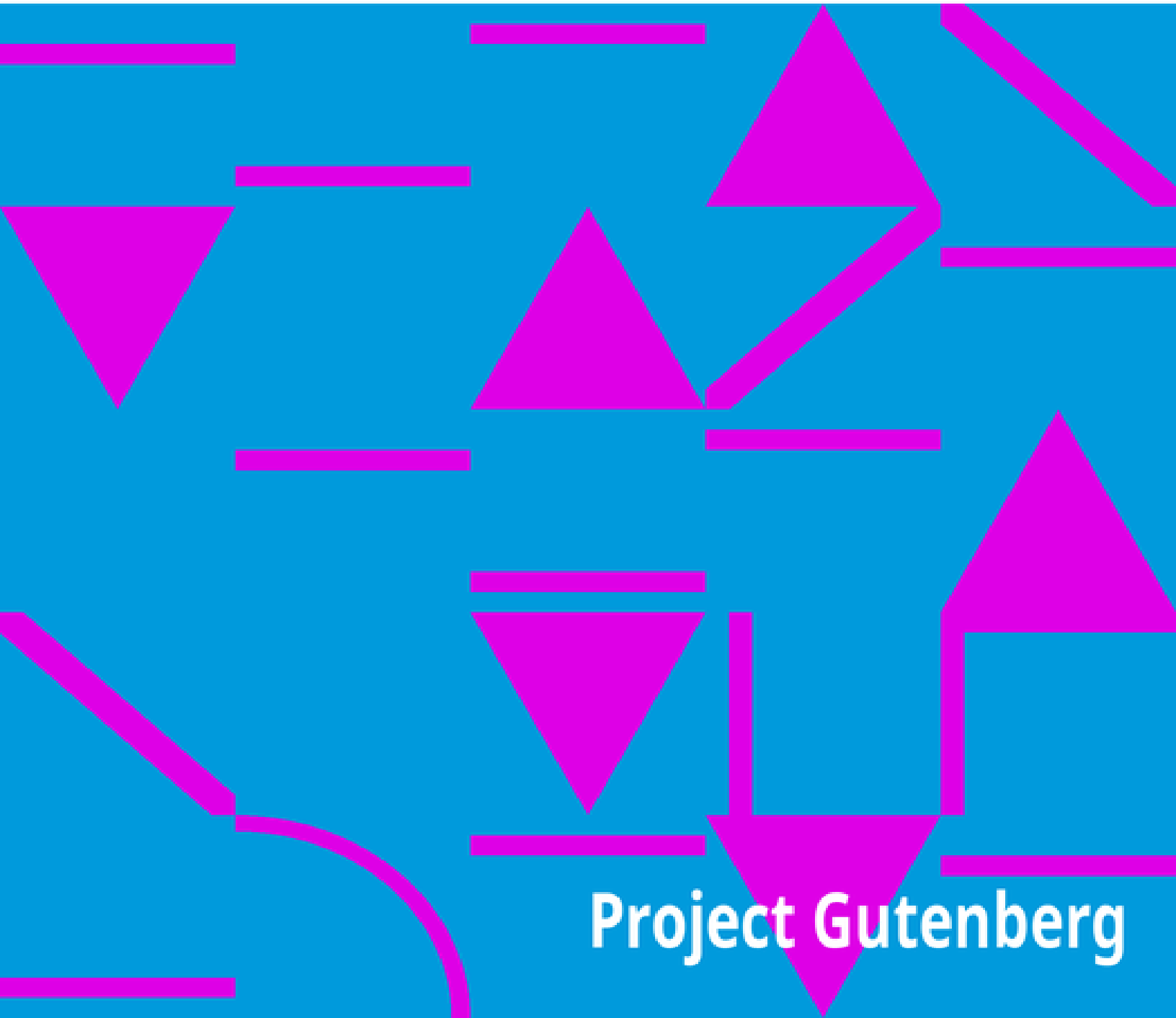
Dreams and Dream Stories

Anna Bonus Kingsford



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Dreams and Dream Stories
By Anna (Bonus) Kingsford

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Preface*

The chronicles which I am about to present to the reader are not the result of any conscious effort of the imagination. They are, as the title-page indicates, records of dreams, occurring at intervals during the last ten years, and transcribed, pretty nearly in the order of their occurrence, from my Diary. Written down as soon as possible after awaking from the slumber during which they presented themselves, these narratives, necessarily unstudied in style and wanting in elegance of diction, have at least the merit of fresh and vivid color, for they were committed to paper at a moment when the effect and impress of each successive vision were strong and forceful in the mind, and before the illusion of reality conveyed by the scenes witnessed and the sounds heard in sleep had had time to pass away.

I do not know whether these experiences of mine are unique. So far, I have not yet met with any one in whom the dreaming faculty appears to be either so strongly or so strangely developed as in myself. Most dreams, even when of unusual vividness and lucidity, betray a want of coherence in their action, and an incongruity of detail and dramatis personae, that stamp

———————- * Written in 1886. Some of the experiences in this volume were subsequent to that date. This publication is made in accordance with the author's last wishes. (Ed.) ———————

them as the product of incomplete and disjointed cerebral function. But the most remarkable features of the experiences I am about to record are the methodical consecutiveness of their sequences, and the intelligent purpose disclosed alike in the events witnessed and in the words heard or read. Some of these last, indeed, resemble, for point and profundity, the apologues of Eastern scriptures; and, on more than one occasion, the scenery of the dream has accurately portrayed characteristics of remote regions, city, forest and mountain, which in this existence at least I have

never beheld, nor, so far as I can remember, even heard described, and yet, every feature of these unfamiliar climes has revealed itself to my sleeping vision with a splendour of coloring and distinctness of outline which made the waking life seem duller and less real by contrast. I know of no parallel to this phenomenon unless in the pages of Bulwer Lytton's romance entitled —"The Pilgrims of the Rhine," in which is related the story of a German student endowed with so marvellous a faculty of dreaming, that for him the normal conditions of sleeping and waking became reversed, his true life was that which he lived in his slumbers, and his hours of wakefulness appeared to him as so many uneventful and inactive intervals of arrest occurring in an existence of intense and vivid interest which was wholly passed in the hypnotic state. Not that to me there is any such inversion of natural conditions. On the contrary, the priceless insights and illuminations I have acquired by means of my dreams have gone far to elucidate for me many difficulties and enigmas of life, and even of religion, which might otherwise have remained dark to me, and to throw upon the events and vicissitudes of a career filled with bewildering situations, a light which, like sunshine, has penetrated to the very causes and springs of circumstance, and has given meaning and fitness to much in my life that would else have appeared to me incoherent or inconsistent.

I have no theory to offer the reader in explanation of my faculty, —at least in so far as its physiological aspect is concerned. Of course, having received a medical education, I have speculated about the modus operandi of the phenomenon, but my speculations are not of such a character as to entitle them to presentation in the form even of an hypothesis. I am tolerably well acquainted with most of the propositions regarding unconscious cerebration, which have been put forward by men of science, but none of these propositions can, by any process of reasonable expansion or modification, be made to fit my case. Hysteria, to the multiform and manifold categories of which, medical experts are wont to refer the majority

of the abnormal experiences encountered by them, is plainly inadequate to explain or account for mine. The singular coherence and sustained dramatic unity observable in these dreams, as well as the poetic beauty and tender subtlety of the instructions and suggestions conveyed in them do not comport with the conditions characteristic of nervous disease. Moreover, during the whole period covered by these dreams, I have been busily and almost continuously engrossed with scientific and literary pursuits demanding accurate judgment and complete self-possession and rectitude of mind. At the time when many of the most vivid and remarkable visions occurred, I was following my course as a student at the Paris Faculty of Medicine, preparing for examinations, daily visiting hospital wards as dresser, and attending lectures. Later, when I had taken my degree, I was engaged in the duties of my profession and in writing for the press on scientific subjects. Neither have I ever taken opium, hashish or other dream-producing agent. A cup of tea or coffee represents the extent of my indulgences in this direction. I mention these details in order to guard against inferences which otherwise might be drawn as to the genesis of my faculty.

With regard to the interpretation and application of particular dreams, I think it best to say nothing. The majority are obviously allegorical, and although obscure in parts, they are invariably harmonious, and tolerably clear in meaning to persons acquainted with the method of Greek and Oriental myth. I shall not, therefore, venture on any explanation of my own, but shall simply record the dreams as they passed before me, and the impressions left upon my mind when I awoke.

Unfortunately, in some instances, which are not, therefore, here transcribed, my waking memory failed to recall accurately, or completely, certain discourses heard or written words seen in the course of the vision,

which in these cases left but a fragmentary impression on the brain and baffled all waking endeavor to recall their missing passages.

These imperfect experiences have not, however, been numerous; on the contrary, it is a perpetual marvel to me to find with what ease and certainty I can, as a rule, on recovering ordinary consciousness, recall the picture witnessed in my sleep, and reproduce the words I have heard spoken or seen written.

Sometimes several interims of months occur during which none of these exceptional visions visit me, but only ordinary dreams, incongruous and insignificant after their kind. Observation, based on an experience of considerable length, justifies me, I think, in saying that climate, altitude, and electrical conditions are not without their influence in the production of the cerebral state necessary to the exercise of the faculty I have described. Dry air, high levels, and a crisp, calm, exhilarating atmosphere favor its activity; while, on the other hand, moisture, proximity to rivers, cloudy skies, and a depressing, heavy climate, will, for an indefinite period, suffice to repress it altogether. It is not, therefore, surprising that the greater number of these dreams, and, especially, the most vivid, detailed and idyllic, have occurred to me while on the continent. At my own residence on the banks of the Severn, in a humid, low-lying tract of country, I very seldom experience such manifestations, and sometimes, after a prolonged sojourn at home, am tempted to fancy that the dreaming gift has left me never to return. But the results of a visit to Paris or to Switzerland always speedily reassure me; the necessary magnetic or psychic tension never fails to reassert itself; and before many weeks have elapsed my Diary is once more rich with the record of my nightly visions.

Some of these phantasmagoria have furnished me with the framework, and even details, of stories which from time to time I have contributed to

various magazines. A ghost story,* published some years ago in a London magazine, and much commented on because of its peculiarly weird and startling character, had this origin; so had a fairy tale,** which appeared in a Christmas Annual last year, and which has recently been re-issued in German by the editor of a foreign periodical. Many of my more

———————- * "Steepside" ** "Beyond the Sunset" ———————

serious contributions to literature have been similarly initiated; and, more than once, fragments of poems, both in English and other languages, have been heard or read by me in dreams. I regret much that I have not yet been able to recover any one entire poem. My memory always failed before I could finish writing out the lines, no matter how luminous and recent the impressions made by them on my mind.* However, even as regards verses, my experience has been far richer and more successful than that of Coleridge, the only product of whose faculty in this direction was the poetical fragment Kubla Khan, and there was no scenic dreaming on the occasion, only the verses were thus obtained; and I am not without hope that at some future time, under more favorable conditions than those I now enjoy, the broken threads may be resumed and these chapters of dream verse perfected and made complete.

It may, perhaps, be worthy of remark that by far the larger number of the dreams set down in this volume, occurred towards dawn; sometimes even, after sunrise, during a "second sleep." A condition of fasting, united possibly, with some subtle magnetic or other atmospheric state, seems therefore to be that most open to impressions of the kind. And, in this connection, I think it right to add that for the past fifteen years I have been an abstainer from flesh-meats; not a "Vegetarian," because during the whole of that period I have used such

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* The poem entitled "A Discourse on the Communion of Souls; or, the Uses of Love between Creature and Creature, Being a part of the Golden Book of Venus," which forms one of the appendices to "The Perfect Way," would be an exception to this rule but that it was necessary for the dream to be repeated before the whole poem could be recalled. (Ed.)

———————

animal produce as butter, cheese, eggs, and milk. That the influence of fasting and of sober fare upon the perspicacity of the sleeping brain was known to the ancients in times when dreams were far more highly esteemed than they now are, appears evident from various passages in the records of theurgy and mysticism. Philostratus, in his "Life of Apollonius Tyaneus," represents the latter as informing King Phraotes that "the Oneiropolists, or Interpreters of Visions, are wont never to interpret any vision till they have first inquired the time at which it befell; for, if it were early, and of the morning sleep, they then thought that they might make a good interpretation thereof (that is, that it might be worth the interpreting), in that the soul was then fitted for divination, and disencumbered. But if in the first sleep, or near midnight, while the soul was as yet clouded and drowned in libations, they, being wise, refused to give any interpretation. Moreover, the gods themselves are of this opinion, and send their oracles only into abstinent minds. For the priests, taking him who doth so consult, keep him one day from meat and three days from wine, that he may in a clear soul receive the oracles." And again, Iamblichus, writing to Agathocles, says:—"There is nothing unworthy of belief in what you have been told concerning the sacred sleep, and seeing by means of dreams. I explain it thus:—The soul has a twofold life, a lower and a higher. In sleep the soul is liberated from the constraint of the body, and enters, as an emancipated being, on its divine life of intelligence. Then, as the noble faculty which beholds objects that

truly are—the objects in the world of intelligence— stirs within, and awakens to its power, who can be astonished that the mind which contains in itself the principles of all events, should, in this its state of liberation, discern the future in those antecedent principles which will constitute that future? The nobler part of the mind is thus united by abstraction to higher natures, and becomes a participant in the wisdom and foreknowledge of the gods . . . . The night-time of the body is the day-time of the soul."

But I have no desire to multiply citations, nor to vex the reader with hypotheses inappropriate to the design of this little work. Having, therefore, briefly recounted the facts and circumstances of my experience so far as they are known to myself, I proceed, without further commentary, to unroll my chart of dream-pictures, and leave them to tell their own tale.

—A.B.K.

I. The Doomed Train*

I was visited last night by a dream of so strange and vivid a kind that I feel impelled to communicate it to you, not only to relieve my own mind of the impression which the recollection of it causes me, but also to give you an opportunity of finding the meaning, which I am sill far too much shaken and terrified to seek for myself.

It seemed to me that you and I were two of a vast company of men and women, upon all of whom, with the exception of myself—for I was there voluntarily—sentence of death had been passed. I was sensible of the

knowledge—how obtained I know not—that this terrible doom had been pronounced by the official agents of some new reign of terror. Certain I was that none of the party had really been guilty of any crime deserving of death; but that the penalty had been incurred through

———————— * This narrative was addressed to the friend particularly referred to in it. The dream occurred near the close of 1876, and on the eve, therefore, of the Russo-Turkish war, and was regarded by us both as having relation to a national crisis, of a moral and spiritual character, our interest in which was so profound as to be destined to dominate all our subsequent lives and work. (Author's Note.) ————————-

their connection with some regime, political, social or religious, which was doomed to utter destruction. It became known among us that the sentence was about to be carried out on a colossal scale; but we remained in absolute ignorance as to the place and method of the intended execution. Thus far my dream gave me no intimation of the horrible scene which next burst on me,—a scene which strained to their utmost tension every sense of sight, hearing and touch, in a manner unprecedented in any dream I have previously had.

It was night, dark and starless, and I found myself, together with the whole company of doomed men and women who knew that they were soon to die, but not how or where, in a railway train hurrying through the darkness to some unknown destination. I sat in a carriage quite at the rear end of the train, in a corner seat, and was leaning out of the open window, peering into the darkness, when, suddenly, a voice, which seemed to speak out of the air, said to me in a low, distinct, in-tense tone, the mere recollection of which makes me shudder,—"The sentence is being carried out even now. You are all of you lost. Ahead of the train is a frightful

precipice of monstrous height, and at its base beats a fathomless sea. The railway ends only with the abyss, Over that will the train hurl itself into annihilation, There Is No One On The Engine!"

At this I sprang from my seat in horror, and looked round at the faces of the persons in the carriage with me. No one of them had spoken, or had heard those awful words. The lamplight from the dome of the carriage flickered on the forms, about me. I looked from one to the other, but saw no sign of alarm given by any of them. Then again the voice out of the air spoke to me,—"There is but one way to be saved. You must leap out of the train!"

In frantic haste I pushed open the carriage door and stepped out on the footboard. The train was going at a terrific pace, swaying to and fro as with the passion of its speed; and the mighty wind of its passage beat my hair about my face and tore at my garments.

Until this moment I had not thought of you, or even seemed conscious of your presence in the train. Holding tightly on to the rail by the carriage door, I began to creep along the footboard towards the engine, hoping to find a chance of dropping safely down on the line. Hand over hand I passed along in this way from one carriage to another; and as I did so I saw by the light within each carriage that the passengers had no idea of the fate upon which they were being hurried. At length, in one of the compartments, I saw you. "Come out!" I cried; "come out! Save yourself! In another minute we shall be dashed to pieces!"

You rose instantly, wrenched open the door, and stood beside me outside on the footboard. The rapidity at which we were going was now more fearful than ever. The train rocked as it fled onwards. The wind shrieked as we were carried through it. "Leap down," I cried to you; "save yourself! It

is certain death to stay here. Before us is an abyss; and there is no one on the engine!"

At this you turned your face full upon me with a look of intense earnestness, and said, "No, we will not leap down. We will stop the train."

