THE MUTABLE MANY.

BY ROBERT BARR.

The Story of a Labor Union. A Tale of Present Day Problems. With Episodes from Real Life.

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CHAPTER IX.—CONTINUED.

"Would you tell Mr. Hope that I wish to speak with him for a moment?"

Barney approached the newcomer with a smiling face and extended his hand.

"Oh, how-de-do, how-de-do? I am so glad you found time to come to my little affair. You are just in time—just in time, don't you know."

Barney's artistic eye rapidly took in the appearance of his guest, and all at once he realized that his clothes had not quite the air of Bond street about them, in spite of the fact that they were flagrantly the best suit his visitor had. The smile faded from the artist's face.

"Oh, pardon me!" he added. "I thought I recognized you, but I don't think I have the pleasure of—"

"No, we are not acquainted, Mr. Hope. I am one of the workmen in your father's factory."

"Really. You have some message for me, perhaps?"

"I came of my own motion. I wish very particularly to speak to you on business."

"Oh, but really, my good fellow, don't you know. This is my 'At Home' day. I never talk business on these days, never. If you want to buy any of my pictures, or anything, don't you know, you must come another day."

"I did not come about pictures, but about something vastly different and more serious."

"My good fellow—you'll excuse my interrupting you, won't you? There is no serious business except art, and today I don't even talk art."

"Human lives," said Marsten, hotly, "are more serious than art."

"Please don't raise your voice. You are certainly wrong about things, but I haven't time to correct you today, don't you know. All one needs to say about your last remark is that human lives are ephemeral, while art is everlasting. Therefore, is art the more important of the two. But we'll let that pass. Can't you come and talk another day? I'm sure I shall be delighted to see you at any time."

"Couldn't you give me five minutes out on the landing?"

"It is impossible. I cannot leave my guests. You see, we have the dancing earl on in a few moments. His grace is just now arranging his skirts. I really must go, don't you know."

"Then I will stay until the earl has done his dancing, if that is what he is here for."

"Do, my dear fellow, do. A most excellent idea. I am sure you will like it, for though I have not seen the dance myself, I understand it is quite unique. Have a cup of tea. I would have sent you a card if I had thought that any of my father's workmen were interested in the latest movements of art, but never mind the lack of invitation. If you care to stay without it, I shall be delighted. It is really very good of you to drop in in this unexpected way. It is the kind of thing I like, so Bohemian, don't you know. You'll excuse me now, I'm sure," and Barney tripped away to see that all arrangements for the appearance of the earl were complete.

The model stand had been pushed to one end of the room fronting the audience; heavy curtains had been drawn across the big north window, leaving the place in semi-darkness; there was the hissing and sputtering of a lime light in the gallery, causing inquisitive people to turn their heads to see what it was.

Marsten stood against the wall beside another man, who said to him in a weary tone:

"Who is this man, Barnard Hope?"

"He is an artist," answered Marsten, astonished that one guest should question a stranger regarding their mutual host.

"Evidently," replied the other. "But who are his people, or has he any?"

"His father is one of the richest manufacturers in London."

"Egad, I was sure of it. I knew there was a shop somewhere in the background, the fellow is so beastly civil."

Conversation was here interrupted by a figure leaping on the model stand, while at the same instant a blinding white light was thrown from the gallery upon it. There was a ripple of applause, and the earl, a beardless youth of perhaps 20, bowed. He looked like a girl in his clinging fluted skirts. He was a scion of an ancient noble family, founded by an affectionate dancer of the opposite sex in the reign of the second Charles, and it was quite in the regular order of things that there should be a recrudescence of terpsichorean ability in the latest member of the house.

The white light changed to red and the skirt dance began. As it went on it was received with tumultuous applause, for a London audience is always easy to please, especially when there is no charge for admission at the doors. Still, it must be admitted that

TIMID LITTLE MR. HOPE PASSES THROUGH THE CROWD.

the sprightly little earl deserved the warmth of his reception, for his exhibition was a model of grace and agility, while his manipulation of the voluminous skirts left little to be desired. The variegated colors thrown on the fluttering, whirling drapery gave a wierd, unearthly effect to the rapid movements of his grace, and the grand finale, where a crimson light was flung upon the flimsy silk waving high above the dancer's head, gave the agile young nobleman the appearance of one of the early martyrs wrapped in flames.

