

the immediate context of the burning phrase he wanted to see; of the two words which had thrummed in his heart incessantly since he read them—"Perpetual Adoration."

Why no human being could manage that! It would be trenching upon the work of the angels. It was their function, of course, but not possible for men. Where was there such a thing upon earth? What could the greatly daring words mean?

He spread the paper with hands which trembled a little, and read once more "Perpetual Adoration."

A tear in the paper beneath, so that the words continued abruptly . . . "appeal for help during the war to maintain the number of candles necessary for continual Exposition. The Adoration is continued day and night unceasingly and has never been interrupted since the Foundation of the Order, having persisted through the troublous period of" . . . A second gap where the paper had been jagged, and on the atom remaining two words, "Blessed Sacrament."

John Jameson sat back musing. Though a deeply religious man he had, like perhaps not a few naturally devout souls, been led by the bewildering choice of creeds in modern England to the extreme undenominationalism of the rejection of all. None of those he had tried had satisfied him completely: the weak note, the lack in all had been precisely that for which his soul yearned most hungrily: the fitting and seemly worship of God. It had seemed to him the concentration on human need even in prayer, heavily weighted with petition, had wronged and forgotten the claims of the Divine.

The prospect therefore of a new religion, possessing this wonderful characteristic of Adoration carried to its fullest height, was a promise of the satisfaction of his own reverential instinct for the due and fitting. The words which to his neighbors would perhaps have been devoid of meaning attracted him with the force of a magnet. No form of religion with which he was acquainted had attempted this, indeed he had not known that such an aspiration existed upon earth and he was excited by his discovery.

Yet the fragmentary condition of his source of information frustrated the gaining of further knowledge. Who were the folk blessed with so exquisite a privilege? What, too, was "Continual Exposition," the *Blessed Sacrament*, and whence the need of candles?

He pondered the mystery at intervals throughout the evening, and at length an inspiration came to him. He would discover from the loquacious boy when next he came to the shop what religion the new owner of the big house professed. He rather suspected it would turn out to be some Eastern esoteric creed.

Then he relapsed into meditation. Perpetual! It was going on then as he went to bed, nor would it cease while he slept.

He was at work early the next morning still hypnotised by his consciousness of a new and secret knowledge. It did not prevent, however, the giving of his full attention to the jug awaiting its turn: a case, he saw, for "bridge" work, the greater part of its handle being missing. He bored a small hole in each of the two remaining stumps, into which he inserted and cemented a bit of copper wire to form a core. Then he put that aside and turned to the riveting of the plates from the big house, laying the broken pieces edge to edge and marking on each side dots where the holes would be drilled. His thoughts kept feast as he bent and flattened the wire for the rivet, and he had just touched its ends with shellac before insertion when the shop bell rang. That did not matter: the wire would contract and cool now, so bringing the edges of the fracture together.

On his return he made some patching mixtures: one for the handle of the jug and another of plumbago, brick-dust, and waterglass for the filling of a tiny hole in a black Wedgewood vase.

At intervals he was absent in the spirit, for though he did not recognise it himself he really lived two lives: one of the faithful healer of old china and another that of a soul capable of becoming *Gott-betrunken*. His outer life showed a regularity almost machine-like yet removed alto-

gether from the commonplace by the glints shed thereon from the divine fire within his soul.

A week later exhilaration possessed him at the prospect of light to be shed upon the words still haunting him. With the gladness of them still in his heart he answered the first ring of the shop bell.

The boy from the big house stood there.

"Come for the plates," he announced without preamble, and Mr. Jameson, nodding, returned to his bench to fetch them. While securing an extra string round the parcel as he stood in the shop he sprang a question on the boy.

"What religion are the new folk up at the house?" he asked, feeling that his life hung on the answer.

"Why, everyone in the village knows as they be Catholics, in course," the urelin returned, not troubling to veil his contempt of Mr. Jameson's despicable ignorance. "Got their own chapel they 'as, stuck full o' all sorts of things," and putting down the china pig he had been fingering he prepared to depart.

"What sort?" faltered John Jameson. His heart had sunk like lead at the boy's reply. All his hopes of a modern, enlightened sect were killed. Romanists! Papists! Who did not even worship God at all but the Virgin Mary instead. He remembered a chapel sermon once heard against Mariolatry. There must be some mistake: the paper could not have to do with that religion.

"Oh, pictures and figures of folk, and candles, lots of 'em. My eye, but it's fine when they're all ablaze!" he added appreciatively.

But at every word the boy had spoken Mr. Jameson's heart sank lower. Yet there were the candles, mysteriously connected in some way with the Adoration.

"Seems as though the aristocracy should know better," he remarked as he handed the parcel to the boy. "I'm not particular where I worship but I *do* draw the line at Catholics." Mr. Jameson was not of the self-righteous, but his tone savored of it now.

Before the boy escaped, however, he brought the fragment of cherished newspaper from his pocket. Any thing was better than suspense.

"Do you know from what paper this came?" he asked, extending the creased page.

"Why, *Catholic Times*, as they takes every week regular," was the answer. "If you wants to know all about it you should come to the chapel. It's open all nights, as well as Sunday."

The china-dealer was, however, too sad for such frivolous amusement. He was thrown back upon himself, and the fellowship of "Perpetual Adoration" had dissolved into thin air.

The next week was a rainy one and but few jobs came in. Customers also were rare, and affairs reached a crisis on a dull day upon which he sold only a breakfast saucer for three halfpence and a teapot for sixpence all day long.

Tiring towards dusk of his cramped position at the bench he rose and went into the shop to satisfy among the gaudy and crude ware a hunger for beauty.

In the half light, however, some of his goods pleased him. They were better thus not seen too plainly. There were cheap vases whose curves were yet quite graceful, and he began massing such stuff as possessed color together. He would make himself a pleasure corner: as no one served in the shop except himself the disarrangement would be of no consequence. All florid and decorated articles he rejected, choosing only those of plain character. The childish make-believe recalled his last visit to the Museum at Kensington, and he lost himself for a while in a dream of the magic beauty of Oriental porcelain: of the purity of azure blue, of the old Chinese vivid red and of the chameleon-like range of amberine.

Then suddenly the chasm between the old classics of pottery and the contents of a modern china shop sickened him, and he could find his recreation there no longer. He must go out.

The old craving, too, for communion with God was upon him. Often at night he had been able to satisfy it in quiet places beneath a starlit sky, but this evening the rain deprived him of his natural temple. Not a place of worship in the village would be open. It was not a prayer-

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