With these words you left me, and crept along the foot-board towards the front of the train. Full of half angry anxiety at what seemed to me a Quixotic act, I followed. In one of the carriages we passed I saw my mother and eldest brother, unconscious as the rest. Presently we reached the last carriage, and saw by the lurid light of the furnace that the voice had spoken truly, and that there was no one on the engine.

You continued to move onwards. "Impossible! Impossible!" I cried; "It cannot be done. O, pray, come away."

Then you knelt upon the footboard, and said,—"You are right. It cannot be done in that way; but we can save the train. Help me to get these irons asunder."

The engine was connected with the train by two great iron hooks and staples. By a tremendous effort, in making which I almost lost my balance, we unhooked the irons and detached the train; when, with a mighty leap as of some mad supernatural monster, the engine sped on its way alone, shooting back as it went a great flaming trail of sparks, and was lost in the darkness. We stood together on the footboard, watching in silence the gradual slackening of the speed. When at length the train had come to a standstill, we cried to the passengers, "Saved! Saved!" and then amid the confusion of opening the doors and descending and eager talking, my dream ended, leaving me shattered and palpitating with the horror of it.

—London, Nov. 1876.

II. The Wonderful Spectacles*

I was walking alone on the seashore. The day was singularly clear and sunny. Inland lay the most beautiful landscape ever seen; and far off were ranges of tall hills, the highest peaks of which were white with glittering snows. Along the sands by the sea came towards me a man accoutred as a postman. He gave me a letter. It was from you. It ran thus:—

"I have got hold of the earliest and most precious book extant. It was written before the world began. The text is easy enough to read; but the notes, which are very copious and numerous, are in such minute and obscure characters that I cannot make them out. I want you to get for me the spectacles which Swedenborg used to wear; not the smaller pair—those he gave to Hans Christian Andersen—but the large pair, and these seem to have got mislaid. I think they are Spinoza's make. You know he was an optical-glass maker by profession, and the best we have ever had. See if you can get them for me."

When I looked up after reading this letter, I saw the postman hastening away across the sands, and I cried out to him, "Stop! how am I to send the answer? Will you not wait for it?"

He looked round, stopped, and came back to me.

"I have the answer here," he said, tapping his letter-bag, "and I shall deliver it immediately."

————————- * From another letter to the friend mentioned in the note appended to the "Doomed Train."—(Author's Note.) ————————-

"How can you have the answer before I have written it?" I asked. "You are making a mistake."

"No," he said." In the city from which I come, the replies are all written at the office, and sent out with the letters themselves. Your reply is in my bag."

"Let me see it," I said. He took another letter from his wallet and gave it to me. I opened it, and read, in my own handwriting, this answer, addressed to you:—

"The spectacles you want can be bought in London. But you will not be able to use them at once, for they have not been worn for many years, and they sadly want cleaning. This you will not be able to do yourself in London, because it is too dark there to see well, and because your fingers are not small enough to clean them properly. Bring them here to me, and I will do it for you."

I gave this letter back to the postman. He smiled and nodded at me; and I then perceived to my astonishment that he wore a camel's-hair tunic round his waist. I had been on the point of addressing him— I know not why—as Hermes. But I now saw that he must be John the Baptist; and in my fright at having spoken with so great a saint, I awoke!

—London, Jan. 31, 1877

———————————— * The dreamer knew nothing of Spinoza at this time, and was quite unaware that he was an optician. Subsequent experience made it clear that the spectacles in question were intended to represent her own remarkable faculty of intuitional and interpretative perception. (Ed.) ————————————-

III. The Counsel of Perfection

I dreamed that I was in a large room, and there were in it seven persons, all men, sitting at one long table; and each of them had before him a scroll, some having books also; and all were greyheaded and bent with age save one, and this was a youth of about twenty without hair on his face. One of the aged men, who had his finger on a place in a book open before him, said:

"This spirit, who is of our order, writes in this book,—'Be ye perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect.' How shall we understand this word `perfection'?" And another, of the old men, looking up, answered, "It must mean wisdom, for wisdom is the sum of perfection." And another old man said, "That cannot be; for no creature can be wise as God is wise. Where is he among us who could attain to such a state? That which is part only, cannot comprehend the whole. To bid a creature to be wise as God is wise would be mockery."

Then a fourth old man said:—"It must be Truth that is intended. For truth only is perfection." But he who sat next the last speaker answered, "Truth also is partial; for where is he among us who shall be able to see as God sees?"

And the sixth said, "It must surely be justice; for this is the whole of righteousness." And the old man who had spoken first, answered him: "Not so; for justice comprehends vengeance, and it is written that vengeance is the Lord's alone."

Then the young man stood up with an open book in his hand and said:
—"I have here another record of one who likewise heard these words.

Let us see whether his rendering of them can help us to the knowledge we seek." And he found a place in the book and read aloud:—

"Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

And all of them closed their books and fixed their eyes upon me.

—London, April 9, 1877

IV. The City of Blood

I dreamed that I was wandering along a narrow street of vast length, upon either hand of which was an unbroken line of high straight houses, their walls and doors resembling those of a prison. The atmosphere was dense and obscure, and the time seemed that of twilight; in the narrow line of sky visible far overhead between the two rows of house-roofs, I could not discern sun, moon, or stars, or color of any kind. All was grey, impenetrable, and dim. Underfoot, between the paving-stones of the street, grass was springing. Nowhere was the least sign of life: the place seemed utterly deserted. I stood alone in the midst of profound silence and desolation. Silence? No! As I listened, there came to my ears from all sides, dully at first and almost imperceptibly, a low creeping sound like subdued moaning; a sound that never ceased, and that was so native to the place, I had at first been unaware of it. But now I clearly gathered in the sound and recognised it as expressive of the intensest physical suffering. Looking steadfastly towards one of the houses from which the most distinct of these sounds issued, I perceived a stream of blood slowly oozing out from

beneath the door and trickling down into the street, staining the tufts of grass red here and there, as it wound its way towards me. I glanced up and saw that the glass in the closed and barred windows of the house was flecked and splashed with the same horrible dye.

"Some one has been murdered in this place!" I cried, and flew towards the door. Then, for the first time, I perceived that the door had neither lock nor handle on the outside, but could be opened only from within. It had, indeed, the form and appearance of a door, but in every other respect it was solid and impassable as the walls themselves. In vain I searched for bell or knocker, or for some means of making entry into the house. I found only a scroll fastened with nails upon a crossbeam over the door, and upon it I read the words:—"This is the Laboratory of a Vivisector." As I read, the wailing sound redoubled in intensity, and a noise as of struggling made itself audible within, as though some new victim had been added to the first. I beat madly against the door with my hands and shrieked for help; but in vain. My dress was reddened with the blood upon the door step. In horror I looked down upon it, then turned and fled. As I passed along the street, the sounds around me grew and gathered volume, formulating themselves into distinct cries and bursts of frenzied sobbing. Upon the door of every house some scroll was attached, similar to that I had already seen. Upon one was inscribed:—"Here is a husband murdering his wife:" upon another:—"Here is a mother beating her child to death:" upon a third: "This is a slaughter-house."

Every door was impassable; every window was barred. The idea of interference from without was futile. Vainly I lifted my voice and cried for aid. The street was desolate as a graveyard; the only thing that moved about me was the stealthy blood that came creeping out from beneath the doors of these awful dwellings. Wild with horror I fled along the street, seeking some outlet, the cries and moans pursuing me as I ran. At length the street

abruptly ended in a high dead wall, the top of which was not discernible; it seemed, indeed, to be limitless in height. Upon this wall was written in great black letters— "There is no way out."

Overwhelmed with despair and anguish, I fell upon the stones of the street, repeating aloud "There is no way out."

- Hinton, Jan. 1877

V. The Bird and the Cat *

I dreamt that I had a beautiful bird in a cage, and that the cage was placed on a table in a room where there was a cat. I took the bird out of the cage and put him on the table. Instantly the cat sprang upon

———————————- * This dream and the next occurred at a moment when it had almost been decided to relax the rule of privacy until then observed in regard to our psychological experiences, among other ways, by submitting them to some of the savants of the Paris Faculty,—a project of which these dreams at once caused the abandonment. This was not the only occasion on which a dream bore a twofold aspect, being a warning or a prediction, according to the heed given to it. (Ed.) ———————————

him and seized him in her mouth. I threw myself upon her and strove to wrest away her prey, loading her with reproaches and bewailing the fate of my beautiful bird. Then suddenly some one said to me, "You have only yourself to blame for this misfortune. While the bird remained in his cage

he was safe. Why should you have taken him out before the eyes of the cat?"

VI. The Treasure in the Lighted House

A second time I dreamt, and saw a house built in the midst of a forest. It was night, and all the rooms of the house were brilliantly illuminated by lamps. But the strange thing was that the windows were without shutters, and reached to the ground. In one of the rooms sat an old man counting money and jewels on a table before him. I stood in the spirit beside him, and presently heard outside the windows a sound of footsteps and of men's voices talking together in hushed tones. Then a face peered in at the lighted room, and I became aware that there were many persons assembled without in the darkness, watching the old man and his treasure. He also heard them, and rose from his seat in alarm, clutching his gold and gems and endeavoring to hide them.

"Who are they?" I asked him. He answered, his face white with terror; "They are robbers and assassins. This forest is their haunt. They will murder me, and seize my treasure." "If this be so," said I, "why did you build your house in the midst of this forest, and why are there no shutters to the windows? Are you mad, or a fool, that you do not know every one can see from without into your lighted rooms?" He looked at me with stupid despair. "I never thought of the shutters," said he.

As we stood talking, the robbers outside congregated in great numbers, and the old man fled from the room with his treasure bags into another

apartment. But this also was brilliantly illuminated within, and the windows were shutterless. The robbers followed his movements easily, and so pursued him from room to room all round the house. Nowhere had he any shelter. Then came the sound of gouge and mallet and saw, and I knew the assassins were breaking into the house, and that before long, the owner would have met the death his folly had invited, and his treasure would pass into the hands of the robbers.

—Paris, Aug. 3, 1877

VII. The Forest Cathedral

I found myself—accompanied by a guide, a young man of Oriental aspect and habit—passing through long vistas of trees which, as we advanced, continually changed in character. Thus we threaded avenues of English oaks and elms, the foliage of which gave way as we proceeded to that of warmer and moister climes, and we saw overhead the hanging masses of broad-leaved palms, and enormous trees whose names I do not know, spreading their fingered leaves over us like great green hands in a manner that frightened me. Here also I saw huge grasses which rose over my shoulders, and through which I had at times to beat my way as through a sea; and ferns of colossal proportions; with every possible variety and mode of tree-life and every conceivable shade of green, from the faintest and clearest yellow to the densest blue-green. One wood in particular I stopped to admire. It seemed as though every leaf of its trees were of gold, so intensely yellow was the tint of the foliage.

In these forests and thickets were numerous shrines of gods such as the Hindus worship. Every now and then we came upon them in open spaces. They were uncouth and rudely painted; but they all were profusely adorned with gems, chiefly turquoises, and they all had many arms and hands, in which they held lotus flowers, sprays of palms, and colored berries.

Passing by these strange figures, we came to a darker part of our course, where the character of the trees changed and the air felt colder. I perceived that a shadow had fallen on the way; and looking upwards I found we were passing beneath a massive roof of dark indigo-colored pines, which here and there were positively black in their intensity and depth. Intermingled with them were firs, whose great, straight stems were covered with lichen and mosses of beautiful variety, and some looking strangely like green ice-crystals.

Presently we came to a little broken-down rude kind of chapel in the midst of the wood. It was built of stone; and masses of stone, shapeless and moss-grown, were lying scattered about on the ground around it. At a little rough-hewn altar within it stood a Christian priest, blessing the elements. Overhead, the great dark sprays of the larches and cone-laden firs swept its roof. I sat down to rest on one of the stones, and looked upwards a while at the foliage. Then turning my gaze again towards the earth, I saw a vast circle of stones, moss-grown like that on which I sat, and ranged in a circle such as that of Stonehenge. It occupied an open space in the midst of the forest; and the grasses and climbing plants of the place had fastened on the crevices of the stones.

One stone, larger and taller than the rest, stood at the junction of the circle, in a place of honor, as though it had stood for a symbol of divinity. I looked at my guide, and said, " Here, at least, is an idol whose semblance belongs to another type than that of the Hindus." He smiled, and turning

from me to the Christian priest at the altar, said aloud, "Priest, why do your people receive from sacerdotal hands the bread only, while you yourselves receive both bread and wine?" And the priest answered, "We receive no more than they. Yes, though under another form, the people are partakers with us of the sacred wine with its particle. The blood is the life of the flesh, and of it the flesh is formed, and without it the flesh could not consist. The communion is the same."

Then the young man my guide turned again to me and waved his hand towards the stone before me. And as I looked the stone opened from its summit to its base; and I saw that the strata within had the form of a tree, and that every minute crystal of which it was formed, —particles so fine that grains of sand would have been coarse in comparison with, them,—and every atom composing its mass, were stamped with this same tree-image, and bore the shape of the ice-crystals, of the ferns and of the colossal palm-leaves I had seen. And my guide said, "Before these stones were, the Tree of Life stood in the midst of the Universe."

And again we passed on, leaving behind us the chapel and the circle of stones, the pines and the firs: and as we went the foliage around us grew more and more stunted and like that at home. We traveled quickly; but now and then, through breaks and openings in the woods, I saw solitary oaks standing in the midst of green spaces, and beneath them kings giving judgment to their peoples, and magistrates administering laws.

At last we came to a forest of trees so enormous that they made me tremble to look at them. The hugeness of their stems gave them an unearthly appearance; for they rose hundreds of feet from the ground before they burst out far, far above us, into colossal masses of vast-leaved foliage. I cannot sufficiently convey the impressions of awe with which the sight of these monster trees inspired me. There seemed to me something pitiless and

phantom-like in the severity of their enormous bare trunks, stretching on without break or branch into the distance—overhead, and there at length giving birth to a sea of dark waving plumes, the rustle of which reached my ears as the sound of tossing waves.

Passing beneath these vast trees we came to others of smaller growth, but still of the same type,—straight-stemmed, with branching foliage at their summit. Here we stood to rest, and as we paused I became aware that the trees around me were losing their color, and turning by imperceptible degrees into stone. In nothing was their form or position altered; only a cold, grey hue overspread them, and the intervening spaces between their stems became filled up, as though by a cloud which gradually grew substantial. Presently I raised my eyes, and lo! overhead were the arches of a vast cathedral, spanning the sky and hiding it from my sight. The tree stems had become tall columns of grey stone; and their plumed tops, the carven architraves and branching spines of Gothic sculpture. The incense rolled in great dense clouds to their outstretching arms, and, breaking against them, hung in floating, fragrant wreaths about their carven sprays. Looking downwards to the altar, I found it covered with flowers and plants and garlands, in the midst of which stood a great golden crucifix, and I turned to my guide wishing to question him, but he had disappeared, and I could not find him. Then a vast crowd of worshipers surrounded me, a priest before the altar raised the pyx and the patten in his hands. The people fell on their knees, and bent their heads, as a great field of corn over which a strong wind passes. I knelt with the rest, and adored with them in silence.

—Paris, July 1877

VIII. The Enchanted Woman*

The first consciousness which broke my sleep last night was one of floating, of being carried swiftly by some invisible force through a vast space; then, of being gently lowered; then of light, until, gradually, I found myself on

———————- * On the night previous to this dream, Mrs Kingsford was awoke by a bright light, and beheld a hand holding out towards her a glass of foaming ale, the action being accompanied by the words, spoken with strong emphasis,—" You must not drink this." It was not her usual beverage, but she occasionally yielded to pressure and took it when at home. In consequence of the above prohibition she abstained for that day, and on the following night received this vision, in order to fit her for which the prohibition had apparently been imposed. It was originally entitled a Vision of the World's Fall, on the supposition that it represented the loss of the Intuition, mystically called the "Fall of the Woman," through the sorceries of priestcraft. (Ed.) ———————————

my feet in a broad noon-day brightness, and before me an open country. Hills, hills, as far as the eye could reach,—hills with snow on their tops, and mists around their gorges. This was the first thing I saw distinctly. Then, casting my eyes towards the ground, I perceived that all about me lay huge masses of grey material which, at first, I took for blocks of stone, having the form of lions; but as I looked at them more intently, my sight grew clearer, and I saw, to my horror, that they were really alive. A panic seized me, and I tried to run away; but on turning, I became suddenly aware that the whole country was filled with these awful shapes; and the faces of those nearest to me were most dreadful, for their eyes, and something in the expression,

though not in the form, of their faces, were human. I was absolutely alone in a terrible world peopled with lions, too, of a monstrous kind. Recovering myself with an effort, I resumed my flight, but, as I passed through the midst of this concourse of monsters, it suddenly struck me that they were perfectly unconscious of my presence. I even laid my hands, in passing, on the heads and manes of several, but they gave no sign of seeing me or of knowing that I touched them. At last I gained the threshold of a great pavilion, not, apparently, built by hands, but formed by Nature. The walls were solid, yet they were composed of huge trees standing close together, like columns; and the roof of the pavilion was formed by their massive foliage, through which not a ray of outer light penetrated. Such light as there was seemed nebulous, and appeared to rise out of the ground. In the centre of this pavilion I stood alone, happy to have got clear away from those terrible beasts and the gaze of their steadfast eyes.