The curtains were drawn back, the entranced assemblage rose to its feet, and, gathering about the host, congratulated him upon the success of his afternoon. Barney received these felicitations with exuberant gratification and the young earl, finally emerging from behind the scenes, clothed and in his right mind, but a trifle breathless, accepted modestly his well-earned share of the compliments, for, let cynics say what they will, true merit is always sure of appreciation in the great city.

Edna Sartwell lingered for a moment on the outskirts of the throng that pressed around Barney and the little earl, then leisurely made her way toward the door, waiting for her stepmother, who lingered to thank her host. The men who had stood along the wall were already in the street and the other visitors had nearly all departed.

Marsten stood alone where he was when the entertainment was going on, gazing with beating heart at the girl he loved. She came slowly toward him, her head averted, watching her stepmother standing in the fast thinning group about Barney. There was a certain consciousness about her movements, as if the young man had hypnotized her and was drawing her to him by mere force of will. At last her skirts touched

The girl turned her head quickly, and for a moment met his gaze without recognizing him.

"My name is Marsten," he said, huskily, seeing she did not know him. "I met you the other evening at your father's office, when he and I were talking of the strike."

"Oh, yes," she replied. "At first I did not remember you. I—I did not expect to—" She paused and seemed confused, looking away from him.

"To find me here," said the young man, completing the sentence for her and gathering courage as the delightful fact that he was actually talking to her impressed its almost unbelievable reality upon him. "I did not know there was anything like this going on. I came to consult with Mr. Hope on the same subject—." He flushed as the memory of one subject arose in his mind, and he felt his newly acquired courage beginning to ebb again. He pulled himself together and ended lamely, "—about the strike, you know."

"Oh," said Edna, instantly interested. "Is there anything new about the strike?"

"Yes, there was a meeting last night, and it was unanimously resolved to quit work."

The color left the girl's cheeks.

"And are the men out? Is that why you are here today?"

"No; they do not go out until Saturday. I did what I could to prevent it, but without success. I applied to your father for this afternoon off, and he gave it to me without asking any questions. It seemed to me that in the few intervening days before the men go out something might be done, when the enthusiasm of the meeting had died down. That's why I came, but I'm afraid there is not much to look for here."

"Does father know?"

"About the strike? Oh, yes."

The girl's winsome face clouded with apprehension.

"I am so sorry," she said at last. "I am sure it is not father's fault, for he is kind to every one. Even if he is sometimes severe," she cast a shy upward glance at the young man that made his heart beat faster, "he is always just."

"Yes, I know that is true. He will beat the men, and that is the reason I want moderate counsels to prevail. The workingman is always the under dog. Most of his mouthing friends are fools, and he himself is the greatest fool of all."

"Don't you think you are a little hard on the workingman? Were you here in time to see the dancing earl?"

She looked at him with a frank smile, and Marsten smiled in company with her—it brightened his face wonderfully and established an evanescent bond of comradeship between them.

"I had forgotten the earl," he said.

"I must go now. I see my stepmother looking for me. I hope you will be successful in averting trouble at the works."

She extended her hand to him and he took it tenderly, fearing he might grasp it too closely and betray himself.

Mrs. Sartwell and her stepdaughter were the last to go.

Barney threw himself on a divan and lighted a cigarette.

"Well, my young friend, here we are alone at last. Help yourself to the cigarettes and allow me to offer you something stronger than the tea with which we regale the ladies. We have several shots in the locker, so just name your particular favorite in the way of stimulants, while I order a B and S for myself. You might not believe it, but one of these afternoons takes it out of a fellow more than a day's work at the factory. Not that I ever indulged in factory work myself, but I think you said it was in your line."

"Yes," said Marsten, after declining the offerings of his host. "It is about the factory I wish to speak to you. The men resolved last night to go out on strike."

"Foolish beggars."

"I quite agree with you. Their action is worse than foolish—that is why I came to see if you would intervene in any way so that a better state of feeling might be brought about."

