

# GOBLIN MARKET

## PART I.

### CHAPTER I

#### THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR

IF you want to find the roots of Bolshevism in England you need not go to Russia. Go to old prints such as Gin Lane, old records of institutions, such as the prisons, hospitals and workhouses of Bumble's time, old houses like No. 12A, Marlborough Terrace, Regent's Park, the residence of Anthony Harrop.

This evil house, which has broken the backs and hearts and health of generations of servant maids, stands narrow as a tombstone and high as an obelisk between Nos. 12 and 14.

The basenient, copied from the dungeons of the Bastille, has held innumerable prisoners—prisoners condemned to sweat over big fires and turning joints, prisoners condemned to carry vast dishes, sirloins of beef, turkeys, vegetables, trays of plates, trays of silver, trays of glass and cutlery; breakfast-things, tea-things upstairs and down again all day long and every day.

And what stairs!

Carry yourself from the hall-door to the nursery at the top of the house and then pause to breathe

## GOBLIN MARKET

and rest and consider what your condition would be had you carried a scudful of coats<sup>l</sup> as well. Those appalling stairs! Made steep and high so that the living rooms might be lofty.

Anthony Harrop, disliked the place; he lived there because it was his wife's. She had two thousand a year of her own and this house, which had been in her family for over sixty years and to which she clung as the English cling to their institutions. She was a faded woman; she had fascinated him years ago but he did not love her now, never had loved her perhaps; yet for over fifteen years he had lived with this woman for whom he did not care in this house that he disliked, lived a highly respectable and blameless life, kept straight by the woman—and maybe also a bit by the house.

You couldn't get drunk in a house with stairs like that, nor carry on with other women, married to a woman whose virtue and high respectability were at once an atmosphere and an influence.

Harrop couldn't.

He had no illusions at all, he suspected that his wife valued him only as she valued the grand piano in the drawing-room or the polish on her silver plate, yet, though he had a leaning towards conviviality and an income of his own derived from a business in Birmingham, he managed to keep pretty straight.

For years and years he had lived a life of ease without much pleasure, without any discomfort, except in the war-time when he had acted as special



## THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR

constable ; for years and years he had gone through the same old round of business duties, middle-class dinner-parties, holidays on the Continent, golf at Wimbledon, visits to the factory at Birmingham, and meetings of the Primrose League, and the years seemed destined to lead him on thus for ever or at least to the grave.

Till one morning came a knocking at the door of Anthony Harröp.



## CHAPTER II

### FIFTEEN MINUTES PAST NINE

It was the servant maid with early tea. She pulled up the blinds, revealing fog, house-tops and the dismal distances of the Regent's Park, then, having placed the tray by the bedside, she left the room carrying a pair of shoes in her hand.

It was the same every morning. Every morning the same plain, flat-breasted, washed-out looking maid, herald of the day, pulled up the same yellow blind and placed the same tray and tea-things by the bed.

This morning, as he turned lazily on his side before rousing up to drink his tea, the monotony of this repeated maid-servant with her flat breast, her sour face, her square waist and her marionette actions spread, touching and tinging almost imperceptibly the room and every object in it—"The Light of the World" (framed and glazed) above the mantel-piece, the wardrobe of mahogany with its plate-glass polish, the wall-paper roses.

All these things said to him, "Here we are again, as immutable and as surely recurrent as Matilda; and to-morrow it will be the same as it was yesterday, as it was the day before yesterday, as it will be the day after to-morrow," a statement that caused neither pain nor pleasure to Anthony Harrop. Three letters lay on the tray beside the tea-things—two obvious bills and a square envelope addressed



In the forcible writing of his partner, Israel Mandelberg.

He read this letter as he sat up sipping his tea and nibbling a biscuit.

Mandelberg was one of Mrs. Harrop's thorns. Harrop might have been anything; he bore a vague resemblance to Lord Haldane; properly dressed for the part he might have been anything, a butler, a bishop, a peer of the realm, but Mandelberg could never be dressed for any part except that of the Jew he was and the Jew he was contented to be. A glossy Jew, extraordinarily youthful looking for his years, pale as death, with raven pomatumed hair, and always dressed the same in a new morning coat, striped trousers and patent leather boots.

He had inherited his share in the business from his father, and Mrs. Harrop had not seen him when she married Harrop.

