

08. Shopping

Saturday, June 24, 1865

Saturday dawned sunny. *Surely*, I thought, *not all days in the County of Kent can be sunny*. I was up early, and groomed in only a very few minutes. The prospect of an adventure in the “big city” of Canterbury excited me! I went downstairs to break my fast. Doing so at Betty Bourne’s was a rare treat for me. Although her meals were excellent, I must perforce spend a good deal of time at Folkestone Manor.

I said hello to young Frank and to Mr. Grimstead. We were treated to hasty pudding, rashers of streaky bacon, and scones.

“Betty, the scones are delicious.”

“And they’re quite easy to make. Just a quick bread, you know. I take flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt. To them, I add butter, egg, and milk. They take but fifteen minutes to bake.”

“About scones, I have heard this rhyme about the pronunciation:

I asked the maid in dulcet tone
To order me a buttered scone
The silly girl has been and gone
And ordered me a buttered scone.”

“Yes, Patricia. I know that one. And my Angus would have added:

I love the sun, I love the moon
But most I love a bonnie scone.

We laughed. Mr. Grimstead remained silent, no doubt confident that he could craft far better verse.

Immediately after breakfast, I helped Betty clear the table. By half eight, we were hatted, with parasols courtesy of Betty, sitting on the front porch, waiting for the arrival of our carriage. That is, Jack Bates would pick us up in his farm wagon, known in America as a “buckboard,” and he would be our coachman.

“Betty, do you think we look all right?”

“My dear Patricia, we are as attractive as two women on the banks of the Seine in an Édouard Manet painting.”

“Betty, I thought you were a simple farm girl. Where did you learn of Manet?”

“I listened to my Angus when he spoke of art. And I read. And, you know, growing up on a farm teaches more than just how the barnyard animals mate, although that is indeed biology. My family had many books, which is not so common among farmers.”

Jack’s rig turned the corner. We left the porch, descending the steps to Oak Lane.

“Hello, ladies. Want a ride?”

“Why good morning, Mr. Bates! We’d be delighted.”

Not needing help from Jack, we mounted and seated ourselves. Jack turned the wagon and drove a few hundred feet back to the Canterbury Road.

I asked, "How far is it to Canterbury, Jack?"

"By the milestones, less than fourteen miles. We'll take the Canterbury Road to the Dover Road. We should be there by eleven o'clock, or perhaps sooner."

He gave the horse a flick of his whip and we were on our way.

As we left Hawkinge, a process that required only a half minute of driving, I mused about the bright sun upon all the greenery. The countryside was a verdant quilt of farmers' fields, orchards, and meadows. And where there are meadows, summer in Kent provides wildflowers. Frequently, I'd see herds of sheep, as well. While a bold yellow sun dominated the blue sky, there were a few clouds as bright and white as clumps of India cotton.

At our right lay a fine area of forest, which Jack named as the Reinden Wood. Jack said it was dominated by European beech, but included oak, ash, rowan, and yew. "The key thing, Miz Pat, is that such a wood has its floor covered with bluebells, and we call that a bluebell wood."

We soon drove through the villages of Selstead and Denton, which were, not surprisingly, very much like Hawkinge.

Betty said, "Patricia, I believe you said that you had never been to Canterbury."

"Indeed, no. While working in London these last several years, I really only visited my mother in Kew. And occasionally I would visit my in-laws in Chastleton, Oxfordshire."

"Well, I think you'll find the cathedral to be quite impressive. It's not as big as St. Paul's in London, but it's big. Thomas Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury, you know, and died there. Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury."

Then Jack said, "I'll add this: the Royal Museum and Art Gallery, also called the Beane Institute, is where the items from my regiment are displayed. Now, I'll propose this, as it will take us a bit of time to reach our destination: let us each tell a short tale for our amusement and education."

Betty and I agreed, and insisted that Jack begin.

The Colour Sergeant's Tale

Jack thought a moment and then began his narrative:

There was a young novice at a convent. To strengthen her faith, she was sent to live alone in the desert to commune with God.

It happened that in the same desert there was a religious hermit, a man who had been there for many years.

He found the novice, who was nearly dead with hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. He took her to his cave and revived her with food and drink.

When it was time for bed, he took off his robe.

The novice was shocked! She said, "What is that thing you have between your legs that I do not have?"

The monk said, "Oh, sister, I am cursed, for this thing that hangs on me is the Devil."

She said, "Oh, how sorry I feel for you."

