

hundreds of people falling over each other, starting things cooking and forgetting them, letting the roasts burn and the pots boil dry-- how anything ever got to the table I couldn't think, for they ate more than they cooked, and wasted more than they ate. I hate to see waste and grieved to see them spoiling the good stuff. I heard one young cook say to another as he passed me, 'What'll we do when there's no more in the larder?' and the other just said, 'Don't be so silly,' and threw a bowlful of cream over him.

After supper I walked out in the garden, where dusk had fallen, and the wide lawns were softly lit with strings of glimmering coloured lanterns. The revelling went on in wilder confusion. But there was a darker part of the garden, behind the palace, where the people seemed to want to stop me going. None the less, I slipped quietly away from them and went through the dark shrubberies. And there I heard what seemed to be a faint sad music coming up from the ground--- but as I came nearer, and heard it more plainly, it was the sighing and weeping of forsaken lovers and disappointed pleasure seekers.

There was a high terrace along one side of the building, overlooking the gaily lit gardens below, and here I lurked in the shadows, and saw two ladies come by. They were older, much older than the revelling girls and boys below--- their hair was white and elegantly dressed, and they walked stiffly, arm in arm, looking down on the dancers.

'Dis-gusting!' said one of them. 'All that, going on down there. Thank goodness we're not like that.' But all the while her two hands were caressing her friend's hand, and cunningly drawing off her rings; and her friend, whose arm was round her waist, held a little sharp pen-knife, and was feeling for a joint in the other's corset where she could drive it in.

I could stand no more of them, and passed along round the next corner; there was a lighted window, and in it there sat two staid elderly men, in black coats, before a table covered with papers. The noise of the revellers came up to them, and distracted one of them from the figures he was adding. He looked up with annoyance.

'There ought to be a Law Against It,' he said, 'All that going on down there. Ought to be a Law Against It. More law and order, that's what this country needs.--- Mind you, no law against what we do here.' And somehow I knew, without having to see, that the papers on the table were full of extortion, and unjust profits, and plans to make green valleys into deserts, and to sell men the means to murder each other.

'Oh, come now!' laughed the other man. 'No law against us, of course. But them-- why, the more they go mad for pleasure, the more profit we make. On with the merry game, and let them Do As They Please as long as they pay us. Let them ruin themselves--- if there's any vice they haven't tried, teach it to them-- invent new vices if you can-- it all comes back to us in money. No law but Do As You Please!'

So I left them and went back to the kitchen, where I slept on a soft cushion-- though I had to bare my teeth and scare off plenty of others who thought they had a right to take it from me.

But before it was light, Sir John woke me. 'Come,' he said, 'I think we had better get out of here. They are charming people, but all the same.... And some of the sweet ladies are too friendly by far. I can't be discourteous to them, but I don't want to forget Rosamunda, and if I stayed here, I'm afraid that I should.'

None opposed us, for they all seemed, at last, to have fallen into drunken sleep, and no watch was kept; none were awake but a few thieves of money or love who crept about here and there. So we slipped out and away from the white walls of the domain of Sans-Loy, and picked up the trail of the carved roses, as the great morning star began to shine in the cold heavens.

My master had laid aside his armour, and it hung behind his saddle, but as the light grew, he said thoughtfully,

'I think we may meet with Sans-Loy again, so I will put on my breastplate.' So he did, and I helped him to lace it up; but he said, 'Do not lace it too strait, in spite of all-- there's reason and measure in all things.'

After a long time he came out alone, and he laid his hand on my head. 'Good Blanche,' he said, 'you have waited patiently. I have had word from my Lady, and a sign, and gifts too. Look, here is her sign,' and he showed me by the roadside the device of a rose carved in the stone, with an arrow pointing. 'Where we see this sign, we must go. And these are her gifts--- a ring, a rose, and her picture.' And he put the ring on his finger, the portrait about his neck, and the rose in the plume of his helmet. Then suddenly he lifted me in his arms and pointed.

'Look easiward,' he said, and there, over the shoulder of the hill, I looked, and saw the last rays of the setting sun light up a mountain peak very far off, and upon the peak stood a castle of amazing beauty, gleaming white and rosy in the western light. And as we looked, a flash like a diamond, or like lightning, came from one of its remote windows, and smote our eyes with its brilliance.

'That is the castle where my Lady dwells,' he said. 'She signals to me. Let us go.'

So we journeyed far into the night, and next day we went on through twisting mountain passes, always following the carved stone roses, and so another day passed. And as it drew towards sunset the grass grew greener, and the trees were laden with heavy-scented blossom, and all was soft and glowing. And then we saw before us a shining white palace.