"Well, now—let's see, I believe I have forgotten your name, or did you tell me? Ah, Marsten—thanks—so many things on my mind, don't you know? You see, Mr. Marsten, it's really no business of mine, although I must admit that your offer of the position of arbitrator flatters me. This makes twice I have been asked within a few days, so I think I must really be a born diplomat, don't you know. But, you see, there's nothing I enjoy so much as minding my own business, and this strike is no affair of mine."

"I think it is. All the luxury you have here is surely earned by the men I am now speaking for."

"My dear fellow, you are not in the least flattering now; you are not, I assure you. You are saying in other words that my pictures do not sell."

"I had no intention of hinting anything of the kind. I have no doubt you can sell anything you paint."

"Ah, you are commending the artistic discernment of the British public which—at present—is an honor the B. P. does not deserve. It will come round ultimately—the great B. P. always does—but not yet, my boy, not yet. Give it time and it will pour cash in your lap. I regret that the moment—how shall I put it?—well, up to date, has not arrived. The workmen whom you honor by associating with at present supply—as with perhaps with unnecessary bluntness you state it—the financial deficiency. But the public will pay for it all in the end—every penny of it, my boy. You see these pictures around the walls? Very well; I hold them at £2,000 each. I had little difficulty in so holding them, for no section of the great British public has, up to the present time, evinced any dogged desire to wrench them from me in exchange for so much gold. What is the consequence? I shall increase the price £500 every year, and the longer they hold off the bigger sum they will have to pay, and serve them jolly right, I say. Ten pictures, £20,000—this year. Next year, £25,000, and so on. With property on my hands increasing at that rate, I should be an idiot to urge people to buy. Ground rents in Belgravia are not in it with my pictures as investments. So you see, Marsten, when my day comes the factory will be a mere triviality as an income producer compared with my brush, don't you know."

"But in the meantime?"

"In the meantime, I am getting along very nicely, thank you. The strike will not affect me in the least. The men may have to diminish the amount of shag, or whatever awful mixture they smoke, but I shall not consume one cigarette the less. I have done nothing to bring on this struggle. If the men want to fight, then, by jingo! let them, say I."

"The fight is not yet actually on, and won't be until Saturday. Now is the time for a cool-headed man to interfere and bring about an amicable understanding. Won't you at least make the attempt, Mr. Hope?"

"My dear Marsten, the way of the self-appointed arbitrator is hard. I was reading in this morning's paper about your charming meeting last night, and I noticed that one man who interfered was kicked off the platform and thrown out into a side street. That is the workingman's idea of how an intellectual discussion should be terminated. I love the workingman myself, but I sometimes wish he would not argue with his hobnailed boot. By the way, did you see this interesting episode? You were there, I suppose?"

"Yes. Braunt, who was kicked out, is one of the best workingmen in the factory, but very hot tempered. He lost control of himself last night under strong provocation, and when he was outside tried to batter in the door. The police interfered, and he knocked down three of them. This was disastrous, for he was fined five pounds this morning, and I have been trying to raise the money so that he need not go to prison, but we are in the minority—he exasperated our fellow workmen—and I am not getting on well with the subscription list."

Barney sprang to his feet.

Knocked down three, did he? Good man. That's something like. It's a most deplorable trait in my character that I somehow enjoy an assault on the police, and yet I recognize the general usefulness of the force. Five pounds, did you say? Then there will be the costs. I don't understand much about these things, but I believe there are usually costs, on the principle of adding insult to injury, I suppose. Will a ten-pound note see him through? Good. Here it is. Three-pound-odd a policeman is not expensive when you think how much some luxuries here below cost, don't you know. No thanks, Marsten, I beg of you. It's a pleasure, I assure you."

As Marsten took the money a servant came in and said in a low voice: "Simpson wants to know if he may go, sir."

"Bless me, yes. I thought he had gone long ago. Simpson is my ornamental six-footer at the head of the stair. Perhaps you noticed him as you came in. Poor fellow, he's not allowed to do anything but stand there and look pretty, so I suppose it gets wearisome. Imagine such boy-stood-on-the-burning-deck devotion at this end of the nineteenth century! I had forgotten him, absorbed in your interesting conversation. Well, Marsten, I'm sorry I can't arbitrate, but drop in again and let me know how things go on. Good afternoon."