As I stood there, I became conscious of the fact that the nebulous light of the place was concentrating itself into a focus on the columned wall opposite to me. It grew there, became intenser, and then spread, revealing, as it spread, a series of moving pictures that appeared to be scenes actually enacted before me. For the figures in the pictures were living, and they moved before my eyes, though I heard neither word nor sound. And this is what I saw. First there came a writing on the wall of the pavilion:—" This is the History of our World." These words, as I looked at them, appeared to sink into the wall as they had risen out of it, and to yield place to the pictures which then began to come out in succession, dimly at first, then strong and clear as actual scenes.

First I beheld a beautiful woman, with the sweetest face and most perfect form conceivable. She was dwelling in a cave among the hills with her husband, and he, too, was beautiful, more like an angel than a man. They seemed perfectly happy together; and their dwelling was like Paradise. On

every side was beauty, sunlight, and repose. This picture sank into the wall as the writing had done. And then came out another; the same man and woman driving together in a sleigh drawn by reindeer over fields of ice; with all about them glaciers and snow, and great mountains veiled in wreaths of slowly moving mist. The sleigh went at a rapid pace, and its occupants talked gaily to each other, so far as I could judge by their smiles and the movement of their lips. But, what caused me much surprise was that they carried between them, and actually in their hands, a glowing flame, the fervor of which I felt reflected from the picture upon my own cheeks. The ice around shone with its brightness. The mists upon the snow mountains caught its gleam. Yet, strong as were its light and heat, neither the man nor the woman seemed to be burned or dazzled by it. This picture, too, the beauty and brilliancy of which greatly impressed me, sank and disappeared as the former.

Next, I saw a terrible looking man clad in an enchanter's robe, standing alone upon an ice-crag. In the air above him, poised like a dragonfly, was an evil spirit, having a head and face like that of a human being. The rest of it resembled the tail of a comet, and seemed made of a green fire, which flickered in and out as though swayed by a wind. And as I looked, suddenly, through an opening among the hills, I saw the sleigh pass, carrying the beautiful woman and her husband; and in the same instant the enchanter also saw it, and his face contracted, and the evil spirit lowered itself and came between me and him. Then this picture sank and vanished.

I next beheld the same cave in the mountains which I had before seen; and the beautiful couple together in it. Then a shadow darkened the door of the cave; and the enchanter was there, asking admittance; cheerfully they bade him enter, and, as he came forward with his snake-like eyes fixed on the fair woman, I understood that he wished to have her for his own, and was even then devising how to bear her away. And the spirit in the air

beside him seemed busy suggesting schemes to this end. Then this picture melted and became confused, giving place for but a brief moment to another, in which I saw the enchanter carrying the woman away in his arms, she struggling and lamenting, her long bright hair streaming behind her. This scene passed from the wall as though a wind had swept over it, and there rose up in its place a picture, which impressed me with a more vivid sense of reality than all the rest.

It represented a market place, in the midst of which was a pile of faggots and a stake, such as were used formerly for the burning of heretics and witches. The market place, round which were rows of seats as though for a concourse of spectators, yet appeared quite deserted. I saw only three living beings present,—the beautiful woman, the enchanter, and the evil spirit. Nevertheless, I thought that the seats were really occupied by invisible tenants, for every now and then there seemed to be a stir in the atmosphere as of a great multitude; and I had, moreover, a strange sense of facing many witnesses. The enchanter led the woman to the stake, fastened her there with iron chains, lit the faggots about her feet and withdrew to a short distance, where he stood with his arms folded, looking on as the flames rose about her. I understood that she had refused his love, and that in his fury he had denounced her as a sorceress. Then in the fire, above the pile, I saw the evil spirit poising itself like a fly, and rising and sinking and fluttering in the thick smoke. While I wondered what this meant, the flames which had concealed the beautiful woman, parted in their midst, and disclosed a sight so horrible and unexpected as to thrill me from head to foot, and curdle my blood. Chained to the stake there stood, not the fair woman I had seen there a moment before, but a hideous monster,—a woman still, but a woman with three heads, and three bodies linked in one. Each of her long arms ended, not in a hand, but in a claw like that of a bird of rapine. Her hair resembled the locks of the classic Medusa, and her faces were inexpressibly loathsome. She seemed, with all her dreadful heads and limbs, to writhe in

the flames and yet not to be consumed by them. She gathered them in to herself; her claws caught them and drew them down; her triple body appeared to suck the fire into itself, as though a blast drove it. The sight appalled me. I covered my face and dared look no more.

When at length I again turned my eyes upon the wall, the picture that had so terrified me was gone, and instead of it, I saw the enchanter flying through the world, pursued by the evil spirit and that dreadful woman. Through all the world they seemed to go. The scenes changed with marvellous rapidity. Now the picture glowed with the wealth and gorgeousness of the torrid zone; now the ice-fields of the North rose into view; anon a pine-forest; then a wild seashore; but always the same three flying figures; always the horrible three-formed harpy pursuing the enchanter, and beside her the evil spirit with the dragonfly wings.

At last this succession of images ceased, and I beheld a desolate region, in the midst of which sat the woman with the enchanter beside her, his head reposing in her lap. Either the sight of her must have become familiar to him and, so, less horrible, or she had subjugated him by some spell. At all events, they were mated at last, and their offspring lay around them on the stony ground, or moved to and fro. These were lions,—monsters with human faces, such as I had seen in the beginning of my dream. Their jaws dripped blood; they paced backwards and forwards, lashing their tails. Then too, this picture faded and sank into the wall as the others had done. And through its melting outlines came out again the words I had first seen: "This is the History of our World," only they seemed to me in some way changed, but how; I cannot tell. The horror of the whole thing was too strong upon me to let me dare look longer at the wall. And I awoke, repeating to myself the question, "How could one woman become three?"

—Hinton, Feb. 1877

IX. The Banquet of the Gods

I saw in my sleep a great table spread upon a beautiful mountain, the distant peaks of which were covered with snow, and brilliant with a bright light. Around the table reclined, twelve persons, six male, six female, some of whom I recognised at once, the others afterwards. Those whom I recognised at once were Zeus, Hera, Pallas Athena, Phoebus Apollo, and Artemis. I knew them by the symbols they wore. The table was covered with all kinds of fruit, of great size, including nuts, almonds, and olives, with flat cakes of bread, and cups of gold into which, before drinking, each divinity poured two sorts of liquid, one of which was wine, the other water. As I was looking on, standing on a step a little below the top of the flight which led to the table, I was startled by seeing Hera suddenly fix her eyes on me and say, "What seest thou at the lower end of the table?" And I looked and answered, "I see two vacant seats." Then she spoke again and said, "When you are able to eat of our food and to drink of our cup, you also shall sit and feast with us." Scarcely had she uttered these words, when Athena, who sat facing me, added, "When you are able to eat of our food and to drink of our cup, then you shall know as you are known." And immediately Artemis, whom I knew by the moon upon her head; continued, "When you are able to eat of our food and to drink of our cup, all things shall become pure to you, and ye shall be made virgins."

Then I said, "O Immortals, what is your food and your drink, and how does your banquet differ from ours, seeing that we also eat no flesh, and blood has no place in our repasts?"

Then one of the Gods, whom at the time I did not know, but have since recognised as Hermes, rose from the table, and coming to me put into my

hands a branch of a fig tree bearing upon it ripe fruit, and said, "If you would be perfect, and able to know and to do all things, quit the heresy of Prometheus. Let fire warm and comfort you externally: it is heaven's gift. But do not wrest it from its rightful purpose, as did that betrayer of your race, to fill the veins of humanity with its contagion, and to consume your interior being with its breath. All of you are men of clay, as was the image which Prometheus made. Ye are nourished with stolen fire, and it consumes you. Of all the evil uses of heaven's good gifts, none is so evil as the internal use of fire. For your hot foods and drinks have consumed and dried up the magnetic power of your nerves, sealed your senses, and cut short your lives. Now, you neither see nor hear; for the fire in your organs consumes your senses. Ye are all blind and deaf, creatures of clay. We have sent you a book to read. Practise its precepts, and your senses shall be opened."

Then, not yet recognising him, I said, "Tell me your name, Lord." At this he laughed and answered, "I have been about you from the beginning. I am the white cloud on the noonday sky." "Do you, then," I asked, "desire the whole world to abandon the use of fire in preparing food and drink?"

Instead of answering my question, he said, "We show you the excellent way. Two places only are vacant at our table. We have told you all that can be shown you on the level on which you stand. But our perfect gifts, the fruits of the Tree of Life, are beyond your reach now. We cannot give them to you until you are purified and have come up higher. The conditions are God's; the will is with you."

These last words seemed to be repeated from the sky overhead, and again from beneath my feet. And at the instant I fell, as if shot down like a meteor from a vast height; and with the swiftness and shock of the fall I awoke.

—Hinton, Sept. 1877

———————————- * The book referred to was a volume entitled Fruit and Bread, which had been sent anonymously on the previous morning. The fig-tree, which both with the Hebrews and the Greeks was the type of intuitional perception, was an especial symbol of Hermes, called by the Hebrews Raphael. The plural used by the seer included myself as the partner of her literary and other studies. The term virgin in its mystical sense signifies a soul pure from admixture of matter.—(Ed.) ———————————————-

X. The Difficult Path

Having fallen asleep last night while in a state of great perplexity about the care and education of my daughter, I dreamt as follows.

I was walking with the child along the border of a high cliff, at the foot of which was the sea. The path was exceedingly narrow, and on the inner side was flanked by a line of rocks and stones. The outer side was so close to the edge of the cliff that she was compelled to walk either before or behind me, or else on the stones. And, as it was unsafe to let go her hand, it was on the stones that she had to walk, much to her distress. I was in male attire, and carried a staff in my hand. She wore skirts and had no staff; and every moment she stumbled or her dress caught and was torn by some jutting crag or bramble. In this way our progress was being continually interrupted and rendered almost impossible, when suddenly we came upon a sharp declivity leading to a steep path which wound down the side of the precipice to the beach below. Looking down, I saw on the shore beneath the cliff a

collection of fishermen's huts, and groups of men and women on the shingle, mending nets, hauling up boats, and sorting fish of various kinds. In the midst of the little village stood a great crucifix of lead, so cast in a mould as to allow me from the elevated position I occupied behind it, to see that though in front it looked solid, it was in reality hollow. As I was noting this, a voice of some one close at hand suddenly addressed me; and on turning my head I found standing before me a man in the garb of a fisherman, who evidently had just scaled the steep path leading from the beach. He stretched out his hand to take the child, saying he bad come to fetch her, for that in the path I was following there was room only for one. "Let her come to us," he added; "she will do very well as a fisherman's daughter." Being reluctant to part with her, and not perceiving then the significance of his garb and vocation, I objected that the calling was a dirty and unsavoury one, and would soil her hands and dress. Whereupon the man became severe, and seemed to insist with a kind of authority upon my acceptance of his proposition. The child, too, was taken with him, and was moreover anxious to leave the rough and dangerous path; and she accordingly went to him of her own will and, placing her hand in his, left me without any sign of regret, and I went on my way alone. Then lifting my eyes to see whither my path led, I beheld it winding along the edge of the cliff to an apparently endless distance, until, as I gazed steadily on the extreme limit of my view, I saw the grey mist from the sea here and there break and roll up into great masses of slow-drifting cloud, in the intervals of which I caught the white gleam of sunlit snow. And these intervals continually closed up to open again in fresh places higher up, disclosing peak upon peak of a range of mountains of enormous altitude.*

By a curious coincidence, the very morning after this dream, a friend, who knew of my perplexity, called to

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* Always the symbol of high mystical insight and spiritual attainment—Biblically called "the Hill of the Lord" and "Mount of God. " (Ed.)

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recommend a school in a certain convent as one suitable for my child. There were, however, insuperable objections to the scheme.

—Paris, Nov. 3, 1877

XI. A Lion In the Way

Owing to the many and great difficulties thrown in my way, I had been seriously considering the advisability of withdrawing, if only for a time, from my course of medical study, when I received the following dream, which determined me to persevere:—

I found myself on the same narrow, rugged, and precipitous path described in my last dream, and confronted by a lion. Afraid to pass him I turned and fled. On this the beast gave chase, when, finding escape by flight hopeless, I turned and boldly faced him. Whereupon the lion at once stopped and slunk to the side of the path, and suffered me to pass unmolested, though I was so close to him that I could not avoid touching him with my garments in passing.

—Paris, Nov. 15, 1877

———————— * The prognostic was fully justified by the event.—(Ed.)
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XII. A Dream of Disembodiment

I dreamt that I was dead, and wanted to take form and appear to C. in order to converse with him. And it was suggested by those about me—spirits like myself I suppose—that I might materialise myself through the medium of some man whom they indicated to me. Coming to the place where he was, I was directed to throw myself out forward towards him by an intense concentration of will; which I accordingly tried to do, but without success, though the effort I made was enormous. I can only compare it to the attempt made by a person unable to swim, to fling himself off a platform into deep water. Do all I would, I could not gather myself up for it; and although encouraged and stimulated, and assured I had only to let myself go, my attempts were ineffectual. Even when I had sufficiently collected and prepared myself in one part of my system, the other part failed me.

At length it was suggested to me that I should find it easier if I first took on me the form of the medium. This I at length succeeded in doing, and, to my annoyance, so completely that I materialised myself into the shape not only of his features, but of his clothing also. The effort requisite for this exhausted me to the utmost, so that I was unable to keep up the apparition for more than a few minutes, when I had no choice but to yield to the strain and let myself go again, only in the opposite way. So I went out, and

mounted like a sudden flame, and saw myself for a moment like a thin streak of white mist rising in the air; while the comfort and relief I experienced by regaining my light spirit-condition, were indescribable. It was because I had, for want of skill, dematerialised myself without sufficient deliberation, that I had thus rapidly mounted in the air.

After an interval I dreamt that, wishing to see what A. would do in case I appeared to him after my death, I went to him as a spirit and called him by his name. Upon hearing my voice he rose and went to the window and looked out uneasily. On my going close to him and speaking in his ear, he was much disturbed, and ran his hand through his hair and rubbed his head in a puzzled and by no means pleased manner. At the third attempt to attract his attention he rushed to the door, and, calling for a glass, poured out some wine, which he drank. On seeing this, and finding him inaccessible, I desisted, thinking it must often happen to the departed to be distressed by the inability or unwillingness of those they love to receive and recognise them.

—Paris, Jan. 1878

XIII. The Perfect Way with Animals

I saw in my sleep a cart-horse who, coming to me, conversed with me in what seemed a perfectly simple and natural manner, for it caused me no surprise that he should speak. And this is what he said:—

"Kindness to animals of the gentler orders is the very foundation of civilisation. For it is the cruelty and harshness of men towards the animals

under their protection which is the cause of the present low standard of humanity itself. Brutal usage creates brutes; and the ranks of mankind are constantly recruited from spirits already hardened and depraved by a long course of ill-treatment. Nothing developes the spirit so much as sympathy. Nothing cultivates, refines, and aids it in its progress towards perfection so much as kind and gentle treatment. On the contrary, the brutal usage and want of sympathy with which we meet at the hands of men, stunt our development and reverse all the currents of a our nature. We grow coarse with coarseness, vile with reviling, and brutal with the brutality of those who surround us. And when we pass out of this stage we enter on the next depraved and hardened, and with the bent of our dispositions such that we are ready by our nature to do in our turn that which has been done to us. The greater number of us, indeed, know no other or better way. For the spirit learns by experience and imitation, and inclines necessarily to do those things which it has been in the habit of seeing done. Humanity will never become perfected until this doctrine is understood and received and made the rule of conduct."

—Paris, Oct. 28, 1879

XIV. The Laboratory Underground

I dreamed that I found myself underground in a vault artificially lighted. Tables were ranged along the walls of the vault, and upon these tables were bound down the living bodies of half-dissected and mutilated animals. Scientific experts were busy at work on their victims with scalpel, hot iron

and forceps. But, as I looked at the creatures lying bound before them, they no longer appeared to be mere rabbits, or hounds, for in each I saw a human shape, the shape of a man, with limbs and lineaments resembling those of their torturers, hidden within the outward form. And when they led into the place an old worn-out horse, crippled with age and long toil in the service of man, and bound him down, and lacerated his flesh with their knives, I saw the human form within him stir and writhe as though it were an unborn babe moving in its mother's womb. And I cried aloud—"Wretches! you are tormenting an unborn man!" But they heard not, nor could they see what I saw. Then they brought in a white rabbit, and thrust its eyes through with heated irons. And as I gazed, the rabbit seemed to me like a tiny infant, with human face, and hands which stretched themselves towards me in appeal, and lips which sought to cry for help in human accents. And I could bear no more, but broke forth into a bitter rain of tears, exclaiming—"O blind! blind! not to see that you torture a child, the youngest of your own flesh and blood!"

And with that I woke, sobbing vehemently.