But the monk responded, "You have it no better, my young friend, for between your legs lies Hell."

She took off her robe, and looked down.

"Is that Hell?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Oh no! What can we do?"

The monk replied, "Surely, there is nothing better either of us can do than to put the Devil in Hell."

And with that he showed her how it was done. This gave her great satisfaction, for which she thanked God.

Over many days, after the Devil had been put in Hell many times, the novice was wiser and happier. She returned to the convent. There the sisters laughed, and agreed that people had been putting the Devil in Hell for a long, long time.

We agreed—all three of us—and had a good laugh, too.

The Nurse's Tale

Next, I began my story:

There was a handsome knight, known for his good deeds and brave heart. But he had no lady, so he traveled far and wide throughout the land in search of a beautiful princess.

One day, deep in the woods, he found an ugly old woman.

She said, "I know I am old and ugly, but I am under a curse. If you kiss me, I will turn into a beautiful maiden."

But the knight, despite his good deeds and brave heart, didn't believe her and wouldn't kiss her.

The old woman said, "Here is a chest full of gold. Please take it. I ask only that you kiss me."

The knight gladly took the gold, but then still refused to kiss her.

"Ah! Be that as it may. Please sit down for food and drink."

Sit down he did. The food was wonderful, and he soon grew sated.

The woman asked if the knight would now kiss her, but again he refused.

The old woman said, "Ah! Be that as it may. You have enjoyed the food. Now partake of this special wine, which I serve only to honored guests such as you."

The knight drank. Once again, the old woman asked to be kissed, but the knight once again refused her.

The old woman said, "Ah! Be that as it may. Lie down and rest."

The knight felt very sleepy. He lay down immediately. As he fell into slumber, the old woman kissed him. Immediately she turned into a beautiful maiden!

With the kiss, the knight woke, and was enthralled. He proposed marriage to the beautiful maiden.

The maiden said, "Oh, no, fair knight! You accepted kindness—gold, food, and drink. Yet with each item offered, you refused to kiss an old woman. I will not marry you. In a minute, in fact, your chances of marrying anyone will be somewhat diminished."

When sixty seconds had elapsed, the knight had turned into a toad.

"Now," said the maiden, "enjoy your curse. Feel what I have felt. Perhaps in time, a maiden will kiss you and you will again become a fair knight. Until then, you will eat flies."

And with that, the girl mounted the knight's horse, and left the woods forever.

Jack and Betty nodded, agreeing that the tale made an excellent point.

The Hopgrower's Tale

It fell to Betty to tell the last tale:

In Tuscany, in times past, there was a rich widow who owned a farm. She was wealthy, but not happy.

An old monk, who was known in his own town for his skill with herbs and potions, happened through the country where she lived. Being quite fatigued, he called upon the widow, and asked for food and drink.

"Good monk," she said, "I'll gladly have you at my table, but the fare is quite simple."

He sat to eat, and indeed, found that the food was very bland.

"My good woman," he said, "your food has no spices or salt."

"It has been that way since my husband died. I took a vow of celibacy, and also I avoided putting spice in the food."

"Then I will suggest a way to add spice to your life. First, you must drink of this potion." He removed a vial from his bag and offered it to her.

She drank. She said, "Oh! I feel stirrings I have not felt in a long time." The potion was magical, containing a substance the monk had learned to make from the Arabs, called al-kohl.

"Yes. That is to be expected. Now, if you suck the vital essence of a man, you will be restored."

“I have no such man. I am lost.”

“I will serve as that man.”

And with that, the monk doffed his habit, and showed the widow the method of sucking his essence.

When done, the widow said, “Is this not a violation of your vows?”

“Not at all,” said the monk. “Did you not hear me cry out, ‘Oh God, Oh God, Oh God’ at the last?”

The widow was impressed. She said, “I can help *you*, friar. You must lick out the essence of a woman.”

And with that, she doffed her dress, and lay back in her chair, with her legs spread.

The friar did his part, and the widow, too, moaned, “Oh God, Oh God, Oh God!”

When the session was over, both people lay exhausted.

The friar offered, “We have both called out to God.”

The widow responded, “That’s true. Now what shall we do?”

“We must mix the two fluids. This will enhance the effect.”

And so they did. When they were done, the monk asked the lady her name.

“Rosemary,” she said. What is yours?”

“Basil.”