We approached it, and the owner came out to meet us, a handsome knight with straight fair hair to his shoulders, and a silken tunic of rich colours over which a golden chain was hung. He greeted Sir John courteously.

'Welcome, worthy Knight, and your little dog too. Come in, come in. I am called the Chevalier Sans-Loy, and this is the Palacce Delightful.'

Then he led us inside the walls, and I saw that all around us were green lawns and groves of trees, where handsome young people, both he and she, dressed in the gayest fancy, were eating, drinking and courting.

'This is the happiest place on earth,' said our host, 'for we have only one law, and that is: Do as you please.'

He led us through the merry throng, where everyone, it seemed, was doing as he pleased. Some were painting and carving, though it seemed to me (as a mere little dog) that the things they painted and carved were very strange, and mostly not finished, for nobody did anything he did not please, and they seldom pleased to finish a thing they were tired of. Some were dancing and singing--- there again, dances and songs seemed more than a little strange, and the biggest crowd was round a man who was just taking off all his clothes and yelling about being free. And all were pursuing love in every kind of way, and snatching each other's lovers, and laughing and weeping.

'I'm all in favour of gaiety and fun,' said Sir John, 'and nobody could call em ea Puritan--- but this is ridiculous.'

'You see,' said our host, 'we follow the philosophy of the immortal Rabelais, who said, 'Do as you please.' "

'Your pardon,' said Sir John, smiling rather timidly, 'but I lived a little nearer the time of Rabelais than you, and what I think that great and misunderstood man said was, 'Fay ce que voudras,' which I would render as 'Do what you wish to do.' There is a difference, you will agree.'

He pondered a little, and then went on,

'And I believe Messire Rabelais added another clause-- I think he said, 'And love God.' "

'Ho, as to love!' laughed our host. 'But of course, love. Yes indeed, we worship love here. We live for nothing else but love. Love is the law, we say, love under will.'

'Yes,' said Sir John, and I could see that he was troubled, 'but love is an easy word to say. Love for whom, and whose will?'

At this point some of the gentle and pleasant-faced servants came for me, the little dog, and led me away to supper in the kitchen. And there I had a most magnificent supper, but I think that most of it was stolen. For the kitchen was a chaotic place-- there were

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So we went on into another morning, through pleasant cultivated
countryside; and towards noon we came to a grey wall covered with
creeping plants, and a wide doorway--- here was a place like an
ancient college of learning, all gables and diamond-paned windows.
A handsome elderly man came out to meet us, with smooth white hair
and a small beard, and a long straight gown of dark velvet.

'Come in, good Sir John,' he said smiling. 'Welcome to the College
of Rational Enlightenment. My name is Sans-Foy. You must come and
share my table, and see my museum.'

He led us into his museum, and at first I thought this surely must
be a good place, for it had a noble vaulted roof and a tall central
window, and a sweet warm smell of incense pervaded it. It looked like
a church, but it also looked like a mosque, or a synagogue, or a
Hindu stupa, or a Greek temple, or a great many other things. All
around were displayed, in glass cases and in lighted pictures, all the
objects belonging to all the religions of mankind. There were
crucifixes and Buddhas, voodoo bundles and Bibles, Torahs in their
embroidered cases, chasubles and copes and surplices, smooth marbles

of Venus and Apollo, rough country Pans with horns and hoofs, and the
Goat of Mendes also; Isis and cat-headed Sekhmet, and the gross
hippopotamus goddess, Tibetan prayer-wheels, and Gautama under his tree
of meditation, rosaries and witches' garters and everything from
every kind of faith that mankind ever thought of. And I could hear,
sometimes the thin unearthly warbling of a Gregorian chant, sometimes
the clean downright line of an Anglican hymn, or the brass and drums
of the Salvation Army, or the 'Shema' of Israel, or the muezzin
calling from his minaret; or the shrill yelling of the priests of
Cybele in their frenzy, or the throbbing of the Obeah drums in the
jungle. Our host shrugged his shoulders and smiled at them all.

'You see,' he said, 'I have studied this question of religion very
deeply. I have carefully considered them all--- and of course I
find that they are basically all the same, and there is nothing in
any one of them. They are all just notions that the mind of man has
dreamed up for a number of very understandable reasons---- You do
agree with me, don't you?'

'Since you ask me,' said Sir John, 'and with all courtesy, and in
all frankness---- no.'

NEXT ISSUE: Sir John meets the third of the trio, Sans-Joy.

Theoder