—Paris, Feb. 2, 1880

XV. The Old Young Man

I dreamed that I was in Rome with C., and a friend of his called on us there, and asked leave to introduce to us a young man, a student of art, whose history and condition were singular. They came together in the evening. In the room where we sat was a kind of telephonic tube, through

which, at intervals, a voice spoke to me. When the young man entered, these words were spoken in my ear through the tube:—

"You have made a good many diagnoses lately of cases of physical disease; here is a curious and interesting type of spiritual pathology, the like of which is rarely met with. Question this young man."

Accordingly I did so, and drew from him that about a year ago he had been seriously ill of Roman fever; but as he hesitated, and seemed unwilling to speak on the subject, I questioned the friend. From him I learnt that the young man had formerly been a very proficient pupil in one of the best-known studios in Rome, but that a year ago he had suffered from a most terrible attack of malaria, in consequence of his remaining in Rome to work after others had found it necessary to go into the country, and that the malady had so affected the nervous system that since his recovery he had been wholly unlike his former self. His great aptitude for artistic work, from which so much had been expected, seemed to have entirely left him; he was no longer master of his pencil; his former faculty and promise of excellence had vanished. The physician who had attended him during his illness affirmed that all this was readily accounted for by the assumption that the malaria had affected the cerebral centres, and in particular, the nerve-cells of the memory; that such consequences of severe continuous fever were by no means uncommon, and might last for an indefinite period. Meanwhile the young man was now, by slow and painful application, doing his utmost to recover his lost power and skill. Naturally, the subject was distasteful to him, and he shrank from discussing it. Here the voice again spoke to me through the tube, telling me to observe the young man, and especially his face. On this I scanned his countenance with attention, and remarked that it wore a singularly odd look,—the look of a man advanced in years and experience. But that I surmised to be a not unusual effect of severe fever.

"How old do you suppose the patient to be?" asked the interrogative voice.

"About twenty years old, I suppose," said I.

"He is a year old," rejoined the voice.

"A year! How can that be?"

"If you will not allow that he is only a year old, then you must admit that he is sixty-five, for he is certainly either one or the other."

This enigma so perplexed me, that I begged my invisible informant for a solution of the difficulty, which was at once vouchsafed in the following terms:—

"Here is the history of your patient. The youth who was the proficient and gifted student, who astonished his masters, and gave such brilliant indications of future greatness, is dead. The malaria killed him. But he had a father, who, while alive, had loved his son as the apple of his eye, and whose whole being and desire centred in the boy. This father died some six years ago, about the age of sixty. After his death his devotion to the youth continued, and as a "spirit," he followed him everywhere, never quitting his side. So entirely was he absorbed in the lad and in his career, that he made no advance in his own spiritual life, nor, indeed, was he fully aware of the fact that he had himself quitted the earthly plane. For there are souls which, having been obtuse and dull in their apprehension of spiritual things during their existence in the flesh, and having neither hopes nor aims beyond the body, are very slow to realise the fact of their dissolution, and remain, therefore, chained to the earth by earthly affections and interests, haunting the places or persons they have most affected. But the young artist was not of this order. Idealist and genius, he was already highly spiritualised and

vitalised even upon earth, and when death rent the bond between him and his body, he passed at once from the atmosphere of carnal things into a loftier sphere. But at the moment of his death, the phantom father was watching beside the son's sick-bed, and filled with agony at beholding the wreck of all the brilliant hopes he had cherished for the boy, thought only of preserving the physical life of that dear body, since the death of the outward form was still for him the death of all he had loved. He would cling to it, preserve it, re-animate it at any cost. The spirit had quitted it; it lay before him a corpse. What, then, did the father do? With a supreme effort of desire, ineffectual indeed to recall the departed ghost, but potent in its reaction upon himself, he projected his own vitality into his son's dead body, re-animated it with his own soul, and thus effected the resuscitation for which he had so ardently longed. So the body you now behold is, indeed, the son's body, but the soul which animates it is that of the father. And it is a year since this event occurred. Such is the real solution of the problem, whose natural effects the physician attributes to the result of disease. The spirit which now tenants this young man's form had no knowledge of art when he was so strangely reborn into the world, beyond the mere rudiments of drawing which he had learned while watching his son at work during the previous six years. What, therefore, seems to the physician to be a painful recovery of previous aptitude, is, in fact, the imperfect endeavour of a novice entering a new and unsuitable career.

"For the father the experience is by no means an unprofitable one. He would certainly, sooner or later, have resumed existence upon earth in the flesh, and it is as well that his return should be under the actual circumstances. The study of art upon which he has thus entered is likely to prove to him an excellent means of spiritual education. By means of it his soul may ascend as it has never yet done; while the habits of the body he now possesses, trained as it is to refined and gentle modes of life, may do much to accomplish the purgation and redemption of its new tenant. It is far

better for the father that this strange event should have occurred, than that he should have remained an earth-bound phantom, unable to realise his own position, or to rise above the affection which chained him to merely worldly things."

—Paris, Feb. 21, 1880

XVI. The Metempsychosis

I was visited last night in my sleep by one whom I presently recognised as the famous Adept and Mystic of the first century of our era, Apollonius of Tyana, called the " Pagan Christ." He was clad in a grey linen robe with a hood, like that of a monk, and had a smooth, beardless face, and seemed to be between forty and fifty years of age. He made himself known to me by asking if I had heard of his lion.* He commenced by speaking of Metempsychosis, concerning which he informed

————- * This was a tame captive lion, in whom Apollonius is said to have recognised the soul of the Egyptian King Amasis, who had lived 500 years previously. The lion burst into tears at the recognition, and showed much misery. (Author's Note.) ————————

me as follows:—"There are two streams or currents, an upward and a downward one, by which souls are continually passing and repassing as on a ladder. The carnivorous animals are souls undergoing penance by being imprisoned for a time in such forms on account of their misdeeds. Have you not heard the story of my lion?" I said yes, but that I did not understand it,

because I thought it impossible for a human soul to suffer the degradation of returning into the body of a lower creature after once attaining humanity. At this he laughed out, and said that the real degradation was not in the penance but in the sin. "It is not by the penance, but by incurring the need of the penance, that the soul is degraded. The man who sullies his humanity by cruelty or lust, is already degraded thereby below humanity; and the form which his soul afterwards assumes is the mere natural consequence of that degradation. He may again recover humanity, but only by means of passing through another form than that of the carnivora. When you were told * that certain creatures were redeemable or not redeemable, the meaning was this: They who are redeemable may, on leaving their present form, return directly into humanity. Their penance is accomplished in that form, and in it, therefore, they are redeemed. But they who are not redeemable, are they whose sin has been too deep or too ingrained to suffer them to return until they have passed through other lower forms. They are not redeemable therein, but will be on ascending again. Others, altogether vile and past redemption, sink continually lower and lower down the stream, until at length they burn out. They shall neither be redeemed in the form they now occupy, nor in any other."

—Paris, May 11, 1880

———————— * The reference is to an instruction received by her four years previously, but not in sleep, and not from Apollonius, though from a source no less transcendental. (Ed.)

*** Remembering, on being told this dream, that "Eliphas Levi," in his Haute Magic, had described an interview with the phantom of Apollonius, which he had evoked, I referred to the book, and found that he also saw him with a smooth-shaven face, but wearing a shroud (linceul). (Ed.)

XVII. The Three Kings

The time was drawing towards dawn in a wild and desolate region. And I stood with my genius at the foot of a mountain the summit of which was hidden in mist. At a few paces from me stood three persons, clad in splendid robes and wearing crowns on their heads. Each personage carried a casket and a key: the three caskets differed from one another, but the keys were all alike. And my genius said to me, "These are the three kings of the East, and they journey hither over the river that is dried up, to go up into the mountain of Sion and rebuild the Temple of the Lord God." Then I looked more closely at the three royalties, and I saw that the one who stood nearest to me on the left hand was a man, and the color of his skin was dark like that of an Indian. And the second was in form like a woman, and her complexion was fair: and the third had the wings of an Angel, and carried a staff of gold. And I heard them say one to another, "Brother, what hast thou

in thy casket?" And the first answered, " I am the Stonelayer, and I carry the implements of my craft; also a bundle of myrrh for thee and for me." And the king who bore the aspect of a woman, answered, "I am the Carpenter, and I bear the instruments of my craft; also a box of frankincense for thee and for me." And the Angel-king answered, "I am the Measurer, and I carry the secrets of the living God, and the rod of gold to measure your work withal." Then the first said, "Therefore let us go up into the hill of the Lord and build the walls of Jerusalem. And they turned to ascend the mountain. But they had not taken the first step when the king, whose name was Stonelayer, said to him who was called the Carpenter, "Give me first the implements of thy craft, and the plan of thy building, that I may know after what sort thou buildest, and may fashion thereto my masonry." And the other asked him, "What buildest thou, brother?" And he answered, "I build the Outer Court." Then the Carpenter unlocked his casket and gave him a scroll written over in silver, and a crystal rule, and a carpenter's plane and a saw. And the other took them and put them into his casket. Then the Carpenter said to the Stonelayer, "Brother, give me also the plan of thy building, and the tools of thy craft. For I build the Inner Place, and must needs fit my designing to thy foundation." But the other answered, "Nay, my brother, for I have promised the laborers. Build thou alone. It is enough that I know thy secrets; ask not mine of me." And the Carpenter answered, "How then shall the Temple of the Lord be builded? Are we not of three Ages, and is the temple yet perfected?" Then the Angel spoke, and said to the Stonelayer, "Fear not, brother: freely hast thou received; freely give. For except thine elder brother had been first a Stonelayer, he could not now be a Carpenter. Art thou not of Solomon, and he of Christ? Therefore he hath already handled thy tools, and is of thy craft. And I also, the Measurer, I know the work of both. But now is that time when the end cometh, and that which hath been spoken in the ear in closets, the same shall be proclaimed on the housetops." Then the first king unlocked his casket, and gave to the

Carpenter a scroll written in red, and a compass and a trowel. But the Carpenter answered him: "It is enough. I have seen, and I remember. For this is the writing King Solomon gave into my hands when I also was a Stonelayer, and when thou wert of the company of them that labor. For I also am thy Brother, and that thou knowest I know also." Then the third king, the Angel, spoke again and said, "Now is the knowledge perfected and the bond fulfilled. For neither can the Stonelayer build alone, nor the Carpenter construct apart. Therefore, until this day, is the Temple of the Lord unbuilt. But now is the time come, and Salem shall have her habitation on the Hill of the Lord."

And there came down a mist from the mountain, and out of the mist a star. And my Genius said, "Thou shalt yet see more on this wise." But I saw then only the mist, which filled the valley, and moistened my hair and my dress; and so I awoke.

—London, April 30, 1882

———— ** For the full comprehension of the above dream, it is necessary to be profoundly versed at once in the esoteric signification of the Scriptures and in the mysteries of Freemasonry. It was the dreamer's great regret that she neither knew, nor could know, the latter, women being excluded from initiation. (Ed.)

XVIII. The Armed Goddess

I dreamed that I sat reading in my study, with books lying about all round me. Suddenly a voice, marvellously clear and silvery, called me by name. Starting up and turning, I saw behind me a long vista of white marble columns, Greek in architecture, flanking on either side a gallery of white marble. At the end of this gallery stood a shape of exceeding brilliancy, the shape of a woman above mortal height, clad from head to foot in shining mail armour. In her right hand was a spear, on her left arm a shield. Her brow was hidden by a helmet, and the aspect of her face was stern,— severe even, I thought. I approached her, and as I went, my body was lifted up from the earth, and I was aware of that strange sensation of floating above the surface of the ground, which is so common with me in sleep that at times I can scarce persuade myself after waking that it has not been a real experience. When I alighted at the end of the long gallery before the armed woman, she said to me:

"Take off the night-dress thou wearest."

I looked at my attire and was about to answer— "This is not a night-dress," when she added, as though perceiving my thought:—

"The woman's garb is a night-dress; it is a garment made to sleep in.
The man's garb is the dress for the day. Look eastward!"

I raised my eyes and, behind the mail-clad shape, I saw the dawn breaking, blood-red, and with great clouds like pillars of smoke rolling up on either side of the place where the sun was about to rise. But as yet the sun was not visible. And as I looked, she cried aloud, and her voice rang through the air like the clash of steel:—

"Listen!"

And she struck her spear on the marble pavement. At the same moment there came from afar off, a confused sound of battle. Cries, and human voices in conflict, and the stir as of a vast multitude, the distant clang of arms and a noise of the galloping of many horses rushing furiously over the ground. And then, sudden silence.

Again she smote the pavement, and again the sounds arose, nearer now, and more tumultuous. Once more they ceased, and a third time she struck the marble with her spear. Then the noises arose all about and around the very spot where we stood, and the clang of the arms was so close that it shook and thrilled the very columns beside me. And the neighing and snorting of horses, and the thud of their ponderous hoofs flying over the earth made, as it were, a wind in my ears, so that it seemed as though a furious battle were raging all around us. But I could see nothing. Only the sounds increased, and became so violent that they awoke me, and even after waking I still seemed to catch the commotion of them in the air. *

—Paris, February 15, 1883.

———————— * This dream was shortly followed by Mrs Kingsford's antivivisection expedition to Switzerland, the fierce conflict of which amply fulfilled any predictive significance it may have had. ————————-

XIX. The Game of Cards: A Parable

I dreamed I was playing at cards with three persons, the two opposed to me being a man and a woman with hoods pulled over their heads, and

cloaks covering their persons. I did not particularly observe them. My partner was an old man without hood or cloak, and there was about him this peculiarity, that he did not from one minute to another appear to remain the same. Sometimes he looked like a very young man, the features not appearing to change in order to produce this effect, but an aspect of youth and even of mirth coming into the face as though the features were lighted up from within. Behind me stood a personage whom I could not see, for his hand and arm only appeared, handing me a pack of cards. So far as I discerned, it was a man's figure, habited in black. Shortly after the dream began, my partner addressed me, saying,

"Do you play by luck or by skill?"

I answered: "I play by luck chiefly; I don't know how to play by skill. But I have generally been lucky." In fact, I had already, lying by me, several "tricks" I had taken. He answered me:—

"To play by luck is to trust to without; to play by skill is to trust to within. In this game, Within goes further than Without."

"What are trumps?" I asked.

"Diamonds are trumps," he answered.

I looked at the cards in my hand and said to him:—"I have more clubs than anything else."

At this he laughed, and seemed all at once quite a youth. "Clubs are strong cards, after all," he said. "Don't despise the black suits. I have known some of the best games ever played won by players holding more clubs than you have."

I examined the cards and found something very odd about them. There were the four suits, diamonds, hearts, clubs, and spades. But the picture cards in my hand seemed different altogether from any I had ever seen before. One was queen of Clubs, and her face altered as I looked at it. First it was dark,—almost dusky,—with the imperial crown on the head; then it seemed quite fair, the crown changing to a smaller one of English aspect, and the dress also transforming itself. There was a queen of Hearts, too, in an antique peasant's gown, with brown hair, and presently this melted into a suit of armor which shone as if reflecting firelight in its burnished scales. The other cards seemed alive likewise, even the ordinary ones, just like the court-cards. There seemed to be pictures moving inside the emblems on their faces. The clubs in my hand ran into higher figures than the spades; these came next in number, and diamonds next. I had no picture-cards of diamonds, but I had the Ace. And this was so bright I could not look at it. Except the two queens of Clubs and Hearts I think I had no picture-cards in my hand, and very few red cards of any kind. There were high figures in the spades. It was the personage behind my chair who dealt the cards always. I said to my partner:—"It is difficult to play at all, whether by luck or by skill, for I get such a bad hand dealt me each time."

"That is your fault," he said. "Play your best with what you have, and next time you will get better cards."

"How can that be?" I asked.

"Because after each game, the `tricks' you take are added to the bottom of the pack which the dealer holds, and you get the `honors' you have taken up from the table. Play well and take all you can. But you must put more head into it. You trust too much to fortune. Don't blame the dealer; he can't see."

"I shall lose this game," I said presently, for the two persons playing against us seemed to be taking up all the cards quickly, and the "lead" never

came to my turn.

"It is because you don't count your points before putting down a card," my partner said. "If they play high numbers, you must play higher."

"But they have all the trumps," I said.

"No," he answered, "you have the highest trump of all in your own hand. It is the first and the last. You may take every card they have with that, for it is the chief of the whole series. But you have spades too, and high ones." (He seemed to know what I had.)

"Diamonds are better than spades," I answered. "And nearly all my cards are black ones. Besides, I can't count, it wants so much thinking. Can't you come over here and play for me?"

He shook his head, and I thought that again he laughed." No," he replied, "that is against the law of the game. You must play for yourself. Think it out."

He uttered these words very emphatically and with so strange an intonation that they dissipated the rest of the dream, and I remember no more of it. But I did "think it out;" and I found it was a parable; of Karma.