They agreed that he had arrived just in time, the time for her to change her views. He gave up his vows, and she gave up her celibacy. Together, they grew many herbs. The food at dinner improved, and they lived happily for a very long time.

All three of us had a fine laugh. At this time, we turned into the Dover Road, which Jack declared to be an old Roman road. As we approached Canterbury, traffic from wagons, carriages, pony traps, and pedestrians grew thick. The Dover Road took us through Riding Gate, the biggest gate. Jack drove us straight into Waiting Street and then made a right turn into St. George’s Lane. He stopped the wagon.

“Very well, ladies. This is St. George’s Gate. I’ll let you out here. I must go buy some things for the manor. Then I’ll stable the horse and meet you.”

“Where shall we meet?”

“At the big outdoor pub called The White Castle. Now if ye don’t mind, here’s a list of things Meg would like. I know nothing about buying them, so I hope you’ll do it for me.”

We agreed, of course. We descended the wagon and walked toward the many stalls along the wall.

“There, Patricia, is Canterbury Cathedral! You can see its size, although we’re two streets from it.”

How right she was! The cross tower, she told me, was 235 feet high. Between here and the cathedral I saw cobbled streets lined with half-timbered three-story houses, and I even caught a glimpse of the River Stour.

There, by the old city wall, was the wall mart. I must say, it was the biggest outdoor faire I had ever seen. There must have been hundreds of stalls. I had been to the market stalls at Covent Garden in London, of course, but this arrangement was vast by comparison.

Betty said, "On the east side of the gate we find the general merchandise. On the west side are the purveyors of food ingredients. Let's look at the general merchandise first."

We entered a street of stalls marked by a banner, "Threadneedle Street."

Betty held up a bolt of cloth. "Patricia, can you believe this? Irish lace at a low price!"

"From what county? County Carlow?"

Merchant: "Ladies, it's from China."

"Well, I'll be bollixed! I'll buy it. And Pat, look here! A tartan!"

"What clan is it?"

"Ho, sister! Not one that I recognize. As nearly as I can determine it's from the MacChang clan. I think it was made in China."

"We'll here's silk, something we can rightly expect to come from China."

"No, ladies, it comes from Macclesfield, Cheshire. That's the center of silk throwing in England."

Betty bought several yards of silk, intent, she told me, on using it and the lace to run up a nice new dress.

From Threadneedle Street we entered a street of stalls labeled with a banner announcing, "Tinker's Alley." After passing several tents, we stopped at one filled with pewterware.

I picked up a lovely plate and turned it over. "Betty, isn't the crowned Tudor rose the hallmark of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers?"

"It certainly is. What have you there?"

"The stamp of a dragon."

The merchant offered, "Why, that means the plate is from Hong Kong. Our crown colony, you know."

"Why, no! You are a wealth of information. Please show me that large copper stewpot you have behind you."

The merchant put the pot in my hands and I looked it over. It seemed to me to be well made and of a heavy gauge. I thanked my mother for what little I knew of cookware.

"What will you take for this, my man?"

“I must have 5 and 10 for it, ma’am. I cannot take less.”

“Very well. We’ll not shop all day merely to disprove you.” I counted out five shillings and ten pence.

“Thank you kindly.”

After we left the stall, Betty said “Cousin, you need a stewpot like I need another man. Which is to say not at all.”

“It’s for Meg, although she didn’t request one. And here’s why: It cost less than the same item in cast iron from Messrs. Richard & John Slack on The Strand in London. I think it’s a bargain.”

We crossed to the west side of St. George’s Gate. Our next street was gaily festooned with streamers and a banner that proclaimed, “Spice Islands.” Here we were to find ingredients for cooking, so I took Meg’s list from my bag.

Our task was quite easy. We bought baking powder, baking soda, yeast, and black pepper. I marveled at all the spice choices. The world of spices is quite fascinating, and the English cook has many to choose from. Of course, all of them are imported, so I could comfortably expect that cinnamon would come from Ceylon, not from Suffolk.

At a stall with loose candy— “penny candy,” as they say in America—I bought six bars of Fry’s chocolate. Fry’s is a special treat, as no one else has moulded cocoa into a candy suitable for direct eating. I bought bars for Betty, Meg, Jack, Sir Reg, Simon Shepherd, and me.

“Well, Betty, have we omitted to buy anything?”

“Tea?”

“No. I understand that Meg gets Chinese tea directly from her sons in India. Oh, what about fish?”

“No, the best fish comes from Folkestone.”

