would not come, and when, his hunger satisfied, he lay back in his chair, his eyes sparkling with enthusiasm, and told her of how great things the Lord had done for him, she was so moved that, forgetting her own household duties, she listened spell-bound. And she could not help contrasting his over-bubbling fervour with the sleek pomposity of certain deacons whom she knew, greatly to their disadvantage.

At last, with a sudden start, he sprang to his feet, saying as he did so, 'Please forgive me, Misses Willyums, fur hindrin' ye from yer work. My head's so gallus thick I k'n only think o' one thing at a time, an' I'm so full of this here business that everythink else's got ter take a back seat. The Lord bless ye, mum, an' pay ye a thousan' times fur yer kindness.'

Her uplifted hand stayed his thanks until she produced half-a-crown from her purse, saying, 'There's my mite towards your mission hall. It's all I can

afford, but I give it with a good heart, and I hope the Lord will accept it as an offering made in sincerity.'

Big tears started from Jemmy's eyes, making queer patches upon his sooty face, as he dashed them away, and in a voice broken with emotion he cried, 'Praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Good-bye, sister, good-bye. He'll reward ye, I know.' Without another word he made a dash for the door, and was gone, his heart a nest of singing birds.

He had only reached the corner of the street however, when a boy rushed up to him shouting, 'Oh, Mr. Maskery, our chimbley's afire. I was just a-running t' yore house. Come along; mother's in such a way.' Off they rushed, and in less than five minutes arrived at the house, where the poor woman, half-distracted by the presence of a gaping crowd outside watching the thick volumes of the yellow smoke tinged with red that was pouring out of the chimney, and in deadly terror lest the roaring she could hear was the fire spreading from the soot in the chimney to the building itself, was in a pitiable condition. Dashing at once into a state of violent activity, Jemmy flew from room to room closing registers, until he climbed out upon the roof, and, almost stifled by the dense smoke, succeeded in binding a sack tightly over the top of the offending chimney, thus effectually staying the progress of the fire, much to the dissatisfaction of the ragamuffins outside, who seemed to consider that they had been cheated out of a spectacle which was their right.

Descending to the kitchen, scorched, choking, and weary, Jemmy found the mistress of the house almost in a state of collapse, and at once set about

the congenial task of comforting her. Here he shone. In a very short time her cheerfulness had returned. But when she timidly asked Jemmy how much she was in his debt, he with a quick appreciation of the circumstances, said seriously, 'Well, Mrs. Fitch, the reg'lar price for puttin' out a chimbley is 'arf-a-suvrin', but bless yer 'art, if I was to go hinsistin' on my rights alwus I sh'd feel more unworthy of all the Lord's blessin's than I do. Wot can y' afford?'

'Oh, Mr. Maskery, I'm ashamed t' tell you that I've only got eighteence in the 'ouse, but if you *could* wait till Friday night w'en my 'usban' get 'is wages I'll pay y' 'arf-a-crown an' be very thankful. I can't pay any more than that, fur 'ee's only earnin' twenty-five shillin's a week now, an' there's five of us in fambly.'

'Looky 'ere, Misses Fitch, don't you worry about that; you pay me w'en you can. I shan't lose nothin', I know. Why, bless y'r 'art, that's what the Lord does with me hevery day of my life. I'm always a-gettin' in His debt, I'm alwas 'avin' nothing to pay 'im with, I'm alwas a-feelin' as if I was just a wuthless loafin' rascal, but in spite of all that He' always a-makin' me so 'appy I c'd darnce for joy. Now are y' shore you're all right? Cawse if y' are I'll get along 'ome. Yes; well, good afternoon, an' Gawd bless yer.' And shouldering his impedimenta, Jemmy resumed his peculiar shuffling trot, heading straight for Lupin Street.

When he reached his home he was overjoyed to find waiting at his door a big van, the appearance of which told him at once that a most welcome re-

plenishment of his exchequer was at hand. It was the waggon of a soot merchant come to carry Jemmy's accumulation to the country. And although, as Jemmy mournfully said, 'Sut ain't wot it used ter be; I mind w'en they was glad ter give yer five and six shillin' a sack for it, an' now they thinks they're a-doing y'r a favour if they gives y'r a shillin' a sack,' yet, knowing that he had ten sacks stored in his back yard, and that the money was always forthcoming on the spot, he felt constrained to utter again with great fervour the melodious words that were perhaps more frequently on his lips than any other, 'Praise the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.'

CHAPTER V

THE PLEASURES OF SERVICE

SATURDAY evening in all the poor quarters of London is a time of tribulation, of hard work, of much anxiety for the great majority of housewives. For they are few indeed who do not adhere to the senseless, hateful custom of leaving all the residue of the week's housework, a sort of special preparation for Sunday, until Saturday; and fewer still are they who do not leave their special shopping until Saturday afternoon and evening, even if they have had the gumption to keep their other work up to date. Employers of labour have done their best to counteract this giant evil of late Saturday shopping by paying wages to their workpeople on Friday, but, like the vice spoken of by the poet, it has at last been embraced by its victims. And many of them even go to the length of waiting until the wearied shopkeeper or costermonger, unable to hold his or her poor body erect any longer, makes a move to cease business for the night, or rather morning, as it is usually well after midnight. Then do these witlessly cruel ones descend upon the over-borne tradesman in the hope of thereby securing a bargain, and keep him wearily serving pennyworths of this, that, and the other until one o'clock A.M.

THE PLEASURES OF SERVICE

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It is a well-known fact that the slackest time for small suburban shopkeepers is between ten and eleven-thirty; after the latter time business begins to freshen, and is usually at its climax about midnight. But this is not the worst phase of the senseless cruelty practised by the poorer classes upon shopkeepers. In many of the poor quarters of London it has become a regular practice to shop on Sunday morning, butchers and greengrocers being the tradesmen chiefly affected. And this is the veriest wantonness. It is the most pitiless oppression, not of the poor by the rich, but of the poor by the poor. I know full well that it will be said that the poor women doing their shopping at these times are not to blame, that it is the fault of the husbands, who, as soon as Saturday morning's work is over, line the public-house bars and do not deliver up the wretched remnant of their week's wages to their waiting wives until legally ejected from the drinking bars at midnight. I admit the truth of this to a certain extent, but maintain that it will only account for about twenty-five per cent. of the late Saturday and early Sunday shopping that is carried on. If in all the cases where there is no need for it this cruel system of shopping were to be discontinued it would be practically put an end to. And this I am not saying from hearsay, but from actual observation and experience of the conditions.

But, it may be asked, what has this serious digression to do with the present story? In my opinion much, for it will be found that the members of such little conventicles as I am endeavouring to describe, do try most heartily to discountenance the practice, knowing how hardly it bears upon large numbers of

their fellow-citizens. 'How,' they ask, 'is a poor tradesman who is on his feet from as early as four A.M. till the following morning at one A.M. to summon sufficient energy to come to meeting at eleven A.M.? How can any man or woman, compelled to crowd the bulk of a week's work into one long, long day, be fit for anything else on Sunday but to lie in bed and rest?' So they usually hold a little prayer-meeting on Saturday evening about nine o'clock, whereunto the bulk of the members gather and pray for grace to use the day of rest well, for strength to go forth among the pleasure-seekers and holiday-makers bearing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. Many mistakes are made, of course, much wild talk is indulged in, many libels upon the character of our loving Father given utterance to, but let it be gratefully recorded that all the efforts of these earnest, simple souls make for the righteousness that exalteth a nation.

So at the close of that ordinary Saturday Jemmy might have been seen sitting in state at his own table, his big Bible open before him, awaiting the coming of the brethren and sisters, and hunting up a 'portion' while so doing. Thoroughly tired, Mrs. Maskery did not feel disposed to join in the exercises presently to be engaged in by her husband and his guests in the parlour, although she had a distinct feeling of pride in being their hostess. Had she been able to express herself she would no doubt have said that 'to labour was to pray,' or something of that kind, and that having made ready the place of meeting she had done her part—all that could reasonably be expected of her.

First to arrive, punctually on the stroke of the hour appointed, were the painter and his wife from No. 9. He was a man of patriarchal aspect, having a high, dome-like head, a pair of kindly, rather prominent blue eyes, and a long white beard reaching to the third button of his waistcoat. He was neatly clad in an ancient black frock-coat and trousers that had preserved their sedate air of respectability through many years of meetings, for which purpose alone they were donned. In his speech he was slightly hesitating and nervous, usually repeating his sentences as if anxious to assure himself that he had been heard, and he was always evidently torn with the conflict between his gentle, loving heart, and the stern, merciless Calvinism which he professed. His wife was a femi. duplicate of himself, with all his virtues accentuated. She it was who, with tenderest words, hovered about the outskirts of the open-air meeting, ready to press home to any wistful heart the words of love, or to comfort any frightened soul before whose mental vision had been too luridly exhibited the eternal torments of the damned, a practice much appreciated by these humble brethren. For over thirty years had Mr. and Mrs. Salmon trodden the rugged ways of London life together, never with more than sufficient for their immediate needs—that is to say, always upon intimate terms with real poverty. Yet they had successfully reared a large family, all of whom were well behaved and most creditable to their up-bringing, while the two elder girls had developed into modest young women who would have graced almost any station in life. But beyond and above this, this dear couple of hard-

working people had never faltered from their consistent following of Christ. They were, in a word, eminent Christians in the true sense, although out of their own tiny circle utterly unknown to the great world that seethed around them. I speak feelingly, for Mrs. Salmon has just gone to her reward, and I know of a surety that many a man mighty in learning, in devoutness, and position in his Church will hereafter rejoice if haply he may attain to a place by her side.

Five more members followed. The tugboat skipper, a broad, red-faced man, bringing in with him a breezy flavour of brine, his meek little wife, with a wistful look in her eyes and her head always just a little inclined to one side as if she were listening for her husband's steam-whistle on his return, Saul Andrews, Joseph Jimson the stevedore, and Peter Burn the rigger—all of them possessing characters well worthy of analysis, but willing, I know, to await their turn until later on. To each of them Jemmy gave a hearty handshake of fellowship and a beaming smile as he motioned them to a seat. When it appeared as if the full extent of the evening's congregation had been reached, Jemmy rose and said, 'We will commence by singin' that beautiful hymn, "O Jesus, O Jesus, how vast Thy love to me." I don't know the number, but some brother or sister please give it out if they know it.' Sister Salmon, who was the 'memory' of the little gathering, immediately supplied the number, 68 in the appendix, and Jemmy, with a courteous 'Thankee, Sister,' turned to it and read the first verse. Then Saul, who was 'shantyman' of his ship, being possessed of a tuneful

voice and a good ear for music, at once raised the tune.

A musical critic would have pronounced the resultant strains excruciating, Jemmy with his high falsetto, Brother Salmon with his devious straying into byways of discord, and Skipper Stevens with his peculiar ideas of bass, conspiring to produce the strangest possible combination of sounds. But to these simple, fervent souls it was a season of delight, with the exception perhaps of Saul, who suffered considerably in his ears but felt his heart all aglow. The praise ended, Jemmy with his hand upon the open Bible, lifted his face with closed eyes and said, 'Ho, hour Farther, give us some bread from Thy dear Word. We're very 'ungry to-night, although we've ben a-feedin' on Thy love all the week, and like a nest o' young birds we've all got our mouths wide open waitin' for Ye to drop suthin' in. We wants to be refreshed after our week's warfare with the world, the flesh, an' the devil. We wants t' be prepared for our meetin' aroun' Thy 'table to-morrer. We wants our faith stren'thened, our hearts soffened, our eyes opened wider, our ears touched, that we may hear Thy voice. An' we know we can't get these things done for us only in Thy way. May Thy Holy Spirit then take the Word an' break it up accordin' to each of our needs, an' we *shall* be fed indeed. For Jesus Christe's sake. Amen.'

Then without further preliminary the speaker plunged into the sublimity of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. His reading was, to put it mildly, not of the best, even if compared with that of some of the clergymen in the Established Church, who supply

us with, probably, the very worst readers in the world. Nevertheless, as his hearers were not critics, as they were all carefully following the words from their own Bibles, and, above all, as they were each convinced of the absolute sincerity and love of the reader, his quaint rendering of the Divine Word gave them no pain. And when he had finished, Skipper Stevens led in prayer. His deep, hoarse tones, reminding one of the muttering of a distant storm, his very conventional phraseology and many repetitions, from his poverty of words wherein to express what he felt, would doubtless have caused a sarcastic smile to curl the lip of many a cultured religionist, had such an one so far forgotten himself as to be present at such a humble meeting. But to those poor folks it was as sweet incense ascending to the throne of the Most High God, and by its means they became uplifted, energised, made glad.

For an hour the meeting continued, everyone present joining in the service of prayer and praise, until Sister Salmon, who had hitherto held her peace, supplied the closing petition.

'Dear Father,' she said, 'we've come again out of the noise of the world and the struggle for daily bread to You for that which we can't get anywhere else. Your smile, Your encouragement to go on, Your words of joy, and peace and love. If it wasn't for You, dear Saviour, there wouldn't be any sunshine in our lives at all, for the sorrow of the world around us is very great. But bless Your Holy Name, You've given us a sure and certain hope, a knowledge that nothing can shake, of Your wisdom and love

which sets our souls in a sea of peace. If we didn't know that You will set all wrongs right, that You will yet be acknowledged as the King of Glory by all Your creatures, that You will be justified in all things by Your Son our Saviour and Friend, we should not be able to go on, seeing what we see, and feeling what we feel. But our ignorance has been swallowed up in Your wisdom, our mistrust is hidden by Your faith, our weakness is enfolded in Your strength; and so, in spite of all our trying surroundings, we are indeed happy with a happiness that nothing can rob us of. Bless, O Father, our efforts in Your service to-morrow; give us each something to do for You, with grace sufficient for the doing of it, and assurance that in all work honestly done for You we shall be guided and sanctified by Your Holy Spirit. Give rest to the weary ones around us, cleansing to the dirty, soberness to the drunken, honesty to the thieves, gentleness to the cruel, food to the hungry, and unity among ourselves, for Jesus' sake. Amen.'

As the thin, quavering voice ceased, there was a sacred hush over the little company—a hush like that of the Holy of Holies, and it was with a sigh as of pain that they rose stiffly from their knees, the pain of return to the world around them symbolised by the strident yelling of a ribald song by a band of male and female roysterers that had just swung round the corner into Lupin Street.

When the discordant echoes had died away, Jemmy rose from his knees and said, Brethering an' Sisters, th' Lawd 'as done great things fer as about our 'all. I want ye t' s'port me now in goin' forwud an' securin' th' place afore somebody else

snaps it up. I ain't much of a business man, as ye know, but I knows enough to feel shore 'at a place like that there in the neighbourwood ain't agoin' beggin' long. I've got the fust 'arf-year's rent 'ere [producing it], an' I ain't even 'ad t' ask for it. An' I'm shore 'at th' Lawd's agoin' to do more 'n ever we expect about it. We sh'll 'ave t' wuk, of course. Our Farther don't want any lazy children, an' 'e ain't got 'em, bless 'is 'oly Name, in this mission. Now wot I arsk is this: You let me, in the name of th' Church, go an' take th' place, and then promise, each one of ye, t' be a shillin' a week to'rds the rent, 'sides wot you've alwus been willin' t' give as y' could afford it. As fur wot it'll want doin' to: well, we're none of us afraid of 'ard work, an' I perpose 'at we do wot's wanted with our own 'ands, only spendin' wot's necessary t' buy materials. Brother Jenkins and Brother Soames ain't 'ere, but I feels shore we can count on 'em fur all they can possible do in a matter o' this kind. Wot d' ye say?'

He paused and looked round upon the care-lined faces somewhat anxiously, his whole heart shining in his eyes. In reply, Saul Andrews spoke first. He said: 'Brothers an' Sisters, I'm only a child among ye, but I feels very grateful fur wot the Lord 'as let ye do for me. I got a big ship t'-day fur a Colonial voy'ge as bo'sun, an' th' wages is 4/. 10s. a month. As most of ye know, I ain't got a soul in th' world but myself to pervide for, an' I'll leave my 'arf-pay, 2/. 5s. a month, fur this voy'ge, anyhow. I'm shore it'll be the 'appiest voy'ge I ever made. Use the 2/. a month fur necessary expenses and

the 5s. for my contribution to the rent. Gawd bless th' Wren Lane Mission'All.'

With such a lead as that, what could the others do, even had they been lukewarm instead of full of love to God and man? Their promises were soon all made, Jemmy was fully authorised to proceed, and with a sense of joy in service that an archbishop might vainly endeavour to attain unto, Jemmy rose again to offer a final word of praise.

'Ho, Farther Gord,' he sobbed, 'this is almost more'n we c'n bear. We're all a-runnin' over with gladness of 'eart. Give us wisdom to walk worthy of Your kindness, give us grace t'remember wot You've been, and done, to us. Accept hour praise for all Thy wonderous love an' mercy in th' name of Jesus. Amen.'

And then he burst into the Doxology of the Brethren :

Glory, honour, praise, and power
 Be unto the Lamb for ever.
 Jesus Christ is our Redeemer!
 Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!
 Praise ye the Lord.

CHAPTER VI

A SUNDAY MORNING

AMID the enormous number of critical, cynical, and earnest remarks that have been passed about the British Sunday in general, and the London Sunday in particular, I do not remember having seen one that looked as if made with intimate knowledge of the lives of the people about whom it was written. And this is especially true of the great mass of God-fearing people in London who, being just below the class denominated 'respectable,' i.e. well-dressed, find an infinite delight in offering up their lives on that day in personal service to a loving Father. Herein it is my inestimable privilege to offer a few personal details in confirmation of the remarks I am making. For fifteen years I lived in London one of the most strenuous lives possible with pecuniary results the most trivial. Employed from nine till five in a quasi-Government office at a meagre salary, I tried to eke out, in the hours that should have been devoted to recreation and reading, that salary by working at the trade of a picture-framer, a trade I had taught myself. When business was brisk this often necessitated my being in my workshop at 2 A.M. in order to fulfil the contracts I had made to deliver frames at a certain time. It also meant my working up till sometimes

as late as 11 P.M. So that when Sunday came, with its placid, restful morning, I always felt profoundly grateful, not only for the bodily rest, but for the way in which I was able to throw off the mental worries of the week and let the sunshine of the Father's love illuminate the desert places of my heart.

But I never felt the slightest desire to spend those precious hours in bed. Feeling renewed in vigorous strength, I was up at about seven, helping to prepare the dinner and doing such odd household jobs as would relieve my wife, and at 10.30 away to the meeting for the breaking of bread. Returning at 1.30, I spent the afternoon at home usually, unlike many of my brethren, who had their Sunday schools to attend. After tea, or say at 6 P.M., I set off with the most eager, joyous anticipation to the open-air meeting, and returned, sometimes almost dropping with bodily fatigue, but with a peace that was flowing like a mighty river, at about 10.30 P.M. The idea of self-sacrifice never occurred to me. Nor did it, I am persuaded, to any of my colleagues, many of them men and women in far humbler positions than myself.

Had anyone suggested to us that we were very good, very holy, because we did these things, we should have felt utterly amazed and as utterly ashamed, because we knew full well that the joy of the service was beyond and above any other delight to be procured by the sons of men upon any terms soever.

Therefore, although we were often far more weary in body than we were on a week-day, we had an exaltation of spirit which was like being drunken

with the new wine of the Kingdom, heartening us and uplifting us to meet the hardness of the new week. None of us felt any desire for a Continental Sunday, neither, as far as I am aware, did the masses of people among whom we laboured. The vast majority of them did not go to any church or chapel at all; the constraint galled them, and something, they could not explain what, made them feel that the man who preached from a pulpit to rows of expensively clothed, decorous worshippers, was only a tradesman who was doing business under false pretences. But for all that, there were none of them, I am sure, who would not have fought with all their might against such an abolition of one day's rest in seven as may be seen on the Continent.

Sunday morning, then, found Jemmy up at 7 A.M. helping to prepare his numerous progeny for Sunday school. And as the boys, who went to work, could not be expected to sacrifice their one day a week, Jemmy might have been seen, had anyone popped in, busy peeling potatoes, cutting cabbages, boning and rolling flank of beef, so that it should look like ribs, &c. What, some of my readers will say, this righteous man cooking on Sunday! Oh, yes, please remember that to the majority of poor Londoners Sunday's dinner-table is a sort of family altar. Around it gathers once a week a united family who look forward to it with pathetic interest as a relief from scrambling meals at cook-shops or in darksome corners off fragments they are ashamed to let their fellows see. It has often been said that the cockney starves all the week so that he may gorge on a Sunday. I don't admit its truth, but I do know

that the Sunday dinner-table is a potent influence in keeping unrelaxed the family bond, and I am a determined opponent of anyone who would destroy the Institution.

But as the hands of the clock approached 10.30 Jemmy became noticeably perturbed. At last Mrs. Maskery's voice rang out, 'I see wot's the matter with ye. It's time you was off. Well, get along 'r else you'll be late. You'll find a clean shlrt and collar an' 'andkercher on th' bed, an' yer close is all ready brushed. Billy! did ye clean farther's best boots?' 'Yes, muvver,' piped up Billy (aged eight), 'an' farver gimme a penny.' 'Did he?' said the prudent mother, 'then let me put it in yer money box an' I'll give ye a beautiful orange, better'n old Walker'd let ye have for it.'

Off darted Jemmy, and in a very short time reappeared, clad in his well-known canonicals, a full suit of black given to him years ago by a Christian friend who loved him for his simple exposition of the Word, and his sweet happy disposition. Entering his parlour with a reverent air, he went to the couch, whereon lay a brown paper parcel containing a carefully got-up table-cloth. This he spread over the table with careful hands, and upon it, exactly in the centre, he placed a bottle containing wine, a tumbler, and a loaf on a blue dinner-plate. Then around the margin of the table, at regular intervals, he placed copies of the 'Hymns and Spiritual Songs with Appendix,' without which no meeting of the 'Brethren' for worship could be considered complete. And this holds good, no matter how many slightly varying congregations

that decidedly fissiparous body becomes divided into.

The chairs placed in position, all preparations were complete, and Jemmy, a big Bible in hand and collection box at his side, seated himself to await the coming of the Church. The members dropped in one by one until the little apartment was full, and when it appeared that all were present who would be that morning, Jemmy opened the meeting with prayer. And now might be seen the secret of power possessed by those humble, primitive followers of the Humblest of Men. There were no adjuncts to tickle the senses, no external influences acting with subtle force upon the worshippers and misleading them into the belief that their feelings were evidence of their being truly in touch with the invisible things of God. Jemmy's face was transfigured. Big tears rolled down his cheeks and glistened in his russet beard like diamonds. His voice shook, his body trembled, and when he sat down, no one in the room had any doubt whatever that, as in the days of the Master upon earth, so He was in very deed and truth present with them, Head of this table spread in the wilderness.

A song followed the prayer :

Praise the Saviour, ye who know Him ;
 Think, oh think, how much we owe Him ;
 Gladly let us render to Him
 All we are and have.

Then a reading by Brother Salmon of an appropriate portion. Then another prayer, another song, and so on, without calling upon individuals, but each one rising and doing his or her part spon-

taneously, until at last there was an expectant hush. For several minutes no one stirred, all sat with heads bowed, apparently in awe-stricken communion with the Unseen. Then Jemmy rose, and drawing the platter and loaf towards him, placed his hand upon the loaf, and lifting his face with eyes fast closed, said :

'Dear Master an' Lord, agen we've met around Your table t' remember Your broken body, Your poured-out blood, till You come. We're very poor, very ignorant, very 'umble, but we believe an' are shore 'at You are glad t' 'ave us come an' do just wot You've told us t' do. We ain't got no priest made by man, because You've told us that You Yourself are our 'Igh Priest, abidin' continually. We can't see Thee, but we know You're 'ere. An' though these pore 'ands o' mine takes this bread' (taking it up), 'and breaks it as You did in that upper room long ago, we know that it's all just as pleasant to You as it was w'en You 'ad all Your disciples aroun' You. We know an' are shore that all Your beloved ones is one with You, as this loaf is one now, an' we know that as we break this loaf' (breaking it into four) 'according to Thy kermarnment, so Your blessed body, the 'uman body You wore fur our sakes, was broken fur us. An' now we're a-goin' t' 'and it round an' eat of it accordin' t' Thy word, "This do in remembrance of Me till I come."' "

And having thus spoken, Jemmy passed to his next neighbour the plate with the broken loaf. Brother Salmon, for it was he, broke off a goodly portion and passed the plate to *his* neighbour. So it made the circuit of the table in solemn silence, and

all ate—did not merely taste one crumb, but ate as if they were actually consuming the sweetest morsel they had ever tasted in their lives. When the plate had completed its round there was another period of solemn silence, during which each member either communed with God in the secret places of his own soul, or sat dumbly with his mind a blank, as many dear earnest ones do who find it impossible to concentrate their thoughts on their petitions or praises unless they utter them aloud.

Again Jemmy rose from his knees, and with trembling hands took up the bottle and glass. He poured out about a quarter of a glassful, and then gently replacing the bottle on the middle of the table, held his hand over the glass and said, 'Lord, knowin' that without sheddin' of blood there is no remission of sins, we remember with thankful 'earts 'at Your Precious blood was shed for us. Don't let us ever fergit fur one minute 'at it cost Thee Thy 'eart's blood t' redeem us from our sins. We remember, dear Lord, 'at You was just a 'ard-workin' Man on earth like we are, only we're a great deal better off than ever You was. An' please don't let us fergit 'at although You did pour out Your soul unto death, an' this wine, which is the type of life to us, is also the type of death to You, the death of Your 'uman 'ouse, yet Glory be to Thy 'oly Name, the grave couldn't 'old You, You made a show of it, an' like Samson a-carryin' away the Gates of Gazer, You took captivity captive, an' You're alive for evermore. An' more 'an that, dear Saviour, we want alwus to hold in our 'eart of 'earts 'at You're not a long way away from us, but 'at here an' now You're wiv us

a-sayin' unto us, "Lo, I am wiv you alwus, even unto the end of the world."

'The cup of blessin' which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? As often as ye drink this cup in obedience to Christ's word an' ker-marnment ye do show forf the Lord's death till He come.'

Every member present murmuringly repeated the solemn words, 'Till He come,' and the glass circulated until all had taken a sip. Then with a perceptible change, a manifest lightening of the solemnity, Skipper Stevens gave out the much-loved hymn, 'Come, ye that love the Lord, and let your joys be known.' It was sung with most earnest enthusiasm, if without much melody, and at its close Brother Salmon rose immediately after all had resumed their seats, and opening his well-worn Bible at a place where several leaves had been turned down in readiness, delivered a little sermon. Put him in an open-air meeting, give him five minutes in which to tell the story of the Cross, and you would get a glorious result. But give him a chance to attempt oratory, to essay exegesis, and presently you would, if you were a stranger to such meetings, wonder which of you were mad, the speaker or the listener. Still, there is no doubt that such speeches do these simple souls little or no harm. Having been born again, their lives are fruitful, not of words but of deeds, and they cannot be injured by any floundering interpreter of difficult passages in God's Word.

A few prayers and hymns followed in quick succession, until each member of the little gathering had spoken or read, and then came the Benediction

from Jemmy, the sweet old form of words hallowed by many centuries of use: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.' The contribution box passed from hand to hand, never without some addition to its store of coins, and when it had made the circuit, Jemmy emptied it on the table, counted it in sight of the members as they were putting on their hats and overcoats, and entered the amount in his little book. Meanwhile there was a pleasant clatter of talk; absent members were discussed, the unpleasant incidents of the previous evening up and down Lupin Street, of which a rank crop was always forthcoming every Saturday night, were mournfully touched upon, and the bright prospects of the new hall alluded to. Then out into Lupin Street they drifted, not without much warm hand-shaking, to enjoy their well-earned Sunday dinner, and look forward eagerly to the open-air service of the evening.

CHAPTER VII

A SUNDAY EVENING

It was one of the greatest sorrows of the little Lupin Street community that they had not what they considered an indispensable adjunct to their work, a Sunday school. For they knew full well, as all mission workers in London know, that while parents may be utterly godless and careless about the health of their own souls, it is very seldom that they will not strain every nerve to assist their children into the way of right living if somebody else will do the teaching. They will let them, that is, go to any Sunday school, whether the children be well or ill taught, feeling perhaps that some vicarious credit will come to themselves for so doing.

But if these humble brethren had no Sunday school of their own, they could, and did, find other Sunday schools where their services were gladly accepted. Or they could and did visit workhouse infirmaries, hospitals, lodging-houses, everywhere bearing with them their message of salvation through the blood of Christ with heaven beyond, or rejection of His proffered love leading straight to the tortures never-ending of a terrific literal hell of fire immediately after death. Whatever it was they did with their Sunday afternoons, at any rate they did

not waste them, but strove earnestly to glorify the God in whom they believed.

It was not, however, until after tea, that is to say, about 6 P.M., that they rose to the full height of their enjoyment of God's service. Then they mustered in full force at Jemmy's door, bearing with them from Brother Salmon's house the most precious of all their worldly possessions—a small portable harmonium, carried by two sticks passed through rings on its sides, as Levites carried the Ark. It represented to them the self-denial of many weeks before the 8% which its cost could be collected, and in their eyes it was a perfect instrument, specially made and dedicated to the service of soul-winning from the beginning of its career by the great Maker of all good things. Its advent never failed to interest the youth of Lupin Street and its vicinity, who, leaving their elvish play, to the great relief of the householders the front of whose premises they honoured with their presence, disported themselves around the little procession and made swift occasional rushes behind to touch the instrument, pleased beyond bearing if they succeeded in so doing. Thus escorted, the band of workers made their stately way towards the 'Waste' whereon they held their evening service, taking no notice of passing remarks by saunterers, but doing nothing by voice or gesture to excite aggression from malevolently disposed passers-by.

Arriving at their pitch, which, thanks to a local guardian appointed by the authorities for the purpose of keeping order, was reserved to them, they found awaiting them a middle-aged, plainly dressed woman who always attended for the purpose of playing the

instrument, a duty none of the others were able to perform. She was a member of a 'Brethren' meeting some distance away, and nothing would have persuaded her to take any part, even the smallest, in the worship of Jemmy's. Nor have I ever been able to understand how it was that she escaped being admonished as 'disorderly.' Perhaps she had received a special dispensation to play for the 'apostles,' on the understanding that she took no other part whatever. The reason why I say this is because I myself have been warned off three 'gatherings' where I was a member, simply because I would reserve my right to go and preach the Gospel in any meeting where I was invited at times when my own band did not require my services. And speaking generally there is no Papal rule more inflexible than that wielded by the elders of those tiny gatherings. If a member does not see eye to eye with the real ruler of the meeting, he or she must leave, even when, as sometimes does happen, they take half of the other members with them.

The harmonium having been upreared and a campstool set for the player, a little hand-shaking ensued between the members and a few unattached sympathisers whose habit it was to come to this particular open-air pitch every Sunday. Then a ring was formed, and Jemmy offered up a short, emphatic petition for guidance, for wisdom, for success. That ended, he looked round and said, 'Brother Saul, will ye give out a 'ymn?' Immediately Saul stepped forward, and in a fine baritone voice, without the book, his whole face aglow, recited the first verse of 'The Gospel Bells are Ringing,' following it with an emphatic announcement of the number. One

chord on the harmonium, and all the members struck at once into the song, the meeting was fairly under weigh. As each verse was sung Saul recited the next, so that if by any chance the singing should make the words indistinct, no one present might have any excuse for saying they did not know what they were singing about.

Then Jemmy produced his big Bible and read the 55th chapter of Isaiah. It was a great mistake which he always committed, but which nothing would induce him to forego—a mistake because in the first place it undid all that had been done in the way of getting an audience together. At the commencement curiosity had led a few passers-by to stand and look on while the harmonium was being set up, the singing of the first hymn had attracted more, and by the time the singing was finished quite a compact little crowd had gathered. But it is a peculiarity of open-air audiences that you must not read to them. No, not even if you be that very rare bird, a *good* reader. You commence with a large crowd of hearers, and when you lower your book from your eyes they have melted away. And Jemmy, as I have before noted, was not a good reader. So that when he had finished, the audience had departed as usual, and in order to collect another it was necessary to sing again. Then Saul, being again invited to give out a hymn, because he would presently be gone from their midst for another long voyage, volunteered to sing alone. He chose that most touching and tender little song from Sankey's collection, 'Jesus, Saviour, pilot me,' and sang it with all his heart in his voice. The lovely words might have been heard from end to end of the

common, so clearly were they enunciated. It was easy to see that the singer had no thought of parading the beauty of his voice; all he desired was that the words might sink into the souls of his hearers as a stone dropped into water. When he ceased there was no open space visible anywhere near. Fully a thousand people were standing spellbound, listening not merely with their ears, but with their hearts. And Jemmy, wisely, nudged Sauí, whispering, 'Go on, brother: speak to 'em now, w'ile you've got their 'tention, in the name of God.'

So Sauí, having apparently taken no notice of any interruption, followed up his song immediately by saying:

'Brothers and sisters, when Jesus was here on earth, a poor Man among poor men, He went about among the people doing good. He didn't worry them with much talk, but He was always ready to help anyone in trouble, to heal any sick man or woman, and to feed the hungry, although to do this He had to put out all the power that was in Him as God. When it came to gettin' food or lodgin' for Himself, He was always dependent on other people; you'll find that nearly all His mighty works was done for the benefit of others—the poor sheep without a shepherd. An' that's why I'm here to-night. Jesus has saved me from my sins, has made me happy, though as poor as any one of you, has comforted me in my loneliness, and is always teachin' me some new an' beautiful way of happiness; an' how can I rest quiet in my boardin'-house or go out t' enjoy myself in the old miserable way, knowin' as I do that there's thousan's of men an' women an' children in this great

London of ours that's utterly cast down, hopeless and despairin' because they don't know anythin' about the love of God for them, as shown in the sendin' of Jesus Christ His Son t' live and die for us? Now, what I want you t' listen to about my Master is this. First of all, He loves you with an everlastin' love. Next, He wants you to know that He does. He's made all your sorrows His own; there isn't anything that you suffer, whether yca've brought it on yourselves or not, that He don't feel an' long t' help you bear or get free from. He wants you to come to Him; He don't want you to go to a church or to a clergyman—that'll come in its right place if necessary; but first of all He wants you to come to Him, and if any or all of you are thinkin' as I did, "Ah, that's all very well, but it don't mean me," I can only tell you what the Master says Himself, "Come unto Me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You all know very well that I'm not talking about somethin' I ain't felt. I'm one of yourselves, a man that's been pretty well knocked about, not only here in my native town, but all over the world. I know what it is to be out of work an' hungry, to be lonely an' ready to fling myself into the river to get out of my misery. An' I know somethin' about the lot of the poor woman that has to toil early an' late to keep a lazy, drunken husband, an' the children he's begotten as well. Besides all these, I know what the life of a forlorn an' friendless child itself is. But I don't know anythin' about these things like the Lord Himself does. I can't feel anythin' like the sympathy that He feels for the weary, the sick, an' the sorrowful. An' as to love,

well, I feels sometimes as if my heart would break. But, bless the Lord, His tender heart *did* break, before the Roman soldier searched it with his spear. His heart broke when He saw how the very sufferin' ones He came to save: an' make happy turned away from Him, for, my dear ones, let me say it with all reverence for His almightiness, there is one thing He can't do, He can't save you if you won't let Him. There's only one person stands between any poor wanderin' one here an' salvation, an' that's himself or herself. I'll go further than that, an' say with all my heart that there's only one way into the outer darkness of utter separation from God, an' that's over the body of the crucified Son of God.

'But some of you may ask me, "What does gettin' saved mean?" Well, I'm only a poor ignorant man, wanting words badly to explain myself, but as far as I've been able to see it means bein' made free. Men an' women, 'specially in this country, are very fond of talkin' 'bout their liberty, but what do they mean? I can see now what I meant when I did the same thing, and I think I am just an ordinary kind o' feller. I meant that I wanted to do whatever I felt inclined to without interference from anybody, an' I couldn't see, poor blind creature that I was, that not only was I wantin' to dive into perfect slavery to my own evil desires, but that in doin' so I would be robbin' everybody I came in contact with of some of their liberty. The fact is, boys, there ain't none of us fit to be trusted with liberty as we, without the light of God, understand it. If we only stop an' think fur a minute we shall see at once that this is true. What do people who have rose up agen their

rulers an' overcome them do as soon as ever the victory's won? Why, choose another ruler. Because they know that without some strong one to rule over them, no one would ever dare to go to sleep, for fear of what some of his unruly and unruly neighbours would be up to. Now what Jesus means by salvation is, first of all, being set free from the terrible slavery of sin. An' He does this in the only possible way, by puttin' His own life into you, His own nature, which, instead of lovin' sin and bein' its groanin', achin', yet willin' slave, hates it, shrinks from it, can't put up with it, can't allow of its presence any more than light and dark can exist together. Next He sets us free from the fear of life, mortal life. I useter think that the fear of death was greatest, but when I see how many men an' women fly to death because they're afraid t' live, I come to the conclusion that it isn't dyin', but livin', that's the most terrible. As to dyin', well, when we have been born agen, death becomes a word without any meanin' as far as we're concerned, because we know that as soon as our little bit of mortal life is done down here, and we're set free from this poor shaky house of ours with all its aches an' pains, we shall enter upon a new career of glorious usefulness in the other world.

'I put that side of salvation last because it rightfully comes last. There's no Christian worth callin' one that comes to Christ for the sake of his or her own safety, just because there's heaven on the other side of the dark river. Christian, I believe, means Christ's man, Christ-like, and if we are that, we want to do the work among our poor brothers and sisters down here, not because we're goin' to get paid for it

with heaven, but because His love is shed abroad in our hearts, and we can no more help loving one another than we can help loving Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Anybody who says to himself that they'll come to Christ for what they can get is in a bad way. Their hearts haven't been touched by repentance for doin' wrong, an' shame at being so long deaf to the call of a lovin' Father. But I mustn't take up any more time, because there's others awaitin' to tell ye better'n than I can of the salvation that Jesus is holdin' out to ye. I'll just wind up by tellin' ye that if ye don't understand me, if what I've been saying seems mysterious, there's one that can make all things clear to ye. All Jesus wants is that you should be willing to forsake your sins and come to Him. If you tell Him so an' ask Him to make the way clear to ye, He'll explain all things as nobody else can. There's no man or woman or child so ignorant or slow-witted that they can't understand how to come to Jesus when Jesus Himself tells them how to come. An' all that I or any other of God's people can do for you is to point this out to you, that He is the way an' the truth an' the life, and that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. May God bless all of ye an' make ye wise unto salvation, for Christ's sake. Amen.'

Now while Saul had been speaking there had been a keenness of attention almost painful in its intensity. It must be borne in mind that this gathering was a typical street one. It was composed of that class of London's workers who are most persistent in refusing a hearing to any representatives of the Churches. Yet more perfect order, deeper and more real interest

in what was being said, could nowhere have been found. Upon these people the problems of life press with an almost crushing weight, and it is one of the most pathetic as well as one of the most hopeful signs that they are so eager to listen to the Gospel from anyone in whom they feel confidence and who will not talk dreary nonsense to them in a conventionally lugubrious voice. But had it not been for Jemmy's tact many of them would have edged away as soon as Saul's address was over. That experienced tactician, however, had, while Saul was speaking, chosen a sacred song with a rousing chorus, and the moment the speaker ended there was an outburst of song which held many of those who were minded to depart and attracted more from the steady stream of passers-by. As soon as the last chorus died away Jemmy sprang to the front, casting his hat recklessly upon the ground at his feet, and cried, 'Glory be to God for His precious promises, an' fur th' big way He fulfils of 'em! Don't go fur just a minute, w'ile I tells ye somefink as'll interest ye. There's lots of ye 'ere as knows me an' my farver, knows what we useter be. Knows, too, wot manner o' men we ben sence Jesus saved our souls, an' 'ow we ain't never ben tired o' comin' out 'ere t' tell ye 'ow great fings th' Lord 'as done fer us. An' I'm shore there isn't many of ye wot thinks, after all these years, 'at we've ever made any money out of our labours among ye. Well, the reason w'y I says this is becos we're a-goin' t' 'ave a 'all, a place where, w'en it's a-rainin,' or 'too cole t' expect ye t' stan' out 'ere an' lissen to us, we k'n invite ye in an' give y' a seat. But we're all like yerselves, pore workin' people, an' unless y' 'elp us,

it'll be almost too 'eavy a burden fer us t' bear. An so I'm going' t' do what I never done before in all the years I ben a-preachin' the Gospel in the open air—I'm a-goin' t' arsk ye t' 'elp us wiv a little money. An' if any of you can't afford even a penny, w'y come an' do a bit o' graft. We're a-goin' t' help, so as there sha'n't be any money spent for labour, on'y materials, an' we'll give ye a 'earty welkim, an' God'll bless ye. Now w'ile we're a-singin' that beautiful 'ymn, "I know in 'oom I 'ave believed," any of ye 'oose 'earts th' Lord 'as touched will please throw what they c'n spare into the ring 'ere, an' we sh'll be grateful even fur fardens from them 'at can't afford more.'

The speaker had hardly concluded before a bright half-crown came flying over the heads of those nearest, the precursor of a shower of coins whose jingle could be heard even above the strenuous singing. Women and children on the outskirts of the crowd besought more vigorous neighbours to fling their contributions for them, others openly shed tears because they had no'ing to give. And when the hymn ceased and the spoil was counted, Jemmy, his face shining with joyful tears, announced to the crowd that the collection amounted to 3*l.* 15*s.* 4*d.* This statement made quite a sensation among the audience, and the rest of that meeting was a time to remember. While one brother or sister was busy singing or speaking of the boundless love of the Father as evidenced in the sending of His Son, the others were kept fully employed in hearing earnest appeals for more light in the way, more knowledge of this wonderful salvation for all. And the best of it all

was the utter absence of noise, of factitious excitement such as, alas! too often disfigures meetings of the kind and beguiles men and women into mistaking it for a change of heart. And when, after nearly three hours of preaching, prayer, and singing, the almost exhausted little group invited all present to sing 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,' there was hardly one of all the great crowd assembled who did not attempt to add his or her voice to the swell of thanksgiving. But, better still, six new adherents signified in unmistakable terms their willingness to become members of the company of God's children, only asking humbly for such help and teaching as the preachers could give them. Their names and addresses were taken. Alas! there was no room in Jemmy's little front parlour to invite them there for further talk on the all-important subject, but that hindrance only stimulated the resolve of all the disciples to spare no effort in order to get the 'Hall' ready soon for the reception of worshippers.

So the little band moved off the fast-darkening common, weary almost to dropping in body, but in soul so happy, so uplifted, that it may well be doubted whether among all London's seething millions there were any hearts lighter than theirs. When they reached Jemmy's door and shook hands before separating for the night, they were nearly speechless, almost unable to murmur the usual 'Good-night, and God bless ye.' And long after they had departed little groups of their late hearers still remained eagerly discussing the wonderful things they had seen and heard.

Besides these things, there were in six poor homes

adjacent that night to be found a man or woman to whom the doors of the Kingdom had been opened, who for the first time in their lives had realised the transcendent fact of the Fatherhood of God. Those intimate with them looked upon them curiously, marvelling mightily what strange thing had come to pass. But to such inquiries as were made—inquiries which usually took the form of ‘Ain’t you well?’—they returned brief, quiet answers, speaking like people under the influence of a great awe. As indeed they might well do, seeing that they had but newly entered the timeless state, had opened their eyes upon the life that is everlasting. If any of my readers feel that this language is incomprehensible or ill chosen, I can only hope that they will soon learn in the only manner possible that it is but the simple statement of a fact that is occurring continually around us, not one whit more mysterious than ordinary birth, and as absolutely necessary to eternal life as birth is to the life which so many myriads of us bear with pain and grief beyond telling.

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARING THE SANCTUARY

LONG and loudly knocked the policeman at Jemmy's door the next morning before his assault upon the knocker penetrated the heavy slumbers of that worthy disciple. For it had been close upon midnight before he sought his bed, having sat long over his frugal supper, telling enthusiastically to his wife the glorious happenings of the day. It was a peculiarity of Mrs. Maskery's that while, as we have seen, occasionally sarcastic at her husband's expense and a severe critic of his obvious shortcomings, she yet took a certain proprietorial delight in his successes in the Gospel field. Doubtless she felt in some dim, indefinable manner she enjoyed a vicarious goodness, that Jemmy's unquestionable merit in a Christian direction partly communicated itself to her as his wife. She listened with much interest on Sunday nights to his fervent, joyful descriptions of the meeting, putting in a shrewd remark at intervals, and occasionally uttering some condemnation upon a brother or sister whose proceedings had met with her disapproval. About the new departure she offered no opinion; she was evidently taking time to consider it in all its bearings. And this was rather disconcerting to Jemmy, who was evidently anxious

as to how far his collecting money in the open air would commend itself to her.

Bang, bang, crash, crash, went the knocker. Jemmy rolled out of bed and stumbled to the window, throwing the lower sash up and calling sleepily, 'All right, Joe.' 'Oh, it is, is it?' answered the policeman. 'Well, that's a comfort to know. I thought you was dead. It's four o'clock, an' you ain't got much time to waste if you're goin' t' sweep them boiler-tubes afore six. Good morning.' And away went the speaker to perform his fantasia upon some other sleepy man's door. Thus goaded into activity, Jemmy was out of the house in twenty minutes, and, only stopping for a minute or two for a ha'porth of scalding coffee and a ha'penny slice of bread and margarine at the corner stall, was soon busy at the onerous task of cleaning the flues of a huge boiler at an adjacent factory.

It was a busy morning for him—so busy that before he returned to his home eleven o'clock had struck, and he was, besides being, as he said, so black that a piece of charcoal would make a white mark on him, very tired. But he was full of joy, because, having done such a good morning's work, he felt free to devote the rest of that day to what, after all, was the main business of his life, the service of the Master. The very thought of it rested him, and without waiting for anything else to crop up in the way of orders, he 'cleaned himself' and donned his best clothes. Then, knowing that Mrs. Maskery was out doing some small shopping, he made his way promptly to the proprietor of the cowshed, and, in a voice unsteady with emotion, professed his

readiness to become the tenant of the premises at an annual rental of 15 $\%$, payable quarterly, and to do all that might be necessary to make the place fit for his purpose. But at the outset of the negotiations Jemmy's faith was put to a somewhat severe test. The landlord refused to listen to any less term being entered upon than seven years, and he also required two other persons to associate themselves with Jemmy in the responsibility of finding the rent. This latter demand was made, of course, because he knew Jemmy well, and did not for one moment believe in his ability to pay another 15 $\%$ yearly. The strain only lasted for a minute, then Jemmy's face cleared again, and he agreed to the proposals, feeling sure that he could find easily two brethren who would become his co-trustees. Handsel money was at once paid, and the bargain so far concluded.

Armed with the key of the place, Jemmy hastened thither at once, as if treading the clouds. We had better accompany him and view the premises. In their entirety they consisted of an oblong brick building with a slated roof, rising from both sides to a ridge in the centre. One end of it abutted upon the back-yard walls of the houses in Wren Lane, the other was bounded by an open yard fenced in by tall palings and prolonged to a sharp angle. It was approached on either side from Wren Lane by narrow alleys, at the entrances to which rooms had been built across from the adjacent houses, forming low archways and making the place gloomy in the extreme. Of course, it was no part of the Vestry's duty to either clean or repair these alleys, equally of course they did not need lighting out of the parish

funds. Inside, the building was divided by a brick partition running right across it from side to side, and cutting off a third of its space. It was this third which Jemmy had just agreed to take a lease of, the remaining two-thirds would still do duty as a stable for several horses and a donkey. There was a large door admitting into either side of the stable, but only one small door opening into the 'Hall.'

And when Jemmy opened this door and gazed within, it was, besides being dark as the inside of a coal sack, full of so foul an atmospheric mixture that even the sweep's seasoned breathing apparatus protested, and he was obliged to retreat for a while, leaving the door wide open. When presently he was able to enter he found that the floor was a quagmire, the walls were heavily laden with slimy fungoid growths of hideous appearance, and the one window (in the roof) was so encrusted with dirt that it was no easy matter to distinguish it as a window. In short, the general inlook was amply sufficient to have daunted any less sanguine, courageous soul than Jemmy's. But he saw beyond the filth, the squalor, and the gloom. The place appeared to him as it would presently be, made beautiful by the loving labours of the Church, and he was in no wise discouraged.