CHAPTER X.

On Saturday the men took their well-earned pay, one by one, and went out of the gates quietly, if sullenly. During the days that had intervened between the meeting and the strike neither side had made advances to the other. If Sartwell had prepared for the struggle these preparations had been accomplished so secretly that Gibbons failed to learn of them. The secretary of the union issued a manifesto to the press, setting forth the position of the men in temperate phrase that had the effect of bringing public sympathy largely to the side of the workers. It was an admirable document and most of the papers published it, some of them editorially regretting the fact that in this enlightened country and this industrial age some hundreds of men, the bone and sinew of the land, willing to work, were forced to go into the streets in protest against a tyranny that refused even to discuss their alleged wrongs. The newspapers pointed out that whether their grievances were just or not was beside the question, as

BARNEY GIVES MARSTON THE BANKNOTE.

the point was that the manager had refused to see a deputation, and this high-handed conduct the papers expressed themselves as forced to deplore.

Both members of the firm thought this manifesto should be answered. The manager did not agree with them, so it was not answered.

Pickets were placed before the gates and a few extra policemen appeared, as if by accident, in the neighborhood; but there was nothing for either policemen or pickets to do. On Monday some of the men lounging around the place looked up at the tall chimneys and saw them, for the first time during their remembrance, smokeless. They had never noticed the smoke before, but now its absence created an unexpected void in the murky outlook. It was as if the finger of death had touched those gaunt, lofty stacks, and the unusual silence of the place seemed to give the situation a lonely feeling of solemnity they had not looked for.

On Tuesday some dray loads of new machinery arrived at the works and these the pickets attempted to stop, but without success. Gibbons was consulted, but he took a sensible and liberal view of the matter.

"Let them put in all the new machinery they wish. That will mean employment for more men when we go back. We will not interfere with Sartwell until he tries to fill the works with other employes."

For the remainder of the week the shops echoed with the clang of iron on iron, but no smoke came out of the tall chimneys.

"Call this a fight?" said one of the men over his mug of beer. "I call it a bean feast."

On Saturday strike pay was given out at headquarters, each man getting his usual wage, for the union was rich. It was, indeed, a bean feast—all pay and no work.

The first week had enabled Sartwell to make repairs and to add machinery that had long been needed, but it had another effect which he considered more important still. It allowed Mr. Monkton and Mr. Hope to recover their second wind, as it were. These good, but timorous men had been panic-stricken by the going out of their employes, and by the adverse comments of the press. As nothing happened during the week, they gradually regained what they called their courage, and, although they perhaps did not realize it, they were more and more committed to the fight when it did come on. They could hardly, with decency, after keeping silence for a week during which there was peace, give way if afterward there should be violence.

The vigilance of the pickets perhaps relaxed a little as time went on, and there was nothing to do. But one morning they had a rude awakening. When they arrived at the gates they saw smoke once more pouring from the chimneys; there was a hum of machinery; the works were in full blast, and the former workers were outside the gates.

The news spread quickly, and the men gathered around the gates from all quarters. Gibbons was early on the ground, like an energetic general, ready to lead his men to the fray. He saw that the fight was now on, and he counselled moderation when he spoke to the excited men. It was all right, he answered them. He had expected this, and was prepared for it.

The gates were closed, and when Gibbons asked admission to speak with the manager his request was curtly refused. This refusal did not tend to allay the excitement, nor to improve the temper of the men. The police kept the throng on the move as much as possible, but the task became more and more difficult as the crowd increased.

At noon a wagon, evidently loaded with provisions, drove down the street, and when the mob learned that its destination was the works, a cry went up that the vehicle should be upset.

Again the pacifying influence of Gibbons made itself felt, and the wagon, amid the jeers of the bystanders, drove in, while the gates were speedily closed after it.

Gibbons retired with his captains to headquarters, where a consultation was held. There was a chance that Sartwell, during the first week, when it was supposed he was putting in new machinery, had also been building dormitories for his new men, and that he was going to keep them inside the gates, free from the influence of the union.

This plan had not been foreseen by Gibbons, and he was unprepared for it.