—Atcham, Dec. 7, 1883

XX. The Panic-Struck Pack-Horse

Out of a veil of palpitating mist there arose before me in my sleep the image of a colossal and precipitous cliff; standing sheer up against a sky of cloud and sea-mist, the tops of the granite peaks being merged and hidden in the vapor. At the foot of the precipice beat a wild sea, tossing and flecked with foam; and out of the flying spray rose sharp splinters of granite, standing like spearheads about the base of the solid rock. As I looked, something stirred far off in the distance, like a fly crawling over the smooth crag. Fixing my gaze upon it I became aware that there was at a great height above the sea, midway between sky and water, a narrow unprotected footpath winding up and down irregularly along the side of the mighty cliff; —a slender, sloping path, horrible to look at, like a rope or a thread stretched mid-air, hanging between heaven and the hungry foam. One by one, came towards me along this awful path a procession of horses, drawing tall narrow carts filled with bales of merchandise. The horses moved along the edge of the crag as though they clung to it, their bodies aslant towards the wall of granite on their right, their legs moving with the precision of creatures feeling and grasping every step. Like deer they moved,— not like horses, and as they advanced, the carts they drew swayed behind them, and I thought every jolt would hurl them over the precipice. Fascinated I watched,—I could not choose but watch. At length came a grey horse, not drawing a cart, but carrying something on his back,—on a pack-saddle apparently. Like the rest he came on stealthily, sniffing every inch of the terrible way, until, just at the worst and giddiest point he paused, hesitated, and seemed about to turn.—-I saw him back himself in a crouching attitude against the wall of rock behind him, lowering his haunches, and rearing his head in a strange manner. The idea flashed on me that he would certainly turn, and then—what could happen? More horses were advancing, and two beasts could not possibly pass each other on that narrow ledge! But I was totally unprepared for the ghastly thing that actually did happen. The miserable horse had been seized with the awful mountain-madness that

sometimes overtakes men on stupendous heights,—the madness of suicide. With a frightful scream, that sounded partly like a cry of supreme desperation, partly like one of furious and frenzied joy, the horse reared himself to his full height on the horrible ledge, shook his head wildly, and—leaped with a frantic spring into the air, sheer over the precipice, and into the foam beneath. His eyes glared as he shot into the void, a great dark living mass against the white mist. Was he speared on those terrible shafts of rock below, or was his life dashed out in horrible crimson splashes against the cliffside? Or did he sink into the reeling swirl of the foaming waters, and die more mercifully in their steel-dark depths? I could not see. I saw only the flying form dart through the mist like an arrow from a bow. I heard only the appalling cry, like nothing earthly ever heard before; and I woke in a panic, with hands tightly clasped, and my body damp with moisture. It was but a dream—this awful picture; it was gone as an image from a mirror, and I was awake, and gazing only upon blank darkness.

—Atcham, Sept. 15, 1884

XXI. The Haunted Inn

I seemed in my vision to be on a long and wearisome journey, and to have arrived at an Inn, in which I was offered shelter and rest. The apartment given me consisted of a bedroom and parlour, communicating, and furnished in an antique manner, everything in the rooms appearing to be worm-eaten, dusty and out of date. The walls were bare and dingy; there was not a picture or an ornament in the apartment. An extremely dim light

prevailed in the scene; indeed, I do not clearly remember, whether, with the exception of the fire and a nightlamp, the rooms were illumined at all. I seated myself in a chair, by the hearth; it was late, and I thought only of rest. But, presently, I became aware of strange things going on about me. On a table in a corner lay some papers and a pencil. With a feeling of indescribable horror I saw this pencil assume an erect position and begin of itself to write on the paper, precisely as though an invisible hand held and guided it. At the same time, small detonations sounded in different parts of the room; tiny bright sparks appeared, burst, and immediately expired in smoke. The pencil having ceased to write, laid itself gently down, and taking the paper in my hand I found on it a quantity of writing which at first appeared to me to be in cipher, but I presently perceived that the words composing it were written backwards, from right to left, exactly as one sees writing reflected on a looking glass. What was written made a considerable impression on me at the time, but I cannot now recall it. I know, however, that the dominant feeling I experienced was one of horror.

I called the owners of the inn and related to them what had taken place. They received my statement with perfect equanimity, and told me that in their house this was the normal state of things, of which, in fact, they were extremely proud; and they ended by congratulating me as a visitor much favored by the invisible agencies of the place.

"We call them our Lights," they said.

"It is true," I observed, "that I saw lights in the air about the room, but they went out instantaneously, and left only smoke behind them. And why do they write backwards? Who are They?"

As I asked this last question, the pencil on the table rose again, and wrote thus on the paper:—

".ksatonoD"

Again horror seized on me, and the air becoming full of smoke I found it impossible to breathe. "Let me out!" I cried, "I am stifled here,—the air is full of smoke!"

"Outside," the people of the house answered, "you will lose your way; it is quite dark, and we have no other rooms to let. And, besides, it is the same in all the other apartments of the inn."

"But the place is haunted!" I cried; and I pushed past them, and burst out of the house.

Before the doorway stood a tall veiled figure, like translucent silver. A sense of reverence overcame me. The night was balmy, and bright almost as day with resplendent starlight. The stars seemed to lean out of heaven; they looked down on me like living eyes, full of a strange immeasurable sympathy. I crossed the threshold, and stood in the open plain, breathing with rapture and relief the pure warm air of that delicious night. How restful, calm, and glorious was the dark landscape, outlined in purple against the luminous sky! And what a consciousness of vastness and immensity above and around me! "Where am I?" I cried. The silver figure stood beside me, and lifted its veil. It was Pallas Athena.

"Under the Stars of the East," she answered me, "the true eternal
Lights of the World."

After I was awake, a text in the Gospels was vividly brought to my mind: —"There was no room for then in the Inn." What is this Inn, I wondered, all the rooms of which are haunted, and in which the Christ cannot be born? And this open country under the eastern night,—is it not the same in which they were "abiding," to whom that Birth was first angelically announced?

—Atcham, Nov. 5, 1885

———— ** The solution of the enigma was afterwards recognised in an instruction, also imparted in sleep, in which it was said, "If Occultism were all, and held the key of heaven, there would be no need of Christ." (Ed.)

XXII. An Eastern Apologue

The following was read by me during sleep, in an old book printed in archaic type. As with many other things similarly read by me, I do not know whether it is to be found in any book:—

"After Buddha had been ten years in retirement, certain sages sent their disciples to him, asking him,—'What dost thou claim to be, Gotama?'

"Buddha answered them, 'I claim to be nothing.'

"Ten years afterwards they sent again to him, asking the same question, and again Buddha answered:—'I claim to be nothing.'

"Then after yet another ten years had passed, they sent a third time, asking, 'What dost thou claim to be, Gotama?'

"And Buddha replied, 'I claim to be the utterance of the most high God.'

"Then they said to him: 'How is this, that hitherto thou hast proclaimed thyself to be nothing, and now thou declarest thyself to be the very

utterance of God?'

"Buddha answered: `Either I am nothing, or I am the very utterance of God, for between these two all is silence.'"

—Atcham, March 5, 1885

XXIII. A Haunted House Indeed!

I dreamt that during a tour on the Continent with my friend C. we stayed in a town wherein there was an ancient house of horrible reputation, concerning which we received the following account. At the top of the house was a suite of rooms, from which no one who entered at night ever again emerged. No corpse was ever found; but it was said by some that the victims were absorbed bodily by the walls; by others that there were in the rooms a number of pictures in frames, one frame, however, containing a blank canvas, which had the dreadful power, first, of fascinating the beholder, and next of drawing him towards it, so that he was compelled to approach and gaze at it. Then, by the same hideous enchantment, he was forced to touch it, and the touch was fatal. For the canvas seized him as a devil-fish seizes its prey, and sucked him in, so that he perished without leaving a trace of himself, or of the manner of his death. The legend said further that if any person could succeed in passing a night in these rooms and in resisting their deadly influence, the spell would for ever be broken, and no one would thenceforth be sacrificed.

Hearing all this, and being somewhat of the knight-errant order, C. and I determined to face the danger, and, if possible, deliver the town from the enchantment. We were assured that the attempt would be vain, for that it had already been many times made, and the Devils of the place were always triumphant. They had the power, we were told, of hallucinating the senses of their victims; we should be subjected to some illusion, and be fatally deceived. Nevertheless, we were resolved to try what we could do, and in order to acquaint ourselves with the scene of the ordeal, we visited the place in the daytime. It was a gloomy-looking building, consisting of several vast rooms, filled with lumber of old furniture, worm-eaten and decaying; scaffoldings, which seemed to have been erected for the sake of making repairs and then left; the windows were curtainless, the floors bare, and rats ran hither and thither among the rubbish accumulated in the corners. Nothing could possibly look more desolate and gruesome. We saw no pictures; but as we did not explore every part of the rooms, they may have been there without our seeing them.

We were further informed by the people of the town that in order to visit the rooms at night it was necessary to wear a special costume, and that without it we should have no chance whatever of issuing from them alive. This costume was of black and white, and each of us was to carry a black stave. So we put on this attire,—which somewhat resembled the garb of an ecclesiastical order,—and when the appointed time came, repaired to the haunted house, where, after toiling up the great staircase in the darkness, we reached the door of the haunted apartments to find it closed. But light was plainly visible beneath it, and within was the sound of voices. This greatly surprised us; but after a short conference we knocked. The door was presently opened by a servant, dressed as a modern indoor footman usually is, who civilly asked us to walk in. On entering we found the place altogether different from what we expected to find, and had found on our daylight visit. It was brightly lighted, had decorated walls, pretty

ornaments, carpets, and every kind of modern garnishment, and, in short, bore all the appearance of an ordinary well-appointed private "flat." While we stood in the corridor, astonished, a gentleman in evening dress advanced towards us from one of the reception rooms. As he looked interrogatively at us, we thought it best to explain the intrusion, adding that we presumed we had either entered the wrong house, or stopped at the wrong apartment.

He laughed pleasantly at our tale, and said, "I don't know anything about haunted rooms, and, in fact, don't believe in anything of the kind. As for these rooms, they have for a long time been let for two or three nights every week to our Society for the purpose of social reunion. We are members of a musical and literary association, and are in the habit of holding conversaziones in these rooms on certain evenings, during which we entertain ourselves with dancing, singing, charades, and literary gossip. The rooms are spacious and lofty, and exactly adapted to our requirements. As you are here, I may say, in the name of the rest of the members, that we shall be happy if you will join us." At this I glanced at our dresses in some confusion, which being observed by the gentleman, he hastened to say: "You need be under no anxiety about your appearance, for this is a costume night, and the greater number of our guests are in travesty." As he spoke he threw open the door of a large drawing-room and invited us in. On entering we found a company of men and women, well-dressed, some in ordinary evening attire and some costumed. The room was brilliantly lighted and beautifully furnished and decorated. At one end was a grand piano, round which several persons were grouped; others were seated on ottomans taking tea or coffee; and others strolled about, talking. Our host, who appeared to be master of the ceremonies, introduced us to several persons, and we soon became deeply interested in a conversation on literary subjects. So the evening wore on pleasantly, but I never ceased to wonder how we could have mistaken the house or the staircase after the precaution we had taken of visiting it in the daytime in order to avoid the possibility of error.

Presently, being tired of conversation, I wandered away from the group with which C. was still engaged, to look at the beautiful decorations of the great salon, the walls of which were covered with artistic designs in fresco. Between each couple of panels, the whole length of the salon, was a beautiful painting, representing a landscape or a sea-piece. I passed from one to the other, admiring each, till I had reached the extreme end, and was far away from the rest of the company, where the lights were not so many or so bright as in the centre. The last fresco in the series then caught my attention. At first it appeared to me to be unfinished; and then I observed that there was upon its background no picture at all, but only a background of merging tints which seemed to change, and to be now sky, now sea, now green grass. This empty picture had, moreover, an odd metallic coloring which fascinated me; and saying to myself "Is there really any painting on it?" I mechanically put out my hand and touched it. On this I was instantly seized by a frightful sensation, a shock that ran from the tips of my fingers to my brain, and steeped my whole being. Simultaneously I was aware of an overwhelming sense of sucking and dragging, which, from my hand and arm, and, as it were, through them, seemed to possess and envelop my whole person. Face, hair, eyes, bosom, limbs, every portion of my body was locked in an awful embrace which, like the vortex of a whirlpool, drew me irresistibly towards the picture. I felt the hideous impulse clinging over me and sucking me forwards into the wall. I strove in vain to resist it. My efforts were more futile than the flutter of gossamer wings. And then there rushed upon my mind the consciousness that all we had been told about the haunted rooms was true; that a strong delusion had been cast over us; that all this brilliant throng of modern ladies and gentlemen were fiends masquerading, prepared beforehand for our coming; that all the beauty and splendor of our surroundings were mere glamor; and that in reality the rooms were those we had seen in the daytime, filled with lumber and rot and vermin. As I realised all this, and was thrilled with the certainty of it, a

sudden access of strength came to me, and I was impelled, as a last desperate effort, to turn my back on the awful fresco, and at least to save my face from coming into contact with it and being glued to its surface. With a shriek of anguish I wrenched myself round and fell prostrate on the ground, face downwards, with my back to the wall, feeling as though the flesh had been torn from my hand and arm. Whether I was saved or not I knew not. My whole being was over-powered by the realisation of the deception to which I had succumbed. I had looked for something so different,—darkness, vacant, deserted rooms, and perhaps a tall, white, empty canvas in a frame, against which I should have been on my guard. Who could have anticipated or suspected this cheerful welcome, these entertaining literati, these innocent-looking frescoes? Who could have foreseen so deadly a horror in such a guise? Was I doomed? Should I, too, be sucked in and absorbed, and perhaps C. after me, knowing nothing of my fate? I had no voice; I could not warn him; all my force seemed to have been spent on the single shriek I had uttered as I turned my back on the wall. I lay prone upon the floor, and knew that I had swooned.

And thus, on seeking me, C. would doubtless have found me, lying insensible among the rubbish, with the rooms restored to the condition in which we had seen them by day, my success in withdrawing myself having dissolved the spell and destroyed the enchantment. But as it was, I awoke from my swoon only to find that I had been dreaming.

XXIV. The Square in the Hand

The foregoing dream was almost immediately succeeded by another, in which I dreamt that I was concerned in a very prominent way in a political struggle in France for liberty and the people's rights. My part in this struggle was, indeed, the leading one, but my friend C. had been drawn into it at my instance, and was implicated in a secondary manner only. The government sought our arrest, and, for a time, we evaded all attempts to take us, but at last we were surprised and driven under escort in a private carriage to a military station, where we were to be detained for examination. With us was arrested a man popularly known as "Fou," a poor weakling whom I much pitied. When we arrived at the station which was our destination, "Fou" gave some trouble to the officials. I think he fainted, but at all events his conveyance from the carriage to the caserne needed the conjoined efforts of our escort, and some commotion was caused by his appearance among the crowd assembled to see us. Clearly the crowd was sympathetic with us and hostile to the military. I particularly noticed one woman who pressed forward as "Fou" was being carried into the station, and who loudly called on all present to note his feeble condition and the barbarity of arresting a witless creature such as he. At that moment C. laid his hand on my arm and whispered: "Now is our time; the guards are all occupied with 'Fou;' we are left alone for a minute; let us jump out of the carriage and run!" As he said this he opened the carriage door on the side opposite to the caserne and alighted in the street. I instantly followed, and the people favoring us, we pressed through them and fled at the top of our speed down the road. As we ran I espied a pathway winding up a hillside away from the town, and cried, "Let us go up there; let us get away from the street!" C. answered, "No, no; they would see us there immediately at that height, the path is too conspicuous. Our best safety is to lose ourselves in the town. We may throw them off our track by winding in and out of the streets." Just then a little child, playing in the road, got in our way, and nearly threw us down as we ran. We had to pause a moment to recover

ourselves. "That child may have cost us our lives," whispered C., breathlessly. A second afterwards we reached the bottom of the street which branched off right and left. I hesitated a moment; then we both turned to the right. As we did so— in the twinkling of an eye—we found ourselves in the midst of a group of soldiers coming round the corner. I ran straight into the arms of one of them, who the same instant knew me and seized me by throat and waist with a grip of iron. This was a horrible moment! The iron grasp was sudden and solid as the grip of a vice; the man's arm held my waist like a bar of steel. "I arrest you!" he cried, and the soldiers immediately closed round us. At once I realised the hopelessness of the situation,—the utter futility of resistance. "Vous n'avez pas besoin de me tenir ainsi," I said to the officer; "j irai tranquillement" He loosened his hold and we were then marched off to another military station, in a different part of the town from that whence we had escaped. The man who had arrested me was a sergeant or some officer in petty command. He took me alone with him into the guardroom, and placed before me on a wooden table some papers which he told me to fill in and sign. Then he sat down opposite to me and I looked through the papers. They were forms, with blanks left for descriptions specifying the name, occupation, age, address and so forth of arrested persons. I signed these, and pushing them across the table to the man, asked him what was to be done with us. "You will be shot," he replied, quickly and decisively. "Both of us?" I asked. "Both," he replied. "But," said I, "my companion has done nothing to deserve death. He was drawn into this struggle entirely by me. Consider, too, his advanced age. His hair is white; he stoops, and, had it not been for the difficulty with which he moves his limbs, both of us would probably be at this moment in a place of safety. What can you gain by shooting an old man such as he?" The officer was silent. He neither favored nor discouraged me by his manner. While I sat awaiting his reply, I glanced at the hand with which I had just signed the papers, and a sudden idea flashed into my mind. "At least," I said, "grant

me one request. If my companion must die, let me die first." Now I made this request for the following reason. In my right hand, the line of life broke abruptly halfway in its length, indicating a sudden and violent death. But the point at which it broke was terminated by a perfectly marked square, extraordinarily clear-cut and distinct. Such a square, occurring at the end of a broken line means rescue, salvation. I had long been aware of this strange figuration in my hand, and had often wondered what it presaged. But now, as once more I looked at it, it came upon me with sudden conviction that in some way I was destined to be delivered from death at the last moment, and I thought that if this be so it would be horrible should C. have been killed first. If I were to be saved I should certainly save him also, for my pardon would involve the pardon of both, or my rescue the rescue of both. Therefore it was important to provide for his safety until after my fate was decided. The officer seemed to take this last request into more serious consideration than the first. He said shortly: "I may be able to manage that for you," and then at once rose and took up the papers I had signed. "When are we to be shot?" I asked him. "Tomorrow morning," he replied, as promptly as before. Then he went out, turning the key of the guardroom upon me.