He had a pleasant little habit of talking to himself, for which he was often twitted by his intimates, but one which he laughingly asserted was a source of great delight to him, especially as he was wont to vary it continually by talking to his Master. So now he said, thrusting both hands deep into his pockets, 'Well, Jemmy, ole

man, you got yer work cut aht for ye 'ere, an' no mistake. Fust of all we mus' git this yere muck dug aht from underfoot an' carted away somewheres; blessed if I know where ever we sh'll shoot it. Oh, yus I do, though; Sammy Corkran, the gardener, 'll be glad of it if we'll shoot it w'ere 'e wants it, for it's almost pure cowdung. These yere walls 'll 'ave ter be scraped right inter the very bricks, well lime-washed, an' then, if it'll run to it, we mus' have 'em clap-boarded. Cost about thirty bob at six bob a square, I s'pose. Then we'll want a lot o' soda for that there roof; that'll be th' wust job of all, I reckon, 'cause it's reg'lar 'ung wiv dirt. But, bless th' Lord, if our 'earts is in th' work we'll soon alter the look o' th' place. Lord, stir up th' brethring, yus, an' th' sisters too, like Ne'emyer did of old, and don't let there be any 'angin' back wotever. Now, lemme see, I mus' go an' borry some barrers, an' shovels, an' scrapers, an' planks, an' buckets, 'an see about a 'orse and cart for th' dung. Got no time t' mooch about 'ere any longer.' So saying he sprang outside, locked the door and trotted off at his best gait.

For the next two hours, then, Jemmy was full of business, borrowing such tools as he knew were necessary, and ordering materials against the grand onslaught to be made that evening. And it was not until everything was fairly in train that he was suddenly aware of a certain vacant feeling at the pit of his stomach, warning him that his healthy body required a little attention as well as his soul. Having threepence of his own about him, he turned into a coffee shop and ordered a 'pint o' corfee an' three slices' for his refreshment. His order was filled by a

strapping young woman, who, when she had set the food and drink before him, said shyly, 'Mr. Maskery, I was at your meetin' last night, an' I—I made up my mind to do as you arsked—get saved.' Before she had finished her brief pronouncement the girl's face was crimson and her eyes running over; but Jemmy, utterly forgetting his bodily needs, sprang up, seized her hands, and shouted, 'Glory, sister, praise the Lord!' so loudly that two or three other customers who were stolidly feeding in the little stalls, rose up and peered over to see what the noise was. And the shopkeeper also, hearing something unusual, came out from the kitchen, his face blank with astonishment. His expression of amazement deepened when Jemmy, entirely carried away by his gratitude, lifted up his voice and thanked the Lord for His mercies, not forgetting to implore Him to make the opportunity fruitful of blessing to all those who were present. The poor girl felt full of embarrassment, yet experienced a certain relief also, because now the step she had dreaded taking, the public avowal of faith in God, had been taken for her, and compared with that first plunge, the rest was, she thought, comparatively easy.

The upshot of this little episode was that, after explanation from Jemmy, two customers and the shopkeeper, while disclaiming stoutly any idea of becoming psalm-singers, promised to come round that evening and assist in the work. Then Jemmy bethought him again of his food, turning to with a relish which made the cold 'corfee' and the bread and butter a sumptuous repast full of celestial flavour. And having eaten and drunk, he departed to remind the Church of the grand event to take place that

evening, and to acquaint them with the progress he had made. By the time he had done so it was six o'clock, and he must needs hurry home to change his clothes and get some tea. During that meal the happy little fellow heard his wife's conversation unheedingly—it might have been a bumble-bee droning in his ear for all he knew of the import of her words. Suddenly, as if awaking from a dream, he said, 'Well, dear, I'm off. Gord bless ye, ole dear, Gord bless ye;' and making a dash at the door he vanished.

Straight as a homing bee, he made for the cowshed off Wren Lane, only stopping at an oil-shop to buy a pound of candles. When he arrived he was delighted to find, blocking up the door of the newly taken premises, a collection of shovels, barrows, buckets, and planks. Hardly had he noticed them before several figures, four men and one woman, emerged from the gloom and approached him, saying timidly, 'We're come t' 'elp if there's anything we can do.' 'Do!' shouted Jemmy, 'I should fink ye *could* do somefink. You just wait till I gets inside an' makes a light, an' then you'll see.' As he spoke he was exceedingly busy unlocking the door, and having gained admission he soon lit up the den with his candles, stuck wherever a projection could be found. Then mustering his forces, he set them to work excavating the filthy flooring and wheeling it out to where a waggon was waiting to receive it. The helpers, both men and women, toiled like beavers, and the work, unsavoury as it was, went on with marvellous celerity, so that in less than two hours the overlying mass of dung had been removed and a

comparatively clean substratum of gravel was reached. But before this desirable consummation was attained there were several willing hands employed scraping the walls as if they would scrape them away, while those who had any skill in carpentry were busy measuring the floor for its planks and the walls for matchboarding.

Meanwhile Jemmy and Saul, like two immense bats, were balancing themselves precariously overhead, exploring the unspeakably dirty recesses of the roof, and occasionally sending down showers of rubbish upon the toilers below, to their huge delight apparently. By ten o'clock a tremendous change had been wrought in the appearance of the place through the removal of the accumulation of dirt—in fact, as Jemmy said, the back of the work had been broken. And as all who were toiling there, with the exception of Saul, had been hard at work all day as well, there was a noticeable flagging in their efforts. But just as some of them were considering whether they might not now feel themselves at liberty to go home, a cry of delight was raised by one of the younger members at the advent of an emissary from the neighbouring fish shop with a tin pail full of stewed eels, a load of basins and spoons, and a basket of slices of bread. An impromptu table was rigged up, and in five minutes all hands were busy enjoying Saul's bounty. A short emphatic thanksgiving from Jemmy followed. Then the old Doxology was sung, and with happy hearts the volunteers dispersed to their several homes.

CHAPTER IX

A BUSY WEEK

HOWEVER Jemmy got through the week that followed I cannot tell you. Never in all his life had he been engaged in an operation of such magnitude before, never had he realised how money melts away like snow under a blazing sun when one is renovating the interior of a long-neglected building, and transforming it into something that it was never intended for. He was up every morning at four, and from then until he sank into his bed at eleven or thereabouts, he seemed to be crowding into each hour ninety minutes of hard labour. For although he did not dare to say so to anyone—pooh-poohed the idea, in fact, when other people only so much as hinted at it—he had high hopes of seeing the sanctuary ready for worship by Saturday evening. And by dint mainly of the self-sacrificing labours of himself and Saul, it came about that on Saturday the bright sunshine of the autumn morning shone down through the limpid panes of the roof window on to a place so transformed that one of its ancient denizens would certainly have refused to enter it, much less have given any milk there.

The once fetid quagmire of the floor, cleansed even down to the gravel that underlay it, was neatly boarded in with well-fitting planks, the aforetime

grimy sweating walls were invisible behind the well-varnished panelling of matchboards, and in the vestry had even been contrived wherein might be kept—not vestments—but such documents as the 'Church' needed. As the apartment was wider across the building than it was lengthway—to be precise, the room was twenty-four feet wide by only fourteen feet long—Jemmy had decided to have the reading desk at one side instead of across the end of the room. Sounds rather complicated, but I think you will see what I mean. That same reading desk, solidly built of pitch-pine by a local carpenter, and brought as his offering towards the new hall, was the pride and delight of Jemmy's heart. Then there were eight forms for seats, four Windsor chairs for the platform, a tiny erection behind the reading-desk, while the 'Table' consisted of half-a-dozen matchboards neatly joined and a couple of trestles to stand it upon. Thus it could easily be put out of the way when not needed, as at ordinary Gospel meeting times.

In addition, to these fitments the gas was laid on. What Joey Parker, the local gasfitter, could do in the way of mollifying the rapacious gas company had been done, but alas, it must be admitted that this item was a serious one after all. Nevertheless Jemmy consoled himself with the feeling that the outlay was well worth the result when he saw the bright gleam of the second-hand lamp above the door, and spelled out the gay scarlet letters upon it announcing to all who chose to read that this was the 'Wren Lane Gospel Mission. J. Maskery, Supt.' A friend in the City who dealt in such things made the Church a present of two dozen Sankey's Hymn-

books and a dozen Bibles, and behold, the 'Hall' was an accomplished fact.

Five shillings more than the whole amount which had been collected was spent, but that deficiency was made up by Saul with great goodwill, delighted, as he said, to be able to put his money to so good a use. I must not forget to state also that the first quarter's rent, 3*l.* 15*s.*, had been paid in advance by the mutual agreement of the three trustees, Jemmy, Brother Salmon, and Jemmy's father, old Bill Maskery, who now appears on the scene for the first time. And as he and his brother are destined to play an important part in our humble narrative, it may not be amiss to devote a few lines to describing them upon their introduction to the reader.

Thirty-five years before the time of which I am writing, there had been in the purlieu of Walworth an area of so vile a character that it was not surpassed in its bad eminence by any of the other London Alsatias. Into its precincts a single policeman never ventured; even two did not dare to visit its intricacies except by day. The inhabitants were principally half-bred gipsies and Irish, with a sprinkling of low Londoners ripe for anything, from rat-hunting to robbery and murder. I am not going to specify its whereabouts particularly, but those devoted missionaries by whose labours it has been greatly altered for the better will know it full well without my being more explicit.

Conspicuous among the inhabitants of this terrible neighbourhood were the two brothers, Bill and Jack Maskery. They were both undersized men, Bill especially, and, unless you were skilled in

physiognomy, rather insignificant-looking. Now, were I to tell the story of these formidable brothers as I have often heard it told by themselves in the open air to hundreds of deeply interested listeners, it would no doubt be intensely interesting, but the recital might prove to be highly inconvenient for me, since to this class of man the written word seems of a far more formidable and indictable nature than the word spoken.

It must then suffice to say that they were both men much in need of regeneration, both for their own sakes and that of their children, and with this innocuous hint I must perforce be content.

Both these worthies were sweeps—at least, chimney sweeping was their ostensible means of livelihood. Both had been climbing-boys in the days when that horrible iniquity towards children was permitted, and both earned a great many pounds in other ways than chimney sweeping.

When both of them were in the heyday of their powers, Richard Weaver came to conduct a mission in Penrose Street, Walworth, and was wonderfully blessed of God in getting hold of some of the most dangerous characters in the neighbourhood. This conversion of tigers into lambs, for it was nothing less, caused something like a panic to seize upon the denizens of South London slums, from the New Cut to Peckham. It was the theme of nightly discussion in hundreds of low drinking dens, but the disputers could never arrive at any clear idea of what it meant except that many of their most highly valued chums were going over to the enemy and becoming—well, it is impossible to set down here what their deeply

chagrined fellows called them. At last, after a prolonged and lurid argument, in which Bill had distributed at least a dozen blue marks of his disagreement upon the faces of his cronies, the two brothers suddenly announced their intention of visiting the scene of Richard Weaver's labours and putting a complete stop to his strange doings. Fired by their example, a large number of their acquaintances followed them, and in due course, after refreshing themselves at several public-houses in the Walworth Road on the way, the company reached the hall just as Richard Weaver was pouring out his soul in prayer to the Most High God for the salvation of the sinners that had gathered to hear.

The tumultuous entry of that ribald crowd created, necessarily, a great disturbance, but the speaker only raised his voice and grew more emphatically fervent in his petition, until, as at a master word, the uproar died away, and the savages, for they were hardly to be designated by any other name, wriggled uneasily into seats and remained in stupefied silence. Suddenly the speaker passed from a loud 'Amen' into the announcement of a hymn :

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy praise,

and, without waiting for any fumbling among hymn books or preliminary playing of the tune, broke into the song itself, being instantly joined by a large number of his audience to whom both words and music were quite familiar. Spellbound, the newcomers sat and listened to the unfamiliar strains. Apparently their purpose in coming was quite

forgotten, and when the singing ceased, and the preacher immediately plunged into a red-hot torrent of eloquence upon the subject of God's love for man, his voice rang through the building undisturbed by the faintest sound.

For nearly an hour, the sweat streaming down his shining face, he pleaded, warned, exhorted, until, suddenly as he had begun, he ceased his address and began to pray that his hearers might then and there be convicted, converted, and receive the assurance of Everlasting Life. He did not finish that prayer. While yet in the flood-tide of it a voice arose from the midst of his audience, a curious hoarse cry of 'God save my soul.' It was Bill Maskery, smitten to the core of his stony heart, and unable longer to restrain himself. Leaping to the occasion, the preacher spread out his arms, calling in tones of melting sweetness, 'Come, my poor brother; come and be cleansed. God wants you, Christ died for you, heaven waits for you; come and be happy.' And, literally obeying him, Bill sprang to his feet. With the same energy which he had often shown in bursting through a race-course crowd he made his way to the platform, followed by his brother, and, falling upon their knees, the pair confessed their acceptance of the mercy of Christ.

Many more of their intimates followed their example, making that night one long to be remembered in Walworth, but of all the trophies of grace collected none were so notable as Bill and Jack Maskery. Their desertion from the devil's army caused something like a panic in the sin-blighted neighbourhood where they lived, especially when they both showed

the same sturdy regardlessness of all consequences in the New Way as they had always manifested in the old. They were both of them utterly illiterate, unable to read or scrawl so much as their own names; but what of that? They set about learning. But meanwhile they preached; they gave evidence everywhere of the great change that had come over them. And before many days had gone by Bill had actually rented a small iron building that had been erected as a mission hall near his cottage, but had been given up in despair, and in it commenced nightly services on his own account, defraying all charges out of his own pocket. This he was well able to do, since he was a tremendous worker, besides being a born money-getter, and as his usual expenditure on drink had been at the rate of nearly 2*l.* per week, he had nearly the whole of that sum to devote to the purposes of his new life. Jack, on the other hand, although decidedly more intellectual than Bill, had never been able to do more than make a bare living, no matter how he schemed. So, unable to set up a place of his own, and feeling for some reason that Bill ought to be permitted his own sphere of labour, Jack went about preaching independently wherever he was invited, and invitations were soon so plentiful that he had much ado to keep pace with them and to do his daily work also. He developed a wonderful power of exposition. Even before he had got into words of two 'sinnables,' as he always called them, his handling of a Scripture theme was the amazement of many of his hosts, who, with all their education, could not come anywhere near the utterly uneducated sweep.

But we must here leave these two worthies for a

little and return to Jemmy. When Saturday came he found, to his almost speechless delight, that all things being now ready the Saturday evening prayer meeting could be held in the new sanctuary. As if fatigue was a meaningless word, he rushed hither and thither issuing invitations, his visage shining with such joy that only to catch sight of it as he trotted past made strangers feel a glow at their hearts. Eight o'clock came, and with it the congregation. The whole 'Church' turned up, as well as sufficient visitors to fill the little place to its utmost seating capacity, which was fifty-two. When all had found seats Jemmy sprang to his place upon the platform, and, leaning over the reading desk, while the big tears of perfect happiness streamed down his face, gave out the time-honoured hymn, 'All hail the power of Jesus' Name.' But it had no sooner been started than the accumulated strain deprived him of all power of singing, and he could only cling to the reading-desk and feebly murmur between his sobs, 'Glory! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!' I know how easy it is to look down from a serene philosophic height and analyse poor little Jemmy's ecstasy; so easy to define it as a combination of fanaticism, nervous excitement, and ignorance; but it came as near perfect happiness as anything can do in this world. And, in spite of scoffs, of disbelief in such heart-quaking worship, the tremendous fact remains of the good lives being lived behind it. Now and then we find it spurious, now and then we find scoundrels, male and female, simulating it for profit; but what does that prove? Only that cunning people consider it to be well worth simulating. We do not make imitations of

the false, but of the true. And I have no doubt whatever that the superior persons who dislike any such exhibition as Jemmy was making of himself would have been highly offended at the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of the martyrs, at the fellowship with the Lord that has so often led men and women and children to follow Him *whithersoever* He led.

The opening prayer was uttered by Bill Maskery, who, with his brother Jack, had come in during the singing of the hymn. He had a peculiar voice, that, beginning quietly in the male register, suddenly jumped an octave as the speaker became more fervent, and remained in that wonderfully penetrating falsetto until he had finished. 'Ho Lord,' he cried, 'oo is like hunto Thee hin Thy 'oly Temple! 'Ow marvellous are Thy works, and Thy goodness to'rds Thy people. Thou 'ast permitted Thy children to set hup hanother Tabbinacle hin the Wilderness. Yus, even hout ov the dung 'eaps they 'ave bin able to build up a sanchuary w'ere the light of Thy wusshup shall be kep' a-burnin'. May the door of it never be opened fur wusshup but wot Thy child'en shall git a personal 'old of Thee; may Thy glory alwus be revealed unto 'em in 'ere, so as they sha'n't faint by the way, a-knowing wot you've got in store for them 'at loves Thee. Han' when the bread is broke an' the wine poured aht, may those 'oo eat an' drink know fur a certainty that You Yourself's ben a-breakin' an' a-pourin' for 'em. May they see Thee by the heye an' feel Thee by the 'and of faith so astinckly 'at their faith shall become certing knowledge. May these yer doors never be hopened for

the preachin' hof the blessed Gorspel of Jesus wivout souls bein' born again ; in the years to come may thousan's look back to this 'ere cow-shed as was an' say this is none hother than the gate of'eaven. An', Lord, don't let anybody as works for Thee e'er do it fur money. We knows an' luvs lots o' Your dear child'en as do preach for money, but we don't want 'em 'ere. We all on us feels 'at we owes You all the light of our lives. We're Yours fur service, an' if You gives us souls for our 'ire we're mightily overpaid. Fill all Thy people 'ere so full of love that it'll keep on a-bubblin' up an' runnin' over all round 'em. An' don't let any of 'em be mean. Keep 'em all a-payin' just a little more'n their share, so's t'elp any pore brother or sister 'at's dahn on their luck. An' don't let's 'ave no tattlin' er mischief-making 'ere. Do, dear Farther Gord, keep Thy people sweet, keep 'em knit together in the bon's of love, and make this 'ere little 'ouse a centre of sunshine for all Roverhive For Christe's dear sake. Amen.'

His voice had hardly ceased when Saul's splendid baritone rose with 'Come, Thou fount of every blessing,' and the volume of sound as all joined in was so great that it seemed as if the walls must give way. Then the old tugboat man prayed, and so without a pause the glorious spontaneous upheaval of praise and prayer went on until 10.30. And when the door was opened to let the glad worshippers out, behold ! the lane was full of people, who, attracted by the unfamiliar sounds in such a place, had come to see what it was all about, and stayed, unable to go away. Then might you have seen Mrs. Salmon and the two

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brothers Maskery, and Jemmy, intensely busy. The outsiders were almost dragged within, an impromptu meeting was held, which lasted until midnight, and four unhappy ones professed to be cut loose from their sins and started on the starry way of Life Eternal.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN THE NEW HOME

HAPPINESS being an entirely relative expression, meaning something different to almost every individual who sighs for it, there may be little use in attempting to explain how entirely happy were the various members of the Wren Lane Mission when they retired to their humble beds on that eventful Saturday night or Sunday morning. Jemmy was probably the happiest of all. First, because his sunny soul seemed always capable of absorbing more delight at any given time than the majority of his fellows ; secondly, because the dream of his whole Christian life had been realised, and he was now in charge of an actual 'Hall,' wherein soul-saving and soul-strengthening might be carried on free from the hampering hindrances of a small home ; and thirdly, because he honestly felt that he had been permitted to occupy a prominent place among those shining souls who loved God and panted to do Him service.

Perhaps it rather added to than detracted from the intensity of his delight that when he returned to his home at 12.15 on Sunday morning, Mrs. Maskery, overburdened with her long day's struggle, met him with cool words. His bounding step and bright face made her feel resentful. And we must sympathise

with her. Only those who have managed a small house and a large family on a few precarious shillings a week in a great town know how heavy is the strain upon human endurance, to say nothing of temper. And after a while even a good woman, such as Mrs. Maskery undoubtedly was, is apt to forget the vast difference between a husband that has been out besotting himself at a bar and a husband who has been spreading the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. The one salient fact that the husband has been out of the stuffy, work-full home enjoying himself amid congenial surroundings overtops all the others, and the resultant complaints, generally unjust and always repented of, are of a severe character.

And on this particular Sunday morning Mrs. Maskery, in addition to her physical weariness, was fiercely enduring the penalty of overtaxed nerves, neuralgia. So that when Jemmy, all aglow with heavenly enthusiasm, burst into their stuffy little kitchen, ready to pour out his happy soul in glowing words, Mrs. Maskery, looking straightly at him, said: 'I sh'd like t' know w'ere *you've* been to till this 'ere time on a Sunday mornin'?' The rest of the interview we must leave because of its private character, but it bore hardly upon the two actors in it.

Old Bill Maskery had borne his cross, too, and found it far heavier than his son's. He was eking out a greatly lessened income in his old age by acting as resident collector of rents and general caretaker of a local slum, a cul-de-sac behind a great flaunting public-house, consisting of about twenty mean little dwellings, not one of which was ever

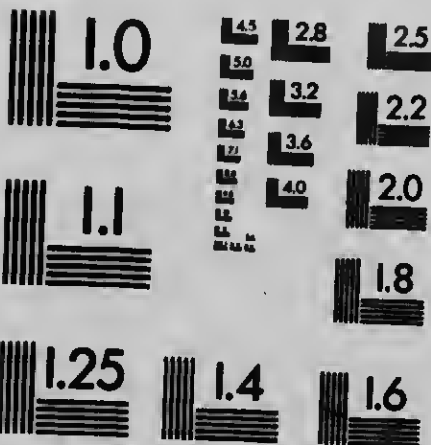
empty for a day. The inhabitants, male and female, were addicted to orgies, generally on Saturday nights, of a particularly unpleasant and bloodthirsty nature, and as their court was self-contained as it were, they were free to indulge in these savage exercises without interference by the police so long as a fighting fringe did not overflow into the main thoroughfare. All the denizens looked to Bill as the arbiter of their disputes, the visible maintainer of order; but, alas! only too frequently while he was endeavouring to carry out his onerous and thankless duties he got impartially banged and bruised by both parties to whatever fray was going on. So on this Sunday morning, when, with his heart as full of spring as his poor lower limbs were of sciatica, he came limping into the court, he found it a seething mass of riot, made hideous by the shrieking blasphemies of drunken women, the hoarse growlings of dehumanised men, and the wailing of neglected and trodden-upon children. His entrance was the signal for the attention of all to be turned upon him, and it was not until he had received several ugly bruises and cuts that the uproar died down, and the listening policeman in the street outside strode away with a sigh of relief.

Yet upon Bill's soul these external troubles made no impression. True, he had been used to such scenes during the whole of his stormy career, and was, therefore, perhaps less liable to be horrified at them than even the most unsympathetic outsider; but, apart altogether from that fact, he had arrived at that point of intimacy with his Master when the things that are not seen are the only realities, and the



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things that are seen and felt physically are mere fleeting phantoms.

To none of the other brethren or sisters had it been given to suffer in this wise on that Sunday morning. Brother Salmon turned up at the door of the Wren Lane Mission at about 10'15, a bottle of British port sticking bulkily out at the tail of his frock-coat, a newspaper-enwrapped bundle under one arm and a broom and duster in one hand. His face wore an expression of perfect contentment, of supremest satisfaction. It was the face of one who had by the sublime force of God's indwelling power completely laid aside all the worrying hindrances of life that affect the children of men from the gutter to the throne, who moved serenely in an atmosphere of eternity entirely permeated by the peace of God. Unlocking the door, which he fastened wide open, so that some at least of the stable smell might exhale, he carefully laid aside his coat, murmuring as he did so, 'Must have some pegs put up for the brethren's garments.' Then, solemnly as any Levite cleansing the sanctuary on Mount Zion, he plied broom and duster until all traces of last night's occupancy had disappeared. Carefully he arranged the forms along the sides of the 'hall;' then bringing forward the trestles and placing them in position, he gently laid the 'table' upon them, brought the forms up to its sides, and, stepping back, contemplated the effect with a face that positively shone. The table was exactly similar to the arrangement he always erected for the purpose of his business of paper-hanging in any room that he might be decorating. But no comparison between the two found a place in *his*

mind. Reverently he undid his newspaper parcel and unfolded a snowy white tablecloth, which he spread over the board. Upon it he placed the loaf he had brought, a fat tumbler from his coat-tail pocket, and the bottle of wine. Hymn-books were arranged around the table's edge, and then, all preparations completed, he resumed his coat and fell upon his knees to enjoy a restful time of silent communion with his Master before the arrival of his brethren and sisters.

Presently they began to come in, and at eleven the whole congregation was there, fourteen of them. Jemmy bustled in last, and after greetings had been exchanged the humble worshippers settled down into their places, with a feeling of much content, to commence their first worship hour in a new building. But they were not allowed to feel too complacent and comfortable. During the giving out of the first hymn an uneasy donkey in the adjoining stable lifted up his voice, and for a time rendered the reader inaudible. His untuneful vocal effort was almost immediately followed by a tremendous crash, some mischievous urchin, seeking an outlet for his superabundant energy, having hurled a huge stone at the door with all his might. The noise made all the worshippers jump and feel uneasy, but except for the momentary and involuntary movement not the slightest notice was taken of the interruption, and the service proceeded on the old familiar lines.

But no sooner had the solemn eating and drinking ended than old Bill Maskery arose, with his well-worn Bible open in his hand, and announced that he would read a portion from the Word and say a word thereon

for the brethren and sisters' behoof. He chose the chapter setting forth the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings viii.), and in spite of his painfully manifest limitations in the matter of reading, his extraordinary floundering and boggling over unfamiliar words, succeeded in riveting the attention of his hearers upon the wonderful description of the coming of the Lord God to His glorious habitation in Jerusalem. Then laying down the book and taking off his spectacles, the once truculent old man looked round upon his fellows and said :

' Beloved brethren an' sisters, we ain't got a temple like Solomon's was, but we've a-got a better one. Not, mind yer, as I means ter say anythin' agin Solomon, or 'is temple either ; but you know as 'ow we all believes as the day is come w'en it don't matter a row er pins w'ere we wusshups God, so long as we does wusshup 'Im. I believe 'at we all feels 'at if it warn't fur the cold an' th' wet we wouldn't want no better temple t' wusshup 'Im in than 'Is own great temple out o' doors, the bootiful sky over'ead and th' lovely green grass underfoot, an' th' sweet incense of fresh growin' 'erbs hof th' field a-blessin' our nosterels. But seein' as 'Ee's placed us 'ere, that carn't be—anyways, not in th' winter time ; neither, seein' 'ow 'Is enemies feels tords us, can we remember th' Lord's death till 'E comes, in public. There ain't no shadder of doubt in our minds, though—is they ?—that th' Lord 'Isself 'ave made 'Is temple in our 'earts, our poor misbul little shrivelled-up 'earts, an' that there temple's as much more glorious than Solomon's as a man's better'n a piece of hallybarster, er hany hother precious stone. 'Nother thing, bless 'Is 'Oly

Name, 'Ee knows 'at we should'n' be able to wusshup 'Im in a bootiful buildin' at all; we ain't ben used to it. We sh'd be a-lookin' roun' at the finery an' reckonin' up 'ow many pore 'ungry people the cost on it all 'ud feed, an' wen we got over that we sh'd begin to fee! stuck up corse we'd got such a grand place, thinkin' more o' wot we could see that was temporal than wot we coodn't see that was eternal. Bless the dear Lord, brethring an' sisters, 'at we've got a watertight roof over our 'eads, a snug place w'ere we can all come apart an' rest a while 'thout a-disturbin' of our pore little 'omes an' p'raps a-makin' unpleasantness. We are thankful, ain't we?' (Loud chorus of 'Amen's and 'Bless the Lord's.)

'An' now I wants ter tell yo wot's in my mind abaht this 'ere place. I s'pose I'm like hall the rest o' th' folks, more I gets more I wants; 'n' it's bore in on me 'at this place ain't a-goin' t' be near big 'nuf. We'll 'ave t' 'ave that theer next place soon. 'Corse w'y? We're a goin' t' get the people in 'ere werry noomrus, an' lots on 'em 'll want baptisin', an' we'll want our own pool, an', an'—Oh, glory, Hi don't see no end ner limit t' wot th' Lord's a-goin' t' do fur us an' wiv us s'long's we're faithful. That's it. Thet's the word Hi ben a-wrastlin' fur. "Be ye faithful unter death 'n' I will give ye a crahn o' life." Yus, that means as we've got ter be faithful t' 'Im fust, then t' hour brethring an' sisters, then t' hourselves. I've a-seen so many bright 'opes fade just 'cause men an' women wasn't faithful. They got 'fraid lest some-bdy else would be a-comin' th' double over 'em in some way or other, 'r else they got some maggitt in their 'eads concerning justification er sanctification,

er somethin' with a long 'ard name 'at they didn't know th' meanin' of, an' they went an' busted up the 'ole meetin' 'cause they couldn't git other people ter see same as they thought they did. Now, brethring an' sisters, don't you get thinkin' 'at I'm a-losin' 'ope 'cause m talking like this. I ain't. I'm a-gettin' old nah, an' fur many, many yeers th' goodness an' mercy of God 'as follered me all my ways. But I've a-learned 'at God's childun ain't never left to 'emselves to do wot's wrong. They gits pulled up sharp w'en-ever they makes mischief, an' if they ain't, w'y ter me that proves as they ain't God's childun at all. An' so I says ter you, dear ones, be keerful. Don't lissen t' houtsiders, don't believe hany hevil hof a brother 'less you can't 'elp yoreself, an' then go ter the brother fust an' see wot 'ee's got ter say afore you makes a rah. Don't be mean. God's genrus, an' God's childun orter take arter their Farther. If yore mean, you know very well wot'll 'appen; two or free of us 'll 'ave 'eaps o' trubbel a-scrapin' the rent o' th' place tergevver. You ain't got no minister t' pay, y' ain't got no pew rents ter pay, y' gits yer Gospel mighty cheap. Jist see t' it 'at y' don't try t' git it fur nothink, 'cos y' know 'as well 's I do 'at wot don't corst y' nothin' y' don't value much, unless it's the salvation wot y' carn't buy. Don't think I'm too 'ard, *please* don't, fur I love yer with all my pore 'art, I do hindeed. An' p'raps all I've tried ter s'y might be better said in th' words o' John, "Little childun, love one another, fur God is love."

The old man sat down, tears flooded his scarred and rugged red face, and even had there been any resentment at his outspokenness, it must have been

effectually quenched by the spectacle of his emotion as he strove to restrain the torrent of his feelings. They all knew his stormy history; all felt sure that his words were the outcome of deepest, truest knowledge; and doubtless there were many fervent resolves made that by the help of God the individual resolving would never give God cause to repent having placed them in their present position. But for some few minutes none of them spoke. Then Saul, rising diffidently to his feet, said: 'Brethren, all our dear old brother's said we must reckonise as not only truth, but wisdom. Anyhow, I'm agoin' t' take it t' heart. I've got t' leave ye next week, as most of ye know, for a long voyage, but I've determined by God's help to say a word fur Him every day, no matter what it costes me. An' I'm a-goin' t' pray for all of you, an' the little mission here. About my half-pay, you know—know I've left it for the benefit of the mission, or p'raps I ought to say for my own benefit, 'cause I know it will do me heaps of good. An' I feel shore I shall come back ter find the Wren Lane Mission a-flourishin' like a green bay tree planted by a river of livin' waters. An' if I don't come back, the sea havin' claimed me for a part of the toll it takes of its workers—well, it's all right, bless the Lord; I shall go where I can do ever so much better than ever I can do here.'

Up jumped Jemmy, almost shouting: 'Brethring an' sisters, my 'eart's too full to speak nah. 'Sides Saul an' my farver's said all 'at I'd ha' said, an' said it better, too. But in the open air to-night I b'lieve the Lord 'll give us all 'earts t' feel an' tongues t' speak His praise. Let's conclude our wusship by singin'

"All hail th' power hof Jesus' Name." Swiftly all present sprang to their feet, and under Saul's leadership sang the grand old hymn with tremendous vigour, if with little attention to time or tune. Then old Bill pronounced the benediction as solemnly, and doubtless as effectively, as if he had been the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the first Sunday meeting in the Wren Lane Mission Hall was over. The collection from sixteen people amounted to twelve and sixpence, half-a-crown of which came from Saul and two shillings from Bill.

But the members could not so readily disperse. They must needs discuss the establishment of a Sunday school in the afternoon and a Band of Hope for some week evening. There were no original thinkers among them, and so, although perfectly independent, they were compelled to proceed on orthodox lines. And if any suggestion had been made to Bill of innovation in any direction whatever, he would certainly have discountenanced it vigorously, having had some dire experiences in that line during his Christian career. So it came to be nearly one o'clock before they separated for their several homes, that little band of worshippers, whose ideas were as simple, whose motives were as pure, as those of the first disciples of our Lord. Not very respectable, not very knowing, but intensely in earnest to know God and keep His commandments in Biblical fashion. Moreover, all were looking forward with eager desire to the evening, when, in the strength of this close communion of theirs, they should go out to carry the war into the enemy's country, unaided by man, ill equipped in every human detail, but with an

absolute certainty in every heart that they were fighting a winning battle under the banner of the Most High God.

At the earnest solicitation of Jemmy, Saul accompanied him home to dinner.

So they went both of them together, and were greeted at the door of Jemmy's tiny house by an odour of roasting beef and boiling cabbage that, as Saul said, would almost give a dead man an appetite. The passage was full of young Maskerys in various stages of growth, but all wildly excited at the prospect of the weekly banquet. As Saul and Jemmy entered the darksome but spotlessly clean kitchen wherein the family spent most of their lives, Mrs. Maskery raised her heated face from the joint she was diligently carving, and said:

'Yore jest in time, young man, I give ye *my* word. Them as ain't in ter dinner by one o'clock don't git none put away for 'em—Oh, Saul, I didn't notice yer; sit right down yer an' make yerself at 'ome. Now then, Sally, say grace, ducky.' And there was an instant hush, all the family remaining quite still in whatever position they chanced to occupy at the moment, and Mrs. Maskery herself standing with one hand holding the carving fork stuck in the joint and the other shading her eyes.

'Thank God for sendin' us all a good dinner, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen,' murmured Sally, a mite of six; and immediately the plates began to circulate rapidly, each receiving its due proportion of beef, potatoes (plenty of these), greens and gravy, which the elder children cut up so that the younger could manipulate their portions with spoons.

The plates were odd ones, the knives and forks were of all shapes, sizes, and dates; there was no cruet or glasses, only mugs to drink water out of; but in spite of all these drawbacks it was a good meal, heartily enjoyed, and served with as much care and neatness as was possible under the circumstances. If only some of our well-fed clubmen could appreciate any of their costly meals half as much as the Maskery family and their guest did that day, I am sure they would never begrudge a doubling of the fairly high prices charged them. But enjoyment is not to be bought.

A temporary diversion of a skirmishing kind took place while the pudding, a huge ball of dough studded sparsely with raisins, succeeded the meat and vegetables, for nearly all hands were pressed into the service of clearing away, washing up such plates as were required for the second course, and settling down into their places again. But presently that pleasant lassitude that succeeds a good meal supervened, while Jemmy mentally calculated how much longer time remained to him before it would be necessary to set out for the 'Hall,' to make ready for the embryo Sunday school. Then up spake Mrs. Maskery: 'You two men better git inter th' front parlour w'ile we clear the things orf th' table; yore only in th' way 'ere, 's men gen'lly are 'bout a 'owse.' But if her words were rough, her manner was genial, bringing quick response from Jemmy, whose sunny nature was always on the alert to respond to a loving word or look from anyone.

So he and Saul removed themselves into the best room, and there, to the unmusical accompaniment of dish-clattering and incessant shrill orders to the

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juvenile assistants from Mrs. Maskery, they sat in meditative enjoyment, neither speaking a word until Jemmy suddenly sprang energetically to his feet, hearing the chiming of the half-hour, and in five minutes they were both making rapid way towards the 'Hall.'

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN THE NEW HALL— AFTERNOON AND EVENING

COMMENCING the last chapter with the full intention of living up to its title, and comprising within its limits all the doings of this memorable first Sunday, I soon found that, unless I made up my mind to prolong it to a most inordinate length, my idea was impracticable. For reminiscences of the period about which I am writing are revolved so rapidly by one another that embarrassment of riches soon sets in, and the difficulty of selection becomes even greater.

However, I am grateful to know that hitherto no one has hinted at the possibility of my using padding; the complaint has always been that I have compressed too much, and so I hope it will continue to be. Therefore, let us at once repair to the 'Hall' with those two earnest apostles, Saul and Jemmy, whose minds were full of the possibilities of extended service opened up, of fresh opportunities of well-doing. But they were hardly prepared to find their most sanguine expectations overtopped. To begin a Sunday school with about a dozen youngsters, and gradually by careful working to increase the number until the 'Hall' should be full, had been their idea. And lo! when they arrived, there were over thirty

children clustered around the door waiting, not too patiently, for it to be opened, although it wanted full ten minutes of the appointed time—three o'clock. Delighted almost beyond bearing, Jemmy burst in among them, unlocked the door, and in five minutes, by the children's willing aid, he had got the table cleared away, the forms set in order, hymn-books given out, and the portable harmonium placed in a prominent position. Punctually to the moment arrived the player, that willing worker whose peculiar loyalty to her own people did not permit her to *worship* with the Wren Lane folk, while leaving her free to assist them in ways like the present.

Being the first occasion of the meeting of the school, the accommodation was very incomplete; but this, so far from causing the children any annoyance, only heightened their enjoyment of the gipsy-like character of the proceedings. A chapter from Jemmy, a short prayer from Brother Salmon, and a couple of hymns, with rousing choruses, made a spirited opening to the proceedings, and then, stepping forward to the verge of the little platform, Jemmy said: 'Deer childun, I don' know 'ow to tell ye 'ow glad I am ter see so many of yer a-comin' 'ere this fust Sunday we've had the "'All.'" It's like the deer Farther 'Imself a-tellin' me 'at th' place was badly wanted. An', please Gord, we'll 'ave some more forms by next Sunday. None of yer sharn't 'ave t' set on the flore (though I b'lieve ye likes it better 'n a good seat). No, we'll 'ave heverythink rigged up all right for ye be nex' Sunday. An' nah our dear Brother Saul 'ere 'll tork t'yer. Ee's agoin' away acrost the great oshun, an' werry likely 'e won't

be able to meet wiv any feller Chrischuns for wusshup until Gord brings 'im back agen safely t' hus. 'N so I wornt ye t' lissen t' 'im wiv all yore 'earts, an' remember wot 'e sez t' ye. Bruvver Saul, will ye speak nah?'

Saul in reply made one step from his lowly seat on the floor to the platform, lifting with him the fair-haired little son (four years old) of Jemmy Maskery. For the child had gone to sleep, and Saul would not relinquish him to his father. Thus he stood before his expectant audience, his face shining with love and sympathy for the youthful pilgrims confronting him. When he spoke it was in a faltering voice, for his feelings almost overcame his ability to put them into words such as children use. At last he began. 'Dear little boys an' girls, as your Superintendent has said, I'm a-goin' away from ye fur a very long time, perhaps for always. An' I don't feel as if I could go 'thout sayin' a few words t' ye fust. For the chance of speakin' I thank your Superintendent with all my heart. An' now, what shall I say? Shall I tell you to be good children, to read your Bibles, and to come to Sunday school reg'lar? Anyone can tell you to be an' do that, an' you'll feel that they're only a-tellin' ye something y' know all about as well as they do, an' that, try as hard as ye may, ye can't do what they tell ye. More'n that, y' don' believe, if ye think at all about the matter, that they can do themselves what they asks you t' do. But I want t' say this t' ye, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the lover of little people like you, wants, oh, so much, to make you able to do right, to make you able not to do wrong. Only He can do

this for you. All kinds of people have tried to do right without Him, but they can't because we're all born with our hearts full of wishes to do wrong and hate for what is right. And as soon as ever we're old enough to do what we want, we begin to do wrong if we're allowed to, and we never do anything right unless we're made to. But if we only do right because we're made to, we're not a bit better than those poor children who do wrong because nobody makes 'em do right. Doing wrong, whether we're beat for it or not, makes us unhappy ; but we can't help ourselves, and we go on getting unhappier because we do wrong more and more, until we feel as if there was no hope that we should ever be anything but bad.

' All over the world people have tried for thousands of years all kinds of things to please the gods they thought ruled over 'em, but usually only because they were 'fraid of being punished for their wrong-doing, not 'because they wanted to be put right and made better. And even now, when we think we're so wise, we often see men who have made lots of money by all kinds of wickedness, when they come near their time to die, they'll spend nearly all they've got on building churches or something like that because they're afraid they'll be punished after death. But they forget that God knows so well what they've been doing all their lives, and that they never did a bit of good with their money until they found that all the pleasure of life was gone. And so we may be sure that all the good they try to do with that wickedly got money when it is of no more use to them will not be of any benefit to themselves. Why, it's

just like the robbers in some countries I know of, who always take some of the money they have stolen from poor travellers and give some of it to their priests, so that they may say some prayers for them to God, not only to get them off proper punishment for doing wrong, but what is much more silly, to imagine that they may soon be able to steal plenty more.

‘Now, dear little people, God’s way is so simple that you will all be able to understand it ; more, He has made it so plain that you can all, if you will, walk in it and be happy. First He sent His Son to bear the punishment for the sins of everybody, then He offers to all who believe in His Son Jesus the power to do right and not to do wrong. He does this by putting His Spirit into our hearts, the Spirit that hates wickedness and loves good, so that we poor helpless people shall find it easy to do right and hard to do wrong. This makes us happy, it makes us useful, and it makes dear gentle Jesus happy too. Oh, children, never forget that God loves you ; that He wants to see you good and happy ; that He is able to do all for you that you want ; that He’s a Friend that’s always near, so near that if you only believe in His love you will never be lonely or forsaken any more.

‘What I am telling you I am telling myself ; for I, like you, forget so quickly, and presently, when I’m out on the sea, and perhaps there may not be another man on board my big ship that loves God, if I don’t remember His love and His promises, I shall feel very lonely. But I sha’n’t forget this afternoon and all your dear little faces listening to what I’ve been able to tell you about the dear Master. I shall think of you

through the long night-watches when all is quiet and the wide sea all around looks like the sky above. And I hope that you will all pray for me that I may live a faithful life, doing what God wants me to do, and that if it may be I shall be permitted to come back and see you all again, and find you still following in the footsteps of your dear Friend and Master Jesus Christ. God bless you all, for His sake. Amen.'

Saul retreated with his sleeping burden to the floor again, and Jemmy immediately gave out the hymn, 'There's a Friend for little children.' It was lustily sung, of course, and then, with the Benediction, the little ones were dismissed into the sunshine. With a good deal of happy noise they dispersed, to all appearance utterly forgetting the solemn talk of Saul. But those who have studied the child know how wonderfully impressions at that early age are often retained, and when those impressions are good, who shall assess the value of the fruit borne of them in after years? True, it was a very unorthodox fashion of Sunday school keeping, but, for one thing, the staff of teachers was not yet organised, and for another, Jemmy was wise enough to know that after a certain amount of teaching has been absorbed, the rest of the time is often wasted in repressing the children's naturally volatile spirits. Nothing is being learned then.

So, carefully locking up the 'Hall,' Saul, Jemmy and his little tribe went home to tea. Their appetites were good, their minds at ease, and before their united exertions three half-quartern loaves, half a pound of butter, and sixpennyworth of 'creases' entirely disappeared. A healthy bread-and-butter appetite is such a

good thing to have. It is so pleasant to see youngsters polishing off slice after slice of the plain, profitable food, that I make no apology for alluding to that impromptu tea-party. True the tea was not of the strongest, Mrs. Maskery doled out milk and sugar somewhat sparingly, but there was plenty of the rather mawkish decoction to assuage thirst, and what more did anyone there want? Nothing. By the time the meal was over, so fast had the minutes flown by that it was necessary for Jemmy and Saul to prepare for the open-air meeting on the Waste.

Now, during the week the news of the establishment of the Wren Lane Mission Hall had been widely discussed in the immediate neighbourhood. A large number of those who lived and worked around Lupin Street and belonged to no place of worship whatever had long felt a sort of proprietary interest in the meetings of Jemmy's little crowd on the Waste, and indeed it is not at all unlikely that they had some dim and indefinite idea that the neighbourhood was in some mysterious way bettered by the labours of Jemmy and his helpers in its midst. And now that a definite forward movement had been made, and that, too, upon such happily unorthodox lines as the conversion of the cowshed, the interest was greatly heightened, and in the queerest out-of-the-way corners the work of the Wren Lane Mission was discussed with much eagerness. Then, too, the weather of this particular Sunday was perfect. Even the mean houses took on a tender glow from the declining rays of the afternoon sun. The sky was of a sweet grey blue, undefiled by the clouds of smoke so heavily ascending on weekdays. And the glorious old river close at

hand lay basking, gilded and tinted by the slanting rays, while every ugly corner, as well as every curious shape of vessel lying quietly moored, was touched and transfigured.

Promptly at six the whole band gathered at the 'Hall,' finding to their amazement and gratification quite a crowd of interested folk waiting to accompany them to the field. Less than ten minutes sufficed for the preliminaries, the brief, almost ejaculatory prayer sent up for the souls of the hearers, for wisdom and power to the speakers, and for a good upheaval all round. Then the warriors sallied forth with bright faces, all except Jimson the stevedore. Probably his liver was out of order, or something of that kind, for had anyone listened closely by his side they would have heard mutterings and grumblings something after this style: 'Ho, yers, 'tsall very well, but some on us 's gitting stuck up, Hi think. Hi haint been harsked t' speak, ner pray, ner do anyfing, in fac. Hi know the time when it was Bruvver Joe here, an' Bruvver Joe there, an' Hi was alwus busy abaht somefing er anuvver. An' nah Joe Jimson's only wanted when th' collection's a goin' on. Sharn't stan' much more on it, Hi know.' Poor fellow, he was yielding to one of the commonest forms of temptation used by the common enemy, in not merely these gatherings, but large and influential churches. It is a disease of all the more dangerous character because it is a virtue becoming a vice. The surest sign of a living church that is justifying its existence is that its members are all eager for service, all unwilling to sit idly by and let officials do all the work of the church in a perfunctory, official way. And

yet how often it is seen that energetic brothers and sisters are extremely prone to take a fit of the sulks if any portion of the work they have been doing (perhaps but poorly, owing to personal limitations) is delegated to another, very likely a newcomer. Then they need special grace to overcome the temptation to make things desperately unpleasant for their friends and themselves. Jimson had been somewhat shelved of late because of the fiery zeal and energy of Saul, and his masterful mind (he was a foreman stevedore) was hard put to it to bear what he considered to be unjust neglect. So he glowered and fumed, making himself unhappy after our foolish manner. Instead of putting the best construction upon the actions of others whereby we appear to be slighted or aggrieved, we hug our grievances, real or fancied, to our hearts until we have reared them to an abnormal growth, and a matter that was really not worth more than a passing thought becomes an offence not to be pardoned.

Fortunately for the work this evening poor Jimson's mood passed unnoticed. The band arrived at their pitch, a ring was formed, and a hymn given out, 'Work, for the night is coming.' Before it was started the audience numbered several hundreds, all working men and women, indefinitely eager for something, they knew not what. Their care-lined faces looked with pathetic earnestness at the speaker, when, the hymn over, Jemmy came forward to tell for the five-hundredth time the stories of his father's conversion and his own. So many of them had heard it before, but it never seemed to pall, and their unuttered sympathy was so manifest that Jemmy

outdid himself. His face was transfigured, his voice deepened, until, amid a hush that was intensely solemn, a man, who had long been the terror of the alley in which he lived and the scourge of his wife and family, came forward, as if drawn by some unseen but irresistible force, and, gently moving aside those who obstructed his progress, reached the ring. Sinking upon his knees he said softly, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' There was a dramatic pause while Jemmy, placing his grimy hand upon the newcomer's head, cried, 'Yuss, brother, 'Ee will. You've claimed 'Im, an' you'll fine 'Im, as I 'ave, the tenderest, most fergivin' Friend you ever 'eard on.'

As if hardly heeding, the man rose to his feet and faced the crowd, now excited tremendously by what was occurring. 'Neighbors,' he said, 'ye all know me. Bill Harrop's been a mighty bad character for a good many years. Most of ye know 'at my pore wife an' kids 'as often 'ad t' go close t' th' edge o' starvation, w'ile I ben a boozin' away like a 'our' afire. An' everybody thought I didn't care. Well, I didn't 'cause I couldn't. I'd a liked to, and I did try to—oh yuss, I did, 'underds o' times. But at last I see my tryin' was all no use, and I jes let meself go 'eadlong t' 'ell, as all on ye know. An' nah it's gotter thet as I see 'em a dyin' afore me werry eyes, an' I—an' I go on boozin' th' larst 'apeny as 'd keep 'em alive. All th' time I know'd there wuz a Gord, on'y I tried 'ard t' fergit it, an' I couldn' 'elp knowin' there was one devil any'ow s'long as I know'd I was erbout meself. Nah, altho' I b'lieve I'm th' wust man I ever come acrost, I just b'lieve too that Gord can make even me wuth somefink. I know I am wus'n ever

old Bill Maskery was, but I do b'lieve I ain't too bad to be saved. I b'lieve Gord 'as saved me.'

