The Isle of Lies

by M. P. Shiel

Free public domain classic — Noveliopdf

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The isle of lies

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The isle of lies

Author: M. P. Shiel

Release date: December 17, 2025 [eBook #77484]

Language: English

Original publication: London: T. Werner Laurie, 1908

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/77484

Credits: Tim Lindell, Les Galloway and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at https://www.pgdp.net (This book was produced from images made available by the HathiTrust Digital Library.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ISLE OF LIES ***

Transcriber’s Notes

Obvious typographical errors have been silently corrected. Variations in hyphenation have been standardised where appropriate but all other spelling and punctuation remains unchanged.

THE ISLE OF LIES

NEW NOVELS

Betty Brent, Typist.

By “Rita.”

Red Love.

By the Author of “The Wild Widow.”

The Soul of Crœsus.

By Gerald Villiers-Stuart.

A Gentleman from Portland.

By Ranger Gull.

The Methods of Mr. Ames.

By the Author of “The Adventures of John Johns.”

A Laughing Matter.

By Shan F. Bullock.

The Loser Pays. A Story of the French Revolution.

By Mary Openshaw.

The Silent Ones.

By Mary Gaunt and J. Ridgwell Essex.

The Adventures of Louis Blake.

By Louis Becke.

Side Stepping with Shorty.

By Sewell Ford. Author of “Shorty McCabe.” Illustrated.

The Wild Widow.

By Gertie de S. Wentworth-James.

Cousins and Others.

By Katharine Tynan.

Lil of the Slums.

By Dick Donovan.

THE ISLE OF LIES

BY

M. P. SHIEL

Author of “The White Wedding” “The Last Miracle”

“The sounding again of the mountains.”—Ezekiel.

Published at Clifford’s Inn, London By T. WERNER LAURIE

CONTENTS

THE ISLE OF LIES

CHAPTER I. THE STELE.

Perhaps one’s happiest manner to begin the history of the remarkable boy whose moral we have to point is to give, as we can, that part of Professor S. S. Reid’s diary which has to do with the matter. The professor writes:

I have this morning the tidings that a son is born to Dr. Lepsius, and as the fact may possibly come to prove momentous in the history of experiment, I am about now to jot down just what I was in the way to know of the story.

In the dog-days of ’68, close on two years gone now, our bout-at-arms with Theodore III. of Abyssinia came to a close with the capture of Magdala by Napier: and the victory was still in everyone’s mouth, when Lepsius one afternoon strolls

into my study to notify me that the British Government was about to send out a mission to that country, and that he, Lepsius, was to accompany it in some rôle or other. I was quite surprised, in spite of my familiarity with the manifold activities of this man.

“You going to Abyssinia?” I exclaimed.

“I am,” says he.

“But what for?” I asked.

“There are the Jurassic limestones for one thing,” he answered, “and you surely know that some more or less valuable MSS., especially Bible MSS., already derive from Abyssinia.”

He then proceeded to tell me that in the rage of the Mohammedan invasion of that region in the sixteenth century, the Abyssinians heaped most of their Ethiopian and other manuscripts into a certain museum on Debra-Seena (an island of Lake Sana), where they remain guarded by clerics, who regard them as idol relics. “Abyssinia, then,” said he, “might not be a bad four-months’ abode for a bloke like me; at all events, I am off.”

And off, in some weeks, Lepsius was.... Never let it be said that the doctor was any shade of a scatter-brains! for in my lifetime never did I meet so essential a sage; all the same, I do admit that to some of the heats of Lepsius the word “flighty” has been applied with some meaning, he was ever so fevered, seeming always to keep vastly too many irons in the fire—“Jack of all trades!” I don’t say master of none. The man was tinged with both physics and biology like a Janus-head, was an educationist and an Egyptologist, all in the ardour of the same day. Modern learning—he made that his domain. Of course, his thumping fortune had much to do with such a mental posture and manner of life, for, like the free-lance that he ever was, his relation with the mill of science was mainly honorary. I never met him steaming along the streets, mopping his pink brow, but he was eager to drag me to the meeting-of-council of

some society, or to drop at my ear some spanking scientific tidings. Old Lepsius! I fancy that I behold him anew, not a beauty assuredly, with his shortish form, bold nose, and thin lips, his burning straight hair brushed back flat from the forehead, and curled up a bit at the nape! At the time when he started for Abyssinia he was a man of perhaps forty-five, of established fame in the western world, and a hardened old bachelor—I almost said old maid!

What surprises me is that a man like Lepsius, a tender wight at bottom surely, should have let himself become the excuse for bloodshed during this exuberance of his, and should have been led into committing an act which the common man might well consider wonderfully like pilfering—at the spur of a whim! Learning, may be, has a claim to make its own code of morals, but I am convinced that in, say, Madrid, Lepsius would have shrunk with dismay from doing what in that savage country he did with the coolest self-assurance.

The mission reached the town of Gondar at the end of August—a world of mountains now, after a camel-journey of some weeks across the lowlands from Somaliland. By September, Dr. Lepsius had won sufficient favour for his purposes with the viceroy, or ras, and, with his usual rashness, ventured out with only one Choan servant on an ass for Lake Sana, twenty miles south, to examine the MSS., etc.

It appears that in these regions the rainy season is from June to the tail-end of September, so that now it was pouring without pity. However, one forenoon Lepsius comes to the lake, and is rowed, as he related it to me, in a buffalo-hide boat to one of the islets.

On this island was a kind of double monastery, half occupied by sisters, and half by brothers, to which latter Lepsius had a letter of introduction given him by the abuna (or father) of Gondar, the head of the Christian-Coptic Church of Abyssinia; but the scientist’s welcome at the monastery was hardly hearty, since, having landed on the

island, he had to hang about a whole hour without beholding his hosts. This, however, as it turned out, was owing to no cursedness of the monks, since it appears that, the prior of the monastery having recently died, the monks were even then intent upon the rite of electing his successor. This once over, Lepsius was fairly well received, and soon thereupon was rowed through the rain to the library by two of the monks: those monks, he told me, being dark-skinned carles with crinkled hair all in plaits, and the library being a kind of mosque on another island half a mile from the monastery-island.

Here, then, on this second island, Lepsius abode most of the day, ferreting and feasting his curiosity. Onwards from the sixth century of our era Abyssinia, he has told me, was a bold and expansive power, having dealings with India, with Ceylon, with the Greek Empire, and overflowing by far the greater part of Arabia: so that this mosque place was crammed with all the gimcrackery and dust of the ages—scriptures, urns, relics, cartouches, taliput-books, mostly modern and of small importance, but still of interest; and the only thing which badgered Lepsius' peace of mind at being turned loose into these pastures was the continual presence of the two monks who had rowed him over, seeing that they did not leave his side a moment. One of them, he says, was a particularly swagger chap who carried over his cotton garment two falchions in scarlet-morocco scabbards, and his aspect appears to have smacked nastily of the fact that in Abyssinia the Church is burningly militant. Ever and anon he would grumble something to his mate in Amharic—a kind of Arabic lingo with which Lepsius was pretty well acquainted, though his ear lacked ease in striking quite what was said.

Toward sunset he went down some steps to an underground corridor into which a series of grilles and doors opened, having in his brisk fashion already made a survey of the treasures above, and wishing to run over those below while there was still some twilight. Midway in the corridor, at a moment when, as it happened, the two monks were whispering together, he noticed a half-open grille, and passed in,

whereat the grimmer of the two fellows stepped sharply up and tapped him on the shoulder, saying, “Not in there!” But Lepsius was already in, and making out that he didn’t understand, took another step, and looked about him.

Three sides of this apartment were piled with papyri and many book-like objects dark with dust, together with pictures of saints all painted full-face, whatever the posture of the body, and with idols, weapons, beads, and other suchlike gems and curios. One wall of it, however, was almost bare, and there, in the centre of that wall, hung a little basalt stele, about as thick as one’s wrist, and about six inches long; it had a copper cap with an old hole in it, through which passed the banyan string with which it was hung up. Lepsius could see that it was covered with a singular enough mixture of hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic figures; and his curiosity seems to have been at once fired to a high degree by this sight, especially when he saw marked on the wall over the stele in the Geez jargon the curious runes, “Riches of Jerusalem.”

Meantime, while peering at the little stele, Lepsius with half an eye had observed on the floor, immediately under the stele, a coffin only half covered by its lid, so that he could spy the body of a very old man who looked lost within it—the coffin was so large, and the corpse so small—and at the coffin’s foot sat on the floor a gigantic Galla, armed to the teeth, his shield garnished with human hair, these Gallas being, in fact, the blackest and most malignant of the Abyssinian clans.

“Well,” Lepsius said, “may I look about?” addressing himself to the milder of the two monks. The answer was, “No, it is the prior’s room.”

“And who is the dead man?” Lepsius asked.

“The prior,” was the answer.

“Who died yesterday?”

“Yes.”

“He died here, then?”

“Yes, in this chamber, where he mainly passed his time.”

“Why did he pass his time here?” Lepsius wished to know.

“Because,” was the answer, “he wanted to contemplate the sacred stele. For fifty years he was poring upon it, and dropped dead before it.”

“Oho,” says Lepsius, “and what is the history of the stele, my friend?”

“It fell from heaven,” replied the monk; “the prior found it here when he was a very young monk, and hung it there under that picture of the Virgin, who was looking when he found it.”

“Oho,” says Lepsius, “but can’t I approach a little and examine it?” The answer was, “No, the irreligious could not approach it.”

But the irreligious had approached it. Lepsius could already make out two or three of the phrases, could tell that it was mainly an imitation of the hieratic of the nineteenth dynasty, mixed with some intentionally secret writing; and, as he stared at it, he mumbled on absently, saying, “Oho, one can see, one can see, its date; and what is the meaning of those marks on it, then?”

“No one knows,” was the answer.

“And yet you write over it, ‘Riches of Jerusalem’?”

“Yes, for the prior discovered this much, that it tells of the riches of the City of God.”

“He was a learned man, I see.”

“We shall not have another like him! a learned and a saintly man. He made the stele the study of his life, and mined out much of its meaning, for which reason it is to be buried with him.”

“Buried with him?” cries Lepsius.

“Yes, by his own instructions.”

“And when?”

“To-night.”

“Ah! At what hour?”

“At eleven.”

“And where?”

“In the monastery.”

But at this the more truculent of the two monks stepped offensively before Lepsius, blocking his view. The Galla warrior, too, who kept guard over the corpse was eyeing him disagreeably, so Lepsius moved off, and after sauntering through another room or two, started off for the monastery-island, to be at once afresh drenched through by the rain. Darkness had suddenly come.

As he now passed up the steps towards the monastery, he made minute note of everything: a number of boats lay close about the landing-place, with some monks baling them out; from a chapel some way off he was aware of the chaunted vesper-psalm of the nuns.

After a repast with the new prior, a portly man of middle age, he was conducted for the night to his chamber, where for a while he waited, sitting on a bed made of rushes mixed with raw cotton; but at ten o’clock he got up and stole through his door. Lepsius by this time had fully informed himself of the minutiæ of the dead prior’s funeral, and had resolved to pilfer the little stele.

I think that I never knew quite so insolently plucky a nut as this of Lepsius. His impetuosity is extreme, and his tenacity is extreme; so that whatever happens at any time to fascinate his mind fascinates it in a quite unbalanced manner, to the banning of every other concern in the world. When this blessed stele had once seized upon his fancy as a thing likely to prove a scientific find, his subsequent action was so very in character, that I shouldn’t wonder if he went stealing the thing, about to be buried and lost as it was, with an overweening sense of propriety, and perhaps, in setting about it, whispered to himself the word “Science,” or perhaps only the word

“Lepsius”: I don’t know.

But no man surely ever rushed into a job bristling with dangers more horrid, for he was alone among all those martial fanatics, and, save for a razor and a penknife, if I am right, quite unarmed.

He crept out of his room into a corridor and down some steps, there being no light apparently in that part of the building, though the place was full of the sounds of busy footfalls and people passing about with lime-torches; and when one of these approached him at a rapid walk, Lepsius had to snatch himself into a kind of carrel, only to find a monk praying in it in the dark, who, at the sound of his entrance, looked round and addressed him: Lepsius droned some mutter in Amharic, and slipped out into an alcove opposite.

He knew very well that he had only to be noticed prowling about in this way to set the whole place in a hullabaloo, and no doubt bring on his instant death; but the floors, covered with cocoanut-fibre, facilitated his flights and escapes, and he contrived to run the blockade to the landing-place. There his ears were aware of a priest baling rain-water from the boat meant to bring over the body of the prior, but so deep was the darkness of the night, that nothing could be seen a yard beyond one’s eyes. With elaborate stealths Lepsius stepped down into a boat almost swamped with rain-water, put out the oar, and paddled off for the library-island.

His hope, derived from certain answers already given to his inquiries, was that the corpse might by this time be less closely guarded, that he might thus perchance be able to stretch a clandestine arm to the stele, and then, hastening back with it, steal into his chamber. But when with bare feet he had got down into the underground corridor of the stele and corpse, and had peeped into the prior’s room, there still lingered, brooding, the armed Galla. Lepsius was the last man alive to be baffled! He simply said to himself, “Well, the other way, then,” went up afresh, towed his boat away from the landing-stage, sat down on a rock, and waited, his ear cocked to

hear a sound through the showering of the rain.

Presently over the surface of the lake appeared three throngs of lights approaching—torches made of lime-wood saturated in spirits, borne by the priests; and amid the splash of their oars there floated forth the burden of a Coptic dirge. One by one, however, these torches were seen to cower out, quenched by the shower, and by the time the boats had reached the library-island where Lepsius lurked, not one remained burning. Upon this Lepsius had counted.

The monks landed and entered the mosque.

After some twenty minutes they returned to the quay with rekindled torches, carrying the coffin: and though the largest of the boats was a craft as big as a Red Sea lugger, so overgrown was the size of the coffin, that they were obliged to lay it crosswise over the gunwales aft. Lepsius, himself unseen, could, by means of the flickering torch-lights, see all. He stole along the shore closer to the landing-stage. The placing of the coffin was a longish task; and out into darkness, one by one, cowered the lights, so that no more than two remained burning when the first of the boats pushed off, and the dirge was afresh lifted; and when at last all the boats were abroad on the water, the priests intoned in a complete darkness. Lepsius was then hanging to the transom of the boat which bore the coffin, she towing his length in her track.

He knew that in the monastery a rite had yet to be performed over the prior; he had been told that the corpse would then be exposed for the last time to the looks of the assembled fathers; he was certain, then, that the lid was not so far fastened to the coffin. All he had to do was to lift his weight up on the transom, raise the lid, whip the little stele from the dead bosom, where he had been told that it would be, and bolt with it into the building, to his bed. They couldn’t see him; the chaunting should drown any chance sound which he might make: and he felt secure, save for one vital fact—he could not swim; he would have to hang on to the boat till it came to the

monastery landing-place before he could attempt to make his escape.

Midway across, judging the moment come, he raised himself cautiously up; one stiff arm held up his weight on the transom, while with the other hand he groped, grasped the lid, tried to lift it. Lid wouldn't stir: it was fastened.

Another man might now, perhaps, have renounced the attempt, not knowing what string next to pull; it was in just such a plight that Lepsius was likely to show fight.

The man's a born theorist: would never dream of abandoning a conclusion based upon reasoning, because, perhaps, appearances should happen to combat it; and he had already reasoned that the lid was unnailed. He raised himself still further, felt with his hand over the surface of the lid, and was soon reassured, seeing that the priests, in order to keep the two pieces together during the passage, had tied two cords of banyan-twine bodily about lid and coffin; finding which, Lepsius dived into his pocket, took out a penknife, and cut the cords, deeming that the monks, when they saw the cords cut, the stele gone, would set it all down to a miracle of God. By this time the boats had floated the funeral-hymn pretty close up to the monks' home.

Lepsius could now easily insert his fingers between lid and coffin, and, on doing so, found what he had opined, that the stele had been slung round the dead neck by its string; so, manœuvring with the fingers of his left hand, he managed to urge and win this string upward from under the dead head: and he had begun to draw forth string and stele, his fingers being still within the coffin, when the poor man's stiff right arm, weary of his weight, gave way under him with a shock, whereat he, in an involuntary movement to check his fall, caught the coffin-rim. It was a disastrous business: the blessed coffin tilted, and slid with a sideward dive into the water, while Lepsius, having clean lost his hold, found himself adrown in the deep, as an outcry arose among the crowd of monks.

Lepsius splashed about, catching at the vacant air; but even in the very plight and fix of his death his reasoning mind was not drowned. He judged that he must now be

very near the monastery, so that if he could find even a minute's support in the water, he might by such means manage some way to come at safety; but the boats had forged on well away beyond him, and there was no making out anything in that thickness of blackness. There was, however, one hope—the coffin: for, though he could not see, he knew perfectly the course of its sideward dive, and it was assuredly only the coffin, or the coffin-lid, which, if he was to find salvation, could save him. He quite well knew the science of swimming, though no master of the art: so, taking care to keep his lips closed, he made a few strokes, sinking and rising indeed, but moving, and his strokes proved in the duly right course, for very soon now he found himself on the coffin-lid, the little basalt stele hanging still to his forefinger by its string.

Still awash and struggling, he began to urge the board toward the shore. The hubbub of monkish tongues had now come to land, while a number of them had rushed out of the monastery, all carrying torches, with outcries, so that the landing-stage was now in a nice state of commotion. Lepsius, in the gloomy deep, steered his struggles in a changed direction, making for another spot of the shore, though he does not seem to have known what he was to do when he got there; but his feet touched bottom in a minute, and at the same time he entered the region of the off-shine of the lights, which showed up his white visage, whereat at once a perfect hullabaloo of howls broke out from the priests, and they all dashed forward to catch him, foremost among them being the fierce monk of the day-time, with his sword flashing, and the new prior, and the huge black fellow.

Lepsius scrambled up some rocks, and started slantways away from the throng of lights toward a wing of the building; and as the priests appear to have had no firearms, it became an affair of darting, Lepsius being a fairly nimble fellow, though, I fancy, without any wind to speak of, and already very weary. However, he reached the monastery-wall, and hastening along it, happened upon a small doorway, into which he darted, slammed the door, and was away anew through

darkness; whereat the monks ran round to the front, and scattering there, rushed with rekindled torches in all directions through the monastery, scouring it for the fugitive.

Well, a scene of sufficient wildness seems to have ensued. Lepsius, divining that the monks would leave the door which he had slammed in their faces to fly to the front, ran back to the door; but his slam had locked, he could not open, it. So back afresh he turned, ran to the bottom of the corridor in which he found himself, and now heard the sound of the onrush of many runners. Happily, it was no longer a question of legs and lungs alone, but of eager, quick wit as well, and here Lepsius was in his element. He saw that he could only rescue himself by hiding, and that he could only hide by continual wise movement. On hieing thievishly up some steps he heard more pelting feet behind him, but he had the advantage of being in shadow, while his hunters were well lit up, and away he went again, choosing his way with good instinct; only, the priests had split up into such an intricacy of pickets, that he should have possessed six sets of wits to elude them. Still, he did for no little while elude them, guided not only by their lights, but by the sounds of the groups, their faint footsteps and outcries: till on a sudden one of those aids was cut off—that of sound—when out roared the abbey-bells, drowning everything else. Just afterwards, he was running down a corridor when behind him he saw coming a bunch of torches; there was no harking back this time; so, hoping to hit upon some door or side-passage somewhere ahead, forward he sped, his wind about done for now, and his wits all bewildered and badgered by the loud bedlam and brabblement of the bells throughout the building. At the corridor's end his course was stopped by a wall with what he took to be a door in it, and a cocoanut tapestry hung before it; there was no side-passage anywhere; the door was fixed, and his hand, feeling behind the tapestry, could find no handle; the throng of torches, too, were now trooping down the corridor towards him, and he thought himself dished and taken. However, he found by touch that the door, too, as well as the tapestry, was of cocoanut-fibre, not a door at all, but a mass of matting fastened over an opening; and inasmuch as the

corridor was long, he had time to snatch his shaving-razor and slash a rent in the tough stuff, so that when the monks arrived at the spot they must have been astonished (if they had spied him) to find their man vanished. Lepsius says that he next hastened over a species of bridge or hanging gallery, at the end of which he hacked a hole in another door, got himself through that as well, and was away ardently again, no more caring whither, through darkness, when all at once he was in the very midst of a lot of people, of a flood of light, for he had pitched through the doorway of a chamber before ever he could check his flight. This chamber was full of beds, for which the people in it must have been making ready when the pealing of the bells had flurried them; they were all women, as Lepsius saw at once, all half-undressed, with their hair floating loose; the two door-mattings through which he had slashed his way were manifestly the doors which separated the monastery from the nunnery; and at the apparition of this white man among them, that multitude of women whooped out one unanimous yowl, which Lepsius tells me he is not going to forget. Out they rushed pell-mell, clutching their garments about them, he after them—with the grave consciousness meantime in his eye-corner of a big floor-bed on fire, for one of the calabash-lamps had been dashed to the floor in the out-rush, and how the whole show, built mostly of touch-wood, was not burnt to the deuce was, he asserts, a wonder. After a little Lepsius pulled up and listened: all was still—for the simple reason that the priests would not at once enter upon the part of the place sacred to the nuns, and presently coming to a staircase, he sped down, and soon found himself out in the open, unpursued. Running now round the rim of the islet in search of a boat, he heard all round about the shores a buzzing sound on the lake, the cause of which he was unable to imagine, and when, having found a boat, he paddled away, this sound swelled upon him, until he was all in the thick of it—a host of tongues hubbubooing, not in Amharic, but in Ethiopic; not monks, then, but chiefs, or dejamatshs, with their troops, who, at the call of the bells, had come to beset the islet with a cordon of boats; and Lepsius declares that he passed through

the thick of them, thanks to the darkness and the rain, by something of a miracle. After this the banks of the lake were not far off; and there, having made rapid paces for the deeps of a forest, and presently feeling himself safer, he dropped to the ground, giving out.

Toward morning, it being still pitch dark, the Englishmen at Gondar who composed the mission were startled by the bombardment of the place set apart for their abode: for the priests and natives, failing to find Lepsius, had posted northward to seek vengeance upon the mission; whereat the British, in danger of their lives, were obliged to barricade their doors and defend themselves; and before the intervention of the ras was able to reach the residence, three Abyssinians were shot, so that this matter of the basalt stele had something of a grim beginning.

Not till six days later did Lepsius succeed in coming up secretly with his comrades, after seeing the lion and the hyrax, and a score of escapades; and on the sixteenth morning they all started eastward and coastward under an escort of the ras. The terror of the anger of England was, of course, extreme at the moment in the mind of the Negus and his Court, or it might have gone ill with Lepsius and his companions. However, all's well that ends well; nothing graver than threats came about, and Lepsius, having his basalt stele, could afford, I suppose, to grin his grin.

CHAPTER II. MOLLY O'HARA.

Professor S. S. Reid's history thus continues:

Well, I saw old Lepsius very shortly after his return, when he showed me the little cylinder of basalt, and related to me for the first time, not the last, the details of his adventures. He was blithe and fit, if a bit bothered in mind about the three shot Abyssinians, and about the drowning of the aged prior's body, due to his rage of research.

"And how about the stele," said I to him; "have you made out the meaning?"

“I am going to,” was his answer.

“I suppose it is worth the pains?” said I.

“Reid,” says he, “it would be worth the pains, if all the Orientalists in the world applied their wits to nothing else than that one thing.”

“What makes you think that?” I asked.

“Well, but haven’t I already read part of the thing?” says he. “True, it is no cartouche of Darius, nor Rosetta-stone; its date can’t be earlier than the thirteenth century, and not only is it the oddest mix of Memphitic with hieroglyphs, but, what is really remarkable, this Coptic stone is the record of an Indian incident. Its comparative-philological value will hardly be high, perhaps, but I am convinced that, once deciphered, it will prove a priceless document from the historian’s point of view.”

Well, I wished him joy of his new toy, and we said adieu for that time.

Then for some few months I did not see much of Lepsius, nor, I imagine, did anyone else of his world, till his seclusion began to be remarked upon by one and another of the gossips. “Where was Lepsius, what was he pottering at at present, why the father of lies...?” and so on. On three or four of the occasions when I called upon him at his Hanover Square house, I found him looking far from so well and sprightly as usual, nor did the good fellow give himself the pains to hide from me that I was somewhat heavy upon him. I understood that he was in the grip of a fit of study—a certain grimness of his looks and gauntness of his face informed one of so much—and that in that same little stele lay the secret of this too great zeal. By this time the blessed stele had been reproduced and distributed among the savants everywhere, and it may be that a race was being run in its deciphering, I don’t know; but one thing was obvious, it made Lepsius lean many days, so that says Matthews to me, “serves him right for picking and steling, there’s some black spook in the basalt thing that’s paying him back, and making him its victim”; and, in truth, I never saw such a thing,

for one by one Lepsius threw every social, every scientific obligation to the winds to give himself day and night to this one object. Such, however, was the man: whatsoever his hands found to do, he did it with a fraction more than all his might or right. Then all at once I learned that he had fallen ill and had gone off to his castle in Galway, from which region, after some weeks, he once only wrote me a few words.

On a sudden one morning, say ten months after his coming back from Abyssinia, Lepsius presents his old phiz before me, looking as brisk and light as you like, with a smile on the thin lips. He had got back from Ireland only the day before, and, after some gossip, said I to him, “Come now, one can really see that we have laid bare at last the secret of our basalt stele.”

“Do I look like it?” he asked rather sorrowfully.

“So I thought,” said I.

“Just failed, sir! just failed!” sighs he, tossing up his hand.

“Tell me about it,” said I.

“That’s all I’ve got to say,” says he; “I’ve only just failed. The epigraph, as you know, consists of signs of very diverse dates, with a quite hierogrammatic vowelling, but Memphitic aspirations, and a jumble of true idiographs and true rebuses. Well, within five months I had deciphered it all—every syllable—save fifteen signs, making, I think, three words at the very finish, which are purposely ‘secret’; but, as it chances, those three are the important ones.”

“That’s hard luck, certainly,” said I; “but why, then, are these three of such particular importance?”

“You know,” said he, “that the stele is the record of an accumulation of riches heaped up somewhere by a host of Hindu princes during the period of the Mohammedan deluge—this where and when is exactly what remains dark. Fix place and date, and you have sextupled the value of your stele as a piece of history, quite apart from the pile of lucre in question, supposing it still to exist.”

“Well, that’s tantalising,” I said. “Of course, Thibaut has seen it?”

“You may bet,” was his answer. “Who hasn’t seen it? They have all seen it. But the fellows can’t make it out! I question if any one of them has read as much of it as I have. Reid, there’s not one single living man who can do it!”

“So much for stolen goods, then,” said I. “Still, you seemed to me a good deal more like your old self just as you came in, quite a youthful step and jaunty air, I thought! so I made sure....”

He laughed, saying, “Well, perhaps you are right, for I am relieved, and I have reason.”

“How do you mean?” I asked.

“Look you,” says he, “I am going to read every syllable of the writing on that stele.”

“You said just now that you couldn’t,” said I.

“I am going to, though,” says he, “for it can be done, if not by me, if not by any living man, still it can be done; and if I look relieved it is because I know the means of doing it, and because, two nights since, lying in my bed, I suddenly decided to use them.”

“Very good,” said I, swallowing my puzzlement; “and what are the means?”

“I am going, Reid,” says Lepsius, “to make a man who will read the secret.”

Quite at a loss to make out what the deuce he would be at, no doubt I smiled, for he added quickly, “No, don’t smile in that fashion, as if you hadn’t known me until to-day, since I assure you quite seriously that I can and will successfully accomplish this job.”

“The making of a man?” said I: “those are your words.”

“The making of a man,” says he, “who will not merely read the rebus, but do it without difficulty—without effort.”

“Quite so, Lepsius,” said I, “for though you choose to express yourself in terms of x,

I am quite sure that in due course some explanation will be offered by you of the matter which you meditate, and of your meaning when you speak of ‘making a man’ to read this stele.”

“Lord,” exclaims Lepsius, “what a speech! How sweet the smile, but how icy the meaning! as if I were some rash, fantastic talker. No! at present I haven’t the time to go into prolonged explanations, moreover doubting Thomas ought to be tortured; but in about four days I shall probably lay my plan fully before you, when I shall have seen the initial stages of it well under way: and meanwhile, I invite you to take part with me in watching the accomplishment of these stages.”

“Where?” said I.

“You come,” said he.

“To the end of the world,” said I, “if you are serious and scientific.”

“I am quite serious and strictly scientific,” says he.

Well, I went with him. First we drove to his club in Piccadilly, where we took two seats at a window to look down upon the passers on the pavement beneath, as to whom Lepsius remarked that we might have to keep an eye on them for two, three, four hours, and—did I mind? “No, didn’t mind,” I replied, feebly chewing my foolish feeling. However, after half an hour of this watch, he changed his mind, said that that was hardly the proper place for his object, and suggested that we should drive to Westminster Bridge, if I would. I should, I said: so thither we drove, and there by the parapet of the bridge we stood, under the July blaze of the sun, two hours. I was at first simply amused by this open-air sentry of two venerable persons like ourselves, then I became a little vexed. However, I stuck to my task, while of the river of people that passed by every one stared at us two standing stupidly there, Lepsius speaking of everything except of what had brought us into this exhibition, mainly, I remember, of the necessity, by a law of probability, that every variety of human type should move past us within a number of time-units equal to the number

of type-varieties which exist in the city. At last, when it was close on two o'clock, he stopped suddenly in his talk, and pointed.

"There, I think," he says, "comes the right age, the right race, the right trade, the right body and being—the very lady."

It was a passing woman at whom he pointed, a woman of the lower orders, with black hair, black eyes, high cheek-bones, very cheaply dressed, but not unclean, long in the leg, lean and fit, some twenty-five years old. Her nose was not red, her teeth were regular. She was going, under a heap of soiled clothes, toward the Surrey side, and one could make quite sure that she was an Irish washerwoman.

Well, Lepsius stepped out and addressed the woman. She was startled! I heard her say, "Sure, then, it isn't me that has the time to be showing your worship around the town this day."

I remained waiting at the parapet, absolutely astonished, much amused, while Lepsius walked on with the woman, talking pressingly, quite a confab, one could see, taking place between them, he all suave insistence, the woman curtseying, till, presently turning, he beckons me to come. So I ran and overtook them, to find them already fast friends; and Lepsius effusively introduced me to "Miss Molly O'Hara."

This woman turned out to be the heartiest, best soul in the world, and in some half-hour we had won from her the whole simple history of one who was orphaned and friendless, save for a sister, a fruit-seller, who lived at Ballihooly. In the course of our discourse it was discovered that she had never visited the Tower, the Crown Jewels, nor the whispering-gallery at St. Paul's, so we soon got from her an engagement to meet us on the Bridge the next day, in order to go with us to inspect these glories. She showed us the slum and the house in Southwark in which she occupied a room, and we parted.

Well then, the next day, at one o'clock, behold Molly standing in holiday garb with her landlady for guardian, and the pair of professors before them with doffed hats,

like characters in an opera! We had lunch in a restaurant, and I spent a pestilent day in the "chamber of horrors" and other suchlike places, winding up with a play in the evening; after which, at about midnight, we sent our ladies home in a cab, and Lepsius, coming back to my house with me, disclosed to me that night the design that underlay his conduct during the last two days, so that we were still talking in my study when the dawn stole in. When I said to him that I had well earned his secret, and asked what in the world he meant to do with this Molly O'Hara, his answer was, "I mean to make her read my stele for me." "Quite so," said I, "but then, Lepsius, you persist in speaking to me in riddles." "I mean to marry her," says Lepsius.

I was so startled, I couldn't help crying out a "No!"

"And why not?" says the doctor coldly.

"Oh, Lepsius," I couldn't help saying, half laughing, and half shrinking with reproach, "this is ridiculous, this is absurd."

"Ridiculous enough, certainly," says he, "but very far from absurd. We differ there."

"But, Lepsius," said I.

"Pooh, man," says he, "don't be excessive; there's no law to prevent me taking a female to the altar, if I like, and, as to the particular lass in question, if it isn't the right of men like you and me to look at facts in their true light, where's the use of us? Molly O'Hara is a better human being than I, you may bet, with all my learning, sound from her top-knot to her toes; I don't doubt she will make a pretty fairish wife—and a most splendid mother."

"Well, I never was so astonished," I said.

"That," he answered, "is due to the fact that you have not yet acquired a scientific interest in my motive, for as soon as ever you have, your interest will quite quash your astonishment."

"Well, I am all ears," says I: "what is your motive?"

“You know, Reid,” was his answer, “that whatever else I may or may not be, I am by nature an educationist; the world calls me educationist, and with justice, if a lifetime’s work and warmth are worth ought; and you know, too, my notion that no son of Adam so far has ever been educated, or been half educated—that education is an affair of the future. Well, my thought, cherished for many years, and now brought to a head by this stele, is to turn out by certain quite sure modes of education, a man, or why not a woman? who shall be not so much a man as a kind of—god. The methods, however, have to be such, that I should not venture to employ them upon another man’s boy, nor, unless the child were in my absolute power from a very early age, would they be of any use. You now observe where my Molly comes nicely in: the first needful work for a man who would build a mansion or a fane is to make sure that his marble and beams are at least good.”

“I see,” said I: “given fair materials to start with, you undertake what you say.”

“Aye,” says he, “and without so much as the shadow of a doubt as to the result.”

“What an enterprise!” I cried. “But as to the means.”

“The means,” says he, “will be simple enough, being based purely upon the known fact that human beings are what their environment makes of them. We know that an English child, abandoned by its guardians in China, will grow up, hardly a mental Englishman, but a mental Chinaman: never by any effort will he be able to row like a Cambridge-man, or do business like a jobber; but he will, without effort, make finer porcelain than could be turned out by the life’s devotion of ten thousand Cambridge-men or jobbers; it is a question of environment, of the mental hue and house about you. Be sure that every brat born into ancient Athens was straightway an artist, and if children to-day were born into a world in which everybody as a matter of course played violins with perfect skill, then every average child would without conscious effort be a pretty perfect fiddle-player—and, indeed, is so in some regions of the Bas-Pyrennees. It is a question of environment.”

"Quite so," said I, "and, if you add heredity——"

"No," says he, "let one get on; what I am trying to tell you is that the faculties of a human child's mind and body can be made to stretch a hundred miles—almost indefinitely—I half said infinitely—according to the ideal, the standard and life-idea, that he finds about him; and I should doubt almost any limit which you chose to lay down to the possible activity, exactness, and acumen of the human mind and senses; we here are limited merely by habit, by the iron rod of mean ideals. Primitive man in his atmosphere of reindeer could run very like a deer; he had his hound's scent, could speed his spear with the sureness of a machine—and without toil, that's the point, without dreaming that he did anything astounding. A modern British child, abandoned in Africa to that same atmosphere and life-ideal, would also run like the devil, shoot like a machine, track like a dog; born into a world of gods or godlike beings, he, too, would in general be stretched into a god or godlike being; if he believed that everybody about him could read rebuses without effort, then he, too, would read them without effort. It is an affair of environment."

"Quite so," said I; "one has no difficulty in following you so far, for even monkeys that have lived long in an environment of men become manlike, and get to do many things; so, given your 'environment of gods,' your undertaking looks all in bloom. But where, then, do you mean to find this environment of gods? On the moon? In Venus?"

"Oh, as to that," says Lepsius, "surely that much is simplicity itself. The environment may be real or it may be merely imagined. A child placed in isolation may be made to believe in an environment, a world, which does not exist, and so long as he never comes into actual contact with the imperfect world, and has no suspicion that it is not a perfect one, you will have all the elements of success: his life-ideal and standard, his idea and atmosphere, will remain quite unaffected by the actual world round about him; and having been made to conceive man as a god, he

will not himself be vastly inferior to his conception."

"By George," I cried, "I see what you are at!... But, my friend, aren't you preparing a nice little shock for some poor devil of a child, supposing he ever does come into contact with his actual, as distinct from his fancied, environment?"

"May be," says Lepsius, with a shrug; "or may be the shock will be to the environment, not to the child—'so much the worse for the coo,' as old Stephenson said; but really, Reid, that's looking too far forward for me; the practical point for us is to make out the meaning of our stele.... Lord! it is broad day, I'm away."

Such is something of the gist of my talk with this radical mind that morning. I can't recall a hundredth part of his ratiocinations, but when he had finished I was convinced. I made him stay till with our own hands we had found and cooked some coffee on my tripod, whereupon the doctor went home.

As to the end of this business, I have already, under September 13th, 1869, recorded the doctor's marriage with Molly O'Hara in the church at Lambeth. As usual with him, Lepsius has given himself up heart and soul to the grip of his caprice, the married pair going off at once to his Galway castle, where, for the past twelvemonth, they have lived. Some months since I received tidings that Lepsius was in a fair way to be a parent, and that he had then leased the island of Shunter (one of the uninhabited islands of the Hebrides), which he was busily preparing at a crazy cost for the habitation of the child shortly to be born. Now this morning comes the joyful news that a boy was actually born about two weeks ago, and with it the gloomy news that our poor good Molly is no more. She died of milk-fever five days ago, and it had been better for the good woman not to have passed over Westminster Bridge just at that particular hour of that day twelve months ago. However, so it was to be. The fellow who is to read the famous stele is to be named Hannibal ... etc., etc.

CHAPTER III. THE ISLE OF LIES.

If what has so far been given by Professor Reid be read as a sort of prologue, nearly nineteen years may well be passed over in silence, till, patching artfully into one a number of letters of Dr. Lepsius to the professor, we watch what then befell. The doctor writes:

The bubble's burst then. We two, Shan Healy and I, have passed over to the island of Barra in the boat, this being the first time for over seven years that I have left the shores of Shunter; and at Barra we now are, my head bound in a handkerchief, aching, and this same fond Shan Healy looking as sad-hearted as a man handed over to be hanged. We really lack the grit for the moment to go to the mainland, or to take any course to get the matter looked into. But you, Reid, will do what you can at once. I am sure the police should be disposed to take an interest in it, if you can make them know the peril implied both to the public and to the poor fellow himself. And there can be no mistaking him! Middle-sized, swarthy, kind of dusky sallow, blackened over cheek, chin and lip by a bluish shade of hair which he would oftentimes shave twice a day—he's so mighty hairy; and by the smile you should know the beggar—that cruel smile which hardly departs from his lips, and those dark eyes, with a glance, Reid, just so wild and sharp, I assure you, as the glance of the rupicapra gazelle. For the rest, no jacket, rough shirt of bauge-like stuff—but where's the good? No police could ever get nigh him, I suppose. He's gone, perhaps he's drowned—he may be, I doubt it; but God knows. On the sands of the little bay at the north a lady's handkerchief has been found; can't tell how it or she came there.

My friend, it was just on his nineteenth birthday, the 21st of July, that, strange to say, it was to happen; the day which I had long determined in my own mind as that on which I should present him the little stele to read.

All was as usual the evening before; we ran the usual race. For the past two years, you know, his highest ambition in life has been to be able to beat me at running—I,

a poor old wreck of sixty-four years! I believe that this was his great dream and hope of glory. For four years an almost daily race has taken place, and Mr. Hannibal has once or twice come gallantly nigh victory, but has never won. Well, at 7.30 p.m. this eve of his birthday, down he bounds from his study, and stands in the castle courtyard, waiting for me to come, with the impulse, I dare say, to dart away pricking in his high health. The climate of these Outer Hebrides is a great deal too humid to be ideal; the ground is mostly of gneiss, too shallow for much culture, so drammach, with some barley, potatoes, and buckies, have formed the main part of our maintenance, apart from what provisions Shan Healy has brought over in the boat from Barra once every four months. But on this thin gruel my man has greatly thrived; is fully grown now, having the shoulders of a man, but a shape as limber as a Grace, sir, and about as supple as any greyhound pup.

Well then, aware that he is below waiting, I pull myself together now, put a bit of go into my gait and glance, and down I go to him; together we stand at the gate of our little home—alas, for the last time—my grey head reaching little higher than his shoulder, Reid, for the old spine bows a bit now, you know; and from the kitchen Shan Healy looks up to watch the race for the thousandth time, while away in the west the sun is going down all in a wild of clouds and glories, as often in this wet place. The sea is dead, just lapping the beach in a weary way; the sky grey, with a curlew or two skirling under it. It gives a little relief to live it over again....

There then, we stand, ready to renew the old, old trial of thews. You know that it has ever been my policy to speak as few words as possible to this creature, so now I only say to him, “Well, ready?”

“Ready, sir,” answers my man.

“Then one, two—Three!”

We are away, he to the left, I to the right, the goal of the race being a little flag-staff standing on the sands to the north of the island, two miles off, and so placed that the

boy going over the east shore, and I over the west, we should run about equally far, the castle, our starting-point, being right at the rim of a bluff of rock at the south of the island. A very few instants after we start, we are quite hidden from each other behind the saddle of the hill, which, being all hard rock just by there, makes hardly any record of the foot-prints of this part of the race. So now, no sooner has my man lost sight of me than I pull up, and pant, and wipe my old brow, and turn back, just in time to catch a glimpse of the flying heels of Asahel going thirteen to the dozen round a corner—a sight, Reid, fit to make soft the eyes of an artist at so much charm of form, and such a pelting puissance of swiftness. Well, I imagine that you have already heard the rest of the business, how I climb back at my leisure to the ridge of the hill, where Shan Healy makes me the wink which means that the mare is ready, and how I descend to the bush in which she is trained to await me without budging, and take her quietly in my hand to the entrance of the tunnel, where I mount and am away. You may be aware that what we call the tunnel is a sort of gut or gorge, which, half natural, and half due to my re-organisation of the features of the island during the fellow's first youth, was specially arranged for the purposes of this race. It runs pretty straight across the island, from south-west to north-east; is thick with peat-moss, so that hardly a sound of the mare's hoofs is to be made out in it, and is fairly shut in by bushes at both ends. So, having galloped straight across to the north-east end, I get off, give the mare her hint to go back to Shan Healy, dive sharply and quietly through the growth of leaves, and am off like the devil afoot for the goal, only some seventy feet distant, but still hidden from me behind a bluff of rock: and as my right hand claps the flag-staff, with the wild eyes of a hart Hannibal darts into view, to fling his flying impetus at the post—a good half-minute or so too late.

