

HUME FERGUS

THE BISHOP'S
SECRET

Fergus Hume
The Bishop's Secret

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PREFACE

In his earlier works, notably in "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab" and "The Silent House in Pimlico," Mr. Hume won a reputation second to none for plot of the stirring, ingenious, misleading, and finally surprising kind, and for working out his plot in vigorous and picturesque English.

In "The Bishop's Secret," while there is no falling off in plot and style, there is a welcome and marvelous broadening out as to the cast of characters, representing an unusually wide range of typical men and women. These are not laboriously described by the author, but are made to reveal themselves in action and speech in a way that has, for the reader, all the charm of personal intercourse with living people.

Mr. Hume's treatment of the peculiar and exclusive ecclesiastical society of a small English cathedral city is quite worthy of Anthony Trollope, and his leading character, Bishop Pendle, is equal to Trollope's best bishop. The Reverend Mr. Cargrim, the Bishop's poor and most unworthy protégé, is a meaner Uriah Heep. Mrs. Pansey is the embodiment of all shrewishness, and yields unlimited amusement. The Gypsies are genuine – such as George Borrow, himself, would have pictured them – not the ignorant caricatures so frequently drawn by writers too lazy to study their subject.

Besides these types, there are several which seem to have had no exact prototypes in preceding fiction. Such are Doctor Graham, "The Man with a Scar," the Mosk family – father, mother, and daughter – Gabriel Pendle, Miss Winchello, and, last but not least, Mr. Baltic – a detective so unique in character and methods as to make Conan Doyle turn green with envy.

All in all, this story is so rich in the essential elements of worthy fiction – in characterization, exciting adventure, suggestions of the marvelous, wit, humor, pathos, and just enough of tragedy – that it is offered to the American public in all confidence that it will be generally and heartily welcomed.

THE PUBLISHERS.

CHAPTER I

'ENTER MRS PANSEY AS CHORUS'

Of late years an anonymous mathematician has declared that in the British Isles the female population is seven times greater than the male; therefore, in these days is fulfilled the scriptural prophecy that seven women shall lay hold of one man and entreat to be called by his name. Miss Daisy Norsham, a veteran Belgravian spinster, decided, after some disappointing seasons, that this text was particularly applicable to London. Doubtful, therefore, of securing a husband at the rate of one chance in seven, or dissatisfied at the prospect of a seventh share in a man, she resolved upon trying her matrimonial fortunes in the country. She was plain, this lady, as she was poor; nor could she rightly be said to be in the first flush of maidenhood. In all matters other than that of man-catching she was shallow past belief. Still, she did hope, by dint of some brisk campaigning in the diocese of Beorminster, to capture a whole man unto herself.

Her first step was to wheedle an invitation out of Mrs Pansey, an archdeacon's widow – then on a philanthropic visit to town – and she arrived, towards the end of July, in the pleasant cathedral city of Beorminster, in time to attend a reception at the bishop's palace. Thus the autumn manœuvres of Miss Norsham opened most auspiciously.

Mrs Pansey, with whom this elderly worshipper of Hymen had elected to stay during her visit, was a gruff woman, with a scowl, who 'looked all nose and eyebrows.' Few ecclesiastical matrons were so well known in the diocese of Beorminster as was Mrs Pansey; not many, it must be confessed, were so ardently hated, for there were few pies indeed in which this dear lady had not a finger; few keyholes through which her eye did not peer. Her memory and her tongue, severally and combined, had ruined half the reputations in the county. In short, she was a renowned social bully, and like most bullies she gained her ends by scaring the lives out of meeker and better-bred people than herself. These latter feared her 'scenes' as she rejoiced in them, and as she knew the pasts of her friends from their cradle upwards, she usually contrived, by a pitiless use of her famous memory, to put to rout anyone so ill-advised as to attempt a stand against her domineering authority. When her tall, gaunt figure – invariably arrayed in the blackest of black silks – was sighted in a room, those present either scuttled out of the way or judiciously held their peace, for everyone knew Mrs Pansey's talent for twisting the simplest observation into some evil shape calculated to get its author into trouble. She excelled in this particular method of making mischief. Possessed of ample means and ample leisure, both of these helped her materially to build up her reputation of a philanthropic bully. She literally swooped down upon the poor, taking one and all in charge to be fed, physicked, worked and guided according to her own ideas. In return for benefits conferred, she demanded an unconditional surrender of free will. Nobody was to have an opinion but Mrs Pansey; nobody knew what was good for them unless their ideas coincided with those of their patroness – which they never did. Mrs Pansey had never been a mother, yet, in her own opinion, there was nothing about children she did not know. She had not studied medicine, therefore she dubbed the doctors a pack of fools, saying she could cure where they failed. Be they tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, Mrs Pansey invariably knew more about their vocations than they themselves did or were ever likely to do. In short, this celebrated lady – for her reputation was more than local – was what the American so succinctly terms a 'she-boss'; and in a less enlightened age she would indubitably have been ducked in the Beorflete river as a meddlesome, scolding, clattering jade. Indeed, had anyone been so brave as to ignore the flight of time and thus suppress her, the righteousness of the act would most assuredly have remained unquestioned.

Now, as Miss Norsham wanted, for her own purposes, to 'know the ropes,' she was fortunate to come within the gloom of Mrs Pansey's silken robes. For Mrs Pansey certainly knew everyone, if she did not know everything, and whomsoever she chaperoned had to be received by Beorminster

society, whether Beorminster society liked it or not. All *protégées* of Mrs Pansey sheltered under the ægis of her terrible reputation, and woe to the daring person who did not accept them as the most charming, the cleverest, and in every way the most desirable of their sex. But in the memory of man, no one had ever sustained battle against Mrs Pansey, and so this feminine Selkirk remained monarch of all she surveyed, and ruled over a community consisting mainly of canons, vicars and curates, with their respective wives and offsprings. There were times when her subjects made use of language not precisely ecclesiastic, and not infrequently Mrs Pansey's name was mentally included in the Commination Service.

Thus it chanced that Daisy, the spinster, found herself in Mrs Pansey's carriage on her way to the episcopalian reception, extremely well pleased with herself, her dress, her position, and her social guardian angel. The elder lady was impressively gloomy in her usual black silk, fashioned after the early Victorian mode, when elegance invariably gave place to utility. Her headgear dated back to the later Georgian epoch. It consisted mainly of a gauze turban twinkling with jet ornaments. Her bosom was defended by a cuirass of cold-looking steel beads, finished off at the throat by a gigantic brooch, containing the portrait and hair of the late archdeacon. Her skirts were lengthy and voluminous, so that they swept the floor with a creepy rustle like the frou-frou of a brocaded spectre. She wore black silk mittens, and on either bony wrist a band of black velvet clasped with a large cameo set hideously in pale gold. Thus attired – a veritable caricature by Leech – this survival of a prehistoric age sat rigidly upright and mangled the reputations of all and sundry.

Miss Norsham, in all but age, was very modern indeed. Her neck was lean; her arms were thin. She made up for lack of quality by display of quantity. In her *décolleté* costume she appeared as if composed of bones and diamonds. The diamonds represented the bulk of Miss Norsham's wealth, and she used them not only for the adornment of her uncomely person, but for the deception of any possible suitor into the belief that she was well dowered. She affected gauzy fabrics and fluttering baby ribbons, so that her dress was as the fleecy flakes of snow clinging to a well-preserved ruin.

For the rest she had really beautiful eyes, a somewhat elastic mouth, and a straight nose well powdered to gloss over its chronic redness. Her teeth were genuine and she cultivated what society novelists term silvery peals of laughter. In every way she accentuated or obliterated nature in her efforts to render herself attractive.

Ichabod was writ large on her powdered brow, and it needed no great foresight to foresee the speedy approach of acidulated spinsterhood. But, to do her justice, this regrettable state of single blessedness was far from being her own fault. If her good fortune had but equalled her courage and energy she should have relinquished celibacy years ago.

'Oh, dear – dear Mrs Pansey,' said the younger lady, strong in adjectives and interjections and reduplication of both, 'is the bishop very, very sweet?'

'He's sweet enough as bishops go,' growled Mrs Pansey, in her deep-toned voice. 'He might be better, and he might be worse. There is too much Popish superstition and worship of idols about him for my taste. If the departed can smell,' added the lady, with an illustrative sniff, 'the late archdeacon must turn in his grave when those priests of Baal and Dagon burn incense at the morning service. Still, Bishop Pendle has his good points, although he *is* a time-server and a sycophant.'

'Is he one of the Lancashire Pendles, dear Mrs Pansey?'

'A twenty-fifth cousin or thereabouts. He says he is a nearer relation, but I know much more about it than he does. If you want an ornamental bishop with good legs for gaiters, and a portly figure for an apron, Dr Pendle's the man. But as a God-fearing priest' (with a groan), 'a simple worshipper' (groan) 'and a lowly, repentant sinner' (groan), 'he leaves much – much to be desired.'

'Oh, Mrs Pansey, the dear bishop a sinner?'

'Why not?' cried Mrs Pansey, ferociously; 'aren't we all miserable sinners? Dr Pendle's a human worm, just as you are – as I am. You may dress him in lawn sleeves and a mitre, and make pagan genuflections before his throne, but he is only a worm for all that.'

'What about his wife?' asked Daisy, to avert further expansion of this text.

'A poor thing, my dear, with a dilated heart and not as much blood in her body as would fill a thimble. She ought to be in a hospital, and would be, too, if I had my way. Lolling all day long on a sofa, and taking glasses of champagne between doses of iron and extract of beef; then giving receptions and wearing herself out. How he ever came to marry the white-faced doll I can't imagine. She was a Mrs Creaght when she caught him.'

'Oh, really! a widow?'

'Of course, of course. You don't suppose she's a bigamist even though he's a fool, do you?' and the eyebrows went up and down in the most alarming manner. 'The bishop – he was a London curate then – married her some eight-and-twenty years ago, and I daresay he has repented of it ever since. They have three children – George' (with a whisk of her fan at the mention of each name), 'who is a good-looking idiot in a line regiment; Gabriel, a curate as white-faced as his mother, and no doubt afflicted as she is with heart trouble. He was in Whitechapel, but his father put him in a curacy here – it was sheer nepotism. Then there is Lucy; she is the best of the bunch, which is not saying much. They've engaged her to young Sir Harry Brace, and now they are giving this reception to celebrate having inveigled him into the match.'

'Engaged?' sighed the fair Daisy, enviously. 'Oh, do tell me if this girl is really, really pretty.'

'Humph,' said the eyebrows, 'a pale, washed-out rag of a creature – but what can you expect from such a mother? No brains, no style, no conversation; always a simpering, weak-eyed rag baby. Oh, my dear, what fools men are!'

'Ah, you may well say that, dear Mrs Pansey,' assented the spinster, thinking wrathfully of this unknown girl who had succeeded where she had failed. 'Is it a very, very good match?'

'Ten thousand a year and a fine estate, my dear. Sir Harry is a nice young fellow, but a fool. An absentee landlord, too,' grumbled Mrs Pansey, resentfully. 'Always running over the world poking his nose into what doesn't concern him, like the Wandering Jew or the *Flying Dutchman*. Ah, my dear, husbands are not what they used to be. The late archdeacon never left his fireside while I was there. I knew better than to let him go to Paris or Peking, or some of those sinks of iniquity. Cook and Gaze indeed!' snorted Mrs Pansey, indignantly; 'I would abolish them by Act of Parliament. They turn men into so many Satans walking to and fro upon the earth. Oh, the immorality of these latter days! No wonder the end of all things is predicted.'

Miss Norsham paid little attention to the latter portion of this diatribe. As Sir Harry Brace was out of the matrimonial market it conveyed no information likely to be of use to her in the coming campaign. She wished to be informed as to the number and the names of eligible men, and forewarned with regard to possible rivals.

'And who is really and truly the most beautiful girl in Beorminster?' she asked abruptly.

'Mab Arden,' replied Mrs Pansey, promptly. 'There, now,' with an emphatic blow of her fan, 'she is pretty, if you like, though I daresay there is more art than nature about her.'

'Who is Mab Arden, dear Mrs Pansey?'

'She is Miss Whichello's niece, that's who she is.'

'Whichello? Oh, good gracious me! what a very, very funny name. Is Miss Whichello a foreigner?'

'Foreigner? Bah!' cried Mrs Pansey, like a stentorian ram, 'she belongs to a good old English family, and, in my opinion, she disgraces them thoroughly. A meddlesome old maid, who wants to foist her niece on to George Pendle; and she's likely to succeed, too,' added the lady, rubbing her nose with a vexed air, 'for the young ass is in love with Mab, although she is three years older than he is. Mr Cargrim also likes the girl, though I daresay it is money with him.'

'Really! Mr Cargrim?'

'Yes, he is the bishop's chaplain; a Jesuit in disguise I call him, with his moping and mowing and sneaky ways. Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth; oh, dear no! I gave my opinion about him pretty plainly to Dr Graham, I can tell you, and Graham's the only man with brains in this city of fools.'

'Is Dr Graham young?' asked Miss Norsham, in the faint hope that Mrs Pansey's list of inhabitants might include a wealthy bachelor.

'Young? He's sixty, if you call that young, and in his second childhood. An Atheist, too. Tom Payn, Colonel Ingersoll, Viscount Amberly – those are his gods, the pagan! I'd burn him on a tar-barrel if I had my way. It's a pity we don't stick to some customs of our ancestors.'

'Oh, dear me, are there no young men at all?'

'Plenty, and all idiots. Brainless officers, whose wives would have to ride on a baggage-waggon; silly young squires, whose ideal of womanhood is a brazen barmaid; and simpering curates, put into the Church as the fools of their respective families. I don't know what men are coming to,' groaned Mrs Pansey. 'The late archdeacon was clever and pious; he honoured and obeyed me as the marriage service says a man should do. I was the light of the dear man's eyes.'

Had Mrs Pansey stated that she had been the terror of the late archdeacon's life she would have been vastly nearer the truth, but such a remark never occurred to her. Although she had bullied and badgered the wretched little man until he had seized the first opportunity of finding in the grave the peace denied him in life, she really and truly believed that she had been a model wife. The egotism of first person singular was so firmly ingrained in the woman that she could not conceive what a scourge she was to mankind in general; what a trial she had been to her poor departed husband in particular. If the late Archdeacon Pansey had not died he would doubtless have become a missionary to some cannibal tribe in the South Seas in the hope that his tough helpmate would be converted into 'long-pig.' But, unluckily for Beorminster, he was dead and his relict was a mourning widow, who constantly referred to her victim as a perfect husband. And yet Mrs Pansey considered that Anthony Trollope's celebrated Mrs Proudie was an overdrawn character.

As to Miss Norsham, she was in the depths of despair, for, if Mrs Pansey was to be believed, there was no eligible husband for her in Beorminster. It was with a heavy heart that the spinster entered the palace, and it was with the courage born of desperation that she perked up and smiled on the gay crowd she found within.

CHAPTER II

THE BISHOP IS WANTED

The episcopalian residence, situate some distance from the city, was a mediæval building, enshrined in the remnant of a royal chase, and in its perfect quiet and loneliness resembled the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. Its composite architecture was of many centuries and many styles, for bishop after bishop had pulled down portions and added others, had levelled a tower here and erected a wing there, until the result was a jumble of divers designs, incongruous but picturesque. Time had mellowed the various parts into one rich coloured whole of perfect beauty, and elevated on a green rise, surrounded by broad stone terraces, with towers and oriels and turrets and machicolated battlements; clothed with ivy, buried amid ancient trees, it looked like the realisation of a poet's dream. Only long ages and many changing epochs; only home-loving prelates, ample monies, and architects of genius, could have created so beautiful and unique a fabric. It was the admiration of transatlantic tourists with a twang; the desire of millionaires. Aladdin's industrious genii would have failed to build such a masterpiece, unless their masters had arranged to inhabit it five centuries or so after construction. Time had created it, as Time would destroy it, but at present it was in perfect preservation, and figured in steel-plate engravings as one of the stately homes of England. No wonder the mitre of Beorminster was a coveted prize, when its gainer could dwell in so noble and matchless a mansion.

