

SAINT JOAN OF ARC.

The members of the British Parliamentary Committee, during their recent visit to Paris, placed on the statue of Joan of Arc, in the Place des Pyramides, a wreath, with the following inscription:—

“The representatives of the British Parliament place at the feet of Joan of Arc this wreath, as a symbol of the complete reconciliation between the two nations, at a time when the two nations, united by the same sentiment of veneration for this heroine of ancient France, defend the liberty of the world.”

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

“TASKER JEVSONS.”*

He was, when we are first introduced to him, reporting football matches. Before that he had been a compositor. “If he had been handsome he’d have been dreadful. His flush, his decorative eyes, his dark eyebrows and eyelashes, his sleek-light brown hair would have made him vulgar. As it was, his queerness gave him a sort of point. If anybody had asked me that night what I saw in him myself beyond an ordinary little journalist ‘on the make,’ I don’t suppose I could have told them. But there’s no doubt that I felt his charm, or that night would have been the end instead of the beginning.” This story is written in the first person by the man who was Jevons’s brother-in-law, and who had intended that the girl whom Jevons married should have been his wife instead. Socially speaking, Jevons was impossible, and the girl Viola, his wife, was the daughter of an irreproachable Canon of Canterbury, whose environment breathed of culture, and Tudor houses and velvet lawns and all such things.

Viola bred in this atmosphere got terrified at its immense dignity and dulness; she had seen her sisters married suitably, and was determined that she herself would never make a suitable match. This was the subconscious reason why she ran away and applied for the post of typist to Mr. Furnival, the writer of this story. Furnival was suitable and well-bred and well off, and his typist was charming and pretty and piquante, and so, of course, he fell in love with her, but his extreme suitability was the drawback with her. But Jevons! Viola Thesiger and Jevons! Yet she married and adored him.

She also adored her brother Captain Thesiger, and it wasn’t very likely that he would swallow Jevons.

“When Jevons came in I saw the gallant Reggie take the shock of him. I don’t suppose he had ever before met anything like Jevons—I mean really met him at close quarters—in his life. But he *was* gallant and had his face well under control.” Then, of course, he did not dream that his sister had any idea of taking

him for her husband. And when it dawned upon him —

But however vulgar and impossible Jevons was, he had an undeniable fascination, and was also a genius. Underlying all this was a certain sweetness of disposition. But it required all these qualities and a great many more to make him acceptable in the dignified circle of Canterbury. After Viola’s marriage they forced themselves to ask her and Jevons to spend a week. At the end of three days Jevons had had enough.

“I can’t,” he said, “go on giving that dear old clergyman a sore throat, I frighten him so that he can’t sing. He doesn’t know what to do with me or say to me. He doesn’t know what to call me. Besides, he agitates me and makes me drop my ‘aitches.’”

But in spite of this, Viola continued to adore her Jimmy, though at times his manners and speech made her “cold all down her spine.”

The character studies of the immaculate Reggie, and of the rest of the Canon’s family, are admirably done, as is also the description of their house and surroundings. It was not until Jevons began to succeed in a big way as novelist and playwright, that he became vulgar in the real sense. Up to that date in spite of his genius he was ingenious and simple-hearted.

It began with his Tudor house and housewarming, and then also began tragedy for Viola, for she awoke to the conviction that she could not “stand” Jevons. His brother-in-law says of him: “Just when you had made up your mind you couldn’t bear him, he would go and do something so beautiful that it made your heart ache.”

The housewarming in the house in Mayfair, when the whole of the Thesiger family had condescended to be present, was of a truly amazing character. It was as if Jimmy had wanted to say to the Thesigers that if it came to being Tudor, he could be as Tudor as any of them and more so. Thus deeply had he absorbed the Canterbury atmosphere. . . . I shall never forget the general’s face as the suits of armour struck him. The Canon rose to even greater heights. We were afraid he would overdo it and look as if he were trying to show us how a Christian gentleman could bear such things as Jimmy’s furnishing. But no! He behaved as though Jimmy’s Tudor hall and miscellaneous drawing-room were his natural background.”

It was about this time that Viola became unable to stand Jevons; and the things he bought her — “hats that even Jimmy owned it was impossible for a woman to wear.” I can see his face saddened and a little puzzled by these failures, and I can hear him saying (it was after the opera cloak and the hysterics): “Walter, you can monkey with a woman’s heart, and you can ruin her immortal soul, but if you meddle with her clothes —”

Read the rest for yourselves. Jevons is a real refreshment.

* By May Sinclair. Hutchinson & Co., London.

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