"It's no use," said Mandelberg in his letter, which was dated from Manchester. "There's no money to be had for business purposes. People won't lend with the nation as it is and politics as they are. I tried Hartops, as I told you I would, and then Jameson; had to go all the way to Leeds to see him and might as well have stayed at home. We've made two mistakes: we shouldn't have ordered that new machinery, that was one mistake, the other was, we shouldn't have thought of ordering it. We should have closed down a

## GOBLIN MARKET

year ago ; we've been running at a loss for nine months.

"I'm telling you now straight what I think of our position.

"If we can get three thousand for the new machinery, if we can get it installed in decent time, if it saves twenty per cent. in cost, and if the market holds we may make out, my son.

"But if one 'if' goes wrong, we're bitched. There's one hope—you might try Burlingham. He's known me ever since I came into business and he's known you since we joined. I thought of him this morning. He's the most unlikely person, but it's just those sort that turn up trumps very often. Go and see him. We've had a loan from him ; all the same, tell him straight out the whole business and ask for three thousand on the factory. There's no collateral, unless you can scrape some up, which I wouldn't advise."

Harrop had known that the business of the factory was not prospering ; the receipts had been falling off for some years ; but he was more or less a sleeping partner looking after the London office, where a capable clerk did all the work.

He had half slept through all sorts of indications that the business was on its last legs, always trusting in his dreams that these sounds from without would pass, always trusting in the genius of Mandelberg to pull things through.

This letter was an awakener. But this easy-going



man who was respectable because his wife was respectable, who lived in a house he disliked because his wife liked it, who had allowed the good and the bad in his nature to be banked down by the even pressure of a commonplace environment, showed nothing of this Great Awakening in his face.

He poured himself out another cup of tea, drank it, replaced the letter in its envelope and then rose, went to the bathroom and got into his tub.

He seemed quite undisturbed, as, in fact, he was. Yet the bath soap, the loofah, the towel, the razor, his own lathered face in the mirror as he shaved—everything he saw or touched was part of the fact, and kept repeating to him the fact that the Business was gone.

He would get no more money from the factory—the profound faith he had in Mandelberg's business capacity told him that—Mandelberg was at his wits' end.

“You might try Burlingham!”

Those four words told him everything.

He finished dressing, wound his watch—he wound it night and morning—put it in his pocket, glanced round the room to see that everything was in order and came downstairs to the dining-room, where breakfast was laid for one.

The dining-room, furnished in the age of solid mahogany, was almost a pleasant place this morning with its brightly burning fire, snow-white tablecloth and sideboard reflecting the firelight from

## GOBLIN MARKET

burnished silver and polished glass; and though Mrs. Harrop always breakfasted in bed, she was always with him as he sat down; as now, to the everlasting eggs and bacon, toast, marmalade, *The Times* and *Morning Post*.

It was her room.

Her father, Sir William Tower, once Lord Mayor of London, faced on the walls her grandfather, Isaac Tower, once something in the city—both done in oils. Men of the highest respectability who for fifteen years had presided over the breakfast-table of Anthony Harrop.

These family portraits which he did not possess, possessed him; they were ancestors of a sort; solid business men to whom failure in business meant disgrace. Easy-going man that Anthony was, he had always felt vaguely that he had not quite met with their approval, that, could they speak, they would have words to say relative to his laxity in city matters, his want of initiative and his reliance on Mandelberg.

It was they, this morning as he sat at breakfast, who first suggested to him the question: "What will Selina say when she knows?"

That had not occurred to him till now. What would she say? His money had helped materially to keep up the house, the car and the cottage at Caversham; for more than a year now he had been using money drawn not from the factory but from the sale of small pre-war investments, saying nothing of the matter to Selina because it was easier not to



say anything. He had about four hundred pounds left at the bank; it would last a little while yet—and then—then he would have to tell Selina that his money was gone, that he had been keeping matters dark from her for a long time, and then—then he would have to subsist on what his wife could spare him out of her “reduced income.” They would have to sell the cottage at Caversham, cut down the servants, put down the car. Two thousand a year was not enough to carry on with as they were living, in these post-war days. He would be dependent on his wife for his bread, subsisting on her charity. The thought struck him as he was helping himself to marmalade, but it did not stay his hand, nor his appetite. He told himself that before living a life like that he would black boots or commit suicide, that four hundred pounds, with proper economy, would last him for a long time yet and that something might turn up in the meanwhile. Then he opened the *Morning Post* and began to read with interest the news of the day.