As the present prelate was an up-to-date bishop, abreast of his time and fond of his creature comforts, the interior of the palace was modernised completely in accordance with the luxurious demands of nineteenth century civilisation. The stately reception-rooms – thrown open on this night to what the *Beorminster Weekly Chronicle*, strong in foreign tongues, tautologically called 'the *élite* and *crème de la crème* of the diocese' – were brilliantly illuminated by electric lamps and furnished magnificently throughout, in keeping with their palatial appearance. The ceilings were painted in the Italian style, with decently-clothed Olympian deities; the floors were of parquetry, polished so highly, and reflecting so truthfully, that the guests seemed to be walking, in some magical way, upon still water. Noble windows, extending from floor to roof, were draped with purple curtains, and stood open to the quiet moonlit world without; between these, tall mirrors flashed back gems and colours, moving figures and floods of amber radiance, and enhanced by reduplicated reflections the size of the rooms. Amid all this splendour of warmth and tints and light moved the numerous guests of the bishop. Almost every invitation had been accepted, for the receptions at the palace were on a large and liberal scale, particularly as regards eating and drinking. Dr Pendle, in addition to his official salary, possessed a handsome income, and spent it in the lavish style of a Cardinal Wolsey. He was wise enough to know how the outward and visible signs of prosperity and dignity affect the popular imagination, and frequently invited the clergy and laity to feast at the table of Mother Church, to show that she could dispense loaves and fishes with the best, and vie with Court and Society in the splendour and hospitality of her entertainments. As he approved of an imposing ritual at the cathedral, so he affected a magnificent way of living at the palace. Mrs Pansey and many others declared that Dr Pendle's aims in that direction were Romish. Perhaps they were, but he could scarcely have followed a better example, since the Church of Peter owes much of its power to a judicious employment of riches and ritual, and a dexterous gratification of the lust of the eye. The Anglican Church is more dignified now than she was in the days of the Georges, and very rightly, too, since God's ministers should not be the poorest or meanest of men.

Naturally, as the host was clerical and the building ecclesiastical, the clergy predominated at this entertainment. The bishop and the dean were the only prelates of their rank present, but there were archdeacons, and canons and rectors, and a plentiful supply of curates, all, in their own opinion,

bishops in embryo. The shape and expression of the many faces were various – ascetic, worldly, pale, red, round, thin, fat, oval; each one revealed the character of its owner. Some lean, bent forms were those of men filled with the fire of religion for its own sake; others, stout, jolly gentlemen in comfortable livings, loved the loaves and fishes of the Church as much as her precepts. The descendants of Friar Tuck and the Vicar of Bray were here, as well as those who would have been Wycliffes and Latimers had the fires of Smithfield still been alight. Obsequious curates bowed down to pompous prebendaries; bluff rectors chatted on cordial terms with suave archdeacons; and in the fold of the Church there were no black sheep on this great occasion. The shepherds and pastors of the Beorminster flock were polite, entertaining, amusing, and not too masterful, so that the general air was quite arcadian.

The laity also formed a strong force. There were lords magnificently condescending to commoners; M.P.s who talked politics, and M.P.s who had had enough of that sort of thing at St Stephen's and didn't; hearty squires from adjacent county seats; prim bankers, with whom the said squires were anxious to be on good terms, since they were the priests of Mammon; officers from near garrison towns, gay and lighthearted, who devoted themselves to the fairer portion of the company; and a sprinkling of barristers, literary men, hardy explorers, and such like minnows among Tritons. Last, but not least, the Mayor of Beorminster was present and posed as a modern Whittington – half commercial wealth, half municipal dignity. If some envious Anarchist had exploded a dynamite bomb in the vicinity of the palace on that night, the greatest, the most intellectual, the richest people of the county would have come to an untimely end, and then the realm of England, like the people themselves, would have gone to pieces. The *Beorminster Chronicle* reporter – also present with a flimsy book and a restless little pencil – worked up this idea on the spot into a glowing paragraph.

Very ungallantly the ladies have been left to the last; but now the last shall be first, although it is difficult to do the subject justice. The matrons of surrounding parishes, the ladies of Beorminster society, the damsels of town and country, were all present in their best attire, chattering and smiling, and becking and bowing, after the observant and diplomatic ways of their sex. Such white shoulders! such pretty faces! such Parisian toilettes! such dresses of obviously home manufacture never were seen in one company. The married ladies whispered scandal behind their fans, and in a Christian spirit shot out the lip of scorn at their social enemies; the young maidens sought for marriageable men, and lurked in darkish corners for the better ensnaring of impressionable males. Cupid unseen mingled in the throng and shot his arrows right and left, not always with the best result, as many post-nuptial experiences showed. There was talk of the gentle art of needlework, of the latest bazaar and the agreeable address delivered thereat by Mr Cargrim; the epicene pastime of lawn tennis was touched upon; and ardent young persons discussed how near they could go to Giant Pope's cave without getting into the clutches of its occupant. The young men talked golfing, parish work, horses, church, male millinery, polo and shooting; the young ladies chatted about Paris fashions and provincial adaptations thereof, the London season, the latest engagement, and the necessity of reviving the flirtatious game of croquet. Black coats, coloured dresses, flashing jewels, many-hued flowers, – the restless crowd resembled a bed of gaudy tulips tossed by the wind. And all this chattering, laughing, clattering, glittering mass of well-bred, well-groomed humanity moved, and swayed, and gyrated under the white glare of the electric lamps. Urbs in Rus; Belgravia in the Provinces; Vanity Fair amid the cornfields; no wonder this entertainment of Bishop and Mrs Pendle was the event of the Beorminster year.

Like an agreeable Jupiter amid adoring mortals, the bishop, with his chaplain in attendance, moved through the rooms, bestowing a word here, a smile there, and a hearty welcome on all. A fine-looking man was the Bishop of Beorminster; as stately in appearance as any prelate drawn by Du Maurier. He was over six feet, and carried himself in a soldierly fashion, as became a leader of the Church Militant. His legs were all that could be desired to fill out episcopalian gaiters; and his bland, clean-shaven face beamed with smiles and benignity. But Bishop Pendle was not the mere figure-head Mrs Pansey's malice declared him to be; he had great administrative powers, great organising

capabilities, and controlled his diocese in a way which did equal credit to his heart and head. As he chatted with his guests and did the honours of the palace, he seemed to be the happiest of men, and well worthy of his exalted post. With a splendid position, a charming wife, a fine family, an obedient flock of clergy and laity, the bishop's lines were cast in pleasant places. There was not even the proverbial crumpled rose-leaf to render uncomfortable the bed he had made for himself. He was like an ecclesiastical Jacob – blessed above all men.

'Well, bishop!' said Dr Graham, a meagre sceptic, who did not believe in the endurance of human felicity, 'I congratulate you.'

'On my daughter's engagement?' asked the prelate, smiling pleasantly.

'On everything. Your position, your family, your health, your easy conscience; all is too smooth, too well with you. It can't last, your lordship, it can't last,' and the doctor shook his bald head, as no doubt Solon did at Croesus when he snubbed that too fortunate monarch.

'I am indeed blessed in the condition of life to which God has been pleased to call me.'

'No doubt! No doubt! But remember Polycrates, bishop, and throw your ring into the sea.'

'My dear Dr Graham,' said the bishop, rather stiffly, 'I do not believe in such paganism. God has blessed me beyond my deserts, no doubt, and I thank Him in all reverence for His kindly care.'

'Hum! Hum!' muttered Graham, shaking his head. 'When men thank fortune for her gifts she usually turns her back on them.'

'I am no believer in such superstitions, doctor.'

'Well, well, bishop, you have tempted the gods, let us see what they will do.'

'Gods or God, doctor?' demanded the bishop, with magnificent displeasure.

'Whichever you like, my lord; whichever you like.'

The bishop was nettled and rather chilled by this pessimism. He felt that it was his duty as a Churchman to administer a rebuke; but Dr Graham's pagan views were well known, and a correction, however dexterously administered, would only lead to an argument. A controversy with Graham was no joke, as he was as subtle as Socrates in discovering and attacking his adversary's weak points; so, not judging the present a fitting occasion to risk a fall, the bishop smoothed away an incipient frown, and blandly smiling, moved on, followed by his chaplain. Graham looked grimly after this modern Cardinal Wolsey.

'I have never,' soliloquised the sceptic, 'I have never known a man without his skeleton. I wonder if you have one, my lord. You look cheerful, you seem thoroughly happy; but you are too fortunate. If you have not a skeleton now, I feel convinced you will have to build a cupboard for one shortly. You thank blind fortune under the alias of God? Well! well! we shall see the result of your thanks. Wolsey! Napoleon! Bismarck! they all fell when most prosperous. Hum! hum! hum!'

Dr Graham had no reason to make this speech, beyond his belief – founded upon experience – that calms are always succeeded by storms. At present the bishop stood under a serene sky; and in no quarter could Graham descry the gathering of the tempest he prophesied. But for all that he had a premonition that evil days were at hand; and, sceptic as he was, he could not shake off the uneasy feeling. His mother had been a Highland woman, and the Celt is said to be gifted with second sight. Perhaps Graham inherited the maternal gift of forecasting the future, for he glanced ominously at the stately form of his host, and shook his head. He thought the bishop was too confident of continuous sunshine.

In the meantime, Dr Pendle, quite free from such forebodings, unfortunately came within speaking distance of Mrs Pansey, who, in her bell of St Paul's voice, was talking to a group of meek listeners. Daisy Norsham had long ago seized upon Gabriel Pendle, and was chatting with him on the edge of the circle, quite heedless of her chaperon's monologue. When Mrs Pansey saw the bishop she swooped down on him before he could get out of the way, which he would have done had courtesy permitted it. Mrs Pansey was the one person Dr Pendle dreaded, and if the late archdeacon had been

alive he would have encouraged the missionary project with all his heart. 'To every man his own fear.' Mrs Pansey was the bishop's.

'Bishop!' cried the lady, in her most impressive archidiaconal manner, 'about that public-house, The Derby Winner, it must be removed.'

Cargrim, who was deferentially smiling at his lordship's elbow, cast a swift glance at Gabriel when he heard Mrs Pansey's remark. He had a belief – founded upon spying – that Gabriel knew too much about the public-house mentioned, which was in his district; and this belief was strengthened when he saw the young man start at the sound of the name. Instinctively he kept his eyes on Gabriel's face, which looked disturbed and anxious; too much so for social requirements.

'It must be removed,' repeated the bishop, gently; 'and why, Mrs Pansey?'

'Why, bishop? You ask why? Because it is a hot-bed of vice and betting and gambling; that's why!'

'But I really cannot see – I have not the power –'

'It's near the cathedral, too,' interrupted Mrs Pansey, whose manners left much to be desired. 'Scandalous!'

'When God erects a house of prayer,
The devil builds a chapel there.'

'Isn't it your duty to eradicate plague-spots, bishop?'

Before Dr Pendle could answer this rude question, a servant approached and spoke in a whisper to his master. The bishop looked surprised.

'A man to see me at this hour – at this time,' said he, repeating the message aloud. 'Who is he? What is his name?'

'I don't know, your lordship. He refused to give his name, but he insists upon seeing your lordship at once.'

'I can't see him!' said the bishop, sharply; 'let him call to-morrow.'

'My lord, he says it is a matter of life and death.'

Dr Pendle frowned. 'Most unbecoming language!' he murmured. 'Perhaps it may be as well to humour him. Where is he?'

'In the entrance hall, your lordship!'

'Take him into the library and say I will see him shortly. Most unusual,' said the bishop to himself. Then added aloud, 'Mrs Pansey, I am called away for a moment; pray excuse me.'

'We must talk about The Derby Winner later on,' said Mrs Pansey, determinedly.

'Oh, yes! – that is – really – I'll see.'

'Shall I accompany your lordship?' murmured Cargrim, officiously.

'No, Mr Cargrim, it is not necessary. I must see this man as he speaks so strongly, but I daresay he is only some pertinacious person who thinks that a bishop should be at the complete disposal of the public – the exacting public!'

With this somewhat petulant speech Dr Pendle walked away, not sorry to find an opportunity of slipping out of a noisy argument with Mrs Pansey. That lady's parting words were that she should expect him back in ten minutes to settle the question of The Derby Winner; or rather to hear how she intended to settle it. Cargrim, pleased at being left behind, since it gave him a chance of watching Gabriel, urged Mrs Pansey to further discussion of the question, and had the satisfaction of seeing that such discussion visibly disconcerted the curate.

And Dr Pendle? In all innocence he left the reception-rooms to speak with his untoward visitor in the library; but although he knew it not, he was entering upon a dark and tortuous path, the end of which he was not destined to see for many a long day. Dr Graham's premonition was likely to prove true, for in the serene sky under which the bishop had moved for so long, a tempest was gathering fast. He should have taken the doctor's advice and have sacrificed his ring like Polycrates, but, as in

the case of that old pagan, the gods might have tossed back the gift and pursued their relentless aims. The bishop had no thoughts like these. As yet he had no skeleton, but the man in the library was about to open a cupboard and let out its grisly tenant to haunt prosperous Bishop Pendle. To him, as to all men, evil had come at the appointed hour.

CHAPTER III

THE UNFORESEEN HAPPENS

'I fear,' said Cargrim, with a gentle sigh, 'I fear you are right about that public-house, Mrs Pansey.'

The chaplain made this remark to renew the discussion, and if possible bring Gabriel into verbal conflict with the lady. He had a great idea of managing people by getting them under his thumb, and so far quite deserved Mrs Pansey's epithet of a Jesuit. Of late – as Cargrim knew by a steady use of his pale blue eyes – the curate had been visiting The Derby Winner, ostensibly on parochial business connected with the ill-health of Mrs Mosk, the landlord's wife. But there was a handsome daughter of the invalid who acted as barmaid, and Gabriel was a young and inflammable man; so, putting this and that together, the chaplain thought he discovered the germs of a scandal. Hence his interest in Mrs Pansey's proposed reforms.

'Right!' echoed the archidiaconal widow, loudly, 'of course I am right. The Derby Winner is a nest of hawks. William Mosk would have disgraced heathen Rome in its worst days; as for his daughter – well!' Mrs Pansey threw a world of horror into the ejaculation.

'Miss Mosk is a well-conducted young lady,' said Gabriel, growing red and injudicious.

'Lady!' bellowed Mrs Pansey, shaking her fan; 'and since when have brazen, painted barmaids become ladies, Mr Pendle?'

'She is most attentive to her sick mother,' protested the curate, wincing.

'No doubt, sir. I presume even Jezebel had some redeeming qualities. Rubbish! humbug! don't tell me! Can good come out of Nazareth?'

'Good did come out of Nazareth, Mrs Pansey.'

'That is enough, Mr Pendle; do not pollute young ears with blasphemy. And you the son of a bishop – the curate of a parish! Remember what is to be the portion of mockers, sir. What happened to the men who threw stones at David?'

'Oh, but really, dear Mrs Pansey, you know Mr Pendle is not throwing stones.'

'People who live in glass houses dare not, my dear. I doubt your interest in this young person, Mr Pendle. She is one who tires her head and paints her face, lying in wait for comely youths that she may destroy them. She –'

'Excuse me, Mrs Pansey!' cried Gabriel, with an angry look, 'you speak too freely and too ignorantly. The Derby Winner is a well-conducted house, for Mrs Mosk looks after it personally, and her daughter is an excellent young woman. I do not defend the father, but I hope to bring him to a sense of his errors in time. There is a charity which thinketh no evil, Mrs Pansey,' and with great heat Gabriel, forgetting his manners, walked off without taking leave of either the lady or Miss Norsham. Mrs Pansey tossed her turban and snorted, but seeing very plainly that she had gone too far, held for once her virulent tongue. Cargrim rubbed his hands and laughed softly.

'Our young friend talks warmly, Mrs Pansey. The natural chivalry of youth, my dear lady – nothing more.'

'I'll make it my business to assure myself that it *is* nothing more,' said Mrs Pansey, in low tones. 'I fear very much that the misguided young man has fallen into the lures of this daughter of Heth. Do you know anything about her, Mr Cargrim?'

Too wise to commit himself to speech, the chaplain cast up his pale eyes and looked volumes. This was quite enough for Mrs Pansey; she scented evil like a social vulture, and taking Cargrim's arm dragged him away to find out all the bad she could about The Derby Winner and its too attractive barmaid.

Left to herself, Miss Norsham seized upon Dean Alder, to whom she had been lately introduced, and played with the artillery of her eyes on that unattractive churchman. Mr Dean was old and wizen, but he was unmarried and rich, so Miss Norsham thought it might be worth her while to play Vivien to this clerical Merlin. His weak point, – speedily discovered, – was archæology, and she was soon listening to a dry description of his researches into Beorminster municipal chronicles. But it was desperately hard work to fix her attention.