No change in the smile, but a shadow now in the eyes, and I know just how my man is meditating in his head, thinking in himself, "It is so, then, that 'Man' can run, and how far beneath Him must I be, when this old being, who is one of 'Man' can beat

me, a youth, can beat me always and completely at running and at all else": for it was never so much with me, I'm sure, that the fellow fought for victory as with "Man," those angels and giants inhabiting the sunset of whose existence he knew, whom eye of his had never viewed, at the idea of whom in their lurid rule over nature his soul swooned with self-disdain.

Darkness was beginning to fall rapidly, the winds to pipe up a bit, as he and I together strolled back homeward in silence all over the western shores, upon which the waters were just moving themselves to moan and spume. I willed it so always, for along the eastern shores, where I was believed to have passed, there was ever a certain absence of foot-prints! And Mr. Hannibal often seemed to have the knack of seeing in the dark.

Have I done well? Have I done right? Never did a question of that sort arise in my mind till within the twelve months gone, when I have had to ask myself, "Have I, who forgot nothing, forgotten one thing—one thing needful?" God Almighty forgive His faulty ones. I am an old man now, with the back bowing down, and a head of white hairs, meekly aware of my own weaknesses and achings....

You know, my friend, something of the kind of life that during eighteen years nearly has whiled itself away on that island of delusion: like the shadow of a vapour it is vanished now. Not without the sacrifice of my career did I tackle it, Reid: but because of the thousand eyes and the acrobat activities of mind by which alone it could be accomplished, the years have been so packed with interest, and have passed so far from unhappily, that though the task has too soon done for me, yet when I look back over them they look to me more like two years than like eighteen; and, if after all one's travail, one could only be certain that the work has been truly good, that one has not somewhere mishandled and bungled, then one could go to bed. Indeed, in some points, there need be no fear as to the meeds of my toils, for in his intellectual and physical features at least there breathes on the earth to-day (if he still

breathes!) the highest human feat, a peerless being, at whose feet all the peoples of this planet may very well kneel, and wail because of him, crying, “Here is what we might have been.”

But oh, the web of imposture to which this being owes his soul! He is the child of lies—and I am his father. At every moment of his life, from the age of four and before, the fellow has known my mould. Nothing was left undone, nothing for me was a bore, or more than I could afford. You know that his books alone cost me a sum of more than £14,000: for, owing to my purpose that his notions of the soul of “Man” should grow from his study of only the most glorious of human works, and owing to the fact that even those works as they stood would never do for those pure eyes, his whole library was formed solely of purged volumes, specially prepared for him, almost before he opened his eyes upon this world; and when he was old enough to study them, it was sown into his skull that only men made of very poor stuff ever wrote books. And so in everything; everywhere the same whip of deceit: the mass of principles, for instance, which we call mathematics, due to the shrewdness of fifty thinkers, adding and adding, each of them, to the achievements of the past, was for Hannibal, his books were so doctored, the discovery of a single ordinary wit, a certain “Peter Pitt,” who, as I had to give the lad to believe, lived in the ancient ages. His study of history, above all, was minutely nursed: wide, yet much pruned. The story of the ingenuity, zeal, and success of masterly adventurers like Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, he knew by heart: but he had no suspicion of their chutes; doesn’t even now know that Cæsar was assassinated, nor that Napoleon was plucked down at last, so that their victoriousness and force remain measureless in his imagination. He knew well the proportions of the pyramids of Shufu and Shafra, but he was not allowed to know how many multitudes, nor how many moons, were used to build them. And so on. It was dropped into his ear at a very early age that among men some few may be born with feeble bodies and wits, that these are called “idiots,” and that poor Shan Healy, who in reality is a rather sharp chap, is one of the feeblest

of these: so Shan has always passed with us under the name of “The Idiot.” As to myself, Hannibal now at the age of nineteen cherishes, if he lives, a belief, ploughed into his brain by ten thousand stratagems, that I can shoot like doom, can swim like a fish, can run like a roe, can watch like a dog, can see like an eagle; and that this skull is the dome of all skill and of all wisdom.

Frauds. But the outcome, I say, is (or was!) without doubt a success, something of a success. What the father feigned to be, that the lad was led to be. I fancy that an average acrobat, after regarding some of the pranks of this young man, would be asking from what moon the beggar had gadded; he has a damnable habit of chucking about little dynamite or other bombs, which he turns out himself, and carries in his pocket—five, ten times a day for years have the curlews heard the burstings of this turbulent being’s play—and I am pretty sure that any other runner than he would long since have been shattered to the deuce by it. As to his mere knowledge, it is of a vastness which you would certainly call marvellous, though to me, who know the cause of it, it is hardly so: for if, for instance, he knows a good deal of most languages from Japanese and the Dravidic dialects to Portuguese, it is because he never, I think, forgets a word or thing which has once come within his consciousness, and so has learned a language within some weeks. I remember to have heard it said that Lord Macaulay could repeat word for word a book once read, a statement the truth of which I beg leave to disbelieve: but, even if true, his lordship differed from Hannibal here, that Hannibal, I imagine, is not quite clear with regard to the meaning of “forgetting”; I never heard him utter such a word; certainly, he never heard such a word escape my lips. Forgetting is, in fact, mainly a loose habit into which humanity has lapsed, for to observe vividly is to retain rigidly; and Hannibal, with his over-manly mental habit, observes each fact presented to him with a vividness which seems to be pretty absolute.

You will say, then, to yourself, my friend, that it was a strange pair of men that paced by the seashore in silence that evening, the eve of the young man’s nineteenth

birthday—old Jack and his young giant; the giant in the meekest subjection to his Jack because of delusion, as all a world will sometimes meekly lie in shackles under the will of the weakest lie. My thoughts as I walked were of the morrow, of that dawn toward which for long years I had looked forward, when I should hand over to Hannibal my old problem of the stele to conquer for me, and I wondered in what manner the young man would manage it. Little doubt, however, had I as to the outcome, seeing that I am even now about to compile into a book quite a crowd of new scientific principles dropped from the mouth of my man in the course of his studies, with a thousand little observations about things in general, most of them bound, I should imagine, to astound you. So, then, that my man would read the stele I could readily believe; but indeed, Reid, I was no longer deeply interested in this miserable bit of a stele; I'm afraid it is too true that my interest had all shifted from the lifeless thing to the living fellow, all too much so, all too much for my peace....

Sometimes lately, Reid, I may avow to you, I have stolen out of my room in the dead of night and stood before his door, stood for hours, hearkening for a sound; couldn't at all tell you why—bound there somehow—and I have shaken my poor head, saying to myself, "No, surely, I have to cure myself of this folly: a purely scientific interest in this savage, nothing more"; but still I have stuck at his door.

Do you understand that this boy is in some points an idiot? It is only lately that the amazingness of it all has struck and made me a wrecked man! To a thousand throes and heartburns, learned in a thousand social niceties by men who dwell with men, he remains a stranger. The different ways in which one should bend the mind toward one's brother, toward one's mother, one's friend, and so on, seem to be unknown to him; I don't know who is to blame. Never a little tenderness, never a sign. I couldn't, of course, bring his mind into contact with the Christian faith from the very nature of the case, the Man of Christianity being a sorrowful type, while the Man of his fancy was bound to be a type of power; so that the name of Christ he has never heard; but his mind was presented with such naïve nature-worship as that of the

Rig-Vedas, Genesis and Job: I thought that it was well....

But to return to this birthday-eve of his. We two had made our way back together in silence, nearly to the castle-gate, when out darts Shan Healy, wringing hands and crying, “Oh, Master Hannibal, do forgive me, sir, the glass pot has boiled all over, while I was attending to the dinner”; whereat Master Hannibal, without waiting to hear another word, threw Shan out of his way, and rushed into the house, no doubt to see for himself how the matter stood, for he seems to have left some mess simmering in his laboratory, had bid Shan look to it, and the thing had had some mischance.

“Now, here’s a go for a poor chap, doctor,” says Shan to me, in great distress; “believe me, I couldn’t avoid it, the thing boiled over so quick, and what’ll Master Hannibal say now?”

“Say?” said I, for I was angry, “what can he dare say? Let him go to the devil, you couldn’t help it, and I order you not to distress yourself in the slightest.”

“Ah, doctor, it’s all very well for you to talk,” says he.

Well, we went into the house, and Shan went down to his kitchen; but I still hung about the bottom of the stair, being a bit anxious as to what this being might take it into his nut to do now about his blessed chemical. All was still during some time, so presently I called sharply up to him, “What are you at, Hannibal?” No answer, no sound; only the faint sounds of Shan’s preparations for dinner downstairs. So now I ran very thievishly up the stairs, and peeped into the laboratory, but he wasn’t there, and I can only think now that at the sounds of my steps on the stair, faint as they were, the monkey must have passed out of the laboratory window, and slipped down the turret by the ivy; anyway, the next thing that I heard were Shan’s howls coming up out of the kitchen, upon which I ran down, to find myself locked out, and to hear within the kitchen the sounds of a head being beaten against the ground, mingled with Shan Healy’s exclaimings.

Beside myself with anger, I pounded upon the door, and now at once the row stopped, and in a moment Shan opened, saying despondently to me, poor chap, “Oh, doctor, he do use me cruel, sir, cruel, cruel, cruel. Oh, my poor head—what does he think anybody is made of?”

My own head was hung with shame; I could do nothing but silently pat my old companion on his shoulder.

“Where is he now?” said I.

“Gone like a shadow through the window, doctor, and down to the shore, the minute he heard you pounding,” says Shan. “He held me down on the floor with one hand, and with the other he banged my poor head ... cruel, cruel. I shouldn’t mind if it was done in a rage, but smiling as cool as a cucumber, as if anybody’s head was a block of wood he was playing with.”

“Well,” I said bitterly, “all your own fault, Shan Healy; you’re too faithful and good.” And I left him there and went up.

Well, I dined by myself, my fellow keeping culpably aloof perhaps; and during the rest of the evening I saw or heard nothing of him till, near ten in the night, I heard some long way off the bursting of one of his bombs. A gale was then raging, and it had grown coldish, with that wet chill which marks this part. So I went to seek a little sleep, but at about three in the morning rose and went softly to stand outside the observatory door, to see if I could detect a sound of his through the row of the storm; and as I so stood, to my surprise, he called to me, praying me to enter. I did so, to find him sitting at a window, looking out at all the dark strife of the winds and waters, and at the bethundered bluff down there below: whereat, without the least mention of Shan Healy, my man began to blab about the moon, which just then struggled through into a channel between two cloud-bogs, saying that our globe, as it seemed to him, might have been made a more suitable place for living beings, if provided with two moons instead of one. Being grum and out of sorts at the

moment, I told him not to trouble his small head about that, that things were well as they were, and I quoted dogmatically to him that “God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.” At this my chap turns up at me a gaze of the greatest astonishment, asking if I did really think that some purpose of providing a lamp to the night had anything to do with the birth and being of the moon. I said yes, I did think so; on which he anew turns at me a certain searching look of astonishment, and murmurs something about not daring to question the truth of my words, but that as a lamp the moon undoubtedly appeared to be a failure, since she did not shine most nights; sometimes shone for a short hour only; sometimes shone uselessly during the day, but left the night orbless—a rather mad sort of lamp—whereas two moons with such and such parallaxes, of such and such masses.... “Well, never you mind that,” said I shortly to him, for I thought that I’d better be mum as to the moon. But he was moon-struck that night, and after saying that just as she then was, near her full, but not quite, she reminded him of “The Idiot’s” face when he had gum-boil and swollen-jaw some years ago—for he’s as simple as a baby in some respects, mind you, and many things said by the boy that you might think said in fun, are, in fact, quite grave statements, devoid of any grain of humour on his part; for though he smiles ever, he hardly ever laughs, so that one’s cheeks are apt to puff out on a sudden with laughter at his words, as at the artless freaks of a child’s remarks. Anyhow, after likening the moon to Shan’s gum-boil face, my boy goes on now to wonder for the thousandth time how it is that his “Man” never managed to range so high into space as the moon, for I had soon found myself compelled to confess to him that man had never yet landed on the satellite, nor did all the reasons which I could adduce for this fact, such as the absence of an atmosphere on the moon, and so on, ever suffice to abate his wonder that the moon should remain unvisited: for little did the man dream that even the north and south poles of our own planet remain even now all unknown, let alone the moon!

Well, sir, he was thus droning to himself as to the moon, and specifying the modes by which her surface appeared to him attainable, when in a foolish heat of tenderness I, standing behind him, let my hand fall on the flesh of his neck, inside the broad flap of his shirt-collar, and I allowed myself to murmur the word “Boy,” about to say, “Boy, I am fond of you,” or some such futility, when my fellow gave me such a gaze of Arctic-cold astonishment—for sheet-lightning and the strangled moonshine both beshone the darkness of the room, so that one could see anon—such a gaze, that I was glad to slip away to conceal the wet in my poor eyes, and I went to sleep.

CHAPTER IV. THE SHIP.

The morning after, his birthday, on meeting him at the breakfast-table as the clock struck eight, I observed to him that he couldn’t have had much sleep: to which, glancing up from his book, he answered, “Enough for the needs of my nature, sir, I think, though I was at work at four minutes before five. The old have greater need of repose, it appears, while, as to the young, the demagogue Cataline, it is written, could dispense with sleep almost altogether.”

“Oho,” said I; “well, let us be eating,” and we sat to the old jug of porridge and oaten loaf.

Presently, as we ate, I said to him, “By the way, I want you now to understand that you are not to knock my servant’s head about any more.”

His answer was that he had discovered that such occasional visitations had the effect of slightly heightening the functioning of the idiot’s wit.

“Never mind your discoveries,” said I: “you are not to do it, sir.”

“I will not, sir,” says he with his formal bow, and buries his brow anew in his volume.

I for my part could hardly eat, for I was uneasy and excited, and my fingers kept on going to feel the old stele, which I had in my pocket; so, fidgeted by his cool reading and feeding, said I to him, “Didn’t I beg you some time since not to be for ever eating and reading together, since it is injurious to the digestion, and there’s a time for everything, as the mightiest minds among men well know.”

“True, sir,” says my man, “you did speak to me on this subject on the third of June two years ago, but your words did not give me an impression of great urgency, so I have dared to disregard them, since, after all, the digestion of the young is hearty and strong, and the days are hardly born but they are fled, and it is hard to the foot to race after the fastness of the horses of time; hence the greater masters, the minds of white-hot ardour, like Cæsar, always delighted themselves in the most entangled exercises, like the dictating of a vast host of letters at once, so as to harbour in their mood a habit of keeping pace with the fleetness of the passing days.”

“So true,” said I, “so true; still, it is as well not to eat and read together; nor are you any longer so ‘young’ as you have been; you know, of course, that to-day is your birthday.”

“So I calculate, sir,” says he: “I have now existed apart from the womb nineteen times as many as three hundred and sixty-five days, less four; that is to say, six thousand nine hundred and thirty-one days, without counting some odd hours.”

“Oho,” said I; “and how are you going to spend the day?”

“I am engaged in a chemical investigation, sir,” says he, leaning back now, and balancing a plate on the edge of his forefinger nail, for he always speedily devoured his food, though with complete mastication, I believe, and was generally done before I was nearly through.

“Ah, and what is the investigation?” I asked.

“You must have noticed, sir,” says he, “the agitation I call it, with which bismuth acts——”

“I know exactly what you are going to say,” said I—God forgive us—“quite so; but look here, before you go I want to show you something, something that will amuse you; just read me that.”

On a sudden now, Reid, the moment long waited for had come, for I now caught the old basalt stele out of my pocket, and laid it before him; whereat immediately the fellow seemed to feel an interest in the mere sight of this object, took it up, looked it up and down and round about, smiling his smile, his brow twitching into momentary frowns.

“Why, sir,” says he suddenly, “where did you come upon this stone?”

“That’s not the point,” said I; “I got it in Abyssinia, but that’s not the point; just read it.”

“It is mainly enchorial and alphabetic,” he breathes aloud, peering into the thing, “but with a great number of syllabary signs, and vowel matres lectionis——”

“Yes, I know; read it,” said I, painfully conscious within myself of being pale in the face.

“Strange,” says he to himself: “both Sahidic and Memphitic, but mainly Memphitic——”

“Yes, I tell you, I know,” said I; “read it, read it, boy.”

He hesitated, sir, and I felt growing within me an agitation almost too great to be any more restrained.

“Have you read it, sir?” he suddenly asks, raising his eyes to my face; and I was foolishly conscious that my eyes drooped before his, even as in a tone of protest I answered, “Why, naturally! I only give it to you as a little exercise to amuse you; just read the whole thing right off.”

Now, sir, he puts the bit of a stele on the table, and he bends his brow studiously over it, supporting his head between his hands.

“Seven of the words are purposely secret,” says he to himself; “it is not an easy cypher....”

“Well, I know, I know that,” said I, deadly anxious now, “that’s why I give it to you—for a little fun on your birthday; just read it off, boy, to please me.”

“Ah, I see,” says he all at once: “this whole half-line is a long rebus or pun; the sound of each ideograph combines with the third following to form a word: that is clearly the idea of the inventor; I can trace his thought; I see. Oh, it is not difficult, sir!”

“Good—very good,” said I; “then just read it right off, and go up to your science, boy,” for I felt my face growing white with excitement, seeing that, in spite of his brave words, the man’s manner showed some hesitation, and lower and lower bent his head over the thing.

“A moment, sir,” he murmurs, “one moment; your servant is slow and dull, but”—something; and another minute went by in a silence that was most bitter to me to bear, till, all in a scare, I called to him, “Well, but haven’t you done it yet?”

“Yes, sir, I think——” he falters.

“Then read it!”

“In Coptic?”

“In English.”

Now, very deliberately, my man begins to utter syllables, his brow between his hands bent low down over the symbols, and, syllable by syllable, says he, “It is graved on a golden brick within the grave of Arunzebe, that when the white strangers from over the Great Hill came with fire and warfare, then did eighty princes bear together their braveries for safety, and they heaped them into the grave of Arunzebe. Even a spirit (nat) could scarce penetrate to their secret place, nor could a rain of men, straining through many days, attain to them. There is the

Silence that annihilates. Let no man strive to visit them at——”

There my man stopped short. “At,” he repeated, but couldn’t go on, and there in the shameful silence he sat now frowning into the thing with a sort of haughty, excruciated self-surprise, but without progress.

“Well?” said I, and my looks, I know, were ghastly, for all that he had read of the thing I, too, long ago had read, though I admit that it had cost me some few months of effort.

“At, sir,” says he, more to himself than to me, “at—something; fifteen other ideographs remain, making three words, I am certain. But they are without determinatives, and their outlines are so blurred, they bring no meaning, no meaning—to my mind; they seem to belong....”

“Better say at once, Hannibal, that you can’t read the epigraph!” I cried out.

“You have read it, sir, no doubt?” says he for the second time with, I fancied now, just a touch of scepticism somewhere.

“Why, naturally, boy!” I cried, with such a noise that, at the moment, I almost believed it myself. “Can’t you, then?”

“It is strange, sir,” says he, “it seems to contain htar, and the old verb secha, to write.... Pray, bear with your servant a little, sir, I shall read the words, I see clearly that I can, if you will only vouchsafe me a little time—down by the seashore.”

“Time,” said I, with some disdain; “why time? The human mind should strike and divide like the very scythe of the lightning!... And how much time?”

“If I may have half an hour on the shore, sir,” says he, rather down-heartedly, and as I knew that his mind usually rose to the height of any problem which bothered him with a lighter spring down there amid the droning of the waves, I said nothing when he took up the little stone, and passed out through the door. And so, Reid, we parted without one last clasp of the hand after nineteen years, for that was four days ago,

and neither Shan nor I have since seen him. He is gone, he is no longer on Shunter, that is our one certainty: he may be drowned, or he may be living, but on Shunter he no longer is, I'll vow. After waiting in suspense an hour, nearly two hours, for him to return with the basalt stele, I despatched Shan Healy from the castle to seek him over the shore, and to command him to come back to me. When Shan was gone on this errand, I took my stand at a window, looking anxiously out over the eastern shores and over the rolling ground of the sea: and while there I chanced to catch sight of a schooner, about the size of a dove, some two leagues to eastward, breasting southward through that gaudy kind of haze that shrowds with a gauze of azure the bridal and gala glances of the brighter days on these islands. But little did I heed her then, nor to this moment do I know that she had anything to do with the vanishing of the young man. Meantime, Shan did not come back, Hannibal did not come back, and at last, angry and anxious, I ran out of the castle, and had got some half a mile over the western shore before I encountered Shan Healy dashing back to the castle in a white heat, with a wild countenance, hardly able to gasp out the words, "Found this, doctor," as he paraded before my marvelling gaze a paltry square of cloth and lace, a lady's handkerchief, marked with the initials "R. V.," and tainted with some effluvium of stale perfume. That thing on Shunter shore! My heart failed me, Reid: for the young man's notions of female man had so far been gathered only from certain Greek and Egyptian urn-traceries, meagre things; and I thought that if eye of his had indeed fallen that morning upon the carnal fact of womanhood, then it would be small wonder if all were lost, and his parting from me an everlasting parting. For fourteen years, so far as we know, no human foot but those of us three has passed over those peats and marshes of Shunter; no spar nor oar has approached within even half a league of its shores; but when Shan and I had run together to the little harbour at the north, where the bit of a flag-staff stands, we found the boat empty of the two pairs of half-tame motacillæ lugubres which had made nests in her, and half-way down to the edge of the low tide I found the sands

much trampled. Unknown to us, some craft had put in there, had anchored, and had departed, perhaps taking with her what far surpassed the understanding of those on her. Shan and I, having separated, searched each of us one of the promontories which enclose the harbour like claws, since, being dark with growths of bush, they seemed worth the searching: and on the east side I found, far out toward the last rocks, a track of footsteps going down to the sea, going, alas, without return: and they seemed to me, though I could hardly be certain, rather like the track of sandals than of boots, in which case he may have chosen that place to swim off to the craft in the harbour, so as to stow himself away below—I don't know. If so, it is remarkable that he should have acted in that fashion. At first we fancied that, maddened by the sight of man and woman, the boy might have started to swim to Barra, and have been destroyed by a shark or a narwhal en route. But we are still quite in the dark as to the actual truth. Shan afterwards discovered half a bon-bon—a bitten bit of chocolate—amid the kelp on the shore, and no more know we of it....

Such, then, is the close of our eighteen years of the cloister on Shunter. Without a message of good-bye to his father the boy is gone. But, after all, I should have known beforehand, I should have guessed: for latterly he has been most museful, given to porings over the ocean through half a night, with more, perhaps, going on in the soul of him than I had any notion of, for we least of all see and know those that are nearest us, Reid; we see their faces and only fancy that we see themselves. Anyhow, it is all passed and over now; the little castle that was our home, that I had grown to love, and hoped that he, too, had grown to love, stands now lone through grey days, and darkling through nightlongs of thunderous weather without us: for, as I have told you, we have passed over to Barra in the boat, we two and the dog, and the poor mare and cows and goats will go hungry now, no doubt, or will soon grow to the humour of the guillemots and herring-gulls on the crags, and become sea-things, goblin of eye, like the tangles of kelp on the shore, or the stench of the ocean's throat, or the pools remote from the foot of men with little bleaks brooding

in their green glooms, or the inclemency of gales that gather over this sea. I tell you truth, man, I am sad, for nineteen years of life is not nothing, Reid. The young man's gone, and how he is going to adjust himself to the world, and how the world is going to manage to adjust itself to him—God only knows. His books will become covered with particles of peat now; our little garth, with its darg of peat heaped in one corner for our fire next winter, will hearken now no more, alas, to the echoes of our passing; our little garden will grow wild; and Shunter will forget the unlasting foot of man and boy, to go back anew with joy to the largeness and boisterous ocean-mood of her past, and the charm of her harsh old solitude. To-morrow, I hope, we shall be able to take boat to Uist, and so to the mainland, but I'm not sure, this poor Shan Healy is so beastly seedy and down in the mouth ... etc., etc.

CHAPTER V. "MISS EVE."

At this point the statement of Dr. Lepsius becoming devoid of interest for us, we may next take up that of one Jeanne Auvache, where she writes (in French, with no eye to us, but quite for her own behoof):

... The next (Tuesday) morning, near nine, the yacht anew dropped her anchor within the claws of a creek in an island called Shunter: for the weather was fine and the sea smooth, so Miss Ruth and Miss Eve, each wishing to seek for more dolomites, weeds, and other suchlike things of the sea, and to place their feet on still a new shore, were pleased to land. I had already massaged, bathed, and coiffured Miss Eve, brought the two ladies their chocolate, and now had sat to costume yet another doll for Miss Ruth, when Miss Ruth comes to give me to know that she is about to go to land, and suggests that that should amuse me to come too with her: for she is ever good, as befits one who has the reputation of a saint, and who feels bound, no doubt, to keep it up. As for me, I little believe in saints, since all beings are as alike as two drops of water, the one to the other, at bottom—all save one, perhaps; and though it

is a thing hardly to be questioned that, if a true saint does live, then it is this Ruth Vickery, still, I little believe in saints, I. Nor is it such a great matter that Miss Ruth should do me these little graces and goodnesses, inasmuch as I am not really her maid—I am the maid of Miss Eve—and not bound to be for ever sitting down dressing dolls for the brats in the hospitals of London; and if it were merely Miss Eve, I should have very little to do through some hours of the day: but Miss Ruth finds ever some charitable work to which to bind me down, and if thou wert now so young as thou once wast, it is not thou, Jeanne, my cherished one, I think, that would long endure this demure quietude and existence of a recluse. But patience, do not yet despair; thou hast been beautiful, thou hast been loved! Yes, and now, it appears, thou art anew beloved. It was not, then, all in vain that I have lived, and the world may not be altogether so dirty a bog of egotism and rotted dogs as I have lately grown to regard it. Heavens! that is droll—I feel myself anew young! The sky looks bluer, my feet would be almost dancing, and I am no more morose within myself at everything: for with a few touches of art there is nought which may not yet be hidden, and it is as if all the mirrors had of late years conspired to make me appear to myself plainer than I really am, since, as a matter of fact, I find the flesh under my jaws yet firmly plump, my eyes glow as gaudily as a girl's, their creases have existed chiefly in my fears, and each day I appear to myself to grow more fit to please.

But how little does one know what is before oneself! The boat had been already lowered down into the water when, having put aside the dressing of the dolls, I went up on deck and saw Miss Ruth, Miss Eve, Lord Astor, Miss Savage, and Monsieur le Comte de Courcy ready to descend to go to the shore, though Mr. Vickery did not go to the shore, but abided on the ship's poop perusing his big Bible through his glasses. When we had come to the shore, the ladies were taken out of the boat both by the sailors and by the gentlemen, and Monsieur le Comte de Courcy, one may be sure, took care to be he who lifted out Miss Eve, while, as for me, I was left to be

taken out by a mariner who, in doing it, embraced me, I think, with intention. In the boat it had been said that the island was uninhabited, but, to our surprise, we found a "coble" or sail-boat, with a brown sail, with the rags of a philibeg, and with a pair of the sort of shoes which they call "brogues" in it, lying in some bushes; also a little inland, on some waste land over which many peewees and moorfowl were chattering their screeches, we found the ruin of a long shed, built of loose stones, with a roof of turf; also on the sands a sort of post or flag-staff: all showing that there were, or had once been, people on this place. On the shore the party split into two parts, Miss Ruth and Miss Savage marching off one way, and Monsieur de Courcy and Lord Astor following after Miss Eve as insects infest a feast of sweetmeat, while I was left to wander as I would. I therefore walked alone over that claw of the coast which was to the left as one looked toward the sea, where I paced in shade over a species of peat between bush and briar, which was deep on either hand, though little higher than my head, with thousands of gulls and whaups whistling and crying together in the air around me; and meantime, whatever seemed rare or strange, such as a weed or a piece of flint, I picked it up to keep for the ladies' pleasure. In this manner I was engaged, waging war on the fog of midges that sang and stung my face, when, at a place where the glow of the morning's sun was quite extinguished under the shade of the bush, I all at once felt within myself the instinct that two great eyes were regarding me from the darkness of an ambush. I sprang up from my stooping with affright! And it proved no fancy, for there, a yard before and to the right of me, I beheld, yes, two ardent eyes, glowing huge and close to the ground, it might be those of a tiger crouching, only that they were as dark as night. No second glance I gave, but with my heart in my mouth ran my hardest back toward the sands, awaiting at every instant the devouring teeth of a beast in my rear. Nothing, however, pursued me, and at length, seeing this, I halted, even ventured back a few feet, peering forward: for I have never lacked bravery, I, and am not to be terrified by a mere pair of eyes like that; but I could now see nothing, though, as I

stood peering, my ear seemed to catch through the leafage not far from me a sharp rush which afresh had the effect of putting me to flight. However, I was about once more to stop to pry round, when the whistle of our boatswain sounded to summon me, and I ran down to the boat, where I found all our party already come back to embark.

When the ladies had been again placed in the boat, and we were all again on the water making toward the yacht, Miss Ruth, noticing my looks, remarked to me, “Why are you so pale?” and I then related to them my adventure in the dark of the bush, how two eyes had glared strangely at me from the ground, and had scared me. At this all the talk stopped short, and no small astonishment was shown at my hap: for all had thought that the island bore on it no form of life except those of the smaller sea-fauna, as sea-birds and suchlike, so that, in short, I was the centre of the interest of all the world for a while, and every eye looked toward me. Miss Savage took the view that it must have been my “fancy,” but I at once quashed such a notion by a gush of assurances, whereat Monsieur le Comte de Courcy gave his opinion that it was the eyes of “the genius of the place” which I had seen, Lord Astor thought that they were “the eyes of Hermes searching the island for the nymph Lamia,” and Miss Eve believed that “more of inhabitants crowd in the village than count in the census; each grove harbours its ghost, heart-sighs and eyes are about——” in the midst of which argument the boat reached the yacht, and at once our anchor was tackled, our canvas thrown to the breeze, and we started out upon the last part of the voyage, no more to tarry till our craft should be at her buoy on the coast of Scotland.

Well, now, I come to the event: I am about to write it! During the hours of the forenoon I had been mainly bound down to the dressing of Miss Ruth’s dolls; during those of the afternoon I had found my hands full enough with the making ready of the trunks, and with the thousand other little last cares that crowd upon one before a disembarking: and it was now evening, about half-past eight o’clock, when, passing

out of Miss Eve's apartment, I went in a hurry round into my own to get and bring out her older brown gown. My wee apartment was quite in darkness; I was able merely to see the circle of my window, near under which, it being on the lee-side of the leaning ship, one was able to hear like a dirging the seething of the sea's surge sweep by toward the rear. So now I reached out my hand to switch on the light, and at that moment it was that it came upon me, while I, in a blue affright, gave up everything, recommending my soul to the good God, for it was as if thirty-six[A] tigers flung their weight against me, and in the very same breath, as it seemed to me, I found myself lying on the ground, my feet bound together, and my mouth gagged with my apron; and so instantly were all these different performances done to me, that I understood, I remember, that I must be under the power of at least three ruffians. Heavens, that moment! I lay as it were given over and drowned far down in the gloom of the tomb, and I said within myself, "Jeanne, thou art finished now," for one could not catch one's breath, nor cry out, nor see anything! However, by a cunning move—for I was ever astute and deep in an extremity, I, and not to be done for so easily like that—I managed to jerk myself sharply upward a little, remembering that the switch was just above, and by a feat of luck my free arm, reaching wildly up, chanced to touch this switch, upon which the apartment was flooded with light, and I saw, to my bewilderment, that my tormentor was not many, but one. At once I had a sigh of escape and of regained hope, for though his right hand still held the gag, I could understand at the flash of the light that it was not a butcher, but a suppliant, who knelt at my side; and at once with that flash of light his lips were passionately at my ear, panting words so warm and queer, that I half questioned whether I heard him well when the young fellow whispered wildly to me that he knew that I am a woman and wanted me for his wife. Heavens! of the two surprises of my situation here was the greater! For I could scarce believe that he was jeering at me, seeing that he gave utterance to his words with so earnest a naïveté, so that I wondered whether I had to do with a lunatic! And even in the thick of my

fears, I was so pierced with a feeling of the queerness of the young man's remark, "I know that you are a woman," that I had to laugh within myself! for I was suddenly light-hearted and relieved in that he wanted me to be his wife rather than to be his victim. Again he made me hear his demand in a pant at my ear, this time with a glance in his gallant eyes which made me afresh apprehensive, and gave me to guess that the penalty of hesitation might be grave; so with my finger I now indicated the stuffing in my mouth, whereat he told me to nod my yes or no, so, to humour him, I nodded yes, I would wed him! He now demanded of me a vow that I would not betray him "to Man" (as he said), till the ship should come to land, and this, too, I vowed with movements of my head and with my uplifted hand. But little did he trust me! for, on releasing me, he flew to the door, and had it secured before I was yet even on my feet. We then stood staring the one at the other, both bosoms labouring, and during some moments my tongue seemed to be unable to dare to address this being, till on a sudden I said to him, "But you are deranged! Who, then, are you?" to which his answer in the lowest whisper was that he was "Hannibal Lepsius."

[A] Anglicè: a dozen, a hundred.

"Little that imports to me, your name," said I: "I wish to know, since you are not one of the ship's company, how came you here?"

His answer was a whisper at my ear that I already broke my vow, since I spoke loudly enough, he said, to be heard by everyone throughout the vessel; but that since he was now certain that he was more powerful than I, therefore he would throw me down, and bind me anew, if I betrayed him "to Man."

At this I stood scared, half-laughing within myself, for I seemed to have to do with a quixote or one crazed! but because of the beauty of his young face and form, and of some naïveté, and of some power, that was all about the young man, I could not be cross with him, for I declare that in some way he at the same time touched my soul with compassion, with mockery, and with awe of him, so that I craved at the same

moment to become his mother and his love, his protectress and his slave. Something odder than anything in the world—in his looks, his words, his being—widened my eyes with the wondering of a babe, and made life a new thing to me ... he had sandals on his feet, a belt, no jacket, no hat ... he seemed to me fleet enough to leap up and fly with pinions. At this menace of his to bind me anew I said to him, “But you must have taken leave of your senses, as it seems to me! for I spoke scarcely above a whisper, which no one could possibly hear.”

As I said this, my young man, without saying more, drops on a sudden down, with his hands outstretched to me: and when I said to him, “Well, what now?” his answer was a prayer not to be untrue to him, but to hide him “from Man” and be his wife!

I laughed anew at this within myself! for he seemed to be blind to my forty-one foundered summers, and the flowers that withered in them, he a youth of hardly twenty years. So I said to him, “Get away with you, for you are crazy; how do you know that I am not already a married woman with a husband?” on which he told me very secretly that in any case he believed it to be possible that he should be able to make me one of “the most sovereign of ladies,” and with that he presents me with a piece of stone, resembling an ink-bottle, saying to me, “Read that.”

“What is this now?” said I, turning the thing round in my hands, since I could see nothing to read, only some holes cut in the stone; upon which he repeated his demand that I should “read” it, telling me that it was partly in Coptic and partly in—some long expressions which I did not comprehend.

“I know nothing of this,” said I to him, handing him back the piece of stone, whereat he peered piercingly at me a moment, and then all at once a light seemed to dawn upon his mind, and he rose up from his knees saying to himself, “I thought so.”

“Thought what?” said I to him, but to this he made no reply, only smiled upon me.

He gave me an impression of some young god gone mad! “You are hardly very polite,” I said to him, “and another woman might think you a little crazed, since at

one moment you crave to be my husband, and at another moment you smile upon me as upon some ninny," to which he replied something about being bound to adore me, ninny or no, inasmuch as I am so adorable!

"Why, get you gone," I said to him, "you have hardly had time to see me yet!"

He asked me how much time was necessary, and if he had not gazed at me through the bushes?

"Those, then, were your eyes that gazed there at Shunter through the bushes at me?" said I; "and you found me beautiful? What, then, could you have found so very beautiful about me, my face, or my figure—or both?" to which he replied, "Both."

"And do you mean," said I to him, "that it was merely through love of me that you concealed yourself in the yacht? What a sudden flame of passion! But I am at a loss to know how you could come here!" on which he explained that he had swum under water from the shore.

"But how could you possibly steal down here without being seen?" I asked him, to which he replied that "that question of itself charged me with a drowsy consciousness."

His little smile of a superior man (petit sourire d'homme supérieur)! "Well," said I fondly to him, "you, for your part, are of a wakeful consciousness, and I, for mine, am beautiful both in face and form, is it not so? and it is a pair of us, is it not? But since we are now about to come to land, tell me this——" but before I could utter another word I heard the call of "Jeanne," and was recalled by it to this world. It was the voice of Miss Eve who called me, and ere I could find my tongue to reply she called again, "Jeanne, where are you?" but I could not answer her, my eyes were fixed upon the boy, who now appeared lost in a joyous attention to the call, and with his finger held up gave deep into my ear a whisper of "Sweet voice." Whereat I, being a little perturbed, turned from him, switched off the light, whispered him to await my return there, and went out in haste to Miss Eve, wondering within myself

how in Heaven's name I was now to restrain him from making the acquaintance of other ladies.

CHAPTER VI. THE TOWERS.

Jeanne Auvache thus continues: It all went beautifully, the landing. He had the wit, on appearing suddenly, to take upon his back the trunk of Miss Eve, which he bore over the pier to the little station, and in the dimness must have seemed to the sailors a porter, and to the porters a sailor. He did not see anyone in the light of the station, save a stationmaster in his uniform, and I praised Heaven that the train was a special one which carried none save our party. As she moved, he ran from the outer dark to the door of the compartment in which I stood beckoning him, and skipped in beautifully, so that we two went quite alone. Ah, but he trembled—all the way, so that one could see his jaws chattering anon. When I kept on saying to him, "But why do you so shiver?" he confessed to me that he felt fear. "But fear of what specially?" I asked, and when I pressed him he replied, "of Man and of my father." I compassionated, but could scarce comprehend him, and I felt myself abashed and banished from contact with his soul, for though we were side by side, yet he was alone, and I was alone. I could only console myself with the thought that I had to do with an ingénu—a beautiful fault soon enough to be cured. But such an ingénu! one dropped down from the moon, as it looked to me. His curiosity about the train! for, to begin with, it was his terrors and tremblings that were uppermost, and then it was his curiosity struggling with them. His eyes were wide with an amazement which at first I took to be the natural amazement of a rustic suddenly plunged into the thick of the wonders of civilisation, until I learned that his amazement was not at the speed, but at the slowness, with which the train was creeping! This caused me to laugh within myself! "Why, we must be flying at fifty miles an hour," I said to him: "how much more do you wish?" But he did not appear to pay much heed to my

statements, and continued to rush about the compartment, touching this and that, now springing up to peer into the lamp, now darting down to lie and pry under the seats, gazing into the make of the window, tapping the woodwork with his fingers, all with so eager a zeal, my God! with the omnipresence of a monkey imprisoned in a crib, and trembling all the time with excitement, as I could see. What most of all amazed him was the size of the train! Why, he wished to know, was this particular train so miserable a thing, seeing that its largeness could be vastly increased with only a paltry increase of the motive force. “But are not all trains of the same size?” I said to him: “they are of a certain size, that is all; one does not know why they are so, and this is no smaller than the others.” But after starting and staring at me, in a moment, as if he regarded me as an ignoramus that did not know what I was saying, he told me with disdain that most trains were raging palaces, though this one, for some sage motive that he did not understand, was not so.

I began then to recognise that he must have lived wholly buried away from actualities amid those islands of the sea, for his ignorance of life could scarce be greater, since he harbours the most laughably large notions of the glory and achievements of beings: and I was glad within myself at this, and resolved that he should be kept like that up to the day following my marriage with him. But even as I was thinking this within myself, what was my astonishment when he informed me that I am a Frenchwoman, and spoke thenceforth to me in very passable French of Bordeaux! So that here is a rustic with a difference.

When we had arrived at Thring we found that, though the sun had not yet risen up, the night had now been replaced by daylight, and the birds were loud at their works in the silence of the world. I had by that time told him by what way to make to the brink of the river, and where to await my coming to him there under the ruin: so some moments before the train stopped he leapt from the door on the off side, and hied off over the metals. A moment more and laughter was sounding on the platform, and I looked out to see Miss Eve alighted, calling out to her father, while

she fingered her now withered violets of Parma, that getting home in the dawn was like dying to earth and a getting to heaven, and immediately her father was to be seen stepping down out of his compartment, on his arm Miss Ruth, and the rest of the party trooping out after. Anne and I, having then assisted to carry the rugs to the carriages outside, set out together in the mail-phaeton for The Towers some minutes later than the others: and we found a gaiety in returning once again after so much of London and the sea, for everything is good in its turn, but a curse upon too much of any one condition of being. So down the mountain through the townlet to the river we drove in a procession, and up the mountain beyond, no one yet to be met on the roads, but one constable, and the day slowly working about us toward its birth.

After our arrival at The Towers, having first perfumed Miss Eve's bath with the infusion of frangipane and ambergris, and then got her hair prepared while she perused an accumulation of her correspondence, I put her to bed, she impressing it upon me that I, too, must take a nap. I had other thoughts than napping, tired as I was! all my nerves tingling at the whispered word within me that love was now again by God's goodness about to be mine in this dog's world. The moment, therefore, that I was free, I was down and away, tapping my face with powder, taking from the larder and housemaid's pantry a parcel of bread, meat, and preserves, and down by the river found him seated in a cavern of the cliffs, searching into the interior of wild plants which he had slit with a knife. He was still visibly atremble with excitement, but did not rise when I came to him, continuing to gaze into the make of the plants, having recognised my coming step, as I think. But on a sudden he started upright with something of a laugh, and made the remark, gazing upward at the sky and around at the girdle of mountains, that it was a world worthy of "Man" to circulate in. "It is more imposing than those islands of the sea, is it not?" said I to him, and he replied, "Yes," for that those are mostly of bog and boulders, with hags in between, but that these parts are made of stones with strange names, so many millions of ages old; only he wished to know what creatures could

live in those sheds over the river, and looked dumfounded when I informed him that they are the ordinary houses of a country townlet! But he scarce seems to believe my statements. The windows, he remarked, can only be opened half-way at the most to take in the fresh air, and when I gave him to know that all English windows are of this sort, though French windows fully open, this caused him to fall into so extraordinary a marvelling, that one had to laugh! For one kind must be ideally the better, he said, so why do we find the British tied to one kind, and the French married to another? But this I was unable to make plain to him, and he remained in his surprise.