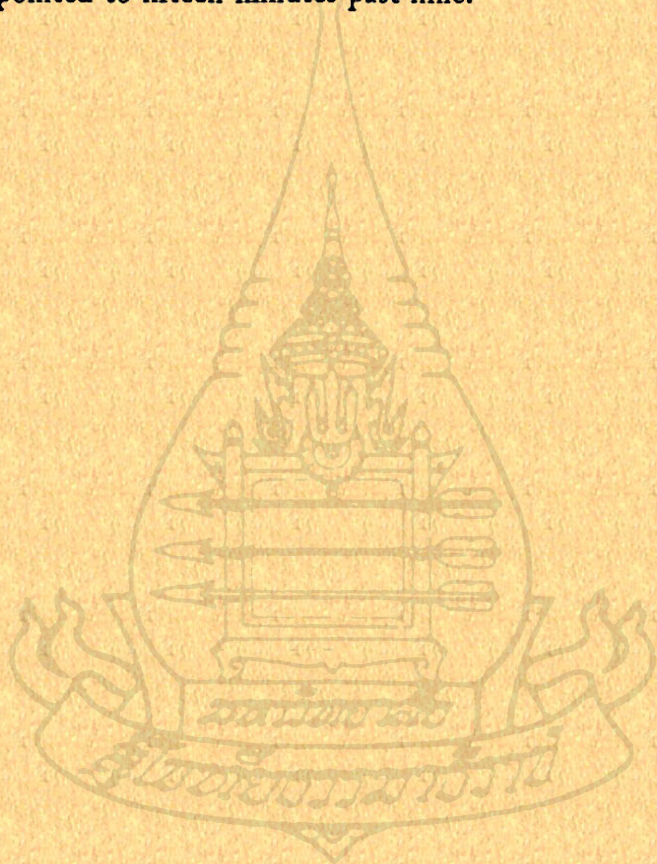
He noted the fact that the season promised to be a good one at Monte Carlo. That Lady Jane Hunneker had arrived at 175 Pont Street, that the Belvoir had found their first fox at Leadenham Hill Top and run it nearly to Crow Bottom; that Fairbanks and Colin Kirkpatrick had played well in Varsity hockey and that the French were bringing the Germans to their senses in the Ruhr.

Then putting the papers aside he took out his pocket-book and counted his money. Three five-

## GOBLIN MARKET

pound notes and three ten-shilling notes, to say nothing of the loose silver in his pockets.

The black marble Madeleine clock on the mantel pointed to fifteen minutes past nine.





CHAPTER III  
TWELVE O'CLOCK

It was his custom every morning to take a taxi from the rank near by, drive to Piccadilly Circus and continue his journey to the office on foot ; but this morning on leaving the house he turned to the right instead of the left, boarded a yellow omnibus and crept inside. Economy had him in her grip : economy and the fact that four hundred pounds alone stood between him and Selina charged with the knowledge that he was moneyless, that he was a failure in the city, that he had deceived her.

There were six people, including a woman with a cough, in this vehicle boarded by Anthony Harrop, and it came to him, as he sat down and took off his glove to find the money for his ticket, that this was the beginning of a new life—of the new life that was to be his owing to the fact that Harrop's productions in motor accessories could not compete with the foreigner.

That was what it amounted to.

He got out at Piccadilly Circus, threw his bus ticket away and started East, calling in at his office and reaching Burlingham's place of business in Victoria Street at half-past eleven. The Burlingham building strikes the eye of the most casual observer. The great plate-glass windows of the ground floor exhibit machinery just as Streeter's windows in Bond Street exhibit watches and rings ; vast blocks

of machinery with the polish and glitter of jewellery advertise the fact that here is the home of the Burlingham engines that can be driven by petrol, petrol-paraffin, gas or steam, and that vary in size from a cottage to a hat-box.

Anthony, giving his card to an office clerk, was shown into a waiting-room and left there alone in company with all sorts of trade papers spread on a mahogany table, a gas stove and an almanac of the Phoenix Insurance Co. He hated this business. How on earth would he begin when face to face with Burlingham? He tried to think of what he should say, failed and put the matter aside.

