

SIMON THE JESTER

CHAPTER I

I MET Renniker the other day at the club. He is a man who knows everything—from the method of trimming a puppy's tail for a dog-show, without being disqualified, to the innermost workings of the mind of every European potentate. If I want information on any subject under heaven I ask Renniker.

"Can you tell me," said I, "the most God-forsaken spot in England?"

Renniker, being in a flippant mood, mentioned a fashionable watering-place on the South Coast. I pleaded the seriousness of my question.

"What I want," said I, "is a place compared to which Golgotha, Aceldama, the Dead Sea, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and the Bowery would be leafy bowers of uninterrupted delight."

"Then Murglebed-on-Sea is what you're looking for," said Renniker. "Are you going there at once?"

"At once," said I.

"It's November," said he, "and a villainous November at that; so you'll see Murglebed-on-Sea in the fine flower of its desolation."

I thanked him, went home, and summoned my excellent man Rogers.

"Rogers," said I, "I am going to the seaside. I hear that Murglebed is a nice quiet little spot. You will go down and inspect it for me and bring back a report."