A long, loud cry, of 'Glory to God' arose from the little gathering, and Mrs. Salmon, her worn features all aglow with heavenly light, stole softly to the side of the penitent and led him to the rear of the meeting. For she, with a wisdom that is often sadly lacking to earnest revivalists, dreaded intensely the noisy outburst of religious excitement, a state of mind contagious in the extreme among large masses of people, and often as utterly destitute of the Spirit of God as is a gathering of howling dervishes.

Saul then took up his place as speaker at the beck of Jemmy, who, with the keen perception born of long practice in these matters, saw perfectly how Saul's utter unconventionality, deep Christian sympathy of look and tone, and abundantly manifested love of his fellow-men would appeal to an audience already prepared for such a message by the solemn proof of the Gospel's power which they had just witnessed.

'Dear friends,' began the sailor, 'Jesus Christ is longin' to bless ye. Just as a mother's heart yearns over her baby, only infinitely more tender, infinitely stronger than that poor human effort, so does the loving heart of God's Son yearn over ye now. He, seein' into all hearts here, knows what we can only dimly feel—that His Spirit is workin' mightily with ye to bring ye to Him. Ignorance, shyness, fear, shame—these are some of the things that's holdin' ye back. But if ye have one thing, the desire to come to Him, He can and will remove all these paltry hindrances. If ye are ignorant, He is all-wise ; if ye are shy, He was lifted up on the cruel cross, before

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the eyes of a mocking world, for your sakes ; if ye are afraid of ridicule, of persecution, of failure, He has met and conquered the most awful shapes that fear can put on for you ; if you are ashamed of anything, no matter what, just look up in His dear face, and the slight will bring all your shame down to one point—that you have so long held out against His wonderful love. My dear Master and loving Lord, these poor souls are so hungry for You ; like lost children wanderin' in the night they stretch out blind hands and feel after the Consoler. Oh, satisfy their unknowing needs, dear Friend of all mankind. Brothers and sisters, here is a salve for every sore, a remedy for all evils of heart and soul and body. The price of it to Him who offers it by my voice at this moment was so great that the majestic company of heaven veiled their faces as it was paid. The Heavenly Father, who is Love, must needs hide His glorious face from Jesus as He suffered because your sin was laid upon Him, and who can say what that meant to Jesus ? All this agony of the soul upon agony of body, such as no merely imperfect man can feel, to purchase redemption for you, and to set you once more in the place it was God's intention that you should occupy. And this heavenly cataract of blessing is yours for the taking. He'll provide all things—cleansing, wedding garments, feast, music, education, protection from evil outside and inside. There's an old, old fable about a man who, having pleased his god by showing him hospitality when he came to him in the shape of a wayfarer, was blessed by having the pitcher out of which he poured the milk for the thirsty traveller always full. That is a feeble picture of the fountain

of blessing Jesus has for you. It isn't only that there is a well to which you may go whenever you like, and draw as much as you like, but within your very souls a fresh spring shall spout up, an inexhaustible supply, not only for you, but all around.

'You stand ready for this blessing', but you are in much danger of losing it. For the tempter is whispering, "Don't be rash, take your time, reflect," to some; while to others he imparts a certain stolid attitude of dull wonder, against which the simple message of "Come to Jesus" beats vainly.'

Suddenly the speaker's voice ceased, his bronzed face took on a deeper flush, big tears burst from his eyes and rolled rapidly down his cheeks, as, with dumb appeal, he spread out his arms to the people. He saw how inadequate his words were to express what was so apparent to his mental vision, he felt something of the Master's burden of the woes of others, he heard reverberating through the air the cries of the overloaded and hopeless victims of the world's harsh ways. And these things overcame him, took from him all power of speech, but left him what, under the circumstances, was far more effectual—the magnetic attraction of deepest sympathy with his hearers plainly to be seen and felt by them all.

The results were amazing. Men and women in dozens, their last defences of insular reserve broken down, pressed forward claiming the gift of God. The patch of shabby, hard-trampled common became a sanctuary, where rows of returning prodigals were embraced by the long-suffering Father, and the whole atmosphere was surcharged with happiness.

A praise meeting was immediately held, in which

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many joined who had never praised God before, and afterwards, breaking up into little groups, men and women exchanged confidences and experiences with a freedom and overflowing sympathy entirely new and strange, while bursts of song arose from hearts whose music could not be restrained. Into those grey lives the rainbow hues of the breaking of God's day had penetrated, and like song-birds at sunrise they must needs lift up their voices and welcome the light.

Giadiy would Jemmy have welcomed the concourse into the 'Hall,' but it was impossible—there was not room for the half of them. But, singing as they went, the happy crowd accompanied the instruments of their release to the door of the little place, and there, with many handshakings and 'God biess you's,' they parted for the night, each to go his or her own way and meditate upon the wonderful work wrought by the love of God.

CHAPTER XII

SAUL'S DEPARTURE

THERE was a touching little gathering in Jemmy's parlour the next evening. All day long the hearts of those concerned in the work of the little mission had been like a choir of tiny angels, in spite of the numberless fretting annoyances of their daily life. Even Joe Jimson, the captious stevedore, found himself less disposed to feel aggrieved at the small active part he had taken in the recent open-work, and occasionally moved to lift up his voice in strident song, an inclination which he manfully repressed for fear of the effect which it might have upon his irreverent gang of cargo-handlers. Captain Stevens of the tug started off that morning at 4 A.M. on a seeking cruise down the river, with a face that fairly glowed with delight, while from his bearded lips there issued a strange series of sounds not unlike the buzzing of a hive of swarming bees under the hot sunshine of a July noon.

But when the little parlour was full of all those who could come to bid Saul Andrews farewell, there was a notable fall in the spiritual barometer. They all, not excluding Jimson, loved him well, and felt the parting with him sorely. He was, they felt, one of their own prizes, won from out of the gape of the

dragon by their own humble instrumentality. And since his conversion he had walked so humbly and consistently with his God, his help and teaching had been so valuable to them, and his influence so entirely good, that all felt on his departure a sense of bereavement that was very hard to bear. Jemmy, of course, was hardest hit, for he and Saul had grappled each other to their hearts with hooks of steel, a mutual bond none the less enduring because Saul was fully alive to Jemmy's many weaknesses.

The pair sat side by side, hand in hand at Jemmy's table, while Saul haltingly uttered a few words of caressing farewell. He was due on board that night in order to be ready for the early morning tide, when at daybreak the great portals of the East India Dock would open and let out the huge *Asteroid* for the commencement of her long voyage round the world. Solemnly he exhorted his brethren to fight against the devil of envy, the devil of jealousy, the temptations to spiritual pride. Touchingly he besought them to abide in love one toward another, and then inviting them all to kneel with him, he lifted up his heart in tenderest, simplest supplication that the Lord would mightily bless each and all of them in all their ways. And then one by one they passed out into the gloom of Lupin Street, each leaving with him as they shook hands some little token of regard—a book, a pair of socks or mittens, a muffler, and such-like.

Hardest of all was his parting with Jemmy and Mrs. Maskery. The latter, moved to tears, took his few quietly uttered words in submissive silence. 'Jemmy's got his faults, like all of us,' he said ;

'but you know better'n any of us how close he has got to the mind of our Father. Don't forget that, specially when he tries your temper. God bless you both, and make you very helpful to each other, bearing each other's burdens and looking forward to the glory a-follerin'. I know I ain't very clear in my expressions, but I believe you know what I mean. Now I must go. I won't ask ye to think of me, 'cause I'm sure y' always do, but I do ask you t' pray for me, 'cause I've got a long heavy job ahead, an' it cheers me to know 'at there's dear ones at home liftin' up their 'earts t' God for me. No'—as Jemmy made to get his coat and hat—'no, you musn't come with me. What's th' use of making th' partin' any harder than it need be? I'll say, God be with you all evermore, Amen! here.' And wringing their hands, Saul stepped out into the night.

I should like, if mental analysis were my forte, to give a word-picture of Saul's feelings as he threaded the squalid maze of streets that lay between him and Rotherhithe station on the East London line: how the foul language flowing so glibly between the members of the various groups of boys and girls he passed affected him; what his mental attitude was towards the future—the long, long voyage, with all its human loneliness, that lay before him; how—for he was naturally both sympathetic and imaginative—he glanced up at the rabbit-hutches of houses he passed and wondered what tragedies of life, death, and resurrection were being enacted within;—but to what good end? Such subtle disquisition, even in the most skilful hands, is of very little value, since humanity, whether in its mental or physical aspects,

is individually diversified, and the experience of one is never the duplicate of the experience of another ; neither can it be taken as a guide without danger. Perhaps the best way in which to describe what was in the mind of Saul would be to say that all these external things were to him as the chips and straws which float and whirl upon the surface of the swiftly rushing river. The voyager sees them, apprehends them more clearly than he does the deep resistless force of the current beneath, but although they engage his attention, they do not affect his purpose or his destination.

Slinking forms, both male and female, waylaid Saul without hindering him. Their muttered remarks passed his ears without entering, and one hour after leaving his friends at Lupin Street he climbed on board the *Asteroid* and entered the berth he was to share for the voyage with the carpenter and sailmaker. A feeling of disgust, immediately suppressed, swept over him as he opened the door and struck a match, for the atmosphere within was foul with the horrible smells of drunkenness, his two berth-mates being stretched, fully clothed, in their respective bunks, stertorously exhaling the fumes of their last debauch. And as he looked at them he remembered how he, too, had so recently been as they were, tied and bound by an awful chain which he had no power to break, but which at the touch of the Loving One had fallen from him as did Peter's bonds in the prison of old.

Very deftly and quickly he arranged his sleeping-place, and prepared his working rig for the morning ; then lighting his own little candle-lamp that he had

rigged up that day, he turned in, and with a sigh of contentment as the sweetness of the rest to his body stole over him, he opened his well-worn Bible at the best loved chapter, 1 Peter i. Its clear-cut statements of fact, its glimpses into the all-wise, all-loving purposes of the Father, were to his soul like the tender nursing motions of a mother to her babe, and a great peace flooded his whole being. It is in this wise that God often reveals Himself to the unlearned but simply trusting children of His love. With every mental hindrance, as well as physical disability, arrayed against them, they are yet endowed with a faculty of enjoyment in His presence; they hear the accents of His voice far, far more clearly than those who have every external facility granted unto them. It is the extension into the spiritual world of the great law of compensation.

His eyes grew tired, and sleep came stealing gently over him, so he laid his book upon the shelf over his head, and in a few simple sentences claimed once more his Father's blessing and protection for the dear ones he was leaving, confidently asked for grace and courage to fulfil his appointed tasks, and offered up his glad tribute of praise. Then with the murmured 'Thank God, thank God,' exhaling from his bearded lips like sweet perfume, he sank into child-like sleep, an utterly happy man.

Before the pale and cheerless dawn broke with an accompaniment of furious squalls of bitter rain, Saul started up from his pleasant, dreamless sleep at the voice of the watchman, whose duty it was to rouse the officers at the appointed time for getting under weigh. With a cheery 'All right,' he sprang out of

his bunk, lit his pipe, and dressed with marvellous celerity, smoking vigorously the while. His movements, no less than the bright cheerfulness of his face, made him a strong contrast to his two most wretched berth-mates. For not only were their recent excesses clamouring for renewal, but the sudden awakening out of that deep slumber into which they had fallen overnight with their brains all awlirl, had set all their nerves jumping so that their fingers could hardly fasten up their clothing. Their eyes were dim and gummy, their faces drawn and twitching, while every few seconds their leathery tongues roamed fruitlessly round their dried-up mouths, vainly seeking a little moisture. With their energetic and cheery ship-mate they exchanged not a word after the sullen 'G'mornin'' with which they had replied to his first salutation, and he, wisely, did not press conversation upon them, seeing that it was almost necessary for them to keep their mouths tight shut lest groans should escape and shame them. Suddenly Saul laid down his pipe, completed his rig by putting on his sou'wester, and stepped out into the tempestuous morning. Making his way aft, he found Mr. Carroll, the mate, in his berth, taking a cup of hot coffee while waiting for his bo'sun's arrival.

It is always rather an anxious time for such a responsible officer as the mate of a ship, and especially a big sailing ship, the period of finding out what kind of men his subordinates are. Especially is this the case with the bo'sun. Upon this petty officer, whose work is almost exactly comparable with that of a foreman upon a building, depends very much of the mate's comfort. The second mate may be a

duffer, but his deficiencies will be dealt with by the master, who, in case of the second mate's utter uselessness, must keep that officer's watch. But the bo'sun, who by the unwritten laws of sea etiquette takes his orders from the mate alone, is the man, after the master, who makes or mars the mate's happiness. If he knows his work thoroughly, is a man of energy and resource, gifted with the indefinable quality which alone enables a man to command his fellows without bullying or constant friction, he is a pearl of price, and few indeed are the mates who do not recognise this to the full. Therefore when Mr. Carroll looked up from his table and saw Saul standing in the doorway, his quick glance took in at a flash the alert, upright figure, the bright, pleasant face and keen eye, and he breathed more freely.

'Mornin', bo'sun,' said he. 'You're very punctual.'

'Good mornin', sir,' replied Saul. 'Hopes you'll alwus fine me so, sir. Any special orders, sir?'

'No, not yet, bo'sun,' thoughtfully returned the mate. 'Anyhow, not till we see what the crowd's like. Most of 'em drunk, I s'pose, as usual. Turn 'em to as soon as you can, an' let's see how they shape. An' keep the decks as clear as you can. If there is one thing more than another that riles me, it is seein' the decks all littered up goin' out o' dock. It's bad any time, but then I think it's worst of all. So do what you can, bo'sun, to keep things clear. Rainin' pretty hard, ain't it?'

'Yes, sir,' answered Saul dubiously; 'looks 'sif there's a lot o' dirt about. But it's gettin' lighter, that's one comfort. Well, sir, if you've no more orders at present, I'll be gettin' 'em started.'

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'Yes, do, bo'sun; an' I'll be along in about five minutes. Oh, have a drink 'fore you start?'

'No, thank you, sir. I don't touch it,' said Saul earnestly. 'I've a-had all I want. I find I can't take a little and done with it, and so I take none, an' keep on the safe side. No offence, I hope, sir.'

'Not likely,' cheerily answered the mate. 'It's mighty good news to me, I give you *my* word. But I guess you'll have a pretty tough time with Chips and Sails. They've been in the ship three voyages, and while they're as good men at their trade as ever I want to go fishin' with, they are about the worst kind of soakers I ever came across. They just can't take a nip an' done with it. Well, start the boys now, bo'sun, please.'

'Aye, aye, sir,' responded Saul, and disappeared. Striding forward, he put his head in at the port fo'c'sle door, and in his deepest tones of command shouted, 'Turn to, there.' He then went to the starboard door and repeated his order, noting as he did so that four or five men were sitting under the dim light shed by the miserable lamp drinking their coffee, while the rest of the crew were either lying on the deck in various limp and uncomfortable attitudes or invisible in the gloom of their bunks. But after the immemorial custom obtaining in British merchant ships he retreated to give them a few minutes' grace in which to pull themselves together. In an American or a Canadian vessel there would have been no such latitude. Upon the word, those ordered must jump or be jumped upon—assailed with boot, fist, belaying pin, or handspike. And knowing this, men shipping on board these vessels

are disinclined to tempt fortune by dilatory behaviour. Now while Saul was awaiting the pleasure of the crew—for it amounted to that, and no less—his mind was exceedingly busy. The old enemy was assailing him with insidious suggestions of the difficulty awaiting him should the men over whom he was placed be, as is so often the case, sullen, unruly, and lazy. Would he dare to use force, and, if not, how would he get himself obeyed? In either case, how would his reputation as a Christian stand? It was a stiff problem, and for a moment—but only a moment—it staggered him. Then his heart went up in unuttered request for assistance, for wisdom to do the right thing at the right time, and while he was yet asking the assurance came.

Ample time having been allowed the men to get out, he stepped forward briskly, with a stentorian shout of 'Now then, all hands, out with you an' get ship unmoored. Out with you!' Two or three slouching forms lolled over the step of the fo'c'sle door rather than stepped out, muttering hardly articulate blasphemy on this rude disturber of their peace who was actually daring to do his duty in ordering them to do theirs. Immediately Saul strode towards them, saying, sternly, 'Get to your work at once. Inside, say what you like; on deck, you're under my command, and while I'm able to stand up I'll see you keep a civil tongue an' do what you've signed for. See?' These words, uttered in a firm, clear, and manly voice, brought all the rest of the crowd on deck except those who were helplessly drunk, and as they came Saul's orders flew like hail. There were no pauses for consultation on the part of

the puzzled crew, or for the formulating of hasty plans by the bo'sun. No; the work went steadily forward without a hitch, and presently, in the midst of the driving rain, the howling wind, and the shouting of orders, men found time to murmur to one another, 'Say, thishyer bo'sun of ours do know 'is work, don't 'ee?'

He certainly did know his work, and, true to his recent training, did it with all his might, neither sparing himself nor those under his orders. And so it came about that with far less trouble or confusion, and far less expense to the owners for outside help than usual, the *Asteroid* was conveyed riverwards until, at the outer lock gates, the big river tug *Cestrian*, with Skipper Stevens in command, backed up and took her hawser. Easily, gracefully, she turned, and then, like a horse that has been fretted by constant windings through the tortuous ways of a town, and has at last emerged into the free, straight way of the country road, the *Asteroid* sped seaward under the friendly stress of the powerful auxiliary ahead.

Then as the stress of duty slackened somewhat, Saul's tact needed all its exercise to keep the peace. For, as always, there were some willing fellows among the crew who, once they were started, found it not merely easy but pleasant to do what they were told to the best of their ability; and there were other some who, no matter what the duties in hand might be, would shirk them if they could, who would always step aside to let some one else do what should have been done by them. And these fellows now, at the first sign of the slackening strain, dodged into the fo'c'sle, leaving the willing ones to do whatever was

to be done, while they, the lean kine of the ship, lurked in darksome corners, hugging themselves that they were escaping some of the work at any rate.

It is hard to sit in judgment upon one's fellow-men, especially when one has so often felt the compulsion of the flesh oneself; but if ever there was an excuse for so doing, I think it must be afforded to those who have, by the force of circumstances, been compelled to get out of unwilling men that which they ought to give, or to put upon the shoulders of their willing work-fellows a load far beyond that which they ought to bear. I know of no conditions where this problem presents itself as it does in the merchant service; for on board ship it will ever be found that the good, earnest sailor will do far more than he ought, while the loafing, blaspheming wastrel goes easy. Quite naturally, because no officer likes to be constantly wrestling with calculated rascality, and will always, no matter how he feels, sooner or later take the line of least resistance for his own personal comfort. The average man needs a certain amount of compulsion, sometimes moral, mostly physical; he needs to have some punishment obviously before him, or he will not do that which he should. On board British merchant ships—it is grievous to have to say it—blackguardism is at a premium, and if a man will only give his mind to being truculent and disorderly, he will be sure, with the rarest exceptions, of having an easy time, while his shipmates, who have decent desires and a fellow feeling for those whom accident has placed in authority over them, will lead a very hard life.

On shore these difficulties present themselves, no

doubt, but in nothing like the same degree, because recalcitrant workmen can always be dealt with there in the simplest way by the dread of losing their employment. And he who does his work ashore in willing and trustworthy fashion, loving it for its own sake, will surely find himself valued, paid better, given opportunities of raising himself. And he will never suffer because any of his mates do not do their work properly. On board ship, however, such a man will find all his good qualities exploited to his own detriment; he will have every inducement held out to him to become indifferent, lazy, and blackguardly, and if he choose to be the reverse, he will not only find himself worked off his feet by the officers, but his life in the fo'c'sle will be one of the most wretched, humanly speaking, that it is possible to conceive.

All these facts were perfectly well known to Saul, of course, and ever since his conversion he had been promising himself that when, if ever, he attained to a position of command, he would, by God's help, use all his endeavours to prevent such a state of things from existing under him. This he resolved, being fully aware of what it would mean to him, but trusting that he would be guided aright as well as helped in his earnest endeavours to do justice without fear or favour between man and man under his orders. Behold him, then, face to face with the facts; and if it be possible for you who lead sheltered lives on shore to understand something of his difficulties, you will not refuse him your admiration and sympathy any more than his friends at the Wren Lane Mission refused him the solid support of their regular prayers.

His keen eyes soon detected the absence of

certain members of his staff whom he had mentally noted before as being 'slack in stays.' And leaving those who were at work to get on with their tasks by themselves for awhile, he went in search of the black sheep. The first one he found was reclining comfortably in a corner of the fo'c'sle, with pipe in full blast, and a look of utter indifference on his face. To him Saul suddenly entered with the crisp remark, 'Now then, young man, you're in the wrong place. I want the work finished, and when it's knock-off time I'll let you know.' He was a big Liverpool Irishman, a peculiar breed of men found in considerable numbers at sea, and hardly to be matched on the wide earth's surface for truculence, insubordination, or laziness when they give their minds to the practice of these things, as so many of them do. He looked up nonchalantly at Saul, saying, 'Me nairves demand a verse o' th' poipe at regular intervals t' kape em in orrdher, an' ef yez don't like me little ways yez k'n just git t' 'ell out ov it, an' lave me recover. Me name's Larry Doolan, an' I come from Scotland Road, an' I don't take any nigger-drivin' frum any — limejuicer afloat, d'ye moind.' Saul listened patiently, and, when he had finished, for all answer, took two steps towards him, seized him by waist and neck, and hurled him on deck. He fell in a heap, dazed. When he recovered he struggled to his feet and made a blind rush at the quiet man before him, his mouth full of cursing and red murder in his heart. But he was met by two fists as grimly irresistible as a stone wall would have been. And as he staggered back once more, Saul's quiet certain voice penetrated his ears. 'You'd better get on with the work, and

not try and impose on your shipmates. You'll only get badly hurt if you keep on as you're going.' This self-evident fact was so very clear to him that, after a momentary pause, he turned and walked aft to where a little group of men were busy lashing some spars in the starboard scuppers, and without another word he joined in the work.

Turning sharply round to go and seek for the rest of his flock, Saul was confronted by the mate, his face bright with smiles.

'Bo'sun,' he said, 'you're a man. If ever you are in any difficulty with these chaps (but I don't think you will be), just count on me to the last ounce. I don't know how the old man is, for this is my first voy'ge with him; but the second mate's all right, and I believe that you and he and I can make as comfortable a ship of this as a man needs to have under his feet.'

'Thank ye, sir,' replied Saul. 'I'll do my best, with the help of God, to make things go smoothly. But to do that I can see that maybe things will go a bit rough at first. There's a lot more chaps loafing around somewhere, I'm sure. I'm goin' t' look for 'em. An' if you don't mind, sir, I'd like you just t' stand around and wait till they come out.'

Mr. Carroll just nodded assent, and Saul dived into the darksome den. Presently sounds of trouble were heard, and one by one haggard and unkempt figures appeared, muttering curses, but making haste to obey. Finally Saul reappeared smiling. Approaching the mate, he said quietly, 'I think that's all of 'em, sir; an' from what I can see they won't give much more trouble.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE SEAL OF APOSTLESHIP

By this time the *Asteroid* had halted at Gravesend for the exchange of pilots, and there was a temporary lull in the work, the decks being beautifully clean. Saul's comprehensive glance having satisfied him that he might safely allow it, he permitted his gang to go and smoke while he himself mounted the top-gallant fo'c'sle in the hope of getting a word with his fellow Christian, the skipper of the tug. For the human heart, whether it be regenerate or no, clings to its affinities, loves fellowship with its like, and Saul knew already that on board the *Asteroid* he was utterly alone as far as Christian fellowship went. So he was intensely gratified when the tug drifted slowly near enough for him to get speech of his brother Stevens, and presently the passing watermen and crews of barges were stiffened with amazement to hear language being exchanged between two such men as Saul and Skipper Stevens as they had hitherto only associated with Hallelujah Bands or the Salvation Army. The colloquy was brief but most valuable to both, especially so to Saul, who, by the time Stevens' parting 'God be with ye, brother, an' make ye' a blessin' aboard yer ship,' had come pealing across the water, was ineffaceably stamped in the sight of all on

board as a professing Christian. And even while his heart beat high with the knowledge that he had just taken the opportunity of most publicly confessing his Master, he was being discussed in the fo'c'sle under his feet with a vigour of epithet and bitterness of hatred that seemed as if nothing short of seeing the last drop of his blood drained from his body would satisfy it.

They were a mixed crowd, of course, but for a wonder mostly British. And, as usual, it was the British part that was most intractable, also that had been the worst for drink when turned out. There were a couple of Swedes who had been long in British ships who were as drunken, as voluble, and as truculent as any Briton could possibly be, but he who knows much of the ways of men before the mast in our country's ships will know that while the Scandinavian is usually the most tractable of men, a few years of sailing in British ships under our peculiarly soft system or want of system will often convert him into as truculent a ruffian as can be found. It may sound harsh and unpatriotic to say these things; but if one knows them to be true, as I certainly do, is it not kinder to state the truth than to prophesy smooth things falsely? British seamen under proper control, firm and just, with every breach of discipline followed with automatic certainty by its appropriate punishment, have no equals in the world. The proof of this may be found by spending a few days on board any man-o'-war. But where, as usual in the British sailing ship on a long voyage, men are really too few for the work that is to be done, food is of poor quality and without change, accommodation

much worse than that given in prison, and the maintenance of order and discipline is rendered impossible by the state of the laws unless the officers choose to risk their certificates by the use of physical force, there the British seaman often deteriorates into an untamable, worthless blackguard. His virtues of self-reliance, courage, doggedness, and resourcefulness, all become vices by being perverted to wrong uses, and his hapless officers would be ready to exchange him gladly for almost any other countryman whatever. It is this general characteristic of crews which makes the Christian seaman ache and long to relinquish a sea-life. It is true that nowhere else in the world is there such scope for really valuable missionary work as may be found on board ship, but on the other hand it is equally true that no other missionaries in the world are made to live under such terrible conditions. Therefore it would be unreasonable in the last degree to expect seamen who have been converted to remain willing denizens of a ship's fo'c'sle for one day longer than they could help, or even to strive very eagerly after an officer's position when they know what manner of men they are expected to rule without even the shadow of disciplinary force to aid them.

And so the very means that are taken by philanthropists ashore for the raising of the sailor become, as did the late Mr. Thomas Gray's most admirable 'Midge' scheme of remitting money home from the port of arrival, the reasons why life on board merchant ships still remains of so pagan a character—because the best men use their newly acquired freedom from vice and waste to seek for occupation ashore.

But I fear I am leaving Saul too long. He was

now by his own deliberate act stamped, as I have said, with the stigma of Christianity. For the time being he was the most discussed man in the ship. The mate and second mate, having a little leisure as the ship was being towed down the lower reaches of the Thames, held a most serious consultation about him. 'Well,' said the mate with a sigh, as if giving up a too difficult problem, 'I knew he was a "tote" 'cause I offered him a drink before "turn to" an' he wouldn't have it, but after seein' him yank that long beast out o' th' fo'c'sle, as if he'd been a truss o' straw, an' block him like a prize-fighter when he tried to rush him afterwards, I certainly wasn't prepared to find him a Holy Joe. Must be a totally new kind I've always had an idea that when a man got converted, as they call it, all he was fit for afterwards was goin' about with a face on him like a kite, mournin' over everybody's sins an' preachin' all sorts o' funny things that couldn't possibly be practised, besides being so soft that he'd let everybody do just what they liked with him for fear of losing his character. But if this chap's got a soft spot about him I ain't seen it yet. If he goes on as he's goin' I shall begin to feel that there's somethin' more in the business than I've got any idea of.' Mr. Kenton, the second mate, gnawed his moustache awhile thoughtfully, and then replied, 'I can't imagine how it is, but although I know there are Christians ashore who ain't soft a bit, that is silly soft, that kind don't seem to thrive aboard ship. I remember when I was serving my time our old man got converted one trip. The previous voyage he was as good a man as I want to be shipmates with. He got a little fresh now and

then, but never to do any harm, and he ruled the ship in such a fashion that a man no more dare give cheek to an officer than he dare jump overboard. As for us boys, well, we did pretty much as we liked below, but on deck he made us toe the mark, now I tell you. An' he taught us our biz too—*we* wasn't kept grubbin' about doin' all sort of dirty jobs because the men might growl at 'em. Then, as I say, he got converted, an' you never saw such a change in your life. He had a prayer meeting in the saloon twice a week an' service twice on a Sunday, an' the fellows, artful' devils that they were, just played him for all he was worth. They skulked and got saucy, and when the officers tried to stop 'em they lodged complaints with the old man, lying like clocks to make their case good, and the poor old chap believed 'em and told the officers to deal gently with 'em. Result was there was anarchy aboard that ship, and when we got to Melbourne she was so bad that the mate and second mate left her. Owing to the slack way things was done we made an awful passage, both out and home, and when we did get back the poor old fellow left, broken-hearted, I think, because his system of brotherly love didn't work.'

Just then the steward called the mate to dinner, and telling the second mate to see whether all hands were getting their midday meal in proper order, Mr. Carroll went below to renew the subject with the captain. Mr. Kenton, having passed a word or two with the pilot, strolled away forrard in obedience to his orders, and as it happened passed the door of the berth in which lived the bo'sun, carpenter, and sail-maker. As he did so, his quick ear caught the sound

of a hoarse voice raised in anger. 'Looky here,' it said, 'afore we goes any farrther, let's unnershtan', ance an' fur a', that thur's gaun tae be nae daum ipocreetical carrins-on in *this* hauf-deck. Aam a Scoetchmin masel', an' ma forbears, daft eeditis, wur Covenanters, sae ah ken fine the haill meseerable peck o' shupersteeshun, idolatry an' humbug uts ca'ud Christyaneety. I'll hae nane o't, I tell ye, whaur Ah leev, an' it may's weel be settelt noo an' dune w'it as gae ony farrther.' Interested in spite of himself, Kenton paused just out of sight. He heard the strong clear voice of Saul replying, 'Chips, my lad, you're making a big mistake. If I hadn't felt that God's hand would uphold me against the whole ship's company if necessary, I wouldn't be here. I know very well that when you do get a bad Scotchman, which isn't often, you get a mighty bad man, but' (here his voice rose a little) 'if you were twenty bad Scotchmen rolled into one you wouldn't force me to do what I didn't like as far as my conscience is concerned.' Crash! and the firm tones were succeeded by the panting of two strong men fiercely struggling. Chips had flung himself like a wild cat at Saul, and by the force of impact unexpected had borne him to the deck. But Saul's muscles were not relaxed by weeks of dissipation, and slowly but certainly he twisted his body round until he was uppermost. Then by a great effort he rose, dragging with him his assailant, and together still fiercely struggling they emerged on deck, leaving the floor of their apartment bestrewn with the fragments of their dinner. The second mate, as in duty bound, interferred, but Saul cried cheerily, 'Please let it go through, sir, it will save lots of trouble later.'

But by this time the crew had left their dinner and clustered aft, while hoarse voices among them ejaculated, 'Kill the —, Chips, knife him, cut his liver out, choke the canting —,' and similar kindly encouragements. Alas for their hopes, it was immediately evident that Chips was but as a babe in the hands of a giant. Suddenly his body, a confused looking heap, flew across the deck, struck against the bulwarks and lay there motionless. Without an instant's pause Saul leapt in among the blaspheming crowd, singling out the most eager potential murderer of them all, and seized him by the throat with so fell a grip that he hung limply backward on the moment. The rest dispersed as Saul's voice rang out, 'Get forrard every one of you an' finish yer grub; it'll be turn-to time directly.'

By this time the skipper had arrived on the scene. And as Saul, somewhat flushed but still smiling pleasantly, faced him, he inquired sternly what was meant by all this riotous behaviour. To which question Saul answered, 'Sir, I shipped as bo'sun of this fine ship of yours fully capable of carrying on the work, and I'll abide by your officers' evidence whether I have done so up till now. But I am a Christian man, and can't bear injustice. So because I've made the loafers work in order that the decent fellows sha'n't be worked to death, the loafers want to kill me. Please take no notice of that, sir, I'll look out for them and get plenty of sleep. Then because I thank my dear Father for my food in the presence of my two berth-mates, the carpenter (poor fellow, I'm afraid he's hurt) flings himself at me like a wild beast. That's all, sir, and if I have offended you

I am sorry. But I think you know as well as I do that a little trouble at the first often saves a lot of trouble after.'

The skipper, a hale bright-looking man of about fifty years, laid a hand upon Saul's shoulder, saying, 'Bo'sun, I'm proud to have you on board my ship, and I'm sure if all Christians were to behave as you've done there'd be more of 'em about than there are. I don't profess to be a Christian myself, but I'll back you up as far as lies in my power. Mr. Carroll, see that the bo'sun has every assistance possible at all times.' So saying Captain Vaughan returned to his dinner, and Saul also, finding that for the present things had straightened themselves out somewhat, stepped into his apartment to see if there still remained any food with which to satisfy his legitimate hunger. He found the sail-maker in an exceedingly amiable frame of mind, ready to talk upon any subject whatever; but the carpenter, poor man, sat upon the spars outside, his head buried in his hands in an attitude of deepest dejection. As soon as Saul had completed his meal as well as he was able, he lit his pipe and stepped out to where the carpenter sat. Laying his hand tenderly upon the stooping man's shoulder, he said, 'Chips, my boy, don't mind me, go an' get a smoke. I'm sure we'll be the best of chums yet. There's no harm done, is there?' Chips answered never a word, but rose to his feet and went into the berth, leaving Saul sitting in the placid enjoyment of his tobacco, an expression on his face as of a man who had not a single care or worry in the world, as the ship sped steadily onward out to sea.

In the fo'c'sle there was a great ferment. For the

decent fellows, feeling that they had a powerful auxiliary in the bo'sun, began to assert themselves. In many ships these willing workers lead a dog's life all the voyage through, for the sole reason that those in authority do not do their duty. But in the fo'c'sle of the *Asteroid* there was felt to be a new influence at work, casting its weight on the side of right and justice, and the men who under unjust conditions would have suffered silently, now felt compelled to take a firm stand. So, when the wastrels renewed their curses upon the man whom they hated, dissentient voices arose. One man in particular, a fair-haired little Scotchman, boldly said, 'Weel, boys, I don't know fhat ye think aboot this bizness, but ah'm of opingon at if every mon 'll dae fhat he signed fur, we'll hae a daum comforrrtable ship. Ah'm no vara much in luvè wi' nigger-drivin' masel, deed a'hm no ower fond o' wark ava, bit the wark hes tae be dune, an' if hauf o's hae made up oor min's ta dae's as little's we can, an' th' ither hauf's tryin' to dae fhat thae signed for, why 'tll be hard on the willin' anes. Ah don't think yon bo'sun's hauf a bad yin. He on'y seems tae want all hands tae hev aigual richts, an' ah'm with'm ther ivery time.'

At this outspoken speech there was a muttered volley of cursing, amidst which various unprintable epithets applied to sneaks, tale-bearers, toadies, &c., were heard frequently. But there was no direct reply. No man dared say boldly that for his part he had shipped with the full intention of doing the least possible amount of work quite regardless of the fact that some of his shipmates must make up for his deficiencies. No, all that was heard was a series of

vague generalities, and it was quite a relief when in the midst of it all Saul's clear voice was heard crying, 'Turn to.' It was quite refreshing to see the alacrity with which the time-honoured summons to labour was obeyed. Even those who had growled the loudest did not seem to think it expedient to hang back. So within five minutes of the call having been given, not only were all hands on deck but they were at work, vigorously engaged in making all things ready for the sail-setting that would presently be demanded.

The mate strolled about with an expression of perfect contentment upon his face, watching with calm delight the unerring certainty of all his bo'sun's orders, the way in which one job fitted into another, and the utter absence of that waste of time so often seen where two men stand watching a third at work because he in authority has not skill to keep them all employed at once. And all the while through gradually worsening weather the *Asteroid* sped steadily seaward through the intricacies of the Thames estuary, where to the uninitiated eye all seems such plain and easy sailing, while in reality beneath that vast extent of water surface the navigable channels run like the paths in a maze, and great breadths of ever-shifting sands lurk deadly for the hapless vessel that chances to get out of one of those tortuous passages of deep water. But in spite of the chill in the air searching their impoverished blood, notwithstanding the steady downpour of sleety rain soaking their poor garb and giving grim premonition of future rheumatism, all hands felt hopeful, for they knew that presently, once round the North Foreland, the wind, now dead ahead, or due east, would be on

the port beam, allowing them to take full advantage of it, and the farther along they went the fairer would the wind be, until it was almost dead aft. This, of course, owing to the configuration of the English Channel. And a fair wind makes up for many other drawbacks, more especially to the shivering outward-bounder on board of a huge modern sailing ship.

Work was proceeding thus steadily when suddenly there was heard a loud splash, and almost at the same moment Saul's voice thunderously exclaimed, 'Man overboard!' With one gigantic leap from the top-gallant fo'c'sle he reached the main deck far abaft the foremast, and in half a dozen bounds, as it seemed, he was on the poop, had torn a life-buoy from its lashings, and hurled it with wonderful accuracy of aim close by the side of Larry Doolan, the recalcitrant A.B. of the morning, who was now just on the edge of eternity's abyss. A sharp blast on the mate's whistle had arrested the tug, which was dropping astern fast, her skipper having a good notion of what was the matter. But Saul and half a dozen of his men were tearing like madmen at the port quarter-boat, striving to free it from its paint-encrusted gripes, trying to move the rusted-in chocks, trying, in a word, to undo in one frantic minute the results of months of neglect. Yet during these toils Saul's keen glance never for a moment lost sight of the struggling man in the wide waste of waters. He was no great distance away, and yet to Saul it seemed certain that before their boat could be lowered he would be gone—he did not appear able to gain the life-buoy. So seeing that the ship's way was stopped, and that the tug was coming, Saul ripped

off his oilskin coat and trousers, kicked off his boots, and sprang from the quarter into the sea. With bated breath his shipmates watched him as he swam with splendid vigour towards the drowning man, watched him tenderly handling him when he reached him, saw the tug's handy little boat dropped from her davits and pulled swiftly towards the pair, and finally, with a rousing cheer that came from the very depths of their hearts, they hailed the boat's return with their shipmates both alive.

Wearily Saul mounted the side, for the physical strain upon him had been very great. But his face was bright with the consciousness of having nobly done a Christian part, and a feeling he could not suppress took possession of him, that he had been granted, and had taken advantage of, an opportunity of justifying his Christian standpoint, that would have more weight with his shipmates than all the sermons ever written. He was calling up his reserves of strength to go on with his work, for there was much to be done in readjusting the great towing hawser slipped by the tug, when Mr. Carroll peremptorily ordered him below for a change of clothes and rest. He made but a feeble remonstrance, for even his great fresh strength had felt the strain upon it, and soon he was in his berth, donning a suit of dry clothes and softly crooning to himself one of his favourite songs, 'My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine.' And then standing by the side of his bunk with his head dropped on his hands he unpacked his heart of its overload of thanks. Broken, ungrammatical, disconnected; as unlike 'made up' praise as could well be, but fragrant with the true incense of a grateful

soul. He lay down in great peace, and in two minutes was asleep.

Meanwhile poor Larry, although tended most carefully by the skipper, had been through a critical time. His life-tides had run very low by reason of his mad behaviour while ashore, and this tremendous shock, coming as it did upon a frame so enfeebled, was almost more than he could bear. So for a time it was a matter for grave anxiety with the skipper, who naturally was intensely desirous that his voyage should not begin in so sad a fashion. He watched breathlessly by the side of the almost moribund man, administering from time to time such restoratives as his scanty medical knowledge suggested to him, until at last he was rewarded by seeing the poor fellow's breathing become regular, his temperature fall, and natural sleep ensue. Greatly relieved, the old man left the spare berth in the saloon, where his patient was lying, and reached the deck in time to anticipate the pilot sending for him.

The ship was now well round the North Foreland, and had ceased her rebellious buck-jumping motion caused by the ruthless dragging of the tug through the short Channel seas coming dead on end. Orders were issued to set sail, and it did the skipper's heart good to see how thoroughly his new bos'un understood his work. For Saul, rested and refreshed, had returned to his duty in spite of the mate's remonstrances, and the mellow thunder of his voice reverberated through the ship as he ably carried out the orders given him by the mate. There is to my mind no better test of seaman-like smartness than the setting of a big ship's sails from bare poles, such

as may be seen when the tug is about to leave and the wind is fair.

At no time is a bungler so easily detected, and the amateur sailor, who in the cosiness of his study ashore writes glibly of the doings of the men of the sea, would here come quickly and irremediably to grief. For one thing, it should always be remembered that the sailing ship officer of the present day has such a tiny handful of men with which to manipulate the gigantic wings of his craft. So that in the disposition of such forces as he may find at his disposal there is ample room for skill in generalship, while he must ever be on the watch for those tiresome members of a ship's company who have made a study of the conservation of energy—their own energy of course—his eye must detect on the instant when a man is not putting his full strength into a pull. It is popularly supposed by those who take interest in the subject, and therefore should know something about it, that the enormous sailing ships of modern days have steam power wherewith to supplement the strength of the depleted crews now so universal. Well, they have, most of them, a small steam engine, but its use is confined to working cargo in port, it is not used at all at sea. The working of the ship is now, as it always was, a matter of muscle. But this is an old grievance, and one perhaps somewhat out of place here.

Feeling that they had a *man* over them, not only one that would stand no nonsense, but one that knew his business most thoroughly, the fast recovering men worked well, even the duffers (about half of their number) doing their best to gain, as they

supposed, his goodwill. And when off Dungeness the pilot left, and the tug, unable longer to keep ahead of the stately craft now asserting herself, slipped the hawser, all hands were in a much more comfortable frame of mind than any of them, with the exception of Saul, could have conceived possible four hours earlier. Sail after sail was added until every available stitch was set, in spite of the threatening appearance of the weather. For while the master was undoubtedly a prudent seaman, he realised that this splendid opportunity for getting out of narrow waters must be utilised even at a little risk, and his evident courage raised him greatly in the estimation of his crew. And so it came about that when the hands had been mustered, the watches set, and the true sea routine entered upon, there were two men on board the *Asteroid* who could safely count upon getting all out of the crew they had to give, unconscious tribute to real worth. Those two men were Saul and Captain Vaughan.

CHAPTER XIV

PROGRESS

FROM Saul, with his voyage well begun in a double sense, speeding westward for the bright broad openness of the deep blue sea, back to Rotherhithe is by no means a pleasant transition. Man's wonderful adaptability to his environment makes even the most sordid conditions of life endurable, and even, wonderful as it may seem, by some unnatural perversion of desire, preferable in many instances to infinitely better and healthier ones. But to those who, like seafarers, are accustomed to spend the most of their lives in an ocean of fresh pure air and sunshine, the crowded lanes and alleys of our great cities seem as stifling as any cellar, and if we are at all observant, we soon become filled with admiration for those brave souls who dwell in them and yet preserve cheerfulness, cleanliness, and respectability. Conversely, although full of pity for them, we have no wonder that the ruffians, both male and female, who infest so many of our poor quarters are what they are—we feel that only a miracle can change them, lifting them on to a higher plane of living, filling their hearts with aspirations after better things, and even altering the very fashion of their faces.

What amount of loving, helpful recognition, then,

can be considered too much to tender to the earnest souls, of whatever church or no-church they profess to be members, who live in the midst of squalor, airlessness, and riot, earning their own living, and devoting all their scanty leisure to the Master's work in the Master's way, as far as they are able to understand it? Yet by one of the strangest, most pitiful perversions of good to evil which, alas! is so characteristic of humanity, an enormous amount of energy generated among those humble servants of God has been dissipated in squabbles with one another about non-essentials. Not merely that one 'gathering' or 'church' squabbles with another, but that internecine strife arises and often ends in a disruption. This fissiparous tendency is almost entirely confined to the smallest of conventicles, which are, most of them, in turn, offshoots from that body which is usually known as the 'Plymouth Brethren.' The great bodies, such as the Baptists, Congregationalists, Wesleyans, &c. (I do not mention the Established Church or the Roman Catholics in this connection for obvious reasons), have long regarded such small gatherings as I have described with distrust and dislike, feeling, what is no doubt in a certain measure true, that small bodies of uneducated men and women like these, without any visible head possessed of a certain definite knowledge of theology, are apt to drift into all sorts of strange bye-paths of heresy from which a little grounding in theology would have saved them. In other words, it is felt that so long as they confine themselves to preaching the Gospel that has been the Power of God unto their salvation, they do a mighty work in

perhaps the best possible way ; but that when they take to expounding Scripture in the seclusion of the ' Hall ' to members of the Church, they do a great deal of harm, not merely by the dissemination of false doctrines, but by the generation of much heated angry feeling one towards another.

It is in consequence of this, perhaps, more than for any other reason, that gatherings like that of the Wren Lane Mission have been so much ignored by the large Christian bodies, who have been compelled to take the Salvation Army into serious account. Not that they love the Salvation Army methods more, or are at all impressed by its peculiar system of autocratic government, still less do they admire the absence of official recognition of the Lord's Supper by its councils. But its organisation is so splendid, its discipline so perfect, and so great the hold it has obtained (a hold always making for righteousness, be it noted) upon great masses of humble people, that it has compelled recognition which is denied to the weak and scattered little conventicles such as I have been attempting to describe. But a broader and more Christian spirit of toleration is manifest among us, and gaining ground every day. The Union of the Free Churches is a mighty stride towards that concentration of the forces of good against the forces of evil, without which Christian progress can at best only lamely limp along towards its high goal. With this great and hopeful movement come pronounced symptoms of a return to primitive Christianity, a recognition that the world's hope lies entirely in the adoption of those first principles inculcated by Jesus, and the consequent cleansing of Christian teaching

from the deadening incrustation it has gathered through the centuries by the interested efforts of professional religionists, until the Christ of the Gospels had been entirely hidden away from the sight of the common people unless they got outside of the Churches and sought Him individually.

These matters, however, though entirely relevant to my story, must not be allowed to hinder its progress. Without touching upon them it would be almost impossible to understand the position of Jemmy Maskery and his adherents, who, as I hope I have made clear, are typical representatives of an enormous number of such bodies. So that in giving, as I hope to do, a history of the Wren Lane Mission over a goodly portion of its career, I hope to let that great reading public which is interested in the uplifting of the people have some reason to hope that even in the darkest corners of our cities God has not left His work to be carried on altogether by the overburdened clergy, but that unpaid and unrecognised missionaries are ever busy telling the story of the God-Man of Nazareth, and by their lives endeavouring to commend Him to their fellows.

After Saul's departure, Jemmy for a time felt as if he had lost his main support. For he, like most of us, however strong our faith in God, loved to have some visible friend in whose wisdom and love he had much confidence, loved to look up to him, and unconsciously lean on him more than was quite prudent or justifiable. But, as Bill Maskery had foretold, the influx of those who had been converted on the memorable evening immediately before Saul's departure necessitated an almost immediate enlargement of their premises if

the 'Church' was to be held together. Besides, Jemmy was a profound believer in and practiser of baptism by immersion, and he wanted a pool of their own in the 'Hall,' 'So we sharn't be beholden ter nobody,' as he put it. Therefore negotiations were at once opened with the owner of the property for the leasing of the adjoining stable. He, like a prudent man of the world, without any scruples at once asked more than double the rent he had hitherto received, stipulating, as before, that all alterations, repairs, &c., must be carried out by the lessees. This brought the rent up to 40*l.* a yea. fortunately without taxes, being a building for religious services only, and in addition it meant at least another 20*l.* at once being laid out upon the necessary alterations and cleansing. Now, trivial as these sums may sound to some of us, they were to the restricted ideas of Jemmy and his friends prodigious, and even Brother Salmon shook his head despondently. But, as so often happens, it was the new blood that provided the needed stimulus. Bill Harrop, the new convert, whose sudden restoration had paved the way for such a great ingathering on the night just referred to, rose in the Church meeting, and spoke for the first time. 'Bruvvers an' sisters,' he said, 'I got er lot er leeway ter make up. I don't know whether I sh'l git much chance, but I 'ope I shall. I don't know 'ow ter tell yer 'ow glad I am an' 'ow much good you've done me, but if any of yer wants ter know you go an' arsk my missus an' th' pore kids. V'all knoo I c'd earn good money if I'd on'y keep sober long enough—well, the bloke I been a-workin' for off an' on for years (w'en I did work), 'ee ses t' me on the Monday mornin' arter I

got converted, 'ee ses, ses 'ee, "I 'ear you've j'ined the Salvation Army." "No, I ain't," I ses, ses I, "I've on'y come t' Jesus, th' workin' man's Friend, an' I believe 'Ee's got 'old of me so solid 'at 'Ee'll never let me go any more." "Oh, well, it's all the same," 'ee ses. "Any'ow, I'm jolly glad t' ear of it, 'cause I wants a lot o' work done, an' if this ere business is goin' t' keep y' orf th' oozeboo, w'y I'll be delighted. An' more," 'ee ses, ses 'ee, "I'll tell yer wot I'll do, jus' for a lark; every day 'at you keeps orf it, I'll give them people wot's got 'old of yer a tanner." Well, all I got ter say more is 'at as I useter spend at least three bob a day in tiddley¹ w'en I was at work, I think I can spare a kiyah² a day t' make the governor's tanner two og.³ An' I'll come an' do my bit o' graft in the 'All too, w'enever I got any time orf. Gord bless yer.'