He had a tremendous capacity that way, and just as he had turned a couple of hours ago from the prospects held out by Mandelberg's letter to the interested perusal of the *Morning Post*, so, now, he turned from the unpleasant duty before him to the *Engine Builder*; a trade paper filled with most alluring pictures and photographs.

Engines, though he knew little about them, interested him; they had interested him as a boy and they interested him still; had he possessed a child and bought it a clockwork train he would have helped to play with it, amused almost as much as the other party to the proceedings.

Looking more like Lord Haldane than ever, he was contemplating the photo of a vast eight-foot driving-wheel Eustis Locomotive when the door opened and the clerk announced that Mr. Burlingham would see him.



Anthony put the paper aside, picked up his hat, gloves and umbrella, and followed the clerk down a passage, up a stairs, through an office to a private room, where Burlingham was standing with his back to the fire dictating a few last words to a girl stenographer.

Burlingham was a man of forty-five or fifty. A big, square, elderly business man in a rather shabby frock-coat, he wore a beard, but his large upper lip was clean-shaven and the face recalled that of Paul Kruger.

He greeted Anthony, the stenographer went out and the session began.

"Well, and how's business?" asked Burlingham as the other took a chair.

"As bad as can be for the moment," said this rotten but honest Business Man. "I had a letter from Mandelberg this morning; he's in Birmingham looking after things, and he's rather down in the mouth, but he believes things will improve. He asked me to call and see you."

"Oh, did he?"

"Yes; he said you knew the lie of things and he's very anxious about some new machinery we have ordered and the whole position. He thought you might be able to advise us."

"On the question of machinery?" asked Burlingham.

"No, on the whole position. The fact is that for the moment we are temporarily embarrassed—in deep water, so to speak—but if we can get the

machinery installed it will mean a saving of twenty per cent. ; he wants to borrow on the factory."

"How much ?"

"Three or four thousand."

"And he wants me to lend it ?"

"Yes, that's it," said Anthony, relieved. "He wrote asking me to call on you with a view to that purpose."

"He wants to borrow on the factory," said Burlingham.

"Yes."

"I suppose he has told you that we have already lent him some money on that security ?"

"No," said Anthony, who had completely forgotten that clause in Mandelberg's letter.

"Ah, well, it is so ; he must have forgotten to tell you ; and now I suppose he wants an extra advance."

"One moment," said Anthony. "I believe I do remember his mentioning a loan, but to tell you the truth I have had very little to do with the business. Mandelberg does everything, and as the factory premises are in his name he would have completed the business with you without my help. I trust him in everything."

"Oh, he's all right," said Burlingham, "and when we made the loan we were not unfavourable to an extension of the advance should trade improve. The bother is, it hasn't."

"No, I suppose it hasn't," said Anthony.

"Your little factory," said Burlingham, "ought to



have done well ; you produce honest stuff and that patent groove was a big asset ; your factory was creeping up, fighting all sorts of difficulties, for Mandelberg is a big man, but he is not big enough to fight America and France."

"How do you mean ?" asked Anthony.

"Competition. Foreign competition, that's what I mean ; protected by a tariff wall Mandelberg could have put up a good fight and won through, but he can't fight naked—not America and France."

"A tariff," said Anthony. "Yes, I suppose that would have made all the difference. Mandelberg has often said the same thing, but, to tell you the truth, it has never come home to me before as it does now—now that things have come to this pass. You see, I have always been a free-trader in principle—not that I ever bothered about it much, but I was brought up like that."

"So was I," said Burlingham, "and a free-trader I am still as far as the food of the people is concerned ; but the people don't eat motor-cars and pianos and opera glasses—the Rich do, at least they buy them, and the Rich ought to be made buy English-made goods whenever possible. Oh, damn it, any jackass on a common could see the sense of what I'm saying. Sick luxury industries giving work to British working men and dying for want of protection against the east wind of foreign competition—and dying because a lot of damn-fool politicians wear blinkers."

Anthony sighed.

