

"Liberty of mind and body is dead! The Army was an eddy at first—it is now a whirlpool, drawing all men and things into its centre. And what are now the chief agents of its power? Ambitious men, who have made this new Christian body a stepping-stone to high positions. Who are its supporters? A few that are zealous, and hosts of those dependent on its bounty."

"Aye! there's the rub," interposed another of the Marshals. "When Booth the First conceived his great plan of providing homes for all that would work, he did not see that the end would be to destroy the energy and self-reliance of the people. Look at the great workshops throughout the land—offspring of the first the General endowed with money subscribed by a charitable public. Look at them, I say—filled with men and women who *half-work*, who *dribble through the labour of the day*, just earning their bread and no more; lazily contented with their lot, without any great earthly hope; void of ambition, seeking neither to raise themselves nor their offspring; sufficient for the day suffices for them; the New State must take care of them on the morrow."

A rapid debate ensued, from which I learnt that the country was growing poorer. There was more evenness in the social state; but the level was a low one, save with a few—leaders of the Army and men in high places, who were favourites of the Pope.

Then, in a whisper, they talked of a New Reformation, of a rebellion against the absolute power of the man who was the real Head of the State, and in the midst of a quiet, earnest discussion I left them.

CHAPTER VII.

DRUMMED OUT.

It was day again, and it seemed to me that some time had elapsed since I walked with Balliol and saw the Holy City under the cover of darkness. But what had happened in the time I could not tell.

Let it suffice that it was high noon and I was in Cheap-side, strolling along.

A great multitude were abroad—hurrying to and fro—with eager faces, some stopping here and there to exchange a word or two with other wayfarers.

The windows were filled with sight-seers, mostly women—some pretty enough, perchance, in face and form, but all hideous to the eye, thanks to the orthodox bonnet and sombre, sack-like dress.

I marvelled at the scene, wondering if the King were again about to visit his Holiness the Pope, and, to satisfy myself, I stopped a passer-by and questioned him.

"What!" he exclaimed, "know you not that the seven Marshals who dissented to the Infallibility of the Pope are this day to be drummed out of the Army?"

I was fain to express my ignorance of the impending humiliation of those who had dared to dissent from the Church of Booth.

"They have done so," continued my informant, "and you will see them carried by on their way to the big pillory for heretics in Smithfield."

I stood aside, and anon I saw the offenders pass in a waggon, with their hands fastened behind them, and the buttons and facings removed from their uniforms.

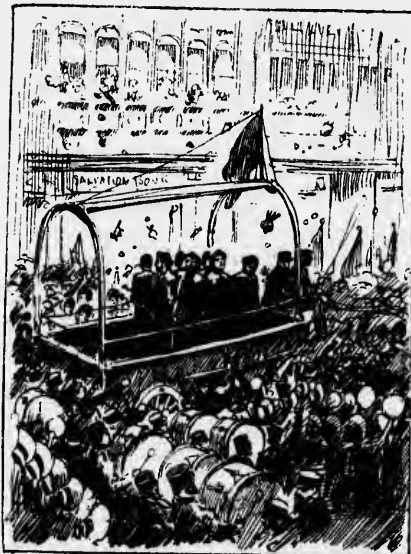
Behind the waggon were a score or so of drummers, who beat their instruments furiously without time or tune, and a

flood of rabble followed, hooting and howling as rabbles are wont to do when opportunity offers for the offensive exercise of their lungs.

Every indignity that tongue could pour out was heaped upon these men. The males hissed or roared, the women at the windows shrieked and rattled tambourines. "Death to the Heretics!" was cried on every side.

And the seven men bore it all unmoved. If they looked at the seething crowd it was with pity; when struck with a stone, or some other popular street missile, they smiled.

On their faces rested a light such as historians record has been seen on the faces of martyrs. I knew these



Anon I saw the offenders pass in a waggon.