This was a clincher. It changed the tone of the meeting directly, and it was at once decided that every brother and sister in the meeting should make themselves responsible to God for a shilling a week over their ordinary contributions. And as there were now twenty-two members that meant twenty-two shillings per week additional, for it was almost certain that they would starve before allowing their contribution to lapse. It is wonderful to see how such poor people as these are not only pride themselves upon keeping their obligations, but in how many little ways they are helped by one another to do so.

Jemmy and the brethren being thus reinvigorated bestirred themselves mightily, and the begging that went on at the bi-weekly open airs was phenomenal

¹ Drink.

² Eighteenpence.

³ Two shillings.

both in its persistency and its results. As Jemmy told his auditors, 'Th' bad wevver 'll soon be 'ere, w'en we sharn't be able t' git out t' ye wiv th' glad tidin's, 'n if we ain't got no place t' arsk ye inter w'y ye'll be as bad orf as ever. Nah we've a-promised th' Lord 'at we won't go back t' that state o' fings 'cause we bin so blessed an' encouraged of late, so 'ave anuvver feel rahnd in them there pockets o' yourn 'n see if ye carn't find anuvver stiver t' put in this bank.' In response to his fervid appeals the coppers simply rained in, but it was reserved for an old seller of firewood, who had recently been brought in, to overtop all the previous efforts in that direction. 'Woody'—he was never called anything else and had almost forgotten his real name—had been a consistently walking Christian for many years, during the whole of which he had never once, even under the most severe pressure, entered a public-house, nor done anything else that the most censorious could lay hold of. Then his wife suddenly died—his partner of over forty years—and on the evening of the same day, his old horse, representing almost the whole of his capital, died also. The two blows following so rapidly upon one another must have temporarily unhinged his mind, for after a period of dumb crouching in his desolate home he rose up, went straight to the nearest public-house, and got drunk. A policeman new to the beat arrested him and locked him up. Joe Jimson, the stevedore, saw him being marched off, slowly realised what had happened, and bailed him out. But he had 'broken out,' and although Jimson had acted a friendly part he was unable to follow it up by pouring oil and wine into the wounds of that

poor bleeding old heart. And as he had thus openly backslidden after being a shining light at open-air meetings for so long, his fall was grievously felt and the open hand of fellowship was tight shut against him. Even Jemmy, though in open meeting he always invited the general backslider to return, never sought out this particular one who was so well known to him, and indeed had never once shaken hands with him since his fall.

It fell out, however, that on the great evening above referred to, something—he did not attempt to realise what—had drawn poor old Woody to the outskirts of the meeting. Things had been bitterly bad with him. For six months he had hardly been able to keep body and soul together by dragging his little truck of firewood about the streets, and often he was at starvation point because he would not make known his need to anyone. While, then, he prowled around the fringe of the crowd, one of the latest adherents to the band, Mary Seton, the coffee-house waitress, saw him, and catching his eye said, 'Oh, Woody, I *am* glad to see you 'ere. You know I've joined 'em, don't yer?' Woody shook his head but looked his astonishment, while she in her eagerness and simplicity told him her story. Now Woody had known her from a child, and had often in his days of service for God warned and advised her only to be roundly abused in the current vernacular for his pains. It was the psychological moment also, although of course neither of them was aware of it. At any rate the immediate and blessed result was that Woody came back from his wanderings outside the fold, and at the first opportunity confessed his wrongdoing in the sight of all assembled

on the Waste. He made no excuses for himself, was unsparing in his condemnation of his own folly in thus voluntarily shutting himself out from the fellowship with the Father, and rejoiced exceedingly that by the testimony of a mere babe in Christ he had been won back in spite of the shame that had so long kept him away. After the meeting was over all the members of the Mission crowded round him and thanked God that they could have fellowship with him once more; but everyone felt in greater or less degree, according to their capacity for feeling, that had they acted a brother or sister's part towards the poor old man he might long ago have been restored—nay, he might never have backslidden. But he had no reproaches for them, his cup was brimming with gladness, and as if to put the final touch upon his joy an old customer of his lent him a pony and cart the next day, telling him that he had at present no use for it, having gone into a different line of business and not being able to find a market for either animal or vehicle just then.

As if to try and make amends for his long neglect of his Master's business, Woody was now more diligent in his attendances at the various meetings in the south-east of London than he had ever been. Adhering to his old custom he did not become a formal member of any particular one, but wherever anything special was going on he would generally be found helping. So on this occasion, when it appeared as if the last copper had been drawn out of the crowd, Woody stepped forward and in a hush so profound that the beating of the people's hearts was almost audible, he told the story of his conversion long years

before, of his falling away, and his recent return. His words were of the roughest, his voice rusty and broken, but his transparent sincerity was so manifest that he swayed the people as the wind sways the corn. And when at last he drew out a crown piece knotted in the corner of a piece of rag, expectation, wonder, interest were almost painful in their intensity.

Holding the coin up between his right forefinger and thumb he said, 'Dear peepul, this 'ere dollar's my market-money. Most on yer know wot I means. If I ain't got it I can't buy no wood, an' kinsequently I can't sell none. That means no grub for me nor the pony neither. Means no t, too. But I'm so shore 'at th' Lord loves me ter trust 'Im, I'm so shore 'at 'Ee wornts me ter give yer a lead in this 'ere bizness, 'at I'm a goin' t' drop it right inter this ring an' trust 'Im t' pervide me wiv all I wants fer terrormor. 'Ere it goes,' and he spun the coin into the middle of the circle. 'Nah 'oos a-goin' t' foller suit?' When you read of the effect of Girolamo Savonarola's preaching in Florence your hearts are touched, the glamour of mediæval religion seizes upon your imagination; but in Rotherhithe in the nineteenth century, in the midst of mean streets and sordid environment, and above and beyond all in matters contemporary with yourself, you may remain unmoved. So did not Woody's hearers. They gave, yes, they gave up all they had retained for what they had considered essential necessities, and those who had nothing to give wept with vexation. And in spite of the poverty of the neighbourhood, when the meeting was closed 9*l.* 14*s.* had been collected by the band, which, as Jemmy said exultantly, would go 'a

long way tords finishin' the little place if it didn't do so right aht.'

As the meeting broke up and Woody was slowly wandering off the Waste to see about his faithful pony's welfare for the night, he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and, turning, was clasped by the hands of a strange man to him, who said, 'You don't know what you've done for me. I'd been scrapin' some money together to go and do a deed of darkness with. Here's a sovereign of it for you, and I'm going back to my poor wife and children.' And he was gone. For a moment Woody stood looking at the coin almost stupidly, then with the simple remark, 'It's just like 'Im,' he continued his way stablewards, his withered lips crooning the refrain of 'The Pearly Gates.'

Thus encouraged Jemmy completed the bargain with the landlord and signed the agreement to take the said premises for a term of seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, covenanting to make all such alterations and do all such repairs as might be necessary.

So much energy was now put into the work of the Mission that the ensuing Saturday after the open-air, when the record sum of money was collected, saw once more a swarm of men, women, and even children collected at Wren Lane, all toiling like trolls to get the necessary work done. In the midst of them all were Jemmy and Woody, armed with clay spades, delving like gold-miners to get a pool dug out. And all around them their friends worked at wall-scraping, roof-cleansing, carting away *débris* such as must be found in a long-neglected stable, and cutting and

fitting matchboarding. But in the very nature of things such a task as this could not be carried through in quite the same time as the previous one. For one thing it was four times as heavy, without the additional labour of digging out the pool.

The ardour of the toilers, however, knew no abatement, and on the third Sunday after the appeal had been made the Wren Lane Mission was in possession of quite a large hall, seated for 300 people, well ventilated, but not well warmed. The walls were matchboarded half-way up and prettily distempered for the other half, while the overhead beams were scraped and varnished, and the great centre support was elaborately lettered by a brother from a distance, who was a facia writer, with the text, 'Oh enter into His gates with praise.' And, best of all, the only bill left unpaid was for the forms. But they had been supplied by a friend at cost price, and as he was in no hurry for his money the minds of the brethren were quite at ease.

There were no opening ceremonies when the Hall was finished, only a meeting of all those who had lent a willing hand in the building of it, and a prolonged service of the usual character. But all who took part were really in earnest, and especially so the minister of a Dissenting chapel some little distance away, who, partly from curiosity and partly from goodwill, had consented to be present and deliver an oration. He was certainly interested but undoubtedly somewhat chagrined also because his carefully prepared periods fell quite flat. His auditory had become accustomed to a much more primitive style of discourse, and did not appreciate his address at all. He

could not, however, withhold a tribute of admiration for the way in which Jemmy and his coadjutors held their audience, neither could he refrain from contrasting the whole-hearted service rendered by the Church members here with the ultra-respectable and, in fact, condescending manner in which his own deacons moved throughout the services at his chapel. In fact, everything he saw impressed him with its freshness and spontaneity, and from thenceforward he was one of the Mission's heartiest friends and supporters.

Behold, then, the enlargement of the Wren Lane Mission an accomplished fact, all in train for a really great work to be carried on, and that too without the subscription of a penny from any external body of Christians. It is true that the cost of the whole affair was not very large measured by the expenditure usually incurred in such matters, but it was large for the people who had carried it through, and every penny subscribed had been properly spent and duly accounted for. And when at last the long day's services were brought to a close, Jemmy made an announcement in a broken voice from the platform. He was overcome because what he was saying represented the summit of his ambition. He gave out among other notices the momentous one that on Thursday next a baptismal service would be held, at which twenty believers had signified their intention of being immersed and thus bearing witness to the faith they held, an announcement which was received with the liveliest satisfaction by all present, but a description of which must be deferred until the next chapter.

CHAPTER XV

A BAPTISMAL SERVICE

IT had always been one of Jemmy's favourite pieces of eloquence, and one that never failed to move a crowd either to laughter or tears—the telling of the story of his baptism. I am not going to attempt to reproduce the story here for several reasons, the chief one being that without his inimitable personality, joined to the relation of it, most of its interest would be lost, even to the most sympathetic reader.

But in spite of his joyful recollections he was desperately dissatisfied at the idea of others going through the same hole-and-corner business, neither did he like appealing to Baptist hospitality; and, therefore, now that his great over-mastering desire was about to be fulfilled, he seemed to grow visibly dignified. There were still difficulties to be overcome. In the first place the accommodation for dressing and changing was exceedingly scanty, neither was there much likelihood of the converts being able to provide their own special robes for the occasion, while the Church possessed none. And while the pool, as a pool, through the labours of Jemmy and Woody, was all that could be desired, being ten feet long by six feet wide and five feet deep, carefully cemented all round, and provided with a good set of steps at one

corner—the water wasn't laid on! Worse than that, after the filling of the pool there were no means of draining it away, so that the mere physical labour of carrying backwards and forwards over a thousand large pails of water was sufficiently formidable to have daunted less earnest souls than these. Needless to say, perhaps, that to Jemmy and Woody the fact of being able to render unto the Lord (as they believed) some bodily service, was entirely delightful. Therefore, the service being fixed for a Thursday evening, on the Wednesday at about 7 P.M., the day's work being well over, Jemmy, Woody, and Bill made their way to the 'Hall' provided with two buckets and some cloths for wiping up the slop sure to be made. Bill's presence was avowedly in the character of the Indian 'shabash-wallah,' an indispensable adjunct to all work carried on in India. He contributes no labour himself, but wanders round among the workers, occasionally exclaiming 'Shabash bhai,' which may be freely interpreted as, 'Courage, brothers!' or 'Cheer up, brothers,' or, indeed, any other word you may fancy that would be likely to revive the flagging spirits of a gang of workers. So regular is the custom that it is almost impossible to get work done without a 'shabash-wallah' or 'cheering-up man.'

Now since Bill Maskery had fallen into the painful grip of sciatica it was as much as he could do to hobble about with the aid of a stick, so that carrying water was out of the question, although he did at infinite pains, forcing many groans from his brave old heart, still go on with his business of chimney sweeping. But that was really necessary for his living. He had made a business contract whereby in con-

sideration of handing over his long and hardly earned connection he was to receive a stated sum per week—enough to live upon. Unfortunately, he soon found that if he did not wish to starve, by reason of his share remaining unpaid, it would be absolutely necessary for him to attend to business as usual, having no means of coercing his partner, who would work or not, and pay or not, as it pleased him.

In Christian work like the present, however, all Bill's sympathies were engaged. His contributions in money were only limited by the shallowness of his purse, while it gave him unalloyed pleasure to come on such occasions and sit in the midst of the workers, telling them story after story from his rich experience: the moral of every one of which was that while nine out of every ten men were sure to fail you at a critical moment, if you put your whole trust in God you were bound to be all right. Your very mistakes seemed to be the right thing unconsciously done. And so, while Jemmy and Woody toiled back and forth to the adjoining stable bringing water, Bill sat and 'shabashed' them, so that when relief came in the shape of Brother Salmon and Brother Burn, the rigger, both of whom turned up at about 9.30, quite two-thirds of the work was finished. Then, while the two new-comers took up the task of water-carrying, Jemmy and Woody rushed off to borrow a portable copper with which to temper the undoubted chill of the water, lest any of the converts, not being upheld by sufficiently forceful faith, should catch a severe cold and thereby have the edge of their new enthusiasm dulled.

So it came about that, in spite of the zest they

brought to their labours, it was past eleven o'clock before all was in readiness for the morrow's ceremony. And even then some finishing touches remained to be put to what Jemmy grandiloquently called the dressing-rooms, one of which was a sort of triangular cupboard into which four persons might with difficulty be squeezed, but then you couldn't shut the door. This was to be arranged for the sisters. The newly baptised brethren would have to change in a little passage that led into the upper part of the hall by a side door, about six feet long by two feet six wide. And great care would be necessary in using this place for dressing purposes, since the partition which divided it from the hall proper was so thin that, leaning against it unaware the neophyte would, breaking through, be precipitated among the spectators in a state of extreme *déshabillé* and cause much confusion, not to say scandalous hilarity, which would be fatal to the solemnity of the proceedings. These details Brother Salmon promised to attend to in time, and then an adjournment to the neighbouring stewed-eel shop was suggested by Bill for a little much-needed refreshment before going home, he offering at the same time to treat the party, since he had not been able to assist them at their labours.

Presently behold them, then, seated at the plain deal table in their favourite shop, with a steaming plate of stewed eels and mashed potatoes before each of them (not much eel, but plenty of thick parsley-sprinkled liquor), with healthy appetites and keen appreciation of this, the working-class Londoner's favourite supper-dish. While eating it Bill regaled them mentally with a reminiscence of his first chapel (as *he* called it). At

the risk of stripping himself of all he possessed he had fitted it up out of the ruins of a bankrupt carpenter's workshop, had provided seats, platform, pool, hymn-books, and all minor details. Then to his sorrow he found that he was not able to provide all the preaching required himself. So, in an evil hour, he was induced to subsidise (at ten shillings weekly) an eloquent man to take his Sunday evening services. Let him give the sequel in his own words: 'Brevren, 'ee was the finest torker, that man, 'at ever I'veard. An' 'is knowledge o' Scripsher, well I never knoo any-fink like it. 'Ee seemed ter know 'is Bible frum Genesis to Revelation by 'eart. An' I thort, pore innercent as I was (if it'd ben a 'orse deal er a corsin' match I wouldn't a-thort so), 'at I'd a got a bargain such as no missioner ever 'ad before. Well, I useter lissen to 'im wiv such pleasure, I *carnt* tell ye. An' gradjully I let 'im 'ave more an' more control of it, seein' as 'ow 'ee could do it so much better'n me, w'ile I went to uvver places w'ere I was invited to speak. I'd oughter known—only there's some kinds er knowin' ye carnt get wivout 'sperience—I'd oughter known better'n ter leave me own gardin' an' go 'elpin ter cultivate uvver peoples.' This kinder fng went on fer abaht six monfs until one day, w'en I was a-goin' froo th' accounts wiv 'im, 'ee ses, sorter bashful like, "Mister Maskery" ('ee'd alwus called me bruvver 'afore), "Mr. Maskery," ses 'ee, "I got somefin' t' say t' ye." "Say away, ole man," ses I, quite cheerful, little finkin' what wos comin'. "Well," 'ee ses, "th' congregashun 'ere seems t' fink 'at yore not quite orthydox on several pints of doctrine; an' 'sides, they've come to th' conclushion 'at you an't a-doin' the right fng

by 'em. They're mos'ly of opinion 'at yore a-goin' abaht too much an' neglecktin' their sperritoal interests." Then, brevren, I see it all in a minit. My ole bisness 'sperience come in straight, 'n I 'eld up me 'and ter stop 'im 'cause 'ee was goin' t' say some more. "'Old on," ses I, "wos they a-perposin' t' make you the parstor of this 'ere chapel 'n shunt me?" 'Ee didn't arnser fur a minit, but I waited till 'ee pulls 'isself tergevver an' ses, "Well, I don't quite like yore way o' putten' it, Mr. Maskery, but I mus' say thet's abaht wot it comes ter," ses 'ee. "Ha, I thort as much," ses I; "well, looky 'ere, Mr. Brahn, I'm a child of Gord nah, an' so I carnt take yer be the neck 'n fling yer froo that there winder as me fingers itch ter do, but fur Gord's sake don' you go 'n temp' me too fur. Now lissen; I ben pretty sleepy I know, but I'm wide awake nah. I'm payin' fur th' ole o' this show, 'cause I love Gord 'n I want t' do for uvvers wot uvvers's done fur me. 'N if I didn't see wot I do see, 'at yore a mean sneak 'at wants ter get somefin' aht o' me an' somefin' aht o' th' people, 'n then w'en you've got all you kin, do a guy somewheres else 'n begin agen, I'd give the 'ole fing up an' feel 'at I was on'y doin' wot wos right an' 'onest 'n true. But seein' wot I do see, I tell yer wot I'm a-goin' t' do, I'm a-goin' t' arsk you t' come dahn t' th' chapel a Sunday night. I'll git a lot er bills aht so's we can 'ave a full 'ouse, an' then I'll put th' matter afore the people. An' if they wants ter git rid o' me and 'ave you—all right, they're welcome; but you an' them 'll 'ave ter give me substanshul security fur repayment of all I've a-laid aht on th' chapel." 'Ee didn't say any more. Just walked orf, an' w'en Sunday night come

'ee didn't show up, an' in abaht five minits I found 'at the people was all sound enough—it was 'im as wasn't sound. W'y, 'ee was a Shaker, er a Mormon or somefin' o' that kind, or at least 'eed got a thin varnish o' some kind o' tommy rot on top of a solid foundation o' lookin' arter Number One. An' 'ee'd faked the 'counts too, so 'at 'is ten bob a week come aht nearer firty 'an ten. But I thenked Gord I'd got orf as cheap as I did, an' I thenked Gord a good menny times 'at sech a wolf in sheep's clovin' 'adn't ben able t' rooin the work I giv' not only me money to, but me 'art's blood almost.

'Yes, brother,' said Brother Salmon, 'it was terrible. I orfen feel as if we don't think half enough about the way in which God keeps us from the harm the devil's always a-waitin' to do us in them kind o' ways. It's fairly easy to go on in the straight way o' righteousness when once He's set our feet in it, but when you think of all the pitfalls there is in our own work for Him, not only dug by wolves in sheep's clothin' but by our own sincere friends, our families, an' even ourselves, it do seem wonderful 'at ever we see any results from our work at all. But we do, bless God, we do [hearty Amens from the others, considerably disconcerting the shopkeeper]. I do feel for that poor wretch though, he must have been very near the Kingdom once. Did you ever hear, Brother Maskery?'

'Oh, yes,' chiraed in Jemmy, 'ee 'eard all right. Mr. Brahn got 'auled up fur obtainin' money an' goods under false pretences, an' farver went to try an' git him orf. He wasn't able to do that quite, although 'ee certinkly did get 'is sentence made less

than it would a' be'n. Then farver goes an' waits for 'im w'en 'ee's a-comin' aht, buys 'im some close an' gets 'im a charnce to go aht ter Souf Ameriky 'long of an old pal of 'is wot was skipper of a little bark. An' 'ee ain't 'erd tell on 'im sence, but I know 'ee's a-'opin' an' believin' 'at 'ee's got saved an' kep'. 'Tain't likely as farver'd ever give anybody up, is it, s'long's they're alive? But I say, we'd better be orf. My wife 'll be that cross—she'll think I forgot all about 'er.'

Jemmy's alarm was very real, and as he sprang to his feet all the others followed his example and hastened to be gone, with the exception of Bill, whose sciatica made him slow of gait. Moreover, as he paid the modest *1s. 6d.* for their repast he took the opportunity of saying a word in season to the shopkeeper, a man whom he had known for years as an inoffensive respectable citizen who paid his way, did his duty as far as could be seen, never was known to refuse a morsel of food to the hungry one who begged for it, but in religious matters was quite an unknown quantity. After a little preliminary fencing Bill tackled him boldly as to why he, who already apparently possessed all the attributes a Christian should have, had not cast in his lot with God's people openly. To Bill's amazement he found that this quiet self-respecting man had never been in a place of worship in his life, or attended any religious meetings of any kind whatever. His father had been a Christian of great energy and independence of thought, who, after having been driven out of several religious bodies through jealousy of his powers, had been utterly ruined by the defalcations of a man

high in office in a great Nonconformist church. This dreadful experience caused him to withdraw himself from Christian work altogether, and until the time of his death, which took place shortly after, his lips were sealed upon the subject. But just before his death he said to his eldest son, then an excellent lad of fifteen, 'Peter, my lad, trust Christ, but distrust people who call themselves Christians. Worship God with your whole heart; but remember that man, whatever his professions may be, is a deceitful being, and keep your eye on him, especially if he holds office in a church.'

The outcome of this terrible advice, so utterly wrong in its conclusions, yet, alas! so awfully natural under the circumstances, was as we have seen, and before this statement poor old Bill retired discomfited, begging however that he might return to the subject on some future occasion, and bidding him good-night with the utmost heartiness, making the simple words sound almost like a benediction.

News of the proposed ceremony had spread throughout the neighbourhood with great thoroughness, and the result was a state of things entirely unforeseen by any of the brethren. When Jemmy and Brother Salmon arrived at 4 P.M. to heat the water for the pool, the alley leading up to the 'Hall' was entirely deserted—indeed, it looked as if no one ever came there. But when at seven o'clock, thoroughly tired, the two workers opened the door to leave and snatch a hurried meal, they found the narrow passage packed with eagerly waiting folk, who, as soon as they saw the pair, clamoured for admission, although the time for commencing the ceremony was fixed

at eight o'clock. Momentarily bewildered, Jemmy stammered out an almost incoherent appeal to the people to be patient. And as they listened to him quietly enough he gathered confidence, and went on to explain more lucidly that the preparations were not yet complete, neither were there any helpers present yet for the purpose of keeping order. With a docility that surprised him they raised no objection, two or three would-be malcontents being speedily silenced, and allowed him and his coadjutor to pass out of the alley on their way home.

When they arrived they were almost too excited to eat or drink, the possibilities of the evening seeming so tremendous to them. Poor Jemmy kept softly repeating to himself, 'More than ye c'n arsk 'r even think. Bless th' Lord, so it is, so it is.' And after snatching a few hurried mouthfuls he started off again, pursued by his eldest boy with a parcel. It contained a baptismal waterproof costume which he had obtained the loan of from a friend who was pastor of a small Baptist congregation in the North of London, and although it is certain that the lack of it would not have hindered him one moment from going on with the ceremony, yet its possession would doubtless add greatly to his comfort. Tucking the parcel under his arm he hurried off again, finding when he arrived at the entrance to the alley that it was a matter of the greatest difficulty to force his way in through the densely packed people. He was overjoyed to find, though, that Captain Stevens, Brothers Jimson, Burn, and Harrop, were there awaiting him, for by their aid he felt well able to maintain order. All the candidates for baptism had arrived

also. Then he managed to get in first, despatching the sisters to their cupboard, under the tender guardianship of Sister Salmon, to prepare; and the brothers to their passage with strict injunctions to mind and not lean against the partition. Then admitting the impatient congregation, he and his helpers had their hands as full as they could well hold for ten minutes or so, getting the people into their places. When at last all that the sanctuary would hold were inside, it was found that quite half as many again were shut out, and it was no easy task to pacify them. But it was accomplished at last. The doors were closed and the windows all opened, and Jemmy, every fibre quivering with almost uncontrollable excitement, gave out the grand old hymn, 'Oh God, our help in ages past,' to the well-known St. Ann's.

It was evident at once that, as Revivalists say, there was 'power' in the meeting, for a casual observer looking from the platform would have seen many rough faces, foreign to all the softer emotions, working in their efforts at restraint. And when the song ceased, and old Bill, mounting the platform, spread out his knotted grimy hands and said brokenly, 'Let's all pray,' there was a distinctly visible wave of feeling which swept from end to end of the closely packed audience. His prayer was a prayer indeed, no sermonette, but a simple fervent appeal to the God he knew so well to bless the famishing ones gathered there with His presence, and bring them to a real conscious acquaintanceship with Himself. As soon as he had finished, another hymn was given out, and Jemmy, after a hurried conference with his helpers,

retired into the brethren's passage, from which he presently emerged robed in what appeared to be a diving-dress as far as the waist, but upwards had the full sleeves and bands of the ancient clerical garb—only in black waterproof. Giggles sternly 's-s-shd' down were heard here and there, and no wonder, for Jemmy was really a mirth-provoking figure. His very self-consciousness helped the hilarity, so that even those most impressed with the solemnity of the occasion were hard put to it to keep their countenances.

Advancing to the brink of the pool, with his friends close by him, Jemmy held up one hand and said, 'Dear friends, it's easy to laurf, 'specially w'en we won't fink. You can't 'ardly 'elp larfin' at me, I know, 'n I don't feel quite comf'ble meself. But if you'll remember w'ot were a-goin' t' do, that all them that's a-goin' dahn inter this water is professin' ter be buried wiv Christ—that is, they're henceforf dead t' sin, an as they come up that they're risin' wiv 'Im to a life of righteousness, 'oliness, an' 'appiness—I'm shore you won't feel inclined ter laurf any more'n you would at the funeral of yer muvver. Please, *please* don't forget 'at if this is on'y a altered cowshed, Jesus, th' King o' Glory, was borned in one, an' among the hanimals too. Bless' 'Im, 'Ee's ere nah, may 'Ee give y' all th' spirit of rev'rence an' godly fear.'

All was now quite silent. The first candidate, the waitress from the coffee-shop, came forward neatly attired in a white robe, pale as chalk, and visibly shaking. Jemmy descended into the pool and helped her down the ladder. Then, as soon as she had recovered the breath which the first chilly touch of the water had taken away, Jemmy, pronouncing

the solemn words which mean so much to the adult being baptised, but which the sponsors of the infant often hear quite unmoved, by a dexterous movement immersed her entirely, and before she quite realised what had happened, she was being assisted up the ladder neatly covered, and was hurried out of sight to change her garb. And so the whole ceremony proceeded without a hitch, although the anxiety of those behind to see was so great that at times it appeared as if there would be trouble. It was promptly prevented by Captain Stevens, who was in his element ; and, indeed, so well was order kept that, although one woman fainted in the pool, no one but those handling her knew of it.

And so the whole great business passed off satisfactorily and in utmost decency and order, until in an evil moment Jemmy essayed to ascend the ladder. As soon as he did so he found that by some unsuspected leak his waterproof dress had become quite filled, and was so weighty that he could by no means lift himself out of the water. It did not occur to him to slip it off or to remain where he was until the audience had gone, but asking for assistance he was forcibly dragged up the ladder, and stood there looking like a gigantic pair of sausages as to his lower limbs.

CHAPTER XVI

GATHERING CLOUDS

POOR old Bill was much cast down at the unfortunate ending to the service. When the crowd had gone and the few 'elders' of the 'Church' were discussing the evening's proceedings, he was moved to tears over the great opportunity lost and the figure cut by his son at so critical a time. He said, 'I looked that we sh'd 'old a service o' praise arter this meetin', an' stid o' that we must, yuss we must, 'old a service o' penitence. There's somethin' wrong somewheres. We ain't all right wiv Gord, I'm shore, 'r we shouldn't 'a ben let go as wrong as we 'ave.'

Then suddenly, to the unmitigated astonishment of everybody present but himself, Jimson stepped forward, his face fiery red, and stammered out, 'Looky 'ere, Mr. Maskery, I've 'ad enough o' yore snackin' an' 'intin' at me, and I ain't a-goin' t' stand it no longer. If you've got anyfink agin me, wy don't yer say it out an' 'ave done wiv it? I'm as good a man as you are, an' I tell yer straight I don't like th' way things 'as ben a-goin' on 'ere fur some time. I ben in the Mission four or five year now, an' up till a little while ago I 'ad my share of the work. I took my part in wotever was goin' an' paid my bit to'rds everythink like a man, an' that's more'n you

can say, Mr. Jemmy Maskery, an' well you knows it. An' then w'en *your* chum comes along, a man like me 'as t' get out of 'is way; stan' back an' 'old my peace, although I fink I 'as quite as much right an' 'sperience, an'—an' goodness too, if it comes ter that, as ever 'ee 'ad, or you either, fur the matter o' that.' The speaker, having now apparently accomplished his object of working himself up into a fury, paused for breath and glared around into the blank astonishment depicted on the faces he saw. For a minute there was an uneasy surcharged silence. Then Bill spoke slowly—thoughtfully, as one who felt that upon him rested great responsibilities—' Joe, my lad, 'ow fur I'm ter blame fur wot you've jest said, I don't know. I only know this, that if I've said anythin', or done anythin', or even thought anythin' wrong to'rds you or any bruvver in this gavrin', I arsk yore pardin 'umbly as I arsk Gord's pardin, too. I can say, though, 'onest an' true, 'at I never meant any 'arm. An' if I was finkin' of anybody in perticler w'en I spoke as I did, it wos my son Jemmy Corse I knows 'im, p'rhaps, better'n any of yer. I knows at 'ee's alwus a rushin' at fings like a bull at a gate, an' 'ee don't often stop ter fink wot's a-goin' ter 'appen w'en 'ee's 'ad 'is way. But, in the sight of Gord, my only feelin' was 'at we'd missed a grand opportunity; th' henemy 'ad 'ad 'casion ter blarspheme, and th' cause we're all wishin' ter see go forward as ben put back. An' I felt 'at per'aps th' fault was in ourselves somewheres. Joe, Jemmy, and brevren, if I've said wot I oughtn't to a-said, forgive me, I didn't mean no 'arm.'

Upon Jemmy the effect of his father's appeal was

GATHERING CLOUDS

what might have been expected. He gazed, if conscience smitten, around the hall, a helpless, pathetic, appealing look as if conscious of wrongdoing yet unable to realise where and in what way he had done what he should not. For a time no one spoke, and when at last the uneasy silence was broken it was by the newly baptised Bill Harrop. Looking straight at Jimson he said, 'Brevren, I'm only a kid among yer, but it seems ter me as if I oughter say somefin'. An' wot I want ter say is this, 'at I fink arter wot Gord's let ye do fur me an' lots of uvvers, I carn't understand any lttle sing like this ere upsettin' of yer. If Bruvver Jimson's ben left aht in the cold, or finks 'ee 'as, why let's all beg 'is pardon an' tell 'im 'ee sha'n't 'ave no cause ter compline any more. I'm shore nobody intended ter slight 'im an'——' But here Jimson burst in with, 'Looky 'ere, *Brother Harrop*, once fer all, don't you think I want any patternisin' from you, cause I don't. I wasn't a-torkin' t' you any'ow, an' I don't know w'ot ye mean by addressin' yore remarks to me. 'I was gettin' sick o' th' ole business afore, an' nah you come a-pattin' me on the back—that feeds me up an' I'm off.' With that he strode swiftly towards the door, disregarding entirely the expostulatory calls of his friends, and was gone.

Now to men of the world Jimson's behaviour would have been perfectly explicable—they would have said that he was jealous: feeling his own want of capacity to do the work that was being done, yet bitterly resentful of the ability of others who, coming later into the 'Church' than he, had naturally taken at once a higher place. There are many such as he in both Nonconformist and Established Churches. As

long as they hold some prominent position, occupy some place that gratifies their self-love, they are, if not content, not too discontented. But let any member of the same Church by any exhibition of useful qualities whatever come to the front, and immediately whispers of disaffection, slanderous disparaging rumours, and sometimes positively scandalous insinuations, will begin to crop up concerning the useful member. If these are traced to their source, a matter requiring much patience and perseverance, they will invariably be found to emanate from some such individual as I have sketched. Alas! it is almost always impossible to undo the harm thus done—it has often been a cancer eating out the very life of a most useful and flourishing Church. It should be dealt with in the same way as cancer—the knife should be used unsparingly. This kind of people is a curse to society generally, but within the Church they are a greater curse than anywhere. They are the devil's most potent agents. In the world it is sometimes seen that one man will pursue another with most malevolent designs, will strive in every dark and detestable way to do him harm, not because of any harm the object of his hatred has done him, but because of envy—that hateful thing that would, if it could gain an entrance there, make a hell of heaven. I speak feelingly because I have most intimate knowledge of a man, highly gifted, industrious, and frugal, who, with splendid opportunities of making a great name and every prospect before him of being of immense service to his kind, has so allowed himself to become possessed of this devil of envy that he has alienated almost every friend he had,

has lost every jot of the influence he once possessed, and is now almost at the same point as when he began his career; because his creed is hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness bound together by a consuming envy of any and every body who does anything successful. But he at least makes no profession of religion. He is, of course, not less of a hypocrite for that, because he will often pose as an advocate of causes for which he cares not the snapping of his fingers, his only object being the damage he may possibly do to some man who has taken strong views upon the same subject.

However, I must not longer dwell upon this side of the question, especially when the importance of the Christian side is so manifest. Let me then say boldly that wherever in Church work an envious man is found spreading malicious reports about his co-workers, steps should at once be taken to get rid of him if he be found, as he most probably will be, impenitent or apparently quite unaware of the evil he is doing. And ministers or leaders of missions should never relax their efforts to inculcate the pre-eminent necessity for a spirit of unity among all engaged in the work of the gathering. To put it on the lowest ground imaginable and apart altogether from its ethical aspect, such a state of things is unbusiness-like. It is a sheer waste of energy. The business of the Church is to fight against evil in all shapes and forms; but if in the Church's heart there exists a canker-worm so virulent as this one of envy, what possible result can be hoped for? How can the pastor preach the sweet doctrines of brotherly love, the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace, when

in his heart he knows that in the arcanum of his Church there are brethren and sisters ready to bite and devour one another? The only answer is that if he does continue to do so, it must be with a sense of hypocrisy and unreality about him that cannot fail to have a dreadfully demoralising influence upon his own soul, like that of a man who, drinking in secret, is at the same time an ardent advocate of the cause of total abstinence.

Jimson's sudden exit seemed to lift the embargo laid upon Gemmy's tongue. He sighed heavily and said, 'Well, farver an' brevren, we must go 'ome. I'me a-goin' 'ome wiv a 'eavy 'eart, not 'at I c'n quite understand wot I've done wrong. But after wot farver 'as said, an' the way Bruvver Jimson's left erse, I carn't feel 'appy. No matter; my 'eart don't condemn me, an' if it did, I sh'd arst pardon an' be fergiven, as I've b'en so many times. Good-night, an' Gord bless all of ye.' A general hand-shaking and series of good-nights followed, and in five minutes all had separated and gone to their several homes.

The Saturday evening prayer-meeting was marked by a most unusual incident. As a rule no one ever came to that meeting save the members of the Mission, but on this occasion a man was present who made all the members feel uneasy. He was a costermonger if he was anything, but neither as a street tradesman nor a general labourer was he ever a regular worker. Nowadays he would be called a Hooligan, but then the only term that could be applied to him with any sense of propriety was that of 'rough.' He was undoubtedly rough, and wherever any trouble was afoot it was almost certain that

Paterson would be found in the midst of it. He was distinctly one of the dangerous classes of whom, alas! there are so many in our great towns, bred in the foulness of the slums and without any more sense of their duty towards their neighbour than animals of the fiercest type. He had been at the baptismal service, and was then 'spotted' by Brother Salmon, who for a moment felt full of fear lest he should have come there to create a disturbance, but was consoled when he found that as the service proceeded Paterson sat quite still, apparently impressed by what was going on.

When, however, he put in an appearance on the Saturday, none of the members knew quite what to make of it. For, in common with most Christian workers, their faith was not very strong, and when results of their preaching and practising manifested themselves, they were always received with wonder, as if results were the last thing they expected. This may seem a sort of acrid comment upon the faith possessed by Christian workers, but I make it confidently, knowing its truth, and knowing too how fully all truly honest Christians will agree with me. It is no matter for wonder that God should keep His word to us, but the great majority of us act as if it were. And so, when the terror of Rotherhithe came shamblingly forward at the close of the Saturday evening's prayer meeting and professed in uncouth terms his desire to seek the Lord, he was received at first with a considerable amount of reserve. Then, when the situation adjusted itself, all went to the opposite extreme and vied with one another in their welcome to the new-comer. He told them that he was tired to death of his way of living, that the

words of Jemmy on the Waste the previous Sunday evening had gone right home to his heart, and that never again could he do or say or even think as he had done. But specially he had been moved by the baptismal service. That had settled the matter for him, and he only longed for the time to come when he, too, might testify in public that he was a lover of the Lord. Much more he said also in the same strain, and at last, such was the agony of conviction in which he found himself, that he burst into tears and for some time refused to be comforted. Great was the rejoicing among the brethren and sisters. All felt, and justifiably so, that such a brand plucked from the burning was worth any amount of labour and pains to secure. They yearned over the repentant one with an intensity of affection that can nowhere else be witnessed in the world's scheme of things. He was at once a trophy of grace, a proof of their ministry, and a Divine sealing of their charter of apostleship. When they left the hall that night they trod the clouds, and for a little while even the disquieting episode of Jimson's defection was forgotten.

At the very time when this delightful season was being enjoyed by the members of the Mission, Jimson was closeted with three chosen chums, fellow foremen, in the dim and somewhat strong-smelling little bar-sanctum of one of those waterside taverns which still survive on both sides of the Thames. A bottle of rum stood on the rickety table, flanked by a sugar basin and a plate containing a sliced lemon. Four glasses also, filled to the brim with a comforting compound, stood one in front of each member of the quartette. Each in turn gave his solemn opinion of

the state of affairs at the Wren Lane Mission. Fortified as well as consoled by the potent spirit, the cronies said many things without the least idea of the value of words, but deep down in the minds of every member of the little company was a somewhat devilish satisfaction that at last Joe Jimson had seen how narrow and unsatisfying was the way of a Holy Joe, and had, gaining wisdom in time, returned to the ways of wisdom—wisdom, that is, in making the best of the world which is, and leaving such esoteric considerations as the comfort of others, to say nothing of one's own comfort in the world which is to come, to take care of themselves.

Said Larkin Smith, as he cocked his opened pocket-knife into the hollow of his thumb and proceeded to rub up the tobacco he had just shredded from a plug into fitting filling for his pipe, 'I alwus did say as Jimson was aht o' place in that gang, didn't I?' There was no answer, but a series of solemn nods, so he resumed. 'Yers, an' wot I say is, men like erse wot's gotter git their livin', an' git it mighty 'ard too, ain't got no time fer foolin' aroun' with bizness wot b'longs ter th' parson. Every man t' 'is trade, I ses. I don't go crabbin' no man's job, I don't; let th' parsons look aht fer men's speritooal matters, w'ile the men's a-doin' their bit o' graft; an' s'longs they don't interfere with me I ain't a-goin' t' interfere wi' them. Live an' let live's my motter. Wot do I know about religion? Nothin' at all, an' I don't want ter know nothin', w'en I k'n get a man oo'se parients 'a' got plenty of brass ter sen' 'im ter college an' learn all thre is ter be lerned, t'll come round 'ere an' take all the 'sponsibility orf my shoulders, t'll come in w'en

I peg aht an' read me the words wot'll pars me froo an' make me all right fer th' nex' world—w'y sh'd I bother *my* stoopid 'ead abaht things? No, not me.' And with a shake of his head worthy of a Solon, Mr. Smith drained his glass and subsided into his chair, puffing vigorously at his pipe like a man who, having stated an unanswerable case, awaits a futile rejoinder in order that he may with a sentence or so crush the rash answerer into dust. No rejoinder came, however, for neither of the other two strangers took sufficient interest in the conversation to rouse them from the pleasant lethargy induced by rum and tobacco, while Jimson himself, although passionately argumentative, was actually too much ashamed to say a word either against the faith he still secretly held, or in its favour when he was engaged in acting as if he had done with it for ever. And there for the present we will leave him to find that the old pleasures long desired in secret had somehow lost their savour; that there was a dull cold sense of dissatisfaction with everything and everybody, allied to a constantly haunting fear of having done irreparable injury to his chances of ultimate happiness, and an aching desire to get back among the people he had but recently been so eager to leave.

There was, as I have before noted, in the enlarged 'Hall' an angular cupboard-like apartment which was used as a vestry, and in this tiny place Jemmy was wont to keep in a little box the moneys collected until the treasurer, Brother Jenkins, who was by reason of his employment somewhat irregular in his attendance, should come and take it. Jemmy had adopted this plan since the amounts collected had

grown in importance, for, as he said with a merry smile, he didn't want to be always under temptation to pay his rent or have a good feed out of the Mission money as he should if he kept it at home. On this Saturday evening the little box contained over 117s., the proceeds of the baptismal service and the previous Sunday's collection, and sundry other sums which were due to be paid away. But when Brother Salmon came as usual to set the 'Hall' in order for the breaking of bread on Sunday morning, he found to his horror that some one had been before him, not through the door but down through the skylight. Further investigation revealed the startling fact that Jemmy's little box was gone! Quite stunned by the discovery Brother Salmon sat down and tried to collect himself, then dropped on his knees for his unfailing solace and told the Father all about it. He rose comforted, and said nothing to any of the brethren until Jemmy arrived, when taking him into the vestry he told the poor fellow the heavy tale. It was a crushing blow to Jemmy, disabling him from conducting the service, which was consequently left in the hands of Brother Salmon. And, although none else but these two knew of the loss, there was present to the minds of all a sense of something being wrong, a lack of the joy and brightness usually felt at the Sunday morning meeting. As soon as it was over Jemmy called all the brethren together who were, if one may call them so, his deacons, and laid the loss before them, taking all the blame and yet lamenting that the treasurer had not been there to take the money away with him. No one had very much to say except to offer the peculiarly British suggestion of locking the stable

after the loss of the horse, but it was unanimously decided that Brother Jenkins be asked to resign his treasurership as soon as he could be seen. All seemed afraid to suspect anyone whom they knew, and no one had any suggestions to offer about raising this large sum. They felt they dared not make the matter public, for they all knew how a censorious world would receive such a statement. It would certainly be said that if any robbery had been committed it was by one of themselves, and those persons who had not contributed a farthing toward the expenses would be the loudest in their condemnation and sinister suggestions of dishonesty.

So that it was with heavy hearts that the little band prepared for the campaign of the evening, anticipating much trouble during the approaching winter in keeping out of debt, when open-air meetings could not be held and the collections would be confined to their own body. For they knew, none better, that in the open-air meetings their strength lay, and that such a congregation as they would get indoors during the winter would be quite unlikely to contribute enough to meet current expenses, much less make up such a loss as they had just sustained. In the open air that night a fairly good collection was taken, amounting to 3*l.*, but there were no conversions and very little enthusiasm except on the part of Bill Harrop, who proved himself a tower of strength. But for him the meeting would have been dull indeed. And if you, reader, feel inclined to blame these poor apostles for their easily damped ardour, it will be well for you to remember some of the occasions on which you have felt that, because some loss has confronted

you, or some of your well-arranged plans have gone awry, the sunshine of God's favour has been shut off and your heaven has been overcast with lowering clouds through which no gleam of blue has been discernible. Since (and before) the days of Elijah the same phenomena have always been witnessed—Christians rising to the most sublime heights of faith in the presence of truly terrible trials, and fainting before trifling setbacks; meeting joyfully the tremendous frontal assaults of the devil victoriously, and succumbing to small temptations to evil most ingloriously. It has ever been so, and presumably, until the day of God shall dawn, it will, in spite of its apparent paradox, so continue to be.

CHAPTER XVII

FAITH'S OPPORTUNITY

FROM the hardly contested struggle of the brethren in dingy Rotherhithe it is doubtless a relief to return for a while to Saul, grandly justifying his high calling upon the wide sea. It is no exaggeration to say that this one man's goodness of character, ability in his profession, and courage to do what he felt to be right, completely altered the lives of everybody on board. For if it be impossible for seamen to withhold their admiration for a brutal tyrant, providing he be a first-rate sailorman, how much more must they, are they, compelled to admire a perfect seamen who is at the same time fearless, just, and untiring. Saul dominated the whole ship, and although, as was inevitable, there were some evil spirits who hated him solely for his goodness, they did not dare to utter their sentiments for fear of what the majority might say or do. So the *Asteroid* was a perfectly peaceful ship. From day to day the routine went on like clockwork, and there never was the slightest necessity for either of the mates to interfere in any way. Not only so, but the mate grew to repose such implicit confidence in Saul's sailorising qualities that his directions for work to be done only consisted of the merest outline, and any suggestion of alteration

made by Saul always met with a most cordial welcome from him.

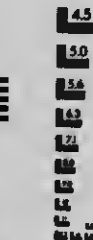
When the ship reached the steady fine-weather region, Saul, having previously obtained the consent of the mate, held a class three nights a week in the second dog-watch, to which he invited all the apprentices and those members of the crew whose seamanship was of poor quality. At these times he taught his pupils, with a thoroughness and assiduity beyond all praise, all the mysteries of knots, splices, selzings, and fancy work, in either hemp or wire rope. And this teaching business caught on so that soon you might see all hands in their watch on deck at night, or below in the dog-watches, busily engaged in demonstrating some knotty point of sailorising or arguing some detail of seamanship, such as the sending up or down of mast and yards, the fitting of rigging, &c.

Side by side with this educational process, which, it may be remarked in passing, was not merely of the highest value to the crew practically, but kept their minds off the endless filthy gabble that is so characteristic of ship's forecastles, another form of instruction was steadily going forward. None the less real because it was unobtrusive, it was not confined to one period of the day, but its beneficent influence was felt all day long. In Saul's presence at first none of his men dared to use bad language because of their fear of the consequences, but as they grew to know him better, they felt that it would be a much greater offence to swear before him than it would be elsewhere. As an instance of what I mean, the little Scotchman of whom I spoke was doing a small job



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one day under the bo'sun's eye, when the marlinespike he was using slipped and the point pierced his hand. As ninety out of a hundred sailors would have done, he uttered a fierce curse upon the tool. Saul gravely said, 'Did sayin' that do ye any good?' Scotty did not trust himself to answer, so Saul went on, 'I can tell ye from experience that, as far as words go, "Thank God" would have just the same effect on the smart as that foul talk, and it would sound ever so much better. But I can tell you more than that. I can tell you that while it's cowardly to swear at a thing which you know can't give you back as bad as you send, cowardly to swear at something else for what is your own fault, it's bad for ye to give way to temper like that. If ye only keep a hand on yourself and bridle your tongue, the good it'll do ye is beyond all count. But I'll admit that to do so fully needs the grace of God, except one's born patient. It does come easier then.'

Scotty looked up at the handsome grave face, his memory ran back along the various incidents of the voyage wherein what the bo'sun was now preaching had been practised by him, and in spite of the smarting of his injured hand he was convinced and ashamed of himself. For herein lies the supreme teaching value of a good man's life on board ship. Men live there in an intimacy unknown elsewhere, except in the family. All a man's faults and failings, no less than his virtues, are brought under the mental microscope, and every detail of his behaviour, even if it is never discussed in speech, is noted, has its influence. This it is that makes me so impatient with the foolish talk of people who speak of the

Christian as if he or she were a creature whose mental and physical fibre were in some way relaxed. In the nature of things one has always a battle to fight when well-doing is his object, and even when surrounded by Christian friends full of sympathy and willingness to help, that battle is a stern one, bringing out all that is most heroic in man. But when, by night and day, week in, week out, for months and months at a time, a man is surrounded by those who are eager to trip him up, who would be delighted beyond measure at his fall, and whose keenness of criticism makes no allowances for temperament, or indeed difficulties of any sort, then the grandeur of the Christian character becomes manifest, the true hero stands revealed. But verily he has his reward: not merely in the contemplation of a theoretical Heaven to be by-and-by attained as a payment for patient endurance of sorrow, evil, and pain here, but in the growth of love, the closer affinity of the creature to the Creator, the gradual return to the originally conceived man before by disobedience he lost that fellowship with God wherein lay perfect peace and happiness.