I now went into the question of our wedding, telling him how everything could be fixed up in some days, how I found myself possessed of two hundred pounds funded out of my earnings, which amount would serve nicely for our small ménage, till he should have found his niche in the world; and I engaged myself to see to everything as to getting the licence from the surrogate, as I desired him meanwhile to hide in the church-steeple near St. Peter, whither twice a day I would fetch him a meal: for I did not wish him to see the world at all as yet, and so, working on his awes as to his father, I warned him that he would certainly be caught, if he but once looked forth of his hiding; though, after our marriage, I said, he could safely range out anywhere, since the laws would not allow his father to take him out of his spouse's arms.

As to this he bent his head; but as to bringing him meals, he made the observation that that was not worth the trouble, inasmuch as he frequently exercised himself in abstaining from eating for a week at a time, and he asked if he might not remain in the cave where he was, in order that he might peep at the people passing over the opposite rivershore: to which, as I could see no reason against it, I gave my consent, and even agreed that he should come to meet me in the east shrubbery of The Towers that evening about nine. So, having given him to observe the zig-zag running down round the mountain's brow from The Towers, I ran from him.

CHAPTER VII. THE TERRACES.

Arrived at The Towers, I first slumbered a couple of hours, and then, the day still early, returned to my mistress' bedside. She had bidden me wake her, but I just massaged her with a gentle touch, contemplating with a smile of pleasure that face whose charms I am soon no more to behold: and never did she show to me in so angel-like a light as then, for everything is suddenly changed in me, I find myself inclined to be kindly-minded to everybody, and then Miss Eve is ever beguiling, from her very breathing being given forth a breeze fraught with that fainting fragrance of frangipane, which is as essentially a part of her self as are her eyes or her smile. When her lids unclosed of their own action she once more bathed, and it was when I was doing her hands in making her toilette for the forenoon that she begged me to bear tea with my own hands to her, if she should happen to be in the small drawing-room after four that afternoon.

I at once suspected an interview with Monsieur le Comte de Courcy, and this proved true: for on looking into the small drawing-room in the afternoon, I saw the two alone at a window, and when I presently stole in bearing the tray, there they still were, Miss Eve considering something that had been entreated of her with her head bent, while Monsieur le Comte, in his grey frock-coat, spoke pressingly at her, eagerly fingering his imperial. Now, the sight of lovemaking always profoundly agitates me, causing me a shivering round my right knee; so, having announced the tea in a mutter, I could not, on stealing out, tear my ears away, but stood there by the stair-top, hung upon what was said; and presently could hear the Minister of the Interior say, "You have permitted me to hope these four months," then mumble, mumble, and then the lips of Miss Eve were speaking, saying, "Days have their weirds and their weathers, if Thursday its drought, perchance Friday its showers: somehow to-day I am dull, empty of every reply." "Only whisper to me the word 'hope,'" I then heard Monsieur the Minister implore with much agitation, though

what answer was made to this I could not catch; and he then said, “Soon?” to which she replied, “Soon necessarily, since you are going.” So he asked her, “To-morrow?” and the answer given was, “Well, to-morrow, if God will,” at which point I saw the boy-in-buttons rushing up, so went away.

For the evening Miss Eve had arranged for the party a ball, to which came a troop of neighbour visitors, though Miss Ruth and Mr. Vickery, of course, kept themselves from the levity of it. So, after preparing Miss Eve’s third bath—Miss Ruth, I have heard, considers it to be “worldly” to bathe her body as frequently as once in a week, as nuns believe!—after bathing Miss Eve anew, I advised her to put on for the evening the Chantilly over-skirt and the pearls, for I knew that Miss Savage in her crimson robe would be making Miss Eve’s pink appear pale; and having aided nature one wee bit by a touch on her cheeks, her lashes, and her eye-brows, I turned her out an object chic to kiss the hand at, proudly certain in myself that she must prove the finest-costumed of the company; and still I had uttered no word to her as to my leaving her service immediately, it was so immense a step, like a ravine from which I shrank.

After dinner, till nearly nine, I was down in the housekeeper’s place, making a pretence at playing cards, and some moments after nine rose to rush off to meet him in the east shrubbery, as arranged; but just then my bell summoned me, and when I went to the shrubbery ten minutes late, with a rush of terrors I became aware that he was not there. I ran my hardest now, my heart raised to Heaven in a prayer that nothing had happened—down the mountain to the cliffs, down their face to his cave. He was not there, and I wrung my hands together in an anguish of apprehension, begging the good God not once again to bring me all the gall of the draught of frustration to drain to the dregs, and the bitterish bread of drabness to chew for ever: for there he was not, and where he could have gone to I could not guess. Thinking at last that I might have missed him in coming, I made my way back up, with runs and stoppages to take my breath, came back to the shrubbery, but failed to find him

there. However, on looking out across the lake, I saw in the moonlight that laved the lawn-terraces two forms: one of them Miss Ruth, pacing there with her gaze poring upon the zodiac, and her rubric of devotion hung between her fingers; the other, whom I could just perceive, was lying flat, peeping into the drawing-room through a window, and I knew that it was he, for a rumour of the music and dancing came faintly to me there, and I knew that this must have seduced him to it. I could not but feel pleased to find him, but to my feet my being was pierced with fear to see him lying there, peeping carefully in. In a minute, however, he bounded to his feet, hearing, I presume, the step of Miss Ruth, and he ran some paces, looking back at her; but when she beckoned to him he waited, and in a minute I perceived them standing together engaged in speech.

I crept then through the bushes of the lake's edge, till I came to the lawn; and there, observing their backs turned toward me, I stalked still further forward on my hands and knees, till I was in concealment beneath the stonework of a terrace—little dreaming that I had been overheard; and thence I heard the voice of Miss Ruth saying to the boy, "But you must have lived in a strange isolation never to have heard speak of Jesus Christ?" upon which he, gazing down upon the ground, said in a low tone that he was altogether ignorant, till two days ago having never met with anyone save his father and an idiot.

"Poor dear boy!" coos the voice of Miss Ruth, who, being but twenty-five years of age, has scarcely the right, I think, thus to soothe a youth of twenty. "And where," says she, "was this?"

In a tone in his throat he replied, "On an island of the Outer Hebrides."

"Why, I am even now from there!" she told him. "But your father, has he also never known the blessed name of Jesus?"

He answered her that his father possesses the sum of worldly wisdom, but that he had never at all heard from his father any mention of this personage.

“Why, this is strange!” she cries in a maze, with her azure eyes of a child widely agape at him: “to think of such pagans living in Christian England! Do you not, then, know the words ‘Christian,’ ‘Christianity,’ ‘Christendom’?”

To this he answered that he had never heard these words.

“Tell me this, then,” said she: “in what year is it that we are now living?” to which he made her the amazing answer that we are now in the year six hundred thousand three hundred and sixty-three.

At this reply Miss Ruth smiled, and during some time appeared wrapped in silent prayer, until she suddenly asked him, “From what event, then, do you date this vast sum of years?”

“From the presumed date of the evolution of human life from the ape-state,” was his reply.

For a few moments Miss Ruth mused upon the young man, then threw up her hands with drollery in her little human way which just rescues her from being angelic; and she asked him, “But are not all dates reckoned among us from the Lord Christ?”

At these words of hers he seemed extremely perplexed, and, after frowning upon the ground, asked her if the Lord Jesus Christ was a Greek or a Roman.

“He was a Hebrew!” cries Miss Ruth.

“With an Arianised name,” said he: “lived, then, under the later Romans.”

“Just so,” said she: “how much you know for one of your station, and how little!”

“How little,” he said, and on a sudden knelt to her, begging her to bear with his ignorance, for that she was much more gracious and merciful to discourse with him than he deserved, as he was not only strange to the world, but his brain, moreover, was all in a whirl, inasmuch as he had only just made away from his father’s control, nor had ever before been intoxicated with strains of harmony such as those escaping from out of the house, nor beheld such blessed beings as she and those fabulous

beldams moving beautifully to music over the floor of the drawing-room.... Upon this Miss Ruth raised him up, bid him wait, and, moving to a window of the drawing-room, peeped in to Miss Eve, becking her to come, too, to inspect the curiosity. I disliked her for it, since there was little need for him ever to have seen Miss Eve near at hand, save for this. At all events, out stepped Miss Eve now, very tall in the sheen of the moon, Miss Ruth seeming a midget near her, and even when the three stood face to face, still Miss Eve appeared the tallest of all. So Miss Ruth recounted now in how odd a solitude the young man had spent his existence, and then fell anew to talking of the Lord Christ, he eyeing Miss Eve steadily with the corner of his wild eye, speaking with a drooped head to Miss Ruth, eyeing steadily Miss Eve; till now Miss Ruth cried out, “He was man and God, too!” and only then did the ogler, peering in surprise at her, cease to eye Miss Eve. Immediately now, too, his meekness appeared to cease, for looking straight now at Miss Eve, he asked her if she also shared this belief.

Miss Eve had as yet uttered not a word, but now with her eyes turned downward, her lips muttered, “Why, yes.”

He smiled, and at the same time looked perfectly perplexed, turning his stare from one to the other lady, until Miss Ruth remarked to him, “Do not doubt it, though it is marvellous in all our eyes, so that even the cherubic natures of the skies deeply brood with admiration upon it,” and he then very impolitely replied to her that her consciousness of the size of this earth could not be alert.

To this answered Miss Ruth, “The earth? she is huge in momentousness, you know: with each tick of the clock a human being ceases to breathe——”

“A human being?” he replied with a cry of surprise: “with each tick of the clock a million worlds are burned, and are born!”

“Oh, La!” says she, startled a little at him.

Then she said, with that veiling of the eyes with the eyelids that lends her her air of

Madonna saintliness, “That cannot be, I think.”

But the other sister murmured, “Ruth, it must truly be so, if the universe truly is termless: prove me one world that’s been burned, millions a minute must burn.”

“Let it be so, then,” said Miss Ruth, “since you say so, and glory be to God, for the remotest of them, I think, His hand holds, and His right hand guides it.”

“He is it,” the young man said.

“He is with it, I think,” Miss Ruth replied.

“And you also say this?” he asked of Miss Eve.

“Yes,” she answered curtly, with a touch of pique, as it appeared to me.

Silent he stood now a while, with that smile of his that hides all the windings of his mind behind his brow, but still giving an impression of one plunged in bewilderment at the creatures he was speaking with. Then, glancing upward, he swept his fingers athwart the vault of the stars, with the remark that all that was a darksome mathematic, a perfection which was deaf.

But now Miss Eve, going rosy, frowned upon the ground, and in tones that trembled a little, she observed, “Perfect it is, though a Heart, not a Head, was its Father and Harper; tolling melodious notes, wrung with emotion it rolls;” and it was now that the young man suddenly caused my heart to bound into my mouth by coming out with the statement that, inasmuch as the fourth sharer in the conversation would undoubtedly be found to contemplate the universe in the same sort of mood, he could only suppose that all ladies were prone to criticisms of the same quality.

The two ladies looked round, and “which ‘fourth sharer’ can he mean?” Miss Ruth wished to know of Miss Eve, while I crouched there beneath the terrace, trembling lest he should betray my whereabouts; but when they pressed him to say where I was, to my great gladness, he gave an evasive reply.

He next requested Miss Ruth to instruct him further in her views of the universe,

upon which she begged him to come the next night that she might give him a Bible and teach him of the Lord Jesus; and as to his father, after some hesitation on her part, he gained from her a promise that, if his father, or his father's agents, should get upon his scent, the sisters would not let out to them where he lurked down there in the river-cave. And next he began to beg Miss Eve for one of the begonias at her girdle, but at that moment, before he could be answered, Monsieur le Comte de Courcy stepped out of the house, and, really as if by magic, the instant he appeared the young man had vanished. By this time I had somewhat recovered of my fit of affright, my eyes were anew at the parapet-top, and I could spy the surprise of the ladies, who seemed unable to believe what their two eyes had seen: for though the nearest leafage was quite nineteen or twenty metres away, in the twinkling of an eye, as it seemed, he was within it, and gone like a ghost at cock-crow.

I, for my part, having crawled back to the lake, rushed through the shrubbery obliquely, meaning to meet him somewhere in his career downward: but he was nowhere to be found, until I was on the footpath above the cliffs, when down there in the moonlight I beheld him walking furiously to and fro before his cave's mouth. Down, then, I scrambled, calling out to him, asking why he had not awaited me; but he is not very well-bred, went on silently walking, and on marking one of the swans glide past on the water, he suddenly darted to lie on his face and gaze at it.

"But why did you fly like that?" I asked him when he returned to me, "since the gentleman could not have hurt you?" but still he made me no reply.

"And what did you think of the two ladies?" I next asked him.

Then he: "Who are those ladies?"

I: "They are Miss Ruth and Miss Eve Vickery, the daughters of Mr. Richard Vickery, who is what is called 'An Iron King,' a very rich and an extremely religious man, who sometimes preaches in a chapel on Sundays."

He: "Preaches?"—and I had now to try to explain that "preaching" means teaching

the people how to be devout and grave; but I failed to get him to comprehend how Mr. Vickery could have attained to greater gravity than the rest, and he struck his brow in the misery of his failure to grasp the signification of a single word that I uttered as to this. “Well, it is so, and that is all,” I said at last; “but as to the ladies, you have still not told me which of the two you most admire.”

Then he: “Which is the first-born?”

So I: “That auburn-haired one is the elder by three years, being already twenty-five, and it is she who has the reputation of a saint in society, though it is Miss Eve who is so much the more queenly; so which of the sisters do you like, the auburn or the light?”

He: “A saint?”—and I had anew to make an explanation which he little comprehended, and then anew I wished to know of him which of the two sisters he the most admired.

And now he, making that stone like an ink-bottle which he keeps inside his shirt whirl about his forefinger without attachment in a quite wonderful way, his waist swaying to keep the thing whirling wildly quick, answered with whistling lips, “I like Miss Ruth.”

Then I: “Oh, you do? You like her better, I see, than you do Miss Eve?” upon which he, putting his hand behind his back for the stone to whirl behind there, answered, “Yes.”

Then I: “But leaving Miss Ruth out of the question, since she will never marry, which of the two do you most admire—Miss Eve or me?”

He: “You.”

I: “Oh, you do?”

He whistled quietly awhile, whirling the thing wildly with a swaying waist, as it were a wheel wheeling on his hand, and he answered, “Yes” to me; but I thought

that my heart would be breaking with its rankling.

So I to him: “Well, since this is so, that you like me so very vastly better than Miss Eve and than all, why go to-morrow evening to get the Bible, since there is no need, really; it is all nonsense and make-believe, and will merely mean that you will be caught by your father,” upon which he, suddenly ceasing to wheel the thing, sharply asked if she had not promised not to betray him.

So I: “She has promised, yes, but she little means it, wait, you will see, you little know women, they are deceivers all; she will betray you surely enough, if she but has the chance.”

He glanced sharply at me, then said, “No.”

I: “But I say yes.”

He: “The lapwing says pee-wit.”

What he meant I was not sure, but I was so broken-hearted that night, that with sobs I threw myself now in a passion to his breast, and on my knees, kissing my own tears on his hands, implored him like a dear boy not to leave and despoil me, but to love me for ever, for if he left me, that would be my death, I said, and his death as well.

He smiled with his fixed little smile upon me, and I could believe that he meant well by me; so, getting up now, I told him how I had that day gained all information as to English marriages, and meant on the morrow to take the first measures; but as I was speaking of this, he, leaning aside, bent his ear to the ground, hearing God only knows what sound under the grass, and when I had bidden him good-night, and was going up the cliff’s brow again, on glancing back I beheld him bent down aside, eagerly listening with his ear near the ground.

CHAPTER VIII. IN THE GARDEN.

The next day the first thing that happened was the coming of a person whom Miss Ruth interviewed for her father in the morning-room. I was even then seeking Miss Ruth for Miss Eve, and on coming near the room could hear the man say that he was one Shan Healy, a servant of Dr. Lepsius, who, having traced to The Towers the owners of the yacht which had touched at Shunter, was now come to find out what he could as to his master's son.

He seemed a person of some thirty years, slimly tall, with a scar that twists his upper lip, clad in rough new clothes: a man of an alert and amiable personality, so that Miss Ruth laid her hand on his sleeve to soothe him, for indeed he was in deep dreariness, and frequently sniffled. When I went in with the message, Miss Ruth sent me to call Miss Eve to her, so I ran back, and having brought Miss Eve, hung near to hear.

It was a long talk, the stranger having been given a seat near the grate, the sisters seated on each side of him, hearing his tale. I, for my share, was kept fidgety by the sounds of footsteps going about the house, and could gather only in fragments what was said—enough, however, to inform me of the marvel of the opportunity which has brought me this gorgeous bridegroom of mine, for here, it would appear, is Aladdin, and it is the wonderful lamps that are alight in his eyes. Only sparkle crisply, do, do, my little star, and come to me some spirit of perfect luck and alertness to spur me now with whispers how only four days more to hold him, till I have safely erected myself on my thrones, and bound my brows with crowns. Oh, I am silly with thoughts. But thrones, may be; may be, many crowns, as Josephine, who was but a bourgeoise, wore: for when Miss Eve asked this man, Healy, for what reason the father is in this fever as to the son being abroad in the world, the man answered that "the doctor regards it, lady, as a peril greater than a charge of gun-cotton piled under the globe, with a child holding a glowing coal by it: for, says he, the day that Master Hannibal gets to recognise the real grade of mankind's mind he'll be dragging the frame of society to fragments, like a child tearing a fly, leg by

leg, for mischief." The ladies had the eyes of a child who has listened late in the night to tales of the ancient time! "Well," Miss Ruth murmured, having heard the wonders that the man had to tell, "I am in for it now, for though I do know, I promised him not to tell his whereabouts, being cross with his parent for not having instructed him in the Christian faith." Then to Miss Eve, who, leaning forward with her chin on her palm, sat staring at some vision which she saw in the hearthplace, she remarked, "What do you say, Eve; what should I do?"

Now Miss Eve knit her brows, and presently replied, "Promises can't be repealed, dear."

"But since it may do much harm?" Miss Ruth suggested.

"Still," muttered the lips of Miss Eve, "a promise."

"Oh, lady, do, for God's sake," Healy now entreated of Miss Ruth, "not that I expect him to go back with me, but he's so green to everything, badly needs somebody, lady, like a whale run ashore, has got no razors to shave, no jacket——"

At this of "razors," Miss Ruth placed her hand upon the man's in a movement of friendliness: for in truth he appears to be rather like his young master's nurse than servant, and Miss Ruth's heart, like waters haunted with squalls, is anew every minute smitten with all the world's smart, as fluid and easy as Miss Eve is aloof. So she smiles with the man, saying, "Wait, I'll question my God," and gets up to go away to a window, from which she presently returns to Miss Eve with the words, "Eve, I'll peach."

To this Miss Eve at first answered nothing, but after a little asked, "What will he think of the worth of the promises made by us Christians? Knowing a first that has failed, never a second he'll trust"; but Miss Ruth continued to believe that it would be better on the whole to betray; did not, however, outright do so, only revealing to Healy that the boy would be coming that evening to receive a Bible, and instructing Healy to be then on the terraces to meet him.

But there was one who had no wish that the boy should be taken unawares, and who, not meaning him any more to meet Miss Eve, immediately made up her mind to make known to him that he had been deceived by the ladies. So, after placing Miss Eve's half-hourly hot water, down at once I started to him, and in passing near the morning-room, again had a peep of Miss Eve in solitude now, pacing there regularly to and fro with something of a frown, as it were a sentinel in a gown. But when I had got down to the cave, again my heart went aching, for again he was not there, and I thought then within myself, "It is going to be more troublesome to hold him in my prison than to keep quicksilver in a sieve, or to bind a wind with twine, and this is a wild kind of horse with wings that I have vaulted on, I think, which may chance in its raging to break every rib of my body." Louder and louder I called out after him now, and there was no sound nor sign of him: only, on the cave's floor now was a thing resembling a telescope, made of oak bored through the core; also I saw there a thing like a trap made of twigs, with the guts and gore of some animal close to it; also a hollowed stone containing water that was violently on the boil, though by what means the boy could cause this water to be bubbling and boiling there was more than one could conceive. There remained also most of the food which I had brought him, and having left what I had now brought, I had to hurry back up to The Towers.

There I spied Miss Eve still pacing in that same machine-like fashion as before, as queenly slow of step as when a lady, conning poetry by rote, paces with closed eyes. However, within twenty minutes now she called me, to ask me to take tea to her with my own hands, as on the day before; nor did I get any time to go down the mountain again, for after lunch I had to take the walk over to St. Arvens, where, at the vicarage, before a Mr. Rae, an aged curé, I made an affidavit as to there being "no impediment" to my marriage, and he promised to procure me by the 27th, from "the Bishop's Registry," the licence to marry, with a stamp on it for £2 3s. 6d. So far, then, all goes well, thank God; and in passing back through St. Arvens, having

got my finger measured at Martin's shop, I there gave orders for the wedding-ring, since I do not regard it as a good thing to bring my former wedding-ring into use for this new bridegroom. By the time I came home, elated with hopes, it was already late, and before long I was bearing tea, as bidden, to Miss Eve. There was an afternoon picnic at the Devil's Pulpit, where many of the party were; a few were at tennis; Miss Ruth was in the book-room in the thick of scribbling off a basketful of her correspondence with Christendom; and Miss Eve was with Monsieur the Minister of the Interior. But this time when I bore in their tea they were less close together: Monsieur de Courcy sitting in a mood of gloom on the sofa, gazing at the floor between his legs, Miss Eve standing nearer the fire-place, fingering white violets, with a bent face. And I, listening in the corridor, heard her murmur to him that "pain like a curse or some venomous perfume infects all Eve's poor daughters: curst that they needs must endure, worse when they needs must inflict," from which I gathered that the poor Monsieur de Courcy, having been given to hope for twenty-four hours, was now definitely turned away, though, as I left the corridor, I heard him cry out crazily, "There is some reason! I know that you like me, Eve!" but what answer was given to this I did not gather.

Then, after spending some time at the wardrobe, preparing the bath, arranging four costumes for her choosing, and the perfumery and lotions for her toilette de soir, I thought I might have just time to run down to the boy, but was now anew disappointed by being summoned to yet new toils by Miss Ruth, who, having received a bale of toys from the Dean of somewhere, presents me five dolls to dress! So that is the way it is? It was always to be dressing dolls that I was born, was it not, ladies? Wait only four days more! and perhaps you will then not know your lady's-maid for the smile that will writhe her lips, and for the royalty of that rage of joy which will shine in her eyes.

For the evening Miss Eve, for some reason, would put on her poudre blue with the Borzoi ornaments, and orchids, and now I had a small hour to myself, for, as to

dinner, eating was far enough beneath that sphere of fairies where my brain was in a reel; so, having merely tasted a spoonful of soup, off I hastened to him....

He was not there at the cave, still he was not there! And I could only guess that, his awes of his “Man” having already grown less great, he had roamed far, and ah, I asked my heart if he had not done it four days too soon for my fate.... I had no paper to write him that he would be betrayed by the ladies if he came up, and after half an hour’s waiting returned to The Towers.

Nothing was then left me to do but to watch, and at first I lurked under the conservatory’s shadow, and then, conscious that I might be observed, moved up to pry from behind the curtains of that front bedroom on the right.

Thence I soon saw Healy appear on the terraces, and soon from the drawing-room out to him moves Miss Ruth. Miss Eve did not appear, though invited by Miss Ruth, I know, to assist at the rendezvous. So Miss Ruth and Healy conversed a while, and I heard the stable-clock strike nine as Miss Ruth introduced Healy into the conservatory to wait there concealed, and then returned to pace the terrace in the moonlight. Three minutes afterwards, half a mile off on the meadow below the lawn, I beheld a runner coming with a wide stride, his elbows at his side, his head thrown back, his lips opened, pressing prone home like a beast with its ribs breathing deeply from long travelling. At once I was certain that it was no one but him by his black skull, his shaggy shirt, and by observing how with a bouncing somehow and a buoyancy in his gait the boy came gaily—beautiful! like a fabulous youth booted with something pneumatic; and soon, scaling the terraces, he stood panting before Miss Ruth, I kneeling at the window’s sill with my ear low to hear him excusing his lateness: for, said he, he had had a high-day of adventures, and then had been again delayed by watching a conflagration eight miles away, and the deaths of a man and a child.

“Really?” says Miss Ruth to him, “and what, sir, is the name of this poor man who

was burnt?" to which he gave the answer that he had heard the man called "George Perkins, the grocer."

"What, Mr. Perkins, the grocer, of Up Brooming?" cries Miss Ruth shrinkingly, with eyes of alarm, "burnt to death?" and "Oh!" she murmured with ruth.

To this he replied—and I disliked him for it—that there was no need for any feeling of grief or loss, since this grocer's life, he felt certain, was a life of no value, one greatly below the human grade, his figure having the grossness of the gorilla's, and his soul on a similar level, since in the attempt that he had made to steal he had failed even to death....

"To steal?" breathed Miss Ruth; "Mr. Perkins, the grocer? A prayer-leader? There must be some mistake!"

"No," he said—at least he took it, he said, for granted that the grocer had meant to steal, since there appeared to be no other motive for his demented rush into the conflagration.

"He rushed to rescue the child!" cries Miss Ruth.

"So," he replies, with his smile, "the people of the region seemed to imagine," but as the child, he observed, was not even the grocer's own offspring, and as even an ape's eye might have recognised the fatal state of the conflagration, therefore he could only suppose that the motive of the grocer was to grasp some hoard.... Whereupon the saint suddenly throws up her hands with drollery, and once more, as on the evening before, could not resist running to bring Miss Eve to hear the story of the good grocer, who, having perished as a hero, was still impeached of stealing! But Miss Eve would not immediately come, so that the other sister had need to entreat her thrice with, "Yes, come, yes, come," ere Miss Eve, deciding, appeared on the terrace in her poudre blue, the moonlight's hue, Hannibal Lepsius making the abject obeisances of a Jew before her face. Then the three spoke during some moments, or Miss Ruth and the young man spoke, Miss Eve, with an air of musing,

waiting mutely near. I heard only in fragments what was said, but gathered that Miss Ruth, having ridiculed the grotesqueness of the good grocer being accused of stealing, the young man now began to glorify and laud stealing, asking if the Spartans did not rightly regard it as an excellent art of life; and what was dishonourable about it, he wished to know, save to be of so drowsy a consciousness, he said, as to fail or to be found out in it? In the midst of which speech of his, Miss Eve, without saying a word, turned away, and went pacing westward behind the conservatory toward the garden, the young man all agape after her, and Miss Ruth saying to him, “Now, I’m afraid you have quite blundered into my sister’s bad books, though I, too, say with you that there’s no wrong in stealing, save that it does seem rather selfish, does it not? and selfishness, I think, is the sole falsity, the only fault. But never mind, it will be quite well, let us wait and pray, for I prophesy in the Spirit that one day light will spring from on high in you. I am only sorry that we have to separate, but here’s the promised Bible, which for love of me you will read frequently, while I for love of you will wrestle—Listen!” for he, half turned toward the conservatory, hardly heard her, his eyeballs all beguiled away with a hungry glaring in them the way that Miss Eve had disappeared. “Listen!” she says, “I have considered it best to betray you——”

“Ah!” now he span about to frown a second at her, into her, one may say, and some other seconds stood dumb, considering it; looked up, too (why, I do not know), at the window where I knelt hidden. At any rate, he saw now the truth of my prophecy that Miss Ruth would betray him, and that I was no lapwing that says “pee-wit.” In a moment more by some reasoning of his own he seems to have surmised that Healy was concealed in the conservatory, for toward it with his usual ill-breeding, leaving Miss Ruth, he immediately rushed. Just then the footman John ran out with some message for Miss Ruth, who went in with him, and soon out from the conservatory hurried Hannibal Lepsius, holding Healy by the sleeve, leading him to the terrace’s brink, where he caused him to sit with a warning finger. The next instant he himself

was off with the fleetest feet the way that Miss Eve had disappeared, tossing aside in his flight the Bible brought him by the other sister into the basin of water where the sun-dial stands, and as he vanished I, too, though with a shivering in my right knee which shook me throughout, rushed toward the house-back, and out into the top part of the garden, all my heart in a conflagration and tremble of haste to break into some outrageous row, and shout my wrongs.

I thought I heard talking down there at the bottom of the garden, and, bottling up my rage, shivering, I crawled like a snail down the three steps into a garden-walk which lay between bowers and arches made of box-twigs. There the voice of the boy again reached me, clearly now; so down another path on my right I prowled to its end, and now could see them down there at the bottom by the seat, he on his knees to Miss Eve like a very slave, she standing still, looking not at him, but at the north shrubbery-wall with a frown on her brow, while round in cruises above-head a white owl, I remember, was moving smoothly about in the moonlight, like a musing spirit cruising: for I somehow observed each little object, just as a person in going to the guillotine does, I have heard; and I observed that, though the previous day there had been bristles on his cheeks, he was at present clean-shaven, and I observed that Miss Eve's handkerchief, which she had dropped, hung from the young man's right ear; and I observed that he offered her earnestly the one half of a halfpenny, or of a penny, at which she would not look. Then I saw her lips speak, and she pointed southward, enjoining him, it seemed, to leave her, upon which up the boy sprang, and was now about, I believe, to seize her body, but all at once now was in flight—along the alley down which I was peeping! Why in flight I could not conjecture, till suddenly I saw Monsieur le Comte de Courcy appear from the north walk, with his cane uplifted in the air. He, it seems, pacing with two ladies in the north shrubbery, and seeing through the gate, may be, a male without a jacket molesting Miss Eve, had run to protect her, at which the young man, ever fearful of his "Man," had taken to his heels: and before ever I could raise my self up to run, he,

raining his steps, had pelted by me, looking back over his shoulder at Monsieur de Courcy. He seemed, when his eyes fell upon me, to see me there without surprise; and on some way he still ran, more and more slowly now, however, looking back always at Monsieur de Courcy who, cane in air, was pursuing him. But all at once the boy, making only loitering steps that halted, almost stopped, amazement painted on his face—that he was so inefficiently chased, I take it; amazement, and also, though he always smiled, a terror which stretched his nostrils as the cane of Monsieur the Minister came. I stood awe-struck at it! and Miss Eve, too, appeared to be apprehensive of something fearful, for she tripped some distance in Monsieur the Minister's rear, and once called out after him. He, however, seemed not to hear her: still on came his great bulk of body, the cane, the eye-glass and glassy shirt-front, till he was quite near the turning in which I lurked, his teeth grinning white to bite his cigarette between them. But he never advanced as far forward as my turning: all at once Hannibal Lepsius was at him; and in that instant of bewilderment, ere one's wits could decide what had been done, or in what way done, one was aware of the cane of Monsieur the Minister wheeling high away up in the air, up where the owl wound its flight, while the Minister himself was now on the ground, and his cigarette, no longer in his mouth, now stuck out of one nostril, the glowing end upward.... Oh, I was smitten with compunction for Monsieur de Courcy, he a man of so much culture—and with a feeling of affright! he being one whose anger it must be a truly grievous thing to bring upon oneself.... As Miss Eve hurried to him, I ran off.... The young man also had vanished, appalled, as I imagine, at the enormity of his defiance of his "Man"; and when I ran out to the terraces, neither of him nor of Healy was any trace to be seen, nor when I ran down to his river-cave.... I came back up lagging and agued, yes, trembling throughout in a kind of ague-fit....

Then, till my bell summoned me at midnight, I lay sullen, and, as it were, dead, though uttering a sob anon. But soon after midnight I had my mistress in my hands before the mirror, had already made ready her hair, and now after massage with the

preparation, was getting on her night-gloves, when she remarks to me, “What is the matter? Your fingers quiver,” and I then replied to her, “Miss Vickery, this is because I have it on my mind to inform you that I am about to leave your service in a hurry, since I am about to be married.” I expected to feel her start a little! but even in that electric blaze of the two candelabra I could detect no surprise in her, and oh, these English with their cold spleens, how one dislikes them! She muttered to me, “Don’t be agitated; when do you go?” did not even inquire who was that future-one of mine. But as it was mainly in order to proclaim this to her that I had spoken, I made the remark, “I believe, Miss Vickery, that you have even seen my future-one, who is that young individual named Hannibal Lepsius”—whereat as when a nerve leaps a little, it appeared certain to me that her hand stirred in mine: and I was pleased within myself at this.

She asked not one question, but I now informed her frankly of everything, how, in his passion for me, after seeing me in the bushes, the young man had swum aboard the yacht, how I had hidden him, brought him hither, and now was about to receive the bishop’s licence to marry him—keeping meantime a sharp eye of observation upon her face in the mirror: but beyond a little raising up of her palms once as in amazement, she listened calmly, making no remark; only, the moment I stopped, up she stood, went to the large wardrobe, and now began prodigally to shower out her gowns, gown after gown, upon the arm-chair for my wedding-gift, so that I stood agape at the largesse of her busy arm, and this sharp shower of her bounty—quite a thousand pounds, as I now count—for out, too, with the others flew that pearl grey, the ermine stole, that orchid-mauve silk with the spotted poplin, and now the China silk tea-gown with the Valenciennes insertions, and that great creation for the Coaching Club Meet last year, only that once worn. “And are all these really for me, Miss Vickery?” I said to her in the midst of it; “you are truly good and gracious, Miss Vickery,” I said, to which she made no answer, but continued to rain her largesse with a scornful arm. I had to make three journeys out of the chamber,

submerged beneath these riches, and comforted inwardly of the pangs that rankled in me. Even when I supposed that I had taken out everything, the stole was still left, and when I now stepped in softly for this from behind the portière, I came upon the lady standing there as naked now as a lily, her outlines all slenderly long-drawn as by the pencil of a stripling painter who has never yet ventured, save in his dreamings, to be voluptuous, and she appeared to stand tip-toe stretched to spurn and desert this earth, and return to her heavens. Suddenly, chancing to catch sight of me behind her, all that marble was washed in one blush, as though I was he upon whom perhaps her heart was musing.

CHAPTER IX. “VITRIOLISERAI.”

The next morning he was gone, he was not there in the cave, and as for the man, Healy, he was not there, and where to seek I knew not at all: only the thing like a telescope was there in the cave, the thing like a trap, the dead creature’s remains, the stone which he has hollowed into a vase, and under some rubbish and leaves in a corner the thing like an ink-bottle that he has called a “stele”: but all the bread, etc., that I had brought him he had either eaten or taken away.

Eaten, may be; but, if not eaten, whither, I asked myself—with this food—was he off to? Ah, many questions I asked myself; and then, hurrying across the bridge, went to the cottage of Mrs. Bream, with whom Healy was lodging, to ask if the man did not sleep there the previous night; but she said no, he had merely come in, together with a stripling who wore sandals, to take away his bag, saying, however, that he would be back to her in some days; and he had taken the 10.20 up-train with this stripling, who had wished to know of her, poor sinner, if she did not know even so much as the names of the mountains in the moon.

Upon this, seeing me near to fainting, she made me sip a little of a white wine made, she said, out of cowslips. I was not, however, wholly without hope, since Healy,

who is clearly a captive, and probably but repeated his master's words, had promised to return; nor did I believe that the man could mean to deceive, since he seems an honest-minded person. To this, then, I clung; though that the boy should fly off thus wildly to London without breathing anything of it to me who am his sweetheart seemed hard—to London, I assumed! for that 10.20 train stops only at Gloucester and Swindon before London, and I thought that he may have wished to behold the capital. Indeed, this is probable: for the conviction has clearly been growing upon him that his "Man," hereabouts, at all events, is hardly all that he has thought him; and I guess that the feebleness of such a magnate as Monsieur the Minister of the Interior in that encounter in the garden may have sent him flying off to the capital to find out once and for all how things actually are. What, then, I asked myself, would be his opinion of it all? Would what he there saw fascinate or in any other way keep him from returning to me? Would not Healy find the means to communicate with Dr. Lepsius, or in some way to kidnap and immure the young man? Ah, many, many questions I asked myself....

The 26th. It was vindictive of Monsieur de Courcy to give information to the police as to his grievance against the young man, which, after all, was hardly very grave; but his no doubt is one of those hard brows that hardly ever forgive. At any rate, this morning an "inspector" demanded to interview me with regard to the whereabouts of the young man, my relation with whom, owing to my haste to crow my marriage, is already known throughout the household, just as the fact that Miss Eve is in negotiation with a lady for a new maid is well known to everyone.... My God! what is to become of me now, my good God? Have I not conducted myself like a light-headed young girl who has not yet learned to govern her nerves or her tongue, who skips into enthusiasm at the first music, and boasts beforehand of shadows as though they were substances? At any rate, I had to confess to this constable my complete ignorance of my bridegroom's movements, whereupon he, getting up to go, said to me, "Well, we shall make it hot for him if he dares show his nose about

here again."

The 27th. But is he such a blackguard, or is his scorn of me so great, that he cannot even write me a line to say that I am never again to see him? Still not even a line, and Miss Eve this morning would not let me do her hands, but ordered me to bed, I looked so bad. I went, but had to get up to go to St. Arvens to receive the marriage-licence, after which I took the train, as directed, to Wynton, to give notice of it to the registrar there; and now any day after to-morrow, this gentleman told me, I may be married: a statement that made me in coming down the stairs break bitterly out into tears.... In passing through Wynton I procured myself at the chemist's a vial of vitriol....

The 28th. Again to-day I was several hours in bed with my headache, Miss Ruth coming at noon to read aloud to me a fairy-tale named The Pilgrim's Progress, and after luncheon comes Miss Eve also to sit five minutes at my bedside. It was in going away, when she had reached the door, that she stopped and said, "And as to your marriage?" whereupon I too rashly indulged my shame with the falsehood that I had that very morning received a communication from my future-one, assuring me that he would immediately be here to be mine.... The house is now empty of guests, the two Gordons having departed this morning....

The 29th. Well, dear Lord, he is here, and I thank you. I now write at six in the morning, after having spent a nearly sleepless night with him and Healy, and still with no desire to close my eyes. By to-morrow evening we shall have been secretly and safely married, and within a week I shall have taken farewell of this my life here....

I was in the housekeeper's room alone, for Mrs. Bowden had gone up, it being long past midnight, and I was lying on the sofa, the vial of vitriol beside me on the table, for I had been foolishly fingering it, when there came a tapping at that back door which opens upon the passage. I get up, I go to it, I open it.... And it was he! Oh, my

wild one with wings, with the light of life flying wildly in his eyes, it was he! and while one might reckon three I stood breathless, then with a cry was on his breast.

His nature is not yet coaxed over into tolerating the luxury of kissing, and even in the ecstasy of our meeting his chastity shrank from the touch of my lips; but, my faith, that will soon be "al-right"! and he patted my shoulder fondly, even while hurriedly saying, "I need light for an hour or two."

I was too much flurried to attend to what he said! I cooed to him, "And is it actually true that you have come back to me?"

"Yes, yes, let me get in," he mutters hurriedly, and now, seizing Healy by the sleeve, hurries in into the housekeeper's room. He had climbed outside, and spied me alone in there through the window, Healy told me afterwards.

But his air was much changed! all bustle now, business, and aloofness from one! When I now said to him, "But where, then, have you been?" he mutters to Healy, "Just answer her questions, and see that she speaks in whispers," and instantly sits to the table, places on it that ink-bottle "stele" of his that he had left in the cave, takes a magnifying-glass out of his shirt, and begins to gaze through it at the marks that are cut in the stone.

"But tell me——" I began to say to him, when "Sh-h-h!" breathes Healy into my ear, "I'll tell you," and draws me away to a corner, where he whispers me, "Mum, can you offer a body such a thing as a bite of something? He"—indicating Hannibal Lepsius with his thumb—"can do without food and sleep, but that's a bit more than I can bring off, anyway."

I made him sit, stole out, and in five minutes was back with bread, meat, cheese, and a bottle of beer. Hannibal Lepsius at this time could no more be said to be sitting, but was half over the table, one knee on the chair, poring with greed over that "stele," as if he would eat it with his gaze. I was about to say something to him, when my ear was afresh reached by the sh-h-h of Healy, like a whispering of leafage

fretted by a zephyr; so I placed the victuals on Healy's knees, sat before him, and commenced to question him; but it was many minutes before his stuffed mouth could bring out a syllable.

"Why were you so famished?" I asked him, "since you had money to pay railway-fare?"

With his lips at my ear, he answered: "It was a question of time, mum—no time to eat, no time to sleep; but that's good meat, that is, and that's good beer, too."

"Was he, then, in such a hurry to return to his marriage?" I asked.

The man looked at me under his eyes—strangely, I thought—and replied, "I know nothing of that, mum; but we went to see London, and we saw it in a tear, I tell you, and we left it in a tear, for by the end of the third day London had got a bit too hot for us."

"Why, how was that?" I asked him.

"Truth is," he whispered, "some of us have been putting into our pockets more than what belongs to us!"

"What!" I said.

"Sh-h-h," he went.

Mrs. Bowden's clock just then struck one, and glancing round at it, I beheld Hannibal Lepsius bent yet further over the table, poring upon that stone, and heard him whimper over it as if in pain.

"What is he doing?" I whispered to Healy.

"Lord knows, mum," he whispered back.

"So the London police were after him?"

"That's so."

"What a thing!" I said in awe.

“Thrice in three days!” he whispered; “aye, and that second time it was a close go with us, too, seeing that he wouldn’t let go hold of me—a thousand people after us through London streets, if there was one, and he dragging me, thinking that I am against him, too, and want to betray him. That’s hard, too, that’s hard. Here am I, mum, Dr. Lepsius’ servant—I’d give this hand for the doctor—yet keeping the lad dark from the doctor, going against the doctor, mind, knowing that I am doing wrong, but no more able to help it than a man addicted to liquor, I am that given up to the lad; yet he keeps me as his prisoner, I who’d race after him to hell; thinks I want to run away and betray him to everybody, can’t believe in a motive that’s not selfish, it’s hard.”

“You haven’t, then, written to tell his father that you have found him?” I asked.

“God forgive me, no,” he answered with a bent head; “though I have had chances to do it, too, mum, and the doctor must be in as much of a wonder what’s come to me as what’s come to Master Hanni. God forgive me! for never I’ll forgive myself on this side Jordan. And all to pleasure the lad—but he can’t see it, keeps me as a prisoner, it’s hard.”