The dawn of the next day broke darkly. It was a terribly stormy day; great black lurid thunderclouds lay piled along the horizon, and came up slowly and awfully against the wind. I looked upon them with terror; they seemed so near the earth, and so like living, watching things. They hung out of the sky, extending long ghostly arms downwards, and their gloom and density seemed supernatural. The soldiers took us out, our hands bound behind us, into a quadrangle at the back of their barracks. The scene is sharply impressed on my mind. A palisade of two sides of a square, made of wooden planks, ran round the quadrangle. Behind this palisade, and pressed up close against it, was a mob of men and women—the people of the town

—come to see the execution. But their faces were sympathetic; an unmistakable look of mingled grief and rage, not unmixed with desperation —for they were a down-trodden folk—shone in the hundreds of eyes turned towards us. I was the only woman among the condemned. C. was there, and poor "Fou," looking bewildered, and one or two other prisoners. On the third and fourth sides of the quadrangle was a high wall, and in a certain place was a niche partly enclosing the trunk of a tree, cut off at the top. An iron ring was driven into the trunk midway, evidently for the purpose of securing condemned persons for execution. I guessed it would be used for that now. In the centre of the square piece of ground stood a file of soldiers, armed with carbines, and an officer with a drawn sabre. The palisade was guarded by a row of soldiers somewhat sparsely distributed, ertainly not more than a dozen in all. A Catholic priest in a black cassock walked beside me, and as we were conducted into the enclosure, he turned to me and offered religious consolation. I declined his ministrations, but asked him anxiously if he knew which of us was to die first. "You," he replied; "the officer in charge of you said you wished it, and he has been able to accede to your request." Even then I felt a singular joy at hearing this, though I had no longer any expectation of release. Death was, I thought, far too near at hand for that. Just then a soldier approached us, and led me, bare-headed, to the tree trunk, where he placed me with my back against it, and made fast my hands behind me with a rope to the iron ring. No bandage was put over my eyes. I stood thus, facing the file of soldiers in the middle of the quadrangle, and noticed that the officer with the drawn sabre placed himself at the extremity of the line, composed of six men. In that supreme moment I also noticed that their uniform was bright with steel accoutrements. Their helmets were of steel, and their carbines, as they raised them and pointed them at me, ready cocked, glittered in a fitful gleam of sunlight with the same burnished metal. There was an instant's stillness and hush while the men took aim; then I saw the officer raise his bared sabre as the signal to

fire. It flashed in the air; then, with a suddenness impossible to convey, the whole quadrangle blazed with an awful light,—a light so vivid, so intense, so blinding, so indescribable that everything was blotted out and devoured by it. It crossed my brain with instantaneous conviction that this amazing glare was the physical effect of being shot, and that the bullets had pierced my brain or heart, and caused this frightful sense of all-pervading flame. Vaguely I remembered having read or having been told that such was the result produced on the nervous system of a victim to death from firearms. "It is over," I said, "that was the bullets." But presently there forced itself on my dazed senses a sound—a confusion of sounds—darkness succeeding the white flash—then steadying itself into gloomy daylight; a tumult; a heap of stricken, tumbled men lying stone-still before me; a fearful horror upon every living face; and then . . . it all burst on me with distinct conviction. The storm which had been gathering all the morning had culminated in its blackest and most electric point immediately overhead. The file of soldiers appointed to shoot us stood exactly under it. Sparkling with bright steel on head and breast and carbines, they stood shoulder to shoulder, a complete lightning conductor, and at the end of the chain they formed, their officer, at the critical moment, raised his shining, naked blade towards the sky. Instantaneously heaven opened, and the lightning fell, attracted by the burnished steel. From blade to carbine, from helmet to breastplate it ran, smiting every man dead as he stood.

They fell like a row of ninepins, blackened in face and hand in an instant, —in the twinkling of an eye. Dead. The electric flame licked the life out of seven men in that second; not one moved a muscle or a finger again. Then followed a wild scene. The crowd, stupefied for a minute by the thunderbolt and the horror of the devastation it had wrought, presently recovered sense, and with a mighty shout hurled itself against the palisade, burst it, leapt over it and swarmed into the quadrangle, easily overpowering the unnerved guards. I was surrounded; eager hands unbound mine; arms were thrown

about me; the people roared, and wept, and triumphed, and fell about me on their knees praising Heaven. I think rain fell, my face was wet with drops, and my hair,—but I knew no more, for I swooned and lay unconscious in the arms of the crowd. My rescue had indeed come, and from the very Heavens!

—Rome, April 12, 1887

Dream-Verses

"Through the Ages"

Wake, thou that sleepest! Soul, awake!
Thy light is come, arise and shine!
For darkness melts, and dawn divine
Doth from the holy Orient break;

Swift-darting down the shadowy ways
And misty deeps of unborn Time,
God's Light, God's Day, whose perfect prime
Is as the light of seven days.

Wake, prophet-soul, the time draws near,
"The God who knows" within thee stirs
And speaks, for His thou art, and Hers
Who bears the mystic shield and spear.

The hidden secrets of their shrine
Where thou, initiate, didst adore,
Their quickening finger shall restore
And make its glories newly thine.

A touch divine shall thrill thy brain,
Thy soul shall leap to life, and lo!
What she has known, again shall know;
What she has seen, shall see again;

The ancient Past through which she came,—
A cloud across a sunset sky,—
A cactus flower of scarlet dye,—
A bird with throat and wings of flame;—

A red wild roe, whose mountain bed
Nor ever hound or hunter knew,
Whose flying footprint dashed the dew
In nameless forests, long since dead.

And ever thus in ceaseless roll
The wheels of Destiny and Time
Through changing form and age and clime
Bear onward the undying Soul:

Till now a Sense, confused and dim,
Dawns in a shape of nobler mould,
Less beast, scarce human; uncontrolled,
With free fierce life in every limb;

A savage youth, in painted gear,
Foot fleeter than the summer wind;

Scant speech for scanty needs designed,
Content with sweetheart, spoil and spear

And, passing thence, with burning breath,
A fiery Soul that knows no fear,
The armed hosts of Odin hear
Her voice amid the ranks of death;

There, where the sounds of war are shrill,
And clarion shrieks, and battle roars,
Once more set free, she leaps and soars
A Soul of flame, aspiring still!

Till last, in fairer shape she stands
Where lotus-scented waters glide,
A Theban Priestess, dusky-eyed,
Barefooted on the golden sands;

Or, prostrate, in the Temple-halls,
When Spirits wake, and mortals sleep,
She hears what mighty Voices sweep
Like winds along the columned walls.

A Princess then beneath the palms
Which wave o'er Afric's burning plains,
The blood of Afric in thy veins,
A golden circlet on thine arms.

By sacred Ganges' sultry tide,
With dreamy gaze and clasped hands
Thou walkst a Seeress in the lands
Where holy Buddha lived and died.

Anon, a sea-bleached mountain cave
Makes shelter for thee, grave and wan,
Thou solemn, solitary Man,
Who, nightly, by the star-lit wave

Invokest with illumined eyes
The steadfast Lords who rule and wait
Beyond the heavens and Time and fate,
Until the perfect Dawn shall rise,

And oracles, through ages dumb,
Shall wake, and holy forms shall shine
On mountain peaks in light divine,
When mortals bid God's kingdom come

So turns the wheel of thy [keen] soul;
From birth to birth her ruling stars,
Swift Mercury and fiery Mars,
In ever changing orbits roll!

—Paris, May, 1880

Fragment

A jarring note, a chord amiss—
The music's sweeter after,
Like wrangling ended with a kiss,
Or tears, with silver laughter.

The high gods have no joys like these,
So sweet in human story;
No tempest rends their tranquil seas
Beyond the sunset glory.

The whirling wheels of Time and Fate

Fragment*

I thank Thee, Lord, who hast through devious ways
Led me to know Thy Praise,
And to this Wildernesse
Hast brought me out, Thine Israel to blesse.

If I should faint with Thirst, or weary, sink,
To these my Soule is Drink,
To these the Majick Rod
Is Life, and mine is hid with Christ in God.

———— * These are not properly dream-verses, having been suddenly presented to the waking vision one day in Paris while gazing at the bright sky. (Ed.)

Signs of the Times

Eyes of the dawning in heaven?
Sparks from the opening of hell?
Gleams from the altar-lamps seven?
Can you tell?

Is it the glare of a fire?
Is it the breaking of day?
Birth lights, or funeral pyre?
Who shall say?

—April 19, 1886.

With the Gods

Sweet lengths of shore with sea between,
Sweet gleams of tender blue and green,
Sweet wind caressive and unseen,
Soft breathing from the deep;

What joy have I in all sweet things;
How clear and bright my spirit sings;
Rising aloft on mystic wings;
While sense and body sleep.

In some such dream of grace and light,
My soul shall pass into the sight
Of the dear Gods who in the height
Of inward being dwell;

And joyful at Her perfect feet
Whom most of all I long to greet,
My soul shall lie in meadow sweet
All white with asphodel.

—August 31, 1887.

Part II. Dream-Stories

I. A Village of Seers—
A Christmas Story

A day or two before Christmas, a few years since, I found myself compelled by business to leave England for the Continent.

I am an American, junior partner in a London mercantile house having a large Swiss connection; and a transaction—needless to specify her—required immediate and personal supervision abroad, at a season of the year when I would gladly have kept festival in London with my friends. But my journey was destined to bring me an adventure of a very remarkable character, which made me full amends for the loss of Christmas cheer at home.

I crossed the Channel at night from Dover to Calais. The passage was bleak and snowy, and the passengers were very few. On board the steamboat I remarked one traveler whose appearance and manner struck me

as altogether unusual and interesting, and I deemed it by no means a disagreeable circumstance that, on arriving at Calais, this man entered the compartment of the railway carriage in which I had already seated myself.

So far as the dim light permitted me a glimpse of the stranger's face, I judged him to be about fifty years of age. The features were delicate and refined in type, the eyes dark and deep-sunken, but full of intelligence and thought, and the whole aspect of the man denoted good birth, a nature given to study and meditation, and a life of much sorrowful experience.

Two other travelers occupied our carriage until Amiens was reached. They then left us, and the interesting stranger and I remained alone together.

"A bitter night," I said to him, as I drew up the window, "and the worst of it is yet to come! The early hours of dawn are always the coldest."

"I suppose so," he answered in a grave voice.

The voice impressed me as strongly as the face; it was subdued and restrained, the voice of a man undergoing great mental suffering.

"You will find Paris bleak at this season of the year," I continued, longing to make him talk. "It was colder there last winter than in London."

"I do not stay in Paris," he replied, "save to breakfast."

"Indeed; that is my case. I am going on to Bale."

"And I also," he said, "and further yet."

Then he turned his face to the window, and would say no more. My speculations regarding him multiplied with his taciturnity. I felt convinced that he was a man with a romance, and a desire to know its nature became

strong in me. We breakfasted apart at Paris, but I watched him into his compartment for Bale, and sprang in after him. During the first part of our journey we slept; but, as we neared the Swiss frontier, a spirit of wakefulness took hold of us, and fitful sentences were exchanged. My companion, it appeared, intended to rest but a single day at Bale. He was bound for far-away Alpine regions, ordinarily visited by tourists during the summer months only, and, one would think, impassable at this season of the year.

"And you go alone?" I asked him. "You will have no companions to join you?"

"I shall have guides," he answered, and relapsed into meditative silence.

Presently I ventured another question: "You go on business, perhaps—not on pleasure?"

He turned his melancholy eyes on mine. "Do I look as if I were traveling for pleasure's sake?" he asked gently.

I felt rebuked, and hastened to apologise. "Pardon me; I ought not to have said that. But you interest me greatly, and I wish, if possible, to be of service to you. If you are going into Alpine districts on business and alone, at this time of the year—"

There I hesitated and paused. How could I tell him that he interested me so much as to make me long to know the romance which, I felt convinced, attached to his expedition? Perhaps he perceived what was in my mind, for he questioned me in his turn. "And you—have you business in Bale?"

"Yes, and in other places. My accent may have told you my nationality. I travel in the interests of the American firm, Fletcher Bros., Roy, & Co.,

whose London house, no doubt, you know. But I need remain only twenty-four hours in Bale. Afterwards I go to Berne, then to Geneva. I must, however, wait for letters from England after doing my business at Bale, and I shall have some days free."

"How many?"

"From the 21st to the 26th."

He was silent for a minute, meditating. Then he took from his traveling-bag a porte-feuille, and from the porte-feuille a visiting- card, which he handed to me.

"That is my name," he said briefly.

I took the hint, and returned the compliment in kind. On his card I read:

MR CHARLES DENIS ST AUBYN,
Grosvenor Square, London. St Aubyn's Court, Shrewsbury.

And mine bore the legend:

MR FRANK ROY,
Merchants' Club, W. C.

"Now that we are no longer unknown to each other," said I, "may I ask, without committing an indiscretion, if I can use the free time at my disposal in your interests?"

"You are very good, Mr Roy. It is the characteristic of your nation to be kind-hearted and readily interested in strangers." Was this sarcastic? I wondered. Perhaps; but he said it quite courteously. "I am a solitary and

unfortunate man. Before I accept your kindness, will you permit me to tell you the nature of the journey I am making? It is a strange one."

He spoke huskily, and with evident effort. I assented eagerly.

The following, recounted in broken sentences, and with many abrupt pauses, is the story to which I listened:

Mr St Aubyn was a widower. His only child, a boy twelve years of age, had been for a year past afflicted with loss of speech and hearing, the result of a severe typhoid fever, from which he barely escaped with life. Last summer, his father, following medical advice, brought him to Switzerland, in the hope that Alpine air, change of scene, exercise, and the pleasure of the trip, would restore him to his normal condition. One day father and son, led by a guide, were ascending a mountain pathway, not ordinarily regarded as dangerous, when the boy, stepping aside to view the snowy ranges above and around, slipped on a treacherous fragment of half-detached rock, and went sliding into the ravine beneath. The height of the fall was by no means great, and the level ground on which the boy would necessarily alight was overgrown with soft herbage and long grass, so that neither the father nor the guide at first conceived any serious apprehensions for the safety of the boy's life or limbs. He might be bruised, perhaps even a few cuts or a sprained wrist might disable him for a few days, but they feared nothing worse than these. As quickly as the slippery ground would permit, they descended the winding path leading to the meadow, but when they reached it, the boy was nowhere to be seen. Hours passed in vain and anxious quest; no track, no sound, no clue assisted the seekers, and the shouts of the guide, if they reached, as doubtless they did, the spot where the lost boy lay, fell on ears as dull and deadened as those of a corpse. Nor could the boy, if crippled by his fall, and unable to show himself, give evidence of his whereabouts by so much as a single cry. Both tongue and ears were sealed

by infirmity, and any low sound such as that he might have been able to utter would have been rendered inaudible by the torrent rushing through the ravine hard by. At nightfall the search was suspended, to be renewed before daybreak with fresh assistance from the nearest village. Some of the new-comers spoke of a cave on the slope of the meadow, into which the boy might have crept. This was easily reached. It was apparently of but small extent; a few goats reposed in it, but no trace of the child was discoverable. After some days spent in futile endeavour, all hope was abandoned. The father returned to England to mourn his lost boy, and another disaster was added to the annual list of casualties in the Alps.

So far the story was sad enough, but hardly romantic. I clasped the hand of the narrator, and assured him warmly of my sympathy, adding, with as little appearance of curiosity as I could command:—

"And your object in coming back is only, then, to—to—be near the scene of your great trouble?"

"No, Mr Roy; that is not the motive of my journey. I do not believe either that my boy's corpse lies concealed among the grasses of the plateau, or that it was swept away, as has been suggested, by the mountain cataract. Neither hypothesis seems to me tenable. The bed of the stream was followed and searched for miles; and though, when he fell, he was carrying over his shoulder a flask and a thick fur-lined cloak,—for we expected cold on the heights, and went provided against it,—-not a fragment of anything belonging to him was found. Had he fallen into the torrent, it is impossible his clothing should not have become detached from the body and caught by the innumerable rocks in the shallow parts of the stream. But that is not all. I have another reason for the belief I cherish." He leaned forward, and added in firmer and slower tones: "I am convinced that my boy still lives, for—I have seen him."

"You have seen him!" I cried.

"Yes; again and again—in dreams. And always in the same way, and with the same look. He stands before me, beckoning to me, and making signs that I should come and help him. Not once or twice only, but many times, night after night I have seen the same thing!"

