The GLOW of the BIBLES

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SYNOPSIS.

Richard Lightnut, an American with an affected English accent, receives a present from a friend in China. The present proves to be a pair of pajamas. A letter hints of surprise to the wearer. Lightnut dons the pajamas and late at night gets up for a smoke. His servant, Jenkins, comes in and, failing to recognize Lightnut, attempts to put him out. Thinks the servant crazy. Lightnut changes his clothes intending to summon help. When he reappears, Jenkins falls on his neck with joy, confirming Lightnut's belief that he is crazy. Jenkins tells Lightnut of the encounter he had with a hideous Chinaman dressed in pajamas. In a message from his friend, Jack Billings, Lightnut is asked to put up "the kid" for the night on his way home from college. Later Lightnut finds a beautiful girl in black pajamas in his room. Lightnut is shocked by the girl's drinking, smoking and slangy talk. She tells him her name is Francis and puzzles him with a story of her love for her sister's room-mate, named Frances. Next morning the girl is missing and Lightnut hurries to the boat to see her off. He is accosted by a husky college boy, who calls him "Dicky." but he does not see the girl. Jack Billings calls to spend the night with Lightnut. They discover priceless rubies hidden in the buttons of the pajamas. Billings dons the pajamas and retires. Lightnut later discovers in his apartment a beefy person in mutton-chop whiskers and wearing pajamas. Jenkins calls the police, who declare the intruder to be a criminal, called "Foxy Grandpa." The intruder declares he is Lightnut's guest and appeals to the latter in vain. He is hustled off to jail. In the morning Lightnut is astonished to find Billings pajamas and more astonished when he gets a message from the latter, demanding his clothes. Lightnut, bound for Tarrytown, Billings' home, discovers "Frances," the girl of the pajamas, on the train. Lightnut speaks to her and alludes to the night before. She declares indignantly that Lightnut never saw her in black pajamas. At Tarrytown Frances is met by a husky college youth, who hails Lightnut as "Dicky." The latter ignores the boy, who then threatens to thrash him for offending Frances. Lightnut takes the next train home. Billings storms over the outrage of his arrest. He and Lightnut discover mysterious Chinese characters on the pajamas. Professor Doozenberry is called in to interpret the hieroglyphics. He reports over what he calls the lost silk of Ji-Ling-Chi. The writing declares that a person wearing the pajamas will take on the semblance of the previous wearer. The professor borrows the pajamas for experiment. "Billings" dressed in pajamas is found in the professor's room and is taken home in an automobile with Frances and a woman Lightnut calls "the frump." Lightnut is angered by "the frump's" slanderous talk about "Francis." "Billings" is taken to his room. A servant tells Lightnut that a message has just been received stating that Billings was under arrest in New York for stealing a suit of black pajamas. Judge Billings astonishes Lightnut with a tale of Francis' escapades. Lightnut asks permission to speak to "Frances."

CHAPTER XXIII. (Continued.)

Wasn't sure, you know, but somehow it seemed to me a rum thing to say—almost offensive, dash it! But then, for that matter, everything was rum of late—so that counted for nothing. Fact was, it just seemed to me like there was something in the air—everybody seemed so queer—well, jolly muddled, I should call it! Idea had been gradually coming to me that I was the only one who appeared to have any clear understanding of things; and somehow the realization just made me devilish nervous—the responsibility, don't you know!

And just then the judge looked suddenly at his watch, muttered something, and hitched up to the table strewn with papers. He bent over these with a frown, coughed oddly, glanced at me—and bent again with a mutter. Of course, I saw he was annoyed over sudden consciousness of the break he had made, and was striving to cover his embarrassment.

And, by Jove, it seemed to me he ought to feel embarrassed, for the very rummest thing yet was this crazy infatuation for this infernal chauffeur. It was pitiful—oh, disgusting, if you ask me—and the more so because it was something she did not share. I knew she didn't, you know! No, it was plain enough, dash it, that between her father and this mucker of a chauffeur, my poor darling was being crowded to the wall—its-name. This was what she had meant—had hinted at—and, by Jove, I was ready to wager anything on it; eager to put up all I was worth, you know!