“Then I believe we’re finished. Shall we find The White Castle and get something to eat?”

The outdoor pub was easy to locate, as it was merely two hundred feet from the market, in St. George’s Street, where it was crossed by St. George’s Lane. While the pub itself was substantial in size, it was augmented on market day by outdoor stalls, where additional food was prepared and barrels of ale sat on boards and trestles. Also, there must have been thirty long tables set out for eating.

“They won’t bring the food to us, Patricia. We must order it and take it to a table.”

And so we did. I was content with fish and chips, while Betty ordered a meal I hadn’t seen before. She was given six tiny Hamburg steaks on six tiny buns. Each one could be eaten in two bites.

“It’s a specialty of The White Castle,” Betty said.

We sat, and just as we did so, Jack walked up. “Hello, ladies!”

“Hello, Jack. How did you find us?”

“Nothing to it. I looked for the two prettiest women here. Now, if you don’t mind, I’ll fetch myself a large ale. The same for you?”

We nodded in agreement. While we waited we listened to music from a band of pipers. “I see the town has a band.”

“Yes. They’re called the Waits.”

“My! What’s that piercing sound?”

“That’s the shawm. Horrible instrument, isn’t it? But it’s not as horrid as the pipes my Angus loved so much.”

Jack returned with glasses of ale, placed them on the table, and sat. He had bought himself two bangers to eat. We had a good, long, well-deserved draught.

“Well, I’ve paid a boy to watch the wagon, so we’ve nothing to do but eat and go home. Except, maybe, to use the privy.”

“Well, we’ve bought all we needed, and more. Do you want to see?”

“Oh, Miz Pat, Miz Betty! I beg you to spare me. Surely you know that men cannot abide such things.”

“Well, *you* shopped, didn’t you?”

“Ah, yes, but I bought what was needed, and only what was needed. I bought iron brackets, horseshoe blanks, and Portland cement.” Jack drained his glass, and so did we. We returned to the wagon, climbed aboard, and began our trip home.

“So, Patricia, what do you think of Canterbury?”

“What I’ve seen of it is quite beautiful, Jack. I’d like to go inside the cathedral someday. And, I must say, I’m quite overwhelmed by the size of the Saturday market.”

“I suppose Canterbury *is* beautiful, Miz Patricia, but do understand that I’ve been to Istanbul, and I found that place to be a bit more lively. Even the Hagia Sophia mosque is beautiful, and I ain’t no Musselman.”

We left at half one in the afternoon. We continued our banter, and were back in Hawkinge just after half three.

We made sure that Jack had all the items we bought for Meg, including the copper stewpot. I determined to deliver my chocolate bars in person. With a tip of his hat, Jack turned the wagon around and drove to the manor.

Betty went off to prepare high tea. I went to my room to write letters. I began with a very brief one to Florence Nightingale.

June 24th, 1865

Florence Nightingale
St. Thomas’ Hospital
Stangate, Lambeth

Dear Florence,

I hope you are very well.

Sir Reginald Pleydell continues to respond to improved medications, improved nutrition, more physical therapy, and numerous challenges to his attitude.

You may not believe it, but he and I indulge in foot races and shooting matches. This has produced a significant boost, I feel, to his competitive spirit. Further, I am evolving new plans for his rehabilitation on almost a daily basis.

I should mention this particular: I have learned from a local person, a shepherd and a bit of a soothsayer—if you can believe it—that Sir Reg’s paralysis may result from a piece of Russian shrapnel in the foramen of the fifth lumbar vertebra. There is no proof of this, but I shall have to study the idea further.

Incidentally, country life has turned out to be a very pleasant adventure.

I remain yours,

Nurse Patricia Goodman
c/o Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge, Kent

My second letter was to my mother.

Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson
№ 41 Gloucester Road
Kew, Richmond

My Dearest *Maman*,

Oh, my! You have met a lovely MP! I’m glad to hear that he is fit, handsome, charming, &c. Will you tell me next that he is rich, also?

I wish you well with your “adventure.” Please keep me informed.

I look forward to more of your biscuits.

Your loving daughter,

Patricia “Pitty-Pat” Goodman
c/o Folkestone Manor
Hawkinge, Kent

I sealed the letters and went to the dining room for tea. The centerpiece of the meal was a fisherman’s pie, made from cod, with béchamel sauce and mashed potatoes. I was delighted that Betty had included prawns as well.