Poor father! Poor desolate man! Not the first driven distraught by grief; not the first deluded by the shadows of love and longing!

"You think I am deceived by hallucinations," he said, watching my face." It is you who are misled by the scientific idiots of the day, the wiseacres who teach us to believe, whenever soul speaks to soul, that the highest and holiest communion attainable by man is the product of physical disease! Forgive me the energy of my words; but had you loved and lost your beloved—-wife and child—as I have done, you would comprehend the contempt and anger with which I regard those modern teachers whose cold and ghastly doctrines give the lie, not only to all human hopes and aspirations towards the higher life, but also to the possibility of that very progress from lower to nobler forms which is the basis of their own philosophy, and to the conception of which the idea of the soul and of love are essential! Evolution presupposes possible perfecting, and the conscious adaptation of means to ends in order to attain it. And both the ideal itself and the endeavour to reach it are incomprehensible without desire, which is love, and whose seat is in the interior self, the living soul—the maker of the outward form!"

He was roused from his melancholy now, and spoke connectedly and with enthusiasm. I was about to reassure him in regard to my own philosophical convictions, the soundness of which he seemed to question, when his voice sank again, and he added earnestly:—

"I tell you I have seen my boy, and that I know he lives,—not in any far-off sphere beyond the grave, but here on earth, among living men! Twice since his loss I have returned from England to seek him, in obedience to the vision, but in vain, and I have gone back home to dream the same dream. But—only last week—I heard a wonderful story. It was told me by a friend who is a great traveler, and who has but just returned from a lengthened tour in the south. I met him at my club, `by accident,' as unthinking persons say. He told me that there exists, buried away out of common sight and knowledge, in the bosom of the Swiss Alps, a little village whose inhabitants possess, in varying degrees, a marvellous and priceless faculty. Almost all the dwellers in this village are mutually related, either bearing the same ancestral name, or being branches from one original stock. The founder of this community was a blind man, who, by some unexplained good fortune, acquired or became endowed with the psychic faculty called 'second sight,' or clairvoyance. This faculty, it appears, is now the hereditary property of the whole village, more developed in the blind man's immediate heirs than in his remoter relatives; but, strange to say, it is a faculty which, for a reason connected with the history of its acquirement, they enjoy only once a year, and that is on Christmas Eve. I know well," continued Mr. St. Aubyn, "all you have it in your mind to say. Doubtless, you would hint to me that the narrator of the tale was amusing himself with my credulity; or that these Alpine villagers, if they exist, are not clairvoyants, but charlatans trading on the folly of the curious, or even that the whole story is a chimera of my own dreaming brain. I am willing that, if it please you, you should accept any of these hypotheses. As for me, in my sorrow and despair, I am resolved to leave no means untried to recover my boy; and it happens that the village in question is not far from the scene of the disaster which deprived me of him. A strange hope—a confidence even—grows in my heart as I approach the end of my journey. I believe I am about to verify the

truth of my friend's story, and that, through the wonderful faculty possessed by these Alpine peasants, the promise of my visions will be realised."

His voice broke again, he ceased speaking, and turned his face away from me. I was greatly moved, and anxious to impress him with a belief in the sincerity of my sympathy, and in my readiness to accept the truth of the tale he had repeated.

"Do not think," I said with some warmth, "that I am disposed to make light of what you tell me, strange though it sounds. Out in the West, where I come from, I heard, when a boy, many a story at least as curious as yours. In our wild country, odd things chance at times, and queer circumstances, they say, happen in out of the way tracks in forest and prairie; aye, and there are strange creatures that haunt the bush, some tell, in places where no human foot is wont to tread. So that nothing of this sort comes upon me with an air of newness, at least! I mayn't quite trust it, as you do, but I am no scoffer. Look, now, Mr. St. Aubyn, I have a proposal to make. You are alone, and purpose undertaking a bitter and, it may be, a perilous journey in mountain ground at this season. What say you to taking me along with you? May be, I shall prove of some use; and at any rate, your adventure and your story interest me greatly!"

I was quite tremulous with apprehension lest he should refuse my request, but he did not. He looked earnestly and even fixedly at me for a minute, then silently held out his hand and grasped mine with energy. It was a sealed compact. After that we considered ourselves comrades, and continued our journey together.

Our day's rest at Bale being over, and the business which concerned me there transacted, we followed the route indicated by Mr. St. Aubyn, and on the evening of the 22nd of December arrived at a little hill station, where we found a guide who promised to conduct us the next morning to the

village we sought. Sunrise found us on our way, and a tramp of several weary hours, with occasional breaks for rest and refreshment, brought us at last to the desired spot.

It was a quaint, picturesque little hamlet, embosomed in a mountain recess, a sheltered oasis in the midst of a wind-swept, snow-covered region. The usual Swiss trade of wood-carving appeared to be the principal occupation of the community. The single narrow street was thronged with goats, whose jingling many-toned bells made an incessant and agreeable symphony. Under the projecting roofs of the log-built chalets bundles of dried herbs swung in the frosty air; stacks of fir-wood, handy for use, were piled about the doorways, and here and there we noticed a huge dog of the St Bernard breed, with solemn face, and massive paws that left tracks like a lion's in the fresh-fallen snow. A rosy afternoon-radiance glorified the surrounding mountains and warmed the aspect of the little village as we entered it. It was not more than three o'clock, yet already the sun drew near the hilltops, and in a short space he would sink behind them and leave the valleys immersed in twilight. Inn or hostelry proper there was none in this out of the world recess, but the peasants were right willing to entertain us, and the owner of the largest chalet in the place speedily made ready the necessary board and lodging. Supper—of goat's milk cheese, coarse bread, honey, and drink purporting to be coffee—being concluded, the villagers began to drop in by twos and threes to have a look at us; and presently, at the invitation of our host, we all drew our stools around the pinewood fire, and partook of a strange beverage served hot with sugar and toast, tasting not unlike elderberry wine. Meanwhile my English friend, more conversant than myself with the curiously mingled French and German patois of the district, plunged into the narration of his trouble, and ended with a frank and pathetic appeal to those present, that if there were any truth in the tale he had heard regarding the annual clairvoyance of the villagers, they would consent to use their powers in his service.

Probably they had never been so appealed to before. When my friend had finished speaking, silence, broken only by a few half-audible whispers, fell on the group. I began to fear that, after all, he had been either misinformed or misunderstood, and was preparing to help him out with an explanation to the best of my ability, when a man sitting in the chimney-corner rose and said that, if we pleased, he would fetch the grandsons of the original seer, who would give us the fullest information possible on the subject of our inquiry. This announcement was encouraging, and we assented with joy. He left the chalet, and shortly afterwards returned with two stalwart and intelligent-looking men of about thirty and thirty-five respectively, accompanied by a couple of St Bernards, the most magnificent dogs I had ever seen. I was reassured instantly, for the faces of these two peasants were certainly not those of rogues or fools. They advanced to the centre of the assembly, now numbering some twenty persons, men and women, and were duly introduced to us by our host as Theodor and Augustin Raoul. A wooden bench by the hearth was accorded them, the great dogs couched at their feet, pipes were lit here and there among the circle; and the scene, embellished by the ruddy glow of the flaming pine-logs, the unfamiliar costume of the peasantry, the quaint furniture of the chalet-kitchen in which we sat, and enhanced by the strange circumstances of our journey and the yet stranger story now recounted by the two Raouls, became to my mind every moment more romantic and unworld-like. But the intent and strained expression of St. Aubyn's features as he bent eagerly forward, hanging as if for life or death on the words which the brothers poured forth, reminded me that, in one respect at least, the spectacle before me presented a painful reality, and that for this desolate and lonely man every word of the Christmas tale told that evening was pregnant with import of the deepest and most serious kind. Here, in English guise, is the legend of the Alpine seer, recounted with much gesticulation and rugged dramatic force by his grandsons, the younger occasionally interpolating details which the elder

forgot, confirming the data, and echoing with a sonorous interjection the exclamations of the listeners.

Augustin Franz Raoul, the grandfather of the men who addressed us, originally differed in no respect, save that of blindness, from ordinary people. One Christmas Eve, as the day drew towards twilight, and a driving storm of frozen snow raged over the mountains, he, his dog Hans, and his mule were fighting their way home up the pass in the teeth of the tempest. At a turn of the road they came on a priest carrying the Viaticum to a dying man who inhabited a solitary but in the valley below. The priest was on foot, almost spent with fatigue, and bewildered by the blinding snow which obscured the pathway and grew every moment more impenetrable and harder to face. The whirling flakes circled and danced before his sight, the winding path was well-nigh obliterated, his brain grew dizzy and his feet unsteady, and he felt that without assistance he should never reach his destination in safety. Blind Raoul, though himself tired, and longing for shelter, listened with sympathy to the priest's complaint, and answered, "Father, you know well I am hardly a pious son of the Church; but if the penitent dying down yonder needs spiritual consolation from her, Heaven forbid that I should not do my utmost to help you to him! Sightless though I am, I know my way over these crags as no other man knows it, and the snowstorm which bewilders your eyes so much cannot daze mine. Come, mount my mule, Hans will go with us, and we three will take you to your journey's end safe and sound."

"Son," answered the priest, "God will reward you for this act of charity. The penitent to whom I go bears an evil reputation as a sorcerer, and we all know his name well enough in these parts. He may have some crime on his conscience which he desires to confess before death. But for your timely help I should not be able to fight my way through this tempest to his door, and he would certainly perish unshriven."

The fury of the storm increased as darkness came on. Dense clouds of snow obscured the whole landscape, and rendered sky and mountain alike indistinguishable. Terror seized the priest; but for the blind man, to whose sight day and night were indifferent, these horrors had no great danger. He and his dumb friends plodded quietly and slowly on in the accustomed path, and at length, close upon midnight, the valley was safely reached, and the priest ushered into the presence of his penitent. What the dying sorcerer's confession was the blind man never knew; but after it was over, and the Sacred Host had passed his lips, Raoul was summoned to his bedside, where a strange and solemn voice greeted him by name and thanked him for the service he had rendered.

"Friend," said the dying man, "you will never know how great a debt I owe you. But before I pass out of the world, I would fain do somewhat towards repayment. Sorcerer though I am by repute, I cannot give you that which, were it possible, I would give with all my heart,—the blessing of physical sight. But may God hear the last earthly prayer of a dying penitent, and grant you a better gift and a rarer one than even that of the sight of your outward eyes, by opening those of your spirit! And may the faculty of that interior vision be continued to you and yours so long as ye use it in deeds of mercy and human kindness such as this!"

The speaker laid his hand a, moment on the blind man's forehead, and his lips moved silently awhile, though Raoul saw it not. The priest and he remained to the last with the penitent; and when the grey Christmas morning broke over the whitened plain they left the little but in which the corpse lay, to apprise the dwellers in the valley hamlet of the death of the wizard, and to arrange for his burial. And ever, since that Christmas Eve, said the two Raouls, their grandfather found himself when the sacred time came round again, year after year, possessed of a new and extraordinary power, that of seeing with the inward senses of the spirit whatever he

desired to see, and this as plainly and distinctly, miles distant, as at his own threshold. The power of interior vision came upon him in sleep or in trance, precisely as with the prophets and sybils of old, and in this condition, sometimes momentary only, whole scenes were flashed before him, the faces of friends leagues away became visible, and he seemed to touch their hands. At these times nothing was hidden from him; it was necessary only that he should desire fervently to see any particular person or place, and that the intent of the wish should be innocent, and he became straightway clairvoyant. To the blind man, deprived in early childhood of physical sight, this miraculous power was an inestimable consolation, and Christmas Eve became to him a festival of illumination whose annual reminiscences and anticipations brightened the whole round of the year. And when at length he died, the faculty remained a family heritage, of which all his descendants partook in some degree, his two grandsons, as his nearest kin, possessing the gift in its completest development. And—most strange of all—the two hounds which lay couched before us by the hearth, appeared to enjoy a share of the sorcerer's benison! These dogs, Fritz and Bruno, directly descended from Hans, had often displayed strong evidence of lucidity, and under its influence they had been known to act with acumen and sagacity wholly beyond the reach of ordinary dogs. Their immediate sire, Gluck, was the property of a community of monks living fourteen miles distant in the Arblen valley; and though the Raouls were not aware that he had yet distinguished himself by any remarkable exploit of a clairvoyant character, he was commonly credited with a goodly share of the family gift.

"And the mule?" I asked thoughtlessly.

"The mule, monsieur," replied the younger Raoul, with a smile, " has been dead many long years. Naturally he left no posterity."

Thus ended the tale, and for a brief space all remained silent, while many glances stole furtively towards St. Aubyn. He sat motionless, with bowed head and folded arms, absorbed in thought.

One by one the members of the group around us rose, knocked the ashes from their pipes, and with a few brief words quitted the chalet. In a few minutes there remained only our host, the two Raouls, with their dogs, my friend, and myself. Then St. Aubyn found his voice. He too rose, and in slow tremulous tones, addressing Theodor, asked,—

"You will have everything prepared for an expedition tomorrow, in case —you should have anything to tell us?"

"All shall be in readiness, monsieur. Pierre (the host) will wake you by sunrise, for with the dawn of Christmas Eve our lucid faculty returns to us, and if we should have good news to give, the start ought to be made early. We may have far to go, and the days are short."

He whistled to the great hounds, wished us goodnight, and the two brothers left the house together, followed by Fritz and Bruno.

Pierre lighted a lantern, and mounting a ladder in the corner of the room, invited us to accompany him. We clambered up this primitive staircase with some difficulty, and presently found ourselves in a bed-chamber not less quaint and picturesque than the kitchen below. Our beds were both prepared in this room, round the walls of which were piled goat's-milk cheeses, dried herbs, sacks of meal, and other winter provender.

Outside it was a starlit night, clear, calm, and frosty, with brilliant promise for the coming day. Long after I was in the land of dreams, I fancy St. Aubyn lay awake, following with restless eyes the stars in their courses,

and wondering whether from some far-off, unknown spot his lost boy might not be watching them also.

Dawn, grey and misty, enwrapped the little village when I was startled from my sleep by a noisy chorus of voices and a busy hurrying of footsteps. A moment later some one, heavily booted, ascended the ladder leading to our bedroom, and a ponderous knock resounded on our door. St. Aubyn sprang from his bed, lifted the latch, and admitted the younger Raoul, whose beaming eyes and excited manner betrayed, before he spoke, the good tidings in store.

"We have seen him!" he cried, throwing up his hands triumphantly above his head. "Both of us have seen your son, monsieur! Not half an hour ago, just as the dawn broke, we saw him in a vision, alive and well in a mountain cave, separated from the valley by a broad torrent. An Angel of the good Lord has ministered to him: it is a miracle! Courage, he will be restored to you. Dress quickly, and come down to breakfast. Everything is ready for the expedition, and there is no time to lose!"

These broken ejaculations were interrupted by the voice of the elder brother, calling from the foot of the ladder:

"Make haste, messieurs, if you please. The valley we have seen in our dream is fully twelve miles away, and to reach it we shall have to cut our way through the snow. It is bad at this time of the year, and the passes may be blocked! Come, Augustin!"

Everything was now hurry and commotion. All the village was astir; the excitement became intense. From the window we saw men running eagerly towards our chalet with pickaxes, ropes, hatchets, and other necessary adjuncts of Alpine adventure. The two great hounds, with others of their breed, were bounding joyfully about in the snow, and showing, I thought,

by their intelligent glances and impatient behavior, that they already understood the nature of the intended day's work.

At sunrise we sat down to a hearty meal, and amid the clamor of voices and rattling of platters, the elder Raoul unfolded to us his plans for reaching the valley, which both he and his brother had recognized as the higher level of the Arblen, several thousand feet above our present altitude, and in mid-winter a perilous place to visit.

"The spot is completely shut off from the valley by the cataract," said he, "and last year a landslip blocked up the only route to it from the mountains. How the child got there is a mystery!"

"We must cut our way over the Thurgau Pass," cried Augustin.

"That is just my idea. Quick now, if you have finished eating, call Georges and Albert, and take the ropes with you!"

Our little party was speedily equipped, and amid the lusty cheers of the men and the sympathetic murmurs of the women, we passed swiftly through the little snow-carpeted street and struck into the mountain path. We were six in number, St. Aubyn and myself, the two Raouls, and a couple of villagers carrying the requisite implements of mountaineering, while the two dogs, Fritz and Bruno, trotted on before us.

At the outset there was some rough ground to traverse, and considerable work to be done with ropes and tools, for the slippery edges of the highland path afforded scarce any foothold, and in some parts the difficulties appeared well-nigh insurmountable. But every fresh obstacle overcome added a new zest to our resolution, and, cheered by the reiterated cry of the two seers, "Courage, messieurs! Avanfons! The worst will soon be passed!"

We pushed forward with right good will, and at length found ourselves on a broad rocky plateau.

