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**The Wonderful Power of the Blood.**

Oh, the blood! Oh, the blood! There's wonderful power in the blood!

No one knew whence they came; and there were about thirty of them—strange, uncouth messengers out of the Unknown, who had come to tell us about the power of the blood—the *wonderful* power of the blood.

They were anchored outside the "Blue Stag"; and, very appropriately considering the nature of their "message," they were almost precisely opposite Mr. Cole's. Mr. Cole is one of the several local butchers; dead pigs and bleeding rabbits with tin mugs on their noses swayed in the cool, late afternoon breeze. Oh, the wonderful power of the blood!

The president was an elderly "beaver"; his benevolently vacuous face was completely fringed with a definitely religious border of white whiskers; under his left arm slumbered a godly umbrella; in his right hand reposed a sacred hymn book in a cheap, holy, bright red cover.

Oddly, these advocates of sanguinity, these protagonists of "the precious blood," were curiously anaemic, judged by the merely worldly eye. A pallid spinster with a "kind face" mournfully manipulated a tinkling harmonium, and the brethren—or congregation—or members—all joined in, taking it in turns to say the words of the verses before they were "sung." One's quite involuntary amusement was mingled with an equally involuntary feeling of life-tragedy. Any bright disciple of Dr. Sigmund Freud would have "spotted" a likely client in every one of the poor, pale, undeveloped creatures around the harmonium. Were they undeveloped, or degenerate, or both? No; probably they were simply warped, drowned psychically in that "precious blood." Spiritually speaking, they'd never had a chance. That blood must have corroded.

The vision before me was an epitome of bourgeois England as it survives to-day; Puritanism run to seed, its ranting enthusiasm all turned to slop—generously mixed with "the precious blood"; unsatisfied yearnings of all kinds seeking extra-natural

outlets, and finding them in spiritual orifices made specially to be flooded and choked with that scarlet fluid shed upon Calvary in order that you and I, dear reader, might be "saved." It is unquestionably a sub-conscious yearning for a fuller, healthier, more normal life that forces these poor, lily-livered, timid, negative, spiritually starved creatures to turn to that unnatural, beastly remedy—that divine quack nostrum—the precious blood.

Such is non-conforming Protestantism! A poor, pale, Pussy-foot Jesus, and streams of rich, rolling, red blood for his friends to enjoy as a "saving flood." Poor Jesus! Poor Protestants! Poor England! And to attempt to tell the truth about these little matters is called blasphemy. Is it no blasphemy against man to distort his mind from the very cradle with lies?—But to our sheep! Our Christian lambs!

A white-eyed, subdued damsel, who might have been attractive had she ever had a chance, distributed tracts amongst the audience: "A Sinner's Confession"; "An Atheist's Cry"; "Lost!"; "Newton's Testimony"; and others referring to "the blood." "There's wonderful power in the blood!" About a dozen of us constituted the audience: stolid matrons nursing junior infants; stocky, indifferent yeomen; a labourer puffing at his pipe; and one or two children.

These poor blood-bagmen had thoughtfully brought with them their own "scenery"; posters with great, ugly lettering, borne upon poles by the faithful. Jesus and "the blood" had hereon a splendid—and presumably free—advertisement. "The Lord's Coming is at Hand"; "Behold! He cometh as a Thief in the Night!"; "Believe in the Lord Jesus and ye shall be saved"; "The Lord is a Consuming Fire"; and more about hell-fire and, of course, "the blood." Let no one accuse Protestantism of being dry! On the contrary, it may be called sticky.

John—three—sixteen! That was the ticket for salvation; the winning number in the divine sweepstake. "For God so loved the world....." You know the rest. If not, you will find it in Holy Writ.

God, you see, who is a walking compendium of all the virtues—mercy, justice, truth, and the rest—"sent down" his only son to be tortured to death that "we"—that is, you and I, sweet reader—might be "saved." In the divine alchemy, fire is to be avoided only by blood. That is a bald translation of our wandering gossellers' doctrine, "roughly done into the vernacular." Well, no one can say that in the divine household charity began at home! On the contrary; and very much so at that!

Poor old God! Poor little Jesus! And poor, silly Evangelicals! What a lot they all miss!

The sacred doctrine that we have tried to condense was given to an eager world to the accompaniment of passing cars and carts; of whistling errand-boys and playing children, all completely indifferent to the only true scheme of salvation. No one seemed to care, and in the golden-orange hues of a perfect summer sunset the unheeding trees swayed happily and gently, while busy bands of rooks went cawing indifferently about their homes in the elm branches. And the "meeting," run by strange folk, atavisms, half butchers and half medicine-men, continued until the shadows began to lengthen, and great green day gradually grew into soft grey night. "There is wonderful power in the blood." Unfortunately it is a power wholly for evil; but it has one point in its favour; it is a waning power. Wherefore thanks be to Man!

Victor B. Neuburg