“But what did he do in London? what did he think of the ladies there? was he really chased by the London people?” I asked, for I could not whisper my questions fast enough to satisfy my inquisitiveness.

Healy answered yes, that the sandals and bauge shirt of Shunter Island had been chased with hue and cry all up Tottenham Court Road at midday, and twice by night in other places; and that not the London police only were after him, for that he had no sooner stepped from the train down here than a constable laid hands on him; but he had filliped the constable in the face, and run away, making to the cave to get the “stele,” which he seemed to be extremely eager to get, and then had run up here, dragging Healy with him.

“And he actually filliped the constable?” I said to Healy: “he is no longer, then, at all

in awe of his ‘Man’?”

Healy grinned a grimace to himself, and throwing up his hands a little, whispered to me, “All idiots! that was the verdict on the second night—about eight o’clock, mum, drizzling, hazy night, he and I sitting in one of those recesses of Waterloo Bridge, and over the river a sight, mum, greatly like a fairyland going on in a haze, with that host of lights.... So he sits awhile there, weary from the two days’ tear, looking at the traffic rolling over the bridge; then getting up on the seat, he leans over the parapet; and presently, as he was there looking down upon the river, I hear him say to himself ‘idiots,’ and then I hear him say ‘all, all,’ with a sort of wail, shaking his head a bit, and then I see him bury his face in his hands, and a sound came out of him that at first was more like crying, but afterwards was more like laughing; and from that minute he was eager to get back down here to his cave.”

I looked round at Hannibal Lepsius, and now saw his body all across the table, with one knee also on it, for, in the keenness of his strain as to that “stele,” he had been pushing it inch by inch from him and following it; and now his brow was all brown and engorged, his eyes were glaring at the object like a maniac’s, and now also a sort of groan broke out of his breast.

When I turned back to Healy to continue our conversation, I found that during those few moments that I had been looking away his brow had dropped in sleep; and I was just disengaging from his fingers the glass that he had been drinking from lest he should drop it, when I became aware of a tapping at the little door at the back. I stole out to it, I opened it, and now, heavens! my soul faints within me when I behold standing there the big Inspector Gibbon, together with that graceful young constable of Thring with the moustache, whose name is Shooter.

“We have found him at last,” remarks Inspector Gibbon, for they had seen the light, climbed a little by the spout outside, and seen the young man poring over the stele.

“But what has he done?” I asked them, with a trembling about my right knee,

hearing, as I asked it, Mrs. Bowden's clock strike twice.

"There are no less than five counts against him," answered Inspector Gibbon, "three from London, two down here; let's have the beauty out"—and he steps within the doorway.

At once now with a wild heart I darted back into Mrs. Bowden's room, to whisper to the young man, "I am afraid that two officers are come to arrest you!"

He groaned, without glancing up from his poring over that stone. I waited several seconds, hearing the clock tick, and my own heart as loudly pounding. Healy also, who had started awake, now sat staring with an open mouth.

"What shall I say to the two officers?" I asked the young man.

Again he groaned grievously, but did not glance up at me, and again I stood in suspense some seconds; till now he in an absent way, still without glancing up, mumbled at me, "Bring them here."

I ran out, and found the officers already at the door: in another moment they were standing within the housekeeper's room. Hanni Lepsius was now on his feet awaiting them, and the instant they appeared he stepped up to them, saying, "Now, I wish you to take me; take me—only be swift."

"You are a beauty——" Inspector Gibbon began to say, taking the young man by one arm, while Shooter took him by the other; but Hannibal Lepsius cut short his words, saying to him, "Yes, I know: you all delight in the waste of time, the waste of words. But come, take me, and I shall know now with certainty whether you are of the smallest worth." The boy now pointed out of the back door at the old oak tree that stands there in the courtyard about twelve yards from the door. "You see that oak tree," he said to them: "only get me past that, and not only will I go with you the rest of the way to prison, but four hundred pounds which I stole in London shall be for your private use"—and how earnestly he spoke to them! turning from one to the other, instilling his meaning into their ears as into the ears of people hard of hearing,

while they calmly smiled upon him with a contempt for him equal to his concern for them. “You are poor,” he told them, “ah, poor even to meanness, even to shame; and here in this pocket is the money. Rouse yourselves now, then! Ask yourselves, ‘How can he escape us?’ Not by strength!—each of you is as strong as I. By craft, then? Surely, only by craft!”—turning from one to the other, pleading earnestly at the ear of each in turn. “But there are at most only six possible ways,” he said, “in which, by craft, even a lord of Mars or Venus, I think, could escape you. Think in lightning now of those ways! Rouse, rouse yourselves! Oh, rouse, rouse, now, all those dark powers that profoundly drowse in your soul! Look round the room: for the means by which I choose to escape lie here before your face; nor are you idiots born, your brain has the same bulk, your reason is equal to mine, only it deeply sleeps—oh, dull, dull, dull—and wakefulness is bliss, wakefulness is life——”

“Oh, come, no more of it,” now said Inspector Gibbon, interrupting him with a good-natured disdain, drawing the young man away; and Hannibal Lepsius uttered no other word.

They took him to the back door, Healy and I following mutely behind, and down the two steps they went, and across the yard toward the oak tree and the swing-gate that is close by the south garden-wall. The moon was about at her full in a sky without one cloud in it, so that I could see that the boy’s right foot, as he walked, was drawing part of the coil of rope from the stables which generally lies just there by the back door; and I whispered to Healy, “He has got his leg entangled in the rope!”

They were by this time not three feet from the old oak tree, Inspector Gibbon at the young man’s right arm, Shooter at the left, keeping a strong grip, I could see, and a cautious guard, since they had been so warned; nor had I, for my part, the least expectation of seeing him escape them ere they reached the tree, or indeed at any time; but all at once, just as they reached the tree, without even the least effort I now beheld him easily free; and the next instant one saw a sight!—the two constables all

entangled, and Hannibal Lepsius running furiously round and round the tree, ever with every revolution at a shorter distance from it, the rope in his hand, roping with many whorles the two men to the tree. I never was so curiously affected, I think, by any sight—with a feeling of religion and hallelujah, I may say, the two men's bulk of flesh looking so abject and helpless in the hands of that wit, like hippopotami with their insignificant skulls: though how he had contrived to escape out of their grasp without a struggle I still had no idea. To tie their hands, their arms being already bound, was to him not the work of a minute, and suddenly he was rushing back to the house, dashed inward past Healy and me without a word, and by the time we two had returned to Mrs. Bowden's room, he was already whining and whimpering anew over his stone, as if nothing had happened.

"But in what way——?" I began to say to him, when Healy's "sh-h-h" again checked my tongue; so in the corner Healy and I discussed in agitated whispers what had taken place. When I asked Healy if he knew in what manner the young man had escaped the police, he answered by asking me, "What's in that little bottle on the table?"

At this I felt myself fly red to the roots of my hair! for he meant the vial of vitriol which, procured at Wynton on the 27th, I have been foolishly fingering ever since.

"How should I know what is in the vial?" I said to Healy.

"Well, whatever it is," he said, "it is something that makes cloth rotten in a tick, for when you went out to tell the officers to come in, he dipped a match into the vial, drew with the match a circle on each of his shirt sleeves, and now, you see, the two pieces of shirt have disappeared"—and in truth the young man's arm nearest me was showing through a hole in his shirt, so I understood that by the working of the vitriol the two pieces of shirt had come away in the policemen's hands. I had begun to say, "Well, it was not so wonderful, after all, now that one knows how——" when one of the bound men began to shout out for succour; upon which Hanni Lepsius groaned

within himself over his stone, and, without glancing up, told Healy to go and give them to know that if they made but one other outcry before the daybreak he would gag and agonise them; so Healy hastened out to say this, and thenceforth the two men remained mum.

After this Healy and I talked in our corner till the clocks tolled three, by which time both our heads were ready to nod, our words dried up, and still on in the soundless night worked Hanni Lepsius over that stone. I did not hear four strike, for I was in a little sleep; but immediately after half-past four I heard, or dreamed that I heard, a laugh somewhere, and I started awake, aware that his study of the stone was over, and that he was standing at my side.

At once, as I opened my eyes, he handed me the vial of vitriol, bowing a little, and smiling.

“What is this?” I asked him.

“It is oil of vitriol,” replies the boy.

I ought, if I had had my wits, to have asked him why he handed it to me! but, being only half-awake and confused, I foolishly took the thing and put it down without finding a word to say; and I saw his gaze linger strangely upon me. Then he said, “I am very hungry.”

I ran and fetched him bread, cheese, and water, for he will eat no meat; and it was while eating that he asked me whether I had with me those two hundred pounds which I had told him that I had hoarded. I replied that I had with me ninety pounds only; he then demanded of me if I had this in metal or in notes, and on my replying “in notes,” he said that he desired to see at once what a banknote is like, and would I run and bring him the money that he might see. Proud to do him a pleasure, though it was a journey through the house at that hour, I light my candle, I set off, and soon return with my roll of notes. He sat with them, fingering, holding them up to the gas, while I, with my hand on his shoulder, remarked that all that was to begin our little

ménage, informed him that everything had been arranged for our marriage, and asked him when that little affair was to be. His answer was that it should be that very day at two o'clock, and I felt my heart start once and cease to beat, my right knee trembling like a string. While I stood thus agitated behind him, he, examining the banknotes, requests me to give him an envelope; so I go to Mrs. Bowden's desk, I get an envelope, and, as I give this to him, he hands me back my roll of notes, takes the envelope, puts into it a piece of tissue-paper, on which he had written some words with a stump of blue pencil, fastens the envelope, and with the pencil writes on it the words, "To Eve Vickery."

I started! and I started anew when he said to me, "Hand this to that lady when she awakes."

"But what do you mean?" I said, shrinking from him; "do you, then, wish to outrage me? and do you suppose that I would do such a thing, really?"

"You will," he said; and to Healy, "Come."

"But stay!" I cried; "at what hour of the day do I see you?..."

He was already at the door of the room, but came back a little, saying, "At noon; and the marriage at two"—whereupon he anew picks up the vial of vitriol from the table, hands it to me, and goes through the doorway—the good God only knows why he did this.

I darted after, caught him at the back door, and, casting my arms about him, wet his cheek with my kisses and tears. He made no remark, save to say, "Do not release those police until twenty minutes past five"; and he went.

The moon had set, and the new day hardly yet dawning, but I could see him go past the oak tree without a glance at the two prisoners, and go away like ghosts, he and his Healy, through the swing-gate close by the south garden-wall.

I had then to sit up till twenty past five, as he had said, to release the police, when I brought them in, gave them some breakfast, and impressed it upon them that it was

useless for them to seek him, since he was “gone away,” I said; and even if he was not, they could never get him, I said: a statement which they seemed to believe, for they were very dejected and shivering.

It is now near seven, and here I still sit, even now not sleepy, for this is the day of my life. What is in my heart? Is it peace? Is it dancing? I think I have a fear....

It will soon be time to be at Miss Eve’s bedside. Of course, I shall not give her the envelope, though he said with assurance that I will; but I have not as yet opened it to see what is in it, for I fear his consciousness of things.... There is something solid in it, like the half of a halfpenny, and a chain....

The 29th, at nine in the night. He has robbed me of my savings, he has abandoned me, he is gone for ever!... No, my God, I cannot write, my head cannot hold itself up.

The 30th. I will vitriolise him. God knows, that will not be easy, he has many eyes, it will be almost impossible: but those great men who make discoveries which amaze the creation—in what manner do they accomplish this? I think it is not because their wits are so vastly more than those of ordinary folk, but because their lives are wholly devoted to one thing only, as my life henceforth will be wholly devoted to this alone. God help me in this; it will be only after years of effort that I can even hope to do it, but one day, if God be my Helper, it will be done “al-right.”

When at two yesterday he could not be anywhere found, I opened with steam the envelope addressed to Miss Eve, and found that he had written on the piece of tissue-paper in it the words, “Beldam Eve, farewell for two years, from your slave for ever, Hannibal Lepsius. Please tell Jeanne Auvache where I have laid her money.” The meaning of this last phrase I could not for fully an hour make any sense of, since my brain was reeling round and round; then it occurred to me to look anew at the roll of notes that he had handed me back, and when I now flew to them, I found that only the two outer ones were now notes, all within being mere stuffing

of tissue-paper. For a long time I lay on the floor by the trunk, feeling myself ruined, for the loss of even a franc has always appeared irreparable to me, and here were two thousand francs departed by fraud, for ever, out of my life. But after a time I thought of the words in the note to Miss Eve, “Please tell Jeanne Auvache where I have laid her money,” and without stopping to ask myself how Miss Eve could know this, I picked myself up to run straight to her with the note, no more caring whether she noticed that I had opened it, for I cared for nothing. First, however, I tried to detach the half-coin from the note—it was the half of a sovereign which had been split in two, and through a hole in it passed one of those little chains such as medallions are hung from round infants’ necks; but he had artfully gummed the half-coin to the tissue-paper just by the words “please tell Jeanne Auvache,” and, as I could not get away the coin without tearing the paper, I ran with the whole to Miss Eve in the eagerness of my hope to get back my money—forgetting at the moment that this was even what that fiend had foretold that I would do. Miss Eve was in her boudoir alone, reading in her rocking-chair, and suddenly, without rapping, I was there before her, holding out the note and chain. She lifts her eyes, and instantly a faint flush flew to suffuse her face. “What is it?” says she, taking the thing, and in one moment her eyes had run over the words, she had thrown the note aside with a little motion of the wrist in a little hurry, like one brushing off a fly, and was anew perusing her book.

“Miss Vickery,” I said, “can you tell me where my money is laid?”

Anew she lifts her eyes, looks at me silently, and from that look I knew at once that that phrase in the note had only been put into it so as to ensure that Miss Eve should receive the note; for he knew that I would open the envelope, and that Miss Eve knew nothing as to where my money is, for how could she? My money is in his pocket, that is where my money is, my two thousand francs.

The 31st. I was not allowed to get out of bed to-day, and ah, these English, they are

frigid, they are hard on the surface, but beneath they are tenderer and better than all the world. I expected that Miss Ruth would lavish the compassion of her ever-wounded bosom upon my grief, but I have been even deeper touched by the goodness of Miss Eve. When, in one of the paroxysms, I cried, “Miss Vickery, I will vitriolise, I will vitriolise him, if it is in fifteen years to come!” she, with a look that flashed anger at me, began to say, “You shameful woman!” but then rushed to the bed and warmly embraced me in her arms, murmuring many times in words of wooing, “Poor bruised heart, poor wounded woman,” with water swimming in her eyes, while I wept on her. A French lady would not have kissed me on the lips.... In the afternoon when I knew that she was below, I stole from bed, and, creeping to her boudoir, peeped in to see if the tissue-paper note with the half of a sovereign was yet on the card-table, whither she had brushed it from her; but it had vanished.

The 2nd. I must go away, and in haste, since this holy house is no place for me to linger one hour in, with my heart all a nest of hissing asps. I recognise it to be an incongruity, as a devil in disguise in high heaven might be. Miss Eve would have me revoke the notice to leave that I have given her: but I will go. In truth, thy youth is over, Jeanne, thy last hope of happiness has perished, thy very last rose is ashes. Is it not certainly a dog’s world? and I will get back into it black and bitter, a hag at heart, bidding good-bye to the time of bloom, to all beauties of youth, abandoning my being recklessly to rancour and wrinkles, decay and tragedy and destruction. I do not care, I will vitriolise him, if he live as high from me as the sky, and within a week, I swear it, will have left this place and these people....

CHAPTER X. “THE MOON.”

The narrative of Jeanne Auvache, which continues yet through three volumes, may here be dropped, and what else took place may be gleaned from the “Memoirs” of Monsieur Goncourt Leflô (Prefect of the Seine), and from the “Notes” of Saïd Pasha

(Chargé d'Affaires), together with jottings and gossips of other witnesses.

In that place which used, I think, to be called "La Plage," but is now the Club des Décavés, a crowd one afternoon sat surveying the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. (The Décavés is far up at the top of the Avenue by the Arc de Triomphe, from which point the throngs of bicyclists who have toiled up the incline of the Champs Elysées put their legs up, give themselves to God, and by Him are taken gaily down the long-drawn-out incline to the Bois, like boats in the river of carriages which rolls droning down.) It was an afternoon in June, and everyone who knows his "capital of the universe" at all knows that sight, whose mood, in its large-minded worldliness, is rather to be recalled than to be described.

The Décavés itself, with people coming, going, sitting, sipping, gossiping, was a scene of no little vivacity; and to a new-comer, as he stepped up, one of a group of three said eagerly, "You have heard, Leflô?"

"Well, naturally, one has heard," answered Monsieur Leflô, the Prefect, as he sat, "inasmuch as one cannot dodge the omnipresent, and all Paris is talking of it."

"But what an indiscretion!" cried Monsieur Isabeau Thiéry.

"A public embrace at the Foreign Office, my friends!" added the Abbé Sauriau, his plump palms spread a little.

"But, then, everything is possible at the Foreign Office," remarked the Prefect of the Seine: "above all, dizziness of the head."

"This, however, my friends," now said the old Duc de Rey-Drouilhet, "is an incident, not of the Third Republic, but of the Second Empire! Transfer the scene to the Bal Morel, and the lady might have been Païva, as the male Plon-Plon," whereat Isabeau Thiéry shook backward his lion's mane of hair with, "It may be an incident of the Third Empire, which we see beginning—unless by chance a patriot or two still exists in France." ("He was"—to quote from the "Notes" of Saïd Pasha—"one of the tribe of poet-politicians—the Hugos, Lamartines, Châteaubriands—and

though neither his poetry, nor even his politics, was at all equal to theirs, Thiéry, as we know, took himself awfully seriously, excelling them all, since not in head, at any rate in hair, in his spread of hatrim and La Vallière cravat, whose crimson hue proved him “of the Left.”)

“But was it Lepsius who did this?” now said the Abbé Sauriau, his tumbler of byrrh brought half-way up to his broad mouth: “Lepsius, the Nazarene, reeling beneath the mead of Venus! This Puritan, whose existence is presumed to be made up of a race with the sun, to whom a speck of dust appears a heap of leprosy, and the loss of a minute the loss of a province?... This Lepsius, indeed, is a myth he has contrived by chance to create in men’s minds a Lepsius-Phantasm, as there is a ‘Napoleonic Legend’; but oh, if he had but a real existence! Who in that case, my friends, could fail to revere this furious reaper of the tickings of the clock, who lives with one eye on a second-hand, and with the other, I am told, on a pyramid of thrones? Do you know the story that is told of what he replied to Proudhon ainé, who at that time was one of the Quæstors of the Chamber, when Proudhon ainé said to him, ‘To-morrow, monsieur, it shall be done’? The answer of Lepsius—as they say—was, ‘Monsieur, believe me, to-day is each man’s last, last chance, for it will be doubly impossible for him to effect to-morrow just that which he may effect to-day, since to-morrow it will be all an altered world, he an altered man in it.’... Is it he, my friends, whom we find engaging in an amour so touched with giddiness that it may not wait for privacy?”

“A propos of ‘the clock,’” remarked the old Duc de Rey-Drouilhet, his little hand all aflash with diamonds in the sunshine, “Freycinet fils is said to have remarked this afternoon at Tortoni’s that then at least, during the kiss, Monsieur Lepsius lost reckoning of the clock, seeing that his eyes were tight closed! And it is now being said round about the Palais-Bourbon of Cardinal Pontmartin, who has declared that the kiss lasted a minute and eight seconds by the clock, ‘How could the Prelate have seen the clock, when those holy eyes of his must have been poring upon Paradise

revealed before them!'—a mot at which the titter and grin of the beau set his (!) teeth atremble with a rather ghastly glitter on his gums.

"But as to the lady——" Isabeau Thiéry began to say at the same moment that the old gossip exclaimed, "Here comes Saïd Pasha, one of the keenest listeners and best observers in Paris"—and a brown man with a firm lip, perfectly turned out, came up to the table, the duke observing to him, "Monsieur, one is conscious from the very blush of your boots that you bring with you much that is new."

"But, Monsieur le Duc, they were not polished by myself," replied Saïd Pasha innocently—a reply which raised a smile! since everybody knew that the duke, in the course of a very varied career, had had need to be his own menial.

"In any case, you can enlighten us as to the identity of the lady who is on the tapis in connection with a certain individual," said Isabeau Thiéry to Saïd Pasha, who at that time was generally supposed to be in quite the inner côterie of the Palais-Lepsius; but in the same instant that the staid and cautious chargé d'affaires was asking what lady was meant, the duc was saying, "Here, too, comes Monsieur the Englishman," and one Mr. E. Reader Meade, an attaché at the Faubourg St. Honoré, walked up—a man who, because of his bulk, and of that mass of face on which was written "phlegm" and "judgment," was often in the Paris of that day nicknamed "the Englishman." As he approached, the aged gossip, holding up his eye-glass before a dilapidated eye, made the observation, "But do I read aright in Monsieur Meade's air that he is unaware of anything having happened?"

"Very possibly, Monsieur le Duc," replied the Englishman, sitting down, "since I only arrived from London an hour ago"—at which confession of benightedness, in a moment the old Duc de Rey-Drouilhet was at Meade's ear, leaning over, tittering forth the story with no little vivacity—Soirée last night at the Quai d'Orsay—all the Faubourg St. Honoré there, much of the Faubourg St. Germain itself, not to mention a Chausée d'Antin mob—in the grand salon the quadrille d'honneur had already

begun, the Prince of Wales the partner of Madame la Ministre—out in the vestibule, moving in, a crowd—in its midst the young Lepsius and his usual retinue—also a lady, supposed to be English, who at any rate was under the chaperonage of the English Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard; this lady and a certain individual gradually work together through the throng, by accident, say some, by design or blind desire, say others—do not, however, seem to see each other—move on with the crowd, shoulder to shoulder, without speech or look—till for some reason two of the electric jets chance to go dark, leaving the vestibule in partial gloom, whereupon that pale dark face of a certain individual turns toward the lady's pale fair face—the lady's pale face turns somewhat toward his—and, according to Cardinal Pontmartin, who was quite near the pair, their wide and wild eyes stare awhile at each other with a stare of scare, of even the extreme of terror, as in apprehension of some impending crash and catastrophe—until now the lips of Lepsius pounce upon the lady's—nor does the good girl turn hers away, gives herself gallantly up to the vertigo and whirl of it, smiling though white, her eyes closed, his eyes closed—the crowd looking on in an amazement so profound, that Cardinal Pontmartin had since declared that his hair could not but have stood on end, if he had had any, as beyond all question would the hair of the good Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, if it had been real."

"And we who imagined that Society under the Third Empire was destined to be as earnest and bourgeoise as was that under the Citizen Monarchy," remarked Isabeau Thiéry with sarcasm when the old duke had concluded the story, to which Mr. E. Reader Meade replied with a smile, "But what can be more 'bourgeois' than kissing, monsieur, or more 'earnest' than such a kiss?"

"Such a kiss," the Abbé Sauriau said, "is a proof, my friends, of nothing save of Lepsius' disdain of mankind, since he certainly weighed the thirty or so pairs of eyes which observed that kiss as lightly as lovers on a stile weigh the eyes of kine which watch them. Do you know the story that is told of his answer to Marshal Macintosh, à propos of the Marshal's remark that a foreigner, even after a hundred years, is

never regarded and behugged by the French as a Frenchman? Lepsius replied, ‘It may be nice to be loved, monsieur, but what is nicer far is to be disliked, to behold yourself surrounded by people thirsting like Tantalus to hurt you, and to behold them powerless, because of your towering superiority.’ So you see, my friends: Napoleon regarded men mainly as pawns in his game; Monsieur Lepsius, in his more savant mood, regards them as gorillas in his garden of zoology”—and now the abbé’s eyes shot out beneath his bush of eyebrow a beam of bile, bush that burned, yet was not consumed, while Isabeau Thiéry’s eyes, quick as tinder, caught fire also, for company.

Saïd Pasha, however, with a frown, was saying, “Oh, pardon, Monsieur l’Abbé!... This anecdote of the reply of Monsieur Lepsius to Marshal Macintosh is, indeed, known; but I need hardly remark that to repeat is not quite to prove, and, in fact, the words are so unlike the individual to whom they are attributed, that I have even ventured to assert that they were never uttered by Monsieur Lepsius, the mood of whose converse is usually much more taciturn. As to Monsieur l’Abbé’s mention of gorillas, I think I have the honour to know that Monsieur Lepsius is far too exact an intellect to regard mankind precisely in that light, but rather, let us say, as sons of Hannaman, the ape-god of the Brahmins; and as to the alleged kiss at the Quai d’Orsay, of which, by the way, everyone in Paris is spreading about a different account, I am able to state that its occurrence, if it occurred, was the result of no world-disdain, but simply of one of those magnetic gales that deflect even the needle of the compass. After all, as was said in a certain Orléaniste salon not thirty minutes since, ‘it takes two to make a kiss,’ and since the lady is not accused of world-disdain, I do not see why the male.”

At this Monsieur Leflô—a little quick personality, whose hairs grew like a wig of bristles—ogled Isabeau Thiéry with, “We are all aware that the utiliser of the moon has a champion wherever Saïd Pasha is present!”

“But, Monsieur le Prefect,” said Saïd Pasha, sudden and quick in quarrel, “am I charged with partisanship for aught but the simple truth?”

“No, monsieur,” replied the Prefect dryly, “even though it is a matter of common talk that Saïd Pasha once shed tears of admiration at the sight of a certain individual racing with camels from a sand-storm near Khartoum, and from that moment became a hero-worshipper. So it is said—I was not there. In any case, I beg leave to question the ‘magnetic gale’ by which you explain this embrace, since I believe that the reason of it is quite a different one than people conceive.”

At this Saïd Pasha’s brow bowed low, with the reply, “We know that Monsieur Leflô is a prefect who is a Fouché and a Réal in one.”

“Oh, as for that,” Leflô answered in his off-hand way, “it requires no spy of the Rue de Jerusalem to recognise the truth that this kiss was no result of vertigo, but of a political purpose.”

“That is only the truth,” added the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet, “since it is certain that a certain individual ‘knows his Paris’—more perfectly knows it than Napoleon the First, as perfectly perhaps as Napoleon the Third; and knowing that your Parisian, as Victor Hugo has observed, must for ever be grinning the teeth, either in a laugh or in a snarl, the arch-gamester never permits himself to forget that there must be no flagging in the game, since in Paris to be out of sight is to be out of mind, and so seeks continually to épater les gens, keeping himself alive in the public eye by breaking ever anew upon it in a new attitude and costume, and invariably with an éclat whose radiance blinds. No, this gentleman is hardly one of those who like to shine in the dark! If for once in his life he tears his lips from the telephone to apply them to those of a lady, he takes care that there shall be as many eye-witnesses to the event as when some months ago he used to assume the rôle of Haroun al Raschid by appearing in an incognito of rags in the thieves’ kitchens of the Quartier Mouffetard, where he engaged in a knife-fight with a Spaniard, and in a cangiar-fight with two

Moors who had attacked him. For here, my friends, we meet with the scenic skill of a Bonaparte in combination with the ambitious mania of a Thiers, Bismarck's steel, that art-genius for Welt-politik of a Cæsar Borgia, and——"

"All possibly true," interrupted the Abbé Sauriau, "but the thing that this very young man lacks is a certain humanity and nativeness to the world: for a man above the world he may be, since they say so, but one discerns that, with all his worldliness, he is hardly a man of the world. How perfect, how Parisian even, his manners when he likes; but one gleans that they have been but recently acquired, and girt on externally for a purpose, as Cato learned Greek at eighty. He lacks a je ne sais quoi which no one lacks. If he laughs, one feels that he has said to himself, 'Just here I will do a laugh, in order to produce such or such an impression upon this brute-mind.' All men, indeed, are actors: but Lepsius is an actor who acts acting, like the players in Hamlet, and I am not certain whether he is to be considered the best of the world's actors, or the worst: for 'the brute-mind' is frequently not so brute as not to perceive that his art lacks the art to conceal its art, owing to the fact that he shares in the mistake made by each superior mind in deeming the difference between himself and other beings deeper than it really is. Hence, for all his brains, a certain gaucherie in his being, a grimace, a guffaw, in relation to the world, to which he is innately a stranger. How very alien to our humanity, for example, the commercial use which he has proposed of the bodies of the dead, a use which he pretends would solve the world-problem of poverty. On that afternoon, too, when the Moon Company Bill was being introduced, and he in the Centre began to scratch his head with one finger in the manner of Cæsar—a signal to his creature Huguenin on the extreme left to scream, 'Cæsar! Cæsar!' in a bogus tone of indignation—the intention, as everybody knows, was that the whole Chamber should take up the roar and reverberate it through France; but not one soul took it up! The trick was immediately seen through by each French child...!"

"Yes, last August," said Mr. E. Reader Meade, gazing away at all the throng and

flutter of the scene, “last August, when the individual in question had not yet been two months a factor in politics; but nine biggish months of world-knowledge, of archive-searching, of worming in the Big Book,[B] have since gone by——”

[B] National Debt Ledger.

“My friends,” answered the Abbé Sauriau, still with his Jesuit blandness, though his bush burned, “I have quite recently been in personal contact with the individual in question, and still I say that I receive from him, as previously, the impression of a being destitute of humour.... He does not please; he cannot speak to you: for though his memory which, I admit, is no bad one, should render him the best of causeurs, his uneasy feeling that idle speaking is a crime renders him the worst.... Oh, I am not demolishing any idol! Why, my friends, should I? You have lately listened to that charge brought against me in the Chamber by Maître Tombarel, the charge of intellectual egoism and envy. I cannot, it appears, be envious of a Rockefeller or a Mogul, but I go green with envy, it appears, on hearing a great epigram that I did not myself think of making. Well, I deny it.... If to my little books my contemporaries have too amiably granted the name of ‘great,’ does that impede my conceiving the possibility of some brain brighter, greater, being made by Nature? Or, can no mind really conceive, and frankly admit to itself, a mind of better fibre than itself? I—don’t know; or rather! my mind could and would, I am most sure, if—the occasion arose. Thus I can speak, I hope, of the individual in question without spleen; indeed, I have even been touched with a feeling of compassion for this poor boy, so joylessly toiling, all lone and lorn, fatherless, a stone thrown from Utopia—for who could picture him in the rôle of a son? And did he not once say to Freycinet père, ‘Monsieur the Président of the Senate,’ said he, ‘I never had a parent.’ Never, at any rate, a brother being, a friend probably, climbing his mountain-way without quite knowing why or whither, but willy-nilly climbing.... Oh, my friends, it is not through jealousy, but for pity, that men should be busying themselves in bottling up the buzzing of this bee.”

To words so bold no one answered anything, till Isabeau Thiéry observed, “From the bee honey, though, as aroma from the rose, though the former has its sting, as the latter its thorn.”

“Ah, monsieur,” answered the Abbé Sauriau, knowing on which nerve to work upon Thiéry, “Brutuses, I fear, are even rarer than Cæsars!” whereat, instantly, Isabeau Thiéry, with a new enthusiasm, was crying, “Still, Monsieur l’Abbé, Brutuses—exist!”

“Quite so,” said Mr. Reader Meade, with a twinkling eye on Thiéry, “but could a patriot be the Brutus of a Cæsar, whose first work would be a frontier reconstructed ‘as in 1814’?”—words which had the effect of making Thiéry glance gladly at the Englishman with the exclamation, “That, too, is a truth, monsieur!” (“His, Thiéry’s, soul,” says Saïd Pasha, in his Paris Notes, “was like meadows over which sweep shadows that fleetly succeed each other. He had no self, this man, but only a set of stock concepts, borrowed emotions—provided only that they were pure, enthusiastic, and high-souled. Hence he was the very serf of certain catchwords! If one breathed ‘Brutus’ nothing could keep the poet-politician from leaping to his feet to butcher Lepsius, if one but breathed ‘as in 1814,’ Thiéry was secretly ready to press Lepsius to his breast.”)

“But,” demands the old Duc de Rey-Drouilhet now, smuggling a cachou into his mouth, “where is the guarantee of the promise ‘as in 1814’? Certainly, fancy pictures to us in that workshop of the Palais-Lepsius the models of many a mechanism which will whiff into wind the barricades of the next 18th Brumaire or 2nd of December, to say nothing of the corps d’armée of the Fatherland and the navies of Albion. And, indeed, they exist, these legions of ingenious steels! For it was but yesterday that Colonel Doumic, whom Barras, of Public Works, and I met at Bignon’s, was dropping hints of another wonderful thing, a ‘steerable bullet,’ he said, which, it appears, is to be both a bullet and a boat, being made with a hole

somewhere in its steel to hold a man, who will steer it.... It appears, my friends, that the keel of this contrivance will merely skim along the sea's surface, being upheld by the rebound of a gun or something exploding downward, I forget how many times a minute; and the boat so upheld will be swept forward rocketwise by another succession of explosions, like a motor-car; so that this thing will safely visit vessel after vessel at bullet's rate, with fatal results to all a navy within some minutes. Doumic should know, being one of the elect with the individual in question: for is it not Doumic who already is choosing the regiments to be quartered upon Paris, in order to send them back to the provinces imbued, one after the other, with this new-imperial dream? But as for me, who am hardly still a youth, I little believe in dreams that are unrealised; I have witnessed many, many things, and heard many words: I have heard Cora Pearl hum the Kyrie, and I have beheld Alfred de Musset sober. Hence to me the individual in question is mainly a directeur de spectacle forain—a famous one, it is true. His palaces that are like the blasphemous gardens built to reproduce Paradise by that king of Irim whom the gods struck blind for arrogance—then the revels—his Moon-proposal—then his riding of his Chérie to victory at Longchamp—his Exhibition-proposal—then this kiss—each seems to belong to a series of scenic——"

"Was the kiss scenic?" asked Mr. E. Reader Meade semi-privately of Saïd Pasha, upon which Saïd Pasha undid his cross-looking lip to answer, "No, monsieur. I state only a fact when I declare that for over four months I have foreknown some such collapse of the intellectual tension of the individual in question—a collapse owing, I say again, to a magnetic gale and to nothing else. Nor was this thing at all sought by Monsieur Lepsius. He is not, we are aware, by nature a Petrarch or Ortis; he is by nature an athlete, an engineer, a financier, a juggler, a sage—what you will, save a gallant; and as others flee the pest, so he has fled this infirmity of his. All which, by the way, I can state on the authority of a man already known, I think, to Monsieur Meade, to Monsieur l'Abbé Sauriau, and to Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet, one

Shan Healy, who is known to have followed Monsieur Lepsius from England to Ceylon, to Japan, and other regions, some couple of years ago: and from this man's statement one is afraid that the blame for what has taken place must be laid upon the lady. In fact, although Monsieur Lepsius certainly knew the young girl before his departure from Europe, and knew on his return that she was then in France with her aunt, the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, he appears to have given himself no sort of pains to greet her again; nor was it until some four months after his star had well risen over the horizon, that the eyes of the two individuals in question encountered one another on the Palais-Lepsius roof, during the morning hours of that ball that followed upon the passing of the Moon Bill. We remember the sight, messieurs: a morning all stars, the Champs Elysées all one swarm of carriage-lights from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde, the Palais-Lepsius looking like one of the buildings of Chilminar or Balbec which the genii are believed to have wished into being, and everyone to be met there, save Monsieur Lepsius himself. Monsieur Lepsius, it appears, had gone to sleep during the rout at his usual hour, but at the hour of three had roused himself to go up to his observatory, no one but his servant being with him; and up there he was, his gaze glued to his tube, a busy-body in the concerns of other worlds, when the lady, as ladies seem to conceive it their duty to do, smartly recalled him to this one. 'Oh! pardon,' says she, and with what object, or by what right, she had got herself up thither is not known, though she was not the only one of the guests who, beguiled by the desire of the eye, were roaming ad lib. through the rooms of the building that night. At all events, as her lips part to pronounce her 'pardon,' the other individual in question darts his glance round from the glass to her, crouches there aghast some eight seconds, gazing, dumb-struck, and—vanishes. Monsieur Healy declares that his heart all but ceased to beat, believing as he did that his master, who had darted out of a casement, had cast his body headlong down! Well, three several times since then have the two individuals——"

But now, before the anecdotist could further go, a sound arose and grew, not loud, but universal over the grounds of the Club, the Avenue, l'Etoile—a rumour in whose droning the word "Lepsius" was to be heard, as a troop of Zouaves and Turcos, riding all in their bright robes, broke into the ocean-current of carriages that rolled through the Avenue. Up from the Elysées they came, making down for the Bois de Boulogne; and up soon after them trotted another crowd of troopers—Moors, Hindoos—voluminous in their vestments of various hues, carrying javelins (jereeds), with streamers, on large chargers which caracoled; and, close behind these, three carriages with gentlemen-ushers, household gentlemen; and up behind these outriders; grooms costumed in green and gold; pigmies in jockey-caps, from which hung fringes of gold; and up behind all a phaeton hauled by Orloff horses that haughtily pawed the air, to fling far their front-hoofs, trotting. In this sat Lepsius. He was in mufti, but clearly no "mere pékin," the insignia of the Grand Cordon of the Legion showing his connection with the Army; and by his side sat a girl who looked American, on her lap a scribbling-book, and flying in her fingers a pencil. He, as he drove up, bowed repeatedly a little to the buzz that droned about his ear, but without ever once glancing upward, his lips never ceasing to move and murmur to the girl whose fingers flew. And away to the wood swept the wind of it.

Everyone then turned anew to sip his aperitif, and the old Duc de Rey-Drouilhet was anew observing that turn-outs so perfect had not conquered the eye since "the early sixties," when a man with white hair that curled upward at his nape came up to the table of our anecdotists to inquire whether the Comte de Courcy had been with them, or had been noticed about the club. "I had to meet the count here," he explained; and something humble, bowed down and sad in his air touched their compunction. During the moving-by of the cavalry troop he had been semi-secretly eyeing the sight through trees some distance from the street; then had come out to seek the count, and now was about to fare farther, when all at once the count himself was there with a raised hat, and at once, grasping the old man's hand, he began to

present “Dr. Lepsius” to the rest.

“‘Lepsius’?” Isabeau Thiéry breathed the word.

“Need I explain,” said Monsieur le Comte, taking a chair, all business, all smiles, with dimples in the chart of his large face, “that there may be many men of that name?—not necessarily related by ties of family? which ties, in any case, can never possess much weight in the matter of politics. So that if by chance we here are all a harmony, politically speaking——”

The count’s eye ran prying with an underlook about the table from face to face, whereat Mr. E. Reader Meade glanced at Saïd Pasha, Saïd Pasha glanced at Mr. Meade, and they two got up to bow themselves out of the business, while the others, with glances at one another, silently smiled.

Then Monsieur le Comte de Courcy, fingering a crucifix of gold that from of old lay smooth from his fingering under his shirt-frills, said to the others, “Gentlemen, it is not without a purpose that I present to you now (rather than more formally at our meeting this evening in Monseigneur Piscari’s house) our actuated by precisely the same motives as ourselves, nay, if possible, by motives still nobler, concerned not with France alone, but of world-wide anxiety. He brings with him something which, as I believe that it will prove of even extreme interest to you, I wished to lay before the Abbé Sauriau, our excellent secretary, previous to our meeting at Monseigneur Piscari’s this evening, in order——”

“Gentlemen,” suddenly rising, said Dr. Lepsius in a low tone, “I think that perhaps if I took a stroll while you talk the matter over, that might be more in order. I will be back to answer any question that may occur to you,” whereat hats were anew raised, the doctor went away, Monsieur de Courcy’s underlook peered about to see that nobody was too near, and now he drew with care from out a pocket-book a bit of paper, rather brown and brittle, that had passed through flame. He laid it on the table: and quickly, like a congress of eagles, the intriguers’ heads were together over

it, the old duke skipping like a youth closer round to it, and that lax skin of the Abbé Sauriau's brow, which above was narrow, broad below, twitching short-sightedly over the browned words, while his bush burned. Only the Count de Courcy leaned back, fingering his secret crucifix, musing through his cigarette fumes upon the clouds, humorously dimpled. ("He was ever healthy and happy-hearted when in office-harness," says Saïd Pasha of him, "with a no small degree of rush and magnetism when revelling in the thick of affairs; one of your true gens de bureau; an intellect essentially narrow, bigot, bourgeois, as 'devout' as he was profoundly irreligious; but iron; and the busier the blither.")

And presently when Isabeau Thiéry, demanded whence the paper came, "This script," replied the Comte de Courcy, "is a portion of a private letter written from Paris some seven months ago to a certain English nobleman who is a Directeur Publique—say a 'Permanent Under-Secretary'—of Her Britannic Majesty's Government. By what succession of good chances the fragment has got itself into the hands of our friend, Dr. Lepsius, will no doubt be described by him to-night at Monseigneur Piscari's."

"But can we be sure who wrote it?" Isabeau Thiéry said, "when it lacks a signature?" to which the count stopped his humming to reply, "Would a signature add to our certainty, monsieur, when the individual whom you have in your mind is said to write a hundred hands a day, as it suits his purpose? But surely the internal evidence furnishes us with a certainty which is ample."

"Oh, ample," said Monsieur Leflô, glancing up.

"Well, he is a showman," sighed the old gossip, rising with satisfied old eyes from the script, while his eye-glass dropped.

"But he is mad," added the Abbé Sauriau.

"That is the definition of God," remarked Isabeau Thiéry: "a showman who is mad"—a remark which caused the Comte de Courcy to laugh, though with one hand

he was at the crucifix, while with the other he was taking up to replace in its nook the bit of paper, which had on it, still to be read through the burn, the typewritten words, “World ... redistribution which I shall choose ... two worlds ... nevertheless, England ... world’s total capital ... Bank of Dresd ... S. America plus Africa the first, Asia plus Russia the second, the rest of Europe plus North America the ... Russia, too, to be included in Manchuria ... the Caspian ... from the Caspian to the Bosphorus ... France first, then, by means of France, the world.... The ocean of blood which will flow, but that, of course ... Quebec to be the capital of the world, and the seat of my ... Moon ... has been too stupid ... shape of the ape’s brain ... nevertheless, moonlight will ... like the eggs of the ostrich, which she hatches, not by sitting on them, but by just gazing at them, so I may.... If the moon had been of some beautiful hue, and of a brighter light, and a reliable light, men ... would naturally have used the day-time for slumber.... Even birds and brutes, I assume, will soon learn to prefer the mood of the beautiful night-time of my ... it is for you, therefore ... when the Exhibition ... come to Paris at ... discreet fash ... afterwards ... my friend and....”

