

"And he desires nothing better than to serve his spiritual superiors in any employment to which they may put him—Eh, my son?"

I looked into the Pope's face and down again; but I said nothing.

"Eh, my son?" he said again with a certain sharpness.

"Holy Father, I have been taught never to contradict my superiors; but indeed in this——"

"Bravo!" said Innocent.

Then he turned to my Lord Abbot, as if I were no longer in the room.

"The question," he said, "is not only whether this young gentleman is capable of hearing everything and saying nothing, of preserving his virtue, of handling locked caskets without even desiring to look inside unless it is his business, of living in the world yet not being of it—but whether he is willing to do all this without being paid for it—except perhaps his bare expenses."

My Lord Abbot said nothing.

"I can have a thousand paid servants," said Innocent, "who are worth exactly their wages; but, since money cannot buy virtue or discretion or courage, in such servants I cannot demand those things. And I can have a thousand foolish servants who could earn no wages anywhere because of their foolishness, and these never have discretion and not often either virtue or courage. But what I wish is to have servants who are as wise sons to me—who have all these things, and will use them for love's sake—for the love of Holy Church and of Christ and His Mother, and who will be content with the wages that These give."

He stopped suddenly and looked at me quickly again; and my heart burned in my breast; for this that he was saying was all that I most desired; and I saw by that that my talk must have been reported to him. I loved Holy Church then, and the cause of Jesus and Mary, as young men do love, and as I hope to love till I die. I asked nothing better than to serve such causes as these even to death. It was not for lack of ardour that I wished to leave the monastery; it was because, truthfully, I had a fever on me of greater activity; because, truthfully, I was not sure of my