It was in this manner that Saul was silently educating the crew of the *Asteroid*. Except that he was always ready with an encouraging or a warning word where he felt it might be fitly spoken, as at such times as I have just alluded to, he never attempted to preach directly, preferring to let his life do that for him, and feeling sure that if he only *lived* Christ, sooner or later he would be asked to preach Him directly. His two berthmates, Chips and Sails, were in great straits. His presence in the half-deck exercised a

restraint upon them that often became intolerable. Only his bright cheery presence, for never by a word did he attempt to force upon them what he thought they sorely needed. So, as a rule, whenever he was in the house they went out and conversed at their ease. They did not boycott him intentionally, feeling that such a proceeding would be futile, but they simply could not talk before him, their darkness could not stand his light. Then Chips was taken seriously ill. The food in the ship was of poor quality—poorer, so the two petty officers said, than it had ever been before—and owing to a quantity of tinned fresh beef going bad there was very little change of diet from the saltpetre-laden meat. This brought on an illness in the carpenter's case which, partly the long-delayed result of vicious habits, might have been averted with proper food. And now the sufferer realised with many mental pangs how good a thing it was to have a tender-hearted untiring shipmate. Saul nursed him like a mother, prayed for him (but never intruded his prayers upon him), read his favourite books to him—for Chips, like most Scotchmen, was a great reader—and generally did for him what such a man might be expected to do. And at last, one Sunday afternoon, as the ship was sweetly breasting the bright waters of the Southern Ocean before a splendid westerly breeze, with a regular rhythmical swing as of an infant's cradle, although she was making a good ten knots, Chips suddenly turned his weary eyes full upon Saul as the latter sat by the bunkside reading the 'Heart of Midlothian' to him, and said, 'Bo'sun, hoo is ut ye've never offert tae read th' Bible tae me?' 'Chips, my boy,' replied Saul, 'I've been waitin' an'

prayin' for ye t' ask me. You know as well as I do that if I had offered you would have been offended, and perhaps scared as well, because some people have a queer notion that to offer to read the Bible to a man shows that you think he's goin' to die. Besides, I do try, as far as He gives me grace to do it, to imitate my Master, Jesus Christ. He was such a gentleman as the world's never seen before or since, An' He never forced Himself on people. When they wanted Him, He was, and is, always ready, but to come where He isn't wanted wouldn't be like Him. But He went on livin' His perfect life in the sight of all men, and if that didn't make 'em love Him it was because the devil had so blinded 'em that they couldn't see the beauty of His splendid perfect manhood. But tell me, *would* you like me to read to you? Read the Bible, I mean.'

Chips, with closed eyes, murmured, 'Yes. Not 'cause Ah think Aam gaein' t' dee, fur Ah daen't. Bit Ah wou'd laik fine t' see, if Ah can, hoo it is that a man can dae fhat ye've ben daein' iver sin ye cam aboard this ship. Mahn, Ah've niver sin ony-thin' laik ut in a' ma life. Mony an' mony a mahn ah've been acquent wi' wha' profest tae be unco guid, bit thae wer a' rotten at hert an' ther professions but lees. But ye seem tae be wut ma idee of a Christen mahn ought to be—read me some oot o' yer Bible, an' Ah'll listen wi' all ma hairt.'

Without another word Saul reached up for his Bible and opened it at Luke xv. From lack of education many of his words were mispronounced in a fashion to make a critic writhe, but he had that supreme gift of a good reader, a sympathetic apprecia-

tion of what he was reading, that made his hearer feel the words as the writer intended they should be felt. And as Chips lay and listened to the sublime parable, he saw, as if in a picture spread out before him, the nine pieces of silver safe in the bag while the sorrowing housewife, candle in hand, swept and searched diligently until she found the piece which was lost. He saw the ninety-nine sheep cosily nestling within the fold, while up and down the bleak mountain side the shepherd sought untiringly for the foolish straying one. And his interest grew poignant in its intensity as Saul, choking with emotion, reproduced the Divine picture of the Father on His lonely watch-tower straining His eyes out over the desert for the drooping wayworn figure of his returning son. So great was the power of sympathetic faith possessed by the reader, that Chips was one of the company of publicans and sinners drawn nigh to hear Him who spake as never man spake before or since, and it was with a sense of perfect realisation of that wonderful scene that he said, as Saul looked up at the story's close, 'Thankye, thankye, bo'sun, ye'll never know what ye've dune fer me this aesthernune. May God repay ye, fer Ah niver can. Noo Ah'll sleep, Ah think, fer Ah feel thet comforted ye caent imagine.'

So Saul put down his book and went on deck, where leaning over the rail his eyes feasted upon the cool loveliness of the departing day, took in every detail of curving wave, diamond spray, delicate play of colours above and beneath, until his heart overflowed with its upspringing fountain of joy, and the big tears of perfect happiness rolled one by one down his bronzed face. There are many people who cannot

dissociate the idea of tears from sorrow, many more who feel that for a man to weep proves him unmanly. Poor people, what do they know of joy or manliness? Jesus wept, and no man ever attained to His over-towering stature of true manliness; while true full joy must have tears or the heart will burst, the joyful one will die.

But Saul's greatest blessing was found in the transformation of the once truculent and worthless Larry Doolan. Larry's experience the first day out had been to him a revelation of what he was, and what this strong brave man was who had first mastered him and then saved his life. He was truly a changed man. Very silent and reserved, scarcely ever heard to speak unless absolutely compelled to do so, willing, teachable, and obedient in the highest degree, there was as much difference between him and the Larry Doolan of former days as between light and dark. And his dog-like affection for Saul was a pathetic thing to see. A deep content seemed to fill him if only he could work near his deliverer; he followed him wistfully with his eyes, and at his lightest word the once dawdling loafer sprang to execute the order as if his life depended upon his promptness. But speak to Saul, Larry could not, except in the way of business. All his native volubility seemed to have deserted him, and he could only express what he felt by his looks. But once or twice in the fo'c'sle, when some lewd fellow of the baser sort ventured a disparaging remark about the bo'sun, threw it out a sort of feeler like, Larry's dark eyes flashed, his fists clenched themselves, and he

growled out a fierce warning that might not be safely disregarded.

And so the passage drew near its close. Chips recovered, but was sadly altered in physique, from the tremendous demand made upon his enfeebled constitution. The sailmaker, a weak good-natured fellow, taking his cue from the penitent carpenter, now sat with him and listened while Saul read a chapter every night out of his beloved Bible and hazarded a few pithy comments at intervals. And then the trio suddenly became aware that during the reading there were listeners outside the door. Some of the watch on deck took to creeping aft and listening to Saul's melodious voice as he read the Word. And presently came that for which Saul had hungered ever since he came on board, an invitation to read to all hands that could attend one Sunday afternoon, at which his heart leapt for joy. Seated on the forehatch, with the chaps picturesquely disposed about him, the bo'sun read amid a silence so deep that you could almost hear the deep breathing. The impression made was very great, how great could only dimly be surmised; but the immediate results were evident. Only four fellows held aloof, men who had made up their minds to hate Saul, and whom no amount of admiration for his seamanship or manly character could alter, and Larry. But the latter only kept away from the reading from a mistaken idea that he would be held disloyal to his religion if he listened to a heretic's reading of the Bible. His conscience was becoming very tender, and he longed to do right at whatever cost to himself, and Saul, knowing his difficulty well, did not press him with invitations. He only remained instant in prayer that

this poor blind heart might be opened to receive the light and be led by the great Guide into the way of peace.

The readings were so great a success that they were renewed at every possible opportunity, and, strange as it may seem, Saul had much difficulty in remaining humble and not puffed up by this wonderful result. But it has ever been so: the gentle souls that could endure martyrdom, that under all adverse circumstances only shine brighter and more steadfastly, are often lulled to sleep or tempted to become well satisfied with themselves when the sunshine of God's love beams upon them and their ministry is being blessed and accepted by all around them. Of course it is only a spiritual application of the universal rule that there be few mortals who can properly endure success. Especially such as this of Saul's. It surpassed his most fervent hopes that he should find all hands, except of course the after-guard, listening patiently while out of the Book of books he read the grand old story in that language which is so plain that a child may apprehend it. He felt sure that there would be a great ingathering presently, looked forward to it confidently, and the contemplation made him supremely happy.

After a smart passage of eighty-seven days the *Asteroid* arrived at Calcutta, and the way her crew worked unbending and stowing away sails as she was swiftly towed up the great river, extorted a few words of wondering praise from the pilot—one of those masterful chiefs of the piloting profession that only seems to attain its full development in Calcutta. 'Fine crew you've got, Captain Vaughan,' said he, as

that gentleman and he promenaded the deck as the sails fell around like autumn leaves. 'Ye' you may well say that,' answered the skipper. 'I don't want a better lot, more willing, or more cheerful. And yet they're being so is a profound mystery to me. Practically their smartness and willingness is the result of one man's work, for a more miserable set of wastrels than the majority looked like when first they showed up leaving London, you could hardly imagine. But that bo'sun of mine has worked miracles with 'em. He's got religion, has that fellow, the right kind, and he not only taught them to obey him, to look slippy when they're called, an' to work without growling, but he's got 'em to sit and listen to him while he reads and expounds the Bible to 'em. I tell you he makes me feel mighty 'shamed of myself, especially as he's made my life a very easy one. I haven't had a thing to trouble my head about all the passage except the navigation, neither has the mate. That fellow's done it all.'

The pilot listened gravely until the skipper had finished, and then with an air of wisdom such as might become a man who was fully qualified to say the last word on the subject, replied, 'Well, Captain Vaughan, what you say is very interesting as a study in superstitions. It is well worthy of attention, the manner in which these lower intelligences blindly attach themselves limpet-wise to some perfectly impossible farrago of jumbled-up ideas, and the lengths to which they will go in support of some theory for which they could not, if their lives depended upon it, bring one single reasonable proof. But I confess that your testimony to this man's behaviour is quite outside the

ordinary range of my experience. Religion, of whatever brand, I have always found unfit a man or woman for the ordinary workaday business of the world ; makes them, in fact, more or less idiotic, while endowing them with a plausible cunning that is a very common feature of idiocy in general. That you should have a man here in such a position as bo'sun, an open professor of religion and withal a man who can do his work and make others do theirs, can keep his place and his preaching for its proper time, whenever that may be, and at the end of three months can command your unqualified good word, is enough to make one think that the age of miracles is not yet past.' 'You've exactly expressed my feelings on the matter, Pilot,' returned the captain, 'except that I detect in your tone a touch of incredulity. But I swear to you that I have studiously underrated the man to you, and I believe if you'll keep a close eye upon him during the short time you are on board that you'll find it easier to believe me. Mind, I do believe that, whether he'd got religion or not he'd be a first-class man, but he's compelled me to believe that he certainly is a very much better man with religion than he would be without it. He tells the chaps that before he was converted'—'Before he was *what?*' interjected the pilot. 'Now, you know what I said,' laughed the skipper ; 'I'm not responsible for his terminology, neither am I going to enter into any discussion as to the meaning he attaches to the words he uses. Before he was converted he says he wasn't anything like so good a workman as he is now, because he didn't take the same interest in his work. He was lazy and drunken whenever he could possibly indulge

in either of those habits, and in fact he lived the life of an intelligent animal without the wise instincts which prevent an animal from doing harm to its own body.

'I see,' sighed the pilot. 'I shall have to take a few days off and study this phenomenon of yours, Captaln ; and then if I'm any judge of the workings of a man's mind by what he says, I may as well study you as well, for I believe if your bo'sun dared to tell you what he's thinkin' about you he would say, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."'

Startled beyond measure, the captaln turned sharply, his face flushing crimson, upon the pilot, as if to say something in a hurry. But he could not find words apparently, for after a pause he murmured, 'Ah, Pilot, although I am astonished to hear you quoting Scripture, I've got to say this—if getting into the Kingdom of God will make me half as good a man as my bo'sun, I'll do all I can to get there. But there's the luncheon bell. Can you come down with us, or shall I have yours sent up here?' 'Oh, I can come down ; I think my leadsman is fully competent to take her along for the next dozen miles.' And they disappeared below.

As I write these few last lines I keep on thinking of what their effect will be upon the minds of men who may honour me by reading them, but whose mental attitude is that of the pilot. Will they dismiss them as invention, or will they give me the credit of having stated what I know to be true? I hope for the latter, of course, because it is a great thing to get a thinking man or woman to receive evidence which they feel they can trust, even though it cuts across the

roots of many of their theories. As a piece of first-hand evidence I do not think its importance can be exaggerated, and for this reason: To-day, wherever educated people are discussing this pre-eminent problem of the effect of Christianity upon the world, they are seeking for results in men's lives. If they find them to be good they must be convinced, but if they find that mediævalism is still rampant among us in a modified form, that the Christianity generally understood of the people is merely a matter of ceremonial, of external compliance with certain forms, while the heart, the life motives, remain untouched—if they see, in short, that to the vast majority of religionists among us Christ is but the name of a mysterious personage far away in the eternities, or a awful image extended upon a cross of gold, enshined in a magnificent building and bowed down to by troops of gorgeously bedight priests doing by proxy that which God has said every soul must do for him or her self—then they will turn sadly away, feeling certain that such a religion is but one of the many which men have adopted since the creation of the world, for fear of what may happen to them hereafter.

Let these thoughtful ones but be persuaded that Christ is as real to genuine Christians now as He was to the twelve, that to men and women who entertain Him without any man's intervention He is, as He said He would be, a very present aid in time of trouble, and a wellspring of joy at all times. Let them devote as much time to the search for facts relating to the lives of those who are acquainted with God as they would to the elucidation of some vexed question concerning, say, the nervous system of the

mollusca, and we shall have a freshness of preaching, an outburst of conquering faith in the unseen verities of life that is hid with Christ in God, such as the world has not witnessed since Apostolic days.

CHAPTER XVIII

CALCUTTA AND HOME

THE mooring of a big sailing-ship at Calcutta is a most interesting process, and one that I have often felt merited a detailed description. But I have grave doubts whether this is the place to give it, much as I should like to bring before my readers the natives diving to hook on the gigantic chain-moorings lying at the bottom, the great launches heaving those cables up, and all the complicated business of securing a huge ship fore and aft in such safety that when the 'bore,' or tidal wave, sweeps diagonally up the river, carrying devastation far and wide among the native craft, it may beat in vain upon the long rows of Western ships riding near the banks of the Hooghly.

As, however, the purpose of this history is concerned with quite other matters, I must reluctantly pass over so tempting a theme, merely pointing out that now Saul was, to his great delight, in a position to call in potent auxiliaries to complete the work he had so nobly begun in the minds of his crew. The behaviour of four of the latter gave him some little trouble, for they neglected no opportunity of getting the worse for liquor; but as they were discountenanced by all the rest of the hands, their folly was not nearly

so harassing to Saul as it was to themselves. And the change in Chips was simply bewildering to the captain. He seemed to have lost all desire for a debauch. Instead of, as in former times, seizing the first opportunity to get ashore with the sailmaker and return riotous with liquor as soon as his means of obtaining any more were exhausted, he did not now go ashore at all, remaining impervious to the hints of the sailmaker, who, apparently, could not go without him. Instead, he sought Saul's society as much as possible when off duty, as if he felt that he must draw strength from him to resist the temptation that assailed him continuously.

The ship was moored on Tuesday, and for the remainder of the week no one went ashore except the toppers aforesaid; and they, by the time Saturday night came, had met with so much contumely from their shipmates for the way in which they had carried on, that they seemed to have lost all desire to go ashore at all. Meanwhile Saul had been making inquiries quietly, and had found that there was being conducted in the Radha Bazaar, at the Sailor's Rest a special mission for seamen by some Americans. Glowing accounts of their success among the sailors reached his ears, and he determined upon a bold step, having first long and earnestly besought God for a blessing upon what he was about to do. On Saturday night he sought the skipper privately, and asked for a small advance upon account of his wages earned. This the captain gave him readily, when he further asked whether the captain would approve of his taking all hands ashore in the afternoon to a meal and a meeting afterwards. The old man professed

himself delighted, and Saul after thanking him went forward and succeeded in getting the promise of all hands but four to come and share his hospitality at the Sailor's Rest at supper time, and stay to the meeting afterwards. He told them that he had gone bail, as it were, for their good behaviour, feeling sure that none of them would slip away and go on a private tear of their own, and so make him regret having invited them ashore.

He was delighted at his success, and in the morning went ashore by himself and had an interview with the Mission folks, finding to his intense satisfaction that they were men after his own heart, men whose company you could not be in five minutes without finding that they were real Christians, but whose particular denomination it would be quite beyond your power to discover. When he unfolded his plan they entered into the spirit of it at once, but vainly endeavoured to induce him to allow them to bear part of the cost. There, however, he was immovable; feeling, as he said, that it was in the nature of a thankoffering for the wonderful way in which God had honoured him by making use of him throughout the passage. Then having made all his arrangements he returned on board, and at five o'clock the expedition set out from the ship, having been preceded, all unknown to them, by the skipper, who was simply burning with desire to know the secret of Saul's hold over the men. Somewhat sheepishly, with a feeling as if they were doing something derogatory to their manhood, the little band rolled up the steps of the Ghât and across the Maidan. But it was not until they reached the 'Rest'

and sat down to the large table reserved for them, that they began to shake off their shyness. Their eyes brightened at the sight of the crisp green salad lettuces, cucumbers, endive, and watercress; at the tasty dishes of sliced ham and beef, and the dainty rolls and pats of butter on ice. All sailors who have known that overpowering hunger for green earth-fruits bred of a long enforced abstinence from them, will appreciate their feelings. For my part I know that when I one morning went into the great bazaar at Calcutta, and saw the marvellously beautiful array of green vegetables just down from the hills, I felt positively ill with desire—a desire as overwhelming as the traveller in the desert has for a drink of cool fresh water, not to be understood by anyone who has never been similarly placed.

Gradually their reserve thawed out, and they laughed unrestrainedly at the quaint turns of speech given utterance to by that grave pair of American preachers who had sat down to supper with them. Oh, that heavenly gift of humour! When it is allied to a sacred sense of the holiness with which God invests His children, when the man or woman of God is not afraid either to laugh themselves or to see others laugh, how good and pleasant and potent a thing it is to be sure! Before the meal was ended not a man present there but felt that he could do anything for those two Americans. They were acknowledged to be real good fellows that anybody could feel at home with, and when at the close of the meal the elder of the two, a slender dark-eyed man of about forty with a flowing brown beard, stood up and said, 'Waal, boys, if you don't mind I sh'd like just t'

thank the dear Father for His abundant mercies,' every head was at once bowed, and not a heart present but beat responsive to the short pithy thanksgiving that was offered up.

Under these circumstances it was no wonder that the little company went into the hall set apart for the meeting with nearly all their shyness replaced by an eager desire to hear what their new-found friends would have to say to them from the vantage ground of the platform. A splendid frame of mind in which to find one's hearers, and one intensely helpful to the speaker, who should be keenly sensible of sympathy among his audience, should be able to see the heart-hunger in their faces, and at once become the medium of communication between them and the Source of all supply for such needs as theirs. Before the time appointed for the commencement of the meeting, seven o'clock, the room was full of sailors, and a better congregation it would have been hard to find. There was plenty of singing, conducted by a little group at the far end of the room remote from the door, and led by a harmonium—rousing choruses in which all could join and sing to their hearts' content.

Then came the praying and preaching, both done in that eminently common-sense way which seems to be the birthright of Americans, most of whom are born orators. It was utterly impossible to suspect those men of pose or cant. Their language was the language of every day; their similes were drawn, like their Master's, from homeliest things; they spoke with naked hearts to naked hearts; and with a full, tender appreciation of the needs and limitations of their hearers. And when they had delivered their

message, while yet the interest of their hearers was at highest tension, they paused, and in earnest beseeching tones implored all present not to allow this present opportunity of joining the noble army of Christ's warriors against the evil of the world to slip away from them. There was no excitement, no frantic endeavours to work upon the feelings of their listeners, but a calm, lucid, reasonable presentation of the facts to be faced. And then when the inevitable invitation came for all those who would decide to serve the King henceforth to stand up, there was an immediate response—not from scattered ones here and there, but from almost everyone in the room, to the number of about one hundred and fifty. Then, when the public confession had been made, the preacher, after telling them all to sit down again, said, 'Now, my dear chaps, those of you who are absolutely sincere and who haven't risen because you saw others do so, you've just enlisted in a conquering army, and you'll have to go on fighting till your lives end. You won't get plain sailing on that sea upon which you have just embarked, any more than you get it now; but, ah, what kind of sailors would you be if the ocean was always as smooth as a millpond, if there was always just enough wind to fill your sails and no more, and that wind was always fair? One of your most frequently used words of praise is, "He was, or is, a man." Well, men are bred, as you know, in hard struggle, in fierce fighting with all the forces that try to hinder them from their goal, to keep them from the haven where they fain would be. Now I'm going to wish you all good-night, and you'll go back aboard your ships with a desire you never had before: a

determination to serve God and therefore your fellow-men. And He, who is Almighty, will supply all your needs in Christ Jesus. Good-night.'

The words had hardly left his lips when a strong voice arose from near the platform, 'Hold on a minute, men.' All hands stopped in their tracks as if turned into stone, while a burly figure mounted the platform and faced them all. It was Captain Vaughan. There was a silence that might be felt as he said, 'Men, I very nearly lost an opportunity through bein' a coward, that might never have come to me any more. Some of you know me : I command a big ship here, the *Asteroid*. An' on my passage out from London I've seen a specimen of what a Christian can be and do, that has simply broken down all my wrong ideas about Christians. Men, you all know what a bo'sun can make of a ship. Well, my bo'sun bein' a Christian has made my ship one of the most comfortable on the high seas. He's a man, among all the men I have ever been shipmate with, the noblest. Through his example I am here to-night, but less brave than he, I nearly allowed my chance of standing up for God slip past me. Thank God, I didn't do so. I call you all to witness that James Vaughan, master of the British ship *Asteroid*, has signed on to serve God from to-night, come fair or foul ; and may He give me grace so to live that I shall never bring any discredit on His great cause.'

There was a breathless pause as Captain Vaughan ceased speaking, and then (who started it could not be told) a tremendous round of cheering ensued. 'Hip, hip, hurrah !' six times repeated, until the whole building rang again, and men from coffee-bar and

reading-room came flocking in to see what strange thing had happened. Then all hands dispersed into the night and sought their several ships, singing with stentorian voices such choruses as they could remember of what they had heard; while the dusky denizens of the bazaar looked on astounded, and forbore to invite to 'Come see, plenty nice house me fine for you; neber mine money, can get from tailor, bum-boat man, anybody.' No, though the Hindoo did not savvy the meaning of this strange outburst of song, he could not mistake it for the ribald mirthless noises made by drunkards, and he stood back, allowing the joyful procession to pass, break up, and join its several ships.

To all those who know what a great seaport abroad is like in the portions of it affected by seamen, it will be unnecessary to say how profoundly Calcutta was affected by these marvellous proceedings. It is hopeless to try and explain to those who do not, but one may just say that the wonderful work effected by the spread of the Gospel among the sailors was the theme of every English-speaking person's talk. To the masters of the ships it was, while the subject of many cheap witticisms, secretly a matter for much self-congratulation, as it might well be from the marvellous way in which they found their labours lightened, their troubles coming to an end. But our concern being with the *Asteroid*, at present we must leave all the other ships and those portions of their crews who had started on the upward way, to the struggle between light and darkness that such a change must inevitably bring.

The remaining days in port were all too quickly

passed by the *Asteroid's* crew. With the captain now taking the lead in all their efforts to acquaint themselves more perfectly with the way of life, those who had entered upon that way were filled with self-condemnation that they had not begun before. It all seemed so easy and so delightful. But they did not realise how highly favoured they were in having so large a majority on board on the Lord's side. To those who had not, as *they* put it, gone off *their* heads, the state of things was anything but satisfactory. The four foremast hands who spake thus found themselves completely isolated by their own act, since they could not, or would not, take part in any of the religious exercises of their shipmates, and because of their inferior numbers they were afraid to take any steps to show their disapproval of such proceedings. Then there were the two officers, Messrs. Carroll and Kenton, the apprentices, the sailmaker and cook, all of whom were anything but comfortable under the new system. Over and over again they murmured among themselves, 'A little of this kind o' thing's all very well, but this is carryin' matters too far.' But all their secret grumbling made no difference. That they steeled their hearts against the splendid influences they saw at work around them, derided their beneficent effects upon the men they had known as good-for-nothing rascals, only did themselves harm and had not the least influence towards hindering or undoing what was being done.

And as if God were fitting, by the beautiful halcyon season He was giving all these new-born babes in Christ, each and all of them for some great work by-and-by, the elements themselves seemed to

favour them. 'Never,' said Captain Vaughan, 'had such a summer voyage been made to the East Indies in all his long experience.' Bright skies, fair winds, work going on almost automatically : even Mr. Carroll, much as he grumbled in secret against the over-godliness of all hands, was fain to admit that at present it seemed as if the godly ones were being justified by results. For some men must see material benefits accruing from the service of God, or they will not believe. But when the ship arrived off the pitch of the Cape, Larry Doolan, who it was noticed had been getting very quiet and delicate-looking for some time past, suddenly took to his bed and sent word aft that he was sorry for it, but he could no longer do his duty because he felt all gone inside. True to his dim belief, he had said no word about the way in which the proceedings in Calcutta and since had affected him, but he had listened to every prayer, every reading of the Word, and his conduct had been absolutely without reproach. As soon as Captain Vaughan heard of his illness, he had him brought aft into a state-room which was prepared for him, and there he nursed him maternally, while Saul (whose life was now one uninterrupted circle of peace) visited him as often as his duties would permit.

The next Sunday morning, the ship having got round the Cape, the skipper came in and told his patient in true sailor fashion that 'At last they were homeward bound,' and Larry, turning his tired head languidly towards the speaker, replied, 'Thank ye, sir, but I'm homeward bound be meself, an' I'll git there quicker'n you will.' His meaning could not be mistaken, and Captain Vaughan, touched to the quick,

replied, 'Don't talk llke that, Larry, we'll all pray for ye this mornln'; we'll pray right up that God 'il spare ye for many years yet. There's a great deal for you to do on the new lines of serving God whlle you're serving men, you know, an' we can't spare you.' There was a last flash of energy ln Larry's answer: 'Ye mustn't do ut, sir, ye mustn't do ut. It's God's great mercy t' me. I'm as wake as wather, an' He knows ut; I haven't a friend on airth, nor anny place I can call a home, an' He knows that too. An' I've be'n a-layin' here askin' Him if in His great love fur a poor crathur like me He'll take me out av it all. There's some 'at could be of servlce to Him, like that graand bhoy, th' bo'sun, but I'm not wan o' them; an' He, blessed be His Howly Name for iver, He knows ut. I'm not a bit o' good here, but I'll maybe alther in the next worrld, whin He gits a closer howld an me, or I can get closer t' Him. No, sor, don't ye pray that I may be shpared for anny more av this worrld, I've had all I want av ut; but pray, av ye plaze, that I may have a good time goin' across. God bless ye ail, I'm glad I lived t' come across the ship an' all av yez. It's be'n a good time whoile ut lasted, but I know I'd do somet'in' to make me a dishgrace to all of yez if I shtopped here, an' I'm hungry t' be gone.'

For all answer the skipper pressed his hand and hurried on deck, going straight to Saul's berth and asking him to come aft and see the sick man. I dare not tell you what passed between them, more especially as I feel that perhaps you need a little respite from these high matters; but I may say that Saul came out of the saloon with a shining face, as of one who had

been so close to the Gates as to catch some reflection of the glory streaming through. That morning's service was a most memorable one to all there. According to Larry's request no prayers were put up for his recovery, but very many for his abundant entrance; and when the speaker went to see him at the close of the service he was no longer there: only the perishable tabernacle he had left behind bore upon its face the imprint of a smile of complete satisfaction. They buried the clay in the grandest of all graves that evening, and as it sank beneath the bright blue waves every one of those who had held out so long and sullenly against the sweet influences brought to bear upon them, yielded unconditional, and announced that from henceforth they too would serve the best of all masters and friends, 'Lord Jesus Christ.

The record of that passage thereafter would be, for some, very monotonous reading. 'Happy is the nation that has no history,' says the proverb, and its truth may be extended to the ship whose even, placid course of duty and progress does not lend itself to lurid descriptions of mutiny, murder, fire, or shipwreck. These things make startling reading, no doubt; but who among us is there who would not rather see our lives free from such painful catastrophes, who would not rather see the wheels of life revolve in orderly fashion than be continually breaking down or running furious, ungovernable, and spreading devastation around? Few indeed, and so thought the crew of the *Asteroid*. Instead of their former discussions of debauchery, of hardly earned pay-days wasted in a few hours, of long months of

suffering from disease, of brutality such as men ashore speak of with bated breath, they sat in their night watches discussing the glories of sea and sky, the mercies of God to His children, the good they would do in the future if spared. And, perhaps sweetest of all, there were several of them who recalled vividly that in distant country homes old parents whom they had not seen for many years, and whose eyes had not all that time been cheered by a written line from them, would be glad beyond measure to see them, and they would, God helping them, surely go home. And Saul, as the good ship drew daily nearer and nearer her port, found himself wistfully wondering how Jemmy and the brethren had been faring in the little Mission, for which he had never forgotten to pray with all his heart almost without ceasing since he had left. Not one line had reached him of their welfare, but his hopes were high, his faith calmly secure.

CHAPTER XIX

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE

DIFFICULT, indeed, it has been to return from the triumphant progress of God's work on board the *Asteroid*, to the accumulating troubles of the Apostles at Wren Lane. But it is always salutary to remember that the Way has the Valley of Humiliation as well as the Delectable Mountains; and especially to notice how, even in the most earnest Christian work, communities as well as individuals have their seasons of depression, dullness, and even disaster. Such a season had now apparently set in for the Wren Lane Mission. The loss of the money was a great blow to so poor a gathering, for the reasons before given; but worse than even the loss of the money was the suspicion, which would not be stifled, although none of them expressed it, that one of their number was the thief. Then on the Tuesday night after the loss Brother Jenkins turned up most unexpectedly, and as soon as ever Jemmy had put up the opening prayer, he bounced to his feet and excitedly demanded to know the name of the brother who had suggested his resigning the treasurership. Evidently labouring under an absurdly exaggerated sense of grievance, he poured forth a multitude of bitter words culminating in his flinging his book, vouchers, and money on the

table and dramatically refusing to have anything more to do with the Mission at all. In vain did Brother Salmon endeavour to soothe him, in vain did Jemmy, taking all the responsibility of having hinted at his resignation, first, point out to him in the most lovable way how impossible it was for them to go on with a treasurer who only came on an average once in three weeks. All would not do. There are some people to whom the soft answer that turneth away wrath does not seem to apply. The more gentle, the tenderer the appeal made to them not to be angry or unreasonable, the fiercer they fulminate, until, if it happen that the appellant loses his temper and storms in his turn, they curiously enough quieten down, and often assume quite a bewildered air of injured innocence, as if they were puzzled beyond measure to know why they should be severely taken to task.

However, in Jenkins's case it was evident that he considered his grievance so substantial that nothing would appease him, and after repeated efforts, shared by all except Skipper Stevens, the attempt was given up. Then and not until then did that old sea-dog say a word that clinched matters. 'Looky here, Brother Jenkins,' he said, 'it's not a bit o' good you're puttin' on frills over this matter. I seen at the outset of to-night's meetin' that you'd made up yer mind t' leave us, and all the appeals 'at was made t' you only tickled yer vanity. You an' Jimson 's a pair, and I think the Mission's well rid of ye. But, before you go, less have a look at yer book.' There was a dead silence as Brother Stevens adjusted his spectacles and calmly lifted the uppermost document. One by one he looked at them, and then, opening the

book, essayed to follow up their entry there and find, if possible, how the finances of the Mission stood. But it was impossible. Between Jenkins's incapacity and neglect there was a hopeless muddle, out of which none of them were able to find what the condition of things really was.

But Jemmy came to the rescue. In his penny memorandum-book he had entered as of old the sums received and paid, more as a matter of habit than with any idea of checking the treasurer. Now, as it turned out, his action had saved the Mission from the very bad position of not knowing how the accounts stood, for in his little book¹ was a perfectly clear and lucid statement of affairs. This was the signal for Jenkins to gather up his documents, and gabbling fiercely to no one in particular about the condition of things that he foresaw overshadowing the Mission, he went out into the night without saying a word of farewell. And who should rise to console the grief-stricken brethren but Bill Harrop? 'Brevren,' he said, 'don't take this 'ere fmg so much t' 'eart. It is 'ard, o' corse, t' see a bruvver leave like that, 'specially one wot's be'n a-workin' wiv yer a long time. Pore chap, 'ee'll be the loser. 'Ee's gone aht inter the dark wot I just come in from, an' gone knowin' wot it is to 'ave the light. Gord 'elp 'im, I says. But don't let's be discouraged. We ain't none of us puffick, an' ou likely ter be in this world, I s'pose, an' any of erse might backslide. That must make the backsliders' brevren sorry, but I 'umbly fink it orter make 'em cling closer t' the Lord wot never disappoints us or can be anyfink else but the Lord ar Righteousness. Fur my part, though Gord ferbid at sech a fmg *should*

'appen, if everyone of yer was ter turn out wrong un's ter-morrer, it wouldn't make no difference ter my faith; corse I ain't dependin' on yore keepin' faifful, but on the Master wot saved me. Less pray fer pore Jenkins wiv all ahr 'arts: ee'll need ahr pray'rs, 'im an' pore Jimson will, afore they finds their way back agen.'

But, as was only natural and to be expected, a deep air of despondency was generally worn, and when the meeting broke up, after it had been agreed to commission Jemmy to pay all the outstanding liabilities, as far as the cash in hand went, first thing in the morning, each went his or her way heavily—especially those who had made themselves liable as trustees for all the payments due from the Mission. Perhaps the most cast down was Jemmy himself. He sighed heavily as he dropped the money into his trousers pocket, and almost unconsciously murmured, 'If Saul was only back agen.' Almost instantly he was conscience-stricken, and as he trotted along home-wards he said, 'Dear Lord, fergive me fer clingin' more t' the creechur than the Creator. I didn't mean t' do it, Lord. I 'ave realised Yore Presence wonderful, an' I can tork t' Ye as I can't even tork t' Saul; but if I could only touch Yer, shake hands wiv Yer, as I can wiv Saul, I could face anyfink. That can't be, of course, Lord; but do make it up t' me, Lord. Make me strong t' face trouble, make me feel Thy presence wiv me all the time, more realler than anybody else's, won't Yer please, dear Jesus?'

I often wonder whether the people who write what are known as 'Society' novels and 'Society' plays have any idea of the thousands of unseen (save

by God) tragedies that are being enacted in the lives of our respectable poor. Surely if they had, these writers would, for very shame's sake, desist from depicting the false, the shoddy scenes of sentiment and so-called love where inane youths and lazy well-fed young women, from sheer lack of wholesome occupation, conspire together to make life one hideous farce, usually degenerating into scarcely less hideous crime. And they call these *love* stories!

Returning to Jemmy, when he rose next morning very early, it occurred to him that it would be a comforting thing to go and spend a little time in meditation at the 'Hall' before going to his first job. When he reached the street the thought was so inspiring that he broke into a trot and soon reached the 'Hall' door. With trembling fingers he unlocked it and went in, the solemnity of the quiet place falling soothingly upon his fretted nerves; until suddenly, with an accelerated heart-beat, he caught sight of a man's body lying in an unnatural position on the floor in the middle of the 'Hall.' Springing forward, Jemmy laid hold of the body, which emitted a low moan of pain as he turned it over. In the strengthening light its face became visible, and Jemmy saw that it was the latest convert, Jemmy Paterson, the terror of Rotherhithe. Like a flash all sorts of trifling evidential links connected themselves up, and Jemmy realised that this was the thief that had broken in before and had robbed the Mission of its sorely needed funds. But he had no time to think of that now. The man was evidently most seriously hurt, one of his legs being doubled under him in such a way as showed that it must be

badly broken. So Jemmy rushed to the door, and darting out into the lane sought the nearest policeman, telling him the story and begging him to bring an ambulance at once, while he (Jemmy) returned to look after the poor wretch until the help should be forthcoming. When he got back he found the man still insensible, except that when Jemmy tried to move him a low sound of pain was heard. It was evident from the fact of the skylight overhead being open how he had got in, but not so easy to understand how he could have been so foolish as to imagine that he would find more spoil, assuming that he had been the original robber.

These speculations Jemmy dismissed at once as beyond him, and kneeling by the side of the silent figure offered up a fervent prayer that his life might be spared for repentance, also that the temptation assailing himself might by God's infinite grace be removed. He had only just risen from his knees when the door opened, and in tramped the two policemen, bearing the ambulance. Very quickly and deftly they raised the poor wretch and placed him as comfortably as might be ; then, curtly telling Jemmy to follow, they bore the body out of the ' Hall ' and set off towards the station. Upon arrival the presiding inspector questioned Jemmy keenly, while the police surgeon examined the poor broken wretch. And when Jemmy's halting replies gave rise to a suspicion that his kindness wanted to shield the suspect from the legal consequences of his act, the inspector, with a merry twinkle in his eye belying the sternness of his voice, warned Jemmy that it would be a serious offence against the law to endeavour to protect

a criminal in any way. 'I know all about that money you lost from the Mission a while back. You thought you kep' it pretty quiet, of course, but I know all about it, an' how much it was, an' I've had a man givin' a eye to your place lately. *He'll* be in considerable trouble this mornin', too, 'cause I sh'll want to know how it was he never see this man a-clim'in' up on the roof or heard 'im fall. But that don't matter to you. If you want t' do this joker any good, you'll 'ave t' do it before the magistrate. I'm a-goin' to do *my* best to get 'im put away fur a stretch or two. I can do without him in my district very pleasantly, I give yè *my* word. Now run along, Jemmy, like a good little man.'

CHAPTER XX

DEEPER AND DEEPER STILL

BY the next morning the strange occurrence at the Wren Lane Mission Hall was the talk of the whole district. Policemen are good sort of fellows, but they lead lonely lives, and a little conversation at night with a man they know is a boon they are truly grateful for. Thus it came about that the news of Jemmy Paterson's adventure buzzed from street to street, eclipsing in interest for the time that never-failing topic of conversation in certain circles—the winners. It was all the more interesting because now, for the first time, the fact of the robbery became generally known, and by common consent Jemmy Paterson was judged and found guilty of that, as well as of breaking into the 'Hall' the morning before. It is pleasant to record that, apart from the injustice of assuming his guilt while he was yet untried, his methods were universally condemned. On the whole, even men of the very lowest class shrink from pretending to the possession of religion in order to commit crime under its cloak. The men who do that kind of thing, whatever their station in life may be, are of an exceedingly bad kind—almost a special criminal class by themselves. Of them, it may be safely said, that they will stick at nothing.

So it came to pass that, when evening came and with it the usual Thursday open-air meeting, there was a far larger gathering than usual around the little band on the Waste. And although the speaking and singing was very poor, all the brethren and sisters being deeply depressed by recent events, there was a deeply sympathetic attention evident in all their hearers. This found expression at last when Bill Harrop came out to say his little piece. He was deeply moved so deeply, that for some moments, although his lips worked, he was unable to articulate a sound. At last he said: 'Friends, it's no conjer t' 'ave t' speak t' ye ter-night, knowin' wot we all know abaht the fings wot's 'appened lately. 'Ere's a little band o' men an' women come all in their own time, at their own exes, t' try an' do us good. 'Ow Gord's blessed an' encouraged 'em we all know; we've seen the Mission 'All growin' up aht o' nothin', and we've seen men an' women bein' brort inter the Kingdom of Gord 'at we sh'd never athort 'd be worth a rotten tater. I'm one of 'em, an' I feel as if I might be some good some day, even me. Well, you all know now how Jemmy Paterson's be'aved tords 'em; ye'll know now 'ow someuns pinched all the money they 'ad c'lected to pay some 'eavy expenses—over nine pound it was. An' it do seem 'ard 'at such a fing as this sh'd 'appen t' pore workin' people, same as you an' me, because they're a-tryin' t' do their own clarse good. 'Tain't like 'sif they was a big chutch wiv lots o' wealthy people to gavver rahnd 'em an' make up all they've lost. No; unless we buck up an' 'elp 'em, some on 'em 'll 'ave th' brokers in fur your an my sakes, don't fergit it. Well, I tell yer wot I'm

a-goin' t' do : I'm goin' t' live same's they do in quod, and save the oof 'n give it to 'em t' make up wot's been snavelled. Wot er *you* goin' t' do? I know it's Fursday, but you could all shake up th' price of arf o' sherry if y' thort you'd 'ave it. Well, aht wiv it, an' come along Sunday night wiv a tanner each, two or free 'undred of yer, an' we sh'll make it up. We're none on us mean, are we?'

The response was instant and surprising. For some minutes there was a perfect hail of bronze, with not one piece of silver amongst it, and when it was gathered up from the ground there was actually 17. 5s. worth. Jemmy wept for joy. But even this perfect proof of the hold that the Wren Lane Mission had obtained upon the minds of those who lived and laboured near, did not dispel much of the gloom that hung over its members. They had been too deeply stirred, the burden of responsibility, of possible failure in schemes that seemed to them gigantic, had been too heavy to be thus lightly shaken off, and it was a very solemn row of faces that bent over the table at the money-counting. Old Bill Maskery looked in, having been away at Margate for a few days on an excursion for mission purposes which gave him a holiday at a nominal cost. And when he heard all the news he looked grave, but soon brightened up, saying, 'Jemmy, my boy, you're young yet, an' don't know 'arf the tricks the devil get's up ter w'en 'ee finks 'is kingdom's likely ter git a 'eavy knock. That's wot I carn't ever understand. 'Ere we are in these latter days wiv abaht a 'undred servants of the devil t' one real true servant of Gord, an' yit th' ole demon seems just as keen, just as 'ard upon all them

'as is doin' anyfink agin 'is kingdom as if 'ee was just a-startin' in bisness. Nah look 'ere, my boy, take it from yer ole farver wot's seen bofe sides—if you wasn't a-doin' no good, the devil woodn't bother you any. W'y some o' the deadeest Chutches I knows of is th' wealthiest. It don't matter to them 'ow th' Chutch of Christ is a-gettin' on, they 'as speculashins abaht oo bilt the pyramids, an' whevver they was any people afore Adam, an' w'ere Cain got 'is wife, none o' wich fings trubbles the devil a little bit. So they "gits on," that is, they gits plenty o' mone,, an' all the swells in the nayburwood finks as 'ow it's a bit of all-right t' be a member of that there Chutch, cause Lady this, an' Sir somebody that, goes theer. Ah well, Jemmy, don't worry, verily they 'as their reward, an' you'll 'ave yourn, safe, shore, carn't miss it.'

The next morning Jemmy, having four or five orders to execute, was up at three o'clock, and as in the course of the morning he found several more chimneys to sweep, it was ten o'clock before he reached home for breakfast, very hungry and weary. But while he was resting and eating his plain and scanty meal he remembered the plight of Jemmy Paterson, the burglar, and he determined to go and see him in the infirmary. This resolve, full of kindness and Christian spirit as it was, involved him in severe trouble with his wife, who, as soon as she saw him preparing to go out dressed, demanded as usual to know where he was going. When he told her, he was obliged to lay the whole story before her, and his previous omission to do so filled her with anger; for she at once came to the conclusion that he must have had some motive for concealment, as it was hi-

usual practice to tell her all the news of the 'Hall.' Then when she had exhausted her stock of vexation upon that head, she found a new cause of offence in Jemmy's going to visit the robber; why, it is difficult to see, since he had often been to the infirmary before visiting. But reason was never woman's strong point. If she thinks she does well to be angry she is angry, and with an ingenuity that compels the admiration of everyone except the unfortunate object, she never fails to find, for her own satisfaction, sufficient cause for anger.

Mrs. Maskery had never yet failed to realise, however, that when once her husband had persuaded himself that a certain course was right it was impossible for him to be turned from it. And as the storm-wind of winter thrashing about the branches of the young trees makes them sinewy and capable of sustaining the stress of coming storms, so these wrestlings with his wife on points of duty doubtless did much to harden Jemmy's moral gristle. It is true that the scene almost always ended in Jemmy's taking refuge in flight, but that is in no wise derogatory to him, the only unwisdom he showed was in striving so long to change her views when opposed to his own.

Upon reaching the infirmary Jemmy was at once shown into the ward where Paterson lay, looking wan with suffering. A compound fracture of the right leg, also of the left arm, and the breakage of three ribs, to say nothing of many bruises, had brought the burly fellow very low. So low, in fact, that when he saw Jemmy he did what probably he had never done before, he blushed with shame. But when Jemmy settled down by his side and said cheerily, 'Well, ole

man, how goes it? Gettin' 'long famously, ain't yer?' he could no longer withhold his confidence from one whom he had so deeply injured. Looking up at Jemmy's bright sympathetic face he murmured, 'Thank ye, Jemmy, I am doin' well; ever s' much better 'n I spected or deserves. I wish I'd a-be'n killed. Now don't say nothin', for he could see Jemmy about to interpose, 'don't say nothin' till I tell yer. It was me robbed yer of that there money. I thort you might 'ave somefink worf pinchin', an' that wos why I stopped that Sat'dy night, so's I c'd see whereabouts yer was likely t' put the stuff. An' I was in the 'All arf 'an 'our after you'd all left, same way as I was a-gettin' in this las' time, through th' skylight. Wot did I care abaht yore troubles or 'ood 'ave ter make it up?—nothin' at all. I was only thinkin' o' th' oof. But the way ye met me very near choked me orf. I ses to meself w'en I got clear, "Well, I won't go near their drum no more, they ain't arf a bad lot o' jossers," an' I wouldn't a-done neither only I got boozed an' somebody touched me fer wot I'd got left, 'n then I thort I'd go through the ole drum agen. An' you know wot 'appened. I'm glad of it. Only thing I wisht'd a-been wuss. If I'd only a-broke me worfless neck it would a-been all right.'

'Oh, don't say that,' said Jemmy, as the poor wretch sank back exhausted, 'while there's life there's 'ope, y' know. You're still in th' place o' repentance, an' it may be 'at Gord's got some great work fur you to do that nobody else can do. Now just you cheer up. We sharn't appear agen ye, at least if we 'ave to we ain't a-goin' to say more'n we can 'elp. It ain't no part of our belief to 'unt th' sinner dahn an' punish

'im. We know 'at 'ls punishment's quite 'eavy enough gen'lly, wlvout us a-puttln' more on it. Wotever it is they glve yer fur wot ye did, don't *you* fink as we 'ad any 'and in it. We'll do ahr best t' make fings lighter for ye.' 'Oh, that's all right,' said Paterson, 'I'm a-goin' t' make a clean breast o' th' ole thing, an' take wotever they gives me wiv a thankful 'eart. I deserve it all, an' it'll do me good t' git it. Nah go away. You're such a good little chap that I feel awful to fink I ever did ye so much 'arm, an' I really carn't bear t' see ye a-sittin' there. Come agen, won't ye, sometlme? P'r'aps w'en ye do I'll feel better able to speak t' ye than I do nah.'

So Jemmy bade him good-bye and went back to his home with a light and gladsome heart, happy in the consciousness that he had done his duty. When Saturday night came he told the story in the prayer-meeting; told it, too, with such graphic power that everyone present was moved to tears and unanimously agreed that this was the way that the blessed Master Himself would have acted. Yet, strange to say, on that very night a gang of Paterson's wild associates, having taken enough drink to make them reckless came up the Lane and amused themselves by breaking every window in the 'Hall,' utterly destroying the lamp hung over the entrance, and battering both doors with big stones until they looked more like a section of road than anything else. It was a pitiful sight that greeted Brother Salmon when he came on Sunday morning, and naturally it cast a gloom over the Breaking of Bread; so much so that when Jemmy was strolling homeward with Brother and Sister Salmon after the meeting he said, in deepest

depression, 'Bruvver Salmon, it seems 'sif we never 'ave such blessed seasons of refreshin' Sunday mornin's as we useter. 'Sif nah we've got ahr 'All an' a goodly number's joined the Chutch, 'at th' dear Lord wasn't as comf'ble wiv erse as 'Ee useter be. Or is it, I wonder, as farver ses, 'at we've got someun in ahr midst as ain't right wiv 'Im?—the Lord, I mean.'

'Oh, don't think that, brother,' exclaimed Sister Salmon, 'there's no need to, I'm sure. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," you know, an' besides we've been permitted to do a great work among the people here lately, and you don't suppose the devil's a-goin' to let us off without tryin' all he knows to make us suffer for it, do you? Bless His Holy Name, I ain't goin' to feel downhearted as long as I see souls bein' saved an' added to the Church every week, an' see how the young converts is a-comin' on, too. That young Jackson, did you notice how he prayed this mornin', and don't you remember how he spoke in the open air last Sunday?'