“Well, it is a great and a gallant brain, after all,” cried Isabeau Thiéry with a flush, when Monsieur le Comte had put away his pocket-book with the script in it.

“A great and a gallant brain,” mused the Minister of the Interior, who, fingering his imperial, was smiling at the sky; “though not a Christian, not a Catholic, not a French brain.”

“Tush! the brain of a precocious, pert youth,” observed the Abbé Sauriau, with a burning bush, “whom it is the duty of us all to remove out of harm’s way without more delay.”

“Though that will not be done without difficulty, mind you!” Monsieur Leflô remarked with a little grimace, planting his fore finger-tip against his hard nut: “but in the event of a citation of the individual before the Sixth Correctional Tribunal, with a view to obtaining a decree of banishment against him for instigating civil

strife, I should say that this document would be of use."

"The Sixth Correctional Tribunal," mused the count, smiling; "I thought, however, that that idea had by this time been abandoned by us all, if only for the reason that the trial could not possibly be completed before the Exhibition, during which, as we assume, the coup d'état that we dread is to take place? Personally I cannot help thinking that a court-trial of uncertain termination is no longer pertinent to the situation, especially as we have been so happy as to win the sanction of the Church (in the persons of Monsieur l'Abbé and of Monseigneur) to move urgent and more certain ways of averting this danger to the world."

The Abbé Sauriau, who had a habit of ever eyeing his right shoe and red sock, which shook up continually (the leg being crossed), struck smartly with his gloves, remarking, "A stronghold close to the coast, with grim bastions and the gloomiest of oubliettes! twelve or fifteen years of that is what the youth wants——" and he struck back his spread of hair that broadened lankly out down over the ears, the Count de Courcy repeating with approval in his musing manner, "Twelve to fifteen years of that, twelve to fifteen years——" and going suddenly grim-red, he giggled gleefully to himself.

"Monsieur l'Abbé is right," the old Duc de Rey-Drouilhet said: "fifteen years of a bastille's oubliette is known to induce in a youth a definite diffidence as to using his lips in public, either in speaking or in kissing," at which speech Monsieur de Courcy, who was drinking menthe, grew crimson, gripping his glass so grimly that it cracked, the green fluid streaming from the table to the abbé's sock.

"If it can be done ..." muttered Monsieur Leflô; "if it can be done...."

"Why, Monsieur le Prefect," said the abbé, "was it not a Frenchman who said that 'cannot' is a bête de mot?"

"That is a truth, too, monsieur!" cried Isabeau Thiéry, "and provided it prove necessary...."

But now a trooper, as troopers do everywhere pursue every Ministre de l'Intérieur, came to the table with a document for the Count de Courcy, who, making his excuses, raised himself to hasten away; but some yards off stopped to beckon to the Abbé Sauriau, who rolled after him with his big stick and soft hat, and together they two walked toward the minister's carriage, the abbé's top-heavy bulk, all thickness of shoulder without any throat, shambling short below the minister's mass; and the minister said to him, "Twelve to fifteen years of a bastille by the coast, you say: and, certainly, such things have often enough been effected by private effort for public purposes. But I do not blind myself to the fact that it would be beyond the Law, and—in fact—I have to consult you now on a matter of—conduct. I am now about to go through a singular interview, and I—address myself, Monsieur l'Abbé, to the ecclesiastic in you. You understand me, I think. We are all first of all Catholics and good Christians, are we not? and afterwards men-of-state. A singular interview—with a woman, who, on the strength of having been in the same yacht, the same house, as myself some three years since, has lately—thrice—addressed herself to me by letter. A lady's maid she—was; and as such knew the individual whom we have been discussing: for this individual whom we habitually associate only with the future has also, it appears, a past—aye, and a shameful past, too—I say a baleful and abominable past—which merits to be punished, which it is righteous to punish. Think of it, Monsieur l'Abbé! as a mere boy—oh, really, my blood boils to speak of these turpitudes!—he not only betrayed this poor soul, but afterwards robbed her of all, all, her paltry savings; was chased through the thoroughfares of London for petty theft...."

"The young Lepsius?"

"Yes, Monsieur l'Abbé—your hero."

"Whose hero?"

"Is it not being stated on the boulevards by Léon Bergerac in particular, who is

always the best informed man in Paris, that you are bitten by an infatuation which is half an idolatry of admiration, and half a hatred, and wholly a hankering, that hardly permits you to talk of aught but of one being?"

"I?" breathed the Abbé Sauriau, standing still to stare, revealed a moment to himself; then with rage, "oh, he lies, he lies: Léon Bergerac is known to be my enemy!"

"Well, well, no doubt," muttered the minister "... but as to this woman, whose name is Auvache——"

"Not the Jeanne Auvache who threw vitriol at the individual in question at Dover on the 11th of November, threw it wide, and was imprisoned for five months?" queried Monsieur l'Abbé.

"It may," said the minister, "be the same; in fact—it is a possibility; though the name is not an uncommon one, Monsieur l'Abbé—Auvache—men, women enough of that name, you will say. But I may tell you one thing: this woman has been spied by a clerk in her lodgings throwing vials of water at a nail's head .... It is her hobby, it seems, having arranged rows of vials on the floor, to eject water at a run from them upon a nail in the wall; a drill of the eye, wrist, fingers, that goes on regularly in the loneliness of that garret every day; she will also practise herself in rushing with a knife to stab a bull's-eye on the wall—why, no one can say."

The Abbé Sauriau pondered it for some moments, and presently observed, "She must be an imbecile."

"That is what I have said to myself, Monsieur l'Abbé," replied the minister; "why else should the woman, in wishing to obtain an entrée into the valetaille Lepsius, address herself to me? unless by some chance she is aware that I know one Nundcumar, a functionary in the Palais-Lepsius.... This Nundcumar has risen, Monsieur l'Abbé. Eight years ago he was a lean scarecrow down on his luck about Paris and London, pretending to be a doctor of medicine, but possessing even less

knowledge of medicine than the present Prefect of Police possesses of the police. Then he became a cook, and it was thus that I again came across him at Egmond, the Brittany château of the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard. Then he remigrated to his native Agra, and was there met and admired by the individual whom we now have in our minds—so Nundcumar avers, though this person, who never ceases to speak, certainly never yet produced a word which by chance was an accuracy. At all events, I am still in touch with the man, and could easily induce him—to-day even—to introduce that ill-used and lunatic woman into the valetaille Lepsius, provided I do not definitely find in my interview with her presently that she has any purpose in view other than the search for work."

Monsieur l'Abbé pondered it a little. Then, "Let it be so, then," he suddenly replied, as they now arrived at the count's brougham; "but though your interview will no doubt prove over-brief to permit of any deep probing into the woman's motives and so on, you will very likely find the time to impress upon her that the practice, or drill, with the knife, at least, is quite offensive, while——"

"You have known how to say what I was only able to think, Monsieur l'Abbé.... Au revoir, then." And the Count de Courcy drove away.

The abbé then turned to go back to the table of the gossips; but now a little girl who was gambolling among the trees, tumbling down before his feet and beginning to scream, immediately he had her garnered in his arms, hugging her to his bosom, his lips on her head, with whimperings of love ("for," says a Note of Saïd Pasha, "he had a most fond father's heart, if especially for children, hardly less for all the world, whenever he was not merciless with envy of some other mind"); and he toyed before the child's eyes one of his few coins, saying, "But look, then, all this is for thee—all, all," and he pointed at the receding brougham, leering, breathing, "Look! that is the brougham of Monsieur the Minister of the Interior—but look! a man whose 'blood boils to speak of these turpitudes' since he has need to condone his

deeds to his own shabby-genteel conscience”—and he clasped the little girl’s fingers upon the franc, placed her on the ground, and now hurried back to the table where by now Dr. Lepsius was again sitting with the gossips.

CHAPTER XI. THE CHAMBER-WINDOW.

At that very time Shan Healy was speeding on a bicycle (having missed a train) from Paris to Versailles, with perspiration raining over his face and swear-words vented when racing through those villages paved with old pavers, which mercilessly jerked him. It was not until six o’clock that he got to Versailles and the Villa des Medicis there, a house of the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, where, having scorched down to the house-front through a great avenue of yews, he craved to interview Miss Ruth Vickery.

He was taken to the door of a chamber in the middle of which stood three ladies talking warmly, though in low tones—two elderly ladies and Miss Ruth Vickery; and a whirl of words was being uttered among them, sometimes all the three trying to make their opinions heard at once, all looking as exhausted and haggard as if they had been going on all the day long, while in the gloom of a far corner of the room lay Miss Eve Vickery asleep, with an appearance of exhaustion, even of swoon. Shan Healy stood on the threshold, and he could just hear the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, whom he knew very well, cry with a casting up of her hands and eyes, “Ah, my dear Lina, you can persuade an angel or the good God himself to change their mind, but you cannot persuade a saint who is English too.”

This lady, although English herself, spoke English in quite a halt way, with effort, was tall and fair, resembling Miss Eve, her niece, in stand and being.

“But, Aunt,” wooed Miss Ruth, “bear with me, since I do mean well, as in my God’s sight. Ask yourself—how can I, how could I, try to induce Eve to marry a man who, it appears, is without even morality, whose mood is pagan, whose aim is Cæsarian,

whose God is arrogance?... And Eve never would, I think, if I know her! You have heard her say yourself——”

“Ah, then, why in the good God’s name did the girl go and kiss him with all Paris gazing at it?” exclaimed the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard.

“Aunt,” breathed Miss Ruth, all ruby-red, with drooped lids, “you know that Eve did not—‘kiss’— him; he—‘kissed’—her.”

“Ah, my good Ruth,” observed the third lady, one Madame Lina Grammont, “the world does not draw these exquisite distinctions, believe me: it knows that in a kiss it is generally the gentleman who both begins against the lady’s will and ends against her will.”

“Exactly,” remarked the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard; “but then, we all know our English: it is always their little mannerism to regard the lady as made of anything but of flesh and blood. The fact, however, that stares one in the face is that Eve is now bound to be married immediately; and I repeat that the scandal will be less if of the two gentlemen she chooses the one who has kissed her.”

“Truly, the scandal will be less,” Miss Ruth answered; “and you do not say, if you think it, that the worldly grandeurs will be greater; but, happily for her peace, Aunt, Eve would rather choose, I think, to live in a hovel with a Christian gentleman like the Comte de Courcy than with one whose bosom was never vaccinated with the stigmata of compassion and abnegation, though he were five times a Mogul.”

“So I hear you say, my dear,” replied the countess, “though Eve herself no doubt most accurately knows her own secret; but if it be a fact that her stomach is such as to like the Comte de Courcy better, why will she not send for him, since he is every hour expecting her reply?”

“She will send, I think,” replied Miss Ruth. “What, however, was the use of summoning papa from London unless she is to hold out for his presence before pronouncing her decision? He should by now have arrived in Paris, and within an

hour will be in Versailles; then, I think, she will speak, she will send, for she feels, I am sure, the nobleness of Monsieur de Courcy's renewed offer, and will not, I think, grieve him by any longer——"

But at that moment Healy at the door sneezed, and, the ladies noticing him, two of them, still speaking eagerly together, went away through another door, Miss Ruth going to meet Healy. She was just beginning to say, "I am so glad——" when Healy put his lips to her ear with "Not in here, miss! every word breathed in here all day has been heard in the palace at Paris"—whereon he showed her the telephone over the sofa on which Miss Eve lay asleep, whispering deeply afresh, "He's this minute lying on his face, hearing her very breathing, I believe"; and when Miss Ruth, as they now moved out of the room into a vestibule, asked how that was possible, Healy replied that it was by means of a whispering-gallery, as at St. Paul's in London, where anyone stationed at the part of a circular wall farthest from a telephone in the wall heard greatly augmented any sounds thrown out of the telephone-mouth, being in a focus of the sound-waves. "The telephone-number of that gallery has been plugged on to yours the whole day, miss," Healy said, "someone here is in his pay, and he has been lying on the ground in the gallery with a crowd of tools strewn round about, modelling something and listening, smiling with himself the while. I know that he knows at what moment your papa was summoned to you, and at what moment Mr. de Courcy's proposal reached here; so, as soon as I could slip away when he went out, I made paces to answer your letter in person, so as to impress upon you that he is really in earnest in this, miss: for he has lost time and given up other things to see to this, seeing that he had arranged to go to the Chamber to-night, but isn't going any more; so he is serious, miss, oh, he means business, believe me, miss, in this, and it will be a bitter pity if Miss Eve isn't whipped off secretly this hour right out of his way somehow, though, as his spies are all about——"

"You do not believe, Healy, I see, that such a union could be good?" said Miss Ruth,

her gaze on his face.

“Well, to be frank, no, miss, marriage wouldn’t hardly suit him,” said the voluble Healy. “No, no; he’d be that miserable, you wouldn’t believe; and the fonder he was of the lady, the more he’d hate and hiss at her for making him waste time. Time’s his wife; the clock, the clock, miss. Believe me, only to be near him, people feel in a prickly heat themselves, as if they were breathing fever from some fierce atmosphere—the very Orientals in the palace, miss, only that slothful old story-teller, Nundcumar.... No, no, miss, do now, he’ll be that miserable——”

“And his lady, too, I think, Healy?” suggested Miss Ruth, with her smile.

“Well, and the lady, too, now you mention it, miss,” Healy agreed; “true enough—the lady too; she’d be like a dog tied behind a railway train, couldn’t keep up the pace anyhow; try now, miss, try, try; he’ll be that wretched, you wouldn’t believe, and everything’ll be changed, and instead of me it’ll be the lady may be, and I nowhere with him; try, try. From that night in the forest round the ruined town of Anuradhapura, he has been good friends with me—till two days ago when the doctor came to France. I have told you about that night before, miss. Oh, that’s a forest, if you like, boundless, miss, I can tell you, and the men and brutes of that country move about in a brown, brown day, miss—big black brutes looming upon you out of the gloom with their stupid gazing, and thousands upon thousands of gods and ogres of stone broken to bits in those groves a thousand centuries ago, they say. He left me one nightfall at the top of one of the big dagabas to go all by himself into the dark of the timber, I to watch each nightfall there till he should come back with the piece of a stele; and there on the dagaba I watched and waited fifteen weeks, miss, night by night, till I began to fancy that he was gone for good. Eh, but he did come back to me all right, miss, one darksome night, under the large stars which look upon those parts, almost starved and stark naked he was, bearing forty old stone boxes on top of a buffalo-cart; and in his hand was that little gold thing

made in the shape of a pear which he never lets go of, and even in his sleep keeps with him.... Do you know what's in that little thing, miss? A little key, they say; and that old story-teller, Nundcumar, who fancies he knows everything, says that this little key opens a certain casket in which there's a second key; and that second key opens a certain safe in which there's a third key; and that third key opens a certain turret at Serapis, the Brittany palace, in which there's a fourth key; and that fourth key opens a certain chamber in which there's a fifth key; and that fifth key—I can't quite call to mind what the fifth key opens; any way, it goes on till you get to the twelfth key, which opens the room in which all his jewels and riches are strewn—so says that Nundcumar, miss, and whereabouts under the ground that room may be no human being has yet got scent of, though that Nundcumar swears that he knows where; and the key to the whole is within that little gold thing made in the shape of a pear which he never lets go of, miss."

At this Miss Vickery, with her stare of child-wonder, stared at Healy, muttering, "How very much lighter and kinder would he feel, now, if he had no keys, nor any jewels to lay up for himself!"

"Doubtless, miss," said the other; "but that's how it stands—what would you have? What was I saying? Oh, about that night in the forest round about the ruined town of Anuradhapura; yes, that's a forest, miss, if you like—boundless; but I think I've told you about that night before, miss, often; and from that night he has been good friends with me, till two days ago, when the doctor came——"

"Does he still avoid a meeting with his father?" asked Miss Vickery in a voice of secrecy.

"Rather, miss; his treatment of that old man is so shocking——" Healy commenced to answer, but was checked by a "sh-h-h" breathed by Miss Ruth, who through the doorway had noticed Miss Eve moving in her sleep; and they two stood peeping at the unfolding of Miss Eve's eyes, saw Miss Eve notice a Bible which lay open by

her nose on the sofa-cushion—a Bible which had been placed there by Miss Ruth with one phrase in it underlined in blue—saw her take the Book to gloat closely over the phrase in the gloaming's dusk, saw her laugh, and, after laughing, suddenly press her lips upon the phrase with ravishment, to drop suddenly afresh on the cushion with a covering up of the face; the phrase which she had read and kissed being this, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers."

"Steal softly in," breathed Miss Ruth to Healy; and softly she herself, having moved into the room, stole on tip-toe quite to the telephone, the opening of which she shut off and stuffed up, Miss Eve meanwhile seeming still asleep; and to Healy Miss Ruth now said aloud, "Continue now, Healy, to speak of your master's treatment of his poor father."

Healy looked at her, and, discerning her meaning, whispered to himself, "Why, if she isn't as wise as a serpent!"

"No, miss," he added aloud, "he won't see the doctor not on no account: never once seen him willingly since the day he left the island in your yacht; flies him like death, he does. Fact is, he is nervous of the doctor; nothing on earth below, nor in heaven above, is he nervous of, but of the doctor he is. Can't get over his youth, you see, can't get over all those years in which he used to believe the doctor a god, not a human being—shuns him as death, he does. And partly it's the doctor's own fault, I must say, for that's only the truth, you know, miss, seeing that the doctor is going all dead against him, taking part with his political enemies, and he well aware of it, for there's an eye spying for him behind every blind, so to say; and he's afraid of the doctor, oh, he's afraid, miss, that the doctor's big brains may be digging his grave for him. So that's his excuse, look; but still, when all's said, his conduct to the doctor has been just shocking—shocking it has. Again and again has the old soul's nose pressed against his gates, and begged and prayed to be let in, but no go; and that time at Lyons when the old man tried to spring into the carriage, just as Master

Hanni stepped down out of the town-hall, that was a bit beyond: for as the father made to spring in, the son darted to the reins, the horses pranced and started off, leaving a father prostrate and bleeding on the street—oh no, that was a bit beyond, that was."

Miss Vickery, with her face averted from the narrator, held her eyes bent skyward with a steadfast gaze, begging for God's forgiveness of men; but from Miss Eve, who must have heard, who was meant to hear, neither word was uttered, nor a stir seen.

After a silence the talkative Healy proceeded to remark, "Well, I can understand him, miss. I recollect that when I was a little lad ten years of age, one day a great big girl of thirteen meets me in a lane, miss, and begins to kiss and hug me—couldn't make out anyhow what it was about, so I got pretty scared, I did, and from that day for years, if I but spied that lass a league off, my hair'd go creepy, I'd take to my heels like a long-dog, and I do believe if I caught sight of her even now, I'd be bound to do a dart for it. It's the same with Master Hanni—shy, shy; the doctor's a great big bogey to him—thinks the doctor'll be digging his grave, though he knows that the doctor can't. And who suffers for it, miss? I do. Thinks I am secretly on the doctor's side against him, can't believe I'm on his side against all comers, thinks I'm always going to 'betray' him to the doctor, trusts no one, trusts no one, it's hard, because——"

Now, however, that stream of Healy's speech was checked by the appearance in the doorway of a gentleman neatly dressed in grey, with a grey top-hat on his head, a neat umbrella, and side-whiskers, with him being the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard and Madame Grammont; and Healy, seeing him, murmured, "Your pa, miss," and now bowed himself out; while Mr. Vickery, darting his eyes all about the room, and discerning in the gloom his younger girl on the couch, rushed by Miss Ruth without any greeting, his eyes brimming with tears, his mouth trembling, and on his knees

garnering Miss Eve in his arms, gave way now to weeping, again and again darting down his lips at her mouth, with pausings to gaze at her face, then again darting down at her mouth, with mania.

Miss Eve sat up, breathing “papa,” and laughed a little, casting back some hairs from her brow with a gesture which, undoubtedly, was not without something of hectic and hare-brained. Indeed, she appeared that day to be dwelling in a region so infected with fever, that through the day she had been treated as a patient, and on the sick list.

“Well, here I am,” Mr. Vickery said to her, “just arrived by God’s help—in time, I hope.... Got a headache, have you? my soul? my love?”

Miss Eve smiled triumphantly in her parent’s face, replying, “No, papa; why should I?”

“That’s all right, don’t say a word,” muttered the father, fast patting her arm, “don’t say a word.... Well, here I am, you see; arrived, arrived, by God’s help. And—I have telegraphed to Monsieur de Courcy to come. Have I done well? I thought I would, and—I did. All the way from London to Paris I was praying to be guided, and the moment I got to Paris the thought was given me to telegraph at once to Monsieur de Courcy, and—I did.”

“Did you, papa?” asked Miss Eve, smiling with her father.

“Yes. Eve, have I done well?”

“Why, papa, I think so,” replied Miss Eve, smiling that defiance which is amused, that triumph which is secure. “Monsieur de Courcy is a most estimable man.”

“He is; but still, Eve, tell me, tell me, dear—have I done well?”

“Oh, I quite think so, papa.... Have you had a pleasant trip across?”

“No, no, let us be frank now; let us make use of plain terms, let’s not mince matters, Eve; come now, tell your papa—my own, my sweet—will you have de Courcy?”

“Oh, as to that, why, I think so, papa,” replied Miss Eve with some appearance of surprise about the eye-brows. “I thought that that was rather understood as a settled thing: ask Ruth, ask aunt: they’ll tell you that Monsieur de Courcy, that model of morals, high at the head of my list, hasn’t a rival to dread.”

Upon this the father turned with an opening of the arms toward the other ladies, saying, “Why, this is well.... You didn’t tell me!”

No reply was made to him; only the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard exchanged half a smile with Madame Grammont, who just shrugged, while Miss Ruth remained with her eyelids drooped.

“Why, that’s all right, then!” cried Mr. Vickery to Miss Eve: “I knew, I knew, that my dear’s instincts would strike true. Well, de Courcy should have nearly reached Versailles by this, and—you’ll be sending him away a happy man, will you? Is that settled?”

The young lady, contemplating her father’s face with a calm smile, replied, “Quite settled, papa—for my share. If it can be, it shall be.”

“‘Can be?’ What does she mean?”—Mr. Vickery threw this whisper at the other ladies behind him; but before anything further could be uttered, a bomb was hurled into the salon by the words of a servant who entered, saying “Monsieur Lepsius to talk with Mr. Vickery”—and he handed a card.

Straight sprang Mr. Vickery up, Miss Eve also raising herself by degrees, and all with blanched cheeks gaped in silence at the menial, till Mr. Vickery, his visage rushing into crimson, cried in a high and hysteric kind of cry, “Say to that gentleman that Mr. Vickery, being engaged, begs him to state his business by letter!”

The menial bowed and backed out, and immediately now there reigned a gale of breaths among the ladies, Madame Grammont and the countess making a thousand gesticulations together, Mr. Vickery standing again pale-faced by a reaction, Miss Ruth at him instigating him to be grim, Miss Eve moving about from place to place,

reading the titles of books, glancing at trees outside, glancing at looking-glasses.

It lasted four minutes, which seemed much more, after which the menial was once more there, bearing a note scribbled in pencil, whose folds Mr. Vickery tremblingly opened. Miss Ruth meantime breathing in his ear, “Pray, papa, do not read it aloud!”—words which Miss Eve either heard or surmised, for now immediately she muttered with some huff, “Oh, I have no wish to hear anything,” and went away.

The rest then, laying their heads over the note, read the words: “Dear sir,—I, a suitor for your daughter’s hand, having run a race with another suitor to your door, and having won the race, am amazed at your want of fairness and also of forethought in refusing me an audience. Why do you? Pray question yourself. Can any king with a rope restrain the rolling of rivers or the drift of fate? I warn you that you waste your time in this, causing me also the woe of wasting mine; nor could that be just to another suitor to permit Miss Eve Vickery in a freakish humour to promise him marriage, since she has no such intention, knowing that such a nonsense is not on the files of life.—Lepsius.”

It was Madame Grammont who, gifted with the strongest eyesight, read the note aloud in a monotone, the gloaming in the room having now grown very heavy; and as she finished, and all raised their eyes, all started, for there afresh was Miss Eve, who had been seen to leave the chamber, hovering anew near to hear.

“I am not to be browbeaten!” suddenly cried Mr. Vickery in a high kind of cry.

“Ah, papa, no agitation, papa!” Miss Ruth called through a throat whose music broke.

“I say I am not to be browbeaten, I am not to be threatened!” screamed Mr. Vickery querulously afresh in an ecstasy, for the atmosphere was all electric, and each one present caught from all the rest a hectic cheek and a lip of quivering.

“My God, I foresaw all! and my advice was not followed,” cried the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, with a casting up of the hands.

"'The files of life,' 'the drift of fate'!" Madame Grammont muttered in a maze.

"Get my daughter's trunks packed!" cried the father; "am I an Englishman? Are there no laws?"

"Calm, papa, calm!" called out Miss Ruth anew: "ah, how disastrous! papa, I warn you, this agitation is fatal to the welfare of the soul!"

"Oh, Ruth, let one alone!" now said the countess in an irritation without restraint; "it is you who are the cause of all, at the end of the tale."

"Aunt, I?" asked Miss Ruth, with reproach lodged in the soul of her eyes.

"But no, Margaret, but no," protested Madame Grammont: "it is not the fault of Ruth, it is not the fault of Ruth."

"Let me get my girl out of this infernal country!" now cried out the high-strung Mr. Vickery; "it is France that has done this!"

"Oh, but be reasonable, Matthieu, at the end of the tale!" the countess mouthed, with intolerance.

"Quite right, papa," now cried out Miss Eve in a spirit of rollicking and recklessness, "let us clearly prove to everyone that we act in no 'humour of freak,' having a will of our own!"

"My love!" cried Mr. Vickery.

"'The files of life,'" mused Madame Grammont anew; "'humour of freakishness'!"

"Ah, but he is right, believe me!" cried the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard; "he has his meaning! he knows Eve better than she knows herself."

"You and others may think so, Aunt," called Miss Eve, snapping her thumb and finger daintily up in the air, with a wheel on her feet.

"But he may still be there!" said Madame Grammont; "is he still there at the door, Gabriel?"

"Monsieur Lepsius has departed, madame," the gaudy Gabriel gave answer, who

through all this had stood there with a bowed brow.

“What happened in the hall?” asked the countess. “Did Monsieur Lepsius make any attempt to enter?”

“Monsieur Lepsius desired to enter, madame,” answered Gabriel, “when I gave him Mr. Vickery’s reply that it might be better for him to state his business by letter; but on his attempt to force an entrance, both Baptiste and myself barred his advance with our arms outspread, and he then, after staring a moment into our faces, broke into a laugh, hastily wrote the note that has been handed you, and drove very quickly away.”

“Did Monsieur Lepsius utter any remark at all?” Madame Grammont began to ask, but before the words were well uttered, there had entered another flunky, who came to proclaim the presence of Monsieur de Courcy at the door; whereupon—a renewed flutter and flurry of consultation! until the ladies rushed from the room, leaving Mr. Vickery to receive the visitor; and immediately in came the Minister of the Interior with his brisk and breezy air, but about his brow now a shade of deliberation.

They two then conversed together until the hour when the dinner-gong began to sing out, whereupon the ladies in their bravery came sailing in, smirking as superbly now as personalities translated beyond the concerns of earth; and after a little small-talk the visitor stepped away with them to dinner.

However, they had not well moved out of the room when now the telephone-rattle in the alcove started to prattle, upon which Mr. Vickery with passion in his heart darted back to it, and Miss Eve also doubled back to be near, though remaining far from her father in the centre of the apartment, staring.

“Who are you?” called Mr. Vickery, the receiver at his ear.

The answer was “Lepsius,” and even Miss Eve, though hovering away off in the middle of the room, could hear it in thunder, for the speaker now no doubt lay in his whispering-gallery, where the sound-waves from his mouth, focusing themselves

upon his telephone, struck monstrous rough, their grumble trumpeting unease upon Mr. Vickery's ear-drum with the gutturalness of some grum god thundering; and, "I want to speak with Miss Eve Vickery," grumbled the thunder.

"It is Mr. Vickery who hears you!"

"I know; allow one to speak with Miss Eve, Mr. Vickery!"

Now with wide eyes hied Miss Eve on tip-toe nigh, hissing, "Say I am at dinner, papa!"

"Miss Eve Vickery is about to sit down to dinner," Mr. Vickery cried, with stricter accuracy.

"She will not eat much!... But as for you, Mr. Vickery, will you have me for a son-in-law?"

"The proposal sounds abrupt, Monsieur Lepsius!"

"Why so? How much waste of time is necessary? And what is your complaint against me? I quite fail to gather this."

"It cannot be discussed over the telephone!"

"Why can it not? Is it that you are offended with me for kissing your daughter?"

"S-s-s-s-s, sir!... But I am being awaited at dinner, Monsieur Lepsius!"

"It was not I who wished to kiss her, it was she who wished to kiss me!"

"Eve, go! go!" screamed Mr. Vickery, warding his daughter away with one arm.

"Say, papa," Miss Eve hissed, reaching far forward to her father's ear with her cheeks afire, "that I am affianced to a good and gallant gentleman!"

"My daughter——" Mr. Vickery commenced to call.

"Tell Miss Eve, sir," the thunderer rumbled, "that I can hear each word that she utters, and that I know she does not mean one syllable of any one of them."

"I have to wish you good evening, Monsieur Lepsius!" cried Mr. Vickery with a

high-pitched cry.

“Go, if you choose; but you prove yourself a feeble and foolish old pantaloon, you know.”

“And you, sir, a courteous young gentleman!” upon which Mr. Vickery put up the receiver, and went with one cheek-bone branded rosy, and one blanched, Miss Eve smiling, with her eyes alight, by his side.

The meal was then eaten serenely by all, after which, in the midst of Parisian chat in the salon, it was found not impossible to bring about, without intention, a tête-à-tête between Miss Eve and the Minister of the Interior; and Monsieur de Courcy, having come through this with success, remained still on, the merriest of ministers and men, until close on eleven o’clock, when, hunted down by a mounted officer with a cipher, he made his bows, and went away.

And now anew the family sat in council to discuss the situation of affairs, though Miss Eve now took no share in it, seated far aloof, with her cheek on her palm, looking out into the dark of the park. At midnight she bid good-night; and, having gone up to her chamber, having been prepared for her bed, and having prayed by her bedside, was soon lying in the semi-gloom of a big bedroom, with her will bent upon slumber. But sleep she could not, though two hours went by. One of her jalousie-windows lying open, through this she could perceive trees, mountains, and in the sky a moon moving in and out among mounds of cloud, now drowning the countryside in shine, and now shrouding it in shadow; until this growing into a grievance and a weariness, at last she got up, swathed all that elongation of her form in a great drapery, got her violin and bow, and in an arm-chair by the jalousie played. So that she might not be heard, she had first shut the shutter and fixed the bar, though, as her apartments were in a rather remote part of the château, this was hardly very necessary, since it was Mendelssohn’s Andante which she chose to utter in a low tone; and there during many minutes she remained in a mood of drooping,

moving the air of the room with the mazes of the music, roaming over and over anew through the same old moon-realms of melancholy, feeling even sleepy now, her ear wearied out with sweetness; until on a sudden she had sprung upon her feet, her cheeks struck white like a sheet, and her eyes wide with affright.

“Who is it?” she hoarsely hissed, for outside the shutter a tap had sounded.

“I! Open!” some chest panted to her, and she knew him, yet anew she hissed with all her wild heart in her windpipe, “Who is it? What is it?”

“The staple to which I hang is giving to my weight,” the chest gasped: “forty seconds and I fall a corpse.”

In ten Lepsius had leapt within the window....

And now were boundless breaths! and the rough sirocco broken free, flights for life, puffs, pantings, runnings to and fro, momentary manias, aimless aims! “Help!” hissed her hoarse heart’s breath, “this wardrobe, help!” whereat he, quite carried away by her rage of agitation, hardly knowing why, caught hold of one side of a wardrobe, while she bent and laboured at the other side, bearing it somewhither. But it was a huge mass Henri Quatre, which, being moved, naturally made some hubbub, so he threw the whisper across to her, “It makes a racket!” whereto her pant replied “Never mind, help!” and finally by tugs and effort they got one narrow side of it against a wall, one broad side against the bed-foot; and now anew she flew, with “This couch, help!” and he helped her to place the couch against the wall and against the bed-head; and now it was “Now, this chair!” and he helped her to heap an easy-chair upon the couch, feet up: which done, she scrambled quick across the bed’s breadth, and now stood in the place betwixt bed and wall, barricaded now from him in front by the bed, to the left by the wardrobe, to the right by the couch and the chair. And then immediately all that to-do was seen to be needless when her hand happened to hit upon a key in the wall behind her, for there was a door there in the wall, and a small window also by it above, and behind the door some steps

leading up to another chamber a little above the bed-chamber; so immediately she scuttled through the door, locked it within, skipped up the four steps, appeared at the window, threw the key from her down upon the bed before him, and now succumbed to the floor, panting, safe at any rate from herself.

He, looking up to the window, threw out to her the whisper, “You are wise! You are witty!” upon which she sprang up to throw out to him the whisper, “Do not come across the bed!” for he stood now with one knee on it, and she could see him in a ray of the moon as she had first beheld him at The Towers in a red shirt loose about the neck and belt, without any jacket or hat; and he, too, could see her in shadow at the window.

“Did I not help you to escape?” he asked her; and then disjointedly, “Do you wear the half-coin which I sent you?”

Miss Eve gave no reply, getting by degrees her breath again in silence.

“Did you know in your heart,” he asked her, “that I would come to-night? You were waiting up for me, playing the fiddle; it was that Andante of Mendelssohn; you played it four times over.”

“Lepsius, you must go,” Miss Eve said.

“I will go near the peep of day, and you with me!”

“No, now; and without me, I think.”

“Oh, you are cold,” he replied, “and I hate your stone’s heart: cold by nature, and colder by hypocrisy that penetrates your texture to the core of you. Oh, I know and foreknow you to my agony, negative, null, enigmatic, like a watch which won’t go, though one goads it, and finally one crushes it under a rock; as frigid as that water of a mortal quality which drips from a rock in the territory of Nonacris; or like that bag——”

But she stopped him with, “Lepsius, you should go!” whereat he leaned keenly

across to whisper her, “Cold! I am told that your mother was a patrician of a most ancient race, so from her you have that faintness of air, your rarity of blood, which makes you resemble lilies too super-cultivated and rare to transparency, or resemble that aroma that you exhale, or hoary old ages of Asia gone that give no answer to the historian’s gaze. No, the mortal heart can’t hold you all, you are far too large for me.... That superciliousness, all but Chinese somehow, in the heave of your eyebrow’s arch, that rather-too-much of the eyewhites shown below the irises ... though I admire, mind, the faintness of it, the faint disdain, the dieaway disdain, so confirmed and hoary, reposed and at home in the universe, with which you look out askance upon the world; and now dark circles will be under them, for I vow you shan’t sleep, and that will please me to be conscious that you are marked with dark underlids because of me.”

“I did not think,” Miss Eve rejoined, leaning both her elbows on the window’s sill, “that you were such a silly boy.”

He during some seconds did not answer this, drew back a bit from the bed with a bent head, reflecting, and then said, “Well, it is silly, it is self-sacrifice; and yet—curious! while I fought against you, since it is silly, I thought it sillier than after I gave in to you. Silly, indeed, I still see it, for these feelings of love make the blood to flow from the front of the brain to other caves of the frame—ruinously! so that loving is a reverting to lower-animal natures whose brains are less largely furnished with blood, the sense of romance and poetry in loving being due to some umbra of remembrance in us of old brutes, moons, and moods, of the geologic ooze, the deluge, the roll in the Jurassic morass, the rufous Vesuvius, the gloomy lagoon, when the moon glowed more big and close to this globe. Love is thus a fall and relapse; and yet—curiously——”

When he paused, she asked, “Well?” upon which he said, “My consciousness has been enlarged by it. I see, in fact, that though it is a fall toward the past, and silly, it

is the one silliness that one may partly pardon oneself in view of its use to the future, because man will not always be man, and ages forward I see the sons' sons of you and me a multitude, shining like stars in the sky, vaunting John to George in voices of joy. No other children instead of ours, if ours are preordained to be born, will do for this evolution: for, since we observe that the perfection which is purposed by the earth can never be accomplished but by a preordained marshalling of atoms, we know that, if this or that atom fails of its place, nothing can be done: far less if this or that baby fated to be born fails anon to be born."

Miss Eve, her face half concealed with her palm, asked, "But what is fated? that is the question. We imagine that what we wish is fated."

"Love is apparently an instinct of fate," Lepsius replied: "the lover prophesies in a kind of trance of triumphs to come. True, he is silly, since he sacrifices his time and life, but when he succumbs in his fight with the world-typhoon which whirls him to the moon, he can excuse his infirmity with a sense that this time it is worth while. I find that I have a tendency to reflect upon you in reveries extravagant to grotesqueness, comparing you with galaxies, fragrances, graces, fairies, lilies, with Dewildé, and Helen of Troy, and the boy Crobylus of Corinth, and that purple of Hermione whose wool was combed with poison-honey and oil of lotus; and though this is not strictly a truth at present of you, it is strictly a true instinct and prophecy of princes to spring through you. The line of your profile has a hint of hollowness to the eye, owing only to a most slight jutting of your chin's point, a nothing which has overjoyed me with emotions the most poignant, with a sense of brotherhood for you, with a sense of the earth from her furnace-birth to her furthest sunsets, when the sun shall shine much nigher her, and the moon loom hugely: and I have compared you with ages, and with the Lady in the Chair of Cassiopeia. Or, looking sideways at you with your legs crossed, I have been struck by the great prolongation of your thigh-bones—so great that you could hardly run on your toes and palms, as I and apes may, since your kneecaps would doubtless graze the ground—so evolved,

patrician: and I have cried extravagantly that, at their greatest stretch, the very galaxy would find space and to spare ’twixt their gaping gateway—an extravagance merely in appearance, since it is in a trance-dream of graces great even to infinity in types fated to grow from you that I thus exclaim; it is my subconsciousness, nay, my consciousness somewhat, all bewildered with a blaze of the world-wonder, and how, darling, but in boundless words may the mortal heart blurt out a little that burden of the Eternal? Or when I think of my love’s upper-shape, so élancé, like the racer’s stretch of waist and neck, like one escaping, dodging, eluding upward—dodging, eluding the ape-shape—the very revelation of evolution——”

Here Miss Eve smiled, remarking dryly, “Lepsius, you are full of apes.”

“Aren’t you? Isn’t the world?” he asked; upon which she said, “Yes, I know your low view of men—and of women, I suppose, still more; but beside my élancé upper-shape, my thigh-bone, my chin, my faded old air and hoary disdain of iris, I have a mind, which is jealous of your omission to mention it.”

“I meant to mention it!”

“Oh?” says she, “that was too sweet of you. Last but not least?”

“By no means least!” he answered earnestly: “a mind, I am certain, better than mine.”

“Ah, now you are insincere,” she said.

“I to you? As if I could be!” Lepsius replied with reproach; “I only, of course, mean a mind better than mine in possibility, since yours is uneducated, and mine more or less educated.”

“Mine un——! But what, then, is ‘education’ in your view?” she wished to know.

“Education,” he told her, “is a waking of one’s subconsciousness to consciousness. I, for instance, know nothing that you do not—or not much; but I am much more conscious of what we both know. Tell me, now—whereabouts were you twenty-four

hours since?"

"Where?" repeated Miss Eve: "I was—here," whereto he replied, "You see, that answer and its tone shows that your education was never initiated. You know, no doubt—are subconscious—that you were a thousand thousand, and half a thousand thousand, miles from here, flying at the speed of fifteen times a rifle-bullet's rabies: subconscious, but not conscious of it. I, now, could never say 'here' in that fashion, without compunction, as though a million miles or two were of no account, Eve, since now and at each instant I can hardly but be conscious of this horse that jaunts us, and his ardour.... Oh, this race of man suppurates in dullness, you know, and I am sometimes most—lonely: I mention this to you that you may compassionate and come to me. I ride a star, inhabiting the unbounded as my house, and the rest, more drowsing than the dormouse, Tortoni's; their glance of a morning darts no surprise of gladness at this romance of time, space and game of balls, the Grand Boulevard their galaxy, pigmies grey, phlegmatic, unflushed, unconscious of their contemporaries in a myriad realms of the creation, among whom are at this moment taking place great crises, hegiras, revolutions, doomsdays, moonfalls, vast marches, everlasting partings; they little know that Venus is uneven and severe in scenery, nor does the thundering of even the nearest sun stun their ear-drum; uneducated; not polite citizens of time and space."

"But you remember——" Miss Eve started to say, but now, startled by some sound, breathed eagerly to him, "did you hear something?"

"It is a mouse going down the right sound-hole of your violin," he replied; and now Miss Eve anew leaned her elbow on her window-sill to continue saying, "But you remember that all this you started to utter of me, then continued with 'they,' 'they'; since then, as 'they' are so I, why are you there by my bed?"

"But are you not in all things far above me?" he asked, "save in this of a wakeful consciousness?"

“But this of a wakeful consciousness,” said she, “is everything, is it not? It is this which makes the difference between a genius and an ape, a god and a dog, you believe, do you not? And you have it, and not I. Only a thigh-bone I own, let me be thrown to a dog.”

Upon this Lepsius bent well across the bed to throw to her the whisper, “Hypocrite! Colder than the coldest Kydnus! It is your mind that I esteem, and in speaking of your thigh, implied it.... You should shun the mood of the modern woman of the West, ever touchy as to her footing, as to the spirit of the marriage-law, and men’s estimate of her mentality. Men must admire the mind of woman, for since we know that we all get our wit from our mother, as our grit from our father, therefore I, having my mind from a female, must needs love the female mind with home-longing, as you, having your grit from a male, must love the male grit with home-longing; so it is not for my wit that you love me, but because you are instinctive that I am gritty and good; nor is it for your grit that I love you, but because I am instinctive that, if educated, you would be witty, and will make witty babies. Give up, then, I beg you, for ever, the idea that I despise your mind, since I do so idolise it; and believe, too, that, for each one of these reasons which I can discover for my love of you, myriads of other reasons exist, ineffable, unknowable to us, but in some manner known to that Man to whose behests men may at no moment but submit.”