'Beorminster,' explained the pedantic dean, not unmoved by his listener's artificial charms, 'is derived from two Anglo-Saxon words – Bëorh a hill, and mynster the church of a monastery. Anciently, our city was called Bëorhmynster, "the church of the hill," for, as you can see, my dear young lady, our cathedral is built on the top of a considerable rise, and thence gained its name. The townsfolk were formerly vassals, and even serfs, of the monastery which was destroyed by Henry VIII.; but the Reformation brought about by that king put an end to the abbot's power. The head of the Bëorhmynster monastery was a mitred abbot –'

'And Bishop Pendle is a mitred bishop,' interposed the fair Daisy, to show the quickness of her understanding, and thereby displaying her ignorance.

'All bishops are mitred,' said Dr Alder, testily; 'a crozier and a mitre are the symbols of their high office. But the Romish abbots of Bëorhmynster were not bishops although they were mitred prelates.'

'Oh, how very, very amusing,' cried Daisy, suppressing a yawn. 'And the name of the river, dear Mr Dean? Does Beorflete mean the church of the hill too?'

'Certainly not, Miss Norsham. "Flete," formerly "fleot," is a Scandinavian word and signifies "a flood," "a stream," "a channel." Bëorhfleot, or – as we now erroneously call it – Beorflete, means, in the vulgar tongue, the flood or stream of the hill. Even in Normandy the word fleot has been corrupted, for the town now called Harfleur was formerly correctly designated "Havoflete." But I am afraid you find this information dull, Miss Norsham!'

This last remark was occasioned by Daisy yawning. It is true that she held a fan, and had politely hidden her mouth when yawning; unfortunately, the fan was of transparent material, and Daisy quite forgot that Mr Dean could see the yawn, which he certainly did. In some confusion she extricated herself from an awkward situation by protesting that she was not tired but hungry, and suggested that Dr Alder should continue his instructive conversation at supper. Mollified by this dexterous evasion, which he saw no reason to disbelieve, the dean politely escorted his companion to the regions of champagne and chicken, both of which aided the lady to sustain further doses of dry-as-dust facts dug out of a monastic past by the persevering Dr Alder. It was in this artful fashion that the town mouse strove to ensnare the church mouse, and succeeded so well that when Mr Dean went home to his lonely house he concluded that it was just as well the monastic institution of celibacy had been abolished.

On leaving Mrs Pansey in disgust, Gabriel proceeded with considerable heat into the next room, where his mother held her court as hostess. Mrs Pendle was a pale, slight, small-framed woman with golden hair, languid eyes, and a languid manner. Owing to her delicate health she could not stand for any length of time, and therefore occupied a large and comfortable arm-chair. Her daughter Lucy, who resembled her closely in looks, but who had more colour in her face, stood near at hand talking to her lover. Both ladies were dressed in white silk, with few ornaments, and looked more like sisters than mother and daughter. Certainly Mrs Pendle appeared surprisingly young to be the parent of a grown-up family, but her continuance of youth was not due to art, as Mrs Pansey averred, but to the quiet and undisturbed life which her frail health compelled her to lead. The bishop was tenderly attached to her, and even at this late stage of their married life behaved towards her more like a lover than a husband. He warded off all worries and troubles from her; he surrounded her with pleasant people, and made her life luxurious and peaceful by every means obtainable in the way of money and influence. It was no wonder that Mrs Pendle, treading the Primrose Path with a devoted and

congenial companion, appeared still young. She looked as fair and fragile as a peri, and as free from mortal cares.

'Is that you, Gabriel?' she said in a low, soft voice, smiling gently on her younger and favourite son. 'You look disturbed, my dear boy!'

'Mrs Pansey!' said Gabriel, and considering that the name furnished all necessary information, sat down near his mother and took one of her delicate hands in his own to smooth and fondle.

'Oh, indeed! Mrs Pansey!' echoed the bishop's wife, smiling still more; and with a slight shrug cast an amused look at Lucy, who in her turn caught Sir Harry's merry eyes and laughed outright.

'Old catamaran!' said Brace, loudly.

'Oh, Harry! Hush!' interposed Lucy, with an anxious glance, 'You shouldn't.'

'Why not? But for the present company I would say something much stronger.'

'I wish you would,' said Gabriel, easing his stiff collar with one finger; 'my cloth forbids me to abuse Mrs Pansey properly.'

'What has she been doing now, Gabriel?'

'Ordering the bishop to have The Derby Winner removed, mother.'

'The Derby Winner,' repeated Mrs Pendle, in puzzled tones; 'is that a horse?'

'A public-house, mother; it is in my district, and I have been lately visiting the wife of the landlord, who is very ill. Mrs Pansey wants the house closed and the woman turned out into the streets, so far as I can make out!'

'The Derby Winner is my property,' said Sir Harry, bluffly, 'and it sha'n't be shut up for a dozen Mrs Panseys.'

'Think of a dozen Mrs Panseys,' murmured Lucy, pensively.

'Think of Bedlam and Pandemonium, my dear! Thank goodness Mrs Pansey is the sole specimen of her kind. Nature broke the mould when that clacking nuisance was turned out. She –'

'Harry! you really must not speak so loud. Mrs Pansey might hear. Come with me, dear. I must look after our guests, for I am sure mother is tired.'

'I *am* tired,' assented Mrs Pendle, with a faint sigh. 'Thank you, Lucy, I willingly make you my representative. Gabriel will stay beside me.'

'Here is Miss Tancred,' observed Harry Brace, in an undertone.

'Oh, she must not come near mother,' whispered Lucy, in alarm. 'Take her to the supper-room, Harry.'

'But she'll tell me the story of how she lost her purse at the Army and Navy Stores, Lucy.'

'You can bear hearing it better than mother can. Besides, she'll not finish it; she never does.'

Sir Harry groaned, but like an obedient lover intercepted a withered old dame who was the greatest bore in the town. She usually told a digressive story about a lost purse, but hitherto had never succeeded in getting to the point, if there was one. Accepting the suggestion of supper with alacrity, she drifted away on Sir Harry's arm, and no doubt mentioned the famous purse before he managed to fill her mouth and stop her prosing.

Lucy, who had a quiet humour of her own in spite of her demure looks, laughed at the dejection and martyrdom of Sir Harry; and taking the eagerly-proffered arm of a callow lieutenant, ostentatiously and hopelessly in love with her, went away to play her part of deputy hostess. She moved from group to group, and everywhere received smiles and congratulations, for she was a general favourite, and, with the exception of Mrs Pansey, everyone approved of her engagement. Behind a floral screen a band of musicians, who called themselves the Yellow Hungarians, and individually possessed the most unpronounceable names, played the last waltz, a smooth, swinging melody which made the younger guests long for a dance. In fact, the callow lieutenant boldly suggested that a waltz should be attempted, with himself and Lucy to set the example; but his companion snubbed him unmercifully for his boldness, and afterwards restored his spirits by taking him to the supper-room. Here they found Miss Tancred in the full flow of her purse story; so Lucy, having pity on her lover,

bestowed her escort on the old lady as a listener, and enjoyed supper at an isolated table with Sir Harry. The sucking Wellington could have murdered Brace with pleasure, and very nearly did murder Miss Tancred, for he plied her so constantly with delicacies that she got indigestion, and was thereby unable to finish about the purse.

Gabriel and his mother were not long left alone, for shortly there approached a brisk old lady, daintily dressed, who looked like a fairy godmother. She had a keen face, bright eyes like those of a squirrel, and in gesture and walk and glance was as restless as that animal. This piece of alacrity was Miss Whichello, who was the aunt of Mab Arden, the beloved of George Pendle. Mab was with her, and, gracious and tall, looked as majestic as any queen, as she paced in her stately manner by the old lady's side. Her beauty was that of Juno, for she was imperial and a trifle haughty in her manner. With dark hair, dark eyes, and dark complexion, she looked like an Oriental princess, quite different in appearance to her apple-cheeked, silvery-haired aunt. There was something Jewish about her rich, eastern beauty, and she might have been painted in her yellow dress as Esther or Rebecca, or even as Jael who slew Sisera on the going down of the sun.

'Well, good folks,' said the brisk little lady in a brisk little voice, 'and how are you both? Tired, Mrs Pendle? Of course, what else can you expect with late hours and your delicacies. I don't believe in these social gatherings.'

'Your presence here contradicts that assertion,' said Gabriel, giving up his chair.

'Oh, I am a martyr to duty. I came because Mab must be amused!'

'I only hope she is not disappointed,' said Mrs Pendle, kindly, for she knew how things were between her eldest son and the girl. 'I am sorry George is not here, my dear.'

'I did not expect him to be,' replied Mab, in her grave, contralto voice, and with a blush; 'he told me that he would not be able to get leave from his colonel.'

'Ha! his colonel knows what is good for young men,' cried Miss Whichello; 'work and diet both in moderate quantities. My dear Mrs Pendle, if you only saw those people in the supper-room! – simply digging their graves with their teeth. I pity the majority of them to-morrow morning.'

'Have you had supper, Miss Whichello?' asked Gabriel.

'Oh, yes! a biscuit and a glass of weak whisky and water; quite enough, too. Mab here has been drinking champagne recklessly.'

'Only half a glass, aunt; don't take away my character!'

'My dear, if you take half a glass, you may as well finish the bottle for the harm it does you. Champagne is poison; much or little, it is rank poison.'

'Come away, Miss Arden, and let us poison ourselves,' suggested the curate.

'It wouldn't do you any harm, Mrs Pendle,' cried the little old lady. 'You are too pale, and champagne, in your case, would pick you up. Iron and slight stimulants are what *you* need. I am afraid you are not careful what you eat.'

'I am not a dietitian, Miss Whichello.'

'I am, my dear ma'am; and look at me – sixty-two, and as brisk as a bee. I don't know the meaning of the word illness. In a good hour be it spoken,' added Miss Whichello, thinking she was tempting the gods. 'By the way, what is this about his lordship being ill?'

'The bishop ill!' faltered Mrs Pendle, half rising. 'He was perfectly well when I saw him last. Oh, dear me, what is this?'

'He's ill now, in the library, at all events.'

'Wait, mother,' said Gabriel, hastily. 'I will see my father. Don't rise; don't worry yourself; pray be calm.'

Gabriel walked quickly to the library, rather astonished to hear that his father was indisposed, for the bishop had never had a day's illness in his life. He saw by the demeanour of the guests that the indisposition of their host was known, for already an uneasy feeling prevailed, and several people

were departing. The door of the library was closed and locked. Cargrim was standing sentinel beside it, evidently irate at being excluded.

'You can't go in, Pendle,' said the chaplain, quickly. 'Dr Graham is with his lordship.'

'Is this sudden illness serious?'

'I don't know. His lordship refuses to see anyone but the doctor. He won't even admit me,' said Cargrim, in an injured tone.

'What has caused it?' asked Gabriel, in dismay.

'I don't know!' replied Cargrim, a second time. 'His lordship saw some stranger who departed ten minutes ago. Then he sent for Dr Graham! I presume this stranger is responsible for the bishop's illness.'

CHAPTER IV

THE CURIOSITY OF MR CARGRIM

Like that famous banquet, when Macbeth entertained unawares the ghost of gracious Duncan, the bishop's reception broke up in the most admired disorder. It was not Dr Pendle's wish that the entertainment should be cut short on his account, but the rumour – magnified greatly – of his sudden illness so dispirited his guests that they made haste to depart; and within an hour the palace was emptied of all save its usual inhabitants. Dr Graham in attendance on the bishop was the only stranger who remained, for Lucy sent away even Sir Harry, although he begged hard to stay in the hope of making himself useful. And the most unpleasant part of the whole incident was, that no one seemed to know the reason of Bishop Pendle's unexpected indisposition.

'He was quite well when I saw him last,' repeated poor Mrs Pendle over and over again. 'And I never knew him to be ill before. What does it all mean?'

'Perhaps papa's visitor brought him bad news,' suggested Lucy, who was hovering round her mother with smelling-salts and a fan.

Mrs Pendle shook her head in much distress. 'Your father has no secrets from me,' she said decisively, 'and, from all I know, it is impossible that any news can have upset him so much.'

'Dr Graham may be able to explain,' said Gabriel.

'I don't want Dr Graham's explanation,' whimpered Mrs Pendle, tearfully. 'I dislike of all things to hear from a stranger what should be told to myself. As your father's wife, he has no right to shut me out of his confidence – and the library,' finished Mrs Pendle, with an aggrieved afterthought.

Certainly the bishop's conduct was very strange, and would have upset even a less nervous woman than Mrs Pendle. Neither of her children could comfort her in any way, for, ignorant themselves of what had occurred, they could make no suggestions. Fortunately, at this moment, Dr Graham, with a reassuring smile on his face, made his appearance, and proceeded to set their minds at ease.

'Tut! tut! my dear lady!' he said briskly, advancing on Mrs Pendle, 'what is all this?'

'The bishop –'

'The bishop is suffering from a slight indisposition brought on by too much exertion in entertaining. He will be all right to-morrow.'

'This visitor has had nothing to do with papa's illness, then?'

'No, Miss Lucy. The visitor was only a decayed clergyman in search of help.'

'Cannot I see my husband?' was the anxious question of the bishop's wife.

Graham shrugged his shoulders, and looked doubtfully at the poor lady. 'Better not, Mrs Pendle,' he said judiciously. 'I have given him a soothing draught, and now he is about to lie down. There is no occasion for you to worry in the least. To-morrow morning you will be laughing over this needless alarm. I suggest that you should go to bed and take a stiff dose of valerian to sooth those shaky nerves of yours. Miss Lucy will see to that.'

'I should like to see the bishop,' persisted Mrs Pendle, whose instinct told her that the doctor was deceiving her.

'Well! well!' said he, good-humouredly, 'a wilful woman will have her own way. I know you won't sleep a wink unless your mind is set at rest, so you *shall* see the bishop. Take my arm, please.'

'I can walk by myself, thank you!' replied Mrs Pendle, testily; and nerved to unusual exertion by anxiety, she walked towards the library, followed by the bishop's family and his chaplain, which latter watched this scene with close attention.

'She'll collapse after this,' said Dr Graham, in an undertone to Lucy; 'you'll have a wakeful night, I fear.'

'I don't mind that, doctor, so long as there is no real cause for alarm.'

'I give you my word of honour, Miss Lucy, that this is a case of much ado about nothing.'

'Let us hope that such is the case,' said Cargrim, the Jesuit, in his softest tones, whereupon Graham looked at him with a pronounced expression of dislike.

'As a man, I don't tell lies; as a doctor, I never make false reports,' said he, coldly; 'there is no need for your pious hopes, Mr Cargrim.'

The bishop was seated at his desk scribbling idly on his blotting-pad, and rose to his feet with a look of alarm when his wife and family entered. His usually ruddy colour had disappeared, and he was white-faced and haggard in appearance; looking like a man who had received a severe shock, and who had not yet recovered from it. On seeing his wife, he smiled reassuringly, but with an obvious effort, and hastened to conduct her to the chair he had vacated.

'Now, my dear,' he said, when she was seated, 'this will never do.'

'I am so anxious, George!'

'There is no need to be anxious,' retorted the bishop, in reproving tones. 'I have been doing too much work of late, and unexpectedly I was seized with a faintness. Graham's medicine and a night's rest will restore me to my usual strength.'

'It's not your heart, I trust, George?'

'His heart!' jested the doctor. 'His lordship's heart is as sound as his digestion.'

'We thought you might have been upset by bad news, papa.'

'I have had no bad news, Lucy. I am only a trifle overcome by late hours and fatigue. Take your mother to bed; and you, my dear,' added the bishop, kissing his wife, 'don't worry yourself unnecessarily. Good-night, and good sleep.'

'Some valerian for your nerves, bishop –'

'I have taken something for my nerves, Amy. Rest is all I need just now.'

Thus reassured, Mrs Pendle submitted to be led from the library by Lucy. She was followed by Gabriel, who was now quite easy in his mind about his father. Cargrim and Graham remained, but the bishop, taking no notice of their presence, looked at the door through which his wife and children had vanished, and uttered a sound something between a sigh and a groan.