"The men must come out sooner or later, and when they do we will have a talk with them," said the secretary. "My own opinion is that they will come out tonight at the usual hour, and I propose to act on that supposition. If I find I am wrong, we will meet again tonight, and I will have some proposals to make. In a short time we shall be able to learn whether the scabs are coming out or not. Meanwhile, get back among our own men, and advise them not to make any hostile demonstration when the 'blacklegs' appear; and when the scabs come out let each man of you persuade as many as you can to come to the big hall, where we can have a talk with them. Tell the men that if there is any violence they will be merely playing into Sartwell's hands. We don't want the police down on us, and, until there is a row, they will at least remain neutral."

This advice commended itself to all who heard it, and, the details of the program having been arranged, they all departed for the scene of conflict.

Promptly at 6 o'clock the gates were thrown open, and shortly after the "blacklegs" began pouring forth into the street. There were no hootings nor jeerings, but the strikers regarded the newcomers with scowling looks, while the latter seemed rather uncomfortable, many of them evidently apprehensive regarding their reception.

"Men," cried Gibbons, "who is your leader? I want a word with him."

The stream of humanity paused for a moment, in spite of the commands of the police to move along. The men looked at one another, and Gibbons quickly recognized the state of things—they were strangers to each other, coming as they did from all parts of England. This surmise was confirmed by one man, who spoke up:

"We've no leader," he said.

"Then you be the spokesman," cried Gibbons. "Did you men know, when you came here, that there was a strike on?"

"Something of that sort," replied the spokesman, sullenly.

"Do you belong to a union?"

"The union never did now't for us."

"Do you know that you are taking bread from the mouths of other workers?"

"We must put bread into our own mouths."

At this point the police captain touched Gibbons on the shoulder.

"I can't allow this obstruction," he said.

"Give me two minutes," pleaded Gibbons.

"No—nor one."

Gibbons turned savagely upon him.

"Look here," he said, "have some tact and sense. Don't you know that I have merely to raise my hand and this crowd will sweep you and your men off the face of the earth?"

"That won't prevent me from sweeping you into prison."

"Certainly not. But you can arrest me quietly, when you like, or I'll meet you at the police station any hour you name, but if you attempt to interfere now you'll have a riot on your hands. I'm holding this crowd in check—it is not its fear of you. There's no traffic coming through this street nor likely to come. We're therefore obstructing nothing, and I'm as anxious as you are to keep the men within the law. Good heavens! you may have your hands full at any moment, so don't push patient people over the line. Remember, you are not in Sartwell's employ. I only want a few words with these men, then we'll leave the street to you."

The captain hesitated a moment. It was an ominous mob.

"Look sharp, then," he said, and stepped back.

"Come with us," cried Gibbons. "We can't talk here. Come to the big hall, and if you don't like what we say, there will be no harm done. This is a free country."

The secretary turned as if he had no doubt that the crowd would follow, and the leaderless men walked after him. Gibbons' assistants mixed among them and talked persuasively with the strangers. Before half an hour all the "blacklegs" were in the Salvation army hall, signing the union roll and being put on the strike pay list.

It was a notable triumph for Gibbons; first blood, as a sporting man would say.

Next morning, when the gates were opened, not a man entered, and Sartwell once more found himself without an employe. After the gates had remained invitingly open for half an hour they were closed again, and a great cheer went up as the two big iron-bolted leaves came together.

Sartwell's resources, however, were not yet exhausted, for two days later the factory was thronged with workmen once more, and these also Gibbons bought from under the manager.

Thus the game went on, and it convinced the men that their secretary knew a thing or two, being more than a match for the manager. Gibbons carried himself confidently, and talked with grand assurance that he was perhaps far from feeling, for he became more and more haggard and anxious as the fight continued. He alone knew the seriousness of the increased drain on the resources of the union, through the forced support of the new hands he had lured away from Sartwell's employ, and which had upset all his previous calculations. An attempt was made to lighten the burden by trying to induce the new men to return to their homes, and this had been partially successful with the first lot, but the others obstinately insisted on getting their share of the strike pay, and refused even to consider the advisability of returning. They demanded what was promised them, or threatened to enter the works in a body, which action would have speedily put an end to the contest. Gibbons was well supported by that section of the press which gave more than a few lines each day to the progress of the strike. One morning the chief of these papers came out to the public with an appeal for aid. The case of the strikers, battling, it might be, at first for their own rights, but fighting in reality for all working humanity, was most convincingly and tersely put in a double-leaded editorial, and the journal itself headed the list with a handsome contribution. Would the people of England hold aloof, reduce these workers into slaves, using the weapon of grim starvation against them? The journal did not believe such apathy existed, and its belief was amply justified, for subscriptions poured in rapidly, together with indignant letters from all parts of the country, which were duly printed in its columns.