“What Man is that?” Miss Eve asked, frowning, her wits rather winded now and flustered at the speed of her speaker’s thoughts.

“I mean, do I not,” said he, “the genius of our species? In every crowd of a thousand there are present, are there not? not a thousand, but a thousand and One, which One we can speak of as the ‘genius of the crowd,’ since it leads each of the thousand by the nose, making him behave in a totally different way than when alone—especially in such crowds as French crowds, which rush into action like one individual, as in

’92. So in séances where those gathered believe that a ghost tilts their table, there is indeed a species of ghost-Man there, an eighth in a meeting of seven, a ‘genius of the crowd,’ compounded, no doubt, of the brain-rays radiated out from the seven. So, too, of the crowd who make up our human race: a Genius-of-the-species, his escutcheon and escheats mentioned on no census-sheet, leads us at each moment, teaching me to know and adore you, and none below the sun but you: to know you well: the very mood of the tune which, if you could be turned into a rhapsody of music, you would produce, a tune with some alto undertone, more old-eternal than the world. Beloved. But I fail to utter half, beloved, my heart faints....”

“Do you love me?” Miss Eve asked him in a whisper, leaning now far out of her window to him, who leaned near to her.

“Beloved,” Lepsius groaned, and again, “beloved.... When I came home from the Quai d’Orsay last night, I dropped down in a drowse, and, with the feast of your kiss still warm in my mouth, I thought in my dream that your feet walked with mine athwart fields of asphodel in future far, far off under a forlorn and morphia moon—I could not tell you. Then in the dark of the morning I awaked, and you were not there in my arms. I passed my palm thrice across my bed of straws, but you were nowhere there; so I had the thought that my darling might be in the garden, among the lilies by the lake, gazing up at my casement, a thought half-crazy, half-drowsy; but up I bounded and raced all round the palace-walls, gazing down into the gardens in order to spy you out and call you up, and you were nowhere there. If one of the spokes of the kite-contrivance on which I fly had not been broken, I should have flown to you. But I ran down, got out, and began to run to you; and the sergents de ville must have asked themselves where Lepsius was rushing to under the morning stars, with half a thought, perhaps, in their heart’s heart of a coup d’état.”

“You didn’t come,” Miss Eve observed.

“No,” he answered, “I turned back; four leagues to Versailles, and I had already lost

a good deal of time on your account.... Eve, I have lost hours."

This he avowed with a bowed brow, and "Dear me," breathed Miss Eve with irony; then, suddenly, like one whose will arises and triumphs, added, "It would have been so fruitless, too.... Lepsius, you should, perhaps, be given to know—can you see? this one is the ring: I am engaged."

"Bomb of poudre Rachel," Lepsius mumbled with a chuckle; "so you came to an arrangement with de Courcy this evening?"

"Yes, then," Miss Eve said, her left shoulder, too, shaken a second by a chuckle.

"And the same night you admit another lover to your bed-chamber!" he said, chuckling.

"Oh, well," she muttered with lowered lids, chuckling within one shoulder, and they chuckled one with the other.

"Are ladies, then, restrained by no scruples as to justice?" Lepsius asked. "Delighter in lies! enigma! through what abstruse movement of your bosom did you get yourself into this embroglio? Not that it matters; but you will inflict a sense of injury upon this man, who has done you no injury," a speech at which in one instant Miss Eve flew into a passion, and, leaning forth, thrice struck the window-sill imperiously, crying through a gruff throat, "As God is my witness——"

"Sh-h-h," Lepsius went.

"Let me speak!" she imperiously hissed: "I mean to marry him, do you hear it? Heaven be my witness!" and up she threw her eyes, trembling as she held them bent on high.

"Eve, no," said Lepsius gently: "you do not mean to do that; you believe that you do, but meantime in your subconsciousness you firmly confide in me never to permit such an absurdity, and so can afford to boast and be wayward.... Dear, would it not certainly kill us both?"

“If it kills a host I will do it!” Miss Eve heatedly replied; “never through life have I broken a promise, nor now shall begin with a vow; given and pledged is my troth; God be my witness in this.”

“But why did you give it and pledge it? I can’t guess!”

“Because I chose!”

“Cogent waste of three words!”

“I shall never have you, anyway!” she said with a nod and threat of the head.

“And why?” he asked in a bewilderment.

“Because you despise my mind!” she sharply replied.

“I have already explained why that is quite impossible,” he made answer.

“Oh, woman knows her own secret, and people’s explanations make no impression upon her intuitions. You despise my mind; and there’s this still deeper reason against any getting together of you and me, that I despise yours.”

“I despise it, too; yet I endure it.”

“Oh!” she sighed, “that untrue humility of yours, it irritates me to the soul, till I hate! ... doubly untrue because insincere, and because, if it were sincere, it would be true to facts: for whereas you regard yourself as far greater than all, all as as far greater than you as you fancy them smaller, since your greatness is bedraggled rags that prevents you from being good. Oh, why are you not some ordinary wight, a young workman, Lepsius, a mason, a sailor, who has never learned to spell? Then some girl would so gleefully desert all her father’s—— But now, ah, il desir vive, e la speranza è morta!... Do you, by the way, still believe it fine to steal?”

“Successfully, you mean?” he said quickly; “stealing seldom needs much show of wit, but swindling is very frequently fine. You, I know, do not appreciate its fineness, but to me it is evident; it is lying in deed as you frequently do in speech.”

That this would give the profoundest offence Lepsius had no grounds to think, lying

being to his philosophy no crime; but with that chastity of the swan, which, being but brushed in her array of whiteness, frills and ruffles awhile, then with majesty swims away, so she ruffled.

"Not 'frequently,' I think," Miss Eve repeated; "if I 'lie,' it is to myself, unwittingly; and in every event differ from you in fancying it 'fine.' Anyhow, now you can see how what you have wanted is out of the question."

At this Lepsius, looking at her under his eyes, said, "Eve, be sincere with me!"

"I mean to be sincere," Miss Eve told him; "I do hope I am; yes, I am. We hate each other, Lepsius, shockingly, like cat and dog, oh, we do, do not gainsay it. I lack a culture you have, you lack a culture I have—in my very marrow. Oh, I know that you are awfully clever and all that, and you fancy that because you can deck me with queenship I shall be dashing myself feverish and shivering upon your breast, little dreaming that the more thrones you throw before my feet, the more bitterly I'll spurn and keep you groaning in purgatory eternally. They say that just before the Exhibition you will be shooting into the sky a kind of sun infused with stored-up moonlight, which will make private lights at night useless through Europe, and France the richest of the nations; and that then, during the business of the Exhibition, you mean in a coup d'état to seize the throne, so as to sweep France off to overrun Providence knows what. It sounds mighty grand—I don't know if it is true; I only know—forgive my outspokenness—that it is howlingly vulgar, that it is not Christian, and that I should have far greater joy of a young mason or sailor-boy who behaves graciously to his father—one with a belt, may be, and your figure—that is——"

She stopped, and he said, "I listen," but as she added nothing, he then said, "'Vulgar,' 'not Christian'; your criticism, of course, interests one, though it is curious."

"Tell me," Miss Eve said, "for whose weal do you purpose all that slaughter and

upheaval—for the world's?"

"For my own," he said: "the weal of the world is in the management of the Genius-of-the-world, Who ceaselessly sees to it. I personally am not concerned in it."

"Then," replied Miss Eve, "that is what I mean by 'vulgar' and 'not Christian.'"

"One idea or two?" he asked.

"No, one."

Lepsius sat slowly aside on the bed, puzzling to understand her mind; and he said that he should have called Japan a far less 'vulgar' land than England, to which Miss Eve replied that if Japan was really the less vulgar, that could only signify that Japan was the more Christian.

"Clearly, then," said Lepsius, "'Christian' bears in your mind some meaning of which I am not yet aware, since Japan does not pretend to be Christian. I will see one day in the month following the Exhibition just what Christianity is; but, as I knew that religions have all so far been infant fancies, and as the religion of Europe is so slightly in the minds of the peoples whom I mean to govern, I have never given myself the pains to investigate it. And you do not say for what reason I ought to cease from my schemes because they are 'vulgar' and 'not Christian.' Vulgar they are, since I am a man, and man is a temporary and trumpery little race, ingrained, whatsoever it attempts, with vulgarity. But put yourself, beloved, in my place: what can I find to do with my life? I am sequestered in the world; and it has occurred to me that that would entertain me to make a world-state. True, I might have turned my life to the delights of research, with the idea of laying the foundations of knowledge in the world: it is, however, such a work! since I should have to begin quite at the beginning, and I shirked it. You may have no idea what a mess your little knowledge or 'science,' as you say, is in! Without foundation, top-heavy, like the education of a child who has been made to learn the Babylonish Talmud by rote, but can write not

one word of his own tongue. The so-called ‘scientists’ know the stars of the night, and talk in millions of millions; but as to the elements of knowledge, as to, say, the nature of gravitation, and what is the ground-reason why their candle-grease dribbles downward instead of bounding skyward, or why it is that the atoms in a twig or anything cling together, though when one breaks the twig, and then again puts the broken ends together, the atoms won’t any longer cling, they possess no more notion than the chimpanzee. Knowledge without foundation; vague, then, foggy, gappy: so that one may say, man knows nothing, and of that little which he knows he is but subconscious, hardly at all conscious. However, when these schemes of mine which you have called ‘vulgar’ are accomplished, I mean to turn almost the whole vigour of the world toward research and the gaining of some little ground-knowledge of the nature of things: for undoubtedly the want of this knowledge is what is now chiefly unwell with our species. But I mustn’t say to you, beloved, that men’s good is my aim, my only aim being to bustle and bluff a little as the governor of a globe in space.”

“But if a million men are killed by it?” Miss Eve remarked.

“Dear, it will not matter,” Lepsius replied.

“Will it matter if you are killed?”

“It will to you, to no one else, since everyone dislikes me.”

“But one will clamour and cry out, you think? One will bleat and beat the breast?”

“Dear, it will not happen; I am so easily the king of men.”

“Better, may be, if it did.... No, it is all awfully low, Lepsius, I say, even lower than Cæsar, as low as Napoleon, and proves how many a thousand miles divide you from me and from men: for far at fault, I can see, is what you said just now that Christ’s religion is but ‘slightly in the mind’ of the crowd! Deeply the world has breathed of its atmosphere, yes, and the murderer Burke, guillotined in the week gone, deep in its stream was immersed, everywhere save at his heel. One sees that, when one hears

you speak. Do you know those words of Julian as to that Jew workman, ‘thou hast conquered, O Galilean’?—so scarcely true then, how greatly true now! You who can see, don’t you notice how pity prevails like the flood, and how charity roars like an ocean? Christs on the ’bus, at the ball, martyrs that saunter in clubs? Firemen, nurses, the Red Cross; the blind boy pampered and spoiled; the sweater and swindler inwardly worked with a qualm for the world’s weal; the moon on her throne still ruling, seducing the rudeness which roars in the tides with her mild smile, still by the touch of a Robe virtue disbursed through the world; and with that hem of his vesture encrimsoned, treading the wine-press of history, the white Christ travels, or, riding his triumph, rides on the foal of an ass over dominions and thrones. When you said, Lepsius, that self-sacrifice is silly——”

But here Lepsius stopped her with the whisper, “someone is coming!” on which the lips of Miss Eve, going at once quite sheet-white, breathed, “God! it must be my sister! Lepsius! go!”

“Why should I?” Lepsius said.

“Lepsius!”—she was beside herself—“would you compromise me? Lepsius? For ever? Would you?” for she herself could now catch the sound of something, a door moving open in an outer room.

“If I go,” Lepsius whispered, “may I come every night?”

“Every——” Even in that storm of her eagerness for his going Miss Eve paused; but she breathed, “Yes, every night—the key!”

In an instant the key was handed her, and he out of the outer window: on which she, too, in some seconds was down, was across the bed and at the outer window, all her breath breathing down to him fifteen feet below, “Every night! But I shan’t ever be here!”

She could just catch his ejaculation of “Wretch!” and as she snatched her fiddle, dashed herself into the chair at the casement, and arranged her drapery, soft footfalls

came on the carpet, the elder sister breathing, “Eve! not in bed. Oh, Eve!”

“Dear,” said Miss Eve with languor, “I couldn’t get to sleep; I was playing the fiddle....”

“Well, I knew it.... I had a feeling that you were not asleep, so I got up and came to you, and here you are. Poor Evie! Cast your care upon God, will you, Eve?... But playing at this hour! And—where’s the bow?”

“I put the bow over there.... Oh, Ruth, put your hand on my brow, I have a headache,” upon which, her head now lying back on the chair-back, she shut down her eyelids, and Miss Ruth, stooping, held her hand over the brow of trouble, groaning now and again a little in her soul, her cheek pressed against Miss Eve’s cheek, till presently she breathed, “That better now?”

“Yes, sweet, that’s sweet,” Miss Eve breathed.... “Sweet, Lepsius was here.”

“Eve, here?”

And now, under the compulsion of that touch upon her brow, Miss Eve breathed out the whole story.

The sandals of Lepsius, meanwhile, were speeding away, till they arrived at his phaeton awaiting him beneath trees at Viroflay by the forest of Meudon, where, throwing himself in, under the setting moon he went tearing by way of Sèvres, Boulogne, Passy, to the palace. There, at the top of a stair, he was awaited by a man in robes of the Orient with a scraggy grey beard, hollow cheeks, and a nose mostly nostrils which gaped, who, with ever a wagging and nodding of his head, stood gossiping and gassing to Shan Healy: his name, Nundcumar. And these two, Shan Healy and Nundcumar, when Lepsius had mounted the stair, hastened without speech after their master’s speed.

It was when they three were in the midst of a corridor whose two rows of cressets seemed to meet at its remoter end, that Lepsius suddenly peered ahead, stopped, and murmured very low in Urdu to Nundcumar, “Anyone new in the palace to-day?”

Perhaps a second lapsed before Nundcumar answered, “One: a person who can spangle silk-muslin with gold of Dacca for the women-folk.”

“Tell! Man or woman?”

“It was a woman. She——”

“Name.”

“I cannot at this moment remember her——”

“Tell! European?”

“Yes. She——”

Lepsius walked on; but after some steps, without stopping, went slower, and now beckoning Nundcumar to him, said low, “You walk before.”

Nundcumar’s eyes opened with some apprehension as he began to walk on ahead, and immediately Lepsius brought forth from the bag of his shirt a species of pigmy weapon which one fired off by pressure upon a button.

The walls here had hangings of tinsel at intervals, between these being daubs on the walls themselves by Hindoo artists in hues as warmly gaudy to the eye as water flooded with the sun’s after-glow. And it was when Nundcumar, having reached the middle of the corridor, was at the extremity of a hanging, that on a sudden he cast up his arms, all shivering, with shrieks which pierced the ear, vitriol eating now that doughy nose-tip, streaming down his beard. Meantime, Lepsius had swung forth by the elbow a woman who had been hidden behind the hanging, and in the quickest demisemiquavers fired two pairs of bullets, one into her right wrist, one into the left, one into her right foot, one into the left. Then during a few seconds he peered with a curiosity of disgust into the disfigurement of the squealing Hindoo, and was gone, throwing behind him to Shan Healy, who was kneeling over Jeanne Auvache, the order, “Call in the police.”

He then made his way to the place where he slept: an apartment as broad as the

palace in that part, resembling a barn, but possessing no walls on three of its faces, only processions of columns of marble which bore up three architraves. Within this chamber a hound—a mastiff all but as large as Lepsius himself—was pacing about; and when Lepsius had well bolted four doors, had again loaded his weapon, had placed it on some straw strewn over one angle of the plain of floor, had let his gaze muse some moments upon the moon going down within a couch of clouds which she flushed, and now had thrown himself down upon the bed of straw, the hound moved to lie down by his side, and both soon dozed.

CHAPTER XII. THE WEDDING-PLACE.

The day of the opening of the Exhibition was coming near, so was the day of the nuptials of Miss Eve and Monsieur de Courcy, which had first been fixed for the 23rd of July, and then, by the nerves and eagerness of the bride's groom and friends, fixed for the 5th; and now orders for the gâteau de noce and other articles had already gone out, and already the lady and her guardians were at Grönland, a seat of the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard near to Orléans, where it was arranged that the marriage should take place.

In these circumstances Shan Healy observed truly to the Hindoo Nundcumar, "There be things brewing in his brain, as you'll see before too long—at work like six whirlwinds! And there's a little smile about'n somehow, and a something somewhere in his eye that spells pestilence to somebody, I haven't a doubt."

Healy was seated in the evening dusk by the Hindoo's side, who, still luxuriating in bed with his nose sore in cotton-wools, lay silent awhile, but then lifting himself to hug his meagre knees, said with that wagging of his head, "Let him run, let him go along; but one day the whirlpools of destiny will decapitulate his head."

"Oh, you go to hell," Healy muttered; "learn to speak Christian English first, and then turn prophet."

The Hindoo's loose tongue, in these weeks unusually quiet, was anew silent, his silences as well as his speech filled with that movement of his head which was as continuous as the neck-movement of Chinese playthings, and as full of meaning and meditation; and presently he observed, "And when he is done for, whirled up and filibustered for all he is worth, I know who will be the doer of it."

"Who's that, then?" Healy demanded, and the Hindoo's bony little face became animated a moment as he made answer, "The woman who threw the vitriol in my face!"

"Oh, she," said the other, "safe enough in chokey for four years anyway—'travaux forcés' they d' name it here; and serves her jolly well right, too."

Nundcumar, with his eyes shut and a head that wagged, said, "If she stops there!"

"Who's to get her out?" demanded Healy aggressively.

"I—do not know," remarked the Oriental innocently, with opening palms.

"Look here, you're a nice one to be speaking in this kind of way," Healy suddenly said; "appears to me as if you'd like to see it done!"

"Me?" said Nundcumar; "na, na, not me, my sonnies. What! me? Why, what was I when he ascended me out of the gutter? A dog, a hungry wretch in rags, just ready for the hangman to garrot by the throat"—he rushed his forefinger across his scraggy throat—"and now, what has he made of me? A king with slaves to ceremony my bathing, and everybody bowing himself down to make me the how-d'-you-do. And why this? Because he liked while at his work to listen with one ear to Nundcumar retailing wholesale his anecdotes of past doings, times, histories, befallings, happenings and epochs, and to hear Nundcumar speak his ingenious English; he wanted me for his gas-bag, his gabbling ape! and he gave me garments of shawl-goat wool, and dancing-girls of Persia with gold bells on their ankles to play the kitar before my godhood, all because he couldn't do without his Nundcumar's tongue. Na, na, not me. And then he made the villain woman

vituperate her vitriol upon the nose and mouth of his good old hound-dog."

"Serves you right," observed Healy: "what earthly right had you to admit the woman into the palace without proper inquiries? And who was to have the vitriol in the chops, you or he, I should like to know?"

"He might have chosen you to have it," the Oriental quietly replied, throwing an underlook at Healy, upon which Healy chuckled within himself, saying, "Ey, but he didn't choose, you see!"

"No," said the Hindoo, "he chose his Nundcumar instead. But never mind, it's nothing, this. Only that's bad, Healy, my friend, when the evil eye is thrown upon a man, for there's not a god sitting on his throne of gold can escape——"

"And who's thrown this evil eye upon him?"

"That woman—that villain woman."

"Safe, thank God, under lock and key."

"May be; safe, thank God, under lock and key, may be: but did I never tell and expostulate you the history and anecdote of the time and epoch when I and my brother were in the service of the Maharajah of——"

"Oh, I'm ill of your lies," said the other; "you never had a brother, nor he nor you never were in the service of any Maharajah in this world. So help me God, I never heard tell of a nigger the like of you: other men lie with a view to deceiving people, but you lie like a lying-machine, just because you needs must, without the least bit expecting that anybody will be believing you."

"Do they believe you?" the Hindoo demanded; "may be I know one that doesn't, since he has had every step of yours spied, vigilised, and super-inspected ever since his sire has been over."

At this Healy, eyeing the floor, heaved a sigh, and then getting up from his seat, said with the dignity of grief, "Well, you are right there, no doubt," and walked out.

At that hour Lepsius himself, in an apartment without walls on a lower floor, was speaking with Mr. E. Reader Meade, who reposed on a couch at his ease, handing a moustache that rolled down like a weir, while Lepsius himself, in a sudeyree and trousers of nankeen, stood close to a telephone hung on one of the columns. In the midst a punkah, somehow worked, fanned the face; a fountain which span showered whirls of spray round flowers and ferns; two girls a good way off in corners continually caused their typewriters to prattle, peering nigh their work in the dusk; while here and there other species of machines competed in making their workings heard.

"Well," Mr. Reader Meade was saying in English, "their scheme of getting hold of your person, of course, seems to me, too, a bit absurd—and you say you knew of it?"

"Well?" said Lepsius to someone at the telephone, throwing immediately to Meade the reply, "Yes, I knew," and to the telephone-speaker the words, "Where, then, is Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet at present?" and to Meade again, "Go on."

"I'll wait," said Meade.

"I listen," said Lepsius.

"Let us take it, then," said Meade, "that you will scarcely fail to elude that plot: for that's the sick spot of your Frenchman, he lacks humour, is so pre-occupied with ideas, that he lacks nice adjustment to facts, often fails to measure his new man or thing, and so comes a cropper in practice——"

"Precisely," said Lepsius, "you are very shrewd—as usual. Say then," he added to his telephone-speaker, "that I can receive Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet for seven minutes."

"The castle to which you are to be inveigled," said Meade, "is called Château Egmond, on the Brittany coast, a league from St. Brieuc, and fourteen from your own Serapis. It is the property of Madame la Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, has been

leased from her by the League, I hear, and de Courcy, it is said, means to make it his residence immediately after his marriage, which takes place at Grönland, near Orléans, on the 5th—or am I giving you all stale news?"

"I knew," Lepsius said, as he now flew through the room to drop some words at the ear of one of the girls, who in turn eagerly spurted out; and now, returning, he said to Meade, seating himself on the floor with clasped knees, "Only I don't quite understand by what means they hope to get me to go to this Château Egmond."

"I am not too sure," said the other, "but Saïd Pasha, who is always at the bottom of the dessous de la politique, asked me at the Palais-Bourbon last night to tell you that Nuncio ad interim Montijo will be of the company at the château, and as you are believed to be eager to gain the Church-party, this may be intended to motive you to accept their invitation. Then also Marshal Rémy will be there, and your right hand, Schuré."

Lepsius was up, speeding off to peer into a little machine hitched on to the telephone which fretted and roared in fits, saying as he ran, "But do they imagine that one cannot negotiate with Rémy, Schuré and Montijo without going down to Brittany? It is conspiracy of—let us say of Bismarcks, all born on the first of April!" at which word "Bismarcks" he chuckled maliciously within himself.

"But a conspiracy having this peril," remarked Meade, "that Isabeau Thiéry seems to be more or less in it."

"Oh, Thiéry is a shadow," said Lepsius, throwing himself flat on a table, his hands under his head; "his characteristic is that he does not exist."

"I should rather say," said Meade, "that his characteristic is that he is the half-brother of Fanny Schuré, who is the wife of Schuré, who is the engineer-in-chief of the moon-machine."

"And that matters in your judgment, I see," said Lepsius.

"Much in my judgment," the other answered very impressively; "you don't, I think,

know the Thiérys well; they are one of those French families who regard each of their members as something between a god, a genius, and a pet-dog to be pampered; and Isabeau Thiéry in particular, with his three volumes of Victor Hugo verse, is to Fanny dear no less than Hermes Trismegistus. I tell you so, Lepsius. He is a ghost, you say, and I say ditto; but his influence with this grande dame of a Fanny must be great enough: if he is against you, Fanny is against you. And you won't undervalue this woman's sway? A bit Brantômesque in tone as the girl may be, with her ambition to say things worthy of Esther Guimont, if not of Ninon de l'Enclos, she has quite earnestly this further ambition, to revive the alcove, and, by pulling the wires in the political drama, to be called a Chateauroux or a Genlis. As to Schuré himself, you know him: au fond he is a viveur living in the odor di femina; his guts is his God, and his 'fafemme'[C] is his Devil. If she tempts, he attempts; she says go, and he goeth. And I say that, if Isabeau Thiéry goes against you, then, through Fanny, Schuré would agree to yield to the immense pressure of your enemies to tamper with the moon-construction; and if there's the smallest failure as to the moon—ah! well, you know the consequence of that."

[C] Wifie.

"You are always very shrewd," said Lepsius, lying on his back with shut eyes, "and but for your judgment I should surely miscarry in everything that I attempt. All this that you say is quite true, and I have always intended to bribe Isabeau Thiéry at the right moment."

"With money? Isabeau Thiéry?"

"Why the surprise?"

The Englishman got his limbs together, and sitting now on his couch-edge, stared, saying, "You cannot do that, you know.... Bribe any of them, the brokers, popes, emperors; but you cannot bribe a poet, man! Don't you know that for a fact, Lepsius? Frankly, you occasionally bring your friends' admiration of your brain to

some sudden cropper...! You, too, having that French fixity of idea and lack of humour, knowing the human clock so minutely in everything, except just its divine trick, its ‘eccentricity,’ as mechanicians say. You couldn’t bribe Thiéry!”

“Abundantly, I meant,” observed Lepsius.

“But that’s worse! If you send him five hundred francs, there’s just the millionth fraction of a chance that it might influence him, since he is so jolly poor; but if you send him five millions, don’t you know, really, what will happen? He’ll throw up the melodramatic right-hand that crumples the cheque, cry ‘Cato!’ and rush off to Sister Fanny to crush you. It’s the ‘eccentricity’ in the earth’s yearly journey: you count ill if you leave it out.”

At this Lepsius, springing up, looked at the other in the way of one who is struck by what has been said, and he had begun to say, “What grounds, now, have you——” when a negro, coming in between two of the columns, announced, “Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet,” and now Meade said, “Well, I’ll be away,” adding, “you can bribe him, Lepsius.”

“And all of you,” thought Lepsius within himself with a somewhat sullen eye askance on his friend.

The friendly Englishman and Lepsius, looking rather like cow and calf together, now exchanged a hand-shake, and in soon stepped the aged little duke, diffusing smells of perfumery, showing a youthful streak of teeth which shook, to seat himself finically on the couch which Meade had left, while anew Lepsius flew hither and thither, for some time paying no heed to the fop’s presence, who meantime secretly touched his teeth, lips, cheeks, and sucked a cachou; till at last Lepsius, casting a look at one of a quartette of clocks, cheque-book in hand, dashed to sit by his side, remarking, “Six minutes and a half, Monsieur le Duc, and my admirable friend: tell.”

“Why, it was you who sent for me,” the duke said, tittering in his fluttering and

fussy manner, “it is you, Monsieur Lepsius, whose rôle it is to tell!”

To this Lepsius made no answer, but stamping a cheque with a number of francs, furiously wrote the duke’s name on it, and now threw the cheque askew to the duke’s knees, without looking at him; upon which the duke sprang up somewhat pallid under his rouge, muttering in a protesting manner, “No, Monsieur Lepsius—your manner—I cannot accept—you forget, monsieur——”

Lepsius groaned. “We are such old cronies! And surely time is ever a thing of some value. Can you not see it? Tell, tell.”

“I am aware that your time is valuable——”

“Yes, of course: tell.”

“But——”

“No, tell.”

“But are there to be no preliminaries? No pourparlers? You have handed me a cheque, monsieur—I know not for what amount, since positively I decline to inspect it——”

“Twenty thousand, that being the first of several, the others to be written out as you proceed in amounts proportioned to the worth of your words.”

“The figures will be big in that event!”

“They shall be; you know that I am immense in generosity.”

“But it is a bribe!—if you consider it. I was never, however, to be bribed! You forget, monsieur, that I bear a name which I never have, nor ever shall, stain by any real meanness; nor, if I have accepted money of you in the past——”

“It was not a bribe, it was a gratuity; a meanness, but not a ‘real’ meanness, because of your secret ardour for my person and service. I know it all, nor should ever dream of insulting that name you bear with a ‘real’ bribe: tell.”

“Well, provided we do thoroughly understand each other’s tone, monsieur ...” the

duke now said, sitting down anew with a twitching up of his trousers' knees, "though in the present instance I absolutely do not feel that I could touch your cheque with honour, since, really, if you consider it, monsieur, it is a betrayal of comrades, this, in which I am engaged—you cannot get rid of the fact by any sophistry!—it—is—a—betrayal; nothing less!"

"Not a betrayal, only an exposure," said Lepsius drearily, "nor need you actually touch the cheque," and picking it up, he put it into the peer's pocket.

"Well, say an 'exposure,' since everything, after all, depends on the tone of an act, and everything is right that is done by the right-minded.... At any rate, let me tell you, monsieur, that you stand in a situation of even the extremist danger!"

"I know; and Isabeau Thiéry is in it."

"Why, yes."

"Tell—deeply?"

"Deeply enough, although not whole-heartedly, I know. Moreover, he hasn't a sou, so can at any moment be opened to you by the golden key."

"And Dr. Lepsius?"

"He also ... I am in the dark, by the way, as to whether the doctor is a relative of yours, although the question is being asked——"

"No relative. But that man is actually in the inside of the inner plot to kidnap and imprison me? Yes?"

"Why, yes. He has attended each of the recent councils in the house of Monseigneur Piscari, has even made suggestions as to the means of your capture."

The left cheek of Lepsius went ashen a second or two, and all at once he was up to fly with an eye on fire to a speaking-tube some distance off, through which, when he had whistled, he murmured low, "33, you?"

The answer was, "Yes."

“Telephone to P.,” said Lepsius, “asking if all is ready on his side, in which case let him now wire to B13 to burn within an hour.” At the same time, without looking round, he cried out to the duke, “You see the amount is as I stated it, Monsieur le Duc!” for the duke was taking the chance to scrutinise his cheque narrowly in the twilight.

“I will see to it,” was the answer of the speaking-tube to Lepsius, who then sped back to the duke, saying, “Two minutes more, monsieur; tell details.”

The old fop laid one forefinger on the other, and with much animation of manner gave the details. Lepsius was to be got to Château Egmond, a league from St. Brieuc, by means of an accumulation of inducements, the chief being that Schuré, the engineer, without speaking with whom it was assumed that Lepsius could not exist a week, would be present: for Schuré, though not of the conspiracy—at all events not formally, so far—had, however, promised to be of the house-party for two or three days; and it was proposed that Schuré should fall more or less indisposed while there through unwholesomeness in his wine for, at any rate, eight or nine days, until Lepsius should be impelled to hie to his bedside. Then Lepsius was to be shut up in the château some days, until he could be taken to the bastille on the Ile de Bas, named Château Labîme, which, too, the League had got on lease; and it was moreover hoped to reduce Lepsius to penury by seizing a minute key which Lepsius was believed to carry continually on his body.

Lepsius threw a new cheque when this had been said, saying, “Their names,” on which the duke, taking a leaf of paper out of his pocket, and speaking now eagerly with a mean secrecy of voice, galloped out a string of names, “Thiéry you know, Dr. Lepsius you know, and, of course, Sauriau, de Courcy, Leflô, Piscari, General-of-Brigade Rabot, Grand-Almoner Persigny; then there is Maspéro and Gustave Ghéon; the big bresseur d’affaires Brückner, Aly of gas, and Huguette of electricity; Captain Pertius; Pichot of Justice and Public Worship; Léonce Pettit;

Director of Fine Arts Rémy-Rehaut; and Maître Sorel—with some provincials."

"Their names," said Lepsius, smiling a little, toying under his vest with that half a coin whose sister-half he had sent to Miss Eve Vickery two years previously.

"The provincials," said the duke, "are obscure rich persons, not worth your resentment, monsieur; there is a Monsieur Louis Jammes of Lyons, a chocolate-maker, then a Monsieur Flammarion of Tours, a Monsieur Brisson of Rouen—who, by the way, is booked to go to the conference at Château Egmond."

"I do not know these people," remarked Lepsius with no little alertness of thought in his eyes which stirred fleetly from side to side like sheet-lightning. He then asked if the provincials had attended the Paris conferences, to which the other replied that they had not, being but "associates" by correspondence with Sauriau, their secretary.

Lepsius stamped yet a cheque, saying, "Make it your work to-morrow, Monsieur le Duc, to discover whether this Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, who is to go to the Egmond conference, is known by sight to any of the Paris conspirators, and you become affluent for six months, as already you are for three," in saying which he threw the new cheque to the duke, and dashed away to peer steadily at the picture of a château colouring itself as by miracle in one of the electric machines. The duke's arm had half started out for a hand-shake of farewell, but drew back without it; and now, after waiting some time, at last with a raising of the shoulders in a shrug which lingered long, he first with a grimace murmured to the four winds, "Is the interview, then, at an end?" and now, doing a very exquisite bow to Lepsius' back, withdrew with bows.

As he departed, Lepsius threw half a look at one of four clocks, their staring faces of a largeness so exaggerated that they concealed, each of them, four of the columns' mass, and afflicted the air with the click of their tick-tack; and with one tap of impatience on a chair he went muttering, "Come, Sauriau."

Some seconds afterwards the name of the Abbé Sauriau was called.

“Admit him!” called Lepsius in reply, at the same time darting behind a screen, whence in scarce more than forty seconds he came out “dressed” in clothes made for quickness, without any buttons about them, and a second before the abbé came in had caught up, and was casting his eye over, a page of a book of the abbé’s just published.

“Monsieur l’Abbé Sauriau,” he murmured, shaking hands, “I was at this moment deep in Hellenic Idylls.... But what are you, then, Monsieur l’Abbé Sauriau. A re-incarnation of Plato? For surely, only a Greek could so utterly know the soul of Greece!”

Monsieur l’Abbé Sauriau had shy eyelids. “I am glad.... Ah! you have seen Hellenic Idylls.”

“Seen and devoured ... and what charm! How airy! What daintiness of manner! Oh, truly, those gross fingers of the Abbé Sauriau know how to engrave with a fairy’s grace.”

“Why, this is well,” said the abbé; “have you, by chance—finished the book?”

“Not quite, yet, monsieur: I am now at the myth of Leda.”

“It is the end that is the best,” breathed the abbé with downbent lids.

“Let us sit here, monsieur, and speak about it,” and now he led to the couch a spirit so bludgeoned and kidnapped by the scoop of this typhoon of flattery, that Lepsius might possibly then and there have made the abbé his slave for ever. This, may be, was actually his aim: for the Abbé Sauriau, owing to his amiable personality, his learning, and his well-deserved celebrity through the whole world of letters, was an individual of no slight influence in the under-currents of the life of the Paris of his time, both within and without the sound of the Palais-Bourbon bell; and not only was his brother, Louis Sauriau, a general-of-division, but the engineer Schuré himself was believed to be deeply under the influence of the abbé’s fascination. This being so, Lepsius, in his gross way, continued with a smile of amusement to

eulogise to the skies the volume of which he had perused only one page, nor found any praise too gross for the poet to gulp down, while the poet eyed his right red sock which continually shook up, and struck the crossed leg with his glove. Unfortunately, Lepsius never knew more than forty-nine of the fifty parts of man, and as for man's vanity, he was himself so exempt from any iota of it—his tone being that of a broker, wholly pre-occupied with the facts of things—that he little recognised to what a degree vanity, in its government of the soul, may famish such grosser passions as avarice. Hence, not content with praising the abbé's book, he went on to mention his intention of buying an immense number of copies, and at once was aware of change in the abbé's air, for at once the abbé was offended, reflecting within himself, "It is a bribe; and since he has a desire to bribe, perhaps what he has said as to the worth of the 'Idylls' is just humbug with a purpose?" and his bush began to burn.

Lepsius, who did not much care, leapt up just then to answer the telephone, and before he came back to the abbé peered into the machine in which a château was slowly painting its shape on a pane of paper: upon which his visitor called to him, "What a fuss of mechanism you have squalling in this hall!"

"Come, I'll let you see them," said Lepsius in a humour of devilry, to humiliate the spirit that he had lately praised; and he led the priest from little machine to little machine, teaching him something of the meaning of each—things of steel acting in the manner of rational and ingenious creatures—into which those bushy eyes of the Abbé Sauriau peered near-sightedly, and though he uttered hardly a word, from time to time a "humph!" would start from him. When, however, they came to the one where the château was coming out in colours, Lepsius nonchalantly said, "This one you could not comprehend, however much I explained it," and dropped a handkerchief on it.

In this manner, half by carelessness, half in malice, he made for himself many

enemies, by contempt; and in the abbé's eyes came a flame.

"However, to come to details, monsieur," he said as he sat down anew.... "I have bound myself to sound you in advance on behalf of Monseigneur Piscari, who met me last night in the Salle des Pas Perdus, as to whether you would be likely to feel inclined to make one of a party, mainly political, to meet in the country in a fortnight's time."

Lepsius span round to the abbé, saying, "I wonder?... Whereabouts?"

"The name is Château Egmond——"

"I didn't know that the prelate had a palace of that name."

"He has lately taken it on a——"

"Where is it?"

"In Brittany, not twenty leagues from your own Palace Serapis, and a league from——"

"Ah, too far. Time, Monsieur l'Abbé," and off Lepsius dashed anew to the machine of the château-picture, snatched the handkerchief from it, peered, and now beheld midget people rushing about it, and the château at four places wrapt in flames; upon which he flew back to the abbé, who was observing, "Well, certainly, it is a long way off, but then everywhere is near to Dædalus; moreover, everybody will be there—Schuré, Montijo—many charming dames——"

"Ah! Who, for instance?"

"Madame Schuré for one," replied the abbé with a flash of the eye.

"Unfortunately, monsieur," remarked Lepsius very rashly, "I can't be expected to make love to a rat d'opéra like Fanny Schuré when it is well known that I am already in love, and with a sovereign lady. If, now, you had informed me that the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard and her charming relatives would be there, that to a great extent would have abolished the distance."

The abbé sat up at this, staring like one who is struck by a new idea, then muttered with some spite, “I was wondering if that could be managed, just to please you. It seems, however, to be out of the question, since one of those relatives of the countess is to be married on the 5th to Monsieur de Courcy at Grönland, in the centre.”

“And Monsieur de Courcy has not asked me to be a guest!” crowed Lepsius with gross sarcasm, adding, “Forgive me—forty seconds,” and anew he flew to the machine of the château-picture, a “living” picture, in which could be seen the leaping of flames that now surrounded all the place, and crowds rushing all about, and fire-engines spouting out waters in the night, all such mites as are the images which walk tiny in the eye of an ox. Lepsius gazed at it through a magnifying-glass, and when in a group of eight moving down a terrace in disarray from the house of flame he could make out the faces and shapes of the Misses Vickery, back he rushed to the abbé, saying, “That, then, must be my answer, Monsieur l’Abbé, to Monseigneur Piscari, with my thanks; nor will anything earthly alter my decision—unless, perhaps, it be some temptation in the shape of the eternal feminine.... You see, Monsieur l’Abbé, I become dissipated in mind like the rest, and oh, believe me, it is a relaxing thing to live among men.... What’s the time?”

The abbé stood smartly up at the hint, and, as always after being with Lepsius, hobbled away brisker than he came, braced in spirit and pricked to be a man of the same height and stride as that model that he yet disliked; and with that baggy skin of his brow twitching with cogitation, gazing at the ground, he went quick of gait, galvanic-young again, making sounds with his great stick, down to a carriage, where he gave an address in the Rue Jean Gougeon.

It was the home of the Count de Courcy. The count, however, was out, but might be found, the abbé was told, at the Ministère, or else at a house in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré.

To the Ministère drove the abbé; no de Courcy was there; so thence he drove to the Faubourg, where the Comte de Courcy rose from dinner to go to him at the head of a stair, and there the abbé said, with a scantness of breath, “I have been chasing you—am fresh from the individual whom—that is, from the young Lepsius, and shall be surprised from his mood at present if anything which we can devise will get him to step into the Egmond trap.... Would you believe? he is love-struck with Hellenic Idylls; it appears, my friend, that the young man dreams of it at night!”

“C’est vrai?” said Monsieur de Courcy (i.e., “By Jove,” touched with irony).

“Yes, you will find him turning author before long in order to vie with us others! But, believe me, monsieur, he is destined to discover that it needs a deeper brain to create a true and poetical book than to imagine machines of steel.”

“As Phœbus beats Hephæstus; but—you see—I am being awaited——”

“Yes, forgive me—only to tell you that it will be most difficult, as I can already see, to get him to go to Egmond, unless—may I express myself? it is delicate....”

“I even pray you to do so.”

“Unless Madame de Pichegru-Picard and her—nieces are of the party, in which event he will agree——”

The Comte de Courcy’s neck stiffened. “My friend, the suggestion would be ingenious, if it were not impossible.”

“I see that,” breathed the Abbé Sauriau, “especially its ingeniousness.”

“To me its impossibility is no less obvious, monsieur,” said Monsieur de Courcy.

But now steps were mounting the stair, and a man bearing a document and a telegram came up to give them to the count, who, having read the telegram, grew pale, and every second paler, and presently observed to the abbé, “My God! Grönland house burned to the ground!”

“Burned!” exclaimed the abbé; “why, accept my sym—— But where, then,

monsieur, will your wedding take place?"

"It may now have to be at Egmond," the count said slowly, with meditation dwelling in his underlook.

"Why, then, this may be a Providence in view of the individual whom we have in our mind!" cried out the Abbé Sauriau.

"We will see how Heaven works it," the count observed, now suddenly holding out his hand to bid bon soir.

CHAPTER XIII. AT EGMOND.

Within ten days everything was settled: the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, burnt out of Château Grönland, came to an arrangement with Monseigneur Piscari (who had already got from her the lease of Egmond in Brittany on behalf of the League), to go down there for the wedding of Miss Eve without interfering with the prelate's house-party; and Lepsius, for his part, on hearing now that Miss Eve would be at Egmond, agreed to go down, too, to meet the other political intriguers.

By the last day of June all the party were there, except a Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, and Lepsius, who had arranged to come on the 2nd of July for two days, the date of the wedding remaining fixed for the 5th of July.

As for this Monsieur Brisson, who lived not far from Brittany, why he did not appear was not very clear, for though he had been written to by Monseigneur Piscari, he had sent no reply.