Jemmy's face brightened up at once as he replied, 'Yers, sister, I should fink I did. 'Ee's a fine speaker already, an' 'ow well 'ee knows 'is Bible! W'y I cou'd almost leave 'im to conduct a meetin'. But then, ye see, 'ee's been well brort up, an' it's on'y sence 'ee's be'n in London 'at 'ee's run wild.' The man of whom they spoke was a fine stalwart young policeman from Yorkshire, who had been gathered in at the memorable meeting on the Waste when Bill Harrop was converted. The ways of the Mission folk apparently came quite natural to him, for he had never gone very far astray, and the memory of his quiet country home and the serenity of his life there took but little re-

living. But there was one thing about him of which these simple souls seemed quite unconscious. He was a born leader of men, and no subordinate position could long content him. Already he had visions of the time when he would be the chief figure in the Wren Lane Mission. It may be thought puerile to aspire to such a lowly position as that; but, dear reader, remember that it was a leadership, a place of authority, and such natures as his cannot but reach out after power, even though it be over as humble a band as this little gathering was.

And all unconsciously, by their praise of him, their pushing him forward whenever possible, they were feeding the flame of his ambition. (Should that seem much too large a word wherewith to characterise such aims as his, remember that the quality is the same whether the object be great or small.) He it was who boldly came forward, and, with the ever-willing Bill Harrop's aid, determined to repair the extensive damage done to the building by Paterson's friends. In quite a patronising way he begged Jemmy not to worry himself about it. He (Jackson), Harrop, and a few others would do all that was to be done, without troubling the outside public with any details. And it was so. They worked like beavers, they stinted themselves of common necessities of life, and before the next Sunday's meeting every broken pane had been replaced; the door had been taken off its hinges, planed, and painted; and the 'Hall' looked quite fresh and bright again. The joy of the brethren at this energetic behaviour on the part of these new adherents may be imagined. It was in nowise lessened when, before the expiration of Paterson's short term

of imprisonment—short because of the absolute refusal of the brethren to press any charge against him, and their pleading that he might be given the benefit of the doubt as to how he came to be on their premises in such a condition—Brother Jackson proposed that he should be met at the prison door, brought to the Mission, and there presented with a new barrow and donkey, as well as a sum of money to go to market with, so that he might resume his real calling as a costermonger with a fair chance of success.

But I am anticipating somewhat. Before Pater-son's term had nearly expired Jackson had suggested and succeeded in establishing a Tuesday evening series of Bible readings and expoundings by himself. At the first two or three, well attended as they were Jemmy and his father were present, and were both delighted at the way in which Brother Jackson handled the sacred Word. Presently, however, they were not so sure as to his perfect orthodoxy. It seemed to them that he was straying away from the old paths in which they had long trodden, into strange no-thoroughfares of dogma. But as neither of them was a very keen disputant or able to dissect a question with any logical ability, they held their peace for the time.

The finances of the 'Hall' did not improve, however, and as it became necessary to discontinue the open-air meetings on account of the inclemency of the weather, the falling-off in the revenue at once developed into a matter for serious concern. In vain did each speaker within the 'Hall' warn all the congregation of the danger of letting their contributions dwindle. All those who have ever had anything to

do with Church finances know how difficult it is to arouse a sense of financial responsibility in the minds of the individual members of the congregation. Dimly, perhaps, they realise that they ought to give, and that not spasmodically but methodically, and that unless they do the Church will get into serious difficulties. But that is where the majority stop. The many warnings and entreaties addressed to them by the pastor glide fruitlessly over their heads, and the result is that a few members silently shoulder the bulk of the burden that should be borne by all; and the defaulters, I can call them nothing else, are well content that it should be so.

Let it be recorded in justice to Brother Jackson that he left no stone unturned to keep the contributions up to the required amount, giving himself really more than he could afford. But he did not fail to drop his... occasionally, to such as he thought disposed to receive them, that the superintendent was somewhat wanting in energy.

In this unsatisfactory way matters went on for some weeks, until, Jackson having taken over the treasurership meanwhile, the storm, which had undoubtedly been brewing for some time, suddenly burst. At the Tuesday Church-meeting, which Jackson had taken care to have well attended, he suddenly brought a charge against Jemmy of having neglected his duty, or, at any rate, of having failed to perform it. Moreover, he went on to say that while Jemmy and his father were undoubtedly a draw in the open-air meetings, and had been signally blessed in the bringing in of such as should be saved, they were quite incapable of managing the affairs of such an

important gathering as the Wren Lane Mission had become, or of teaching the young converts the doctrines it was so necessary they should know in order to become in their turn spreaders of the Light.

It was a long harangue, and it made a great impression. But it did Jemmy good. Deep down within him smouldered hidden fires of that dogged energy that his father was so notable for in the bad old days before his conversion. And this outspoken attempt to oust him from a position that he occupied by right divine, as he believed, aroused him effectually. He sprang to his feet at the close of Jackson's speech, and made so vigorous a declaration of his views and of his awakening to the real aims of Mr. Jackson, as he called him now, that the audience visibly wavered. But while they were wondering to what this matter would grow, old Bill Maskery arose and said, 'Brevren an' sisters, less adjurn the meetin' till Sunday night, tryin' then t' get all our members an' friends here, an' then we'll ask 'em w'ich they'll 'ave, my son or Bruvver Jackson fer superintendent. We must settle it some'ow; it's gone too fur to be patched up, it must be settled.' At that Brother Salmon at once pronounced the Benediction, and the audience dispersed to spread the news of the first split in the Wren Lane Mission.

Meanwhile Jackson spent every spare moment calling upon possible adherents, discussing the roseate prospects of the Mission under so energetic and capable a superintendent as he should be, and dismally dwelling upon the certain disaster impending if Jemmy, good Christian but incapable business man as he was, were allowed to continue in command.

Altogether the very keenness of his interest and the flow of his persuasive talk mightily impressed people, and even those best affected towards Jemmy began to shake their heads and say, 'Well, it would be a pity to let the Mission run down, wouldn't it?' altogether forgetting that the principal sufferers in such an event would be the original members, who were trustees, and who would, of course, be called upon to find the rent for seven years in any event.

CHAPTER XXI

SAUL'S RETURN

IN all the range of human experience I make bold to say that there is nothing more beautiful, and at the same time more wonderful, to watch than the behaviour of a newly converted man or woman. They have a happiness far too deep for expression, but they have also so sensitive an appreciation of danger to that happiness through their failing to maintain the high standard they have set before themselves, that the way in which they walk through the wilderness of this world is most pathetic to watch. 'Smit with a sudden and a sweet surprise,' they welcome every blessing with a profound yet glad humility, and as in every circumstance of life, as far as it affects themselves, they are able to find blessing intended for them, their cup of thankfulness runs over all the time. Like infants learning to walk, you shall see the once selfish person totteringly practising unselfishness; the once foul tongue almost silent while its new language is being learned; the flaccid muscles of the once indolent impudent loafer being braced to meet the new demands made upon them by this mighty indwelling force, which no amount of human reasoning or philosophy can ever satisfactorily account for or explain away.

But when, instead of an individual case, there is, as in the case of the crew of the *Asteroid*, a company of believers, all without the faintest tinge of hypocrisy or cant, clustered together in their little floating world, with an utter absence of all the evils by which folks ashore are continually being tempted to forsake the Lord, the sight is one that is as near an advance view of the joys of Heaven as can be witnessed while yet this hampering environment of flesh compasses us about. There is nothing monastic about such a life, except in the enforced coarseness of the food. No rule of silence, no formal routine of mechanical prayers, no self-torture. His service is perfect freedom, because the will of Christ has become the will of the Christian. There is, however, deep down in every heart a dread of the time swiftly approaching when the loving company must separate, when new companions will by every wile that the devil can suggest endeavour to turn the released ones back into the loathsome dungeons they have been delivered from, until the trembling Christian is prone to pray that it may please God to set him free from the burden of the flesh, which he feels to be more than he can bear. In other words, that he may receive the crown without bearing the cross, a perfectly natural, and consequently purely selfish, desire.

Therefore it was that, as the *Asteroid*, bounding homeward before a strong westerly gale at the rate of 300 miles per day, gave all her crew to understand that their time of refreshing was drawing to a close, they were one and all possessed by mingled feelings of joy and dread. Everyone loves to see the termination of his long journey draw near, fervently desires

the consummation of another voyage. So did these but they dreaded the beginning of the fight as well as the parting from one another. Perhaps of all of them Saul had the most single eye. He loved them all, as he was beloved by them, but upon his heart night and day was the welfare of the brethren at Wren Lane, and his impatience to be back again with them grew almost painful in its intensity.

The cares of his position, however, kept him from becoming too much absorbed in anticipation; and as they came into greener water betokening the shallowing sea and their nearness to land, all hands found quite sufficient in present duties and anxieties to occupy their minds fully. For, as often happens in the early spring, stormy weather unwilling to release its grip upon the year made a final desperate spurt, bringing dismay and much suffering to thousands of seafarers; howling squalls of snow swept down upon them from the leaden, low skies, enwrapping them in a whirling smother of white cold that seemed to freeze their very hearts. This is one of the greatest hardships that the sailor endures, yet one that he makes least fuss about. The sudden leap out of a tropical temperature into the rigour of English Channel winter weather is so trying to that wonderful piece of machinery, the human body, that it is no wonder sailors become prematurely old. On shore we complain if the weather shows those peculiar vicissitudes and vacillations between heat and cold so peculiarly characteristic of our islands. But we can cope with it by sheltering ourselves, and by attention to clothing, diet, &c. Moreover, the range is never very great. But the sailor who for weeks has been

basking in tropical sunshine until his blood is thin as claret, suddenly finds himself beset by Arctic weather. He is wet and cannot dry his clothing. He is bitterly cold and has no means of warming himself, for a stove in his abode (a 'bogey,' as it is called) is said to be very unhealthful. And so he must shiver and suffer, while from his food he gets no sensible degree of comfort as far as the raising of his temperature goes.

As they drew nearer the land, and their deep-sea lead smelt bottom, bringing up in its 'arming' of tallow, sand, shells, and hake-teeth, down came the fog in vast eddying wreaths like smoke. With it came that terrible sense of proximity to danger which is peculiar to seamen in a fog. Even in the Channel, what is perhaps the most crowded arm of the sea in the world, ships always seem to have so much room when the weather is clear that the idea of collision is scouted as ridiculous. But when the fog shuts down, all those wide breadths seem to have closed up. The eye vainly tries to pierce through the dense veil, the ear aches with listening for the hoot of syrens or the wailing shriek of whistles, while every fibre of the seaman's body tingles with expectation of being suddenly called upon to battle for his life with the utmost energy. On board the *Asteroid*, however, there was less of this waste of nerve-force than usual, because all hands were imbued with the idea that they were under the peculiar and particular care of God. Whatever befell them would, they were sure, be the very best thing for their welfare. With this perfect panoply of faith to ward off those infirmities of fear or apprehension that so easily beset men engaged in dangerous callings,

they were wonderfully light-hearted, and sprang to their duties in response to the calls made upon them with a cheerful alacrity delightful to see. As Captain Vaughan said to Mr. Carroll, 'I don't want to meet trouble half-way, but these dear fellows are spoiling me for the next lot I shall get. I would to God I could keep them by the ship. But that's out of the question, of course.'

So the *Asteroid*, her home wind holding steadily, ran swiftly up Channel in safety until she entered the narrowing waters off Beachy Head. The skipper had not taken steam because he had not seen a tug, and being anxious to shorten the anxious period of his navigation was carrying a heavy press of sail. Suddenly the fog seemed to grow solid just ahead, and out of that density leapt a huge steamship, her electric mast-head light glaring like the solitary eye of some suddenly awakened Cyclop. With both helms hard-a-port the ships slowly revolved as if upon an axis, but so close to each other that the agonised passengers on board the steamer could hear the dull booming of the sails of the *Asteroid* as they sullenly beat against the masts. A few moments of terrible suspense and the ships swung clear of each other, not a splinter or a rope-yarn displaced, and all who thus escaped were entitled henceforth to say that they had been suspended over the grave by a single hair.

Owing to the smartness of the *Asteroid's* crew but a very few minutes elapsed before all sail necessary was again set, and those no longer needed were furled. Then shone out the familiar low beam of Dungeness, inviting the homeward-bounder to stay

awhile and receive a pilot from the cutter cruising in the East Bay. Presently the burly form of their new guide appeared at the gangway, welcomed as a pilot always is by homeward-coming crews—as if now, indeed, the perils of the voyage were all at an end. And hardly had the sails been filled and the ship gathered way, before out steamed a tug from Dover harbour and offered her services. They were immediately accepted, and the joyful news communicated to the watch below. There is no order more cheerfully obeyed on board ship than that to pass the hawser or tow-rope along to the tug, and it was a heart-lifting sight to see those dear chaps move. Morning was just breaking, so that the pilot had a full view of their actions. As soon as the tug was fast and steaming ahead, and the orders had been given to clew up and haul down the sails, the pilot turned to the skipper and said, 'Cap'n, you've got a splendid lot o' fellows here. 'Tain't often nowadays one has the pleasure of seein' work done aboard ship as these fellows are doin' it.' Captain Vaughan's face lit up with a proud smile as he replied, 'Pilot, you never said a truer word in your life. But you make me think of the last time such a remark was passed to me, and the change that's come over me since then.' Having thus got his opening the skipper told the story of his conversion in Calcutta, of the blessing Saul had been to them all, and the time of perfect peace they had all enjoyed since leaving port. He wound up with streaming eyes, his heart running over with gratitude as he remembered all the joys of the voyage, and finally said, 'Now, pilot, I don't know how you feel about it, but I feel that with such

a testimony as I have given, no sailorman ought to hesitate for a moment before accepting the blessing offered him by such a Father. Especially a pilot, who knows so well what it means to poor sailors to have some sure guide well acquainted with all the intricate navigation of life, and whose knowledge is so perfect that He cannot make a mistake.'

The skipper stopped abruptly and looked at the pilot. As he did so he saw that upon that worthy man's face there was a most happy smile—an infectious smile. Slowly the pilot replied, 'Captain, I wouldn't interrupt ye, for I be'n enjoyin' myself more than I can possibly give ye any idea of. I've been a Christian for a good many years now, an' when I look back on 'em I can't see that I've done much to justify my calling. I'm an active member of our Church (I'm a Congregationalist) when I'm ashore, but I can't say, I daren't say, that I use my opportunities afloat as I might do—no, not by a very long way. What you've just told me, however, has, I hope, hit me pretty hard. You've shown me a picture of a state of sea-life such as I've long dreamed about; but, like so many others, I never took one little step towards makin' my dream a reality. I will now though, by God's help, I certainly will. An' p'raps if you git half a chance before it's too late, you'll give me an opportunity of tellin' your fine fellows as much before they go ashore.' 'I'm real glad you mentioned that, pilot, because it's just given me the clue I want,' said the skipper. 'There's been a hazy sort of an idea floatin' round in my brain for several days past that such a ship's company as this oughtn't to part as usual; that we ought to have a sort of thanksgivin' service before we get far

enough up the river to be interrupted by visitors. Mr. Carroll!' as that officer came in sight, 'as soon as the hands have had their breakfast let them muster aft for a few final words—everybody in the ship, if you please, and we'll gather on the poop, so that the man at the wheel can take part at the same time.' 'Aye, aye, sir,' answered Carroll, 'I'll see to it. They'll all be very glad of the chance, I know.'

All hands were sent to breakfast at seven bells, breakfast that the skipper had personally superintended the preparation of, all that could be found worth having in the cuddy stores. And when it was over, the ship was steadily being towed up the Mouse Channel, passing all the old familiar landmarks one after the other, and overhead gleams of pale sunshine were just breaking through the greyness of the overhanging clouds. At one bell (8.30) all hands came aft, no longer shamefacedly and awkwardly, as would once have been the case, but brightly, cheerily, and all at ease, as men who respected themselves and knew the respect due to others. They grouped themselves all about the poop in obedience to the skipper's gestures, and when all hands were present Captain Vaughan stood out in front of them and said, 'My dear fellows, for the very first time in my life my heart is heavy at getting home. It's heavy in spite of the joy I naturally feel at the prospect of meeting my dear ones. Heavy because I am about to part with the best crew ever man had. For under the truly wretched conditions of our Merchant Service, there is no possible prospect of us all being shipmates again, although I'd gladly give a good percentage of my pay to know that we

were all goin' to make another voyage together. Oh dear, but my heart *is* sore at the idea of partin' with you all. But perhaps I'm selfish. I'm forgettin' in my desire for my own personal comfort how necessary it is that all you missionaries of the real kind should be scattered about through as many ships as possible.

'An' that brings me to what I've called you aft for. Only as your skipper, mind you, for the man that has the best right to talk to you on this subject is the man we all love and admire, the man to whom, under God, we all owe the salvation of our souls. God Almighty bless and prosper Saul Andrews, our bo'sun.' A broken chorus of 'God bless him's and 'Amen's went up, and on several bronzed faces there shone a jewel of incomparable lustre, the grateful tear welling from a heart surcharged with Divine love. The skipper resumed: 'You know, dear boys, that presently we shall be in the thick of all those snares that our countrymen spread for us when we are let loose for a brief holiday. Now we must all freeze on to the fact that if we want to be truly happy, not only while we're ashore but afterwards, we must never forget for one moment that we have been bought with a price, we're no longer bits of flotsam and jetsam, we're witnesses for God in one of the most difficult callings known to men. Therefore, my advice to you is when the B.T. [Board of Trade] man comes aboard, all of you who have a home to go to, even if you've been so long away that you've almost forgotten it, be off at once. Those who havn't any home, go and get some decent lodgings away from sailor-town and its miserable squalid temptations, and keep in touch with me, all of you that can. It may be that we *may* all, or

nearly all, manage to make another voyage together. But for the dear Lord's sake don't forget that all the happy hours we've had since we left Calcutta have only been to fit us for the fiery trial that's about to try us. Now the pilot wants to say just a word or two to you.'

Forthwith the pilot came forward and said, 'Well, Captain Vaughan, officers, and men of this fine ship, I'm afraid I'm a bit tongue-tied. Ye see, I've neglected my opportunities of sayin' a word for the Master for so long that I don't know how to begin now. But one thing I can say, an' that is, that what your skipper has told me about your wonderful voyage has made me feel dreadfully ashamed of myself, an' I take ye all to witness that from this out I intend to say something for the extendin' of the Kingdom of God in every ship I take out or bring in. After the example you've all set me I feel right down ashamed of myself. And I must say this one thing more, which is, that of all the crews I've ever seen in my life you are the brightest, the smartest, and the happiest lookin'. God bless every one of ye.'

'Bo'sun,' said the skipper, when the ringing cheers which greeted the pilot's little speech had died away, 'we should all very much like, I know, to have a final word from you and also to have you give us a closing word of prayer. I know you'll be glad of the chance, so go ahead.' Saul, who had been drinking in every word with feelings indescribable, sprang to his feet and faced the ship's company. But for some moments he was unable to get a word out because of the hearty cheering of his shipmates. When at

last their affectionate tributes had subsided, he began, 'Captain Vaughan, pilot, an' friends, what *can* I say? My heart's so full I can't hardly speak. Just think of it—God saved me, made my work a delight to me 'stead of a weary way of gettin' a livin', filled me so full of His love that I had to show it, couldn't help it. An' then, all these things, all these blessin's that would be well wuth any trouble or pains to get, blessin's which I never did nothin' for, are treated as if they was good doin's o' mine, an' I'm paid for 'em like this. What is the use o' me tryin' to talk to you about it? I'm so happy I can't talk! If workin' chaps, an' specially sailormen, only knew how good a thing it was to serve God, what an example to the Churches ships an' workshops would be, to be sure. But there is one thing I'd like to say, an' that is that I'm connected with a little Mission over in Rotherhithe, an' I would dearly love for as many of you as ain't leavin' London to come over an' attend some o' the meetin's there. I promise ye a treat. Besides that, I'd like as many of ye as 'aven't got no regular good place to go, to let me do what I can to get ye respectable lodgin's away from sailor-town, as the captain says, an' perhaps, if we keep in touch with the dear old ship, we may make another voyage in her. If not, three or four of us may get in a ship together, an' I'll warrant the Lord 'd make use of us. An' now, oh dear loving careful Father, do accept all the thanks of our full hearts. You've done a wonderful work in this ship, You've saved every soul aboard. We've been as happy as any ship's company could possibly be. You've given us health, You've given us good weather, filled us with loving kindness

one towards another, an' brought us safe home. Now we're a-goin' into greater dangers than there is at sea. Lord, keep us. We 'aven't got the strength, we'll be just like children let loose, but You know all about us: keep us from doin' any harm to ourselves or anybody else, an' wherever we goes let us bear witness for Jesus. God bless our dear skipper, our officers, God bless us, every one, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.'

It was all over, and back flowed the tide of work. Ah, how they worked, those Christian sailors. Men generally do put their backs into their duty when coming up the river homeward bound, if they have never done so all the voyage; but these men, always alert and willing, laboured to-day as if each were a host in himself. Presently the ship reached Gravesend, and with a perfect hurricane of farewells the Channel pilot took his leave. He was succeeded by the river pilot, a totally different kind of man, who had not been on board five minutes before he rapped out a tremendous oath at one of his boat's crew who had in some way offended him. Captain Vaughan, who was standing near him at the moment, said, 'Pilot, that's the first swear-word I've heard for five months. I'd almost forgotten that men were such fools as to swear.' 'Look 'ere, cap'n,' retorted the 'Mudlark,' 'I ain't under yore commawnd, an' if I feels like cussin' an' swearin' I'm a-goin' t' do it, see? Pretty fine thing w'en a man cawn't swear if he wants to. I wonder wot th' 'ell next.' 'Oh certainly,' replied the skipper, 'swear if you want to if you think it does you any good. I can't stop you, of course, though I should like to. I only said that

I'd almost forgotten that men were such fools as to swear.'

Now, strange as it may appear to those who know the painful and frequent and free language indulged in by river workers on the Thames, that pilot did not swear any more while he was on board the *Asteroid* until she reached the dock. He caused a good deal of harmless mirth among the crew, by issuing his orders sarcastically, saying, 'Wouldjer kindly oblige me by trimmin' them yawds forrard?' or 'Will somebody 'ave th' goodness t' see whether the anchors is all clear for lettin' go?' or 'Do yer mind givin' her a little stawbud 'ellum?' but although the strain must have been severe, not another oath escaped his lips until, just as the ship's head was being pointed into the East India Dock basin, a lighterman, whose aim of getting pushed into the basin ahead of the *Asteroid* had been frustrated, launched a perfectly tropical squall of profanity at the suffering pilot. That burst the floodgates of his speech, and for the space of about three minutes he gave vent to his long pent-up feelings. When for sheer lack of breath he paused, the lighterman looked up at him with a quizzical smile, saying, 'Lord love yer, Billy, anybody'd fink you'd be'n dum for a week. I didn't fink you'd got it in yer. Y'awt t' keep a Sunday school, you awt.' To this remark he made no reply, but with all the usual skill of these men saw the ship safely moored in her berth. As soon as she was fast he fled ashore, muttering unintelligibly, a man that had met with a problem beyond his utmost skill to solve.

The decks cleared up neatly and all as a careful

mate would have it, Mr. Carroll sang out for all hands. When they mustered he said, 'Boys, I'm goin' to say the usually welcome words that'll do everybody. But I feel I must say good-bye to everyone personally. I do hope with all my heart, and so does Mr. Kenton, that we shall all be shipmates again. Of course Captain Vaughan had to go, but before he went he told me he'd pay off at Green's Home the day after to-morrow, in the afternoon, and if any of you that are not goin' home by the Board o' Trade scheme want any money I've got it to give you.' Only four men stepped forward and asked for a sovereign each, the rest had all accepted the most welcome provision made by the laws for the protection of the poor sailor from the swarming villainy along the river banks. The money was at once handed over, and then each man stepped forward and gave the two officers a hearty hand-shake and good-bye.

On the quay there waited hungrily several individuals whose faces alone should have been as a danger signal, warning homeward-bound sailors to shun them as they would an infected corpse. A wise law would not allow these fellows on board, but they came as near as they dared, and whenever they saw a face over the rail one of them would put on as amiable an expression as he knew how, half withdrawing a bottle from his pocket and beckoning the owner of the face ashore. It is difficult to imagine the chagrin experienced by these landsharks when they found that of all the crew not one was at all likely to fall into their nets. How savagely they cursed as they saw the homegoers leave under the careful

supervision of the Board of Trade man, and the four remaining chaps sedately walk away with Saul. They spat out their opprobrium at the departing men as long as it was safe for them to do so, and then, baffled at every point, slunk away to await the coming in of another ship's company who would be less carefully prepared to meet and withstand their diabolical wiles. So happily ended the voyage of the *Asteroid*, inauspiciously begun, but by the courage, ability, and Christian perseverance of one man brought to so beautiful an issue—never to be forgotten by anyone who belonged to her during that time.

CHAPTER XXII

A CATASTROPHE AT THE MISSION

IT is disagreeably necessary now to turn back for a time from the peaceful happy condition of things experienced on board the *Asteroid* to the turbid waters rapidly rising around the Mission. It will be remembered how high the tension had become on account of the desire of Brother Jackson to oust Jemmy from the position of superintendent. On the Thursday following, the usual mid-week meeting was held—indoors, the weather being far too inclement now for open-air work—and there was a fairly good attendance. But the whole performance was perfunctory in the extreme. There was no life, no spirituality in the meeting at all. How, indeed, could there be under the circumstances? Outwardly, at all events, both parties observed the compact not to do anything until the question should be put to the gathering, as a whole, on Sunday night; except, of course, the issue of emphatic invitations to all members to attend who possibly could. Yet it is undeniable that Jackson did do a great deal of underhand work, aided by those who favoured his claims; while Jemmy and his party, as far as they could, dismissed the whole matter from their minds for the present.

On Saturday night, however, the prayer-meeting,

which had been exceptionally well attended of late, was almost deserted. To the astonishment of Jemmy only the old members of the Mission were present, with the addition of Mary Seton, Woody, and Bill Harrop—and the omission, of course, of the defaulters Jimson and Jenkins—and there was a noticeable absence of fervour, except in the case of Bill Harrop and Woody. Indeed, the former bade fair to be one of these wonderful spiritual prodigies that from the outer darkness seem at once to spring into the most perfect light, liberty, and usefulness. Woody was as happy as usual, but, as he had ever been since his return to the fold, very penitential over his backsliding, and overflowing with gratitude for the goodness of God in permitting him to come back to peace. But neither of these cheery souls made any allusion to the impending crisis. From anything they said a stranger might have supposed that the affairs of the Mission were profoundly peaceful and prosperous. Jemmy, for a marvel, prayed not at all. He wondered at himself, and with reason, for his spiritual experiences of late had been of a disturbing kind. Yet such is the perversity of poor human nature, that even with the prospect before him of the work he had given so large a slice of his life to being broken down, he could not bring himself to pray for the special Providence of God to interpose and avert the calamity.

Just before the close of the meeting Jemmy's uncle, old Jack Maskery, quietly glided in and took his seat alongside of his brother. A whispered word or two passed between the two old warriors, and presently Jack stood up. There was a deep hush over all as he began, 'Dear Farver, we've be'n arskin' Ye fur a

blessin' on ahr comin' tergevver ter-morrer, arskin' Yer ter bless ahr effits t' exten' Thy Kingdom. An' all the w'ile some on us 'at orter know better 'r feelin' 'fraid 'at, arter all these years o' blessin' th' wuk we be'n tryin' t' do fur Thee, Yore a-goin' t' let up on erse, a-goin' t' let erse be put t' shame. No, Lord, that You ain't. You never done it yit, an' You ain't goin' t' begin nah. If there's goin' t' be a bust up 'ere in this Mission, it's 'corse it's wanted. Any'ow, You knows best, Lord, there ain't or ortn't t' be any doubts abaht thet. Gord bless erse all. Keep erse steadfast, unmovable, alwus abahndin' in th' wuk o' th' Lord, forasmuch as we know ahr labur is not in vain in th' Lord. Amen.'

Then Bill pronounced the Benediction, and the little company passed out into the bleak night. All except the three Maskerys, who remained behind to discuss the situation. The two old brothers were very emphatic upon the 'all-right-ness' of the Mission, while at the same time sympathising deeply with Jemmy. They knew what he must be feeling, much better than he thought they did—for had they not often gone through much the same experience many times? But what they did not know was the suffering he was enduring by reason of that evil suggestion entertained about the money. The words of his father concerning the possible presence among them of one who was not all right with the Lord, clung to him and would not be got rid of. However, to his great relief the two rugged old Christians proceeded to discuss ways and means in case of a split, and this, turning his mind into another channel, did him good. At last it was decided that in the event of the

impending split being of a serious nature and drawing off a majority of the congregation, Bill and Jack should beat up their friends and endeavour to persuade them to tide the little gathering over its temporary troubles. And with this resolve they parted for their several homes.

Sunday evening saw the 'Hall' packed to overflowing, for not only were there no absentees among the members, but, allured by the prospect of a row, premonitions of which unseemly proceeding had somehow got circulated in the neighbourhood, there was a goodly muster of those who had no Christian feeling whatever, only a wish to see what they termed a lark. After the preliminary hymn-singing and prayers, Jemmy rose, and, taking for his text the familiar John iii. 16, launched into a fervent appeal to those present to hear the voice of God, to come and be saved. Never had he spoken with so much fire blended with so much pathos. Never apparently had his hearers manifested such keen interest in his remarks. But had he been ten times as fervently eloquent, it is doubtful whether he would have made any real impression, because the majority of his audience, having come to hear something entirely different, had a certain sense of grievance at Jemmy unwarrantably taking up their time with what they felt they could hear whenever they liked. So when he suddenly brought his address to an end by announcing that after a hymn had been sung Brother Jackson would address the meeting, there was perceptible intensifying of interest, all faces lost their somewhat dreamy look, and the hymn was sung with great vigour.

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While the last verse was proceeding Brother Jackson made his way to the platform, being met at its break by Bill, who whispered something in his ear. He nodded and took a seat by Jemmy's side at the rear of the platform. As soon as the congregation had resumed their seats Bill limped forward and said, 'Brevren an' sisters, most on ye know what's in the wind. I needn't remind ye of all that my son 'as be'n an' done in this 'ere nayburwood; you all knows it as well as wot I do. But Bruvver Jackson 'ee finks as 'ow us old 'uns at the work in this Mission's gittin' stale, an' that they ort t' be some fresh blood in the conduc' of matters 'ere. 'Ee's nah goin' t' address yer on th' subjec', an' arterwards we'll 'ave a show of 'ands to see oose in favlor of 'im being superintendent 'stead o' my son. I still 'ave a little more t' say arter 'ee's finished, but at present it's 'is show. Bruvver Jackson, will you take the meetin' ?'

The attention was now earnest enough to satisfy the most exacting speaker. Brother Jackson advanced to the rail, moistened his lips with his tongue twice or thrice, cleared his throat nervously, and at last said, 'Dear friends, my task to-night ain't a easy one. God knows I shou'd be the last to say a word agen Jemmy or his father, or anybody else connected with this Mission. I owe 'em all too much for that. I don't believe that you could find, if you searched London through, a better lot than there is here. But we've all gotter remember that a man may be very godly, very lovable, and very kind, an' yet be a very bad business man. An' in a Mission like this you can't afford t' have a bad business man for a superintendent. There isn't any outside help; all the funds

'as got to come from the poorest of the poor (I know I'm a-wearin' my shirts till they nearly fall to pieces 'cause of the drain the Mission is on me), an' if these funds are not carefully nursed and wisely managed you know what'll happen, don't you? If not, I'll tell you. Before this winter's gone you'll have the landlord bundlin' you out and collarin' the "Hall" that 'as cost so much labour and money' ('Neither of it yours,' muttered Jemmy). 'Well, what I propose is this, that we have an election for superintendent, treasurer, secretary, and deacons in proper form, every member of the gathering being entitled to vote, and when the election's over that we have a proper set of rules drawn up, and auditors appointed to examine all vouchers and deeds and everything else belonging to the Mission. All of you who think that what I propose ought to be done, please hold up your hands.' Immediately the hands of everybody in the 'Hall' went up, the only exceptions being the old members, Stevens, Salmon, Burn, and their wives, aided by Woody, Bill Harrop, and the Maskerys. With a triumphant flush on his face Jackson turned to Bill and said, 'Well, shall we proceed to the election?'

Stiffly Bill rose, came to the front of the platform and quietly said, 'My friends, ahr Bruvver Jackson 'as invited yer t' elect the brevren ye choose ter run this 'ere Mission. But 'ee's fergot ter mention that four on us 'as made ahrselves responsible fur th' place, an' it falls t' ahr lot t' make up any deficits in payment. Nah that bein' th' case I got ter remind 'im—an' you too—at us four 'ave got the say in this matter. An' we don't choose that any of them what's come inter the Mission sence we've borne th' burden an'

'eat of th' day shall rob us of ahr interest in it. We think we've earnt ahr right, an' we mean t' stick to it. 'Ave yore election if ye like, but understand, please, 'at if ye decide t' put us aht, yer decides ter put yerselves aht of this 'All—yer must go an' git some'rs else t' wusshup in. It's very simple. It almost breaks my pore ole 'eart t' 'ave t' say this, but 'tain't th' fust time I've 'ad t' face th' same kind o' fing. I ain't got nuffink t' say agin anybody ; I'm only a-tellin' yer th' plain facts. Now go a'ed wiv yer votin'.'

Jackson sprang to his feet instantly, crying, 'I thought as much. These 'ere Maskerys are runnin' this place as a little private concern. I didn't say so afore ; but now it's been so plainly put afore us all, that all we've got to do—those of us who don't agree with having a matter like this made a family affair of—is to go out an', as Mr. Maskery, senior, suggests, get a place of our own. All them as are in favour of doing so, follow me out.' Alas for the fickleness of human nature ! In spite of all that had gone before, notwithstanding the blameless record of the Maskerys and the history of the Mission, there was such an exodus at Jackson's invitation that in five minutes only twelve persons remained to support the original members of the Wren Lane Mission. Why struggle to find an explanation ? Many vastly more important popular movements have been made with just as slender a foundation to go upon, and the virtue of true gratitude is one that is rarely exercised by communities, much more rarely than it is by individuals. But what principally troubled Jemmy were the insulting remarks passed by sundry people as they passed out, reflections upon him which he

knew to be undeserved. For, in spite of what people say, undeserved reproach is far harder to bear than that which is deserved.

The little company left behind felt very forlorn and lonely as they looked round the 'Hall,' so large for them now. Each thought mournfully of the months still to pass before the open air campaign could be entered upon again and new converts made to swell their numbers, for each of them knew how little hope there was of getting audiences into the 'Hall' during the winter. They sat speechlessly for a few minutes, until Bill Harrop rose and said quietly, 'Brevren and sisters, this 'ere's a bit of a knock, I ain't sayin' it isn't, but I be'n a-readin' that there yarn in the Book 'bout Gideon, an' I reckon 'ee 'ad a good deal 'eavier knock than this w'en all 'is army melted away 'cept them three 'underd. Our congregashun's left us, but God ain't, an' you mark my words, there's some great blessin' 'id in this fer us if we'll only wait an' see th' salvation of the Lord. I don't know as it's much good sayin' a great deal to-night, but afore we parts let me remind yer 'at that pore wretch is a-comin' aht ter-morrer—Jem Paterson, I mean. Now I serjests as Jemmy an' 'is farver goes up an' meets 'im w'en 'ee do come aht. I know 'ee ain't got nowhere to go, an' aht er th' Mission funds, in spite o' th' straits we're in, I votes they setz 'im up wiv a donkey an' barrer an' some market money. Firty bob 'll abaht do it, an' I know it ort ter be done—wot dye s'y?'

'Say,' almost shouted Stevens, the tugboat skipper, 'why I say certainly. An' wot's more, there's the money,' flinging it on the platform. 'I brought

it to-night out of a bit of a bonus I had to make up as far as I could what I knew would be short, but I'm shore you're right, Bill, that's what we ought to do. It'll be more pow'ful among that rough lot as he knows and lives among, than all the talk in the world. Less ask a blessin' on it an' on him.'

Immediately the little group closed up, and forgetting all their sorrow and difficulties they prayed with all their hearts that this man might be saved, might be added to their trophies of grace; for be it noted that, although they could not help feeling resentful at Jackson, their feelings of tenderness towards the new converts whom he had led away remained unchanged. They rose from their knees refreshed, comforted, and with many expressions of goodwill parted and repaired to their respective homes.

That was a delightful journey made by Jemmy and his father the next morning to the grim portals of the prison, only tempered by the thought that perhaps Jackson might be there also and cause some little complication. Even that slight drawback to the joy of their merciful errand was removed when they saw him in his uniform parading his beat, and knew that he was safely employed for some hours at any rate. To do him justice he did not know for certain the date of Paterson's release, or he would have made some arrangements for his being met and helped in case of the Mission people either forgetting or being disinclined to help. For it must not be supposed that he was a bad man or an unscientific one. He honestly strove to do what he

believed to be right, and that with all his heart. But then so did many of the mediæval monks who inflicted nameless cruelties upon the quivering bodies of those whom they deemed to be heretics, feeling that the bodily pain was not worth granting a moment's consideration if haply the soul might be plucked from the everlasting burnings.

When the two unconventional philanthropists arrived at the prison gates they found a curious gathering. Salvationists and members of the Prison Gate Brigade were there, ready to welcome the punished one and to let him see that to them at any rate he was no pariah, that the punishment he had undergone should not, if they could help it, be mercilessly augmented by the prevention of the penitent getting honest work. It is one of the blackest blots on our police system, that a man who has according to our laws expiated his crime (and legally no one can be punished twice for the same offence) should be hunted down when trying to earn an honest living, should be shadowed by detectives, eager to find him tripping, so that they may be commended for their vigilance, and should, in sheer despair of ever being able to reinstate himself, sink back into criminal courses again. Of course, it will be said—it has been said—that this is an exaggerated, a distorted view of the case, but unhappily it is nothing of the kind, and everyone who has ever had anything to do with the attempted reclamation of discharged prisoners knows that it is not, to their bitter, bitter disappointment.

None of these considerations troubled Jemmy and his father. They were on that spot for a definite

present purpose, and the possible future frustration of their benevolent desires did not enter into their calculations. They gazed understandingly upon little furtive groups or shrinking individuals—upon the two or three professional thieves showing their sense of comradeship by waiting for a pal who had done his time ; saw with pity the wretched-looking woman, her face hardly yet healed of the wounds branded upon it by the man who had just expiated that shameful act, and yet waiting to welcome him back to her battered bosom with freest, fullest forgiveness, and they thought of the all-covering love of God. Suddenly the small door, opening a little way, allowed a man to slip out, and closed again. He melted into one of the groups and disappeared as if he had been spirited away. One after another emerged in the same way and departed, all but one boy of about fourteen, who seemed to have no one to welcome him. Leaving Jemmy to watch for Paterson's coming, Bill limped towards the lad and presently succeeded in winning his confidence and persuading him to come and share for awhile the little place that was all Bill's very own.

And then came Paterson, hearty and healthy-looking, but with downcast eyes as if he wished not to be seen by any of his old associates who might be there. He needed not the precaution. None of them had come. But Jemmy, in his impulsive way, sprang towards him, and clutching both his hands, cried, 'W'y, Gord bless ye, ole man, yer look a fair treat. S'pose they be'n a-feedin' ye up th' larst week or two. Never mine, come on outer this ; it's no plice for 'spectable people like you an' me. Now I wants ter tell yer

somefin', talking very fast, and beckoning his father and the waif to come along, as if afraid he might not be able to hold his prisoner. 'We've got a bit o' stuff for yer. A friend of ourn 'as put up a barrer an' such a slap-up moke; if yer try at all you'd orter take fust prize wiv 'im at the fust donkey show as ever is. An' there's a few 'og lef' fur market money, so yer won't 'ave ter run inter debt fur anyfink. An' if ye don't do wot you orter at fust, well come an' look us up ag'in. We can feel for yer, yer know.' 'Jemmy,' said the quivering man, 'I be'n tryin' t' git a word in edge-ways, but yer won't let me; I carn't jine yore meetin'.' 'Well!' ejaculated Jemmy, 'oo wants yer to? I don't, I know. I woodn't 'ave yer if yer didn't come free an' full o' yer own accord. Not me. No, you do wot ye like, an' go w'are ye like, only we'll all pray 'at ye may do wot's right, and go ware ye orter.' That stopped the conversation, for Paterson was choking. He had struck something quite beyond his comprehension, and its incidence deprived him of speech. And Jemmy was also much moved, for he felt in the very marrow of his bones that in what he was saying and doing he was most highly honoured, that his fall from grace, all unknown to anybody on earth, had been forgiven and the joy of the reinstated ones was his.

In due time they reached the 'Hall,' where punctually, according to promise, Skipper Stevens had caused the donkey and barrow to be in readiness. And then, handing over fifteen shillings for a nest-egg, Jemmy and his father shook hands heartily with Paterson and bade him God-speed. He did not reply because he could not, but his face told its own

story as he flung himself into the barrow and drove away.

'Jemmy, my son,' said Bill, 'the Lord's a-goin' t' bless us. I ain't be'n so 'appy fur a long time as I am to-day. 'Ere we are, 'avin' been privileged to do a bit of 'Is own work 'asmornin', a bit o' wuk as th' bigges' Chutch on earth 'd be prahd t' claim a 'and in. An' nah you run along 'ome w'ile I take this pore lad t' my little drum an' giv' 'im somefink t' eat, an' arterwards see wot can be done t' keep 'im aht o' trouble in th' future. Good-mornin', boy, good-mornin', an' Gord bless yer.' Heart full, Jemmy silently shook hands with his father and the boy, and turned his steps homeward. When he arrived he went straight in through the open door of his little house to his parlour, hoping that his wife would be too busy to notice his entrance and scold him for wasting so much time on an object of which she disapproved. And when he turned the handle of the parlour door and strode in, there was Saul sit ng in the arm-chair with Mrs. Maskery facing him on another, her arms folded and a beaming smile on her face.

It would be a hopeless task for me to attempt a description of Jimmy's behaviour, much less his feelings on thus beholding his friend, whose presence had been so greatly longed for by him. The affection that one man often bears to another is one of the most sacred and beautiful things that it is possible to witness on earth. But it does not lend itself to writing about. David's lament for Jonathan is the most beautiful and wonderful attempt to describe the glorious well-spring of pure love (nighest to

God's) that one man may bear to another, but even that is powerful more by reason of what it suggests than what it says. The story of Damon and Pythias may be myth, but it does not in the least exaggerate the depth of love felt and practised between many men to-day—a love that rises high above all earthly considerations, and touches the very heart of the Most High God.

For a few moments Saul and Jemmy stared at one another speechlessly. Saul recovered himself first, rose and seized Jemmy's outstretched hands in both his own, saying, 'Dear old chap, I can't tell you how glad I am to see ye. I've been longin' fur a sight of ye all until I was half crazy, and the voyage wasn't a long one, either. How are ye gettin' on at the Mission? Mrs. Maskery here's been a-tellin' me of yer health an' yer struggles, an' some troubles you been havin', but I want t' hear all about it from you.' 'All right, Saul,' said Mrs. Maskery, 'I'll git ye t' excuse me. I got my work t' do, an' it won't be put orf like 'is will. 'Ee'll tork ye blind an' deaf if you'll let 'im. But there, ye know 'ee will. I'll see ye later on.' As she departed, Jemmy, drawing a chair up to Saul's side, burst into a disconnected and not very lucid account of the happenings of the last few months. It is difficult to imagine the relief he felt at being able to do this. It should be remembered, however, that since Saul's departure he had never enjoyed such an opportunity, he had never been in any sympathetic person's company who did not know as much about these matters as he did himself. But above all there was one matter which had long burdened his heart, about which he had been unable

to speak to a soul—a matter which cannot be put on record here. The recital made Saul's heart bleed, and unable to say a word he could only grip Jemmy's hand tighter and look into his face with humid eyes from which beamed perfect love.

The story ended, Saul began *his* yarn. His sole auditor was entranced, astounded; Jemmy's breath came in short thick gasps, his mouth twitched with uttermost sympathy, and occasionally a whispered 'Bless the dear Lord' broke from his lips. Such a listener would have been a treasure to any speaker, but as a listener to such a story as Saul had to tell Jemmy was pre-eminent. Both the men were lost in the contemplation of what God had wrought, and the time flew by utterly unnoticed, until at last Mrs. Maskery burst in crying, 'There, Saul, wot'd I tell yer? Once git 'im started you'd never make 'im leave orf 'cept by force. 'Ee's the orflest jaw-me-dead I ever see an'——' 'Excuse me, Mrs. Maskery,' interpolated Saul, 'let's be just. I've be'n doin' all the talkin' fur a long time, an' a better or more patient listener man never had. But let's see what th' time is.' And, looking at his watch, Saul exclaimed, 'Why, Jemmy, my lad, no wonder your wife got impatient to know what was goin' on. We've be'n a-talkin' fur three 'ours!'

CHAPTER XXIII

A BRIGHTER DAY DAWNS

AMONG the many interesting details which Saul had acquainted Jemmy with, was the determination of a portion of the *Asteroid's* crew—those who had no homes—to come over to Rotherhithe and lodge with Saul for a time. To think that the little open-air meeting on the Waste would be reinforced by such a sturdy band of recruits to the good cause, won by his own child in the faith, too, was for Jemmy most delightful and uplifting. So much so, that he was hardly able to contain himself for joyful anticipation of Sunday, or refrain from fear lest the weather should be, as it had been of late, utterly inclement. He got the friend who had painted the motto on the centre beam of the 'Hall' to draw up a big flaring bill, which was stuck up outside the 'Hall,' and notified all and sundry that a band of converted sailors would be present at the meetings on Thursday and Sunday, both of which would be held on the Waste, weather permitting. And wherever he went he spread the news and begged his hearers to do the same.

In consequence of his efforts in this direction the 'Hall' on Thursday was fairly well filled, much better indeed than he had hoped for. But many of the audience came from local chapels, moved by curiosity

to see and hear a band of converted sailors. Saul, of course, was quite in his element, and spoke with his usual fervour and force, but his friends from the ship were nervous and shy, as might naturally be expected. However, the meeting went with a grand swing, and a few of the malcontents who broke away with Jackson on the previous Sunday, repenting of their hasty decision, came back again quietly, hoping that they would not be spoken to about their temporary disloyalty. Best of all, Paterson was there, sitting right at the back and looking wistfully at Jemmy. The latter soon spied him, and at the first opportunity made his way towards him and entreated him to come to the front. He firmly resisted all Jemmy's importunities, saying in effect that when he had proved by his life that he really was a changed man he would confess Christ openly before all the world if need be, but at present he felt that his place was that of one who was only just allowed inside the doors of a meeting-house. He handed five shillings over to Jemmy as part repayment of what had been given him to start him again, and gratefully admitted that he had been doing very well.

Two incidents also occurred at this meeting well worth recording, not merely for their bearing upon the history of the Mission, but for their intrinsic importance. One was the coming out of a young commercial clerk, brought up in the strictest forms of religion, but until then utterly case-hardened to Christian influences, and the other the falling in love of a beautiful young seamstress, of unimpeachable character, with Saul. It may sound almost brutally premature to state this fact in such an abrupt manner,

but I do not know that any good end would be served by making a mystery of it, or dragging it out by slow degrees through half a dozen pages; and of the two incidents mentioned, I have intentionally given it the second place, because I am as sure as it is possible to be of such a thing, that the conversion of that clerk had a far more widely reaching importance than Saul's first (and last) love story. Therefore I must go on to say that this young man, in the full vigour of manhood (he had just come of age), came deliberately forward and confessed his faith in Christ, and announced his determination to cast in his lot with God's people. And as an earnest of his sincerity he then and there handed in a goodly portion of his savings, five pounds, and offered to serve in any capacity that might be required of him. I do not wish to anticipate, but I feel compelled to say that William Maylie was and is the most perfect example of what the Grace of God can make of a man that ever I saw. He now holds a fairly high position in his business, worldly matters have prospered with him, but he is just the same humble Christian, eager to be doing good and caring not one jot for authority or fame, as he was the first night of his conversion.

As I write these words I cannot help wondering again how they will be received. Not that I should fear the world's hostile criticism at all, but whether impartial people will believe in the reality of the characters I have vainly been trying to give an impression of. Well, it is no wonder that, remembering the strange monsters that have been limned by popular novelists of late and labelled 'Christians'

with or without qualifying prefixes, I should feel doubtful about the reception of real Christians—not invented ones. All I can say is that if you who read will not believe that there do exist such people as I have tried to portray, the loss will be yours, not mine. As I am never weary of saying, truth is unaffected by disbelief in it. But the unbeliever is affected, for his disbelief in the truth may prevent his attainment of happiness.