It being Saturday night, I had nothing to do. After a long drive and a day in Canterbury, I was content with the situation. However, Betty suggested that our having an ale or two at the locals, before it grew too late, would

put a fine cap on the day. Given that we were well-dressed and had just been well-fed at her table, I had no objection.

And so, just after six o'clock, we made our way to The White Horse, a walk of perhaps 300 feet.

The pub was about half full. That is, there were perhaps twenty people there, mostly men, but some couples as well. A little bit of music filled the room, created by a recorder and tabor, and as was inevitable, a game of darts was underway.

Betty gave a wave to Ned Bowles. She then pointed to a corner and held up fingers signaling two ales.

We sat ourselves, and just a moment later, Ned came with our pints.

"Hello, Ned! How are you?"

"Just fine, ladies. Here's your ales. No going up to the bar for my favorites. You are about to sample Ned's extra special bitter, brewed to provide a bit of extra punch. And it's been drawn from the cask with my new beer engine—a hand pump."

"Well, Ned, if you have a hand pump, you don't need me."

Ned was startled. "But you don't pump ale."

"No, I pump something else with my hand."

"Why, Betty, I am shocked—shocked!—that you should say such a thing. Just the same, I appreciate how handy you are."

"You have a nice sized crowd this evening."

"Yes, it's six o'clock on a Saturday and the regular crowd is shuffling in. It'll grow a bit more lively when the folks start arguing over politics."

"Tell me, handsome, could you bring us a little something extra—in a teacup, of course?"

"Sure. Compliments of the pubkeeper. Would that be Glenlivet Scots tea or Bushmill's Irish tea?"

"I think Patricia favors the Bushmill's, and I'll have Glenlivet. Just don't bring any of the Bombay gin tea."

"Of course not. That's a poison, in my view." Ned dashed off, and we sipped our ale. Betty seemed to have a nod or a wave for nearly every farmer in the place.

Ned returned. "Here you go."

"Ned, your pub looks good."

"It will look better when I bring in a table for skittles bowling. You know, I've got the dignified pub, while it's me brother who runs a den of iniquity."

We laughed, and Ned walked off to draw more ales. The combination of ale and “tea” was lovely. After just a bit of time, we drank up and left for The Black Horse. I noted that we walked with a stagger, but only a small one.

It was nearly seven when we entered The Black Horse. The scene was similar to that of The White Horse. About thirty people, but all of them a bit louder. To my surprise, The Black Horse had a piano!

Betty followed the same routine she used at The White Horse: She waved to Nick, pointed to a corner, and made a gesture indicating two ales.

Nick brought our ales. “Good evening, Mrs. Goodman. Hello, Betty. Sorry we’ve got no snug for single ladies to sit separate.”

“Well, Nick. We’re just a small village, and you don’t have to operate like a big Canterbury pub. Now tell me, who is the piano player?”

“Ah! Our piano man is a fellow named Billy. He’s from Folkestone, and he says he used to play in London. He can come up with just about any song you name. Now, here’s your ales. Nick’s premium bitter, with a bit of an extra punch. Every bit as good as Fuller’s, and much better because of Betty’s hops.”

“You draw a nice crowd.”

“Indeed, Patricia. A lively one, as well, Saturday being the end of a six-day work week, with only the prospect of church in the morning.”

“Say Nick, could you bring us...”

“A bit of ‘tea’ in a teacup? Yes, of course.”

Nick shoved off and Betty and I spent a minute taking in the farmers, farm hands, and tradesmen. Once again, Betty had a wave for nearly everyone.

My eyes fell on a fellow drinking alone at the table next to us. He was a bit older and looked very tired. Periodically, he’d remove a clear glass bottle from his coat and drink directly from it.

“Betty, who is that man? He looks quite sad.”

“Why that’s Tom Collins. He’s a local who works itinerantly. He hasn’t a family, so gin has become his wife.”

Nick returned with our teacups. “This here is American ‘tea,’ from Bourbon County in their state of Kentucky.” He saluted, and marched off to attend to other customers.

The piano player was quite good, filling the room with lively tunes. Also, there was a surprise for me. From time to time, a villager would walk up to the piano, drop a coin in the player’s dish, and request him to play a tune for singing. Then the song would commence, and the villager would break into a solo, getting help with the lyrics from time to time. We listened to three or four rousing songs, some traditional and some popular in the music halls of London.

I can’t account for it, but I rose, a bit unsteadily, and walked to the piano. I placed a shilling in the tray and whispered to Billy, the piano man. He nodded instantly, and I turned to the crowd.