However, about an hour after dinner on the 1st of July, Monsieur Brisson was announced just as a council which met to consider last details as to Lepsius had sat round a table in a chamber in a tower. The door was already locked when the card of Monsieur Brisson was brought, who, on being admitted, was seen to be the embodiment of the bourgeois in glasses, one of his legs bowed and booted with a

sole inches deep, on which he steeply limped. As he was unknown by sight to the others, he had to produce some of his notes from the League before being given leave to assume his seat; and the conference then began in a gloaming still unlighted by any lamp, present being Monsieur de Courcy, the Abbé Sauriau, Monsieur Leflô, the Duc de Rey-Drouilhet; the bent back of Dr. Lepsius sat sideways to the table, dumb; Monseigneur Piscari, a lank and stark inquisitor, presided; Isabeau Thiéry was absent; but there were some ten more, men of wit or weight.

The difficulty was to get Lepsius into Egmond without scandal: for if he once came in as a guest, and was seen, his disappearance would naturally excite comment and unrest; but after much discussion one Captain Pertius, a spark of the beau sabreur type, who had five pioupious (privates) at command in the château, proposed that as Lepsius came, his capture should take place outside a summer-house in a south avenue, and Lepsius there kept till everybody was abed; and this was carried.

But now Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, with a rasping throat of the nouveau riche, at last gave a croak, saying, “It will be a great risk to keep him idling there for hours in that summer-house.”

And now, too, for the first time, Dr. Lepsius breathed a weary word, “I agree.”

However, their votes were overborne on the authority of Pertius, who, having thoroughly examined the summer-house, had found it strong and sound.

Then, till it was almost dark, many details were discussed, many proposals put to the vote, everybody knew what his own duty was to be, and the council was now about to be broken up when anew the throat of Monsieur Brisson of Rouen was croaking, “But I feel uneasy.... Who chose the chamber in which Lepsius is to be kept?”

“It was Captain Pertius,” said Monseigneur Piscari.

“And you have all inspected it?” asked Monsieur Brisson.

“Most of us,” remarked Monsieur de Courcy; “it is a good, good place, monsieur.”

“It may be good,” said Monsieur Brisson, “but is it the best? Oh, believe me, messieurs, in everything there is a bad, a good, a better, and a best, the best ever more grievous than the rest, but so greatly better than the better.”

“True,” murmured the Abbé Sauriau: “is it the best?”

“I propose that we search the château in a body first,” suggested Monsieur Brisson.

“I agree,” murmured Dr. Lepsius, and after some talk this was done. Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet took with alacrity a blue candle from a candelabrum of ormolu, and with it led the procession, first up the tower’s stair to the chamber prepared for the prisoner’s sojourn, and then down and through almost the whole building, down to the vaults, up other towers, through crowds of halls and corridors, now with sounding footsteps, now with muffled, everyone chattering with some other in sets nonchalantly, Monsieur de Courcy and Monseigneur with their heads together before, and, behind, the Abbé Sauriau with the good bonhomme Brisson, whose right side, as along he stumped, stooped at every step of his right bow-leg. He was giving the abbé a reason why he must needs leave Egmond that very evening, having come merely to attend the committee-meeting, when for the twentieth time he stopped to stare at a painting; and since he had already explained that he was then buying, he was left to pursue his hobby by the abbé, who did not observe that behind each of the pictures that Monsieur Brisson peered at he left a certain little object resembling a night-light; and behind one picture he left a vial and his handkerchief.

After all, it was found that the tower-chamber which Captain Pertius had chosen was the most eligible; and, everything at last arranged, the committee separated to come among the ladies.

At this hour, with the moon in the clouds, and groups of ladies and their gallants moving round the grounds, and sounds of music in the salons and galleries, Egmond looked a stately and picturesque place. The Misses Vickery were strolling with Monsieur de Courcy along the brink of an oblong of water that stretched

far-slumbering in boscage from the bottom of the terraces to a mosque of marble at its far end, when there came up to them Dr. Lepsius to take part in their walk; but presently a messenger from Monseigneur Piscari came to call Monsieur de Courcy, who with his lips just touched a finger-tip of his future-one with a great parade of grace, and went away; soon after which Miss Ruth, too, was called by another party of promenaders—a Schuré group, Fanny Schuré burnished in coloured fires like mother-of-pearl, with whom Miss Ruth stopped to gossip, the innocent with the guilty, Dr. Lepsius and Miss Eve meantime going on to the mosque.

And there, sitting alone in a casement, they two spoke some time in low tones, while more and more the moon imbued the night with the mood of her beauty and her quietude, and communed sleepily the lily-leaves of the pool. It was when they were getting up to go away that Dr. Lepsius said, “But I mustn’t trouble a bride with an old man’s sorrows—in three days’ time you will be a bride, and I rejoice in your choice, which I think a wise one.”

Miss Eve had risen, seeming in her white evening-dress, with whitest cheeks, even weird in that sheen, and she replied with a chuckle, “It was prophesied me that I should not be a bride for some time to come!”

“By my son?... Well, he has no little might in this lower world,” the old man murmured, “but have no fear, he is by no means omnipotent, and, as I have hinted, he is at this moment in extreme peril for his own skin.”

Sharply at this, with a haughty heave-up of her chin, Miss Eve asked, “Who could touch him?”

“Ah! it is dubious,” the old man said musingly, bending over his oak stick; “still—I believe—by many eyes, and by many hands, and by the agreement of many wits and wills of men and God, it shall be achieved!” and now he struck the stick sharply upon the perron of steps down which they were now passing to the path, Miss Eve laughing a little with a meaning that was hardly understood, saying, “And his father,

if I am rightly informed, is with his enemies?"

"That is so," said Dr. Lepsius with an inclination of his head, whereat she stopped walking to face him, asking, "With your eyes quite open, Dr. Lepsius?"

"Well, I hope so," the doctor answered.

"You have thought, then, of what will certainly happen, if—after—I am married on Friday?"

Dr. Lepsius glanced up at her, having noted her tones go shaky, and on beholding her face bony with agitation, said with some astonishment, "No, what will happen?"

"Your son will kill himself."

And while the doctor with an eye of scare stared at her, she with a certain roistering and hilarity added, "And since royalty should have servants rejoicing to join in its voyages, two you may see, if not more, go to attend on his ghost."

"Two—I do not quite——" the doctor stammered.

"I meant my poor father for one," she sighed, continuing to walk.

But since her "kill himself" the doctor had but absently heard what was said, and "kill himself!" he cried suddenly, crimson with anger, "let him! let him! I will go to his funeral! For I'd sooner follow him to the tomb——"

"Now, Dr. Lepsius, a father ought not to be down on a son," Miss Eve said, "though I know that he has been beastly to you."

At this tears gushed to the old man's eyes. "Oh, it isn't that, dear Eve—it isn't the bitter ingratitude, the bruise, the gash in here: but how shall I not be against him in what he undoubtedly aims to bring about, when the mouth of every gash which he gives our race will shout out in rage against me? You see, do you not——?"

But now the old man, touched on the shoulder, looked about, and saw Monsieur Leflô, who had come down an allée in the leafage as a messenger of the Count de Courcy, seeking the doctor; so the doctor went off with Monsieur Leflô, while Miss

Eve, spying Miss Ruth in a group ahead, moved to go to her; but suddenly became aware of a stump, stump, of one limping in an allée, and in some seconds was accosted with a murmur of the word, “Mademoiselle.”

It was Monsieur Brisson of Rouen.

And when Miss Eve looked at him without seeming to know him, he, though undoubtedly agitated, said with a coarse chuckle that she and he had been shoulder to shoulder at the Quai d’Orsay that evening when a particular individual had dared to take a liberty with her lips: at which thing Miss Eve stood like a queen who stands astonished at so much insolence under the sun, then silently went on her way.

But this Monsieur Brisson was not one who could be banished with a chin; he followed to breathe near Miss Eve’s ear, “I wish to speak to you of him, he may be here to-morrow, and I have a message....”

“Here?”

“Let us go down that allée.”

She hesitated, and he glanced like lightning at his watch. “Only three minutes to be with you—come.”

Now she walked with him into the dark of the allée, looking down at the ground, like one magnetised, drawn with a cord.

“For what reason will he be here?” she breathed.

“On business.”

“You are to inform your master, monsieur,” she then said in a haughty manner, “if Monsieur Lepsius happens to be your master, that I know him to be in much danger, so that he should have a care.”

“Oh, trust in him!” said Monsieur Brisson imploringly, stumping along by her side with dippings of his right shoulder; “do you imagine that, loving you, he can miscarry? He feels that the breath of his love is vibrant enough by itself to heave

mountains out of their beds, and bear them as bubbles to the sea. Nor is his danger so much; it will be nothing, if you will consent to fly with me this instant."

"This instant?" she whispered furtively: "to fly? Away? With you?... But what, then, am I? A beast, with a beast's soul? Evil to the core? Reckless, furious, moon-struck? Is there no Christ for me on high, I wonder? No right? No wrong?"

"If you came," said her companion with some bitterness, though touched by her trouble, "it would save much time; and you would come, if hypocrisy was not your breath and bread," upon which she rushed into an irritation not to be restrained, crying, "That is monstrously untrue and unkind! I mean well!"

"Well," he said, "I did not expect you to come with me, for I know you. But you have to show me the windows of your bed-chamber."

Now she stopped walking, standing tall, gaunt, her heart galloping up in her gorge, asking, "Why my windows?"

"Oh, nothing: just show," he muttered; and when she had stared a little while at him, she paced on in silence.

Presently she went down another allée which led them to the terraces at the front and south of the house, and hence went on to the brink of a lake which laved with its waters a platform of marble at the château-back. Not a soul was thereabouts, no sound, only the spirit of the moon brooding upon the face of the lake and down the solitude of avenues of yews; and here immediately Monsieur Brisson stooped to whip off that thick-soled boot of his, whipped off his frock-coat, wrapped his two boots, with his top-hat, his spectacles, and his waist-coat in the coat, and cast all into the water, where they sank; in doing which very hurriedly, he asked, "Well, which are your windows?"

She, with her back toward the house and toward him, her brow bent downward, replied to the ground in a proud guttural that trembled, "I am sure I do not know why such a question should be asked of me.... My windows happen to be those two

on the first floor immediately over the balcony-end near by the statue—since it seems that the knowledge is desired."

The plash of the coat with its weight sounded now in the lake, and "Monsieur Brisson," that bow of his right leg quite gone, stood now limber on his bare feet, his elbow suddenly about Miss Eve's waist: whereat she, feeling his lips stealing near her face, went fearfully pale; nearer, and she shivered with sickness; nearer, and she sucked in her breath as at luscious juice and shooting pangs, sighed "By heaven," and had his lips.

He put her to lie on a bench of marble by the waterside, whence she through her half-shut eyelids watched him run away with a deer's ease up an avenue of the park, and disappear in darkness.

Some way down that avenue was a summer-house in a bower, and there the runner stopped his career some seconds to conceal beneath the seat some sheets of paper, a piece of pencil, and two tiny tools of steel like keys, then shot on. And it was there that at 6 p.m. the next day, as Lepsius was driving from St. Brieuc station to the château in a carriage of Monseigneur Piscari, the carriage stopped, and was at once surrounded by a crowd of pioupious and others. When he demanded of them what was the matter, they answered that he was a captive, and Captain Pertius, who was with them, then proceeded, with a perfectly ashen visage and hands which shivered like leaves, to search each nook of Lepsius' costume, even his shoes, searching especially for a certain little key, which, however, was not to be found. Lepsius' trunk was sent on to the house, and everything taken from him. "Oh, let one have his watch," he protested, but without effect. However, by an act one might say infinite in deftness, he contrived as he was being hustled down out of the carriage to snatch behind him the watch of Shan Healy who attended him, and was not seen. He was then imprisoned in the summer-house with a sentry of some ten mounted upon him; and in there, having taken the paper and pencil from their place of concealment

beneath the seat, he threw himself, face down, on the seat, and in a brown light began to draw diagrams.

On the day commencing to dim, he took out his collar-stud, touched it, and it shed round his sheets an electric sheen.

Soon after two in the morning he was removed to the room fitted out for him in the tower; the same hour the members of the League being met in council to congratulate each other and resolve on the next measures.

But early the next day their joys suffered much alloy through the turning up at the château of a certain Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, who had no resemblance to that first Monsieur Brisson of the conference! this new Brisson having the story to tell that, on going to a bogus business interview in Rouen, he had been imprisoned in a room by a gang of men, his papers grabbed, and he made to write a letter to his family saying that he was safe, and in Amiens on affairs. Only after four and forty hours had he been set free. So now the problem arose—who could have been that Brisson-of-the-limp who had attended the conference?

Lepsius, however, was there in the tower, safe enough, which was everything.... It was an eight-cornered chamber where he was, arranged with some little luxury, and large; but he suffered, being unaccustomed to be between walls, and here was but one window, with bars in it, while, as to the lush carpet, the eye of his consciousness was at every moment open to the microbic hordes that must be at barracks within it, nor could he bathe with ease, he who bathed frequently each day, nor was the food such as was usual with him, being much too luscious.

This was first served to him by a person who had a beard and appeared to be a man, but was not so loosely costumed but that certain curves of the womanly could be observed in him—or her. On seeing her when she bore in his breakfast, Lepsius moaned, and flew to the other extremity of the chamber, where he held a chair-back, ready if she attacked; but when she had put down the breakfast without glancing at

him, and had gone, his brow reddened, and having begged one of four guards for pen and ink, he wrote to Monseigneur Piscari, asking whether monseigneur was privy to the fact that one Jeanne Auvache, a convict with a mania, who had been aided by his, Lepsius', enemies, to evade prison, had been sent to attend upon him. He received no answer to this, but the woman ceased to appear at meals.

It was a superb day—the third of July—and by springing up to his little window-ledge, and hanging on, as he twice did, he could see groups of elegant folk moving remotely over the terraces or gossiping in retreats of greenery, appearing pigmy far down below all that half-globe of sky and tabernacle-hall of cloud, like spirits idling in paradise; and once he was able to make out the face of Mr. Vickery, and once knew Miss Ruth, but of that form that his eyes sought saw no sign.

Most of the day he spent on his face on his table over plans of buildings and machines, which he concealed when the meals came in at one o'clock and at seven in the evening—for it was not suspected that he had any pencil and paper; and when the meals—none of which he touched—had been cleared away, he bathed at a basin of delf ware that stood on a tripod of iron under the window. This window looked toward the west, though the tower itself formed the south-east corner of the château, which looked eastward. So as the afternoon's heat waxed fierce in the room, he drew down his blind of dimity, and now continued his labour cooler in a cave of shade which the blind's maroon colour imbrued with a blush of ruby; but when the sun had well declined, he anew drew up the blind, sprang up to the window, and, like a monkey peering keenly into something never previously seen among its trees, clung on long to peer into the scene of the sunset—a sight rather high and tragic really for the heart of a man, the sun going down all among bars of crimson, the brow of God drooped, disgloried, His arms far outcast in gory crucifixion. Then the door opened and the meal of the evening came in, to be immediately taken away untasted; and now with feet of impatience, frowning, the prisoner paced about the chamber. No light was brought him when it became dark, for his jailers, having an apprehension

that he might turn objects to unusual uses, took care that as few objects as might be should be in the chamber, not even a knife having been taken him with the meals. But by the aid of an electric stud, he spent some time in prying into the make of the lock of the door, though he had already looked into it two nights before, after the conference, in his rôle of "Monsieur Brisson": which done, near eight o'clock, shunning the bed with its bed-clothes, he chose a part of the floor where no carpet was, cast a look at Shan Healy's watch, and went to sleep there.

He knew (having been at the council), that at the hour of two he was to be roused to go on board a brig, bound for the bastille on the Ile de Bas; so he had commanded Shan Healy to conceal himself in the château and come to the prison-door exactly at 1.50, so as to help Lepsius to carry a load which Lepsius conceived that he would have need to carry. Ten minutes, then, before that 1.50, at a moment when preparations were being made in the château below to take him to the ship, Lepsius awoke to act. He was still at the lock of the door with the two little tools that he had hidden in the summer-house before his capture, when howls of "Help! help!" broke out without the door, and he was made aware that Shan Healy must be engaged in a struggle with the greenhorn pioupiou on guard out there; but the pioupiou's howls were at once drowned in the sound of a disturbance resembling the bursting of some tremendous drum somewhere, which just then made the château to tremble through its breadth and length; and before that roaring was well over, Shan, who had felled the pioupiou with the pioupiou's lantern, broke blithely with the lantern-light into the room, the lock of whose door had at that moment opened to the key of Lepsius.

But the poor fellow's blitheness had no long life. He did not enter the chamber alone—at least, scarcely less closely than a shadow follows did the feet of a female follow him in. No word had yet been uttered between Shan Healy and Lepsius, and Lepsius was just going to call out "Come!" (in a din now as dreadful as all the guns of Armageddon mouthing, the house racking its frame to fragments, the ground quaking) when he changed his "Come" into a shout of "Out with the light!" at the

same moment bolting to the other side of the chamber. But either Healy did not hear, or stood in a condition of mind too flurried for sprightly action (for he, too, had spied the woman as she had slammed the door after her); at all events, nothing was done as to the light, and Lepsius, as he pelted, moaned, the ogress after him, staring, her hair cut close, ugly, ghostly, grim as the very grave. “Shoot!” shrieked the fugitive to Healy, who, too, was in hot pursuit; but, even assuming that Healy was able to hear in the blare of that tumult, he must have perceived that he lacked the time to fire—unless, indeed, he was quite wondrously quick—because at that moment the woman’s arm was drawn back to throw her liquid; he saw it; did not see that by this time Lepsius was safe, having a chair with which to hide his face; and as the fluid was starting from the vial, wildly Healy flew between, receiving the bath of vitriol all over his right cheek and throat.

He could not help shrieking...!

“Idiot!” hissed Lepsius, who, as he now darted away, caught a weapon out of Shan’s pocket, sent with one glance backward and a nervous gurgle of chuckling a bullet into the woman’s bosom, which, however, chanced not to end her, and was out and away.

Right through the howling hell of the house from east to west he had now to hie: and fleet were his feet and alight his eye. Twice only he stopped a moment, once when, in pelting up a stair, he met flying down in a nightgown a girl whom with his lowered head he felled by butting her, knowing that if she descended she would be butchered; and a second time he stopped in a corridor to take the vial and handkerchief which as “Monsieur Brisson” he had placed there behind a painting. No want of light anywhere: for at various places the building was already in flames, which flames, serving as flambeaux, reddened the chambers where no flame burned; but as he spurted onward with his vial, the flooring violently sprang beneath his feet, and he was thrown against a wall, where he remained rather aghast some moments,

until smoke in his throat caused him to cough, and anew he flew, though at one point forced to win his way with toil and patience over floorless joists. And afresh every forty seconds or so all the house started at a sound which opened its mouth to appal the heart and astound the darkness with the message of its solemnity, after each of which deep-mouthed sounds count one second's pause and waiting, and now came downfalls crackling, like the brittle outbreaks of arrays of rifles prattling: for the bombs resembling night-lights that "Monsieur Brisson" had left behind statues, etc., had been timed to fuse, not in a mass, but one by one; and though he had so placed them in the below-stairs as not much to imperil the lives of the château slumberers, they were many, and were meant by him thoroughly to wreck the structure wherein men in their vanity had ventured to hem him. Anon he was aware of fugitives, single or in groups, staring, conscious of sin and of doomsday come: the Duc de Rey-Drouilhet, all toothless now, his nightshirt aflaunt, flying down a curving stair, calling out upon the rocks and hills to cover him; then the stout Abbé Sauriau clambering over a mound of débris, his trousers unbraced; then through the fumes that rolled all round a courtyard Miss Ruth Vickery in a dressing-gown on a gallery, dragging her father faster than he could go, Monsieur de Courcy, too, with them, Lepsius himself then flying along a lower gallery on the opposite side of the court; and as they were going west—to see to Miss Eve, he guessed—and were well ahead of him, never did his feet so fleetly speed. The delay of some seconds occasioned by the invasion of his chamber by Jeanne Auvache had disturbed the course of events as forecasted by him, and he had hardly burst into his darling's apartments and turned the outer key, when her father's poundings were sounding at the panels without.

Erect on her bare soles in an alcove, robed in a bedroom-robe of lace, a stone stone-still, her hair a rope plaited to a bow of ribbon at her knees, Miss Eve stood, waiting, aware of his tumults, but beauteously dead, as one who has interviewed the stare of Medusa; and all in a tick, like a cat fawning, Lepsius was cast at her feet,

kissing them, pleading, “Dear, will you come with me?”

Her friends were pressingly clamouring at the entrance; they screamed, “Eve!”

She took no notice of them, if she heard; as to Lepsius, she hurled up her right hand to strike him dead, crying, “You brute!”

“Oh, do—for us two—beloved——”

“I bitterly hate and abhor the pair of us!”

“But you will get us both killed——”

“Thank God!”

Now he started up, an arm about her. “I have to make you faint,” his handkerchief at her face; and like fate she took it, did not fight, or very slightly, resigned herself, smiled, sighed, closed her eyes ... and in some moments, by means of a sheet, he had reached the platform of marble thirty feet beneath, heard through the turmoil in his rear the noise of guns booming before—a signal from his yacht in the bay—leapt the balusters with his burden into the lake waters, waded, swam a bit, obliquely north-westward, reached the lake’s bank, and there among reeds and bulrushes sat down to breathe and rest, her brow on his breast.

Southward, a smoke that soared to the clouds was being poured out steadily from the château, which ever throed inwardly with loud-bursting noises and sounds of rumbling like poisoned bowels and Etna boiling; and that plume of fume-and-fire slanted continually from point to point of the compass, for a wind boisterously blew, drizzle sprayed the face, and the moon, while suffusing the night wildly with the whiteness of her light, was herself quite hidden away out of sight in cloud.

Lepsius was soon up and gone again with his load, knowing that pursuit would not be slow: but it was a great labour; the country there is rugged; Miss Eve, drugged, could not, or would not, keep on her feet; Healy, with whose help the load would have been easy, moaned in his agonies somewhere; and the bay lay nearly a league

away.

However, half-way to the shore he found waiting in a gorge where the gloom was gross under crags the Hindoo Nundcumar, together with four of his mariners, their eyes raised to the inflamed sky; nor was it long before a little half-harbour snoring in sleep between the arms of beetling crags, a brig's green and crimson beams, a steam-yacht's three beams, lay before them, and near a little pier of stone the men of two boats who lay on their oars for him, one a boat of his foes, one his own; and flushing the vault of heaven, even here, a false dawn flung far abroad from the château, and over the shore the breakers making their snoring, Miss Eve's feet bleeding, and streamlets of drizzle-spray in haste on her face.

They lodged her, still unconscious (as it seemed), among cushions, and plied to the ship, which, lying with steam at a moment's notice, immediately steamed away, turning toward the west: and rushing she went, urgently churning the sea—a long boat burnished with Tobin-bronze, burning the eye like a strip of the sun; and as the dawn worked and began gradually to overspread all the world of waters and of coast, Lepsius, prying a port on the stern, spied like pearl the pinnacles of Serapis.

CHAPTER XIV. AT SERAPIS.

Lepsius, to the amazement of men, remained at Serapis for weeks, to the very eve of the Exhibition, though he quickly established a system of posts and telephones with Monsieur Schuré and other men of importance: as to which the Hindoo, Nundcumar, remarked to Shan Healy, "It is a piece of slackness, this; once he would not have done this: but when a woman comes in, great minds begin to go rotten, and look a little ahead, my sonnies, and you will see their catastrophe head-over-heels."

It was then the turn of the Hindoo with his burned nose to drone by the bedside of Healy; and Healy, who had conceived a fever from his vitriol-dose, said with a moan, "Won't she let him see her yet?"

Nundcumar wagged his head meaningly-meaninglessly, going, “Not she: true-blue British and A1, a queen of queens! keeps him dewrithing in the deepest depths of hell! That morning when she landed, he thought he had her, my sonnies; but, if he is artful, she is a bit artfuller still: peeped through the rose-curtains of her palankeen, smiling with him like any dancing-girl, gabbing and gossiping with him about Serapis, and how he built it; then when she was in and saw Serapis, and what it is, her nostrils spread a bit, her breath stops a bit; but by the time he had got her into the west ivory seraglio, and gave her to know that that was to be her special palace, she had come to herself again, looking as compleased as Sir Punch himself, smiling with him, and he with her, and she with him, all very fine and large; so she halts before one of the bashi-bazouks guarding a hall, gaping at his get-up, his thises and his thats, his whys and his wherefores, makes him draw his sword to show her, all marquetry of little gems and gold, his dagger, all marquetry of little seed-gems, a real pleasure, delight and comfort to man’s ophthalmoscoptics; and, says she, ‘How pretty, Lepsius!’ she says, drawing the dagger out of the guard’s paws; ‘oh, I mean to keep this; may I?’ So Mr. High and Mr. Mighty he looks at her quick, then lowers his eyes, and at last he mutters, ‘Yes,’ reluctantly. Then she begs him to go, as she has a migraine-ache, so he hands her over to her ladies, and goes; and the moment he is gone she squats to pen him a note: and what do you suppose was in it?”

Shan Healy tossed for ease, moaning. “Anybody can easy enough guess out what was in it; but how the deuce do you know?”

“I know and I know,” said the Hindoo with a moving head, “and what I do not know is what man knoweth not, for that which is is shown unto me. And in the note, word for word, she says, ‘Lepsius, I admit myself your prisoner here in Serapis. You understand though, I think, knowing me armed, that I instantly die if you venture to enter anew any part of my palace; test me, I woo you, to see whether I mean it or not.—Eve.’ That was her scribble, my sonnies, and the wording and reverbosity of her constructing.”

Healy opened and closed anew his sick eyes to reply, “If it’s true.”

“What, don’t you suppose I ever let slip something that’s true, for form’s sake, in the hey-day and prime of life?” prated the utterly senseless ape-tongue of the Hindoo that ambled blandly in a monotone along, with the obscurest meanings anon, if meaning it had.

“So he ain’t seen her since?” Healy asked.

“He has seen her every day, though she little thinks it! for she is artful, but he is artfuller still——”

“Old gas-bag,” Healy moaned, “you said just now that he is artful, but she is artfuller still.”

“Both are artfuller than each one, my chum Healy,” Nundcumar said: “he is artfuller than she because he is of the guiley ones and artful dodges, the beguilers and the wilers, and she is artfuller than he because she is a woman, and the guilt of womanhood is in the juice of her gall-bladder. But he sees her when she little believes it: his eyes have their peep-holes and their spy-places to weigh her and dwell upon her when she’s wantoning on the water with her poet and her ladies, or when she is walking under the arcade of the courtyard gazing at the gauderies and the graces of her Persian and Delhi girls dancing with their carcanets of pearl in the moonshine: for she grows every day more luxuriatingous, which is the curse of Serapis for everyone who enters it, from the lord of all to the low-cast coolie who polishes the porphyries; and in these three weeks she has grown into a regular begum-queen, true-blue old England as she is, and if he only waits a bit, he will get and win her, be certain—that is, if she does not flirt off abscond and run away first with the young poet Pershorez——”

At this the sick man looked at Nundcumar to sigh, “Oh, you scandalous tongue—if I only had the strength——”

“Why, my friend Healy,” said Nundcumar, “have your ears not heard how she pets

her little Pershorez? Cannot stir without him near her! Feeds him with sweetmeats, conserve of roses, orange-honey of Kauzeroon, and all delights, almond-patés, and amusements! her eyes musing on his eyes all an afternoon in that small hall of red andem-wood, while he recites to her from Hafez and Ferdousi, sir-poets of Persia whom she cannot understand a word, though she can well understand the face of Pershorez, my sonnies, which is only made of cream of gazelle-milk and rose-leaves fading, and his little figure more perfect in grace, symmetry, curves, and very hungriness of perfecting than Thammuz, the love-god that Syrian girls go thin for fancy of, and sigh for very hungriness of delight, and die of. And that other one, the lord of all, he knows, he knows, of this, because Barova, the little Arab slave-maid, who is thin, faint and gaunt for love of lord Lepsius, she pushed her way one night right into his private hall in the north palace, and told out of her mistress, how the grossness of the sap of womanly hungriness grows wanton in the arteries of her gall for Pershorez; and first he could not grasp what the girl wished to say to him, but then for very anguish of jealousy he cast back his head-piece and laughed wild——"

"Laughed for fun," sighed Healy—"if any of it is true."

"For fun, may be, and may be not for fun," the Hindoo said with a moving head: "though not much fun in Serapis going on these days. Wait, wait: for that's bad, Healy, when the evil eye is cast upon a man, and the villain woman with the vitriol is not yet dead, for first it was poor old-boy Nundcumar on his oil-factory nose, and then it was you, poor boy, and the third time it will be—another one of the ones. That's bad, that's bad. And the seeds of disease spring and spread in Serapis; he loses hours now in peeping and dreaming and brooding about her—loose! looser every day; and when the woman comes in greatness goes out and out, for the race of man would be a crowd of gods, but the presence of woman relaxes his screw and corrupts his entrails. Peeping, dreaming, like any Pershorez poet! and his Exhibition that is all the talk coming so near! Several times he has passed hours hanging about her: once stood guard disguised as a Mamaluke under that cupola of enamels of her

outer hall to see her pass close; and he has fanned her face disguised as a slave-girl, where she sat listening among her cushions to her Persian girls singing to the vina, with the zels clashing aloud, and the kanoon-lutes making music and all sorts of sounds, alarms, loudness and howdedo of melody; and he has come to embalm her musk-baths, attended her bathing, painted her nails with henna, and she with her weapon none the wiser——"

The sick fellow whined at this, sighing, "Pity you're quite so vile an old liar, after all."

"Who—me?" said the Hindoo, a finger at his breast: "why, some of it is true, my friend Healy, as the four and fourteen gospels! And how about the letters that go between them, have you not heard of this? For every day he writes her three-four times, and every morning that dawns she writes him a line, though for two weeks she would not, but when he raged, prayed, raved, consought and implored her with so much squalling, pain, despair and foaming, she said at last that she would write him one line every morning, giving him a puzzle-problem to solve, since he is so witty, wise and witful in all wiles and witticisms, and if ever once he failed wittily to answer her, he must agree to let her go from her prison in Serapis to her parent, who is sick to death for lack of her, though Sir Lepsius sends her daily the report that her parent is in health and roarious spirits. So every morning that dawns her note goes as regular as the milk-carts and the market-gardeners all the way through from the west to the north of Serapis, wrapt in satin in her poet's hand; and one day the lady has written, 'Lepsius, tell me to-day if the spirits of men live ever and ever.—Eve'; and one day she has written 'Lepsius, write me to-day (with a why) which wild-rose is sweeter and wilder: those all white on the weald, or those which are washed as with shame.—Eve'; and one day she has written, 'Lepsius, tell me to-day how the heavens and star-dust were formed out of nothing.—Eve'; and he to her writes the most fantasticalest, whimsiest, witticismest answers, replies and respondencies, as she has shown them to her old Nundcumar when she sits listening with delight to my

tales, faries, frivols, and other lip-froth; and as to that of the forming of the heavens and star-dust, he wrote her that, once upon a time of the times, One Who Is, wishing to compose an oratorio of music, brewed oceans of ink in a bowl of gold, and, holding in hand a pen of gold, began to compose and throw off the notes of his oratorio; but soon, when the beauty of the music stressed and throed in his soul, so that he pressed well upon the pen, the pen splintered, and the ink spattered, blotching with spots and splashes all the blackness of the vault: so One Who Is roamed more remotely into the womb of gloom to compose some more glorious oratorio. So they toy and coy, and bill and coo together, my sonnies; but wait—let him go on: the seeds of disease spring and spread in Serapis, say I; he gets slacker and laxer with his idol-lady; wantonness and riot is growing among some of the scum of the domestics; many of the men, and their commanders, too, are grumbling with discontent because of regulatings and strictness; that villain woman——"

Here, however, the entrance of a sister-of-mercy, Healy's nurse, whose frown the Hindoo knew, interrupted and drove him out; immediately whereupon Healy begged to be permitted to pen a note, and on gaining the battle, wrote as follows: "Master Hanni, I beg to be forgiven for writing to you, but as I do not much fancy now that I shall ever be getting up out of this again, that's why I take this liberty, which is to say that I wish to God, Master Hanni, you would get that dog of a Hindoo Nundcumar from being near about you, for he means you no good, I doubt, and under the ridiculousness of a parrot this man hides ten times the craftiness of a fox. Dear Master Hanni, you may not be aware that thirteen years since Nundcumar was two years in Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, near by London, for stealing two bicycles. And, Master Hanni, that you may never cease to remember with any breath you breathe that Jeanne Auvache remains alive is the dying prayer of yours till death, Shan Healy. I'd give fifteen years, if I had fifteen days, to lay my eyes on your face once again for one moment on this side, but that may be a bit more than I can expect of you: and, if not, good-bye to you."

A little slave of Healy's was at once sent out with this letter, which two hours later reached the hand of Lepsius in the north-east regions of Serapis, where he lay in a diwan-i-am, or hall of audience; and his glance having lassoed in one swoop the significance of the note, he threw it among other notes into an alcove of the throne in which he lay, saying to a gentleman (a commissaire) who sat with him, "No, Monsieur Hugonnet, you have my assurance: she is not in Serapis; she perished in the collapse of Egmond."

"Not so, monsieur, I think," said Monsieur Hugonnet, a big bureaucrat, who ever struck the wind with his eye-glass in his fingers: "that theory is no longer tenable, for it is now established that some shreds of her body must have been found. Moreover, you do not forget the crew of the brig's boat who saw a lady carried into your boat?"

"It was another lady," replied Lepsius, smiling, "as ten days ago I gave myself the pains to prove to Monsieur Leflô and Lord Rawlinson."

"Monsieur, I admit it," the commissary replied: "you have conclusively proved that Miss Vickery is made of air; this, nevertheless, seems a matter in which frankness, reasonableness and right feeling might well be invoked on both sides. Think, monsieur—the lady's father lies half dead of it; and the English Government, I give you my word, monsieur, grows every day more earnest, more urgent——" at which Lepsius, jumping up with a rather reddened brow, went walking about a hall all pillars of marble, between which stretched screens of perforated marble and filigrees of gold, screens low enough for one to overgaze, away below, the crags of the Brittany coast, and, away beyond these, a streak of sea, indigo corruscated with snow-glints under the sun's glare.

"Let the English Government grow urgent," Lepsius, returning to Monsieur Hugonnet, suddenly said: "what then? What would you and it have? Have I not allowed your troops to enter and ransack every crack of Serapis? Have you found

Miss Vickery? No. So, then, she is not here? Nor is she made of air, monsieur, believe me, but of flesh and blood, and her palms, if you palpate them, will be warmer to you than the bark of the maple. So, why have you not found her? And how much more of my time shall I have to lavish on this matter?"

"Serapis is not so much a palace as a town——" the commissary commenced to say.

"Still, you have searched it throughout!"

"Let us search it again, monsieur, for certainty's sake!"

"Again? And when?"

"Say to-morrow, will you?"

"Well, it is ridiculous; still——"

"Scribble me a pass, monsieur!"

Lepsius scribbled a pass for the following day, and the commissary went away.

As for Lepsius, he had no fear of the legal visit, since his reason for giving Miss Eve her (west) palace was that in it were rooms so curiously and astutely concealed, that no keenest wit could suspect them; and on the previous visit of the police Miss Eve was easily induced on some excuse to step, unsuspecting, into one of these. So Lepsius smiled, as he once more stepped up to recline in his kind of throne, little thinking that that commissary was more cunning than he looked.

He was about to sound for the following interview, but instead put out his hand to Healy's letter: did not, however, lift it; but, his hand on it, reflected a little; then sprang up, and ran out, down the length of three corridors, across a hanging gallery, guards making him salaam, down a stair, along a lake, southwestward always, knowing his way without fail, slaves and dignitaries, going on their various duties, standing agape, saluting his tunic's glare, his turban's egrette of heron's feathers aburn with seed-pearl, and up a curved stairway to a certain curtain: and Healy's Ursuline nurse stood up amazed to see him peer in, and wished to wake Healy, who

lay breathing strangely in sleep; but Lepsius restrained her.

Lepsius stood about two minutes, looking down at that rash on the sick brow, the bandages on the breached cheek; took up, looked at, smelled two of the medicine bottles; took up and held the sick hand; and, holding it, gazed out with a brow of trouble through a great window which was hollowed out in Moorish ogives, out into a court where the whiteness of a minaret in the midst of a lake was reflected far down in the water, with zephyrs flirting along the water's surface: an afternoon in July in which all that Brittany country slumbrously basked, and bumblebees, as air-boats trading, tromboned a moment, as through steamboat throttles, their boom of music across the ear-drum dreamily, and cruised to some other ear. Somehow Lepsius sighed. And whispering the sister, "Tell him that I came," he went away in haste.

But he had hardly passed beyond the door's hanging, when a French functionary with a wild and white face, wringing his hands together, raced to him with the hiss, "My God, monsieur, all is lost! Monsieur Hugonnet has gained admission with a squad of gendarmes, and is now searching Miss Vickery's house!"

Quickly Lepsius' eyes stirred from side to side. What had happened he saw: Hugonnet, aiming to take Lepsius by surprise (as he did!) had adventured to present to the guards at the great gates the pass intended for the morrow, and they had not noticed the date; nor was there any possibility of inducing Miss Eve at a moment's notice to move into one of the secret rooms, nor any possibility of checking the officers in their search, nor any possibility of keeping her a prisoner in Serapis, if she was once seen, nor any possibility of living without keeping her....

Lepsius flew....

Not toward the west palace, but back toward his own north, and not the way he had come, but as the bird flies, one eye on the watch on his palm, one on the way he went, once swinging over a wall, once swimming an oval of water, trampling

flower-beds, routing men, making one bound of stairs, while the fowls of the air cried out their affright at his flight; and now like whirlwind his fingers were scattering among masses of trinkets and things in a certain mahogany, he groaning in his soul; got what he wanted; and now was gone again, going straight as the bird goes, west and south, swinging, swimming, bounding, and now at last was in the south-west house.

Standing within a doorway under a dome, he heard above-stairs the sound of the troop; and stealing in a tick up sixty steps on the belly, his wet streaming on the alabaster, he spied the troop, who, he saw with spite, were just moving from one of his secret rooms, proving treachery in Serapis. And on they went, Monsieur Hugonnet and ten gallants in gaudy garments with swords, walking with a swagger between two white walls with lines of doorways in them that seemed without any end, he hiding behind, wriggling with eagerness as a tigress wriggles about to spring, hearing now a sound as of the harp far off (which, however, the gendarmes seemed not to hear), and aware now where Miss Eve was. So the moment that the commissaire, examining a plan in his hand, went into a doorway with his men, Lepsius sped on to slip ahead of them, but before he could get to the door heard the sound of the searchers coming out again, a glance having shown them that no one was in there: and he had to shy into a side-corridor on the right. And now on a sudden the sound of the strings of an instrument struck to the ears of the seekers, too; they looked alive; “Come on!” cried the commissaire, and on they stepped. Now Lepsius sped ten-footed to the right down the length of his side-corridor, turned at its end down a second corridor, turned left down a third, and in this last spurted through door-curtains into a room, before ever the troop had attained the bottom of their corridor—a room of monstrous circumference, domed with moresque-work in gold, and, though looking a ghost of marble, cool, too, and balmy, its circle of rose-curtains being all closed, embarring a grotto of umbrage within, which was pregnant with fragrances of frankincense burning in urns and

cassolets. Two fountains wheeled about its centre, between these in the wilderness of floor being one flush of colour and odour of woman, cushions, stuffs, rugs, for snugly grouped there lay an oasis of ladies making music, Miss Eve seated in their midst, cuddling a gazelle which lay chewing the sugar of its cud with lids of indolence. All at once she was up, tall! a weapon started out of her breast, yes, and was brought down, and would have been driven to her heart, if the feet of Lepsius had been by one whisp less fleet, or his eye less wise. He had her in his arms, the ataghan-dagger cast far, she struggling against a handkerchief which he held on her face, with stifled cries of "Let me go! Lepsius, let me go!" He, however, clearly hearing now the near-coming of the steps in the corridor, pressed heavily, had her senseless, laid her down on the yatag (ground-bed) where she had been sitting, and drew to her chin a coverlet over her. At that moment the troop stood at the door, and, had the music not ceased on his entrance, Lepsius, however speedy-handed, could not have succeeded; he had counted, however, upon the music ceasing: and during the seconds that the troop remained out there in a state of hesitation as to which was the chamber of the music, his raging hands had her face brown with some ulmin or umber-stain, had his turban bound about her brows, her mouth, cheeks, submerged beneath a snow of beard. "Say 'sh-h-h' if one enters," he whispered, "fan her," and he vanished.

Some seconds later Monsieur Hugonnet and his troop rapped, came in, inspected the group of Oriental maids, the poet (lone male among women) with his lute, the gazelle, and the old Ulema, Imam or Cadi taking siesta on the yatag in his turban, softly fanned by his girls. The gendarmes cast glances at the group of girls—could hardly be got to move on; but presently searched through the hall, and spent the rest of the day in searching Serapis in vain.

Nor did Monsieur Hugonnet go out as he came in. In passing down a stair in the north palace, he and several of his men slipped down it, three spraining their legs; in one place he got an electric stroke; and in his going out of Serapis a grate gave way

under him—a grate that had sustained all his men—nor was it without difficulty that he was raised up, half-drowned in filth, out of a drain.

Thus ended the final attempt of the two Governments to find the prisoner in Serapis. But no sooner did the Governments begin to give up than her sister, Miss Ruth, said, "I will find her": and two days after that failure of the police, late in the evening, Lepsius received a request to admit Miss Vickery, for no one was admitted into Serapis unless permitted; and he at once sent for her.

"Alone?" said he, with his elbows laid on a table to stare at her paled face upon which a lamp shone, she seated with her luggage (a hand-bag) at her feet, a pretty sprig in her hat, for she liked little fineries and vanities, provided they were very cheap.

"Yes," she replied to him, "quite alone."

"You have come to see—Serapis?"

"Why, what a question—for Eve!"

"If I had Eve, do you imagine that I should give her to you?"

"I am even sure that you will, if I beg you."

"Beg me, and see."

"You admit, then, that you have her.... Tell me whether she is well!"

"No, she is not in Serapis. I fancy I know where she might be traced, but she is not in Serapis."