At the Saturday evening's prayer-meeting there was full muster. All day Friday and a good deal of Saturday, Saul and his four shipmates had been doing the historic sights of London, soaking up with all a novice's avidity the glories of South Kensington, Westminster, St. Paul's, and the Zoo. Oh, how childish, some will say. Well, I can only reply, 'Except ye receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, ye can in no wise enter therein.' And it is the merest platitude to say that the majority of civilised mankind deliberately shed their capacity for pure enjoyment, condemning things as childish which belong to the highest development of man or womanhood, and batten upon paltry debasing pleasures that the child would instinctively refuse, knowing by Divine intuition that there could be no satisfaction therein.

Therefore these five came down to Wren Lane Hall ready not only to pray but to praise. Their eyes had seen many wonders of nature and art, and their souls had prompted them to thank God; which is as it should be, but, alas! seldom is. When they arrived they found that their fame had preceded them (owing to the indefatigable way in which Jemmy had made known their history), and there was

a record attendance for a Saturday evening prayer-meeting. There was also a swing, a go, in the proceedings that no one present could remember as having obtained before. Now during the singing of one of the hymns, Saul, who sat with Jemmy facing the audience, suddenly caught the eyes of a young lady in the congregation fixed upon him with so earnest, so all-embracing a gaze, if I may use the word, that he was dumbfounded. His voice faltered and he ceased to sing. That wistful beseeching look awoke in him something that until then had been in the chrysalis stage. For Saul, like many another grand man, was exceedingly modest about himself, and the idea of any woman loving *him* never occurred to him. Moreover, in spite of his sad experiences all round the world, he retained a most whole-hearted reverence and admiration for woman as a type of the higher aspects of humanity. To him woman *per se* was a lesser angel, in whose presence any decent man must be in something of the same mental attitude as he remembers he preserved at his mother's knee in early childhood. The poor debased ones he had met he always regarded as the exceptions which proved the rule—they rather deepened and confirmed than shook his opinion.

But now he could hardly help feeling, such was the magnetic power of Elizabeth Carter's eyes, that there might be a possibility of his being loved by some sweet girl who would by-and-by consent to become his wife. And he there and then determined to do what in him lay to find out whether or not the owner of those eyes really meant what he felt she did when she looked at him like that. So at the moment the

meeting closed he whispered to Jemmy a question as to whether he knew that young lady, pointing a quivering finger at her back, as she passed down the 'Hall' towards the exit. No, Jemmy did not know her, but he would try and find out. And with that scant comfort Saul was compelled to be content, and hope that some fortunate accident would bring him and the young woman together. He was so wrapped in thought as he and his four companions strolled homeward to their comfortable lodging through the crowded streets, that the latter could not help remarking upon his preoccupied air. So he shook it off and was soon his own cheerful self again. He was very glad though to be alone in his little room, and there, in silent meditation with his Friend, bring this new and startling upheaval in the placid flow of his Christian life to the testing touch. Do what he would, he could find no condemnation for the trend of his thoughts, and at last he sank on his knees and fervently asked God to guide him. And if, he said, it was not contrary to God's will concerning him, he would well love to be married, to look forward at his home-coming for a dear human face whose eyes would beam for him alone; who would wait for him, pray for him, and—yes, there was an exquisite thrill in the thought—would perhaps give him a living pledge of love that should bind him closer than ever to the Lord and Giver of life, and enable him better to understand the heart of the *Father*.

Sunday dawned bright and clear. One of those lovely days in this much-maligned London winter of ours that makes us wonder how far people are justified in saying the things they do about it. Not a breath of

air stirring, a few fleecy clouds sauntering across the pale-blue sky, and a tender touch in the air that, while not too mild for the time of year, had yet within it a suggestion of summer. At the Breaking of Bread the sailors' presence gave an added interest to the weekly ceremony that brought quite a new flutter of joy to the hearts of the faithful ones. What it meant to the visitors no one could say. They would have characterised it, had they been able to put their thoughts into words as Jacob did the holy place of Luz, 'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.' As if unable to keep away from the place, they came again to the Sunday school, endearing themselves so much to the children that school did not break up till an unusually late hour, and then when the scholars had gone they (the sailors) sat on with Jemmy and Brother Salmon discussing the finances and building of the 'Hall.' When they heard of the ebbtide in its prosperity which set in with Paterson's robbery, they were touched to the heart and at once made up the amount needed to put the Mission on a solvent footing. Then they went joyously home to their tea, firmly refusing to burden Jemmy's humble abode with their presence, with a forethought for his comfort and a delicacy that would have done credit to the best-reared gentlemen in the land.

The lovely day drew peacefully to its close, the evening being calm, bright, and mild, with a glorious full moon. And with thankful hearts the Mission folks gathered together and marched to their old station on the Waste, to enjoy a meeting in the open air snatched out of the close season of winter. The wonderful weather had, as it always does, drawn many people out

for a little fresh air and exercise, so that by the time the meeting was fairly under way a goodly audience had gathered. Jemmy was in splendid form, all his late despondency having vanished and his heart beating high with hope. When he told the people of the home-coming of Saul and his children in the faith, and in his blundering yet graphic way had described the joys of their voyage with the Lord in command of their ship, there were many bystanders who wondered whether he was not inventing a good story for their benefit. But when Saul, whose face was familiar to many in the neighbourhood from his former ministrations in that place, stepped forward, the interest was intense. Every word he spoke was listened to as if it came from an oracle. He said very little about himself, and that little deprecatingly.

That omission, however, was more than remedied when his brother seamen responded to the call made upon them. One by one they gave their simple testimony, but none of them failed to tell their hearers that, had it not been for the brave and noble stand made by Saul among them, they would never have known how good and gracious a thing it was to serve the Lord. By some magnetic power people were continually being drawn from unseen sources, until a larger crowd than had ever before been seen upon the Waste was gathered around the speakers. At the culminating point of the meeting there was a little bustle, a whispered consultation, and forth stepped Jemmy Paterson, evidently under strong tension of excitement, a condition which at once communicated itself to his audience. Without any preliminary he burst out with, 'Looky 'ere, people, most on yer knows

me, but there ain't many on ye knows any good of me. I be'n a fair hot-un, I have, but I never done anyfink quite so bad as I did w'en I broke into these 'ere bloke's drum dahn Wren Lane an' pinched all the oof they collected t' pay the landlord wiv. I robbed a good many people that night, I know, but these poor chaps 'ad t' put up wiv the consequences. An' wot did they do when I come agen an' broke meself all up tryin' t' do anuvver grab? W'y, they looked arter me w'ile I was in th' Infirmary, they made it as light as they could for me 'fore the madg'strate, an' w'en I come aht they met me at the gate o' th' jug an' welcomed me 'sif I'd a-be'n their long-lorst bruvver. They set me up in bisness agen, an' I'll tell ye wot it is, my bisness pays me nah. I fine 'at cause I've learnt t' speak the trufe, to give good weight, an' be perlite an' puncshal, I'm gittin' more an' more work every day. These people put me on to that as a sorter reward for 'avin' robbed 'em, an' made 'em dreadful dahn in the mouth fur a time.

' Then w'en they see I was sorry fur wot I done (I was, too), they arsked me ter come in wiv 'em an' serve Gord same as they did. I ses "No." I ses, "I don't feel 'sif I c'd stick it, an' I ain't a-goin' ter make a mock of you ner Gord neither, 'f I k'n 'elp it." But on the q.t. I fort I would 'av' a try wivout s'yin' anyfink t' anybody, so I screws up me eyes tight an' I ses, "Ho, Gord, I don't know where Y' are, I carn't see Ye and feel Ye, but I can see wot them people's like wot ses 'at You makes 'em wot they are. Nah, I'm on'y a pore ignant coster, a bit of a gun, an' in gen'ral no good. Try Yer 'and on me. I'm willin', s'elp me Gord, I'm willin'. I'll put up wiv anyfink, go anywheres, do anyfink, if

on'y You'll make me as good as that lot wot's treated me as they 'ave." An' then I went on wiv me job. W'en I was firsty I 'ad a drink er water; w'en I was a-buyin' I didn't tell the lies I useter, er giv a bloke a pint t' rob his guvnor fur my benefit; 'n w'en I wos a-sellin' I didn't tell everybody I was a-sellin' my goods fur less'n wot I giv fur 'em. At leást, I say I did or didn't do all these 'ere fings. I don't want t' tell no lies, an' yit I carn't rightly 'splain t' yer wot I mean. I don't feel 'sif I did 'em 't all. I feel 'sif somefink inside of me wos a-doin' 'em w'ile I only 'ad t' be quite still. Well, I fought I'd go on like that quite quiet-like, an' not a-syin' anyfink fur fear I sh'd break aht agen, until t' night I come dahn 'ere wiv a bit er brass t' pay back som'er what I stole, w'en I 'eard that there bloke torkin' abaht wot 'ee calls bearin' witness fur Gord. An' ses I t' meself, ses I, you ain't a-doin' that, yore edgin', that's what yore a-doin'. Yore a-leavin' a back door t' slip out on, case you shou'd feel like 'avin' a fling bimeby. W'y you ain't arf a man, I ses, jest like that, 'sif I was a-torkin' t' somebody else. Nah be a man, ses I; wotever you do, toe the mark an' tell the people, so's if ever you do go wrong arter this they'll be able to spot yer fer the dirty dorg y'are. That's w'y I'm-a standin' up 'ere. I carn't tork t' yer like this fine bloke, patting Saul on the shoulder, 'but I can say this, that all rahnd abaht everyone 'at wants to do right, be right, live right, there's 'elpin' 'ands, aht o' sight but real. An' I believe they're the 'ands of Almighty Gord.'

There was an awe-stricken silence as Paterson retired. Such a frank outpouring of a man's inmost soul-strugglings must have an immediate effect upon

such a promiscuous crowd as was gathered on the Waste that night. It is only in congregations case-hardened by the constant receipt of undeserved blessings that the most fervent outpourings of a man's inmost soul are often received unmoved. So that when Bill Harrop took Paterson's place there were many weary ones panting with desire to obtain a share of the blessings which the latter had indicated as having become his. Bill began to speak, and as he did so one of his hearers whispered to his neighbour, 'It's a fair-knock aht, ain't it? W'y I remember we'n 'ee *was* a scorcher, an' no mistake. You'd on'y gotter look at 'im ter give 'im a wide berf. An' nah 'ee looks quite the gentlemin.' All unconscious of these remarks Bill was fervently inviting all and sundry to come and make the acquaintance of his newly found Friend. 'If yer don't believe wot I say,' he cried, 'I'll tell yer wot ter do. You go an' arsk my wife 'n kids. They know the difference 'tween wot I was an wot I am. An' I b'lieve they knows too the trufe o' wot Bruvver Paterson's just be'n a-tellin' yer—that I didn't do it ner yet these dear people 'ere, it was th' 'and of Gord wot did it, wot made me clean, 'onest, an' sober. Let Him 'ave a try at yerselves, those of yer 'oo knows 'at yer needs it. Gord bless yer.'

Again there was a great scene. Unfortunately it was impossible to avoid the awkward effects of physical excitement altogether, and no doubt there were some who professed to find Eternal Life who were only temporarily carried away by the prevailing impression. That, however, was not for the preachers to decide: theirs only to do as they were bidden, and afterwards to look for the fruits of their labours. 'Bless Gord,' cried Jimmy, 'we got a 'Ali t' arsk y

inter. Come along, all on yer, inter th' 'All. Less 'ave a praise-meetin'. Less give Gord fanks for all 'Ee's done fur us. Praise 'Is 'Oly Name.'

So they went in a body, and foremost among them went Miss Carter. Seeing that Saul was somewhat overloaded with books, chairs, &c., she said, 'Let me take some of those books for you,' and that broke the ice. All the way to the 'Hall' they chatted about the work that was being done, and before they parted they had made arrangements to see more of each other.

This little episode must not, however, make me forget another matter that showed how deeply the words spoken on the Waste had struck home. After as many as could find admission had crowded the 'Hall,' and the impromptu service of praise was in full swing, Brother Salmon sidled up to Jemmy and whispered: 'There's a gal here that's in trouble. We must 'elp 'er. My wife's just told me. She's under notice to leave 'er place of service, because there's a baby comin'; she's got nowhere to go, an' her friends are all up in the North. Now don't you think we must do something?' 'Corse I do,' answered Jemmy; 'tell 'er to stop be'ind an' give us the perticlars. We'll find 'er a place t' lie 'er pore 'ead dahn. Pore crechur, she'll be punished enough for wot she's done. Pore fing, pore fing.' So at the close of the meeting, when many rejoicing souls had gone their several ways, and many others, envious of the happiness they saw manifested, but unable to grasp its secret, had gone discontentedly homewards, there was a little committee meeting held of the brethren, with the poor shrinking girl sitting in their midst like one awaiting sentence.

In answer to questions, as delicately put as if

their propounders had belonged to the highest rank in society, she gave all the information required, and being promised all the aid the brethren could give, such as providing her with a retreat, fetching her box away, &c., she departed lighter in heart than she had been for many a day. Then her new-found friends went their several ways homeward, rejoicing all in the blessed consciousness of a good day's work done for God. In fact, it would have been hard to find anywhere upon earth so happy a lot of people as had emerged from the Wren Lane Mission Hall that night. Obscure, unknown, unclassified among religious agencies, it had yet done more to justify its existence in that one day's work among the class that the Lord of Light came down to minister unto, than many a stately cathedral has done in all the centuries of its existence. Its value was to them as life is to stone.

I must not close this chapter without one word about Saul. He had arranged to meet Miss Carter on the next evening and take her for a walk. In his own mind he had planned a course of action the outcome of which you shall learn in due time. To say that he was happy would be ineffectual. He was almost always happy. But this night his happiness had a special quality. His life seemed suddenly to acquire a greater significance, a higher value than ever before. In short, upon his placid pursuit of doing good to all from love to God, had been superimposed the blessedness of doing good to one for love of herself. Not a totally different thing, but rather an essence of the same.

CHAPTER XXIV

SAUL'S WOOING AND WEDDING

VERY punctually on the Monday, Saul was at the appointed trysting-place. He had satisfactorily disposed of his shipmates for the evening: not without some qualms at thus leaving them to themselves. It is a failing which most of us are prone to, an amiable weakness if you will, but nevertheless somewhat galling at times to the objects of our solicitude. I mean the way in which we will persist in shepherding people who ought to be, if they are not, quite capable of taking care of themselves. Had Saul but realised it, those four fellows were rather relieved to be their own masters for a little while. They loved Saul intensely, but all the same the sensation of being continually in leading strings is not a pleasant one for grown men—they love to feel that they are trusted; so that Saul's fears were quite groundless, it was a little over-estimation of his own importance, not any needed self-condemnation.

When he saw Miss Carter tripping along towards where he stood expectant, he noted with an accelerated heart-beat her fair fresh face, her dainty dress and graceful movements, and he felt an intense delight that he was being thus favoured. Shyly he

offered her his arm and felt her little hand fall upon his coat-sleeve with a sense of proprietorship—utterly unjustifiable, of course, after so short an acquaintance, but still most natural under the circumstances. A few platitudes of the usual kind followed—those conversational vedettes that we all feel bound to throw out before the main body of our thoughts, as we skirmish for an opening through which we may march the horse, foot, and artillery of our pet ideas.

And now I feel a considerable difficulty confronting me. If I were to faithfully set down Saul's conversation here, most of my readers would call him a prig. But no man was ever less of a prig than Saul Andrews, and I dread to give a wrong impression of him. May I, however, remind my readers of one essential fact—that the very core of Saul's existence, the pivot upon which all his thoughts, feelings, wishes, and wants revolved, was Christ. I speak with (I hope) a due and solemn sense of the weight of my words, and I repeat that Saul Andrews, like every other man who has been touched by the hand of the Holy Spirit, could no more keep the name of His Master out of his mind in business, or out of his mouth in friendly talk, than he could help breathing. Therefore, before he and Miss Carter had gone a mile, he was telling her of his early pitiful struggle for life, of that unseen Father who, he was sure, had watched over him through all those trying days of his godless youth, and his hairbreadth escapes from death in many grim forms; of his conviction and conversion, and his new-born longing to live for the Lord who had bought him and was always training him up to do what He needed to be done in the

particular sphere of influence controlled by the speaker.

It was an interesting, but to the great majority of people an utterly incomprehensible sort of conversation to take place between a man and woman who, if not yet avowed lovers, were both on the brink of declaring themselves so. Miss Carter was, in some sort, overcome by this outburst on the part of Saul. She did not understand it. She had, it is true, that tender yearning towards religious manifestations which seems to be the special characteristic of women of all ages and all nations. But like the majority of women, also, she had not reasoned about these matters. She had been impressed more or less superficially and emotionally by what she had heard on the Waste and in the 'Hall,' and all she needed was an abiding influence, a Divine control over her thoughts, feelings, emotions, what you will, to make her a great power for good, into whatever society she might be cast. At this present time she felt that such a power was needed by her, but made the perfectly natural mistake of supposing that Saul could supply it—only another proof, by the way, of how frail human nature clings to the seen and tangible, as compared with its difficulty of appreciating the unseen and spiritual. But what could Saul know of this? Man-like, he only saw a dainty, pretty young woman hanging upon his words, he only felt that here was an extension of his work for God into a pleasant region his access to which had hardly been dreamed of before, and the discovery wafted him into a very sea of delight.

So he talked on and on, looking down fondly into those humid eyes that gazed up into his with so

much apparent appreciation of what he was saying, although to tell the truth it was himself, not his words, that was bringing that gaze of all-embracing affection into them. Ey-and-by he said, 'Now, Miss Carter—but may I call you Lizzie?' She did not answer verbally, but her look and the slight pressure of her hand upon his arm was sufficient. 'Now, Lizzie, I'm going to say to you, for you've encouraged me to, what I never said to any woman before. I love you, and if you can love me well enough to share my lot with me, be my wife. You'll make me very happy, for at present I have no home, and all my energies, almost all my earnings, go to the Wren Lane Mission. And I can't help feeling that God would like me to have a dear little wife (like you) and a home of my own. But, you know, I'm a sailor, earning my living away from home, and sometimes not seeing England for over a year. It's a poor lot I'm askin' you to share, but I promise you that I'll do my best to find work ashore as soon as possible, if you'll only be my wife. Will you?'

Of course he could not know how eagerly she had been longing for him to ask her the question, any more than he could imagine how completely the present occupied her mental horizon; and so he was overjoyed, almost dizzy with delight, when she shyly murmured, 'Yes, dear.' They were in a quiet street at the time, with no passers-by, and with a sudden movement their lips met in the betrothal kiss; an act, to Saul's mind at any rate, as solemn and binding as his baptism had been. They walked on for a while in silence, till suddenly Saul broke it by saying, 'Tell me, Lizzie dear, have you no friends or parents whom

I ought to see? Surely you are not like me, quite alone in the world except for my Lord's precious company?'

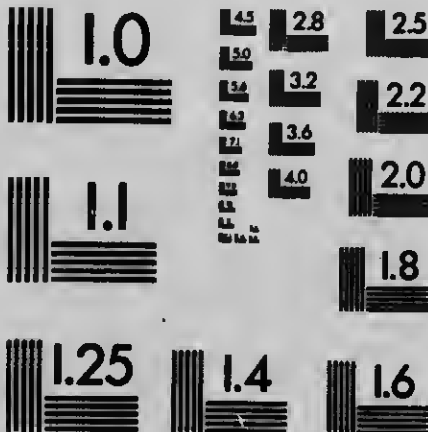
'Not quite, but very nearly,' she sighed. 'I have a father and a mother, separated from each other as so many are in this cruel London, and I do not know where either of them are just now. I haven't seen mother for over six months! I live with an old cousin, a dear old soul who's got a little private dressmaking business, and we've been fairly happy together since the awful day I came to what was home then, from a machinist's place I'd got, and found the furniture all cleared out, and father and mother gone, nobody knew where. She, my cousin Carrie, as soon as I went and told her what had happened, invited me to come to her and share what she'd got, and as far as she could she'd be a mother to me now my own had deserted me. She has been all that; I've been fairly fortunate in getting work when she hadn't enough to keep us both going, and I've had no illnesses, thank God, or I don't know what we should have done.' Saul's face grew very grave as he drew a mental picture of what friendless girls have always before them in a great city when they can find no work and no one feels that it is any part of their duty to look after them, and he drew the little hand, resting so confidently upon his strong arm, closer and more firmly to his side as he made a vow to do what in him lay to be both father and mother to its owner.

How very sudden, says some one, for such high affection to develop. It may be, but then sailors must be sudden in these matters, the time at their disposal being so short. Moreover, there are many hearts



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wherein love has been long accumulating, like waters behind a dam, until it only needs a touch to release it and spread it in vast volume over all obstacles. But Saul, being, like most fine, brave, and gentle men, exceedingly diffident and modest as well as thoughtful for others, now said what many would consider a foolish thing, one at any rate quite uncalled for on his part. After declaring that it gave him the utmost joy to find that Lizzie could love him, he begged her to consult her own happiness before his in this wise: that if she should find during his absence that she had made a mistake, she was to have no compunction in telling him so, since whatever pain it might and would cost him then would be infinitely better and easier to bear than the finding out of such a mistake after marriage would be. He found to his surprise that such a view of possible change in her feelings towards him was very distasteful. She looked upon it as almost a personal slight, and with feminine ingenuity sharply suggested that perhaps he wished to leave a loophole for his own escape from an engagement. Mildly he pointed out to her how foreign such an idea was to his mind, and reminded her that whereas she would always be seeing fresh faces and might easily find that her rapidly firing affection for him was misplaced, through meeting some one whom she loved better, he would be in quite a secluded position, where, if he were ever so fickle, he would have no chance of fixing his affections upon any other girl for the simple reason that he would meet none.

Somewhat mollified, but still smarting from what she considered an unmerited suggestion, Lizzie at last consented to change the subject. And Saul, suddenly

conscience-stricken at the way in which he had walked her on and on, forgetting how different her strength must be to his, invited her to have a meal with him in a quiet restaurant near by, for they were now at Greenwich. The food was very welcome and the meal to Saul was almost a sacred one, the first of the kind in all his experience. His eyes, looking through love's glamour, invested her with a holy light : she was transfigured, becoming a being far uplifted from the common herd of mortals. And he ! why should he be privileged to (delicious thought) kiss her ? Oh, meed past all deserving, how humble it made him feel ! Well, love (of this kind) and common-sense are seldom allied, and Saul only made the old, old mistake of erecting an impossible ideal, instead of the real woman before him, with all the ordinary stock of imperfections and weaknesses. Rather hard upon the woman to be thus transformed, because it so often happens that when the magic haze melts from before the lover's eyes and he sees his sweetheart as she really is, he is bitterly disappointed to find how far she is removed from the being his fancy has created. And it is not in any sense her fault.

When that happy evening drew to a close and the lovers parted, Saul felt as if life, always holding a sense of want before, had now completed its full circle. Upon entering their snug lodgings his shipmates greeted him noisily, being unfeignedly glad to see him. They told him that they had visited the *Asteroid*, and had been informed that she was going round to Cardiff in a month's time to load coals for Hong Kong. That the mate had given them to understand that it was probable no one of her old

crew except the carpenter and sailmaker, who seemed to be as much a part of her as her stern post, would be likely to go in her again. For Captain Vaughan had received an appointment already to a fine large steamer, the mate and second mate had both been transferred to other ships, and, consequently, none of the day-dreams they had all indulged in about being again a united and happy ship's company were likely to be realised. For a moment, but only for a moment, Saul was saddened by this news, as he realised that he was, in place of the pleasant voyage he had looked forward to, booked for another uphill fight ; but Faith soon resumed her reign, and remembering his latest joys he was cheered again.

While the five sat smoking and yarning happily, as sailors will when they are well fed and housed, and have nothing on their minds, Jemmy Maskery was announced. He was received uproariously and made specially welcome. He said he had only run over for a few minutes to speak to Saul, and could not stay. If Saul would come out with him for a few minutes he'd be glad. Truth to tell, he was anxious to escape from that tobacco-laden atmosphere, for in days past he had been a passionate lover of the weed, and having given it up because he thought it hindered him in his Christian work, he dreaded the temptation which the smell brought to bear upon him. Wherein he showed his wisdom in one direction at any rate, for no wise man courts temptation, however fortified against it he may feel himself to be.

When he had got Saul to himself he told him that arrangements had been made to bring the poor girl's (she who had besought their help on the Sunday

evening) box away from the place where she was in service to the 'Hall,' and that he had obtained for her an order of admission into the infirmary for her confinement. She had refused to go home, fearing very naturally to face her poor parents under such miserable conditions. Would Saul help him to carry her box down to the 'Hall,' where it could remain in safe keeping until she could come and claim it again. Why, of course; nothing could please Saul better than so practical a demonstration of his willingness to do all that a Christian man should do.

The next morning, nine o'clock beheld Saul and Jemmy (whose home crisis had happily ended during the night in the birth of a little daughter) waiting at the side entrance to one of those hideous suburban villas with which utterly unprincipled builders have defiled the beautiful outskirts of London: an erection of no known order of architecture, whose tawdry outside ornaments of unseasoned wood were already decaying, and down whose walls great cracks were already visible amid the dirty-green patches that showed where the shoddy walls were sodden with damp. The door was opened to them by the girl, her eyes inflamed with weeping; for her mistress, an ex-barmaid whose forenoons were spent in bed and her afternoons in the pursuit of what she understood as pleasure, had been venting upon her in no measured terms the wrath and scorn she felt at a creature 'like 'er, a low-lyved drab like 'er, bringin' disgrace upon a respectabel 'ouse.' How is it, I wonder, that women whose past has been, to use a hackneyed expression, somewhat shady, are usually so merciless to any sister woman who has presently

been found sinning? Perhaps it would be unprofitable to inquire, but that such is the fact let all bear witness who know anything about the matter at all.

Saul and Jemmy lost no time in man-handling the somewhat heavy box and staggering away with it to the road, where a truck they had brought with them was standing. With all possible expedition they made their way to the 'Hall,' and brought the box safely inside. The girl followed and there faced these two men, the one long married and conversant with all the mysteries and difficulties of female life, the other just entering into that blissful condition of life known as courtship, and, as has before been noted, deeply imbued with the idea of female sanctity. Jemmy it was that ended an awkward pause by falling upon his knees and saying, as he did so, 'Less 'ave a word o' prayer.' Saul immediately bent his knees, and the girl, albeit somewhat surprised, followed his example. Jemmy at once lifted up his voice in supplication: 'Ho Gord, hour Farther, look dahn on this 'ere poor gal. She's done wrong, an' she knows it. She don't make no excuse for 'erself, an' we ain't got no room t' condemn 'er. You knows all about 'er, bless Yore 'Oly name, an' k'n understan' as we never can wot 'er temptashuns was, an' w'y she fell. Forgive 'er, Lord, an' be with 'er in 'er time of trial. W'en she's a-sufferin' comfort 'er, an' let 'er know 'ow tender an' lovin' You can be, more tenderer an' loviner than any of erse knows 'ow ter be. An', ho Gord, w'en it's all hover an' she's back in the world agen, do be wiv 'er an' make 'er Your child. Don't let 'er fall agen, but make 'er way plain before 'er, an' give 'er grace ter walk in it till 'er live's end, w'en she won't want

ter walk no more—she'll be able ter fly. Gord bless 'er an' us, for Christ's sake, Amen.'

I dare not reproduce for you that poor girl's prayer. She never remembered praying before. But in that invisible Presence brought so real and near to her, she could not restrain herself. She prayed really. No precedent shaped the form of her words, but brokenly, sincerely, she asked for pardon, for help, and a clean record if she should once again take her place amid the busy world. But—and here she sounded the very depths of pathos, to my mind—she humbly asked, if it might be, that both she and her infant might together enter into rest. For them, she felt the world had no place. Weak and friendless, where would they be welcome, or where could they hope to find such profound peace as the grave for their bodies, and the bosom of the Father for their souls? And if any feel that such a desire was irreligious or cowardly, I have nothing to say.

Saul remaining silent, they all rose from their knees and departed. The two men accompanied the girl to the infirmary, warmly assuring her that when she came out she would find them just as willing to assist her, for Christ's sake, as they were now. Wishing her all good, they bade her farewell and left her. The gates closed upon her, and they saw her on earth no more.

During the next week matters prospered mightily with the Mission. The presence of the sailors, who never missed a meeting, the attendance of Jemmy, Paterson, and the ever-fresh enthusiasm of Bill Harrop, who had become an inseparable chum of Paterson's, all combined to keep the public interest up to fever

heat. Day after day saw fresh converts pouring in, for on the initiative of Saul a week's mission had been entered upon with services every night, and the fame of the Wren Lane services began to spread abroad among the local churches and chapels, so that their members were fain to visit the converted cowshed, and see if these things were really so. Consequently Saul found little time for courting, but such opportunities as came in his way he utilised so well that, when he had been three weeks ashore, he and Miss Carter had decided to marry at once at a Registrar's office and have a little religious service at the 'Hall' in the evening. They had no one to consult but themselves: Saul had engaged to go in another ship, the *Ferozepore*, to Calcutta as bo'sun, and would leave in a fortnight's time, so that their decision not to delay their union any longer was an utterly unblamable one.

Saul's four shipmates were unhappily not able to wait and go with him again, but they saw him married, and in the evening at Wren Lane Hall there was a meeting that no one who was present can ever forget. Jemmy was, as the patriarch bestowing his blessing on the newly wedded pair, beyond all criticism. His transparent earnestness was so beautiful that it completely diverted the mind from any sense of the ludicrous, a quality which was never very far from anything Jemmy engaged in, owing to certain peculiarities he possessed which were inseparable from him, a part of his personality.

The evening ceremony over, Saul and his bride retired to her cousin's humble home, where such provision as was possible had been made for the couple,

very plain and poor it is true, but not at all uncomfortable; and, indeed, when compared with what both of them had been compelled to endure in their childhood, it was not very far removed from luxury. Here we may leave them to enjoy this springtide of life, all the more precious because each knew that it was bound to be so exceedingly brief, and that it would so soon be succeeded by a long, long period of lonely waiting, of hope deferred if not worse—in fact, of all those ills that are summed up in the word 'separation' when applied to those whom we love.

CHAPTER XXV

SAUL DESCENDS INTO DARK PLACES

NOT wishing to harrow my readers' sympathetic souls unnecessarily, I pass over the pathetic parting scenes between Saul and his wife. He had left her in good hands, and with his half-pay of 2*l.* 5*s.* per month to supplement her own fairly good earnings, he was not without hope that she would be fairly comfortable until his return. In fact, like so many of us, he unconsciously looked upon hope as a solid asset almost as realisable as a banking account with a substantial balance to credit. It is sometimes seen, this hopeful frame, in commerce, when company directors divide their earnings up to the hilt and make no allowance for depreciation or put anything to reserve. When the almost inevitable crash comes, everybody is loud in their condemnation of such want of prudence. But among many Christians, owing to a very prevalent but entirely mistaken reading of the Scripture (Matt. vi. 25-31), such want of forethought is looked upon as an evidence of faith. Yet, if carried to its logical conclusion, it would mean that the perfectly faithful man might sit quietly at home and meditate, trusting the Lord to provide himself and those dependent upon him with all things needful. Of course there are instances when such

behaviour is commendable, nay indispensable, to the proper doing of exceptional Christian work, but they are very rare. The rule is that the Christian must not only be harmless as a dove, but wise as a serpent; that unless he would be condemned as worse than an infidel, he must provide by his honest labour for those near and dear to him, not of course forgetting his duty to the brethren. And that, above all things, he must not be lazy.

Perhaps I am doing an unconscious injustice to Saul by making his sanguine behaviour a text whereon to hang most of the preceding paragraph. And yet I know how much sorrow, what awful heart pangs would have been spared him, had he listened to the voice of prudence. There never was a more unwise thing done on earth than the leaving of a young wife by a sailor in one of our great seaports practically friendless, and bound to supplement her scanty half-pay by her own earnings or go very short indeed. Where she has a home, a good mother, brothers and sisters, friends, matters are very different. But when you come to think of it, the position of a young married woman whose husband after little more than a week, say, of wedded bliss, has left her for a year, and who has no friends who can properly lighten the loneliness of her life, is perilous in the extreme. Whatever may happen she needs all the consideration possible, the kindest construction that can be placed upon any of her acts.

But to return for a moment to the affairs of the Mission. Saul's marriage having deprived them of his half-pay, and coming as it did upon the top of their catastrophe, could only be called a severe blow.

Yet such was the love they bore him that they all rejoiced in his happiness, allowing no selfish thought of their own impending troubles to creep in. And there was certainly one bright spot in the gloom ahead; it was that the latest convert, the young clerk, had taken hold of things in so splendid a fashion that already the members had begun to lean upon him in all critical situations, to depend upon his calm clear common-sense, and, above all, to feel that whatever might happen to the Mission he would strain his resources to the utmost before it should come to grief. But Brother Jackson and his band had set up a Hall for themselves in a disused packing-case maker's shop only a few rods away, and were carrying on so vigorous a campaign that the funds at Wren Lane were seriously affected. Rumour had it that already strange doctrines were being taught at the new conventicle, that Jackson had been studying a batch of books sent him from America, that land of strange perversions of Protestantism. It was whispered that he was determined to make a new application of the old text, 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good,' by giving every new form of belief (rather every old form of heresy in a nineteenth century garb) which came along a fair trial, until some day, he hoped, he should find one that would ultimately satisfy.

Meanwhile the novelty was attractive. Curiosity led many strange visitors to the new conventicle to hear men and women who could do little more than read plain print and could hardly write their own names, discussing among themselves, yes, and expounding from the platform, obscure points of exegesis such as have puzzled the most learned, not

to say the wisest, men of all ages. They quoted Greek and Hebrew, questioned the translation of passages that did not happen to fit their theories of the moment, and carried themselves, these ignorant ones, as if upon them and them only had fallen the Divine gift of speaking all tongues, knowing all mysteries, and (this was the most dangerous phase of all) exempted from such mortal frailties as sin and disease. Many worthy people who have all their lives dwelt quietly under the shadow of one particular Church, humbly grateful for its teaching, and never presuming to question or of its points of doctrine, but doing that which the hands found to do with all their might, and, best of all, leading quiet consistent Christian lives, will doubtless look upon my description of these seceders as caricature, and even that vastly exaggerated. But all those who have lived and laboured in Christian ways among the lower religious strata of our country, will know that it is in nowise over coloured. So-called religious discussion is usually tabooed among non-religious working people on account of its usually leading to blows, but among professing Christians of that class not only is religious discussion continual, but some of the wildest theories are, where possible, reduced to practice, and while one particular heresy is in vogue woe be to him or her who dares to question its absolute and final settlement of the one great matter, the salvation of the individual soul.

But we must return to Saul. After a fortnight of such happiness as he had hitherto only dimly imagined to be possible on earth, came the day of his departure for a voyage estimated to last at least nine months. His bride was inconsolable. With true feminine

inconsistency she blamed Saul for leaving her, bewailed her folly in marrying a sailor, scolded herself for even hinting at such a thing, and dissolved in tenderest consideration for him in his coming loneliness, by turns. She could not see him off, for his vessel left at 4 A.M. So he bade her farewell at their bedside on his knees, tenderly commending her to the care of his Father, and humbly asking that he might be spared to find her happy and hearty on his return. So he departed to his ship, but in a very different frame of mind to that with which he joined the *Asteroid* nearly twelve months before. And somehow he had not the same spring, the same single outlook upon the future, the wide-eyed confidence, that he had enjoyed. He felt himself more ready to consider consequences, although he knew that what he was doing was right.

When he arrived on board all was perfectly quiet. A decrepit seaman, given the job as a pension, was watchman. He informed Saul that he was the only man on board, and that from what he had seen he didn't expect she would leave at tide-time. But he admitted that he did not know the 'old man,' upon whom so much depends on board ship. Saul, however, knowing from experience what sort of a day awaited him on the morrow, took one preliminary survey of his new home as he smoked his good-night pipe, with the firm intention of getting all the rest practicable while he had the opportunity.

She was what the modern sailor knows as a 'four-poster,' viz. a four-masted sailing-ship. Really she was just a square-rigged ship, that is one having three masts with yards, into which a fourth mast had been

inserted because of her great length, making her really a four-masted barque, the fourth mast only carrying two fore and aft sails, no yards. She had been badly neglected, Saul could see that even at night, and badly found into the bargain. One or two blocks and gipsies that he tried would hardly move, without any suggestion of leverage being obtained by them. And he sighed as he thought of the wild work there would be in Channel if they should encounter a sudden gale, unless they were fortunate in having a most extraordinary crew. Then, his pipe smoked out, he sought his bunk and turned in, catching himself sighing heavily at intervals before he sank to sleep, quite a novel experience with him who had been so evenly happy since his conversion. Had he been a philosopher I suppose he would have endeavoured to account for this by the action of some compensating law : that, having been for a short time exuberantly happy, he must now, to restore the needed balance of the human soul, be for a time unduly miserable. But being only an ordinary human being, very tender-hearted and sensitive to internal as well as external impulses, and withal actuated by the indwelling force of righteousness, he pondered none of these things. He just blamed himself a little for ingratitude and then took the matter to his Father in heaven, commending to Him also his dear wife, who, he shuddered to think, was to be so lonely in that great London until his return. He was comforted and fell asleep.

'Now then, bo'sun ; blank blank the man, is he drunk, too, I wonder ? Here, bo'sun, turn out an' see about gettin' th' ship outer dock. Y' oughter been on deck long ago, y' know.' An angry voice in the

darkness, its owner invisible behind a bull's-eye lantern, a sense of utter bewilderment as to why he was thus assailed, a feeling of compunction that it should have been found necessary—all these sensations flashed through Saul's mind in less than half a minute. Then, apologetically murmuring, he sprang out of the bunk ; and the mate, for it was he, departed, the absence of his body from the doorway permitting the entry of a whirl of snow. One thing was plain to Saul as he hurried on his clothes ; the old watchman had omitted to call him, for never before had he lain down again after having been once aroused. But it was of scant use to know that, for in the first place the watchman had departed, and in the next if he were there he would certainly declare that he had done his duty.

It was, but for the glimmering snow-flakes, pitch dark when Saul came on deck. The sailor's eyes, however, rapidly become accustomed to the dark, and before Saul reached the fore-castle head, where he hoped to find the mate, he could see as well as possible. Climbing to the upper deck he found the mate bawling frantically to some invisible person on the quay, whose answering yells came weirdly up through the darkness. As soon as the mate turned, Saul confronted him saying, ' Beg yer pardon, Mr. Jones, but I hope you won't think me slack ; I was never called. I'll take yer orders now, sir.' ' Never called, eh ? ' sneered the mate ; ' seems ter me I've heard that yarn before. An' as t' orders, d'ye know yer work er don't ye ? I sh'd think any — fool 'd know 'at the first thing was t' git yer men together, an' the sooner y' see to it the better. Just move lively now, or else you and

me won't be friends very long.' 'Aye, aye, sir,' rose automatically to Saul's lips, but his heart was hot within him. He controlled himself though, and descending swiftly to the main deck began to look for his crew. With great difficulty he found them, stowed away in all sorts of corners in the two sides of the forecastle. But his heart sank as one by one they revealed their uselessness. There were negroes, Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Scandinavians, and three Britons. Of them all only the three Britons were of any use, and they were fairly fresh with drink. But they were three splendid fellows with the old bull-dog contempt for dagoes and square-heads, and in spite of their potations they rose to the occasion. Not one of the others could Saul get on deck. Some were swinishly drunk, others were apparently nearly dead with cold, but all were absolutely helpless. And at last Saul, having done all that man could do, called upon his three stalwarts to follow him, and made his way on to the forecastle, where he acquainted the mate with the state of affairs.

That officer was a young man of great assurance but little ability, possessed of a fluent command of bad language but little else. He had been pampered hitherto by sailing with a man who, being under great obligations to his father, who had been part owner of the ship, had made things very easy for him as second mate. This was his first voyage as mate, he was in a strange ship, and he had a notion that a loud voice and a bullying manner were all that was necessary to get along as mate of a big British sailing-ship. So he turned threateningly to Saul, and with many an oath inquired whether he (the mate) was expected

to do the bo'sun's work as well. Then, his voice rising ever higher, he ordered Saul to go and turn the hands out and act like a man, not like an adjective baby in loisy clothes. Saul waited respectfully until he had finished, his mind busy with the retrospect of the *Asteroid*. Then he calmly said, 'I did my best with 'em, sir, before I troubled you. Perhaps you had better just come and look at them. They may be all right by the time we gets to Gravesen', though I doubt it. Anyhow, all there is to do between here and there I daresay these three, the carpenter and sailmaker, the apprentices and myself, can manage.' 'Oh, git out o' *my* way,' stormed the mate, as he rushed down the fo'c'sle ladder and aft to where the skipper stood talking with the river pilot.

Captain Fortescue was the very antipodes of Captain Vaughan of the *Asteroid*. His idea of maintaining discipline was to play one officer off against the other, the crew against the officers, enjoying as much the endless cabals that took place and the general feeling of dissatisfaction as some men enjoy a game of chess. At the present moment he was in a very happy frame of mind. He was certainly not drunk, but he had been drinking freely, and in some circles he would have been called pot-valiant. Having heard the mate's report he said gaily, 'Excuse me, pilot, I'll have t' go an' see what I k'n do to git my crew out. You know, same old thing; takes me to see a job like this through.' So he strode jauntily off, followed by the mate, who told him as they went that the bo'sun was a poor thing, hadn't got a word to throw at a dog. 'That so?' answered the skipper. 'Well, Mr. Jones, I guess I've trained a few bo'suns in

my time ; I'll have a look at him directly.' They reached the fo'c'sle and found, as Saul had said, that the case was hopeless ; they could do nothing with the men—more like logs of wood than men—who seemed alike insensible to blows and abuse, and who, if dragged to their feet, collapsed immediately they were let go.

So the attempt was relinquished, a tacit admission that Saul was right. Yet such is the perversity of human nature that both the mate and skipper hated Saul more because he was right than they would have done had they found him to be wrong. But the ship had to go, crew or no crew. So all through the bitterness of that morning Saul, his three men, the apprentices and the carpenter (the sailmaker was speechlessly drunk in his berth), laboured to get things shipshape and Bristol fashion, and longed for Gravesend. In due time they arrived there and anchored, the tug sheering off and anchoring near to await the pilot's decision as to when the *Ferozepore* would be ready for sea. At intervals throughout the day Saul, the mate, and the second mate visited the fo'c'sle, always treating the three workers with respect (which they had well earned), but it was not until daybreak the next morning that the polyglot crowd were available for work. What sort of a fist would be made of the vast sails overhead no one knew—they must trust to Providence. Ah, how many trust in Providence because they must, not knowing what they are trusting, when they might trust in God of their own free wills and know in Whom they had believed.

I may not draw the picture of that getting under weigh : of how the mate and Saul were just police-

men keeping a sharp eye upon the miserable men, who were continually slipping away below ; of how those two sorely worried officers, of whom one had to bear the burden of undeserved contumely from his superior as well as that of his own work and his private sorrows (but the capacity of the human brain is mercifully limited, it cannot do too much thinking at one time), had to bear the burden of the whole ship's company and do their own work as well. No, let me just in cowardly fashion slur over the miseries of that bad day and hasten on to the time when, the tugboat having slipped her hold, the huge *Ferozepore* was 'blundering down Channel zigzag fashion, the wind being almost dead ahead. Oh, Channel passengers who, hastening to France, bewail your sufferings on that brief passage measured by minutes, think if you can what it must mean to be in a mighty ship without steam-power, and a handful of wretches ill fed, badly housed, hopelessly battering against a south-westerly gale down Channel. Think if you can what it must be to handle such a ship as an officer, and you won't wonder any longer that if there should be a whisky bottle handy a man in such a plight should resort to it.

A detailed description of the *Ferozepore's* experiences that night as she tumbled about in the ugly cross-Channel seas would comprise a *résumé* of the reason why we cannot get our countrymen to choose the sea as a profession. I dare not comment upon the subject here, having dealt with it so frequently in other places. But I must point out that Saul, the most blameless, the hardest working of all her crew, was now by the irony of fate in almost the worst

position. He saw the officers 'freshening the nip,'¹ he saw his useless crew slinking away into hiding, saw how cruelly the want of men to do the work bore upon the tenderly nurtured apprentices paying to learn their profession and being used as substitutes for men who must be paid, and he was very sad. But he kept going. Long after he was justly entitled to rest he might have been found examining running-gear left unrove or wrongly rove by careless riggers with no one to look after them. And when at last he did seek his berth, he first interviewed the mate and informed him of the state of the ship as far as he had been able to discover it. The mate, instead of recognising that he had a conscientious man in charge of things, just grunted some unintelligible reply and turned his back. Saul said, 'Good-night, sir,' and sought his berth.

Three days, three weary month-long days, this lasted, and by dint of persistent hammering the *Ferozepore* was well outside the Channel. Saul was beginning to breathe more freely, and, what was not so good for him, was beginning also to have some leisure to think upon how things might be going on at home. Without saying one word to anticipate the story I must write, well was it for him that he did not know how widely the reality of what was taking place differed from his mental pictures of it. Many people grumble very much because they cannot peep into futurity or know what is going on out of their sight, but they should rather thank God on their bended knees that these things are denied them. However, before Saul sank to rest each night he

¹ Drinking every now and then.

lapped himself in a golden dream of home, of his beautiful bride kneeling by her solitary bed commending him to the care of the Father. He pictured to himself her mind being occupied each day, and all day, with visions of himself and prayers for his welfare. Poor Saul!

On the fourth night out, the wind having freed and freshened at the same time, all hands were detained at eight bells (midnight) to trim sail. It was pitchy dark and the air was filled with spindrift. All hands, with the exception of the petty officers, slouched about their work muttering curses in their various tongues upon the hardships accompanying the life 'of they that go down to the sea in ships,' when the thickness to windward suddenly materialised. It assumed a gigantic, an awful shape. Forth blazed two terrible eyes of red and green, and high overhead pointed threateningly a long white finger. Then came a great grinding crash, a piercing wail (albeit in many tones), and the *Ferozepore* turned on her side and sank, another item in the tribute demanded by the sea from its votaries.

At the moment of impact Saul was fast asleep. Rudely awakened he leapt on deck, and seeing no one imagined that all had sought refuge on board the mighty hull that was boring its way steadily through the ribs of his ship. Just pausing a moment to awaken thoroughly his berthmates, the carpenter, sailmaker, and cook, Saul ran up the main rigging and leaped hazardously upon the deck of the steamship. There was no one there. He ran aft and mounted the bridge—still no one. Then, as he was about to descend, he was confronted by the captain,

who, flung out of his berth by the concussion, had just scrambled on deck to find his chief officer missing and the Chinese crew hidden away no one knew where. Just a very few words of explanation passed. Men think rapidly and speak the same under such circumstances. Naturally the captain of the *Shan-hai-kwan* was anxious about his future, but, as he said, he could not be on deck all the time, and his chief officer was a very first-class man. They were both Germans, and the steamer belonged to Japan. Poor Saul had nothing to say. His mind was full of the terrible happenings of the last hour and the knowledge that in all probability every soul on board the *Ferozepore* had been drowned but himself. But his meditations were rapidly cut short. The *Shan-hai-kwan* had not only stove in her bows, she had done much other serious damage to her hull and she was sinking fast. There was a wild upward rush of coolies from below, a hissing of escaping steam, guttural German oaths as pigeon-English was forgotten by the officers, a few dropping shots from revolvers, one last wild scramble, and Saul found himself alone on the Atlantic clutching a hencoop, the waves rising and falling monotonously around.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE NIGHT FALLS

How long Saul had floated thus he did not, and never will, know. Mercifully, he had but just time to secure himself with a bit of hambro' line (it was always his practice to carry serviceable pieces of spunyarn, hambro' line, marline, &c., in a big pocket he had made for the purpose) when easily, as if he were just falling into a gentle sleep, his senses left him. And had he then died it would have been no more to him physically than falling to sleep. Years afterwards, when the stern battle seemed to be going almost too hard for him, he used to look back regretfully upon that time and wistfully wonder what joys would have been his had he only not awakened then. When he did return to consciousness his sufferings were great. The sun was at its meridian and shining strongly out of a clear sky. There was but a slight air of wind with a gentle swell, upon which his frail support rolled slightly, so that the upper part of his body was dried and encrusted with salt. His eyes smarted, burned as he opened them once again to the light of day with some difficulty, because the lashes were thick with salt. His tongue was like a piece of leather, and his lips cracked and bled when he tried to moisten them. Also every part of him protested painfully

against this treatment. But gradually his mind became clear, all the events of the past few days were recalled up to the time of the sinking of the great steamer. And then he thought of Lizzie, his wife, thought of her with a great pity in his heart as he pictured her feelings did she but know of his present position.

This supplied the stimulus his body so much needed. It roused in him the natural desire of life already growing weak, and lifting up his voice in the midst of that vast solitude he called upon God to save his life, to send help before it was too late, in order that his poor young wife should not be so soon widowed. Or, if that might not be, he prayed that in some way she might be provided for—sheltered from the pitiless world. This beneficial exercise of his privilege of prayer had the most restful and consolatory effect upon him, and he fell fast asleep again.