The first pinch of the strike came on the men when it was suddenly announced that strike pay would the next Saturday be cut down to one-quarter the amount they were then receiving. There was a good deal of grumbling and some inquiries as to what they were fighting for, but on the whole the disastrous proclamation was received quietly, if somewhat grimly.

"We are bound to win," said Gibbons, when he was reluctantly compelled to tell the men of the reduction. "The firm is losing nearly a thousand pounds a week by the factory remaining idle, and it is not likely they will stand that long, even to oblige Sartwell."

Gibbons had not the courage to add that, even with this reduction, the union could not hold out more than a week longer; that it was practically at the end of its resources, and that future strike pay would have to depend on the subscriptions received from the outside, a most precarious source of revenue, for every one knows how short-lived enthusiasm is and how the collection of hard cash destroys it.

There is much in good generalship, and one of its axioms is that you should endeavor to discover your enemy's weakest point. Never once did it dawn on Gibbons or any of his lieutenants that the fortress they were attacking had only to be approached in one direction, when the walls would have crumbled like those of Jericho; never did it occur to him that Sartwell was fighting at the same time two battles—one with the men and one with the masters, and of the two contests he feared the result of the latter most. Sartwell was between two fires; he had urged both Monkton and Hope to quit England until the fight was over, and leave the conducting of it to him. They vacillated; in the evening Sartwell might have their promise, but in the morning they had changed what they had pleased to call their minds. They always feared the worst. They saw the factory in flames, and the mob shot down by the troops. They implored Sartwell to come to some agreement with the men. He had said the strike would be over in three weeks, and here it was still dragging on, the men as determined as ever. If he were wrong about the duration of the fight, might he not be wrong also in his treatment of the men? Was no compromise possible?

This sort of thing Sartwell had to contend with, and it wearied him more than the strike itself. He opened the papers in daily fear that he would find there some letter from the firm, in answer to the strictures of the day before, which would show the public at once how the land lay.

Gibbons believed that the backbone of a fight was money, as in many cases it is; but a moment's reflection might have shown him that, if the fight was to be conducted on a cash basis, the strikers had not a ghost of a chance, because the firm of Monkton & Hope was much richer than the union. He believed in fighting the devil with fire. Adages are supposed to represent the condensed wisdom of the ages, whereas they too often represent condensed foolishness. If one has to meet an expert swordsman on the field of honor, he should select a pistol if he has the choice of weapons. Fight the devil if you like, but never with fire. When Marsten had said to Gibbons, "Mr. Sartwell knows to a penny how much you have in the bank," the secretary had answered grandly that Sartwell might see the books of the union for all he cared, and much good might it do him. The fact that a man like Sartwell thought it worth his while to find out what the enemy was doing did not suggest to Gibbons that it might not be a bad plan to have a look over Sartwell's shoulders and discover just how things were going in the privacy of the manager's office. When Marsten ferreted out various things as the fight progressed, and brought his knowledge to Gibbons, the latter waved it aside as of no consequence, treating Marsten throughout as an enemy in the camp.

Timid little Mr. Hope passed through the gates each day to his office, scarcely ever glancing at the crowd that hooted him and made remarks not pleasant to hear. He dreaded the moment of arriving and leaving, but thought it a courageous thing to do, imagining he would be neglecting his duties as a free-born Briton if he deserted his post at this time of danger.

If Gibbons had been a shrewd man he would have called upon Mr. Hope at Surbiton, and ten minutes' conversation there would have shown him the true state of affairs, for the timid little manufacturer was as transparent as crystal. If the secretary had lured one of the partners to the strikers' place of meeting, which might have been accomplished as easily as with the "blacklegs" from the country, he would in all probability have had a public statement which would have made Sartwell's resignation inevitable. Thus might Gibbons have led his army to victory and at the same time have placed his enemy where his army then was—outside the gates.