Dr Graham looked anxiously at him, and the look was intercepted by Cargrim, who at once made up his mind that there was something seriously wrong, which both Graham and the bishop desired to conceal. The doctor noted the curious expression in the chaplain's eyes, and with bluff good-humour – which was assumed, as he disliked the man – proceeded to turn him out of the library. Cargrim – bent on discovering the truth – protested, in his usual cat-like way, against this sudden dismissal.

'I should be happy to sit up all night with his lordship,' he declared.

'Sit up with your grandmother!' cried Graham, gruffly. 'Go to bed, sir, and don't make mountains out of mole-hills.'

'Good-night, my lord,' said Cargrim, softly. 'I trust you will find yourself fully restored in the morning.'

'Thank you, Mr Cargrim; good-night!'

When the chaplain sidled out of the room, Dr Graham rubbed his hands and turned briskly towards his patient, who was standing as still as any stone, staring in a hypnotised sort of way at the reading lamp on the desk.

'Come, my lord,' said he, touching the bishop on the shoulder, 'you must take your composing draught and get to bed. You'll be all right in the morning.'

'I trust so!' replied Pendle, with a groan.

'Of course, bishop, if you won't tell me what is the matter with you, I can't cure you.'

'I am upset, doctor, that is all.'

'You have had a severe nervous shock,' said Graham, sharply, 'and it will take some time for you to recover from it. This visitor brought you bad news, I suppose?'

'No!' said the bishop, wincing, 'he did not.'

'Well! well! keep your own secrets. I can do no more, so I'll say good-night,' and he held out his hand.

Dr Pendle took it and retained it within his own for a moment. 'Your allusion to the ring of Polycrates, Graham!'

'What of it?'

'I should throw my ring into the sea also. That is all.'

'Ha! ha! You'll have to travel a considerable distance to reach the sea, bishop. Good-night; good-night,' and Graham, smiling in his dry way, took himself out of the room. As he glanced back at the door he saw that the bishop was again staring dully at the reading lamp. Graham shook his head at the sight, and closed the door.

'It is mind, not matter,' he thought, as he put on hat and coat in the hall; 'the cupboard's open and the skeleton is out. My premonition was true – true. Æsculapius forgive me that I should be so superstitious. The bishop has had a shock. What is it? what is it? That visitor brought bad news! Hum! Hum! Better to throw physic to the dogs in his case. Mind diseased: secret trouble: my punishment is greater than I can bear. Put this and that together; there is something serious the matter. Well! well! I'm no Paul Pry.'

'Is his lordship better?' said the soft voice of Cargrim at his elbow.

Graham wheeled round. 'Much better; good-night,' he replied curtly, and was off in a moment.

Michael Cargrim, the chaplain, was a dangerous man. He was thin and pale, with light blue eyes and sleek fair hair; and as weak physically as he was strong mentally. In his neat clerical garb, with a slight stoop and meek smile, he looked a harmless, commonplace young curate of the tabby cat kind. No one could be more tactful and ingratiating than Mr Cargrim, and he was greatly admired by the old ladies and young girls of Beorminster; but the men, one and all – even his clerical brethren – disliked and distrusted him, although there was no apparent reason for their doing so. Perhaps his too deferential manners and pronounced effeminacy, which made him shun manly sports, had something to do with his masculine unpopularity; but, from the bishop downward, he was certainly no favourite, and in every male breast he constantly inspired a desire to kick him. The clergy of the diocese maintained towards him a kind of 'Dr Fell' attitude, and none of them had more to do with him than they could help. With all the will in the world, with all the desire to interpret brotherly love in its most liberal sense, the Beorminster Levites found it impossible to like Mr Cargrim. Hence he was a kind of clerical Ishmael, and as dangerous within as he looked harmless without.

How such a viper came to warm itself on the bishop's hearth no one could say. Mrs Pansey herself did not know in what particular way Mr Cargrim had wriggled himself – so she expressed it – into his present snug position. But, to speak frankly, there was no wriggling in the matter, and had the bishop felt himself called upon to explain his business to anyone, he could have given a very reasonable account of the election of Cargrim to the post of chaplain. The young man was the son of an old schoolfellow, to whom Pendle had been much attached, and from whom, in the earlier part of his career, he had received many kindnesses. This schoolfellow – he was a banker – had become a bankrupt, a beggar, finally a suicide, through no fault of his own, and when dying, had commended his wife and son to the bishop's care. Cargrim was then fifteen years of age, and being clever and calculating, even as a youth, had determined to utilise the bishop's affection for his father to its fullest extent. He was clever, as has been stated; he was also ambitious and unscrupulous; therefore he resolved to enter the profession in which Dr Pendle's influence would be of most value. For this reason, and not because he felt a call to the work, he entered holy orders. The result of his wisdom was soon apparent, for after a short career as a curate in London, he was appointed chaplain to the Bishop of Beorminster.

So far, so good. The position, for a young man of twenty-eight, was by no means a bad one; the more so as it gave him a capital opportunity of gaining a better one by watching for the vacancy of a rich preferment and getting it from his patron by asking directly and immediately for it. Cargrim had in his eye the rectorship of a wealthy, easy-going parish, not far from Beorminster, which was in the gift of the bishop. The present holder was aged and infirm, and given so much to indulgence in port wine, that the chances were he might expire within a few months, and then, as the chaplain hoped, the next rector would be the Reverend Michael Cargrim. Once that firm position was obtained, he could bend his energies to developing into an archdeacon, a dean, even into a bishop, should his craft and fortune serve him as he intended they should. But in all these ambitious dreams there was nothing of religion, or of conscience, or of self-denial. If ever there was a square peg which tried to adapt itself to a round hole, Michael Cargrim, allegorically speaking, was that article.

With all his love for the father, Dr Pendle could never bring himself to like the son, and determined in his own mind to confer a benefice on him when possible, if only to get rid of him; but not the rich one of Heathcroft, which was the delectable land of Cargrim's desire. The bishop intended to bestow that on Gabriel; and Cargrim, in his sneaky way, had gained some inkling of this intention. Afraid of losing his wished-for prize, he was bent upon forcing Dr Pendle into presenting him with the living of Heathcroft; and to accomplish this amiable purpose with the more certainty he had conceived the plan of somehow getting the bishop into his power. Hitherto – so open and stainless was Dr Pendle's life – he had not succeeded in his aims; but now matters looked more promising, for the bishop appeared to possess a secret which he guarded even from the knowledge of his wife. What this secret might be, Cargrim could not guess, in spite of his anxiety to do so, but he intended in one way or another to discover it and utilise it for the furtherance and attainment of his own selfish ends. By gaining such forbidden knowledge he hoped to get Dr Pendle well under his thumb; and once there the prelate could be kept in that uncomfortable position until he gratified Mr Cargrim's ambition. For a humble chaplain to have the whip-hand of a powerful ecclesiastic was a glorious and easy way for a meritorious young man to succeed in his profession. Having come to this conclusion, which did more credit to his head than to his heart, Cargrim sought out the servant who had summoned the bishop to see the stranger. A full acquaintance with the circumstances of the visit was necessary to the development of the Reverend Michael's ingenious little plot.

'This is a sad thing about his lordship's indisposition, said he to the man in the most casual way, for it would not do to let the servant know that he was being questioned for a doubtful purpose.

'Yes, sir,' replied the man. "'Tis mos' extraordinary. I never knowed his lordship took ill before. I suppose that gentleman brought bad news, sir.'

'Possibly, John, possibly. Was this gentleman a short man with light hair? I fancy I saw him.'

'Lor', no, Mr Cargrim. He was tall and lean as a rake; looked like a military gentleman, sir; and I don't know as I'd call him gentry either,' added John, half to himself. 'He wasn't what he thought he was.'

'A decayed clergyman, John?' inquired Cargrim, remembering Graham's description.

'There was lots of decay but no clergy about him, sir. I fancy I knows a parson when I sees one. Clergymen don't have scars on their cheekes as I knows of.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Cargrim, mentally noting that the doctor had spoken falsely. 'So he had a scar?'

'A red scar, sir, on the right cheek, from his temple to the corner of his mouth. He was as dark as pitch in looks, with a military moustache, and two black eyes like gimblets. His clothes was shabby, and his looks was horrid. Bad-tempered too, sir, I should say, for when he was with his lordship I 'eard his voice quite angry like. It ain't no clergy as 'ud speak like that to our bishop, Mr Cargrim.'

'And his lordship was taken ill when this visitor departed, John?'

'Right off, sir. When I got back to the library after showing him out I found his lordship gas'ly pale.'

'And his paleness was caused by the noisy conduct of this man?'

'Couldn't have bin caused by anything else, sir.'

'Dear me! dear me! this is much to be deplored,' sighed Cargrim, in his softest manner. 'And a clergyman too.'

'Beggin' your pardon, sir, he weren't no clergyman,' cried John, who was an old servant and took liberties; 'he was more like a tramp or a gipsy. I wouldn't have left him near the plate, I know.'

'We must not judge too harshly, John. Perhaps this poor man was in trouble.'

'He didn't look like it, Mr Cargrim. He went in and came out quite cocky like. I wonder his lordship didn't send for the police.'

'His lordship is too kind-hearted, John. This stranger had a scar, you say?'

'Yes, sir; a red scar on the right cheek.'

'Dear me! no doubt he has been in the wars. Good-night, John. Let us hope that his lordship will be better after a night's rest.'

'Good-night, sir!'

The chaplain walked away with a satisfied smile on his meek face.

'I must find the man with the scar,' he thought, 'and then – who knows.'

CHAPTER V

THE DERBY WINNER

As its name denotes, Beorminster was built on a hill, or, to speak more precisely, on an eminence elevated slightly above the surrounding plain. In former times it had been surrounded by aguish marshes which had rendered the town unhealthy, but now that modern enterprise had drained the fenlands, Beorminster was as salubrious a town as could be found in England. The rich, black mud of the former bogs now yielded luxuriant harvests, and in autumn the city, with its mass of red-roofed houses climbing upward to the cathedral, was islanded in a golden ocean of wheat and rye and bearded barley. For the purposes of defence, the town had been built originally on the slopes of the hill, under the very shadow of the minster, and round its base the massive old walls yet remained, which had squeezed the city into a huddled mass of uncomfortable dwellings within its narrow girdle. But now oppidan life extended beyond these walls; and houses, streets, villas and gardens spread into the plain on all sides. Broad, white roads ran to Southberry Junction, ten miles away; to manufacturing Irongrip, the smoke of whose furnaces could be seen on the horizon; and to many a tiny hamlet and sleepy town buried amid the rich meadowlands and golden cornfields. And high above all lorded the stately cathedral, with its trio of mighty towers, whence, morning and evening, melodious bells pealed through the peaceful lands.

Beyond the walls the modern town was made up of broad streets and handsome shops. On its outskirts appeared comfortable villas and stately manors, gardens and woody parks, in which dwelt the aristocracy of Beorminster. But the old town, with its tall houses and narrow lanes, was given over to the plebeians, save in the Cathedral Close, where dwelt the canons, the dean, the archdeacon, and a few old-fashioned folk who remained by preference in their ancestral dwellings. From this close, which surrounded the open space, wherein the cathedral was built, narrow streets trickled down to the walls, and here was the Seven Dials, the Whitechapel, the very worst corner of Beorminster. The Beorminster police declared that this network of lanes and alleys and malodorous *cul-de-sacs* was as dangerous a neighbourhood as any London slum, and they were particularly emphatic in denouncing the public-house known as The Derby Winner, and kept by a certain William Mosk, who was a sporting scoundrel and a horsey scamp. This ill-famed hostel was placed at the foot of the hill, in what had once been the main street, and being near the Eastgate, caught in its web most of the thirsty passers-by who entered the city proper, either for sight-seeing or business. It affected a kind of spurious respectability, which was all on the outside, for within it was as iniquitous a den as could well be conceived, and was usually filled with horse-copers and sporting characters, who made bets, and talked racing, and rode or drove fiery steeds, and who lived on, and swindled through, the noblest of all animals. Mr Mosk, a lean light-weight, who wore loud check suits, tight in the legs and short in the waist, was the presiding deity of this Inferno, and as the Ormuz to this Ahrimanes, Gabriel Pendle was the curate of the district, charged with the almost hopeless task of reforming his sporting parishioners. And all this, with considerable irony, was placed almost in the shadow of the cathedral towers.

Not a neighbourhood for Mr Cargrim to venture into, since many sights therein must have displeased his exact tastes; yet two days after the reception at the palace the chaplain might have been seen daintily picking his way over the cobble-stone pavements. As he walked he thought, and his thoughts were busy with the circumstances which had led him to venture his saintly person so near the spider's web of The Derby Winner. The bishop, London, curiosity, Gabriel, this unpleasant neighbourhood – so ran the links of his chain of thought.

The day following his unexpected illness brought no relief to the bishop, at all events to outward seeming, for he was paler and more haggard than ever in looks, and as dour as a bear in manner. With Mrs Pendle he strove to be his usual cheerful self, but with small success, as occasionally he

would steal an anxious look at her, and heave deep sighs expressive of much inward trouble. All this was noted by Cargrim, who carefully strove, by sympathetic looks and dexterous remarks, to bring his superior to the much-desired point of unburdening his mind. Gabriel had returned to his lodgings near the Eastgate, and to his hopeless task of civilising his degraded centaurs. Lucy, after the manner of maids in love, was building air-castles with Sir Harry's assistance, and Mrs Pendle kept her usual watch on her weak heart and fluctuating pulse. The bishop thus escaped their particular notice, and it was mainly Cargrim who saw how distraught and anxious he was. As for Dr Graham, he had departed after a second unsatisfactory visit, swearing that he could do nothing with a man who refused to make a confidant of his doctor. Bishop Pendle was therefore wholly at the mercy of his suspicious chaplain, to be spied upon, to be questioned, to be watched, and to be made a prey of in his first weak moment. But the worried man, filled with some unknown anxiety, was quite oblivious to Cargrim's manœuvres.

For some time the chaplain, in spite of all his watchfulness, failed to come upon anything tangible likely to explain what was in the bishop's mind. He walked about restlessly, he brooded continuously, and instead of devoting himself to his work in his usual regular way, occupied himself for long hours in scribbling figures on his blotting-paper, and muttering at times in anxious tones. Cargrim examined the blotting-paper, and strained his ears to gather the sense of the mutterings, but in neither case could he gain any clue to the bishop's actual trouble. At length – it was on the morning of the second day after the reception – Dr Pendle abruptly announced that he was going up to London that very afternoon, and would go alone. The emphasis he laid on this last statement still further roused Cargrim's curiosity.

'Shall I not accompany your lordship?' he asked, as the bishop restlessly paced the library.

'No, Mr Cargrim, why should you?' said the bishop, abruptly and testily.

'Your lordship seems ill, and I thought –'

'There is no need for you to think, sir. I am not well, and my visit to London is in connection with my health.'

'Or with your secret!' thought the chaplain, deferentially bowing.

'I have every confidence in Dr Graham,' continued Pendle, 'but it is my intention to consult a specialist. I need not go into details, Mr Cargrim, as they will not interest you.'

'Oh, your lordship, your health is my constant thought.'

'Your anxiety is commendable, but needless,' responded the bishop, dryly. 'I am due at Southberry this Sunday, I believe.'

'There is a confirmation at St Mark's, your lordship.'

'Very good; you can make the necessary arrangements, Mr Cargrim. To-day is Thursday. I shall return to-morrow night, and shall rest on Saturday until the evening, when I shall ride over to Southberry, attend at St Mark's, and return on Sunday night.'

'Does not your lordship desire my attendance?' asked Cargrim, although he knew that he was the morning preacher in the cathedral on Sunday.

'No,' answered Dr Pendle, curtly, 'I shall go and return alone.'

The bishop looked at Cargrim, and Cargrim looked at the bishop, each striving to read the other's thoughts, then the latter turned away with a frown, and the former, much exercised in his mind, advanced towards the door of the library. Dr Pendle called him back.

'Not a word about my health to Mrs Pendle,' he said sharply.

'Certainly not, your lordship; you can rely upon my discretion in every way,' replied the chaplain, with emphasis, and glided away as soft-footed as any panther, and as dangerous.

'I wonder what the fellow suspects,' thought the bishop when alone. 'I can see that he is filled with curiosity, but he can never find out the truth, or even guess at it. I am safe enough from him. All the same, I'll have a fool for my next chaplain. Fools are easier to deal with.'

