

"They keep us waiting an unconscionable time," he said. "Are you not tired?"

"This is the half-hour for meditation," she replied gravely. "You ought to be meditating."

"I am," he said, suppressing a strong desire to yawn. "I am meditating."

"Then please don't interrupt my meditations," she answered, with a little light of mischief in her eyes.

So he was silent again for a space.

"Do you happen to know," the man began again—men are always so impatient—"Do you happen to know what they will do to us in the ceremony of reception?"

"Tom—I mean, Mr. Caledon, refused to tell me anything about it, when I asked him."

"I hope," he said, fidgeting about, "that there will be no Masonic nonsense; if there is, I shall go back to the world."

"I presume," she said, "though I do not know anything about it, really—but I expect that the Sisters will give us the kiss of fraternity, and that——"

"If," he interrupted her—"If we have only got to kiss each other, it would be a ceremony much too simple to need all this mystery. After all, most mysteries wrap up something very elementary. They say the Masons have got nothing to give you but a word and a grip. The kiss of fraternity—that will be very charming."

He looked as if he thought they might begin at once, before the others came; but the girl made no reply, and just then the organ which had dropped into a low whisper of melodious sound, which was rolling and rumbling among the rafters in the roof over their heads, suddenly crashed into a triumphant march. At the same moment, the long row of starlike flame-dots sprang into a brilliant illumination: the double doors at the lower end of the hall, at the side opposite to that where was placed the stool of repentance, were flung open, and a Procession began, at the appearance of which both novices sprang to their feet, as if they were in a church.

And then, too, the hall became visible with all its adornments.

It was a grand old hall which had once belonged to the original Abbey which Henry VIII. presented to the Dunlop who graced his reign. It was as large as the hall of Hampton Court, it was lit by a row of

windows high up, beneath which hung tapestry, by a large rose window in the east, and a great perpendicular window in the west. There was a gallery below the rose, and the organ was in a recess of *pratique* in the wall at the lower end. Along the wall at the upper, or western end, was a row of stalls in carved woodwork, the wood was old, but the stalls were new. There were twenty in all, and over each hung a silken banner with a coat of arms. Each was approached by three steps, and each, with its canopy of carved wood, its seat and arms in carved wood, the gay banner above it, and the coat of arms painted and gilded at the back, might have served for the Royal Chapel at Windsor. Between the windows and above the tapestry were trophies of arms, with antlers and portraits. And on the north side stood the great fireplace, sunk back six feet and more in the wall; around it were more wood carvings, with shields, bunches of grapes, coats of arms in gold and purple, pilasters and pediments, a very precious piece of carving. There was a *daïs* along the western end; on this stood a throne, fitted with a canopy, and overlaid with purple velvet fringed with gold. On the right and left of the throne stood two chairs in crimson velvet, before each a table; and on one table were books. In the centre of the hall was another table covered with crimson velvet, in front of which was a long cushion as if for kneeling. In front of the candidates for reception, was a bar covered with velvet of the same colour.

The novices took in these arrangements with hasty eyes, and then turned to the procession, which began to file slowly and with fitting solemnity over the polished floor of the long hall. The organ pealed out the march from Scipio.

"I haven't heard that," said the man, "since I was at Winchester, they used to play it when the judges came to church."

First there walked a row, in double file, of boys clad in purple surplices, with crimson hoods; they carried flowers in baskets. After them came twenty young men in long blue robes, tied round the waist with scarlet ropes; they carried books, which might have been music books, and these were singing-men and serving-men. After them, at due intervals, came the Brethren and Sisters of the monastery.

There were eighteen in all, and they