Burlingham, the fire behind him, the furniture of the room, all seemed part of the great dreary fact that unescapable ruin lay before the firm of Harrop and Mandelberg. All this talk about the politicians and tariffs lent a cataclysmic touch to the position; the firm of Harrop & Mandelberg was about to be destroyed not by any local accident or internal complaint, but by the movement of great elemental trade forces—crushed to death by America and France.

“Well, that’s it, and there we are,” went on Burlingham, raising his left foot to the warmth of the fire; “and you see how the position is; it’s not the question of us making you a loan, but of the loan doing you any good. As matters stand, money poured into your firm would be like water poured into a sieve. However, why not go down to Birmingham and see Shires; he knows all the position there better than I do, and you can give him word from me to lend you a hand if he sees a cat’s chance of doing any good.”

Anthony knew that Shires was the financial brain of the Burlingham Company; he had seen him at a distance once and had been impressed, but not favourably.

He called up the picture of Shires, and it came sharp-cut and hard to the mental eye: a figure made by God, no doubt, but undoubtedly made in Birmingham; the last person in the world one would fancy as a lender of money to a doubtful borrower.



"I'll think about it," said Anthony.

"Mind you," said the other, "I don't think it's much use, but it's worth exploring every avenue; yes, it's worth exploring every avenue."

It was in the days when trade-union leaders and politicians were always "exploring avenues"; the phrase had caught on and came in useful now.

Burlingham wanted to get rid of Anthony Harrop without giving him a direct refusal. Shires would do the killing—Shires was made for that sort of work, and this was not the first butchering job that had been passed on to him by the more kindly-hearted senior partner.

"Thank you," said Anthony.

He rose up and, shaking hands with the other, left the room, Burlingham watching the round-bodied, prosperous-looking Haldanian figure as it vanished, the door closing behind it, little dreaming what weird and romantic events were to be born, the children of that commonplace business interview.

## CHAPTER IV

### ONE O'CLOCK

OUTSIDE in the street, Anthony looked at his watch. It was past twelve, and he turned westward. He did not feel depressed, that hope-shattering talk with Burlingham had produced only one effect on his mind, the omnibus mood had passed.

When you are riding on an avalanche you don't bother to count the pence in your pocket, and Anthony would have called a taxi to take him to his destination, which was Scott's, only for the fact that the day was bright and he preferred to walk.

In the Strand he turned into a Bodega and called for a glass of dry sherry.

Yesterday a glass of sherry would have left the Harrop brain cells almost unperturbed, to-day the effect was quite different; and, leaving the bar, Mr. Harrop pursued his way along the Strand possessed of a mild cheerfulness without any foundation in reason.

It seemed to him that something had pushed the office, Mandelberg, his wife and the house in Regent's Park slightly away from him; all these things forming his major environment had been accepted from long habit, endured without much discomfort, recognised as essential to his existence, yet now as he walked along the Strand a new feeling came to him, a strange, careless, pleasant



feeling, a sense of freedom as though the slight withdrawal of his old environment under threat of disaster had given him room to breathe more easily and to breathe a fresher air.

He lunched at Scott's.

On ordinary days after luncheon he would return to the office for an hour, and if Mandelberg were away open any letters that had come by the afternoon post, then he would take himself to the club for bridge and get home in time to dress for dinner. To-day this programme did not appeal to him. He did not want to go to the office or to the club. He did not want to go home and dress for dinner, yet what else could he do?

Disaster had shaken him out of the groove he had followed for years but had given him no other groove or even line of direction to follow; he could not walk about the streets, he disliked cinemas and theatres, he had no hobby to play with. Considering the matter of where he could go and what he could do with himself the suggestion came to him all at once, and in the voice of Burlingham: "Why not go to Birmingham and see Shires?" Why not? The thing was pretty hopeless from a business point of view, but it would occupy him—and it would take him away for the night; he would not have to go home and dine.

He could take the tea train, the Central Hotel was comfortable, and there were generally pleasant and communicative people of a business sort to be met with in the smoking-room.

## GOBLIN MARKET

Yes, he would go to Birmingham and see Shires. He called for a glass of Benedictine, paid his bill, and, leaving Scott's, hailed a taxi, ordering the driver to take him to Lloyds Bank. Here he drew and cashed a cheque for ten pounds and re-entering the taxi drove to Regent's Park.

Mrs. Harrop was out.