Cargrim would have given much to have overheard this speech, but as the door and several passages were between him and the talker, he was ignorant of the incriminating remarks the bishop

had let slip. Still baffled, but still curious, he busied himself with attending to some business of the See which did not require the personal supervision of Dr Pendle, and when that prelate took his departure for London by the three o'clock train, Cargrim attended him to the station, full of meekness and irritating attentions. It was with a feeling of relief that the bishop saw his officious chaplain left behind on the platform. He had a secret, and with the uneasiness of a loaded conscience, fancied that everyone saw that he had something to conceal – particularly Cargrim. In the presence of that good young man, this spiritual lord, high-placed and powerful, felt that he resembled an insect under a microscope, and that Cargrim had his eye to the instrument. Conscience made a coward of the bishop, but in the case of his chaplain his uneasy feelings were in some degree justified.

On leaving the railway station, which was on the outskirts of the modern town, Cargrim took his way through the brisk population which thronged the streets, and wondered in what manner he could benefit by the absence of his superior. As he could not learn the truth from Dr Pendle himself, he thought that he might discover it from an investigation of the bishop's desk. For this purpose he returned to the palace forthwith, and on the plea of business, shut himself up in the library. Dr Pendle was a careless man, and never locked up any drawers, even those which contained his private papers. Cargrim, who was too much of a sneak to feel honourable scruples, went through these carefully, but in spite of all his predisposition to malignity was unable to find any grounds for suspecting Dr Pendle to be in any serious trouble. At the end of an hour he found himself as ignorant as ever, and made only one discovery of any note, which was that the bishop had taken his cheque-book with him to London.

To many people this would have seemed a natural circumstance, as most men with banking accounts take their cheque-books with them when going on a journey. But Cargrim knew that the bishop usually preferred to fill his pockets with loose cash when absent for a short time, and this deviation from his ordinary habits appeared to be suspicious.

'Hum!' thought the chaplain, rubbing his chin, 'I wonder if that so-called clergyman wanted money. If he had wished for a small sum, the bishop could easily have given it to him out of the cash-box. Going by this reasoning, he must have wanted a lot of money, which argues blackmail. Hum! Has he taken both cheque-books, or only one?'

The reason of this last query was that Bishop Pendle had accounts in two different banks. One in Beorminster, as became the bishop of the See, the other in London, in accordance with the dignity of a spiritual lord of Parliament. A further search showed Mr Cargrim that the Beorminster cheque-book had been left behind.

'Hum!' said the chaplain again, 'that man must have gone back to London. Dr Pendle is going to meet him there and draw money from his Town bank to pay what he demands. I'll have a look at the butts of that cheque-book when it comes back; the amount of the cheque may prove much. I may even find out the name of this stranger.'

But all this, as Cargrim very well knew, was pure theory. The bishop might have taken his cheque-book to London for other reasons than paying blackmail to the stranger, for it was not even certain that there was any such extortion in the question. Dr Pendle was worried, it was true, and after the departure of his strange visitor he had been taken ill, but these facts proved nothing; and after twisting and turning them in every way, and connecting and disconnecting them with the absence of the London cheque-book, Mr Cargrim was forced to acknowledge that he was beaten for the time being. Then he fancied he might extract some information from Gabriel relative to his father's departure for London, for Mr Cargrim was too astute to believe in the 'consulting a specialist' excuse. Still, this might serve as a peg whereon to hang his inquiries and develop further information, so the chaplain, after meditating over his five-o'clock cup of tea, took his way to the Eastgate, in order to put Gabriel unawares into the witness-box. Yet, for all these doings and suspicions Cargrim had no very good reason, save his own desire to get Dr Pendle under his thumb. He was groping in the dark, he had not a shred of evidence to suppose that the uneasiness of the bishop was connected with anything criminal; nevertheless, the chaplain put himself so far out of his usual habits as to venture into the

unsavoury neighbourhood wherein stood The Derby Winner. Truly this man's cobweb spinning was of a very dangerous character when he took so much trouble to weave the web.

As in Excelsior, the shades of night were falling fast, when Cargrim found himself at the door of the curate's lodging. Here he met with a check, for Gabriel's landlady informed him that Mr Pendle was not at home, and she did not know where he was or when he would be back. Cargrim made the sweetest excuses for troubling the good lady, left a message that he would call again, and returned along Monk Street on his way back to the palace through the new town. By going in this direction he passed The Derby Winner – not without intention – for it was this young man's belief that Gabriel might be haunting the public-house to see Mrs Mosk or – as was more probable to the malignant chaplain – her handsome daughter.

As he came abreast of The Derby Winner it was not too dark but that he could see a tall man standing in the doorway. Cargrim at first fancied that this might be Gabriel, and paced slowly along so as to seize an opportunity of addressing him. But when he came almost within touching distance, he found himself face to face with a dark-looking gipsy, fiery-eyed and dangerous in appearance. He had a lean, cruel face, a hawk's beak for a nose, and black, black hair streaked with grey; but what mostly attracted Cargrim's attention was a red streak which traversed the right cheek of the man from ear to mouth. At once he recalled John's description – 'A military-looking gentleman with a scar on the right cheek.' He thought, 'Hum! this, then, is the bishop's visitor.'

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN WITH THE SCAR

This engaging individual looked at Cargrim with a fierce air. He was not sober, and had just reached the quarrelsome stage of intoxication, which means objection to everyone and everything. Consequently he cocked his hat defiantly at the curate; and although he blocked up the doorway, made no motion to stand aside. Cargrim was not ill pleased at this obstinacy, as it gave him an opportunity of entering into conversation with the so-called decayed clergyman, who was as unlike a parson as a rabbit is like a terrier.

'Do you know if Mr Pendle is within, my friend?' asked the chaplain, with bland politeness.

The stranger started at the mention of the name. His face grew paler, his scar waxed redder, and with all his Dutch courage there was a look of alarm visible in his cold eyes.

'I don't know,' said he, insolently, yet with a certain refinement of speech. 'I shouldn't think it likely that a pot-house like this would be patronised by a bishop.'

'Pardon me, sir, I speak of Mr Gabriel Pendle, the son of his lordship.'

'Then pardon me, sir,' mimicked the man, 'if I say that I know nothing of the son of his lordship; and what's more, I'm d – d if I want to.'

'I see! You are more fortunate in knowing his lordship himself,' said the chaplain, with great simplicity.

The stranger plucked at his worn sleeve with a look of irony. 'Do I look as though I were acquainted with bishops?' said he, scoffingly. 'Is this the kind of coat likely to be admitted into episcopalian palaces?'

'Yet it was admitted, sir. If I am not mistaken you called at the palace two nights ago.'

'Did you see me?'

'Certainly I saw you,' replied Cargrim, salving his conscience with the Jesuitic saying that the end justifies the means. 'And I was informed that you were a decayed clergyman seeking assistance.'

'I have been most things in my time,' observed the stranger, gloomily, 'but not a parson. You are one, I perceive.'

Cargrim bowed. 'I am the chaplain of Bishop Pendle.'

'And the busybody of Beorminster, I should say,' rejoined the man with a sneer. 'See here, my friend,' and he rapped Cargrim on the breast with a shapely hand, 'if you interfere in what does not concern you, there will be trouble. I saw Dr Pendle on private business, and as such it has nothing to do with you. Hold your tongue, you black crow, and keep away from me,' cried the stranger, with sudden ferocity, 'or I'll knock your head off. Now you know,' and with a fierce glance the man moved out of the doorway and sauntered round the corner before Cargrim could make up his mind how to resent this insolence.

'Hum!' said he to himself, with a glance at the tall retiring figure, 'that is a nice friend for a bishop to have. He's a jail-bird if I mistake not; and he is afraid of my finding out his business with Pendle. Birds of a feather,' sighed Mr Cargrim, entering the hotel. 'I fear, I sadly fear that his lordship is but a whited sepulchre. A look into the bishop's past might show me many things of moment,' and the fat living of Heathcroft seemed almost within Cargrim's grasp as he came to this conclusion.

'Now then, sir,' interrupted a sharp but pleasant female voice, 'and what may you want?'

Mr Cargrim wheeled round to answer this question, and found himself face to face with a bar, glittering with brass and crystal and bright-hued liquors in fat glass barrels; also with an extremely handsome young woman, dressed in an astonishing variety of colours. She was high-coloured and frank-eyed, with a great quantity of very black hair twisted into many amazing shapes on the top of her head. In manner she was as brisk as a bee and as restless as a butterfly; and being adorned

with a vast quantity of bracelets, and locket, and brooches, all of gaudy patterns, jingled at every movement. This young lady was Miss Bell Mosk, whom the frequenters of The Derby Winner called 'a dashing beauty,' and Mrs Pansey 'a painted jade.' With her glittering ornaments, her bright blue dress, her high colour, and general air of vivacity, she glowed and twinkled in the lamp-light like some gorgeous-plumaged parrot; and her free speech and constant chatter might have been ascribed to the same bird.

'Miss Mosk, I believe,' said the polite Cargrim, marvelling that this gaudy female should be the refined Gabriel's notion of feminine perfection.

'I am Miss Mosk,' replied Bell, taking a comprehensive view of the sleek, black-clothed parson. 'What can I do for you?'

'I am Mr Cargrim, the bishop's chaplain, Miss Mosk, and I wish to see Mr Pendle – Mr Gabriel Pendle.'

Bell flushed as red as the reddest cabbage rose, and with downcast eyes wiped the counter briskly with a duster. 'Why should you come here to ask for Mr Pendle?' said she, in guarded tones.

'I called at his lodgings, Miss Mosk, and I was informed that he was visiting a sick person here.'

'My mother!' replied Bell, not knowing what an amazing lie the chaplain was telling. 'Yes! Mr Pendle comes often to see – my mother.'

'Is he here now?' asked Cargrim, noticing the hesitancy at the end of her sentence; 'because I wish to speak with him on business.'

'He is upstairs. I daresay he'll be down soon.'

'Oh, don't disturb him for my sake, I beg. But if you will permit me I shall go up and see Mrs Mosk.'

'Here comes Mr Pendle now,' said Bell, abruptly, and withdrew into the interior of the bar as Gabriel appeared at the end of the passage. He started and seemed uneasy when he recognised the chaplain.

'Cargrim!' he cried, hurrying forward. 'Why are you here?' and he gave a nervous glance in the direction of the bar; a glance which the chaplain saw and understood, but discreetly left unnoticed.

'I wish to see you,' he replied, with great simplicity; 'they told me at your lodgings that you might be here, so –'

'Why!' interrupted Gabriel, sharply, 'I left no message to that effect.'

Cargrim saw that he had made a mistake. 'I speak generally, my dear friend – generally,' he said in some haste. 'Your worthy landlady mentioned several houses in which you were in the habit of seeing sick people – amongst others this hotel.'

'Mrs Mosk is very ill. I have been seeing her,' said Gabriel, shortly.

'Ay! ay! you have been seeing Mrs Mosk!'

Gabriel changed colour and cast another glance towards the bar, for the significance of Cargrim's speech was not lost on him. 'Do you wish to speak with me?' he asked coldly.

'I should esteem it a favour if you would allow me a few words,' said Cargrim, politely. 'I'll wait for you – outside,' and in his turn the chaplain looked towards the bar.

'Thank you, I can come with you now,' was Gabriel's reply, made with a burning desire to knock Cargrim down. 'Miss Mosk, I am glad to find that your mother is easier in her mind.'

'It's all due to you, Mr Pendle,' said Bell, moving forward with a toss of her head directed especially at Mr Cargrim. 'Your visits do mother a great deal of good.'

'I am sure they do,' said the chaplain, not able to forego giving the girl a scratch of his claws. 'Mr Pendle's visits here must be delightful to everybody.'

'I daresay,' retorted Bell, with heightened colour, 'other people's visits would not be so welcome.'

'Perhaps not, Miss Mosk. Mr Pendle has many amiable qualities to recommend him. He is a general and deserved favourite.'

'Come, come, Cargrim,' interposed Gabriel, anxiously, for the fair Bell's temper was rapidly getting the better of her; 'if you are ready we shall go. Good evening, Miss Mosk.'

'Good evening, Mr Pendle,' said the barmaid, and directed a spiteful look at Cargrim, for she saw plainly that he had intentionally deprived her of a confidential conversation with Gabriel. The chaplain received the look – which he quite understood – with an amused smile and a bland inclination of the head. As he walked out arm-in-arm with the reluctant Pendle, Bell banged the pewters and glasses about with considerable energy, for the significant demeanour of Cargrim annoyed her so much that she felt a great inclination to throw something at his head. But then, Miss Mosk was a high-spirited girl and believed in actions rather than speech, even though she possessed a fair command of the latter.

'Well, Cargrim,' said Gabriel, when he found himself in the street with his uncongenial companion, 'what is it?'

'It's about the bishop.'

'My father! Is there anything the matter with him?'

'I fear so. He told me that he was going to London.'

'What of that?' said Gabriel, impatiently. 'He told me the same thing yesterday. Has he gone?'

'He left by the afternoon train. Do you know the object of his visit to London?'

'No. What is his object?'

'He goes to consult a specialist about his health.'

'What!' cried Gabriel, anxiously. 'Is he ill?'

'I think so; some nervous trouble brought on by worry.'

'By worry! Has my father anything on his mind likely to worry him to that extent?'

Cargrim coughed significantly. 'I think so,' said he again. 'He has not been himself since the visit of that stranger to the palace. I fancy the man must have brought bad news.'

'Did the bishop tell you so?'

'No; but I am observant, you know.'

Privately, Gabriel considered that Cargrim was a great deal too observant, and also of a meddlesome nature, else why had he come to spy out matters which did not concern him. Needless to say, Gabriel was thinking of Bell at this moment. However, he made no comment on the chaplain's speech, but merely remarked that doubtless the bishop had his own reasons for keeping silent, and advised Cargrim to wait until he was consulted in connection with the matter, before troubling himself unnecessarily about it 'My father knows his own business best,' finished Gabriel, stiffly, 'if you will forgive my speaking so plainly.'

'Certainly, certainly, Pendle; but I owe a great deal to your father, and I would do much to save him from annoyance. By the way,' with an abrupt change of subject, 'do you know that I saw the stranger who called at the palace two nights ago during the reception?'

'When? Where?'

'At that hotel, this evening. He looks a dangerous man.'

Gabriel shrugged his shoulders. 'It seems to me, Cargrim, that you are making a mountain out of a mole hill. A stranger sees my father, and afterwards you meet him at a public-house; there is nothing strange in that.'

'You forget,' hinted Cargrim, sweetly, 'this man caused your father's illness.'

'We can't be sure of that; and in any case, my father is quite clever enough to deal with his own affairs. I see no reason why you should have hunted me out to talk such nonsense. Good-night, Cargrim,' and with a curt nod the curate stalked away, considerably annoyed by the meddlesome spirit manifested by the chaplain. He had never liked the man, and, now that he was in this interfering mood, liked him less than ever. It would be as well, thought Gabriel, that Mr Cargrim should be dismissed from his confidential office as soon as possible. Otherwise he might cause trouble, and Gabriel mentally thought of the high-coloured young lady in the bar. His conscience was not at ease

regarding his admiration for her; and he dreaded lest the officious Cargrim should talk about her to the bishop. Altogether the chaplain, like a hornet, had annoyed both Dr Pendle and his son; and the bishop in London and Gabriel in Beorminster were anything but well disposed towards this clerical busybody, who minded everyone's business instead of his own. It is such people who stir up muddy water and cause mischief.

Meanwhile, the busybody looked after the curate with an evil smile; and, gratified at having aroused such irritation as the abrupt parting signified, turned back to The Derby Winner. He had seen Bell, he had spoken to Gabriel, he had even secured an unsatisfactory conversation with the unknown man. Now he wished to question Mrs Mosk and acquaint himself with her nature and attitude. Also he desired to question her concerning the military stranger; and with this resolve presented himself again before Miss Mosk, smiling and undaunted.

'What is it?' asked the young lady, who had been nursing her grievances.

'A mere trifle, Miss Mosk; I wish to see your mother.'

'Why?' was Bell's blunt demand.

'My reasons are for Mrs Mosk's ears alone.'

'Oh, are they? Well, I'm afraid you can't see my mother. In the first place, she's too ill to receive anyone; and in the second, my father does not like clergymen.'

'Dear! dear! not even Mr Pendle?'

'Mr Pendle is an exception,' retorted Bell, blushing, and again fell to wiping the counter in a fury, so as to keep her hands from Mr Cargrim's ears.