"Oh, fie, you tell lies; why, I have seen her here."

"You?"

"Yes, three afternoons ago, in a dream. I hardly ever go to sleep in the day-time, but somehow that afternoon about two sleep overpowered me, and Eve lay before my feet. She lay asleep, and she was an old man with a beard somehow, and yet she was Eve, and a goat with its forelegs doubled underneath it fed by her feet, and it was

here in Serapis, I knew very well, in a room with a dome over it."

Lepsius, staring at her, remained dumb.

"So you see," she remarked with an underlook, "there are more kingdoms than you have visited."

"Myriads more," he mumbled.

Now all of a sudden she brought down her fist masterfully upon the table, bending forward. "Let me take her back to her poor papa!" whereat he laughed with a sort of wrath, crying, "I! I have her for ever and ever!"

"Have you married her, may I ask?"

He, his gaze on the table, mumbled, "If I even go near her, she raises a dagger to pierce her bosom."

"Good old Eve," breathed Miss Ruth, staring in surprise; but added immediately with veiled eyes, to soothe the agonies which she guessed, "that is not because she loves anyone less, but because she loves God more."

"You are an unintelligible family," he remarked with half a shrug.

"Oh, but well-meaning, I think, well-wishing," she said. "Anyway, if—since—she may not come with me, I will stay with her."

"No; if you stay, you stay a captive; and, if I allow you to, I thereby avow that Eve is here."

"No one will know but my papa, who promises you, if you will let me be with her, never to tell anyone."

"So, then," asked Lepsius, "you imagine me sufficiently childish to rely upon your father's promise?"

"You do not? Really? How curious! Well, I undertake, then——"

"Your undertaking is without weight. Moreover, you once before broke a promise that you made me."

“When?”

“At The Towers, as to betraying my presence to Dr. Lepsius....”

“Oh, but if one meant well! Look, now, into one’s eyes....”

She looked into his, and he into hers, which had water and all her heart in them—ten seconds, twenty, thirty—until his dropped at her purity, with a murmur of the word “sweet” on his lips.

Then he said, “But you are all against me; you would be speaking against me to Eve.”

“Well, then, I will undertake never again to do that.”

“That is not enough; I say no, unless you will undertake to woo her in my favour.”

“Now, how can I? Is she not affianced to——?”

“How laughable!” shouted Lepsius: “she shrieks with laughter at the mere thought of such a farce! De Courcy is a gnat, a limpet in a hag of peat-water! And since you, meaning well, could break your promise made to me, why may not Eve, meaning well, break her promise made to this ape-man?”

“Oh, I,” Miss Ruth replied with her touch of flippancy, “I’d crash through a promise like piecrust any day, if I saw fit, for I think that a Christian is set free from rules, and in the pure every crime is pure. My sister, however, regards herself as more bound by laws and modes, and as to departing from a promise once given, it has always been her way, I know, to regard that as rather a ghastly business. But suppose that somehow the fact of her espousal could be overcome, how can I ever possibly cry back to your cause, knowing that you are not a Christian?”

Lepsius smiled. “If that be all, regard the knot of Gordium as cut: I become a Christian this night.”

“How will you—‘this night’?”

“Isn’t there something about being plunged into holy water?”

“To be plunged into holy water is hardly to be a Christian, I think.”

“What, then, is?”

“To wish well to the world, I think; to live to serve it; to stand piously alert to suffer and die for it”—with down-turned lids she uttered this, and, as he heard it, his brow twitched once; then bringing his mouth down to the table, he mumbled, as it seemed, to nobody, “A lady here to be led away west,” and as a guard in gauds appeared, he remarked to Miss Ruth, “You will hardly be able to persuade me that you are a thinker, you know; but I am persuaded that you are in some way the sweetest of sisters and girls, and a prisoner whom Serapis will not readily let go.”

“Have I won, then? Am I about to see her?”—Miss Ruth bounded upright—“oh, but you are pretty good, after all, and I shall never, never forget you whenever I lift my eyes to the hills of God.... How is she? How far is it? May I go now?” ... Lepsius was whispering to the guard, who soon afterwards turned to Miss Ruth, and it was in quite a gush of girlish flutter and flightiness of glee that she went with her guide’s steps, inclined to prattle, crying anon, “Why, Serapis is all like a white metropolis swimming on water!”—for all the lights of Serapis had by this time been lit, and beamed star-wise far and near in myriads, as it seemed—white, crimson, green—streaming on negro waters that gleamed like steel, so that it all seemed of the drama of some teeming dream. But when at last they came to the west-end, it was only to be told that the lady of the place was away on the west lake with her playmates; and making their way to this with haste and impatience through alleys and courts, an increasing roar now sounding in their ears, the pair of seekers stood on the lake’s shore and shouted. During some moments, however, Miss Ruth screamed “Eve!” without result, inasmuch as the gondola of gold-moresque in which Miss Eve rowed was close under the gross roar of a cataract that rolled with a hoary angriness, Niagara-like, over crags near a hundred feet deep at one end of the parallelogram of water that made the lake—a lake surrounded with towering

house-walls and crags. But soon Miss Ruth was seen from the boat, Miss Eve screamed, and before many moments the sisters were breast to breast, uttering breathless syllables, broken with kisses.

“But—let one look at you!”—and when Miss Eve exhibited herself, “Is this Eve?” the other asked, for Miss Eve was in a garb all of flimsies of the Orient as gaudy as rainbows—silk-muslins, gauzes—her ears gross with ear-rings of coral-rock and gold, a kefie-cloth draping her face, with her gazelle, her maids, her boy-poet wearing his embroidered sandals and strings of little pearls....

“Well, this is Eve,” breathed Miss Ruth, musing upon the other with her bambino eyes, a smile of happiness chronic on her lips; “and whatever can that be on your nails?”

“Henna.”

“Eve!”

Miss Eve snapped her thumb and finger gaily up in the air saying, “Oh, well, never say die, and in Rome let’s row with the Romans; once I was queen of the Greeks, hundreds of eras ago. Come, sweet, to see the seraglio,” and thither they hurried.

CHAPTER XV. TO SHUNTER.

Lepsius, the Exhibition being now about to begin, should have been in Paris, but was at Serapis: and that was a true word of the gossip Nundcumar that woman works a relaxation in the screw of greatness, and taints its vein. Paris was strange; and the weather there “treacherous,” as they say. Frequently each day Lepsius was in communication with Monsieur Fautras, his broker, and with Schuré, his chief engineer. A rumour was abroad that the last of the Moon Debenture Bills (asking the sanction of the Chamber to the issue of yet new stock to the tune of a milliard and a half) would hardly be carried, because of another rumour that the moon-structure itself was fated to failure: an event that must ruin very many investors. So the

croakers and screamers arose and mouthed: the scheme, they screamed, was never sound; down all at once one day from par to 97 fell the stock; speeches breathing rage were everywhere being made, in the streets, on ’Change, in the Chamber; newspapers furious with froths of abuse—true Paris-babies, created to live three days—saw the light, cried, and died; pamphlets, pamphlets, flooded the cafés; Lepsius, men said, had fled.

During all which a kind of riot one afternoon (the seventh of July) sprang up in Serapis itself. As the old Nundcumar told it with a moving head to Miss Ruth Vickery at the bedside of Healy that evening, “Sir Lepsius was at the telephone when Captain Bréhat broke into his presence with a face like volcano-ashes mixed with fire-flashes, to bring him the message news and betidings that some two hundred and fifty of the private troops had broken loose, and had wrecked two of the barrack-rooms. So Sir Lepsius finished his talk and chit-chat at the telephone, and then, starting off with a malign light in his eyes, though smiling ever his smile of the smiles, caught up a weapon of queer and dark appearances, and ran away to a square in the north-east, where the crew of them stood—all picturesque rascals of Spahis, mixed with Turcos, Mamalukes, Zouaves, Uhlans, Don Cossacks, some of them on horse-back, but most on foot in their half-dress, all under arms, so that the heart, missie, paused under the bosom-bone to see it through. Three-four of them said ‘Bravo,’ on beholding Sir Lepsius come, but the brows of the rest only scowled blackly at him, and one big Spahi spurred out to him with his grievance-list. Never a word breathed Sir Lepsius from first to last, but as the grievance-list was going to be presented, all at once he sprang like a flea of the fleas to the ringleader’s horse-back—a great Hungarian horse, all rings and piebalds—and he began to stick the horse with his penknife like a pig, here and there, till the creature in its raging, plunging, prancing, and very arrogance of arrogances dashed down the ringleader on the ground. Then Sir Lepsius shot his gun-shot up in the clouds, and down upon the crowd of them a shower of shot dropped back broadcast and hard-hitting; at the

same moment he aimed the gun at them, drove the Hungarian mare at a gallop round about, pressing them, and on a sudden they were gone in a rout with bowed backs, as a crowd rushes out of a shower suddenly. Then he came again to the north palace, and later in the afternoon got the news that all was well, as the troops had resumed their duties. But wait, wait, it is not done with yet——" He stopped, Miss Ruth rising to wipe the lips of the dying man in silence....

But it was, in truth, not "done with": for the very next forenoon the troops anew broke into mutiny, and Lepsius was told that one part of the soldiers' quarters was being burnt. He had already observed the redness of it in the sky, spent twenty seconds in dire reflecting, and then sped away, intending this time to be terrible. It was a morning of storm that spat dribble and brine, the strip of sea seen from the higher parts of Serapis had an appearance of wrath, a league to the east a brigantine had been wrecked in the night, the sky was all grey and hurried like a current, and all pools of water darted darkling continuously under the swoops and pursuits of the squalls. Lepsius was making headway in the teeth of it eastward to the scene of the émeute, when, to his amazement, a maid came pelting to meet and present him a line scribbled on the fly-leaf of a Bible, "Pray, sir, do not come to the men. It will be well.—Ruth Vickery." Nevertheless, he ran on; and presently, peering through a wicket, saw Miss Ruth with the mutineers in a court, moving to and fro before them, her hair blown loose over an old cloak of faded blue that enfolded her, flapping, on her head a forage-cap of the men, she haranguing them loudly in French against the sounding of the gale. Lepsius stood too far off to know what was being said, but saw Miss Ruth laughing anon, the troop laughing also, soon became aware of a rumour of voices raving "Bravo!" then of Miss Ruth pointing at the flame, as if enjoining the troop to hasten to help in its suppression, then saw them press pell-mell through a gate and go, taking her in the current of their haste.

In truth, Miss Ruth was at present no more a prisoner in Serapis, but roamed whithersoever she chose in and out of it, visiting the Breton peasants round about,

the sick in Serapis, and corresponding whenever she chose with her parent, to whom she wrote that the angel of the Lord had broken the bars of her prison. On the whole, she was so well known, and with so much respect, to everyone in Serapis, that it may have been beyond the wit of Lepsius, had he willed it, to keep her strictly a prisoner. At any rate, the émeute thus suppressed did not recur; and Lepsius pondered this anon.

Little enough time had he for pondering, however. That forenoon of wet and wind the slump in moon-stock continued from 97 to 95, and at nine that night a crowd that had waited for hours outside the Palais-Bourbon in the storm, unharnessed the horses from Monsieur de Courcy's brougham, and brought the Minister home with hurrahs, because his thunder at the Debenture Bill had resulted in its overthrow.

"Thrice on the eighth," writes Saïd Pasha in his Notes, "I raced across to the Rue de la Chausée d'Antin, on each occasion getting wetted to the skin, in order to talk with Lepsius through Monsieur Schuré's private telephone. On each occasion I had to wait, since others were before me. The first time I saw Colonel Doumic, Monsieur Leflô and Cardinal Dampmartin talking together, standing in a corner of the drawing-room; and two hours later when I returned they still stood in the same place, talking. The house, in fact, was much frequented throughout the day, people coming, lingering, going, and coming again; but no sign of either host or hostess. The Abbé Sauriau, who for some time sat alone on a sofa with his legs crossed, perusing with quite evident surprise and delight an old book of his own—it was his Pindar—told me that Monsieur Schuré 'was supposed' to be at home, but abed, in a condition of alcoholism; while as to Madame, Colonel Doumic, who had a cold in the head, and trumpeted persistently through the nose, told me that the lady was spending three days with her sister at Meudon. To Monsieur Favre, the Procurator-General, and to me the colonel also made this remark, 'My friends, let the politicians do their worst, but what can un tas de pékins do to the individual in question when the name of Lepsius still raises a cheer in each company of pioupious

through France?' I wished that I could share in his confidence, but to me who knew the under-currents and each secret wire which each of the puppets obeyed, it appeared quite beyond the ingenuity of a Nestor and a Richelieu in one to save the situation. 'Nothing has happened!' exclaimed General Le Goffic, the Prefect's aide-de-camp, to me at Bignon's near eight in the evening, 'and yet what a revolution in public opinion within these two little weeks!' 'Mon ami,' added the old Orléaniste, who was a descendant of the mulatto Ducs de Dornis, and still at seventy a gallant figure, 'the individual in question thought to inaugurate an empire on the race-course at Longchamp, as the Prince de Condé is said to have begun the battle of Lérida to the cry-cry of a dozen violins: but the fantastic soon ceases to amuse at a cost of three milliards. As to "La Lune," since the word means also the part of the human person on which children are spanked, it was always certain that this fact, by itself, would doom the scheme to failure. At the actual moment, what hope remains, monsieur? since we know that when Belleville, St. Antoine and Ménilmontant have pricked the ear, le plis est pris, and Heaven itself is helpless. In passing down the Boulevard Majenta just now, I encountered a crowd bounding south, to the Palais-Bourbon, no doubt, singing "Conspuez Lepsie, conspuez Lepsie, conspuez"—the grave sound on the last syllable of "Lepsie"—a truly gross and terrible growl.'

"Well, at half after eight a messenger hastened to tell me that Isabeau Thiéry was about to mount the tribune, and to the Palais-Bourbon Pierre Huré and I set off in a fiacre, seeing on the way streams of people who were speeding to join the crowd that loitered round the House, without seeming to heed the showers and the noise of the wind. Having reasons of my own for not desiring to be seen within the Chambre des Députés itself, I strolled in the Salle des Pas Perdus, while Thiéry, ever the enfant terrible of the Députés, rolled his periods in the interior. Among us outside in the Pas Perdus the question was, 'Is Thiéry speaking for or in opposition to the Debenture Bill?' and managing to seize upon the old Major-General Dauriac, one of

the three Quæstors, who came rushing in, I put to him the question. He shrugged both his shoulders on high, giving me the reply, ‘Who knows, my friend? In the former half of his oration Thiéry has denounced the Bill, but now is no less loudly sounding its praises. C’est un homme nul, ce monsieur-là’—and he hastened on his way.

“I did not remain during the oration of Monsieur de Courcy, who followed Isabeau Thiéry in the tribune, but hurried back northward in order to have direct speech with Lepsius himself. I now found the salon, the stairs, the passages of Schuré’s house actually crowded—I am unable to state why, since Schuré himself remained invisible—men of the Bourse, newspaper-men, men-of-state, besides a number of mere well-dressed badauds and désœuvrés. Monsieur Fautras, the broker of Lepsius, was speaking with General Figuier, the Military Governor of Paris, and with Graf Bobertag of the German Embassy, which last arrested me thirteen minutes with conversation of a secret nature. To Lepsius I then spoke of the tone of Paris up to the present, and was surprised that, though I had come at full speed, he already knew the gist of Thiéry’s speech. It was said, indeed, that he had mysterious instruments by means of which he could see and hear that which takes place at a distance, though I myself have never seen any such with him: at any rate, I now freely revealed my fears, reading to him some headlines from the evening papers, and even venturing to say that the air of Paris was believed to be bearable even in September! He took it coldly. But did he ever know his friends? Was Lepsius ever capable of appreciating the nature of friendship? Yet how he was loved by a few! and how he was abhorred by all, even by the few who loved him! ‘I knew,’ he replied to everything of mine. ‘The Debenture Bill will undoubtedly now be thrown out,’ I told him. ‘I knew,’ he answered, adding, ‘it is of no importance, if Schuré be kept staunch: I rely upon you to keep him staunch.’ This astonished me. ‘How can I?’ I asked. ‘Keep close to Thiéry to-night and to-morrow,’ he replied, ‘influence him, and you will find out how I can repay.’ ‘Monsieur,’ was my answer, ‘I will do this with much pleasure

without the prospect of any such discovery.' 'Many thanks,' said he. 'I have,' I then said, suddenly remembering it, 'to deliver to you this message from Mr. E. Reader Meade, that it might be most inadvisable at the actual moment to try to tempt Thiéry in a monetary sense'—a suggestion which (unless I was mistaken) had the effect of strangely irritating Lepsius, for he made me the amazing reply, 'Monsieur, the oak is hardly the highest form of life,' and closed the interview.

"I at once set out on the quest of Thiéry, wondering within myself how it was that Lepsius was not that night in Paris! Was it because of the very hardship of combating the storm from the place in which he happened to find himself that he decided to remain in it? Some stiffness of neck? Some arrogance? For he was arrogant. Nothing was greater than the grossness of his arrogance, save the glory of his lowliness. Seeing men, he felt himself a deity; but he was saved from even the least taint or vein of vanity, because his consciousness was so quick and large, that no less nearly and clearly than he saw men he saw stars, and felt himself a flea. At any rate, he could never be induced to take the human race quite au sérieux; he abided in his Brittany.

"Thiéry I did not light upon until nigh on eleven in the night, and then in the unexpected quarter of his own tiny apartment in the Rue de Rome—a two-roomed den, with a cuisine and a vestibule; and it was necessary for me to sit waiting in the vestibule, since the Abbé Sauriau was there in the salon, engaged in talk which it was altogether impossible for me to escape hearing, since nothing separated us save an aged green drapery, which the gale, penetrating between the beams, waved in my face. Thiéry was going up and down wrapped in a greasy dressing-gown, a fez on his head, the abbé being seated, speaking ceaselessly; nor was it long before I knew that it was a question of offering Thiéry the portfolio of Justice as from Monsieur de Courcy, who that day could have foreseen for himself nothing less than the Chief Magistracy of France. Thiéry did not accept, did not reject it. The abbé coaxed, quoted, fawned, exhorted, flattered. 'The destinies of France rest this night on your

shoulders'; 'it is for you to-night, my friend, in rocking the tocsin of enfranchisement, to toll once and no more for ever the death-knell of despots.' 'But the Army,' said Thiéry, 'the Army.' 'Can the Army rescue a ruined man?' asked the abbé; and he added, 'Listen, my friend, you are not a financier, but you know that the company started with a capital of three milliards in 1,200,000 shares of 2,500 francs each; you know, too, that 800,000 ordinary shares were offered at par to the public at the first issue, as to which the individual in question not only gave his guarantee to pay four per cent. interest during construction, but to repay every ordinary shareholder at par, if the venture should prove a failure. And if it does!—as it is in your power to make it! Could revenues so countless really come out of any private fund and not leave it dry? And how in the day of his failure may the Army avail to save him from the wrath of France?' But numbers always dropped like water on a duck's back upon the skull of Isabeau Thiéry: and the breezes penetrating beneath the door chilled my shins, and still he remained in his indecision of mind. Finally he undertook to deliver his reply as to the portfolio before twelve the next day, and the Abbé Sauriau then went away.

"It was then my turn to convert the poet, and certainly I worked with no little fervour, throwing off reserve. I blessed with my hands upon its head the bust of Cæsar on the mantel-piece; I spoke of the offer of the portfolio as a bribe, and as unpatriotic in spirit; I said 'as in 1814,' and 'the destinies of France'; I spoke of the crowd of crowned heads then in Paris to be present at the opening of the Exhibition, and of their exultation to behold the overthrow of that being who was the hope of France; and, sitting on his table's edge, his face glowed gallantly when in glaring hues I sketched the glories of the future. Lepsius, I saw, occupied a place in his heart. Unfortunately, just as 12.45 struck, in came Monsieur Josef, formerly a mouchard of the Rue de Jerusalem, then a man who to Lepsius was 'P.2.' The moment I beheld him I had a boding of trouble; and, certain that the envelope that he delivered to Thiéry derived from Lepsius, I kept my eyes fixed upon Thiéry while he

read. Thiéry at once turned quite worm-white; one could observe how his fingers quivered; and, getting down from the table, he began to move about the room in an absent manner, with a bosom somewhat breathless, and a visage at once flushed and blanched in patches. I muttered to myself, ‘Lepsius must have tempted him with some momentous money-offer.’ He walked presently near to me, and with his arms quivering and somewhat spread appealed rather piteously to me with a ‘Mon ami!’ He then began to walk about again; till now again he halted to frown piercingly into the bust of Cæsar on the mantel-piece; and now, beating his palm with his finger, he breathed, ‘But no, but no, the Eagle does not blink’; and all at once he was scarlet, cast up his head, letting slip a little ‘Ha!’ and suddenly all in a hurry and flurry, muttering to himself, ‘Stop, he is going to see,’ he was gone away.

“He very soon hurried in again from his bedroom, dressed, drawing on a glove, begging me to forgive him, since he must necessarily go. I ventured to ask him whither, and his answer, ‘Ah! to Meudon,’ convinced me that all was lost....

“When I flew to tell Lepsius of it, he during two seconds or so stood mute, then very hurriedly said, ‘Thanks. I’ll look to it’....”

What Lepsius did on learning of the disaster was urgently to telephone a certain course of conduct to an agent in Chantilly; he then at once summoned to his presence the Due de Rey-Drouilhet, who during two days had been staying at Serapis; and he took two pilules out of a cabinet and put them in a pill-box.

As soon as the duke came in he was struck staggering a step or two against one of the pillars, for the hall, all open to the four winds, was all vocal and haunted with the storm, and half its area of floor was as washed with rain-water as a ship’s quarterdeck. Lepsius seated the old man near him in the middle, and speaking as low as the sound of the winds allowed, said, “I wish to pray you to set off for Paris for me by my next special at 1.6; for if you wish to prove useful to me, and at the same time to make yourself affluent for life, this is your chance of chances. I may tell you

that Thiéry has just taken train from Paris to Meudon to see his sister, Fanny Schuré, with a design unfriendly to me. Well, he will not see her to-night: for an agent of mine in Chantilly, where Schuré is, is at this moment telephoning her the false news that her husband is dying, and either fifteen or four minutes before Thiéry reaches Meudon she will have left it for Chantilly; nor will he be able, I see, to follow her thither to-night for want of a train. But to-morrow he will see her, unless I prevent him; hence I ask you to assist at his premier déjeûner in the morning, and deftly to drop these two pilules into his coffee or chocolate. You are his friend—— What is it?"

He turned to a servant by his elbow who bore him a leaf of ivory scribbled with these words: "Healy can live only a few minutes more.—Ruth."

Lepsius sprang up, pestered at this the third missive of the kind received that day, he having been too busy to pay any heed to them, though Healy was at this time, by his orders, near him in the north palace. He walked away to the columns, and cast a look out: no stars out there, no vault of heaven, only darksomeness mixed all with water and winds wawling; and back he bolted to the duke, saying, "Excuse me two minutes," and hastened away.

His own motive in going he hardly knew, since that was hardly very rational that he should go: but something that is in the breast brought him. However, he did not enter, only stole nigh, and, standing outside a door-hanging, listened, spied.

The two windows looked toward the coast, and though these were well closed, everything movable in the room moved to a breeze that ever breathed through it—the bed-curtains, the skirt of an Ursuline who kneeled near the bottom of the bed, telling her beads, the skirt of Miss Ruth who kneeled at the bed's head, reading, the beard of the old Nundcumar who sat leaning forward on a sofa between these two.

Miss Vickery held under her eyes on the bed's edge a Greek Bible from which with

a poignancy and grieving in her voice she was translating, the gale battering anon great breaches in her speech in the ear of Lepsius.

“Nor be called masters ... but he that is greatest among you will be your servant ... and he that humbles himself is high.”

The bed was low and small, in the north-west corner of the chamber under a window—the window which was opposite the door where Lepsius waited, there being two doors in the length of the room (which was longish and narrow), and two great windows, under a groined roof; and though an Arabian boy, crouching on a rug in the south-west corner of the marble floor, made a fourth watcher in the chamber, there was an air of loneness in there, an odour of death. This little Arab, indeed, but increased this feeling: for, though kneeling, he was so doubled on himself, so stone-still, that he seemed to be dead, and a greenish sheen gloating on his cheek from the lamp-globe just above his head increased his appearance of death.

“And they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, ‘You wait here, while I go to pray.’”

The light of the only lamp was somehow a local halo about itself, throwing the remainder of the room in some obscurity, so that the clicks of the nun’s rosary arose from shadows in which she was herself no more than a shadow; nor could Healy be seen, nothing but his toes sticking up beneath the clothes, though anon that keen ear of Lepsius could hear his throat croaking the death-ruckle, pouring it low, hurried, like a purring rolling; and, still more pressed with haste, rain-water outside struggling darkly down spouts, with gulps and sobs and goblin sounds; and again that poignancy and break in Miss Vickery’s voice....

“And he went a little onward, and dropped down upon the ground, and prayed, saying, ‘Abba (papa), take away this cup from me; still, not what I want, papa, but what thou.’”

Loudly from across the sea came the sound of the gale, flapping with the sound of a

navy of argosies going down in some archipelago of gloom, with all their great sails whooping loose, and all their sailors wailing.

“And again he went away, and dropped down on the ground, and prayed, saying, ‘If it be possible, let this draught pass away from me; still, not what I want, papa, but what thou.’”

The hand of Lepsius tightened on the box that held the two pilules designed for Isabeau Thiéry’s breakfast; at the same time the death-ruckle on the bed came on a sudden to an end; the happy saint raised herself from the bedside with a smile and a light in her eyes; and during some moments nobody moved in the room, until now the crony Nundcumar rose to move to the bed’s head, and, bowed over the dead with a moving brow and body, crooning, he said, “He is dead. But his head is not yet thoroughly dead and done, and he lies reflecting dimly in himself, thinking: ‘I am dead: no more to view the sight of the sun, nor any light of the moon at night, nor all the stars: for I am dead, and this is death; and what I long saw falling upon others, and was long in awe of for myself, is fallen at last this day upon me, me, also: for I lie dead, and this is my day.’”

As for Lepsius, he was gone; not so swiftly as he had come.

When he got back to the hall where the duke awaited him, he halted two seconds betwixt two of the columns, struck with hesitancy: until, suddenly running, he muttered, “Forgive me for being longer than I meant; and now, to catch the train, you should be in haste”—he held out the pill-box.

The old man was very tremulous; his hand that rose to take the box hesitated midway. “I assume, monsieur, that the dose is not—is innocuous....”

Lepsius’ lip of disdain deigned no reply.

“I know it, of course,” remarked the old fop piteously in a flurry, “and asked only for form’s sake.... On those terms I am entirely at your service.”

“Rey-Drouilhet, be certain and deft,” said Lepsius impressively; and within eight

minutes Rey-Drouilhet was on the way to the railway. Before 7.40 the following morning he sat, in the Rue de Rome, at Isabeau Thiéry's bed's head.

He pretended that pressing Serapis-gossip had thus brought him at the matin-gun; but he had hardly any need to invent the gossip, since by this time Thiéry could speak of nothing but Lepsius' bribe.

"My friend, what was the amount?" the duke questioned with a screwed countenance.

"It was two millions, monsieur."

"De Dieu de Dieu!... I who am no more a youth would undoubtedly have refused it without difficulty, but how could you, a young man?"

"Ah, mon cher ami, noblesse oblige," remarked Isabeau Thiéry in an absent mutter.

He was now about to get out of bed to get on his clothes, when his gouvernante bore him in his coffee and little loaf; and during the minutes that he took to fling on his things, the coffee stood cooling on a commode close to the duke. The flesh of the duke's face during this became very blanched and aged, his manners nervous and fluttered; but, though he had the two pills in his hand, and had many opportunities of dropping them into the coffee during Thiéry's dressing, he did not. He now thought to himself, "No, Thiéry must be out of the room," and presently he passed the remark that he had not breakfasted.

"My friend, pardon me!" cried out Thiéry, and darted out half-dressed to order another cup of coffee.

Now was the duke's opportunity. Yet he did not drop the pills into Thiéry's coffee. He started! First athwart the whirl of his thoughts flushed Isabeau Thiéry's words, "noblesse oblige," the example of that generous blood: and away he rushed, bent, from the coffee; and then back to it he rushed, fleet and thievish, to dash in the pills; and away from it afresh, without having dashed them in. And now he was casting his arms on high, his rickety eyes, distracted; and now he was creeping on his knees,

sneakingly, to drop the two pills into a pot beneath the bed; and now he was at Thiéry's bread, sneakingly kneading two pills out of the pith; and these he dropped into Thiéry's coffee....

Later that forenoon he misquoted Shakespeare, despatching to Lepsius, in English, the telegram, "The deed is done."

Nor did Lepsius need the coming of this telegram to be perfectly certain that the deed was done, though he could scarcely still have been ignorant that very many threads congregate to make the mental texture of modern men. Anyway, till late in the day he was securely acting upon the fact that the duke could not fail; and then, suddenly, he knew—too late....

The next night, the second of the Exhibition, was the night on which men had been given to hope that a strange glory would change the look of the skies: but no such glory arose upon the eyes.

And now more in number than the messengers of Job crowded upon Lepsius the recorders of his downfall; French laws and procedures were tortured in order to reach him swiftly; during the midnight of the ninth the offices of the moon in the Rue St. Honoré, as well as the offices of several newspapers in his pay, were wrecked; on the 11th the troops of the 67th, posted to protect his palace in the Elysées, could not prevent it from being sacked and burned; by the 13th he had been accused, and had been convicted by the Sixth Tribunal, of fermenting civil strife; by the 15th the decree of his banishment from French land, posted in every commune, had been gaped at as old and usual, and glared from the gates of Serapis.

Lepsius smiled, but bitterly. He was lying on his belly on a bed of straw, reading the life of Jesus of Nazareth in the book of Matthew when the news of the destruction of the moon-offices reached him; and at once, throwing away the book to run out with a reddened brow, he said within himself, "I will blot out this name of France." During the rage and deluge of the few days following, he yet more hardened his

heart. To Miss Ruth Vickery he refused an interview, and to Miss Eve Vickery, who wrote “I am sorry for you,” and entreated him to be meek, to cease from scheming, and to bend his head before the tempest, he condescended to send no answer.

Indeed, he was now too busy to heed anything but what he was now about to do. In his resentment he had resolved to stretch out his arm in terror, of each and all of his enemies to make a clean sweep in one heap, and immediately to leap into a throne, some months before he had previously proposed. Of the Army, which regarded him as its hope of glory, he was still certain; and on the morning of the 15th the first of his thunderbolts bewildered the world, when from his rostrum at the Bourse, Monsieur Fautras roundly denounced the downfall of the moon-structure as due to the schemings of paltry politicians, and to the treachery of the engineer Schuré. He was authorised, he said, by Monsieur Lepsius, to present as a loan to the company a sum of a milliard and a half of francs, not to be repaid till ordinary shares should be earning a dividend of 8 per cent.; and, further, he was authorised by Monsieur Lepsius, who was prepared to finance the concern entirely from his private purse, to purchase back, if desired, every ordinary share at par from that morning; and, further, he had to say that by midday of the 17th instant Monsieur Lepsius proposed to be in Paris....

Never did Lepsius loom so hugely upon the universal world, luminous as some angel of the welkin, as that afternoon, France, for her part, casting upon her head the ashes of contrition. As for the foes of Lepsius, they saw only instant loss of place and power, only ruin, degradation, disgrace, knowing that now the decree of banishment against him was nothing but a dead letter. Hence the Count de Courcy took a hurried trip down into Brittany that day, and contrived to talk a little with the prattler Nundcumar outside the walls of Serapis....

At five on the morning of the 17th all was in order for the departure for Paris, and Lepsius, not having slept through the night, went to lie a little in his bath, his big

dog, Argo, and the old Nundcumar, going also with him. As he locked the door, he noticed that the dog, going up to a coffer of cedarwood, in which it was usual to keep towels, etc., sniffed at it; the dog, however, did not growl, and, as his head was now crowded with cares, he gave it no heed. It was an apartment of marble with a row of round windows in one wall up near the ceiling, and in the centre of it a sort of well or cistern, with a tower of marble about it as light and beautiful as a flower, whose whiteness bloomed again down in the water's gloom, and it had a bell in it; otherwise the apartment was without any ornament, except for the coffer in one corner, and the bath in the corner opposite, this being a mass of augite and gold, so big that one might swim a little, with lumps of ice floating in the water that almost filled it. Lepsius' pieces of raiment dropped from him, he was in immediately, dived, and remained under a long while. Argo, the dog, was walking uneasily to and fro, but if one had looked narrowly at him, the dog might have been seen to be not quite himself, to be drunk or drugged. Nundcumar, for his part, stood by the side of the bath, his knees weak beneath him, but with no sign of this to be seen in his lean looks; and the air in there seemed to wait for somewhat, and to wait, a dusk air, for though it was now fully day outside, in there the light was scarce.

At the moment when Lepsius went under the water for the second time, Nundcumar, suddenly grabbing the dog by the collar, coughed twice: and the next moment the dog broke roaring from his grasp to drag down a woman who rose out of the coffer and flew through the room.... Lepsius, hearing the row, reared up his head, and even as the woman went down under the hound, received vitriol about his brows....

He at once dived....

Later in the day he discovered that one of his sandals, in a chamber of which he kept a little key, was missing. It was the Abbé Sauriau who told him so, kneeling over Lepsius on his bed of straw, as the gloaming began to grow deep. "It is intended that your hoards shall be distributed among charitable institutions," the abbé said; and he

cried accusingly, his body convulsed with sobs, “Lepsius, you are blind! and it is I who have been the cause of this.”

Lepsius lay with a band covering his eyes, his limbs cast all asprawl at random, tossing for ease; and presently he bleated, “I am blind!”

And now Isabeau Thiéry, waiting for hours at the far end of the chamber, dashed both his palms to his ears to shut out the sound of that bleat, which each three minutes was repeated, and rushed with the stare of a maniac away.

Lepsius could get no rest, for though the ravage of the vitriol (thanks to the rush of the dog and to the bath-water) was local about the brows, and he was hardly at all disfigured in his face, yet the agony was great, and the heat of the atmosphere every moment growing greater, since a reign of licence and riot had kept carnival during all the afternoon, and at several places Serapis was flaring.

“You must not stay here much longer,” blubbed the Abbé Sauriau, with two big tears streaming on his cheeks.... “I have a little cottage in Chantilly, and thither you will come to abide until my death by my side. You are poor, you are many millions in debt, you are utterly destitute, naught can be more utter, more boundless, than your downfall. So you will come, my friend, to my breast, and in the cottage we shall be, we two, dwelling in a shaded leisure and seclusion of literature, for I shall be reading my books to you, and you will be dictating books to me, which I shall write for you.”

“I am blind!” bleated the blind boy to his obscurity, neither heeding nor hearing him.

It was at this point that the blind boy’s father arrived after a voyage from London; and, lying on the straws, the old man rubbed his cheek on his son’s cheek silently, a sob in his throat keeping him from speaking; whereat the Abbé Sauriau and some others who were there stole away; and presently, when he had wept plenteously, Dr. Lepsius said to his son, who kept shrinking from his touch, “You have yet your yacht at anchor yonder in the bay; let’s cut back to Shunter! you and me; only no

Shan any more, no Shan: back out of the dirty world, to listen to the waups whistling, what? Don't you remember the old castle? And the old coble-boat on the north coast? And the long, low old shed, centuries old, all encrusted with peat-smoke, which we could see from the east castle-turret far off in the heugh of the crags? And all the gulls, and the bog, and the hags of water with the buckies in 'em, can't you recall it all, and the sea? Say that you are coming...."

"I shall never run again!" complained Lepsius to his gloom.

"You may! You do not know yet! God may will to give you back your eyes, or one of them! But say that you will come this night with me."

"Are you not still against me?" asked Lepsius in pain.

"What, against my own? Was I ever really against you, do you dream? Oh, fie, hard heart, to let yourself utter those words!"

Lepsius now turned a little to put his arm about the old man's shoulder, and water washed with a whey of blood wound all down one side of his nose, while the old man moaned.

"So, then," the old man said, "you will come, for I feel that it will do you good, and I'll go at once to see to it."

He stood up; and he had scarcely gone away when with eager feet Miss Eve Vickery came in, and fifteen feet from Lepsius stood looking at him, her father halting far off near the pillars, his eyes all alight with excitement. Having come for his daughters, he had ordered them both into a brougham, and they had started to roll away in it through the ruelles and courts of Serapis, lurid at this time with conflagrations glaring in the gloomy night, where groups of distinguished men from Paris and elsewhere stood to watch the flames and fumes, and, like devils in fire, troops of luxurious rioters roved with uproars to and fro. But when about to pass out of this scene, Miss Eve had seen a wing of the north palace in passing near it, and had leapt up. Nor could anything stay her. "I will see him once," she had said over her

shoulder: whereon her father, ordering his other daughter to remain where she was, had followed Miss Eve's speeding feet; and Miss Eve came, and stood, and looked at Lepsius.

"Eve, I am blind!" bleated Lepsius aloud, perhaps having caught and known the sound of her walk, or probably invoking her without any knowledge that she was present; and what pen of poet or seer of the soul can disclose the olio of her whole emotion then, sketching with what fiendishness of hell-spite her whitened lip touched her lower teeth, as she flung at him, "You should have been good!" and then again how the bowels of her woman's ruth moved and rued, beholding him so low, when he rose on his elbow, but tumbled back, calling, "Eve! you are here!"

"Lepsius, I am going for good from you!"

"Eve, do not leave me!"

"Eve!" her father now called out in a sort of whisper.

She crammed her mouth with her handkerchief to bite on, and letting fall her arm behind her toward the bed of straws, wafting it a good-bye, tried to get away toward her father, but half-way gave up, smiling, her knees going feeble beneath her, and lapsed, seated, upon the floor; whereat Mr. Vickery came, raised, and carried her away to their carriage.

The carriage then went on its way toward the station two miles distant through a dark night unlighted by one star in the sky, with wild winds blowing. But they had not advanced half a mile when the driver suddenly halted, having noticed lying right athwart the road a woman whom, but for the light radiating from the blazing of Serapis, he must have driven over. Mr. Vickery, getting out, gave a hand to raising her up: and now, to his consternation, she turned out to be his old servant, Jeanne Auvache. The woman, her life-work now performed, was now all maudlin, and desired to die—hence had thrown herself on the road. She instantly dashed into chattering (against the grain of her hearers) as to the various phases of the day, on

her face a rain of tears, Miss Ruth and her father induced to hear, Miss Eve, for her part, reclining in swoon with her lips parted like the dying, not appearing to hear. One piece of the chatter, however, appeared to pierce to her consciousness; and now her eyes unclosed, she sat up. It was when Jeanne Auvache was recounting how she had been arrested at St. Brieuc, and how at about 3 p.m. she had been brought back to Serapis in order to be presented to, and identified by, Lepsius, the officers not then knowing that Lepsius was entirely sightless. “He is good, he is very good,” the hag groaned, “so that I regret at the actual moment to have done it, and have a desire to die. He lay there on his bed of straws, all solitary, calling to nobody ‘I am blind’; and when the two officers asked him if he was able to say whether I was the woman, he answered them, ‘Let her say something’; so I said, ‘Monsieur Lepsius!’ and I said again, ‘Monsieur Lepsius!’ and he gave no answer to the two men for some time, but lay still, frowning, passing his palm over his brow and his bandage; and he then said gently, ‘No, it was not she; it was not a woman who did it,’ and then——”

Now, however, a crazy stare was gazing out of the carriage window, Miss Eve leaning out, saying, “Do you say, woman, that he forgave you? Oh, tell me the God’s truth!”

“Why, yes, since you see me here——” the hag began to say: but now Miss Eve was gone.

“Eve!” howled her father after her, “remember your vow to——?”

Miss Eve threw her hand backward without looking round, and went fluttering on her way, her frocks quarrelling with the winds; nor was it possible to pursue her with the brougham, since she took a shortcut path through a meadow; and though her father and Miss Ruth ran after her, calling, her youth and long legs soon got them pretty far behind, she slipping back to Serapis like a spring which, pressed the wrong way, is of a sudden sprung free. In some fifteen minutes she lay on her love’s bed, shuddering on his breast, her teeth chattering feverishly into his ear “for ever,” and

anew “for ever.”

“Eve, you are here!” he called to her in that voice of the blind which has lost its way like a lambkin bleating in the void of the night; and she in the fever of her joy said to him, “Here, you can feel it, the half coin: where should I be but in you, but interned in your heart, my eternal? I who eternities since yearned at the altar with you.”

But now Dr. Lepsius walked actively in to announce that everything was ready as to the vessel; and about half an hour after this, a small crowd consisting of Dr. Lepsius, Lepsius, Miss Eve, Miss Ruth, Mr. Vickery, a Dr. Proudhomme of Serapis, the Abbé Sauriau, Isabeau Thiéry, Saïd Pasha, and Mr. E. Reader Meade, paced to the quay of the little bay named Petit Bazaine. Yonder on the sea the yacht’s three lights glared tiny in a darkness made rather Tartarian by the conflagration of Serapis, the glows from which, glaring on the slopes of the billows’ blackness in dabblements, gave to the bay the goriness of Aceldama. A boat lay at the end of the quay; but as the sea was very rough, and trouble was looked for in embarking Lepsius, all the party went forward to see the boat, leaving him seated alone on a block of stone. The boatmen, who lay on their oars, called that they would wait for a calmer moment; so it was some minutes ere Miss Eve ran back to bring Lepsius, and then to her amazement, met him on his knees—the roar of the breakers and of the gale in his ears, the sprays raining on his face, or his engrossment, may be, in his prayer, preventing him from hearing her approach. She with an uplifted hand, stood hushed a little, listening, catching some words, the bursting of his sobs.... “Who hearest, but dost not heed, the bleatings of brutes ... yet if just one human wish for once may move thee ... let no speck of grit ever prick her eyes to agonise her; oh, I was sick and she visited me pelt her; I am reft, despoiled, and she makes choice of me ... chase, infest her every hour with fresh showers and astonishments of joy——”

She touched him, saying, “Come.”

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ISLE OF LIES ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the

terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the

requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or

distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

• You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.” • You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works. • You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work. • You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that

provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old,

middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41 Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many

small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright

notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.