“Ho!” someone shouted, “it’s the nurse.”

“You’re right, young man. I am the nurse. Now, I have a song for you. ‘Weasel and stoat’ rhymes with coat. You may well know that in London, the Cockneys say your coat is called your weasel. Well, if you drink at The Eagle on City Road and spend all your money, you may need to pawn your weasel to get more money. So here’s what they sing:”

Up and down the City Road,
In and out The Eagle,
That’s the way the money goes,
Pop goes the weasel.

“Now you join me:”

(Me)
Half a pound of tuppenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle.
That’s the way the money goes,
(The crowd)
Pop! goes the weasel.

(Me)
Every night when I get home,
The monkey’s on the table,
Take a stick and knock it off,
(The crowd)
Pop! goes the weasel.

At the end of that verse, I bowed. The people applauded and I quickly left my position by the piano to resume my seat.

That sad fellow, Tom Collins, rose from his chair and staggered up to us.

“Why, ma’am, that was the finest song I’ve ever heard.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Say, Betty, have you got a pound you can lend me? I’m out of money.”

“No, Tom, I don’t. You drink all your money away. And begging doesn’t become you.”

Tom grew angry. “What do you know about begging? You’ve never had to beg for drink money. You get your drinks by lying on your back.”

“Tom, you are very rude. I was a hardworking farmer, and now I’m a hardworking landlady. You have no place to accuse me of debauchery.”

“I may have no place, but I can turn your table over right this minute. That will spoil your drinks and your fancy outfits.”

He advanced and grabbed the edge of our table. But then a strange phenomenon occurred. Tom's head snapped up, and he dropped slowly to the floor.

"Oh, my!"

Behind Tom stood Constable Daniel Dover. He had a sap in his hand. He looked down at the floor and slowly shook his head. His attention then turned to us.

"Good evening, Mrs. Goodman, Mrs. Bourne. I see you've been conversing with old Tom Collins. But he seems to have passed out."

Betty exclaimed, "Why thank you, Dan. Well, Patricia, that's what happens on Saturday evenings in Hawkinge."

Dan added, "Indeed, Betty, it seems that every Saturday Old Tom meets up with my cosh, with Tom coming away the worse for wear. For a Welshman, he surely cannot hold his liquor. Now, if you don't mind, I'll take him over to my gaol so he can sleep off his sudden fainting spell." Dan slung Tom over his shoulder and marched out of the pub.

"Oh my, Betty. Will Tom stand trial for drunkenness?"

"No, never. Dan will just let him out in the morning."

I counted it a blessing to meet one more of Hawkinge's inhabitants, although he was a rude drunk. We drank up and returned to the boarding house. Why we did not crawl from the pub, our trip featured a bit more staggering than when we had entered it.

Betty and I helped each other climb the stairs, slowly and carefully. We said good night. In my room, I had the good sense to take two tablets of the acetylsalicylic acid provided by Mr. Aull, the chemist in London.

To put it in the briefest of terms, I peeled off my dress and fairly collapsed on the bed. I had no memory of falling asleep.

Sunday, June 25, 1865

On Sunday I rose remarkably refreshed, especially when I considered my drinking from the night before. It was quite early, too, and the sunlight flooded my sitting room.

I peeked into the hallway. Mr. Uriah Grimstead was not in sight. So, wearing only my kimono, I dashed downstairs for a cup of tea. I found Betty alone in the kitchen. She told me to return to my room, and in a few minutes, she arrived with a tray of tea for two.

"Why, thank you!"

"You are quite welcome. Besides, you give me an opportunity to absent myself from my kitchen for a little bit." She sat, and we drank.

"Betty, will you be going to church today?"

"No. Last week's attendance was plenty for me. Tonight, I might go to the Church of The Black Horse to see what sermon Nick Bowles might preach."

“But he’ll use you as a dartboard.”

“Yes, that’s certainly my expectation. Maybe I’ll use him as a trumpet, or put his tongue to other good use.”

“What will today’s dinner be?”

“A roasted leg of lamb, courtesy of Mr. Simon Shepherd, our guest of honor. He delivered it yesterday when we were at Canterbury.”

After a lovely cup of tea, Betty returned to her kitchen. I did my ablutions and dressed. How to spend the morning? I determined to walk to the mound on the bluffs near Folkestone Manor.