'I wish to see Mrs Mosk particularly,' reiterated Cargrim, who was bent upon carrying his point. 'If not, your father will do.'

'My father is absent in Southberry. Why do you want to see my mother?'

'I'll tell her that myself – with your permission,' said Cargrim, suavely.

'You sha'n't, then,' cried Bell, and flung down her duster with sparkling eyes.

'In that case I must go away,' replied Cargrim, seeing he was beaten, 'and I thank you, Miss Mosk, for your politeness. By the way,' he added, as he half returned, 'will you tell that gentleman with the scar on the cheek that I wish to see him also?'

'Seems to me you wish to see everybody about here,' said Bell, scornfully. 'I'll tell Mr Jentham if you like. Now go away; I'm busy.'

'Jentham!' repeated Cargrim, as he walked homeward. 'Now, I wonder if I'll find that name in the bishop's cheque-book.'

CHAPTER VII

AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION

When Mr Cargrim took an idea into his head it was not easy to get it out again, and to this resolute obstinacy he owed no small part of his success. He was like the famous drop of water and would wear away any human stone, however hard it might be. Again and again, when baffled, he returned with gentle persistence to the object he had in view, and however strong of will his adversary happened to be, that will was bound, in the long run, to yield to the incessant attacks of the chaplain. At the present moment he desired to have an interview with Mrs Mosk, and he was determined to obtain one in spite of Bell's refusal. However, he had no time to waste on the persuasive method, as he wished to see the invalid before the bishop returned. To achieve this end he enlisted the services of Mrs Pansey.

That good lady sometimes indulged in a species of persecution she termed district-visiting, which usually consisted in her thrusting herself at untoward times into poor people's houses and asking them questions about their private affairs. When she had learned all she wished to know, and had given her advice in the tone of a command not to be disobeyed, she would retire, leaving the evidence of her trail behind her in the shape of a nauseous little tract with an abusive title. It was no use any poor creature refusing to see Mrs Pansey, for she forced herself into the most private chambers, and never would retire unless she thought fit to do so of her own will. It was for this reason that Cargrim suggested the good lady should call upon Mrs Mosk, for he knew well that neither the father, nor the daughter, nor the whole assembled domestics of the hotel, would be able to stop her from making her way to the bedside of the invalid; and in the devastated rear of Mrs Pansey the chaplain intended to follow.

His principal object in seeing Mrs Mosk was to discover what she knew about the man called Jentham. He was lodging at The Derby Winner, as Cargrim ascertained by later inquiry, and it was probable that the inmates of the hotel knew something as to the reasons of his stay in Beorminster. Mr Mosk, being as obstinate as a mule, was not likely to tell Cargrim anything he desired to learn. Bell, detesting the chaplain, as she took no pains to conceal, would probably refuse to hold a conversation with him; but Mrs Mosk, being weak-minded and ill, might be led by dexterous questioning to tell all she knew. And what she did know might, in Cargrim's opinion, throw more light on Jentham's connection with the bishop. Therefore, the next morning, Cargrim called on the archdeacon's widow to inveigle her into persecuting Mrs Mosk with a call. Mrs Pansey, with all her acuteness, could not see that she was being made use of – luckily for Cargrim.

'I hear the poor woman is very ill,' sighed the chaplain, after he had introduced the subject, 'and I fear that her daughter does not give her all the attention an invalid should have.'

'The Jezebel!' growled Mrs Pansey. 'What can you expect from that flaunting hussy?'

'She is a human being, Mrs Pansey, and I expect at least human feelings.'

'Can you get blood out of a stone, Mr Cargrim? No, you can't. Is that red-cheeked Dutch doll a pelican to pluck her breast for the benefit of her mother? No, indeed! I daresay she passes her sinful hours drinking with young men. I'd whip her at a cart's tail if I had my way.'

'Gabriel Pendle is trying to bring the girl to a sense of her errors.'

'Rubbish! She's trying to bring him to the altar, more like. I'll go with you, Mr Cargrim, and see the minx. I have long thought that it is my duty to reprove her and warn her mother of such goings-on. As for that weak-minded young Pendle,' cried Mrs Pansey, shaking her head furiously, 'I pity his infatuation; but what can you expect from such a mother as his mother? Can a fool produce sense? No!'

'I am afraid you will find the young woman difficult to deal with.'

'That makes me all the more determined to see her, Mr Cargrim. I'll tell her the truth for once in her life. Marry young Pendle indeed!' snorted the good lady. 'I'll let her see.'

'Speak to her mother first,' urged Cargrim, who wished his visit to be less warlike, as more conducive to success.

'I'll speak to both of them. I daresay one is as bad as the other. I must have that public-house removed; it's an eye-sore to Beorminster – a curse to the place. It ought to be pulled down and the site ploughed up and sown with salt. Come with me, Mr Cargrim, and you shall see how I deal with iniquity. I hope I know what is due to myself.'

'Where is Miss Norsham?' asked the chaplain, when they fell into more general conversation on their way to The Derby Winner.

'Husband-hunting. Dean Alder is showing her the tombs in the cathedral. Tombs, indeed! It's the altar she's interested in.'

'My dear lady, the dean is too old to marry!'

'He is not too old to be made a fool of, Mr Cargrim. As for Daisy Norsham, she'd marry Methuselah to take away the shame of being single. Not that the match with Alder will be out of the way, for she's no chicken herself.'

'I rather thought Mr Dean had an eye to Miss Whichello.'

'Stuff!' rejoined Mrs Pansey, with a sniff. 'She's far too much taken up with dieting people to think of marrying them. She actually weighs out the food on the table when meals are on. No wonder that poor girl Mab is thin.'

'But she isn't too thin for her height, Mrs Pansey. She seems to me to be well covered.'

'You didn't notice her at the palace, then,' snapped the widow, avoiding a direct reply. 'She wore a low-necked dress which made me blush. I don't know what girls are coming to. They'd go about like so many Eves if they could.'

'Oh, Mrs Pansey!' remonstrated the chaplain, in a shocked tone.

'Well, it's in the Bible, isn't it, man? You aren't going to say Holy Writ is indecent, are you?'

'Well, really, Mrs Pansey, clergyman as I am, I must say that there are parts of the Bible unfit for the use of schools.'

'To the pure all things are pure, Mr Cargrim; you have an impure mind, I fear. Remember the Thirty-Nine Articles and speak becomingly of holy things. However, let that pass,' added Mrs Pansey, in livelier tones. 'Here we are, and there's that hussy hanging out from an upper window like the Jezebel she is.'

This remark was directed against Bell, who, apparently in her mother's room, was at the window amusing herself by watching the passers-by. When she saw Mrs Pansey and the chaplain stalking along in black garments, and looking like two birds of prey, she hastily withdrew, and by the time they arrived at the hotel was at the doorway to receive them, with fixed bayonets.

'Young woman,' said Mrs Pansey, severely, 'I have come to see your mother,' and she cast a disapproving look on Bell's gay pink dress.

'She is not well enough to see either you or Mr Cargrim,' said Bell, coolly.

'All the more reason that Mr Cargrim, as a clergyman, should look after her soul, my good girl.'

'Thank you, Mr Pendle is doing that.'

'Indeed! Mr Pendle, then, combines business with pleasure.'

Bell quite understood the insinuation conveyed in this last speech, and, firing up, would have come to high words with the visitors but that her father made his appearance, and, as she did not wish to draw forth remarks from Mrs Pansey about Gabriel in his hearing, she discreetly held her tongue. However, as Mrs Pansey swept by in triumph, followed by Cargrim, she looked daggers at them both, and bounced into the bar, where she drew beer for thirsty customers in a flaming temper. She dearly desired a duel of words with the formidable visitor.

Mosk was a lean, tall man with a pimpled face and a military moustache. He knew Mrs Pansey, and, like most other people, detested her with all his heart; but she was, as he thought, a great friend of Sir Harry Brace, who was his landlord, so for diplomatic reasons he greeted her with all deference, hat in hand.

'I have come with Mr Cargrim to see your wife, Mr Mosk,' said the visitor.

'Thank you, ma'am, I'm sure it's very kind of you,' replied Mosk, who had a husky voice suggestive of beer. 'She'll be honoured to see you, I'm sure. This way, ma'am.'

'Is she very ill?' demanded the chaplain, as they followed Mosk to the back of the hotel and up a narrow staircase.

'She ain't well, sir, but I can't say as she's dying. We do all we can to make her easy.'

'Ho!' from Mrs Pansey. 'I hope your daughter acts towards her mother like as a daughter should.'

'I'd like to see the person as says she don't,' cried Mr Mosk, with sudden anger. 'I'd knock his head off. Bell's a good girl; none better.'

'Let us hope your trust in her is justified,' sighed the mischief-maker, and passed into the sickroom, leaving Mosk with an uneasy feeling that something was wrong. If the man had a tender spot in his heart it was for his handsome daughter; and it was with a vague fear that, after presenting his wife to her visitors, he went downstairs to the bar. Mrs Pansey had a genius for making mischief by a timely word.

'Bell,' said he, gruffly, 'what's that old cat hinting at?'

'What about?' asked Bell, tossing her head till all her ornaments jingled, and wiping the counter furiously.

'About you! She don't think I should trust you.'

'What right has she to talk about me, I'd like to know!' cried Bell, getting as red as a peony. 'I've never done anything that anyone can say a word against me.'

'Who said you had?' snapped her father; 'but that old cat hints.'

'Let her keep her hints to herself, then. Because I'm young and good-looking she wants to take my character away. Nasty old puss that she is!'

'That's just it, my gal. You're too young and good-looking to escape folks' talking; and I hear that young Mr Pendle comes round when I'm away.'

'Who says he doesn't, father? It's to see mother; he's a parson, ain't he?'

'Yes! and he's gentry too. I won't have him paying attention to you.'

'You'd better wait till he does,' flashed out Bell. 'I can take care of myself, I hope.'

'If I catch him talking other than religion to you I'll choke him in his own collar,' cried Mr Mosk, with a scowl; 'so now you know.'

'I know as you're talking nonsense, father. Time enough for you to interfere when there's cause. Now you clear out and let me get on with my work.'

Reassured by the girl's manner, Mosk began to think that Mrs Pansey's hints were all moonshine, and after cooling himself with a glass of beer, went away to look into his betting-book with some horsey pals. In the meantime, Mrs Pansey was persecuting his wife, a meek, nervous little woman, who was propped up with pillows in a large bed, and seemed to be quite overwhelmed by the honour of Mrs Pansey's call.

'So you are weak in the back, are you?' said the visitor, in loud tones. 'If you are, what right have you to marry and bring feeble children into the world?'

'Bell isn't feeble,' said Mrs Mosk, weakly. 'She's a fine set-up gal.'

'Set-up and stuck-up,' retorted Mrs Pansey. 'I tell you what, my good woman, you ought to be downstairs looking after her.'

'Lord! mum, there ain't nothing wrong, I do devoutly hope.'

'Nothing as yet; but you shouldn't have young gentlemen about the place.'

'I can't help it, mum,' said Mrs Mosk, beginning to cry. 'I'm sure we must earn our living somehow. This is an 'otel, isn't it? and Mosk's a pop'lar character, ain't he? I'm sure it's hard enough to make ends meet as it is; we owe rent for half a year and can't pay – and won't pay,' wailed Mrs Mosk, 'unless my 'usband comes 'ome on Skinflint.'

'Comes home on Skinflint, woman, what do you mean?'

'Skinflint's a 'orse, mum, as Mosk 'ave put his shirt on.'

Mrs Pansey wagged her plumes and groaned. 'I'm sadly afraid your husband is a son of perdition, Mrs Mosk. Put his shirt on Skinflint, indeed!'

'He's a good man to me, anyhow,' cried Mrs Mosk, plucking up spirit.

'Drink and betting,' continued Mrs Pansey, pretending not to hear this feeble defiance. 'What can we expect from a man who drinks and bets?'

'And associates with bad characters,' put in Cargrim, seizing his chance.

'That he don't, sir,' said Mrs Mosk, with energy. 'May I beg of you to put a name to one of 'em?'

'Jentham,' said the chaplain, softly. 'Who is Jentham, Mrs Mosk?'

'I know no more nor a babe unborn, sir. He's bin 'ere two weeks, and I did see him twice afore my back got so bad as to force me to bed. But I don't see why you calls him bad, sir. He pays his way.'

'Oh,' groaned Mrs Pansey, 'is it the chief end of man to pay his way?'

'It is with us, mum,' retorted Mrs Mosk, meekly; 'there ain't no denying of it. And Mr Jentham do pay proper though he *is* a gipsy.'

'He's a gipsy, is he?' said Cargrim, alertly.

'So he says, sir; and I knows as he goes sometimes to that camp of gipsies on Southberry Heath.'

'Where does he get his money from?'

'Better not inquire into that, Mr Cargrim,' said Mrs Pansey, with a sniff.

'Oh, Mr Jentham's honest, I'm sure, mum. He's bin at the gold diggin's and 'ave made a trifle of money. Indeed, I don't know where he ain't been, sir. The four pints of the compass is all plain sailing to 'im; and his 'airbreadth escapes is too h'awful. I shivers and shudders when I 'ears 'em.'

'What is he doing here?'

'He's on business; but I don't know what kind. Oh, he knows 'ow to 'old 'is tongue, does Jentham.'

'He is a gipsy, he consorts with gipsies, he has money, and no one knows where he comes from,' summed up Cargrim. 'I think, Mrs Pansey, we may regard this man as a dangerous character.'

'I shouldn't be surprised to hear he was an Anarchist,' said Mrs Pansey, who knew nothing about the man. 'Well, Mrs Mosk, I hope we've cheered you up. I'll go now. Read this tract,' bestowing a grimy little pamphlet, 'and don't see too much of Mr Pendle.'

'But he comforts me,' said poor Mrs Mosk; 'he reads beautiful.'

Mrs Pansey grunted. Bold as she was she did not like to speak quite plainly to the woman, as too free speech might inculcate Gabriel and bring the bishop to the rescue. Besides, Mrs Pansey had no evidence to bring forward to prove that Gabriel was in love with Bell Mosk. Therefore she said nothing, but, like the mariner's parrot, thought the more. Shaking out her dark skirts she rose to go, with another grunt full of unspoken suspicions.

'Good-day, Mrs Mosk,' said she, pausing at the door. 'When you are low-spirited send for me to cheer you up.'

Mrs Mosk attempted a curtsy in bed, which was a failure owing to her sitting position; but Mrs Pansey did not see the attempt, as she was already half-way down the stairs, followed by Cargrim. The chaplain had learned a trifle more about the mysterious Jentham and was quite satisfied with his visit; but he was more puzzled than ever. A tramp, a gipsy, an adventurer – what had such a creature in common with Bishop Pendle? To Mr Cargrim's eye the affair of the visit began to assume the proportions of a criminal case. But all the information he had gathered proved nothing, so it only remained to wait for the bishop's return and see what discoveries he could make in that

direction. If Jentham's name was in the cheque-book the chaplain would be satisfied that there was an understanding between the pair; and then his next move would be to learn what the understanding was. When he discovered that, he had no doubt but that he would have Dr Pendle under his thumb, which would be a good thing for Mr Cargrim and an unpleasant position for the bishop.

Mrs Pansey stalked down to the bar, and seeing Bell therein, silently placed a little tract on the counter. No sooner had she left the house than Bell snatched up the tract, and rushing to the door flung it after the good lady.

'You need it more than I do,' she cried, and bounced into the house again.

It was with a quiver of rage that Mrs Pansey turned to the chaplain. She was almost past speech, but with some difficulty and much choking managed to convey her feelings in two words.

'The creature!' gasped Mrs Pansey, and shook her skirts as if to rid herself of some taint contracted at The Derby Winner.

CHAPTER VIII ON SATURDAY NIGHT

The bishop returned on Saturday morning instead of on Friday night as arranged, and was much more cheerful than when he left, a state of mind which irritated Cargrim in no small degree, and also perplexed him not a little. If Dr Pendle's connection with Jentham was dangerous he should still be ill at ease and anxious, instead of which he was almost his old genial self when he joined his wife and Lucy at their afternoon tea. Sir Harry was not present, but Mr Cargrim supplied his place, an exchange which was not at all to Lucy's mind. The Pendles treated the chaplain always with a certain reserve, and the only person who really thought him the good young man he appeared to be, was the bishop's wife. But kindly Mrs Pendle was the most innocent of mortals, and all geese were swans to her. She had not the necessary faculty of seeing through a brick wall with which nature had gifted Mrs Pansey in so extraordinary a degree.