When he awoke it was at the sound of a human voice, the touch of a hand, and he thanked God. A boat was lying by the side of the hencoop manned by five swarthy piratical-looking fellows, whose language he did not understand, although by its sound he thought it was Italian. They lifted him tenderly into the boat, and then for the first time he saw the ship they had come from, a large wooden barque, deep laden, hove to only a few ships' lengths away. They soon reached her side and hoisted Saul up in the boat, as being the simplest way of getting him on board. He was so full of pain that carefully and delicately as they handled him he could not help letting a groan escape him as they removed him to the cabin, a somewhat dirty, very stuffy apartment,

reeking with the fumes of tobacco and garlic, but to him a sweet haven of rest. In a few minutes the cook appeared bearing a pannikin of soup, which seemed to Saul the most deliciously invigorating food he had ever tasted. He did not know that it was made with wine instead of water, or he would no doubt most foolishly have refused it. He felt the almost stagnant blood beginning to circulate again, felt the glow of life returning, and his heart swelled with gratitude.

After another period of sleep and more soup he felt sufficiently revived to undertake the task of trying to relate his adventures, as well as the much more important one of ascertaining his present destination. As no one on board spoke any English and there was no linguist this was somewhat exhausting work, but at last to his horror he discovered that she was bound from Cardiff to Hong Kong with coal, and that she had already been out of port a fortnight.

With all the energy he could muster he begged the skipper to land him at the Western Islands, to put him on board a homeward-bound vessel whatever port she might be going to; but for pity's sake not to carry him away to the other side of the world without his being able to earn anything. To all his impassioned entreaties the captain listened attentively but obviously without understanding, and evidently with a shrewd suspicion that the poor fellow was out of his mind. The latter felt himself that unless he fell back upon his faith, if he allowed himself to look upon his position purely from the human side, he did run great risk of losing his reason. For he knew full well that as soon as the news of the

loss of the *Ferosepore* became known his half-pay would cease, and if it should happen that his wife fell out of work what would she do? As it was, the mental disturbance and strain threw him into a brain fever, from which only his vigorous constitution and perfect state of health and cleanliness of life saved him, since the captain of the *Giuseppe B.* knew no more what was the matter with his patient than a cow, and in all probability even if he had known what the malady was he would have had not the slightest idea of how to treat it.

So Saul battled with death. No doubt that in passing through the valley of the shadow the Friend of the lonely was with him. But the contest was a terrible one, and when he came out of it, only just alive, the old tub was rolling leisurely down into the South-East Trade region to the southward of the Line. As soon as his mind became clear he saw that his long helplessness had in no wise endeared him to his shipmates, for there is no place where one gets less sympathy in a long illness than on board ship. One's help is wanted so much, one's shipmates are able to do so little, even if they felt inclined, and unless people are careful to cultivate the grace of patient compassion they soon get callous to the sufferings of others. Saul's fight was over, however. He would no longer kick against what he saw to be the inevitable, but calmly go on doing all he could in his sorry position, praying that God would be with his dear one at home. And once having settled down he mended rapidly. He began to pick up a few words of the language, and as his shipmates saw more of him they speedily warmed towards him.

Probably none of them had ever seen so smart a sailorman before. They watched him with wide-eyed amazement as he manipulated wire and rope, wondering much however he did it, and giving all the hearty admiration which sailors are capable of towards a master workman in their own line.

Saul was always an industrious man, but he worked double tides now, to keep his mind off the agony of his position. In the night watches, when he had to stand at the wheel or on the look-out for two hours at a time, he had need of all the training he had received to keep from cursing his hard lot. It was so difficult to see how such a fiery trial as this was to be of any use to him. No new discovery, many will say: we never seem to appreciate trials at their full value somehow. But with his mind busy all the time with possibilities of suffering for his wife at home, and the disheartening spectacle before his eyes of the snail's pace made by the old barque, to say nothing of the aggravating content that appeared to rest upon everybody else but himself—these things made his lot hard to bear indeed. The food suited him very well, much better indeed than he could ever remember having been satisfied with in the fo'c'sles of his own country's sailing-ships, but the horrors of the fo'c'sle were too great for him to endure. So he lived a hermit's life in the longboat amidships, with only memories to feed upon. No books, no conversation, and no prospect of earning anything for months. Poor Saul!

Here we must leave him to dree his weird and return to London. As in the case of Job of old, it seemed as if the universal enemy had obtained leave

to put all his infernal arts into practice against one of the Lord's servants who had been signally successful in the never-ending war between good and evil. For on the second day after Saul's departure his wife was simply astounded to hear her cousin, without any preliminary, say, 'Lizzie, my dear, we've always been very happy together, and I like your society very much, but now you're married things ain't quite as they used to be, are they? An' to tell you the truth, I've got a little girl coming in to do all I want, and I shall be glad if you'll get another place to lodge as soon as you can. You're a married woman now, and can look after yourself.' Poor Lizzie felt crushed for a moment: then her native spirit came to the rescue, and she said without a tremor, 'Very well, Carrie. I s'pose you don't want to turn me out right at once, do you? Give me a little time to get a place and I'll go.' 'Oh, certainly,' said her cousin, 'take your time by all means, and——' but happily there was a call at that moment, and the undignified spectacle of a quarrel between relatives on a mere point of pique (for that was the whole of the cousin's grievance) was averted.

So Lizzie went away from the house to begin her search, very sorrowful. It never occurred to her to seek out the members of the Mission and confide in them. She knew that her husband would have wished her to do so, but to tell the truth she was a little jealous of the influence the Mission had over him. She was not at all drawn to any of its members herself, and had already quite forgotten that it was there she had met him she loved, or thought she did. Now he was gone, her husband,

she was not so sure whether she had not been too precipitate; whether she really was as fond of him as she had believed while he was with her; whether it was worth while marrying a man of whose company you could only enjoy three weeks or a month of each year, just to give him an idea that he was worth so much more to you than any landsman, that you could bear the long absences for the sake of the week or two of perfect happiness in his company. It is a very difficult and delicate point to touch upon, but there is no doubt that when a young woman gets married she acquires a strong desire for a man's company at all times. Naturally, and if she be left alone, unless her love, her faith, and her virtue be all firmly anchored deep down in the solid rock of God, she is in very great danger indeed. I have always felt that sailors' wives should receive special attention from those interested in the sailor, whenever they are liable to be left without friends near them to keep them company and make the heavy hours pass quicker. I could tell (but not in print) some terribly tragic stories of lives wrecked, of good beautiful women going astray, simply and solely because their lives were so dreary. And the first false step having been taken, the successive downward stages follow in horribly swift progression.

First of all Mrs. Andrews, to give Lizzie her full title, found a serious difficulty in obtaining a room; a room, that is, in a decent house. Why, oh why, should this be so? Why should it be made so difficult for females to live unless they have friends and a home, when men can get on so differently? A question like this cannot be answered hurriedly

but I feel a deep personal interest in its solution, because *my* wife had to seek till she was heart-sick, as well as foot-weary, before she found a place to lay her lonely head, and then she was treated more like a pauper than a solvent payer of rent. Indeed, she said that had she been single, it would have been easier for her to find a room which the proprietors thereof would be willing to let to her than she found it being married. At last, to her great relief, the young wife succeeded in finding a room in the house of a worthy couple who, when they heard her story, were exceedingly sympathetic. But even they gave her clearly to understand that if she could not pay her rent for one week she must go. They were so poor that they dared not run the risk of having the room empty for a day, or of losing a day's rent, while as to running up a bill it was not to be thought of. Their superior landlord called for his rent every Monday morning, and it must be ready for him though the whole family should have to go without food to obtain it. Lizzie assured them that there was no danger of her not paying, and proudly exhibited her half-pay paper. Poor girl, she in her ignorance imagined that the 2*l.* 5*s.* per month it guaranteed was something in the nature of Bank of England dividends. The possibility of its failing never occurred to her. And she got work, too—she had a good sewing-machine—got work making ladies' ulsters at 11*s.* 6*d.* per dozen. The handsome smirking Jew who gave them out to her assured her that he had given her the best-paid work in the shop, but when she found that even her deft fingers could scarcely complete three of them by close application

for thirteen hours, she began to wonder what sort of a life the women lead who made the cheaper ones, down, for instance, to 4s. 9d. per dozen. Spurred by the fear of being left to want, she overworked herself and fell ill. And utterly unable to work her machine, she must needs send back the unfinished garments, not, however, before she had tried to get them done locally. That was hopeless unless she could have found some one working like herself. The first person she asked was a private mantle-maker, who said that as Mrs. Andrews was in the trade she would make those three ulsters for 9s. 6d. each. When she was told that the rate of pay allowed by Isaacstein & Co. was 11½d. each, she simply sniffed derisively and retired, not saying another word.

There is no feature of our commercial system more damnable than this (and there are many really damnable things in it), that every middleman through whose hands a garment passes shall make more profit out of it than the poor slave who produced the cloth, or the still poorer slave who produced the garment out of the cloth. Be you very sure, those of you who buy cheap 'ready-mades,' that the wealthy merchant who 'handles' them gets far more profit out of each piece than the poor creature who sits with her eyes glued to her flying needle almost night and day. Do not imagine that these things have passed away. It is such a common retort, when one speaks of an abuse, 'Oh, it used to be like that, but it isn't so any longer.' But it is also a most dangerous one, because we wish to believe it and often do, without troubling about proof, while too often it is utterly untrue. But Lizzie Andrews troubled her head about none of these things.

Being one of the suffering ones she suffered in silence, feeling, if not knowing, the uselessness of complaint, and comforting herself with the knowledge that at any rate she could not starve whether she got work or not, since she had her half-pay of 1*s.* 6*d.* a day. It is true that many of us would be able to see little in such a sum but slow starvation, in London, where rent alone is such an item. To Lizzie, however, it was a veritable sheet-anchor by the help of which she would weather the storm now upon her. Then suddenly, as the stress of the ship plunging at her cable in the teeth of the howling tempest and finding a weak link in it snaps it and begins to drift awfully on the jagged rocks gnashing astern, there came to this poor soul the news of the loss of Saul's ship with all hands, and the consequent stoppage of his half-pay.

She lay down on her poor bed and moaned like a hurt animal—inarticulately, hopelessly. For hours she lay there, no one coming to see her; and had she died, as so many do, there would have been a long and utterly unprofitable inquiry into her death and an open verdict. At last to her aid came one almost as poor as herself in bodily needs, a poor girl who, an orphan and friendless, was eking out a scanty living by shirt-making. To her careful loving nursing and self-sacrificing charity Lizzie owed her life. She it was who obtained admission for Lizzie to the hospital, for the shock the latter had received was the beginning of a long illness. But when she came out of hospital her poor faithful friend awaited her with warmest welcome, took her home to her poor room, and put her in the way of earning a crust.

Strangely enough, as we have said, it never occurred to Lizzie to seek aid or comfort at the Mission. And her Christian principles remained in abeyance, a dull apathy to all except the most pressing needs of the body taking the place of living faith in a living God. Here we must draw a veil over the dull grey lives of these two obscure women fighting for bare existence in the heart of a great city.

And all this time, half a world away, Saul was steadfastly awaiting deliverance. When once the battle with himself was won, patience and faithful waiting upon God resumed their sway in his rested soul. Even the hardship of being utterly without reading matter, above all a Bible, became bearable after a time. He had to learn the love of great silences. Never acquiring sufficient Italian to converse with his shipmates, he used to sit alone and fix his thoughts upon unseens, or allow his soul to bathe itself in the glories all around. But chiefly he loved to lie, in the long calm nights of the tropics, on his back on the fo'c'sle head with his eyes fixed upon the vast star-besprinkled space above him, recalling all he could of the words of the Bible and thinking upon the glories of Heaven, until his cultivated imagination almost made him see indescribable visions with the outward eyes of sense. Doubtless in the perfecting of this fine man's character these long long days of almost monastic seclusion, as far as his mind was concerned, played a most important part; and, blessedly for him, he did not know anything of what was going on at home, neither did he permit himself any longer to anticipate evil. He prayed without ceasing for his darling, and was content to leave the answering

to God. That his prayers were not answered is true, as is also the fact that it is impossible to see why. But, then, when we come to that we are at once confronted with so great an array of similar cases that we must, if we be indeed faithful believers in the loving Fatherhood of God, fall back upon our one great stronghold: 'In that day God will be justified in all things by His Son.'

At last, 198 days after Saul was picked up, the *Giuseppe B.* lumbered slowly and clumsily into Hong Kong harbour. Her paint, bleached nearly to the wood off hull and yards by months of sun and rain, her sails worn to muslin by their long profitless slatting against the masts, all that part of her beneath the water and much above encrusted with stony sea-growths and festooned with dark black-green moss that rose and fell with each movement of the sea like a floating shroud, she looked as if some long ago given-up derelict had been suddenly restored to the busy world of men. Saul's heart beat high with thankfulness as the old ship sailed up the well-remembered harbour into which he had so often steamed in the old days when he was a quartermaster in one of the 'Glen' boats. Nor did even the knowledge that no news could be awaiting him from home or that from him no news could reach home for nearly two months, suffice to depress him.

No sooner was the anchor down and the decks cleared up than Saul went aft and appealed respectfully to the mate, the captain having of course gone ashore, to allow him to land. This, however, the mate dared not do without the captain's permission, and so Saul, comforting himself as best he could with

the reflection that it was past office hours, resigned himself to another night on board the old hulk that had, oh, so slowly, borne him to this far-off part of the world. Bright and early he sought the captain, who, as well as he could, made him understand that he was very well pleased with Saul's behaviour while on board, that he was free to go whenever he would, and that, but for the fact that he, the skipper, was a very poor man, he would have been glad to give Saul his monthly wage the same as the rest of the men earned. As it was, all he could do, and that out of his own pocket, was to give him twenty dollars. With this pitiful sum Saul was obliged to be content, knowing that he could get no more. So gathering the few ragged garments together that had been given him, he went ashore straight to the post-office, and, writing a long and loving letter to his wife, he sent her the whole of the money he had just received except cost of postage and transmission. Then he turned his steps towards the shipping-office and told his story. He was listened to in silence, and then asked if he would take a passage home in one of the blue-funnelled boats to England as a distressed seaman. This he refused, not wishing to arrive at home penniless. The official shrugged his shoulders and replied, 'That's all I can do for you, then.'

Outside the shipping-office Saul stood awhile, wondering what he should do now. Suddenly he caught sight of a white policeman striding towards him, and intercepting him as he was passing, he asked him if there was in the place a Seaman's Mission, and if so would he direct the speaker thereto. Now the policeman was a Christian, and to receive

such an application warmed his heart. So he led Saul to the Mission, entered with him and introduced him, and made arrangements for their meeting again that evening. Now Saul's present troubles were all overcome. In the first place he was in the midst of a congenial environment, in the next all the help that he so much needed in food, lodging, and clothing was extended to him, and one gentleman, a merchant who was a staunch friend of the Mission, even offered to cable home to Saul's wife the news of his safety, at large cost. But this Saul refused, not seeing where the benefit would come, and feeling that it was not right to waste so much of other people's money.

One very happy week he spent in Hong Kong, and then, not being able to get a berth as bos'un, he shipped before the mast in a fine American ship bound to Manila to load hemp for New York. When he came on board he found himself, to his surprise, in an almost palatial house on deck, with a table running its whole length—light, clean, and well ventilated. He found the food not only good in quality and having plenty of variety, but excellently cooked and served as if men were going so eat it, not hogs. His shipmates were a mixed medley of races, but principally Scandinavians, all well drilled and as smart as could well be. As for brutality, there was none; there was no need of it. An order sharply given was obeyed with the utmost alacrity and cheerfulness, for every man had learned that it is just as easy to obey smartly and willingly where obedience must be rendered, as it is to skulk and scowl through one's obvious duties. In the delight

which Saul felt at being on board such a ship and under such a system, he almost forgot the crushing burden of his trouble. Especially as he received a month's advance of another four pounds, which he was able to send home intact to the poor girl whom he saw, in his mind's eye, suffering and sorrowing for him.

He left Hong Kong with the hearty good wishes of all whom he had met there, well supplied with clothes by their liberality, and with such a stock of good reading matter as would last him all the way home most comfortably. He felt as if, at last, the long and dreary lane he had been travelling had found its turning, and that the pathway before him promised to be bright right to the end. He was in a good ship, with smart officers and a well-disciplined crew; and having a joy in doing that which his hand found to do with all his might, found life again very pleasant.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MISSION PROSPERS

MEANWHILE events at the Mission had been without much stirring interest to the little outside world of their immediate neighbourhood, though never lacking in variety and fullness of marvel to those who were responsible for its maintenance and direction. Jemmy, poor little man, had by reason of his wife's illness been much away, in fact he had hardly been seen at the Mission for a month. But when his dear partner was pronounced out of danger he returned, bearing a sheaf of grateful messages from her to those who, she knew, had been praying for her in her sickness; returned and found that for a Thursday night there was a record attendance. During his absence at his sick wife's bedside there had been a sort of dual control. Maylie, the young clerk, and Paterson, the coster, had been working like Trojans, and their ministry had been abundantly successful. Bill Harrop, too, had been supporting them, but he had developed the finer aspects of the Christian character—the ability to stand aside and let the Lord use whomsoever He will, so long as the Kingdom's cause is advanced. To stand at the door and hand out the hymn-books, to sweep up the 'Hall' after everybody had gone, to be first to come and last to

go, these were Bill Harrop's ambitions, if by such a name they might properly be called. When chaffed about his earnestness he would say, 'Ar, if you'd a-be'n dahn inter th' dirty 'ell 'at I 'ave, an' ,be'n pulled erp agen inter th' clean 'eaven 'at I 'ave, you wouldn't wonder at my be'avin' as I do. I carn't 'elp it, no I carn't, an' '—here he whispered mysteriously—' I woodn't if I could. I like it too much. I sleeps like a baby, I eats anyfink 'at comes along wiv a "fank Gord" for it, my wife an' kids fair wusships the grahd I walks on; an' me! oh, *you* don't know what a dirty dorg I was an' would be nah if it wasn't fer 'Im, the Lord Gord Almighty.'

In consequence of these labours, undertaken mainly because they felt (the workers) that loyalty to Jemmy in his deep trouble demanded them, there was a spirit of enthusiasm, of earnest attention in the hope of getting more wisdom from above, abroad than Jemmy ever remembered having seen before. When he appeared on the platform, his face aglow with thankfulness, there was a long-drawn breath, and then, it would not be restrained, an uproarious burst of applause. The leader of this welcome was poor old Woody—at least, I call him poor, remembering his much-patched garments, his thin pale face, his rounded shoulders and thin grey hair. But he would, I am sure, have fiercely resented any such adjective being applied to him. How could any man as happy as he be called poor? So they clapped and stamped and shouted till they were tired, and at last Jemmy got a chance to say a word. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to reproduce for you his speech, but I fear it might possibly pall upon

you. It must therefore suffice to say that he told with much pathos the story of his wife's illness, of the passing of the poor girl who had been helped over her terrible trouble by Saul and himself. All this he did in the most perfectly natural manner possible, and its effect was marvellous. Subject, of course, to correction, I feel that this is the secret of all successful oratory, whether in preaching or otherwise: to give the listeners stories of such life as they understand, with a lifting application. It was the way of the Lord, and there can be no better. Go through our picture galleries and note the expressions on the faces of those who gaze. Before a lovely rendering of some old lying story from the Greek mythology they gape unmoved, but let a picture of present-day heroism be brought before them and you shall see the human sympathy, the tears falling fast. This may be Philistinism, but, if so, I am glad to be a Philistine.

So Jemmy preached and prayed as of old, but with an added power that neither he nor his hearers could have explained. He swayed them as the wind the leaves, and when at last he sat down there was a long-drawn sigh of disappointment that he had ended so soon. But it was soon made up for by the following speakers, Harrop and Paterson and Maylie. They, too, met with much acceptance, for all there knew how they had worked and prayed during the absence of their much-loved superintendent. When they had finished their various speeches Jemmy rose again to address the meeting. He said, 'Brevren an' sisters, I carn't leave 'ere ter-night 'athout tellin' yer wot's in my 'cart abaht some of these yer dear fellers

'ere. Y' all know how fings 'as ben wiv me lately, 'ow I ain't ben able to 'tend ter nuffink along of illness at 'ome, not even my own business. Well, two dear fellers in this 'ere meetin' 'as kep things agoin puffickly straight fer abaht six weeks. Yuss, an' I arskes yer ter fank Gord fer sendin' on earf two such men as Willie Maylie an' Jemmy Paterson.' When the wild outburst of appreciation had subsided, Jemmy resumed his address for a short time, in order to acquaint all his hearers with the flourishing state of the Mission finances: a condition of things which, he told them, was almost totally due to the unremitting energies of William Maylie, who had not only worked hard to keep the subscriptions and donations up to the high-water mark, but had by careful book-keeping kept their accounts so clear that a child could understand them. And besides all this, he had paid in to the funds out of his own pocket a sum of five shillings every week. Lastly, the speaker alluded to the statements made by Jenkins, the late treasurer, as to his (Jemmy's) default in respect of subscriptions. 'Brevren,' said he, 'I know I don't put very much inter the Mission funds. I never did. But then I ain't got it ter put in. That ain't my fault, it's my farver's. Wot 'd 'ee bring me up t' chimbley-sweepin' for?' with mock indignation. 'I ain't let none o' my boys go sweepin' chimbleys, no fear. W'y wot wiv the price er coals, an' all these 'underds o' thousan's er penny-in-the-slot gas meters, they ain't scarcely no chimbleys at all ter sweep nah. An' as ter beatin' carpets, wot used ter be a reg'lar part of ahr business—most er th' people I know don't have none, they uses linoleum. If they does

have a nice bit er carpet, w'y they sen's it ter a cump'ny, or rarer the cump'ny sen's an' fetches it in a swagger van an' pair o' hosses. An' it's put in a kind 'er washin' masheen that wallops all th' dust aht of it quicker'n you can say knife. I don't 'old wiv all this 'ere masheenry, I don't. It'd be all right if we c'd live by masheenry, I s'pose ; but there, it's no good grumblin', I never fahnd that paid any'ow. Let's sing. Sister, play us

' Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine ;
Oh what a foretaste of glory Divine.'

So they launched into song and sang the chorus, 'This is my story, this is my song,' three times to each verse and five or six times to the last, and were all very much uplifted and happy. And as they wcre about to leave, just after the Benediction had been pronounced, a wild-looking figure that had been crouching in the doorway stood up and shuffled along the aisle towards the platform. Paterson and Harrop went to meet him and attend to him in case he should have come to make any disturbance, when the latter recognised him as Jimson. Truly he was a sad spectacle. Filthy beyond expression, shoeless, in scanty rags that hardly covered his nakedness, he was an object-lesson in the highest sense on the fact that the way of transgressors is hard. The people waited to see 'what was up,' as they put it, and presently the poor wretch was allowed to mount the platform and tell his story. In effect it was this, that although he had apparently left the Mission through pique, it was really because he had never honestly had his heart in it. He loved to hold a

prominent place among his fellows and to pose as respectable, because he found it paid with his employer who was a very religious man. So he had joined the Wren Lane band before it possessed the present 'Hall,' and for a time found himself looked up to by Jemmy and taking the part he loved—viz. that of a prominent man. But when the Mission expanded he found himself, as he put it, a bit crowded, and he also found the work getting irksome. So he became a backslider and immediately went back to the drink. Curiously enough, before he joined the Mission he was a very moderate drinker, but as soon as he left it he became a drunkard. He went rapidly down, down, down. Now his wife was dead, his children were scattered, and he was, he hoped, in the last stages of a disease that would carry him off very speedily. He didn't want anything, for he was going to the workhouse infirmary to die, but before he went he wanted to ease his mind by confessing to all connected with the Mission that no one was in any way to blame for his going away but himself. Also that if anyone there had a mind to become a backslider, he would tell them simply that they would never have any enjoyment out of it. The devil was a great promiser, but his performances were terrible to endure. He, the speaker, asked them all to forgive him and pray for him, and he bade them good-bye. Resisting all efforts to detain him he hobbled slowly away, only accepting the help of poor old Woody to enable him to reach the infirmary. They took him in at once, and in three days he was dead, having by his last few words made a greater impression upon his hearers than ever he had been able to in his previous Mission

days, an impression that will never fade from some of their minds while life lasts.

After the audience had dispersed the brethren remained a little while to discuss the Mission affairs, upon the reappearance of Jemmy. All felt that they had deep cause for thankfulness in the steady solid work that was going on, and the manner in which they were paying their way. Although their numbers had never since reached the total which they amounted to before Jackson's defection, they had a very respectable roll of members—respectable, that is, in amount and steadfastness of Christian life, not respectable in appearance as compared with the ordinary church or chapel goer by any means. At the early (8 A.M.) Sunday morning prayer-meeting there was often an attendance of fifty, and at the Breaking of Bread usually half as many again. Their Sunday school roll numbered nearly three hundred, and already the accommodation for the children was very restricted. But no suggestion of enlarging their borders or launching out into ambitious building schemes was mooted, for all felt that such things in their position were better left severely alone. As Jemmy tersely put it, 'S'long's we're 'umble the Lord 'll bless us; w'en we git too big for our boots 'Ee'll 'ave to set erse back a bit, same's 'Ee done afore. That done erse good no doubt, but I don't want any more on it, thank yer.'

Mr. Jackson had grown and waxed great, so Bill Harrop reported. He had taken a large hall seating eight hundred people at an expense of nearly 7*l.* a week, he had got together a good-sized brass band whereof every member had the privilege of finding his own instrument, and he was now preaching a curious

blend of Universalism, faith healing, and Ritualism. He had left the police force, donned a clerical garb, and had cards printed with the words, 'Rev. Thos. Jackson, Peniston Hall Gospel Mission.' He was popularly supposed to be making between 200*l.* and 300*l.* per annum. When Jemmy heard this news he said with a sigh, 'I st'^d like fine ter be mykin' free 'underd a yeer, an' I 'opes I won't never be tempted ter make it dis'onest. But I do know 'at if I was offered right 'ear t' exchange wiv Jackson I wouldn't. He must be un'appy inside, mustn't 'ee?' 'Well, I don' know,' answered his father musingly, 'ee may be 'appier 'n wot you think for. 'Ee may believe 'ee's all right. Nobody knows wot they can do in the way of deceivin' 'emselves till they begins ter try. If it wasn't so I don't know 'ow we sh'^d acahnt fur the many jolly people we see aht of Christ, wivout any 'ope fur th' fucher—any well-grahnded 'ope that is. By the bye, changin' the subjec' rarver quick, does anybody know anyfink er Saul's wife?'

There was a dead silence for maybe half a minute, and an uneasy guilty feeling among them quite unwarranted by any action or want of action of theirs. For none of them had known her address, she had voluntarily withdrawn herself after Saul's departure, and in this great labyrinth of London, more especially among people whose hands were so full as these, it was almost an impossibility to find a person who had no desire to be found. But it spoke well for the brethren's hearts that they *did* feel like that. A tender heart and a sensitive conscience is a good thing to have, although at times an inconvenient one if its owner wants a little self-indulgence. At last

Jemmy spoke and said, 'I've orfen thort abaht 'er, but I didn't know wot'd become of 'er. I know she didn't like erse very much, I c'd see that th' day we 'eld th' weddin' service 'ere. An' I know this, that arter Saul went she never come near th' place no more. I yeerd somebody say, I donno 'oo it could a-be'n nah, 'at she'd lef' the nayburwood. I trust in Gord nuffinks 'appen'd to 'er. Let's 'ave a word o' pray'r abaht er afore we parts, shall we?' A general assent: being heartily given, all present knelt and Jemmy prayed: 'Ho Gord, hour Father w'ich is right: 'ere ermongst erse, we're trubbled in mine abaht ahr sister, Thy dear servant Saul's wife; 'ee's aht on the great sea far away from us, an' we feels as if we orter a-looked arter th' one dearest to 'im in th' world. But she went away, Lord, an' we don' know w'ere she is. Oh Gord, You know. If she's in trouble, 'elp 'er aht of it; if it may be, bring 'er back ermong erse; an' any'ow, 'ave 'er in Thy most 'oly keepin'. An' bless ahr dear bruvver Saul also. We dunno w'ere 'ee is, asept 'at 'ee's wiv You, Lord. Watch hover 'im, comfort 'im, 'elp 'im t' do the work You've giv' 'im ter do, an' bring 'im safe back t' erse agen. An' nah, please bless every one on us, Lord. Bless my pore pardner 'oose 'ad such a weary time o' sickness. Grant, Lord, that the fiery time ov trial she's 'ad may be of the werry gr'atest use t' 'er an' me too. Bless us all an' take us t' ahr several 'omes in peace an' grateful love to Thee, in the name of Thy dear Son. Amen.'

There remained only the good-nights to say and hands to be shaken. So they parted, and Jemmy hastened home, trotting all the way. When he reached his house he rushed upstairs to find Mrs.

Maskery sitting up in bed eating a little beef-tea brought her by Sister Salmon, who was sitting at the other side of the bed.

Sister Salmon had risen to go when Jemmy came in, but Mrs. Maskery held her tight while she told her what was in her heart. And as soon as Mrs. Maskery had finished speaking, that sweet saintly soul just stooped and kissed the worn face all wet with tears, saying only, 'Good-night, dear, an' God bless ye; you've made me very happy.' Then she left the room, Jemmy holding the candle high over the banisters to light her way down, and hastened off to join her faithful spouse in their own peaceful home.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SAUL COMES HOME

WITH something of a sense of dread at what we feel awaits Saul, yet with a feeling of relief also that in front of him still spreads a long peaceful road over which he shall tread with firm unfaltering footfall before he meets with the dread knowledge which shall shake but not overthrow the firmly rooted foundations of his faith, we must now return to where he is patiently doing his duty on board the *Colorado* in Manila harbour. Even with such a perfectly disciplined crowd as there was on board this fine ship, and the unsleeping vigilance of her officers, it could not be but that, in harbour, occasions of disagreement should arise, and if by any means drink should become obtainable, a very slight matter originally might suddenly develop into a condition of great danger to all on board. Thus it happened that, after a fortnight's uninterrupted peace in Manila, during which time, as the shipment of the hemp only demanded six of the ship's company, the rest of the work of stowage being done by Filipinos and Chinese, the whole ship was overhauled and painted, there arose a longing on the part of the majority of the hands for a final run ashore before the long passage home began.

Now Captain Peck had made a wise rule for the benefit of all hands, to the effect that he could be interviewed every evening at eight bells, when he was on board, by any member of the ship's company, either for complaints or requests, and this effectually precluded any hole-and-corner work, since he would not listen to anything but from the person directly concerned. So one evening, a huge Austrian, deputed by his comrades, slouched aft at the appointed hour and proffered the usual request to the steward that he might see the captain. This being granted, he asked for a day's liberty on behalf of himself and the crew. Captain Peck listened in patience until he had finished speaking, then replied curtly, 'Certainly not. You'll get leave finally in N' York, not before. Anything else?' The man looked nonplussed for a moment, then muttered surlily, 'Whata for no givee leava, capaña? Alla mans plenta work alla time, neva geta drinka, that time fineesh work wanta a leetta drinka.' He was, I should have explained, from Trieste.

For all answer the captain pointed with his right hand to the fo'c'sle and said sternly, 'Go forward, and tell the rest of your shipmates not to come aft with any such request to me.' The man slouched off, black rage in his heart, and as soon as he reached the fo'c'sle began to detail all sorts of imaginary insults hurled at him by the skipper. As most of the palaver was in foreign speech which Saul did not understand, its import troubled him not at all. But during the next few days he could not help noticing that something was afoot that seemed to menace the peace and safety of the whole ship. Before he had

time to realise what it was going to be, the storm burst. A large quantity of liquor suddenly made its appearance and passed freely from hand to hand, refused of course by him, but making him marvel mightily from whence it had been obtained. Then to his horror he heard muttered outlines of a plan to murder all the officers, fierce recallings of the way in which during the early days of the voyage they, the speakers, had been drilled into submissiveness and their sluggish intelligences quickened by brutal application of force, for all of which things they would now exact the utmost reparation.

Saul's mind was quickly made up. As a keen watch was being kept lest anyone should go aft, he lit his pipe and strolled carelessly up on the fo'c'sle head. There was no one watching there, so he slipped over the head, down the cable, and swam aft to the accommodation ladder, up which he ran and presented himself breathless at the door of the mate's berth. That officer listened gravely to Saul's warning—then, disregarding his dripping condition, led him before the skipper, who as gravely thanked him and offered him a loaded revolver. Saul refused the weapon, thanking the captain for his confidence, but saying that while he would do all that two honest fists could do to maintain order, he did not feel like taking life—he would rather lose his own. The captain looked at him pityingly, as one not understanding such a condition of mind at all, and was just about to discuss the matter with him, when a patter of bare feet, a smothered oath, and a crackle of revolver shots announced that the threatened upheaval had begun.

Saul and the captain rushed up the companion, hoping thereby to gain the upper ground, to have the advantage over their assailants. But they were met by the big Austrian and two other men, who had dodged past the officers in the struggle on deck, hoping to take them in the rear. Mattei, the Austrian, flung himself at the captain, his uplifted knife gleaming in the moonlight, and had it not been for Saul there is no doubt the old man would have been slain. But quick as thought Saul's left arm flew across the captain's breast, receiving the vengeful downward stab right through the fleshy part, while his right fist shot out like a catapult, taking Mattei on the point of the chin and breaking his jaw. Down fell the big man like a log, and across his prostrate body the skipper and Saul fought shoulder to shoulder against not only the two who had accompanied Mattei, but reinforcements that had arrived from below. But no valour, however fired, can make head against firearms in the hands of men unafraid to use them, and in a very few minutes the discomfited crew were being driven 'foward' like a flock of sheep, all save the luckless ones who lay groaning and bleeding on deck.

Now there have been cases where such treatment of men by officers would have been wholly unjustifiable, where the men, goaded to madness by ill treatment and overwork, deserved all the success in overcoming and even slaying their persecutors that could possibly become theirs; but here it was not so. The *Colorado* was a good ship, had been made so, indeed, by the unremitting efforts of the officers at the commencement of the voyage, and only a sudden

upheaval of tigerish lust induced by drink had led to what might, but for the courage and energy of Saul, have ended in a most terrible tragedy. When the last of the wounded had been attended to and all those of the crew who could stand were perched aloft in various uncomfortable positions, Captain Peck and his chief officer interviewed Saul and decided that he must be the bo'sun, that is if he would accept the office. His wages were at once increased by ten dollars per month, and he was given plenary powers of dealing with any man who should perchance meditate revenge.

Saul, however, was no coward, and moreover he had so pleasant a way with him that it was almost impossible for a man to be under his orders and not come to like him. And when that motley crowd realised what a splendid specimen of mankind they had got over them, when they found how utterly incapable he was of bearing malice or of abusing his position in order to pay them out for what they had done, they altered their bearing towards him, and no longer thought, as at first they did, of stabbing him in the back and dumping him overboard the first chance they got. They grew to love as well as admire him, before they were round the Cape he could do anything with them, and it was admitted by all the officers that a smarter crew or a better bo'sun it would be almost impossible to find.

Thus it came to pass that, in solemn conclave with his officers, Captain Peck thus delivered himself: 'Gentlemen, in common with most American seamen, I've hitherto had a mighty poor opinion of the so-called superiority of the British sailor over every

other mariner that ever was. And I hold still, that while he certainly is reliable when good, his smartness requires considerable freshening up before it reaches our standard. As a general rule his motto is "Go slow," however good a man he may be. But here we've got a man who's not only the best all-round sailorman I've ever clapped eyes on in all my fishing, but is in addition to that the spryest man I've ever had under my command. You can't get him rattled. The hotter the pace the cooler he seems to be, and the very tones of his voice seem to give men confidence that all is going right. Now I've got a theory about this man. I believe he's a Christian of the highest stamp, one of the kind that's sent us occasionally to show what Christianity can make of a man if he'll only let it have a fair show. I've never heard him utter a swear-word, I've never seen him out of temper, and yet, if you notice, there's a look in his face as of a man that's bowed down with very great sorrow. I'm afraid we shall lose him in N' York; I feel sure that he'll be off east as quick's ever he can get, but I'd give big money to keep him.'

The skipper having thus eased his mind, the mate modestly took up the conversation by saying, 'You're perfectly right, sir, in all you say. The man is a Christian; I've surprised him on his knees. An' I've noticed that although he reads considerable, the Bible's more often in his hands than any other book. Another thing, whenever he's been below a little while by himself he always comes on deck again with his face all a-shine, as if he'd been having such a bully time that the reflection of it on his face wouldn't

die away. Now with me that ain't so. When I'm turned out to my duty I always have to just shake myself back to work again, an' I feel as sulky as a starvin' grizzly.' Murmurs of assent from skipper and second mate. 'Yes, sir,' the mate went on, 'I'd give quite a pile if only I knew the secret of this Britisher's content.'

The *Colorado* made a wonderful passage home and came into port looking like a new pin, to the deep measureless satisfaction of her officers, to whom the comments made by the pilot and subsequent visitors were as sweetest incense in their nostrils. As the ship was towing up the East River, the captain sent for Saul and told him that if he would only stay with him in the ship he should be kept on full pay while in harbour, and anything in reason in the way of wages that he liked to ask for should be his for the next voyage. Moreover, he (the captain) would make it his special care to teach Saul navigation, to fit him for taking the post that he so richly deserved, for which he was so pre-eminently fitted. But even as he talked, the captain could see that all his kindly efforts would be in vain. The man before him had his face steadfastly set in one direction from which nothing earthly that he could overcome would turn it. And when the captain had finished, Saul answered him saying, 'Captain Peck, you've done me a great deal of honour talkin' to me as you have. I've only done what I ought, but I shouldn't ha' been able to do it but for the continual help of God, given to me without any deservin' of my own, except a deep sense of my utter helplessness athout it. But I can't help feelin' too, sir, that I

haven't been faithful as I ought to 'ave been aboard here. I 'aven't preached as well as practised. By the help of God I have practised Christianity, but somehow I 'aven't felt able to do as I did on board the last ship I made a voy'ge in as bo'sun. An' it weighs on my 'eart very heavy, I assure you. As to your offer, sir, I can't accept it anyhow. I was just married before I came away. I was wrecked only a few days out of port, picked up, an' carried off to China. An' I've never heard of her since, an' don't know whether she's heard of me or not; although, of course, I've sent on all the money I could get to her from Hong Kong. But, and here the poor fellow's eyes shone with entreaty, 'do please let me know as soon as you can whether there's a letter waitin' here for me. Excuse me troublin' you, sir, but I am almost sick with anxiety, and I have to keep on praying to God to keep me from worrying myself into another brain fever.'

'My dear fellow,' answered the skipper, hard put to it to keep the tears from his eyes, 'count on me to do all I can for you. I'll not say another word about your coming with me, your duty's at home and to get there with all possible speed. And as for your letter, I'll do all I can to get it off to you at once. I'll send a special messenger with it if it's there.' Sure enough, as soon as ever the ship was secured, a messenger brought Saul a letter which had been lying in the owner's office for two months. Happily it arrived only a few minutes before he was free to go and devour its contents—happily, because he was so violently agitated that his knees smote together and the ganglions at the pit of his breast-bone felt as

if a ruthless hand were wrenching them round and round.

'DERE SIR [it ran], I write these few lines hoping they will find you quite well as thank God it leaves me at present.

'I am so sorry to tell you that your pore wife died in my arms a week ago. She had been ill a long time and her earnings and mine was very small so we couldn't get the things she ought to have had. The money you sent from China came the day after she died, so I was able to give her a decent funeral and not let her be buried by the parish. The next four pound you sent I've got the order for, which I will send wherever you ask me.

'She was a dear creature and very fond of me and I loved her dearly. But her heart was broke and I don't think she wanted to live. You see she believed she had lost all she cared to live for. I feel very lonely without her so I can sympathise with you.

'Your obedient servant,

'MARY WILKINS.

'14 Bertha St., Upper Street, Islington.'

How is it possible to say anything about the manner in which Saul received this letter? I feel that the task is impossible, and in any case the great struggle with overwhelming grief was carried on in the secret places of the Almighty. So I will pass on in silence, merely noting that he felt an intense desire to return to England. With a deep-drawn sigh he folded the letter up and put it away, and sprang into violent energy packing his belongings for shore. The mate came, and, finding him thus employed, begged him as a special favour to stay on board that evening

and talk with him, pointing out that in any case he could not go home until the ship was paid off, and he would be far better off aboard than ashore. Saul consented willingly, only stipulating that he should go and ascertain when the first steamer left for London. Having found that there was one going in two days' time and secured a steerage passage in her, Saul came back and was at once invited by the mate into his berth.

When two men get together like Saul and Mr. Fish, the relations that have subsisted between them take some little time to get broken down and a condition of equality set up. But the mate was most pathetically eager to learn the secret of Saul's efficient happiness and Saul was equally eager to tell it, so that in far less time than usual they came to closest quarters over the one eternal question of man's salvation. Here, however, all the conditions were favourable. Tested to the utmost, Saul's Christianity had proved its value, so that all he said came with tremendous force. He was no mere theorist or hireling who did not believe practically one of the truths he was enunciating. Nor was he actuated by any other motive than that inspired by the great Friend of Man, the making of another man into a more perfect pattern of what a man should really be, the image of God: for his own greater happiness and the eternal benefit of those with whom he should come in contact.

Before they parted for the night Mr. Fish had stepped out of his old self, had thrown in his lot with the people of God, and had become a worthy disciple of the greatest, bravest, happiest Man that ever lived.

And Saul, in spite of his gnawing desire to get home, was comforted. It is indeed a consolation to know that we are not standing all the day idle, but that wherever we are, however long we may have to wait between employments, we may redeem the time to our soul's intense satisfaction and the benefit of some poor soul for whose behoof that spare time was allowed us.

Wednesday morning saw Saul on the deck of one of the liners homeward-bound, his passage having been paid by the grateful Captain Peck, who never could forget that but for Saul he would have died in Manila. Moreover, there had mysteriously appeared in the handful of bills the skipper handed Saul as his pay, one for a hundred dollars which seemed to Saul to have got there in error. When he pointed this out the skipper curtly told him that the money was all right, *he* never made any mistakes in money matters. And Saul's keen wit saw at once that this was just a kindly unstrained way of making up to him his great loss. He was very grateful, feeling almost guilty at leaving so splendid an opening for good, but nevertheless his heart was within him as lead. The short, fine passage ended, Saul hastened to a quiet lodging in the East India Dock Road for the night, and at once hastened to the address whence the letter was written. He found Miss Wilkins just returned home, and she, having first prudently invited the landlady to be present, told him the whole sad story of his wife's suffering, sorrow and death.

To go over it would be merely to tell the sordid tale of similar experiences which may be read almost every day in our newspapers, and it is, therefore,

needless, especially at this last stage, to do so. Saul sat during the recital as if carved in wood, a big tear escaping at intervals from his tortured heart. When he rose to go he offered payment to Miss Wilkins—an offer firmly refused. But he obtained a promise that in any time of trouble she would apply to him at once.

CHAPTER XXIX

AND LAST

THE delight with which the next evening Saul was received at the Mission was almost extravagant until a closer look at his grief-lined face, and a short explanation from him of the reason for it, quieted them all. But a great content was manifested among them when he told them that it was his intention to relinquish his seafaring career, if possible, and settle down among them.

He immediately set about materialising his idea, but found it no easy task.

At last, when his stock of cash had dwindled to a solitary pound, he met one day, in the West India Dock Road, with his old skipper, Captain Vaughan. Their greeting was most cordial, and turning into the captain's house, which was close at hand, they enjoyed a long long exchange of experiences since last they had parted. And presently it came out that Captain Vaughan had retired from the sea and was now the overlooker of a line of ships. When Saul told him of his own earnest wish to get a job ashore, he was, at first, disinclined to further Saul's wishes, alleging as his reason that such a man as Saul ought to remain at sea in view of the good that he could do there—far more, in proportion, than he could do ashore. For Captain Vaughan was convinced of the fundamental truth that the place to

missionise Jack successfully is at sea. But it is quite impossible to do this in the Merchant Service unless you can persuade converted sailors to continue their career in the fo'c'sle. It seems hard that this should be so, but men have made, men do make, similar sacrifices for God every day, and that without any trumpeting of their deeds abroad. However, when Captain Vaughan heard Saul's side of the matter and considered it fully, he altered his mind as far as Saul was concerned, and almost immediately got him a berth as a foreman rigger, a post he was eminently qualified to fill.

Saul soon settled down to shore life, for sailors are the most adaptable of men. His help now regularly given at the Mission was a most blessed boon to them. Out of his wages, which averaged forty-five shillings weekly, he set aside fifteen shillings for the Mission. They were now, indeed, a stalwart band, doing a splendid work in the midst of their own people, a work that certainly could not have been done so well by any other organisation whatever. And any one of the principal workers was a host in himself. Jemmy, mellowing from day to day under the sunny atmosphere of his happy home life, was noticeably less insistent upon the eternal damnation of literal fire awaiting those who did not come to Jesus while here below. He gave his loving humanity a chance, and began dimly to recognise the great fact of the pre-eminence of love over fear. This reacted healthily also upon his treatment of those Christians who differed from him on minor points of doctrine, softened the asperities that often disfigure the characters of the most godly men when discussing the things that do not matter

Brother and Sister Salmon remained as they always had been, the peaceful light-shedders of the little band, looked up to and most tenderly loved by all the rest. Skipper Stevens and Peter Burn also remained as they were, in spite of the almost universally held idea that in the Christian life there is no such thing, that Christians must either advance or recede. I do not propose to argue this question, but if this be true how do we account for the very large number of Church members, familiar to us all, who are always in their places, always ready with their contributions, always leading week-day lives of purity, peace, and unspottedness from the world? Unambitious to occupy office of any kind, they greatly prefer to form part of the rank and file, to march with the common soldiery and do their duty humbly. Without any paltering with words must we not admit that these Christians are as stationary in their spiritual career as is the good and faithful servant in business, who, having attained a certain level, maintains it all his life, doing his duty faithfully as long as he is able and then regretfully retiring from his well-beloved work to his well-earned rest? I think so, and I believe that every pastor who is truly a shepherd is grateful for the knowledge that his congregation comprises some of these rooted and grounded ones.

But Maylie, Paterson, and Harrop were the wonders of the place. Their gifts were so very remarkable, their power over the people among whom they lived and worked so great, that it was no wonder overtures were again and again made to them to get them away into larger spheres of work. Again and again they were told that they were burying their talent in the earth, that they were wasting golden

opportunities, and so forth. No such arguments moved them one jot. And without attempting to decide whether they were right or not, I cannot but admire their simple loyalty to Jemmy, their loving forbearance with his undoubted limitations, their own humbleness, which felt that its proper sphere was the little lowly Mission where the Lord had found them ; and where, untrammelled by the too often hampering concomitants of belonging to a great society, they had been the glad instruments of so much real good. Maylie especially, although he was rising steadily to the head of affairs in the great firm where he earned his bread, and was now in a position that would have made him a decided acquisition to the roll of officers of any great Church, treated any suggestion that he should go up higher in the world of Christian work, as a joke. He would quietly say to any of his friends outside, when they in all seriousness remonstrated with him for still remaining in such company, 'It's of not the slightest use talking to me. I could not be happy anywhere else. I believe that the work God has given me to do here is exactly what I'm fit for. I feel as if nobody could do it better than I can, and I feel too, that it is a good thing in Christian work to keep low down. The work of God has never been better done than it was by the Apostles, and goodness knows, as far as externals went, they were so low down that they couldn't get any lower, right down on the ground. No, put me up a bit, make me an officeholder in some big Church, and I am afraid I should get full of sinful pride. Anyhow, I'm not going to run into temptation of that sort if I can possibly avoid it. I'll stick to the old Mission until God Himself shifts me out of it.'

Bill and Jack Maskery still maintained their free-lance connection with the Mission, Bill being exceptionally happy and contented there, especially as the boy whom he had rescued from the prison gate had turned out all right and a great comfort to him in his fast-increasing decrepitude. He had got the lad into a large shop close by the court in which they lived, where he was always handy, where his hours were good, and he was greatly esteemed. And poor old Bill was never tired of quoting that sublime line, 'At eventide it shall be light.' Woody, whose withered old frame seemed to have in it something of the gnarled and knotted fibre of the oak logs sawn from broken-up ships that he sold, still went on his way rejoicing. Never a member of the Mission—that is to say, inscribed on its books—he nevertheless came and went freely and much more frequently than anywhere else. He was always most heartily welcome, for he always brought with him a sense of power that lifted whatever was being done at the time on to a still higher plane.

Here stern necessity compels me to leave the Apostles of the South East, not in a blaze of splendour, but quietly doing their appointed work for God with all their might, happy in the doing of it, happier when they see fruits forthcoming, happiest of all in their acquaintanceship with God.



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