He packed his evening clothes in a suit-case and, telling the servant that he was called to Birmingham on urgent business and would not return till the morrow, left the house and ordered the waiting taxi-man to take him to Paddington.

Disaster had caused a split between Anthony Harrop and his old environment, but it had done more than that—it had aroused in his kindly and easy-going mind a feeling almost of antipathy towards his wife. The fact that he would have to tell her of the coming crash, the fact that he was already concealing it from her, the fact that he would have to depend on her money for the means of existence and the fact that he was not born by nature to meet adversity, all these facts combined to create this feeling in his mind.

For fifteen years he had lived with her, and it was not his fault that his feeling for her had dwindled to a kindly tolerance; for fifteen years he had been faithful to her, and it was not his fault that now in the moment of disaster he was almost running away from her.

Almost, for, seated in the taxi driving to Paddington, his return on the morrow seemed to him as



ONE O'CLOCK

sure a thing as the sky above Regent's Park, unconscious as the dead that the taxi was taking his round body and kindly soul into the Land of Estrangement and towards the strangest fate that an honest man ever encountered. ,



CHAPTER V  
SHIRES

BIRMINGHAM, the best-governed city in the world, according to its own account, stands upon three hills and two rivers in the midst of the fair land of Warwickshire. The city of smiths and cutlers that once on a time supplied the Parliamentary Army with swords devotes itself nowadays to a multiplicity of trades. It produces articles of gold, silver, copper, brass and steel, firearms, ammunition, metal ornaments, toys, jewellery, coins, buttons, buckles, lamps, pins, steel pens, tools, bolts and locks. It produces steam engines and pumps. It produced the Liberal Caucus and helped in the production of John Bright, and it has always produced Birmingham men: men who served out swords to the Praise-God-Bareboneites—at a price—men who rioted with joy over the fall of the Bastille and hid the Chartists, yet always, somehow, managed to keep their heads screwed on tight. Level-headed men like Shires, chief moving spirit of the Burlingham Engine Company.

Anthony having dined at the Central passed into the smoke-room. The place was crowded—crowded with prosperous-looking individuals mostly congregated in little groups, talking, laughing and engaged with liqueurs and half-crown Coronas.

There was some sort of show on in Birmingham that day; hence the crowd in which burly and well-



to-do looking farmers from Warwickshire rubbed shoulders with cotton men from Manchester and men from the Five Towns. That trade was bad did not seem to matter, that the streets were filled with the unemployed did not seem to matter; nothing seemed to matter as far as these men were concerned but the moment in which they lived, joked, drank and smoked.

Anthony, lighting a cigar, sat down in an easy chair close to a little group of men whose talk was Greek to him, for they were talking horses, but whose manners and looks were friendly; in fact, in a few minutes, and by pulling his chair forward, he was of their party—a dumb member, it is true, but a listener, nodding his head now and then, laughing when the others laughed and sometimes putting in a word. The new sense of freedom which had come to him since morning accounted, perhaps, for the pleasure he experienced in this new environment. He had stopped at the Central several times before—once with Mandelberg and once alone—but never before had he mixed with the smoke-room crowd, drunk with it—a whisky and soda had materialised at his elbow—listened to its talk and laughed at its jokes.

The slight division that had suddenly come between him and his wife—unknown to her—had, somehow or another, slightly altered his position as regards the correctness of things; in almost running away from her he had almost escaped from that aura of high respectability which was hers and in

## GOBLIN MARKET

whose influence he had lived for fifteen years. And the result was pleasant.

For fifteen years, except at city dinners, when it is permissible for even the most highly respectable citizen to get muddled, Anthony's potations had been extremely limited—one whisky and soda he generally allowed himself at night—and now, behold, a second had materialised itself at his elbow and he was leaning forward with the tips of his fingers together and a smile on his rubicund face listening to the story of a Manchester man about another Manchester man addicted to racing who had got himself entangled with a woman whose husband was a welsher by profession. The story, destitute of morals but not without a certain humour, was drawing to its conclusion when Anthony suddenly lost interest in it. His eye had caught sight of a new-comer who had just entered the room, a thin man with a hard-bitten face, dressed in a morning coat, with black pomatumed hair, a flower in his buttonhole and wearing a monocle.