As a rule, Mr Cargrim did not come to afternoon tea, but on this occasion he presented himself; ostensibly to welcome back his patron, in reality to watch him. Also he was determined, at the very first opportunity, to introduce the name of Jentham and observe what effect it had on the bishop. With these little plans in his mind the chaplain crept about the tea-table like a tame cat, and handed round cake and bread with his most winning smile. His pale face was even more inexpressive than usual, and none could have guessed, from outward appearance, his malicious intents – least of all the trio he was with. They were too upright themselves to suspect evil in others.

'I am so glad to see you are better, bishop,' said Mrs Pendle, languidly trifling with a cup of tea. 'Your journey has done you good.'

'Change of air, change of air, my dear. A wonderful restorative.'

'Your business was all right, I hope?'

'Oh, yes! Indeed, I hardly went up on business, and what I did do was a mere trifle,' replied the bishop, smoothing his apron. 'Has Gabriel been here to-day?' he added, obviously desirous of turning the conversation.

'Twice!' said Lucy, who presided over the tea-table; 'and the second time he told mamma that he had received a letter from George.'

'Ay, ay! a letter from George. Is he quite well, Lucy?'

'We shall see that for ourselves this evening, papa. George is coming to Beorminster, and will be here about ten o'clock to-night.'

'How vexing!' exclaimed Dr Pendle. 'I intended going over to Southberry this evening, but I can't miss seeing George.'

'Ride over to-morrow morning, bishop,' suggested his wife.

'Sunday morning, my dear!'

'Well, papa!' said Lucy, smiling, 'you are not a strict Sabbatarian, you know.'

'I am not so good as I ought to be, my dear,' said Dr Pendle, playfully pinching her pretty ear. 'Well! well! I must see George. I'll go to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. You'll send a telegram to Mr Vasser to that effect, if you please, Mr Cargrim. Say that I regret not being able to come to-night.'

'Certainly, my lord. In any case, I am going in to Beorminster this evening.'

'You are usually more stay-at-home, Mr Cargrim. Thank you, Lucy, I will take another cup of tea.'

'I do not care for going out at night as a rule, my lord, observed the chaplain, in his most sanctimonious tone, 'but duty calls me into Beorminster. I am desirous of comforting poor sick Mrs Mosk at The Derby Winner.'

'Oh, that is Gabriel's pet invalid,' cried Lucy, peering into the teapot; 'he says Mrs Mosk is a very good woman.'

'Let us hope so,' observed the bishop, stirring his new cup of tea. 'I do not wish to be uncharitable, my dear, but if Mrs Pansey is to be believed, that public-house is not conducted so carefully as it should be.'

'But *is* Mrs Pansey to be believed, bishop?' asked his wife, smiling.

'I don't think she would tell a deliberate falsehood, my love.'

'All the same, she might exaggerate little into much,' said Lucy, with a pretty grimace. 'What is your opinion of this hotel, Mr Cargrim?'

The chaplain saw his opportunity and seized it at once. 'My dear Miss Pendle,' he said, showing all his teeth, 'as The Derby Winner is the property of Sir Harry Brace I wish I could speak well of it, but candour compels me to confess that it is a badly-conducted house.'

'Tut! tut!' said the bishop, 'what is this? You don't say so.'

'Harry shall shut it up at once,' cried Lucy, the pretty Puritan.

'It is a resort of bad characters, I fear,' sighed Cargrim, 'and Mrs Mosk, being an invalid, is not able to keep them away.'

'What about the landlord, Mr Cargrim?'

'Aha!' replied the chaplain, turning towards Mrs Pendle, who had asked this question, 'he is a man of lax morals. His boon companion is a tramp called Jentham!'

'Jentham!' repeated Dr Pendle, in so complacent a tone that Cargrim, with some vexation, saw that he did not associate the name with his visitor; 'and who is Jentham?'

'I hardly know,' said the chaplain, making another attempt; 'he is a tramp, as I have reason to believe, and consorts with gipsies. I saw him myself the other day – a tall, lean man with a scar.'

The bishop rose, and walking over to the tea-table placed his cup carefully thereon. 'With a scar,' he repeated in low tones. 'A man with a scar – Jentham – indeed! What do you know of this person, Mr Cargrim?'

'Absolutely nothing,' rejoined the chaplain, with a satisfied glance at the uneasy face of his questioner. 'He is a gipsy; he stays at The Derby Winner and pays regularly for his lodgings; and his name is Jentham. I know no more.'

'I don't suppose there is more to know,' cried Lucy, lightly.

'If there is, the police may find out, Miss Pendle.'

The bishop frowned. 'As the man, so far as we know, has done nothing against the laws,' said he, quickly, 'I see no reason why the police should be mentioned in connection with him. Evidently, from what Mr Cargrim says, he is a rolling stone, and probably will not remain much longer in Beorminster. Let us hope that he will take himself and his bad influence away from our city. In the meantime, it is hardly worth our while to discuss a person of so little importance.'

In this skilful way the bishop put an end to the conversation, and Cargrim, fearful of rousing his suspicions, did not dare to resume it. In a little while, after a few kind words to his wife, Dr Pendle left the drawing-room for his study. As he passed out, Cargrim noticed that the haggard look had come back to his face, and once or twice he glanced anxiously at his wife. In his turn Cargrim examined Mrs Pendle, but saw nothing in her manner likely to indicate that she shared the uneasiness of her husband, or knew the cause of his secret anxiety. She looked calm and content, and there was a gentle smile in her weary eyes. Evidently the bishop's mind was set at rest by her placid looks, for it was with a sigh of relief that he left the room. Cargrim noted the look and heard the sigh, but was wholly in the dark regarding their meaning.

'Though I daresay they have to do with Jentham and this secret,' he thought, when bowing himself out of the drawing-room. 'Whatever the matter may be, Dr Pendle is evidently most anxious to keep his wife from knowing of it. All the better.' He rubbed his hands together with a satisfied smirk. 'Such anxiety shows that the secret is worth learning. Sooner or later I shall find it out, and

then I can insist upon being the rector of Heathcroft. I have no time to lose, so I shall go to The Derby Winner to-night and see if I can induce this mysterious Jentham to speak out. He looks a drunken dog, so a glass of wine may unloosen his tongue.'

From this speech it can be seen that Mr Cargrim was true to his Jesuitic instincts, and thought no action dishonourable so long as it aided him to gain his ends. He was a methodical scoundrel, too, and arranged the details of his scheme with the utmost circumspection. For instance, prior to seeing the man with the scar, he thought it advisable to find out if the bishop had drawn a large sum of money while in London for the purpose of bribing the creature to silence. Therefore, before leaving the palace, he made several attempts to examine the cheque-book. But Dr Pendle remained constantly at his desk in the library, and although the plotter actually saw the cheque-book at the elbow of his proposed victim, he was unable, without any good reason, to pick it up and satisfy his curiosity. He was therefore obliged to defer any attempt to obtain it until the next day, as the bishop would probably leave it behind him when he rode over to Southberry. This failure vexed the chaplain, as he wished to be forearmed in his interview with Jentham, but, as there was no help for it, he was obliged to put the cart before the horse – in other words, to learn what he could from the man first and settle the bribery question by a peep into the cheque-book afterwards. The ingenious Mr Cargrim was by no means pleased with this slip-slop method of conducting business. There was method in his villainy.

That evening, after despatching the telegram to Southberry, the chaplain repaired to The Derby Winner and found it largely patronised by a noisy and thirsty crowd. The weather was tropical, the workmen of Beorminster had received their wages, so they were converting the coin of the realm into beer and whisky as speedily as possibly. The night was calm and comparatively cool with the spreading darkness, and the majority of the inhabitants were seated outside their doors gossiping and taking the air. Children were playing in the street, their shrill voices at times interrupting the continuous chatter of the women; and The Derby Winner, flaring with gas, was stuffed as full as it could hold with artizans, workmen, Irish harvesters and stablemen, all more or less exhilarated with alcohol. It was by no means a scene into which the fastidious Cargrim would have ventured of his own free will, but his desire to pump Jentham was greater than his sense of disgust, and he walked briskly into the hotel, to where Mr Mosk and Bell were dispensing drinks as fast as they were able. The crowd, having an inherent respect for the clergy, as became the inhabitants of a cathedral city, opened out to let him pass, and there was much less swearing and drinking when his black coat and clerical collar came into view. Mosk saw that the appearance of the chaplain was detrimental to business, and resenting his presence gave him but a surly greeting. As to Bell, she tossed her head, shot a withering glance of defiance at the bland new-comer, and withdrew to the far end of the bar.

'My friend,' said Cargrim, in his softest tones, 'I have come to see your wife and inquire how she is.'

'She's well enough,' growled Mosk, pushing a foaming tankard towards an expectant navy, 'and what's more, sir, she's asleep, sir, so you can't see her.'

'I should be sorry to disturb her, Mr Mosk, so I will postpone my visit till a more fitted occasion. You seem to be busy to-night.'

'So busy that I've got no time for talking, sir.'

'Far be it from me to distract your attention, my worthy friend,' was the chaplain's bland reply, 'but with your permission I will remain in this corner and enjoy the humours of the scene.'

Mosk inwardly cursed the visitor for making this modest request, as he detested parsons on account of their aptitude to make teetotalers of his customers. He was a brute in his way, and a Radical to boot, so if he had dared he would have driven forth Cargrim with a few choice oaths. But as his visitor was the chaplain of the ecclesiastical sovereign of Beorminster, and was acquainted with Sir Harry Brace, the owner of the hotel, and further, as Mosk could not pay his rent and was already in bad odour with his landlord, he judged it wise to be diplomatic, lest a word from Cargrim

to the bishop and Sir Harry should make matters worse. He therefore grudgingly gave the required permission.

'Though this ain't a sight fit for the likes of you, sir,' he grumbled, waving his hand. 'This lot smells and they swears, and they gets rowdy in their cups, so I won't answer as they won't offend you.'

'My duty has carried me into much more unsavoury localities, my friend. The worse the place the more is my presence, as a clergyman, necessary.'

'You ain't going to preach, sir?' cried Mosk, in alarm.

'No! that would indeed be casting pearls before swine, replied Cargrim, in his cool tones. 'But I will observe and reflect.'

The landlord looked uneasy. 'I know as the place is rough,' he said apologetically, 'but 'tain't my fault. You won't go talking to Sir Harry, I hope, sir, and take the bread out of my mouth?'

'Make your mind easy, Mosk. It is not my place to carry tales to your landlord; and I am aware that the lower orders cannot conduct themselves with decorum, especially on Saturday night. I repine that such a scene should be possible in a Christian land, but I don't blame you for its existence.'

'That's all right, sir,' said Mosk, with a sigh of relief. 'I'm rough but honest, whatever lies may be told to the contrary. If I can't pay my rent, that ain't my fault, I hope, as it ain't to be expected as I can do miracles.'

'The age of miracles is past, my worthy friend,' replied Cargrim, in conciliatory tones. 'We must not expect the impossible nowadays. By the way' – with a sudden change – 'have you a man called Jentham here?'

'Yes, I have,' growled Mosk, looking suspiciously at his questioner. 'What do you know of him, sir?'

'Nothing; but I take an interest in him as he seems to be one who has known better days.'

'He don't know them now, at all events, Mr Cargrim. He owes me money for this last week, he does. He paid all right at fust, but he don't pay now.'

'Indeed,' said the chaplain, pricking up his ears, 'he owes you money?'

'That he does; more nor two quid, sir. But he says he'll pay me soon.'

'Ah! he says he'll pay you soon,' repeated Cargrim; 'he expects to receive money, then?'

'I s'pose so, tho' Lord knows! – I beg pardon, sir – tho' goodness knows where it's coming from. He don't work or get wages as I can see.'

'I think I know,' thought Cargrim; then added aloud, 'Is the man here?'

'In the coffee-room yonder, sir. Half drunk he is, and lying like a good one. The yarns he reels off is wonderful.'

'No doubt; a man like that must be interesting to listen to. With your permission, Mr Mosk, I'll go into the coffee-room.'

'Straight ahead, sir. Will you take something to drink, if I may make so bold, Mr Cargrim?'

'No, my friend, no; thank you all the same,' and with a nod Cargrim pushed his way into the coffee-room to see the man with the scar.

CHAPTER IX

AN EXCITING ADVENTURE

Mr Cargrim found a considerable number of people in the coffee-room, and these, with tankards and glasses before them, were listening to the conversation of Jentham. Tobacco smoke filled the apartment with a thick atmosphere of fog, through which the gas-lights flared in a nebulous fashion, and rendered the air so hot that it was difficult to breathe in spite of the windows being open. At the head of the long table sat Jentham, drinking brandy-and-soda, and speaking in his cracked, refined voice with considerable spirit, his rat-like, quick eyes glittering the while with alcoholic lustre. He seemed to be considerably under the influence of drink, and his voice ran up and down from bass to treble as he became excited in narrating his adventures.

Whether these were true or false Cargrim could not determine; for although the man trenched again and again on the marvellous, he certainly seemed to be fully acquainted with what he was talking about, and related the most wonderful stories in a thoroughly dramatic fashion. Like Ulysses, he knew men and cities, and appeared to have travelled as much as that famous globe-trotter. In his narration he passed from China to Chili, sailed north to the Pole, steamed south to the Horn, described the paradise of the South Seas, and discoursed about the wild wastes of snowy Siberia. The capitals of Europe appeared to be as familiar to him as the chair he was seated in; and the steppes of Russia, the deserts of Africa, the sheep runs of Australia were all mentioned in turn, as adventure after adventure fell from his lips. And mixed up with these geographical accounts were thrilling tales of treasure-hunting, of escapes from savages, of perilous deeds in the secret places of great cities; and details of blood, and war, and lust, and hate, all told in a fiercely dramatic fashion. The man was a tramp, a gipsy, a ragged, penniless rolling-stone; but in his own way he was a genius. Cargrim wondered, with all his bravery, and endurance, and resource, that he had not made his fortune. The eloquent scamp seemed to wonder also.

'For,' said he, striking the table with his fist, 'I have never been able to hold what I won. I've been a millionaire twice over, but the gold wouldn't stay; it drifted away, it was swept away, it vanished, like Macbeth's witches, into thin air. Look at me, you country cabbages! I've reigned a king amongst savages. A poor sort of king, say you; but a king's a king, say I; and king I have been. Yet here I am, sitting in a Beorminster gutter, but I don't stay in it. By – ,' he confirmed his purpose with an oath, 'not I. I've got my plans laid, and they'll lift me up to the stars yet.'

'Hev you the money, mister?' inquired a sceptical listener.

'What's that to you?' cried Jentham, and finished his drink. 'Yes, I have money!' He set down his empty glass with a bang. 'At least I know where to get it. Bah! you fools, one can get blood out of a stone if one knows how to go about it. I know! I know! My Tom Tiddler's ground isn't far from your holy township,' and he began to sing, —

'Southberry Heath's Tom Tiddler's ground,
Gold and silver are there to be found.
It's dropped by the priest, picked up by the knave,
For the one is a coward, the other is brave.

More brandy, waiter; make it stiff, sonny! stiff! stiff! stiff!

The man's wild speech and rude song were unintelligible to his stupid, drink-bemused audience; but the keen brain of the schemer lurking near the door picked up their sense at once. Dr Pendle was the priest who was to drop the money on Southberry Heath, and Jentham the knave who was to pick it up. As certainly as though the man had given chapter and verse, Cargrim understood his enigmatic

stave. His mind flashed back to the memory that Dr Pendle intended to ride over to Southberry in the morning, across the heath. Without doubt he had agreed to meet there this man who boasted that he could get blood out of a stone, and the object of the meeting was to bribe him to silence. But however loosely Jentham alluded to his intention of picking up gold, he was cunning enough, with all his excitement, to hold his tongue as to how he could work such a miracle. Undoubtedly there was a secret between Dr Pendle and this scamp; but what it might be, Cargrim could by no means guess. Was Jentham a disreputable relation of the bishop's? Had Dr Pendle committed a crime in his youth for which he was now being blackmailed? What could be the nature of the secret which gave this unscrupulous blackguard a hold on a dignitary of the Church? Cargrim's brain was quite bewildered by his conjectures.