And this was merely one of the methods by which a clever general would have triumphed.

If Gibbons had taken the trouble to inform himself about the effect the few editorials had produced in the minds of the partners he would have endeavored to make arrangements for the publication of a series of articles on the well known philanthropy of the firm, with some moral reflections about charity beginning at home. This undoubtedly would have caused the ground to crumble away beneath the feet of Sartwell, for Monkton and Hope were proud of the good their benefections were supposed to do, and until this trouble had arisen they had thought themselves just employers, who treated their men with fairness, as indeed they were, and as indeed they did.

But now they were in doubt about the matter, and had an uneasy feeling that they had been, perhaps, remiss in their duties toward their employes. Sartwell dominated them when he was in their presence, and they knew his value too well to run the risk of losing him. They knew, also, if they gave way to the men without his sanction they would lose him, and they had rivals in London who would be only too glad to take him into their employ; yet in spite of this knowledge they wavered, and it required but a little tact and diplomacy on the part of Gibbons to win a victory all along the line.

(To be Continued.)

CHRISTMAS AND THE POETS.

The Merry Maskers.

Sir Walter Scott.

Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made;
But O, what maskers richly dight
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer.
The poor man's heart through half the year.

The Nativity.

Shakespeare.

Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated;
This bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then they say no spirit dares stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

Bethlehem.

Milman.

The heavens were not commanded to prepare
A gorgeous canopy of golden air;
Nor stopped their lamps th' enthroned fires on high:
A single silent star.

Gliding unchecked and calm along the liquid sky;
The Eastern sages leading on
As at a kingly throne,
To lay their gold and odors sweet
Before Thy infant feet.

Rejoice.

Lewis Morris.

Those precious works of old:
Good will and peace to men—the halt, the blind,
The poor, nay all mankind.
Therefore, we raise our cheerful song,
A strain of solemn mirth;
Our hope is clear, our faith is strong
In a regenerate earth.
No doubt shall come our eyes to dim,
Or check our faithful voice;
To peace on earth we raise our Christmas hymn,
Whose burden is "Rejoice!"

The Birth.

Archdeacon Farrar.

Low lies Thy cradled head,
Thou blessed Child divine;
The wreath of thorns must twine around
That tender brow of Thine;
But love and life and home
Through Thee are dearer far,
And lives of mortal men may be
As pure as angels are.
Then join their angel lay,
With heart and voice rejoice, rejoice,
Your Lord is born today.

The Coming of the King.

Phillips Brooks.

O angels sweet and splendid!
Throng in our hearts and sing
The wonders which attended
The coming of the King.
Till we, too, boldly pressing
Where once the angels trod,
Climb Bethlehem's Hill of Blessing
And find the Son of God.

MILLIONS RENOUNCE CHRISTMAS.

Mohammedans, Brahmins and Buddhists Deny the Holiness of Christ.

There are millions upon millions of people in the world who will not celebrate Christmas, and there are other millions to whom Christmas is objectionable, says the New York Herald.

Take the followers of Mohammed, for instance. They are divided into forty or fifty different sects, among which are the Nousayrie-yeh. There are about 50,000 of them, and they believe in transmigration of the soul. They believe that men's souls pass after death into the bodies of animals. For them the story of the birth and life of Christ has no charms.

Then there are the Druses, who profess to have knowledge that God has visited the world 234 times, but they do not believe in Christ. For them Christmas has no significance.

It is equally disregarded by Buddhists, Japanese, Chinese, Brahmins and Mohammedans. "There is no God but Allah," say the Mohammedans, "and Mohammed is his prophet." Mohammed's followers also have curious notions in regard to the fate of unbelievers' children. Some believe that these children act as the servants of the faithful in paradise, and Mohammed is recorded as saying on one occasion to his wife:

"If thou desirest I can make thee hear their cries in Hades."

Other Mohammedan authorities, however, dissent from this view, and one of them boldly says: "I know that Allah will not torment those who have not committed any sin."

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