I walked a mere thirty minutes, past the manor, over the bridge at the Pent Stream, and on the path to the mound. I set myself down on the stone bench, and found myself staring at the grotto, with its marble statue, canopy, and arc of trees.

Thanks to Meg’s explanation, I now knew the marble goddess to be Venus, and I found it soothing to meditate upon its story.

My return to my rooms was unremarkable, yet was enhanced by my refreshing visit to the mound and pleasure of the bright sunlight. There was time before the Sunday dinner to read a little.

As two o’clock approached, I grew a bit anxious about Simon. I went outdoors to look for him.

I crossed Oak Lane and walked through the empty field behind The White Horse. I could see Simon walking up Church Street.

Just before I could shout to Simon, I saw a gang of perhaps six boys coming toward him from the park. Tom Brown, a boy who apparently did not profit from Reverend Pritchett’s words about bullying, was in the lead. I saw what I took to be rocks in their hands. Well, as Sir Reginald had once told me, one doesn’t need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows.

I was determined to prevent any incident. I looked for a “persuader,” and was not disappointed. The ground was covered with rocks. I picked up a fist-sized model and cradled it in my palm. As Simon moved toward them, they moved toward Simon. I moved toward them both.

“Hello, boys! My, you are idlers, aren’t you? Want to play with rocks? I’ve got a big one right here, one with your name on it, Tom Brown. And I can assure you, I throw it with the same accuracy as I shoot my pistol.”

“Aw, Nurse Goodman, you wouldn’t heave a rock at me, would you?”

“Yes, Tom, I would. If it kills you, too bad. I’ll cry at your funeral. If it only injures you, I’ll nurse you back to health. So if you want, throw rocks at Simon. Go ahead, make my day.”

The boys were cowed, as I imaged they would be. Cowards are like that. In my best Cockney, I shouted, “Now, piss off, you stupid gits.” They ran.

“Hello, Simon! It’s a pleasure to see you. May I escort you to Betty Bourne’s house for dinner?” And so, we walked the fifty or so yards to the house. Simon looked quite good, his hair trimmed and his face and hands very clean. He wore his newest shirt, but best of all, he wore a smile.

“Miz Patricia, you, Jack Bates, Meg Bates, and even Sir Reginald have been so kind to me. I was a bit afraid to come, because now I fear I must meet a dining room full of strangers.”

“That’s understandable, but there will be only three others, and they will not remain strangers for long. Certainly Betty Bourne and her son, Frank, are quite warm. The boarder, Mr. Uriah Grimstead, is a bit strange, but is harmless. Besides, did you not deliver a lamb yesterday?”

“Yes. A boy took it from me.”

“That was Frank Bourne, Betty’s son. I’m sure you and he will like each other.” We entered the house and proceeded directly to the dining room. All were there.

“Mrs. Betty Bourne, Master Frank Bourne, and Mr. Uriah Grimstead, permit me to introduce you to Mr. Simon Shepherd, formerly of the 4th Queen’s Own Hussars.”

Grimstead: “Pleased to meet you, I’m sure.”

Frank: “Good afternoon, sir.”

Simon: “Thank you for having me, Mrs. Bourne.”

“Please call me Betty. All is in readiness. Now, Simon, seat yourself and we’ll begin.”

Betty uncovered a tureen and dished up bowls of soup for everyone.

“What is it, mum?”

“A bisque, Frank, made from lobsters and shrimp. Now, eat your soup and I’ll bring forth the joint.” Betty left the room and returned with a rolling cart. She set the dishes on the table. I saw roasted potatoes, turnips, parsnips, pease porridge, and Yorkshire pudding.

“Now, here’s the leg of lamb, provided by Simon. I’ll slice and spare you the trouble. There. Now fill your plates.” She laid a platter of lamb slices before us. In a few moments, we had served ourselves.

“Now I’ll give you the Selkirk grace, courtesy of Robbie Burns:

Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
Sae let the Lord be thankit.”

We began to eat. “Betty, this is all beautifully done!”

“It’s good, mum.”

“It’s very nice, to be sure.”

“It’s wonderful, Mrs. Bourne.”

“I thank you. Oh, be sure to take some redcurrant jelly for the lamb.”

I must say, Betty had exceeded herself. We were all quite occupied with eating. Simon ate with relish, and I suspected the meal was a pleasant contrast to his one-dish suppers. During the eating, we four exchanged only minor pleasantries.