Shires. The very man he had come to Birmingham to interview, the man whose existence he had forgotten during the last few hours. Though he had only seen Shires once or twice before and at a distance, there could be no mistaking that hard, glabrous, serious face with its stone-wall expression—the face of the complete Business Man with an extra touch, as though Science at the last moment had taken a hand with the chisel.



Shires might have been a mathematical chemist or a physiologist of the old hard type of the days of Ludwig and Bernard, he might also perhaps have been a preacher; but whatever he might have been one thing he certainly was—the last man in the world you would expect mercy from in a business deal.

He seemed out of place in that room crowded with good fellows and filled with an atmosphere of Coronas and good-fellowship; his seriousness almost amounted to a rebuke; if he had got on a chair, cleared his throat and invited his hearers to consider their sins and a serious call to a more godly life, he would have been in the picture.

Meanwhile he was moving, coming through the room, passing from group to group, evading detention by hands flung out to arrest him, casting a word here and there, but never a smile, and making for the bar at the far end of the room, no doubt to obtain some light refreshment after a hard day's work.

Anthony, sitting straight up in his chair, paused for a moment as if undecided. Then he rose up and came towards the bar.

He felt nervous and rather anxious lest the fact of his being found in such a place by the serious-minded Shires might cast a slur on the firm of Harrop & Mandelberg, might spoil the business on which he had come.

However, the business seemed so essentially hopeless that this consideration did not check him,

urged as he was by the desire to get the affair over and done with.

He went up to the other.

"I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Shires?" said Anthony.

"That is my name," replied the Burlingham man, wondering who on earth this old buffer might be, so different, somehow, from the other men in the room; so like a heavy father stepped out of a play.

"My name is Harrop," said Anthony, "of the firm of Harrop & Mandelberg."

"Mandelberg's partner?" said Shires. "Oh! very glad to meet you—heard of you often—and how's Mandy?"

"He is very well, I believe," replied the other. "The fact of the matter is, he's away and he asked me to see Mr. Burlingham on a matter of business, and Mr. Burlingham suggested that I should come to Birmingham and see you."

"Damn business," cut in Shires lightly. "Have a drink—I never talk business after six o'clock. You can tell me all about it to-morrow at the office. Whisky? George, two double whiskies. You have one? Never mind, have a fresh one for the good of the house. Haig & Haig, George." He put a five-pound note on the counter, all this without a movement of the face muscles or a shift of the monocle, whilst Anthony, relieved at the postponement of an unpleasant duty and surprised by the apparent difference between the mind and the exterior of this serious-looking and highly respectable



individual, leaned his elbow on the counter and lifting his glass said: "To you."

"I came here to-night to see a man about a griffon," went on the other. "Brownlow of Oakley Stratton, he breeds them. You haven't seen Mr. Brownlow of Oakley Stratton in to-night, George, have you? Damn him—he told me he'd sell me a pup and seems to me he's done so."

"Do you keep dogs?" asked Anthony.

"No," replied Shires; "as a matter of fact, I was buying this for a gir—lady friend. If I kept a dog, I'd keep a dog, not a damn feather duster on four legs; but you can't account for women. I've been trying to account for women all my life, but the account won't balance. I wish I'd known you were coming to Brum and I'd have asked you up to my place to dinner. Have another whisky?"

"It's my turn," said Anthony, finishing his half-emptied glass hurriedly, to the amazement of his unaccustomed stomach. "I'd have been delighted to come if I had known, but I ran down here in a hurry after seeing Mr. Burlingham. You see, Mandelberg wrote me a letter this morning, a most disturbing letter, asking me to see Mr. Burlingham, and he suggested that I should come down and see you, as the business——"

"No business," cut in Shires. "That'll do to-morrow. Don't mention the beastly thing's name after hours. If I didn't make that rule I'd be off my head or in the Bankruptcy Court, generally the same thing. I've known four men who took

## GOBLIN MARKET

their businesses home with them and they're all dead but one, who's selling buttons on a card outside the Royal Exchange. Well, if you haven't been able to dine with me, you must let me show you round and you can come and have a smoke at my house. My car's outside."

Five minutes later Anthony found himself getting into his overcoat and following Shires to the hotel entrance, where a car was waiting.

"I live a bit out," said Shires; "but first of all we'll drop in for a few minutes to see the two McPhersons."

"Where's that?" asked Anthony.

"Music-hall," said Shires.

