

## OUTSIDE THE GATES.

The Glory of Reims is no more. The holiest ground in France has been desecrated, and in the words of the grief-stricken Government of the French Republic, "At the present moment the famous basilica is no more than a heap of ruins. . . . by this revolting act of vandalism which, by handing over to the flames a sanctuary of our history, humanity has been robbed of an incomparable portion of its artistic patrimony."

Indeed, by this impious act the Germans have sealed their inevitable fate. It has aroused not only horror, but unutterable grief throughout the civilised world. In this wondrous edifice "a noble heritage from the Age of Faith," the historic associations add immeasurably to its splendour. In it almost all the sovereigns of France were crowned. In its treasury was the Holy Ampulla, containing a fragment of the original sacred phial in which the oil for anointing kings was said to have been brought from Heaven.

Here Joan of Arc, the most sacred figure in French history, saw Charles VII. consecrated, the king for whom she fought and died. For this reason it has been a shrine to the womanhood of the world, who have faith in fighting for just causes.

When the bombardment began wounded German prisoners were within, the symbol of the Red Cross waved without. The *Times* reports:—

"Shells fell upon the prisoners, killing three or four and wounding others. My informant saw the latter painfully dragging their bodies over the straw like grey-coloured snakes. Every now and again the half-light in the Cathedral was lit by the white glare of a breaking shell. Four Sisters of Mercy also lay dead on the floor of the Cathedral, their white faces set with the sublimity of their faith. All around were the figures of kneeling women, their lips moving in fervent prayer. Apparently they were beseeching intercession from St. Joan of Arc, whose beautiful figure, crowned with white flowers, and looking ethereally calm in the tumult, was untouched by shot and shell. But the equestrian statue of the Maid outside the Cathedral had had part of its pedestal shot away; the Virgin Mary, with the Child had been reduced to dust."

The King has placed Upper Lodge, Bushey Park, at the disposal of the Secretary of State for War, to accommodate some of the wives and families of non-commissioned officers and men at the front.

Queen Alexandra has also intimated her intention to place a house at the seaside at the disposal of Lord Kitchener for the same purpose.

Before the rising of Parliament it was agreed to increase the allowances for soldiers' wives and their children; a most necessary and practical way of proving the nation's gratitude to the fathers of families "doing their bit" for their country in this most ruthless war, in which nothing is sacred to the aggressor.

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

### "SIMON HERIOT."

Simon was stepson to Mr. Martin, who spelt his name with a big M, and was rather an unpleasant person. Simon's own father had been the heir to Heriot Place, and had married humble Amy Bradshaw, who afterwards became Mrs. Martin. She really must have wished quite a number of times that she had remained faithful to her first love.

"Another cup of tea, Robert?"

Mr. Martin consulted his watch, which was large, expensive, accurate as to time.

"I have time. Yes, I have time for another cup of tea. Less sugar, more milk, and at least half hot water. There is too much tea in the pot—too much. Three spoonfuls are sufficient when we are alone. If Hilda is in to tea then four are ample—ample."

That's the kind of person Mr. Martin was.

When Simon was come to years of discretion he was taken into his stepfather's pottery works, but left them promptly. He explained the reason to his mother.

"He offered me a partnership," said Simon, "and I can't take it unless there is an alteration in the way the business is run. Work does not hurt people. It's the preventable elements of dust and dirt and carelessness. And the pater's responsible. And I won't be responsible. He could alter it if he liked, and he won't even listen."

That's the kind of person Pater was.

"Oh, hush, my dear," said Mrs. Martin. "Papa's such a good man. I am sure the way he goes to church is a pattern. Twice on Sunday and never misses. Oh, you shouldn't talk as if Papa didn't know best."

And that's the sort of woman Mrs. Martin was.

But Simon in spite of "Papa" cut the business and struck out for himself. His matrimonial venture was not more successful.

"When the first quarter's bills came in they took Simon by surprise. He sat frowning at the figures whilst Maud curled up in a chair by the fire, assumed her most provoking mood, and treated the whole affair as a joke.

"All these flowers," protested Simon.

"Oh, I can't live without flowers," said Maud lightly. "A room without flowers is simply hateful. I wouldn't be seen dead in it. If I were dead, though, I suppose people would send lots of flowers, nice expensive wreaths and crosses that we shouldn't have to pay for."

Maud got up lazily, and crossing the room sat down on the arm of his chair and looked over his shoulder.

"How you do fuss," she said. "Cross old thing." She slipped an arm round his neck. "Do stop being cross."

Simon rightly objected to her friendship with Isidore and to the presents she accepted from him.

\*By Patricia Wentworth. London: Andrew Melrose, Ltd.

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