Didn't know, dash it, how much I was worth. Went down in Wall street one day and asked old Morley, my man of affairs, but forgot what he said. Never could remember afterward whether it was one million or ten and always hated to ask again.

Truth was he had stared at me so and seemed so oddly surprised, I just worked off some jolly apologetic rubbish and got out. Pugsley thought I must have violated some rotten, silly law of commercial ethics—that sort of thing, you know; declared that his attorney had had the dashed impertinence once to ask him about some investments, so he got another man and gave him a power of what's-its-name. Never was bothered now, he said, by checks or reports or any boring distractions of that sort, this man just kept him supplied with money, and come in a while he scrawled his name.

"Hm!" coughed the judge. "Er—h'm!" And I stopped snapping the cover of my cigarette case, thinking he was about to say something, but he did not look up. By Jove, how I wished that he were really busy, so I might slip out without danger of offending him! But I was afraid to chance it—did so want to rub him right, don't you know, on account of Frances. Know he was still feeling a bit plucked over his slip of the tongue—showed plainly he was bothered, you know; you could tell by his puckered brows and the way he kept clearing his throat. So meantime, knowing that the best thing was to appear unconscious—just give him time, you know—I fell carelessly to jingling some coins in my pocket and tapping my foot upon the hardwood, as I hummed a devilish neat little air from La Juive that I almost knew by heart:

"Qu'il, l'apprenne de vous?
Helas, je vous implore, benissez mon epoux—"

By Jove, I had just got that far, when he shook his head with a kind of snort, threw down his pen, and got to his feet, facing me with a sickly smile.

"I am going to ask you to excuse me, my dear Lightnut"—came right out frankly like that, you know! "But the fact is—" he opened and shut his watch—nervously, you know—"I have just received news—"

But I stopped him—couldn't let him go on, of course: "Oh, I say, you know! Not another word, my dear judge—don't care a jolly hang, dash it! And to show him, I smiled, got out a cigarette, and perched kind of sidewise on the edge of the table. "I'm not a bit sensitive, don't you know!"

He stared. "Indeed, no—I see you are not!" he said warmly.

I drew a light a bit airily. "Of course," I puffed, "what you are thinking of is your servant, but I"—I shot him a light wink—"I've got to think a little about my own affair, don't you—"

"Lightnut!" He caught me by the arms, his face reddened almost black. "My dear boy, ten thousand pardons! I assure you—"

"That's just all right, judge," I reassured him soothingly. "All I am holding out for is just to be sure we understand each other about Frances—that I may be sure I have your authority—"

"So that's it!" He relaxed with a deep breath. Then quietly: "My dear boy, you make me ashamed of myself—I was rude!" And he shook my hand. "Yes, indeed—you just go right ahead; almost anything is preferable to the vicious life Francis is leading—anything!" He sighed and his voice dropped confidentially: "I'm afraid even you would be discouraged if I told you of one or two disgraceful episodes at Cambridge—I know Scoggins would bet!"

Scoggins again—always Scoggins! Dash Scoggins! Of course he would be discouraged, but I should not. Devilish simple reason, you know—wouldn't believe it, by Jove!

"Yes, I learned all about it from my daughter when she came home," he proceeded gloomily; "she feels that in a measure it has marred Miss Kirkland's visit with her."

Miss Kirkland! I recalled now that that was the name of the girl from China. By Jove, I preferred to think of her as the frump!

"For Miss Kirkland heard the gossip at Cambridge—seems she has friends there among the residents; and they were kind enough to tell her of these things of the year before as soon as they noticed how devoted Francis was to her. At least this is what my daughter suspects—Miss Kirkland is not the kind to talk, you know."

Oh, wasn't she! By Jove, I wondered what he would think if he had heard our conversation in the hall! But it wasn't for me to tell him he was warming a what-its-name to his bosom, so I just mumbled a reply