Hitherto Jentham had been in the blabbing stage of intoxication, but after another glass of drink he relapsed into a sullen, silent condition, and with his eyes on the table pulled fiercely at his pipe, so that his wicked face looked out like that of a devil from amid the rolling clouds of smoke. His audience waited open-mouthed for more stories, but as their entertainer seemed too moody to tell them any more, they began to talk amongst themselves, principally about horses and dogs. It was now growing late, and the most respectable of the crowd were moving homeward. Cargrim felt that to keep up the dignity of his cloth he should depart also; for several looks of surprise were cast in his direction. But Jentham and his wild speeches fascinated him, and he lurked in his corner, watching the sullen face of the man until the two were left the sole occupants of the room. Then Jentham looked up to call the waiter to bring him a final drink, and his eyes met those of Mr Cargrim. After a keen glance he suddenly broke into a peal of discordant laughter, which died away into a savage and menacing growl.

'Hallo!' he grumbled, 'here is the busybody of Beorminster. And what may you want, Mr Paul Pry?'

'A little civility in the first place, my worthy friend,' said Cargrim, in silky tones, for he did not relish the insolent tone of the satirical scamp.

'I am no friend to spies!'

'How dare you speak to me like that, fellow?'

'You call me a fellow and I'll knock your head off,' cried Jentham, rising with a savage look in his eyes. 'If you aren't a spy why do you come sneaking round here?'

'I came to see Mrs Mosk,' explained the chaplain, in a mighty dignified manner, 'but she is asleep, so I could not see her. In passing the door of this room I heard you relating your adventures, and I naturally stopped to listen.'

'To hear if I had anything to say about my visit to your bishop, I suppose?' growled Jentham, unpleasantly. 'I have a great mind to tell him how you watch me, you infernal devil-dodger!'

'Respect my cloth, sir.'

'Begin by respecting it yourself, d – you. What would his lordship of Beorminster say if he knew you were here?'

'His lordship does know.'

Jentham started. 'Perhaps he sent you?' he said, looking doubtful.

'No, he did not,' contradicted Cargrim, who saw that nothing was to be learned while the man was thus bemused with drink. 'I have told you the reason of my presence here. And as I am here, I warn you, as a clergyman, not to drink any more. You have already had more than enough.'

Jentham was staggered by the boldness of the chaplain, and stared at him open-mouthed; then recovering his speech, he poured forth such a volley of vile words at Cargrim that the chaplain stepped to the door and called the landlord. He felt that it was time for him to assert himself.

'This man is drunk, Mosk,' said he, sharply, 'and if you keep such a creature on your premises you will get into trouble.'

'Creature yourself!' cried Jentham, advancing towards Cargrim. 'I'll wring your neck if you use such language to me. I've killed fifty better men than you in my time. Mosk!' he turned with a snarl on the landlord, 'get me a drink of brandy.'

'I think you've had enough, Mr Jentham,' said the landlord, with a glance at Cargrim, 'and you know you owe me money.'

'Curse you, what of that?' raved Jentham, stamping. 'Do you think I'll not pay you?'

'I've not seen the colour of your money lately.'

'You'll see it when I choose. I'll have hundreds of pounds next week – hundreds;' and he broke out fiercely, 'get me more brandy; don't mind that devil-dodger.'

'Go to bed,' said Mosk, retiring, 'go to bed.'

Jentham ran after him with an angry cry, so Cargrim, feeling himself somewhat out of place in this pot-house row, nodded to Mosk and left the hotel with as much dignity as he could muster. As he went, the burden of Jentham's last speech – 'hundreds of pounds! hundreds of pounds!' – rang in his ears; and more than ever he desired to examine the bishop's cheque-book, in order to ascertain the exact sum. The secret, he thought, must indeed be a precious one when the cost of its preservation ran into three figures.

When Cargrim emerged into the street it was still filled with people, as ten o'clock was just chiming from the cathedral tower. The gossipers had retired within, and lights were gleaming in the upper windows of the houses; but knots of neighbours still stood about here and there, talking and laughing loudly. Cargrim strolled slowly down the street towards the Eastgate, musing over his late experience, and enjoying the coolness of the night air after the sultry atmosphere of the coffee-room. The sky was now brilliant with stars, and a silver moon rolled aloft in the blue arch, shedding down floods of light on the town, and investing its commonplace aspect with something of romance. The streets were radiant with the cold, clear lustre; the shadows cast by the houses lay black as Indian ink on the ground; and the laughter and noise of the passers-by seemed woefully out of place in this magical white world.

Cargrim was alive to the beauty of the night, but was too much taken up with his thoughts to pay much attention to its mingled mystery of shadow and light. As he took his musing way through the wide streets of the modern town, he was suddenly brought to a standstill by hearing the voice of Jentham some distance away. Evidently the man had quarrelled with the landlord, and had been turned out of the hotel, for he came rolling along in a lurching, drunken manner, roaring out a wild and savage ditty, picked up, no doubt, in some land at the back of beyond.

'Oh, I have treked the eight world climes,
And sailed the seven seas:
I've made my pile a hundred times,
And chucked the lot on sprees.

But when my ship comes home, my lads,
Why, curse me, don't I know
The spot that's worth, the blooming earth,
The spot where I shall go.

They call it Callao! for oh, it's Callao.
For on no condition
Is extradition
Allowed in Callao.'

Jentham roared and ranted the fierce old chanty with as much gusto and noise as though he were camping in the waste lands to which the song applied, instead of disturbing the peace of a quiet English town. As his thin form came swinging along in the silver light, men and women drew back with looks of alarm to let him pass, and Cargrim, not wishing to have trouble with the drunken bully, slipped into the shadow of a house until he passed. As usual, there was no policeman visible, and Jentham went bellowing and storming through the quiet summer night like the dissolute ruffian he was. He was making for the country in the direction of the palace, and wondering if he intended to force his way into the house to threaten Dr Pendle, the chaplain followed immediately behind. But he was careful to keep out of sight, as Jentham was in just the excited frame of mind to draw a knife: and Cargrim, knowing his lawless nature, had little doubt but that he had one concealed in his boot or trouser belt. The delicate coward shivered at the idea of a rough-and-tumble encounter with an armed buccaneer.

On went Jentham, swinging his arms with mad gestures, and followed by the black shadow of the chaplain, until the two were clear of the town. Then the gipsy turned down a shadowy lane, cut through a footpath, and when he emerged again into the broad roadway, found himself opposite the iron gates of the episcopalian park. Here he stopped singing and shook his fist at them.

'Come out, you devil-dodger!' he bellowed savagely. 'Come out and give me money, or I'll shame you before the whole town, you clerical hypocrite.' Then he took a pull at a pocket-flask.

Cargrim listened eagerly in the hope of hearing something definite, and Jentham gathered himself together for further denunciation of the bishop, when round the corner tripped two women, towards whom his drunken attention was at once attracted. With a hoarse chuckle he reeled towards them.

'Come along m' beauty,' he hiccuped, stretching out his arms, 'here's your haven. Wine and women! I love them both.'

The women both shrieked, and rushed along the road, pursued by the ruffian. Just as he laid rude hands on the last one, a young man came racing along the footpath and swung into the middle of the road. The next moment Jentham lay sprawling on his back, and the lady assaulted was clinging to the arm of her preserver.

'Why, it's Mab!' said the young man, in surprise.

'George!' cried Miss Arden, and burst into tears. 'Oh, George!'

'Curse you both!' growled Jentham, rising slowly. 'I'll be even with you for that blow, my lad.'

'I'll kick you into the next field if you don't clear out,' retorted George Pendle. 'Did he hurt you, Mab?'

'No! no! but I was afraid. I was at Mrs Tears, and was coming home with Ellen, when that man jumped on to us. Oh! oh! oh!'

'The villain!' cried Captain Pendle; 'who is he?'

It was at this moment that, all danger being over, Cargrim judged it judicious to emerge from his retreat. He came forward hurriedly, as though he had just arrived on the scene.

'What is the matter?' he exclaimed. 'I heard a scream. What, Captain Pendle! Miss Arden! This is indeed a surprise.'

'Captain Pendle!' cried Jentham. 'The son of the bishop. Curse him!'

George whirled his stick and made a dash at the creature, but was restrained by Mab, who implored him not to provoke further quarrels.

George took her arm within his own, gave a curt nod to the chaplain, whom he suspected had seen more of the affray than he chose to admit, and flung a word to Jentham.

'Clear out, you dog!' he said, 'or I'll hand you over to the police. Come, Mab, yonder is Ellen waiting for you. We'll join her, and I shall see you both home.'

Jentham stood looking after the three figures with a scowl. 'You'll hand me over to the police, George Pendle, will you?' he muttered, loud enough for Cargrim to overhear. 'Take care I don't do

the same thing to your father,' and like a noisome and dangerous animal he crept back in the shadow of the hedge and disappeared.

'Aha!' chuckled Cargrim, as he walked towards the park gates, 'it has to do with the police, then, my lord bishop. So much the better for me, so much the worse for you.'

CHAPTER X

MORNING SERVICE IN THE MINSTER

The cathedral is the glory of Beorminster, of the county, and, indeed, of all England, since no churches surpass it in size and splendour, save the minsters of York and Canterbury. Founded and endowed by Henry II. in 1184 for the glory of God, it is dedicated to the blessed Saint Wulf of Osserton, a holy hermit of Saxon times, who was killed by the heathen Danes. Bishop Gandolf designed the building in the picturesque style of Anglo-Norman architecture; and as the original plans have been closely adhered to by successive prelates, the vast fabric is the finest example extant of the Norman superiority in architectural science. It was begun by Gandolf in 1185, and finished at the beginning of the present century; therefore, as it took six hundred years in building, every portion of it is executed in the most perfect manner. It is renowned both for its beauty and sanctity, and forms one of the most splendid memorials of architectural art and earnest faith to be found even in England, that land of fine churches.

The great central tower rises to the height of two hundred feet in square massiveness, and from this point springs a slender and graceful spire to another hundred feet, so that next to Salisbury, the great archetype of this special class of ecclesiastical architecture, it is the tallest spire in England. Two square towers, richly ornamented, embellish the western front, and beneath the great window over the central entrance is a series of canopied arches. The church is cruciform in shape, and is built of Portland stone, the whole being richly ornamented with pinnacles, buttresses, crocketed spires and elaborate tracery. Statues of saints, kings, queens and bishops are placed in niches along the northern and southern fronts, and the western front itself is sculptured with scenes from Holy Scripture in the quaint grotesque style of mediæval art. No ivy is permitted to conceal the beauties of the building; and elevated in the clear air, far above the smoke of the town, it looks as fresh and white and clean cut as though it had been erected only within the last few years. Spared by Henry VIII. and the iconoclastic rage of the Puritans, Time alone has dealt with it; and Time has mellowed the whole to a pale amber hue which adds greatly to the beauty of the mighty fane. Beorminster Cathedral is a poem in stone.

Within, the nave and transepts are lofty and imposing, with innumerable arches springing from massive marble pillars. The rood screen is ornate, with figures of saints and patriarchs; the pavement is diversified with brasses and carved marble slabs, and several Crusaders' tombs adorn the side chapels. The many windows are mostly of stained glass, since these were not destroyed by the Puritans; and when the sun shines on a summer's day the twilight interior is dyed with rich hues and quaint patterns. As the Bishop of Beorminster is a High Churchman the altar is magnificently decorated, and during service, what with the light and colour and brilliancy, the vast building seems – unlike the dead aspect of many of its kind – to be filled with life and movement and living faith. A Romanist might well imagine that he was attending one of the magnificent and imposing services of his own faith, save that the uttered words are spoken in the mother tongue.

As became a city whose whole existence depended upon the central shrine, the services at the cathedral were invariably well attended. The preaching attracted some, the fine music many, and the imposing ritual introduced by Bishop Pendle went a great way towards bringing worshippers to the altar. A cold, frigid, undecorated service, appealing more to the intellect than the senses, would not have drawn together so vast and attentive a congregation; but the warmth and colour and musical fervour of the new ritual lured the most careless within the walls of the sacred building. Bishop Pendle was right in his estimate of human nature; for when the senses are enthralled by colour and sound, and vast spaces, and symbolic decorations the reverential feeling thus engendered prepares the mind for the reception of the sublime truths of Christianity. A pure faith and a gorgeous ritual are not so incompatible as many people think. God should be worshipped with pomp and splendour; we should

bring to His service all that we can invent in the way of art and beauty. If God has prepared for those who believe the splendid habitation of the New Jerusalem with its gates of pearl and its streets of gold, why should we, His creatures, stint our gifts in His service, and debar the beautiful things, which He inspires us to create with brain and hand, from use in His holy temple? 'Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh,' and out of the fulness of the hand the giver should give. 'Date et dabitur!' The great Luther was right in applying this saying to the church.

One of the congregation at St Wulf's on this particular morning was Captain George Pendle, and he came less for the service than in the hope – after the manner of those in love – of meeting with Mab Arden. During the reading of the lessons his eyes were roving here and there in search of that beloved face, but much to his dismay he could not see it. Finally, on a chair near a pillar, he caught sight of Miss Whichello in her poke bonnet and black silk cloak, but she was alone, and there were no bright eyes beside her to send a glance in the direction of George. Having ascertained beyond all doubt that Mab was not in the church, and believing that she was unwell after the shock of Jentham's attack on the previous night, George withdrew his attention from the congregation, and settled himself to listen attentively to the anthem. It was worthy of the cathedral, and higher praise cannot be given. 'I have blotted out as a thick cloud,' sang the boy soloist in a clear sweet treble, 'I have blotted out thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.' Then came the triumphant cry of the choir, borne on the rich waves of sound rolling from the organ, 'Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.' The lofty roof reverberated with the melodious thunder, and the silvery altoes pierced through the great volume of sound like arrows of song. 'Return! Return! Return!' called the choristers louder and higher and clearer, and ended, with a magnificent burst of harmony, with the sublime proclamation, 'The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel!' When the white-robed singers resumed their seats, the organ still continued to peal forth triumphant notes, which died away in gentle murmurs. It was like the passing by of a tempest; the stilling of the ocean after a storm.

Mr Cargrim preached the sermon, and, with a vivid recollection of his present enterprise, waxed eloquent on the ominous text, 'Be sure thy sin will find thee out.' His belief that the bishop was guilty of some crime, for the concealment of which he intended to bribe Jentham, had been strengthened by an examination on that very morning of the cheque-book. Dr Pendle had departed on horseback for Southberry after an early breakfast, and after hurriedly despatching his own, Cargrim had hastened to the library. Here, as he expected, he found the cheque-book carelessly left in an unlocked drawer of the desk, and on looking over it he found that one of the butts had been torn out. The previous butt bore a date immediately preceding that of Dr Pendle's departure for London, so Cargrim had little difficulty in concluding that the bishop had drawn the next cheque in London, and had torn out the butt to which it had been attached. This showed, as the chaplain very truly thought, that Dr Pendle was desirous of concealing not only the amount of the cheque – since he had kept no note of the sum on the butt – but of hiding the fact that the cheque had been drawn at all. This conduct, coupled with the fact of Jentham's allusion to Tom Tiddler's ground, and his snatch of extempore song, confirmed Cargrim in his suspicions that Pendle had visited London for the purpose of drawing out a large sum of money, and intended to pay the same over to Jentham that very night on Southberry Heath. With this in his mind it was no wonder that Cargrim preached a stirring sermon. He repeated his warning text over and over again; he illustrated it in the most brilliant fashion; and his appeals to those who had secret sins, to confess them at once, were quite heartrending in their pathos. As most of his congregation had their own little peccadilloes to worry over, Mr Cargrim's sermon made them quite uneasy, and created a decided sensation, much to his own gratification. If Bishop Pendle had only been seated on his throne to hear that sermon, Cargrim would have been thoroughly satisfied. But, alas! the bishop – worthy man – was confirming innocent sinners at Southberry, and thus lost any chance he might have had of profiting by his chaplain's eloquence.

However, the congregation could not be supposed to know the secret source of the chaplain's eloquence, and his withering denunciations were supposed to arise from a consciousness of his own

pure and open heart. The female admirers of Cargrim particularly dwelt in after-church gossip on this presumed cause of the excellent sermon they had heard, and when the preacher appeared he was congratulated on all sides. Miss Tancred for once forgot her purse story, and absolutely squeaked, in the highest of keys, in her efforts to make the young man understand the amount of pleasure he had given her. Even Mrs Pansey was pleased to express her approval of so well chosen a text, and looked significantly at several of her friends as she remarked that she hoped they would take its warning to heart.

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