

CHAPTER LV

THE General Strike was past and over. Motor-omnibuses had gone down the Strand, Van Tromp fashion, with brooms at the mast-head, atop of the destination board. The Conservative Government remained in power and, as was the way of all Governments of any colour whatsoever, never was there such a feeble one in the eyes of its enemies or so capable to its friends.

The coal strike died at last of sheer inanition and the country took heart of grace. Oyt in China there was trouble, as there had been trouble since the Emperor left the Dragon Throne. It would almost seem as though there were something a little amiss with the new system of the Divine Right of Peoples. The Divine Right of Kings might be more illogical, but it had seemed to give more peace to the ordinary citizen.

We dispatched the Shanghai Defence Force, to the great concern of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who seemed distressed that Britain should defend herself by any other means than surrender.

“They said the same things about Lord Palmerston on the same matter seventy years ago,” observed Lord Woden. “Gad, what sport that election was, and how proud Angeline was when I became a Member of Parliament.”

Well, events national were rather beyond his ken now. He had reached his hundredth birthday and Poppy her twentieth.

Soon she was to reach her wedding-day, and that interested him infinitely more. It was 1927 and high spring.

In the summer she and Tom were to be married. Poppy and Tom, bride and bridegroom, both of the blood of the old Earl of Woden.

He felt very happy. It seemed as though his sin were to be forgiven at long last.

"No more a girl with a candle, I am thankful to say."

It was a different world, he thought, in which Poppy and Tom and their children would have their lives and beings—a more difficult world in many ways.

He looked out of the library window at Woden, over the sunlit lawns past the green wood to where he could just see the country road. That was the Suffolk road, where old Sir Richard had met his father on the day of his birth one hundred years before.

"I hope they will have a son and bring him up well and make a gentleman of him," thought Lord Woden. "The country needs gentlemen. It needs men——"

He sipped some of the Normandin '75, although it was not yet noon.

"I hear they're talking of another general strike——"

The sunlight of early June made the earth seem very fair, and yet——

"There is an infernally ugly spirit in the country. All this nonsense about reforming the Lords."

For he, with many others, would simply have repealed the Parliament Act.

"The fact is we have never got over the War and never shall. That fellow, the Kaiser, ruined us. By Gad, it is nine years since we got our victory and we're paying for it.—Subsidising our Allies and the rogues not paying us back."

The Spirit of the Suffolk Countryside laughed. He had heard all this before. In Plantagenet days, and Marlborough's time, and one hundred years ago.

"I declare the country is done for. The statesmen we've got! In my young days statesmen were statesmen, but

now—Baldwin's a — fool, and so is Ramsay MacDonald,
— fools, the lot of them—”

Poppy entered the room, sweet and twenty, young and lovely, and kissed him.

“Gran'pa, why are you looking so' stern? And a penny for your thoughts.”

“I don't think you would like the bargain.”

Sweet and twenty, dark hair and blue eyes, kissed him again.

“After all, it is a very good world,” said John.

THE END