“Now, my guests, here’s the teapot. And for dessert we have something special.” She set before us a lovely baked dish, with cherries and a custard-like appearance. “To be quite precise, this is a *clafoutis*, but I like to call it a Welsh tart.”

Now, we were quite settled, with tea and dessert. Young Frank was the first to speak.

“I’m going to be a soldier, Mr. Shepherd.”

Betty said, “Frank, don’t bother Mr. Shepherd with your soldier ambitions.”

“Oh, that’s quite all right. As Mrs. Goodman, er Patricia, no doubt has told you, I’ve spent a little time soldiering.”

“Yes. Mum says you were in the charge of the Light Brigade.”

“And lived to be here today. That was my major accomplishment in the war, young fellow.”

“Was that the goal, sir?”

“Yes. You do not want to die for your country. Your job is to make the other fellow die for *his* country.”

Pause. “Oh, I see.”

“Anyway, do not worry. You *will* be a soldier. You will not die, and you’ll be a hero to boot.”

“Simon, you shouldn’t encourage him!”

“Ah, but it’s true, Mrs. Bourne, I mean Betty. Frank will join B Company of the 2nd Regiment of the 24th Foot. After four years, he’ll become Colour Sergeant, and the youngest non-commissioned officer of that rank in the entire British Army.”

“Why, that’s better-most, Mr. Shepherd!”

“The penalty you’ll pay is that you’ll have the nickname ‘The Kid.’”

“How do I become a hero?”

“Nothing to it, boy. On January 22nd, 1879, you and 150 fellow soldiers will merely have to defend the garrison at Rorke’s Drift against 4,000 Zulu warriors.”

Frank was silent. Then he spoke slowly. “I don’t think I care for the odds, sir. Where is Rorke’s Drift?”

“In the Zulu Kingdom, near Isandlwana. Best you study your geography. Anyway, the conflict will be called the Anglo-Zulu War.”

“Crikey, Mr. Shepherd. Do I get a VC?”

“No, Frank, no Victoria Cross for you. You’ll be awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. And that’s the second highest medal. There will be eleven Victoria Crosses and four Distinguished Conduct Medals handed out.”

“Are you a sorcerer, Mr. Shepherd? It’s scary.”

“No, Frank. I just have unusual dreams, and I share them with very few people”

“You’re like Joseph in the Bible, with his coat of many colors.”

“Well, I’m hardly as highly placed as Joseph, although he started off tending flocks, just as I do. I don’t mean to reveal too much, but perhaps you’ll soon forget this speech. So I will say that by 1918, you will be given the honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. You’ll live until 1945, and be the last survivor of the Rorke’s Drift battle.”

Uriah Grimstead was silent during this exercise. He merely consumed his cherry tart and sipped his tea. I wondered if he feared jumping in. Who knows what truths might emerge about the mysterious poet? Yet he ventured a question.

“That is fascinating, to be sure. What do you see for me?”

“Ah, Mr. Grimstead, you will have trouble. But, as it often goes, I do not see what it might be. Trouble is always unclear. But in the meantime, you will remain quite fit, and continue to write poetry.”

Apparently satisfied, Mr. Grimstead returned to his tart.

“Now, if you insist upon making me a sorcerer, I will say that Betty Bourne will remarry. But who? Another Scotsman, I suppose.”

“Mr. Shepherd, I have no plans to go to Scotland, and I expect no visitors from there, either.”

“Then, my good woman, do not look to Scotland. I believe an American named Bairn or Burns will find you. I cannot account for why these names have entered my head. And whether the man is worthy of you, I cannot say.”

“Very well, but what about our Patricia here?”

“At the moment, Mrs. Bourne, that is unclear. I see a marriage, but I see nothing else. For an attractive widow, that is not much of a prediction.”

“Simon, you may be right in all things or may be wrong in all things. No matter what, I’ll send you home with a basket of food. I hope you enjoy it.” Dinner concluded. We said our goodbyes all around. I walked Simon down to the street.

“What about those boys, Simon? I’m sure they vex you.”

“Well, although I have no memories of my childhood, I surmise that I was once a bit like them. Next time, Patricia, I have a plan. So do not worry. Due to you—your words and your actions—I have confidence in the future.”

With that in mind, we said goodbye. As Simon walked down Oak Lane, I reflected that his poise was increasing at a mighty rate. I returned to my rooms.

Rather exhausted by the full week, I must report that I did very little. I read a bit, and then later fell into bed for a well-earned sleep.