All this time the two hounds had taken the lead, pioneering us with amazing skill round precipitous corners, and springing from crag to crag over the icy ravines with a daring and precision which curdled my blood to witness. It was a relief to see them finally descend the narrow pass in safety, and halt beside us panting and exultant. All around lay glittering reaches of untrodden snow, blinding to look at, scintillant as diamond dust. We sat down to rest on some scattered boulders, and gazed with wonder at the magnificent vistas of glowing peaks towering above us, and the luminous expanse of purple gorge and valley, with the white, roaring torrents below, over which wreaths of foam-like filmy mist hovered and floated continually.

As I sat, lost in admiration, St. Aubyn touched my arm, and silently pointed to Theodor Raoul. He had risen, and now stood at the edge of the plateau over-hanging the lowland landscape, his head raised, his eyes wide-opened, his whole appearance indicative of magnetic trance. While we looked he turned slowly towards us, moved his hands to and fro with a gesture of uncertainty, as though feeling his way in the dark; and spoke with a slow dreamy utterance:

"I see the lad sitting in the entrance of the cavern, looking out across the valley, as though expecting some one. He is pallid and thin, and wears a dark-colored mantle—a large mantle—lined with sable fur."

St. Aubyn sprang from his seat. "True!" he exclaimed. "It is the mantle he was carrying on his arm when he slipped over the pass! O, thank God for that; it may have saved his life!"

"The place in which I see your boy," continued the mountaineer, "is fully three miles distant from the plateau on which we now stand. But I do not know how to reach it. I cannot discern the track. I am at fault!" He moved his hands impatiently to and fro, and cried in tones which manifested the disappointment he felt: "I can see no more! the vision passes from me. I can discover nothing but confused shapes merged in ever-increasing darkness!"

We gathered round him in some dismay, and St. Aubyn urged the younger Raoul to attempt an elucidation of the difficulty. But he too failed. The scene in the cave appeared to him with perfect distinctness; but when he strove to trace the path which should conduct us to it, profound darkness obliterated the vision.

"It must be underground," he said, using the groping action we had already observed on Theodor's part. "It is impossible to distinguish anything, save a few vague outlines of rock. Now there is not a glimmer of light; all is profound gloom!"

Suddenly, as we stood discussing the situation, one advising this, another that, a sharp bark from one of the hounds startled us all, and immediately arrested our consultation. It was Fritz who had thus interrupted the debate. He was running excitedly to and fro, sniffing about the edge of the plateau, and every now and then turning himself with an abrupt jerk, as if seeking something which eluded him. Presently Bruno joined in this mysterious quest, and the next moment, to our admiration and amazement, both dogs simultaneously lifted their heads, their eyes illumined with intelligence and delight, and uttered a prolonged and joyous cry that reverberated chorus-like from the mountain wall behind us.

"They know! They see! They have the clue!" cried the peasants, as the two hounds leapt from the plateau down the steep declivity leading to the valley, scattering the snowdrifts of the crevices pell-mell in their headlong

career. In frantic haste we resumed our loads, and hurried after our flying guides with what speed we could. When the dogs had reached the next level, they paused and waited, standing with uplifted heads and dripping tongues while we clambered down the gorge to join them. Again they took the lead; but this time the way was more intricate, and their progress slower. Single-file we followed them along a narrow winding track of broken ground, over which every moment a tiny torrent foamed and tumbled; and as we descended the air became less keen, the snow rarer, and a few patches of gentian and hardy plants appeared on the craggy sides of the mountain.

Suddenly a great agitation seized St. Aubyn. "Look look!" he cried, clutching me by the arm; "here, where we stand, is the very spot from which my boy fell! And below yonder is the valley!"

Even as he uttered the words, the dogs halted and came towards us, looking wistfully into St. Aubyn's face, as though they fain would speak to him. We stood still, and looked down into the green valley, green even in mid-winter, where a score of goats were browsing in the sunshine. Here my friend would have descended, but the Raouls bade him trust the leadership of the dogs.

"Follow them, monsieur," said Theodor, impressively; "they can see, and you cannot. It is the good God that conducts them. Doubtless they have brought us to this spot to show you they know it, and to inspire you with confidence in their skill and guidance. See! they are advancing! On! do not let us remain behind!"

Thus urged, we hastened after our canine guides, who, impelled by the mysterious influence of their strange faculty, were again pressing forward. This time the track ascended. Soon we lost sight of the valley, and an hour's upward scrambling over loose rocks and sharp crags brought us to a chasm, the two edges of which were separated by a precipitous gulf some twenty

feet across. This chasm was probably about eight or nine hundred feet deep, and its sides were straight and sheer as those of a well. Our ladders were in requisition now, and with the aid of these and the ropes, all the members of our party, human and canine, were safely landed on the opposite brink of the abyss.

We had covered about two miles of difficult ground beyond the chasm, when once more, on the brow of a projecting eminence, the hounds halted for the last time, and drew near St. Aubyn, gazing up at him with eloquent exulting eyes, as though they would have said, "He whom you seek is here!"

It was a wild and desolate spot, strewn with tempest-torn branches, a spot hidden from the sun by dense masses of pine foliage, and backed by sharp peaks of granite. St. Aubyn looked around him, trembling with emotion.

"Shout," cried one of the peasants; "shout, the boy may hear you!"

"Alas," answered the father, " he cannot hear; you forget that my child is deaf and dumb!"

At that instant, Theodor, who for a brief while had stood apart, abstracted and silent, approached St. Aubyn and grasped his hand.

"Shout!" repeated he, with the earnestness of a command; "call your boy by his name!"

St Aubyn looked at him with astonishment; then in a clear piercing voice obeyed.

"Charlie!" he cried; "Charlie, my boy! where are you?"

We stood around him in dread silence and expectancy, a group for a picture. St. Aubyn in the midst, with white quivering face and clasped hands, the two Raouls on either side, listening intently, the dogs motionless and eager, their ears erect, their hair bristling round their stretched throats. You might have heard a pin drop on the rock at our feet, as we stood and waited after that cry. A minute passed thus, and then there was heard from below, at a great depth, a faint uncertain sound. One word only—uttered in the voice of a child,—tremulous, and intensely earnest: "Father!"

St Aubyn fell on his knees. "My God! my God!" he cried, sobbing; "it is my boy! He is alive, and can hear and speak!"

With feverish haste we descended the crag, and speedily found ourselves on a green sward, sheltered on three sides by high walls of cliff, and bounded on the fourth, southward, by a rushing stream some thirty feet from shore to shore. Beyond the stream was a wide expanse of pasture stretching down into the Arblen valley.

Again St. Aubyn shouted, and again the childlike cry replied, guiding us to a narrow gorge or fissure in the cliff almost hidden under exuberant foliage. This passage brought us to a turfy knoll, upon which opened a deep recess in the mountain rock; a picturesque cavern, carpeted with moss, and showing, from some ancient, half obliterated carvings which here and there adorned its walls, that it had once served as a crypt or chapel, possibly in some time of ecclesiastical persecution. At the mouth of this cave, with startled eyes and pallid parted lips, stood a fair-haired lad, wrapped in the mantle described by the elder Raoul. One instant only he stood there; the next he darted forward, and fell with weeping and inarticulate cries into his father's embrace.

We paused, and waited aloof in silence, respecting the supreme joy and emotion of a greeting so sacred as this. The dogs only, bursting into the

cave, leapt and gambolled about, venting their satisfaction in sonorous barks and turbulent demonstrations of delight. But for them, as they seemed well to know, this marvellous discovery would have never been achieved, and the drama which now ended with so great happiness, might have terminated in a lifelong tragedy.

Therefore we were not surprised to see St. Aubyn, after the first transport of the meeting, turn to the dogs, and clasping each huge rough head in turn, kiss it fervently and with grateful tears.

It was their only guerdon for that day's priceless service: the dumb beasts that love us do not work for gold!

And now came the history of the three long months which had elapsed since the occurrence of the disaster which separated my friend from his little son.

Seated on the soft moss of the cavern floor, St. Aubyn in the midst and the boy beside him, we listened to the sequel of the strange tale recounted the preceding evening by Theodor and Augustin Raoul. And first we learnt that until the moment when his father's shout broke upon his ear that day, Charlie St. Aubyn had remained as insensible to sound and as mute of voice as he was when his accident befell him. Even now that the powers of hearing and of speech were restored, he articulated uncertainly and with great difficulty, leaving many words unfinished, and helping out his phrases with gesticulations and signs, his father suggesting and assisting as the narrative proceeded. Was it the strong love in St. Aubyn's cry that broke through the spell of disease and thrilled his child's dulled nerves into life? Was it the shock of an emotion coming unexpected and intense after all those dreary weeks of futile watchfulness? or was the miracle an effect of the same Divine grace which, by means of a mysterious gift, had enabled us to track and to find this obscure and unknown spot?

It matters little; the spirit of man is master of all things, and the miracles of love are myriad-fold. For, where love abounds and is pure, the spirit of man is as the Spirit of God.

Little St. Aubyn had been saved from death, and sustained during the past three months by a creature dumb like himself,—a large dog exactly resembling Fritz and Bruno. This dog, he gave us to understand, came from "over the torrent," indicating with a gesture the Arblen Valley; and, from the beginning of his troubles, had been to him like a human friend. The fall from the hillside had not seriously injured, but only bruised and temporarily lamed the lad, and after lying for a minute or two a little stunned and giddy, he rose and with some difficulty made his way across the meadow slope on which he found himself, expecting to meet his father descending the path. But he miscalculated its direction, and speedily discovered he had lost his way. After waiting a long time in great suspense, and seeing no one but a few goatherds at a distance, whose attention he failed to attract, the pain of a twisted ankle, increased by continual movement, compelled him to seek a night's shelter in the cave subsequently visited by his father at the suggestion of the peasants who assisted in the search. These peasants were not aware that the cave was but the mouth of a vast and wandering labyrinth tunneled, partly by nature and partly by art, through the rocky heart of the mountain. A little before sunrise, on the morning after his accident, the boy, examining with minute curiosity the picturesque grotto in which he had passed the night, discovered in its darkest corner a moss-covered stone behind which had accumulated a great quantity of weeds, ivy, and loose rubbish. Boylike, he fell to clearing away these impedimenta and excavating the stone, until, after some industrious labour thus expended, he dismantled behind and a little above it a narrow passage, into which he crept, partly to satisfy his love of "exploring," partly in the hope that it might afford him an egress in the direction of the village. The aperture thus exposed had not, in fact, escaped the eye of St. Aubyn, when about an hour

afterwards the search for the lost boy was renewed. But one of his guides, after a brief inspection, declared the recess into which it opened empty, and the party, satisfied with his report, left the spot, little thinking that all their labor had been lost by a too hasty examination. For, in fact, this narrow and apparently limited passage gradually widened in its darkest part, and, as little St Aubyn found, became by degrees a tolerably roomy corridor, in which he could just manage to walk upright, and into which light from the outer world penetrated dimly through artificial fissures hollowed out at intervals in the rocky wall. Delighted at this discovery, but chilled by the vaultlike coldness of the place, the lad hastened back to fetch the fur mantle he had left in the cave, threw it over his shoulders, and returned to continue his exploration. The cavern gallery beguiled him with ever-new wonders at every step. Here rose a subterranean spring, there a rudely carved gargoyle grinned from the granite roof; curious and intricate windings enticed his eager steps, while all the time the deathlike and horrible silence which might have deterred an ordinary child from further advance, failed of its effect upon ears unable to distinguish between the living sounds of the outer world and the stillness of a sepulchre.

Thus he groped and wandered, until he became aware that the gloom of the corridor had gradually deepened, and that the tiny opening in the rock were now far less frequent than at the outset. Even to his eyes, by this time accustomed to obscurity, the darkness grew portentous, and at every step he stumbled against some unseen projection, or bruised his hands in vain efforts to discover a returning path. Too late he began to apprehend that he was nearly lost in the heart of the mountain. Either the windings of the labyrinth were hopelessly confusing, or some debris, dislodged by the unaccustomed concussion of footsteps, had fallen from the roof and choked the passage behind him. The account which the boy gave of his adventure, and of his vain and long-continued efforts to retrace his way, made the latter hypothesis appear to us the more acceptable, the noise occasioned by such a

fall having of course passed unheeded by him. In the end, thoroughly baffled and exhausted, the lad determined to work on through the Cimmerian darkness in the hope of discovering a second terminus on the further side of the mountain. This at length he did. A faint starlike outlet finally presented itself to his delighted eyes; he groped painfully towards it; gradually it widened and brightened, till at length he emerged from the subterranean gulf which had so long imprisoned him into the mountain cave wherein he bad ever since remained. How long it had taken him to accomplish this passage he could not guess, but from the sun's position it seemed to be about noon when he again beheld day. He sat down, dazzled and fatigued, on the mossy floor of the grotto, and watched the mountain torrent eddying and sweeping furiously past in the gorge beneath his retreat. After a while he slept, and awoke towards evening faint with hunger and bitterly regretting the affliction which prevented him from attracting help.

Suddenly, to his great amaze, a huge tawny head appeared above the rocky edge of the plateau, and in another moment a St. Bernard hound clambered up the steep bank and ran towards the cave. He was dripping wet, and carried, strapped across his broad back, a double pannier, the contents of which proved on inspection to consist of three flasks of goat's milk, and some half dozen rye loaves packed in a tin box.

The friendly expression and intelligent demeanour of his visitor invited little St. Aubyn's confidence and reanimated his sinking heart. Delighted at such evidence of human proximity, and eager for food, he drank of the goat's milk and ate part of the bread, afterwards emptying his pockets of the few sous he possessed and enclosing them with the remaining loaves in the tin case, hoping that the sight of the coins would inform the dog's owners of the incident. The creature went as he came, plunging into the deepest and least boisterous part of the torrent, which he crossed by swimming, regained the opposite shore, and soon disappeared from view.

But next day, at about the same hour, the dog reappeared alone, again bringing milk and bread, of which again the lad partook, this time, however, having no sous to deposit in the basket. And when, as on the previous day, his new friend rose to depart, Charlie St. Aubyn left the cave with him, clambered down the bank with difficulty, and essayed to cross the torrent ford. But the depth and rapidity of the current dismayed him, and with sinking heart the child returned to his abode. Every day the same thing happened, and at length the strange life became familiar to him, the trees, the birds, and the flowers became his friends, and the great hound a mysterious protector whom he regarded with reverent affection and trusted with entire confidence. At night he dreamed of home, and constantly visited his father in visions, saying always the same words, "Father, I am alive and well."

"And now," whispered the child, nestling closer in St. Aubyn's embrace, "the wonderful thing is that today, for the first and only time since I have been in this cave, my dog has not come to me! It looks, does it not, as if in some strange and fairylike way he really knew what was happening, and had known it all along from the very beginning! O father! can he be—do you think—can he be an Angel in disguise? And, to be sure, I patted him, and thought he was only a dog!"

As the boy, an awed expression in his lifted blue eyes, gave utterance to this naive idea, I glanced at St. Aubyn's face, and saw that, though his lips smiled, his eyes were grave and full of grateful wonder.

He turned towards the peasants grouped around us, and in their own language recited to them the child's story. They listened intently, from time to time exchanging among themselves intelligent glances and muttering interjections expressive of astonishment. When the last word of the tale was spoken, the elder Raoul, who stood at the entrance of the cave, gazing out

over the sunlit valley of the Arblen, removed his hat with a reverent gesture and crossed himself.

"God forgive us miserable sinners," he said humbly, "and pardon us our human pride! The Angel of the Lord whom Augustin and I beheld in our vision, ministering to the lad, is no other than the dog Gluck who lives at the monastery out yonder! And while we men are lucid only once a year, he has the seeing gift all the year round, and the good God showed him the lad in this cave, when we, forsooth, should have looked for him in vain. I know that every day Gluck is sent from the monastery laden with food and drink to a poor widow living up yonder over the ravine. She is infirm and bedridden, and her little grand-daughter takes care of her. Doubtless the poor soul took the sous in the basket to be the gift of the brothers, and, as her portion is not always the same from day to day, but depends on what they can spare from the store set apart for almsgiving, she would not notice the diminished cakes and milk, save perhaps to grumble a little at the increase of the beggars who trespassed thus on her pension."

There was silence among us for a moment, then St Aubyn's boy spoke.

"Father," he asked, tremulously, "shall I not see that good Gluck again and tell the monks how he saved me, and how Fritz and Bruno brought you here?"

"Yes, my child," answered St Aubyn, rising, and drawing the boy's hand into his own, "we will go and find Gluck, who knows, no doubt, all that has passed today, and is waiting for us at the monastery."

"We must ford the torrent," said Augustin; "the bridge was carried off by last year's avalanche, but with six of us and the dogs it will be easy work."

Twilight was falling; and already the stars of Christmas Eve climbed the frosty heavens and appeared above the snowy far-off peaks.

Filled with gratitude and wonder at all the strange events of the day we betook ourselves to the ford, and by the help of ropes and stocks our whole party landed safely on the valley side. Another half-hour brought us into the warm glow of the monk's refectory fire, where, while supper was prepared, the worthy brothers listened to a tale at least as marvellous as any legend in their ecclesiastical repertory. I fancy they must have felt a pang of regret that holy Mother Church would find it impossible to bestow upon Gluck and his two noble sons the dignity of canonisation.

II. Steepside
A Ghost Story

The strange things I am going to tell you, dear reader, did not occur, as such things generally do, to my great-uncle, or to my second cousin, or even to my grandfather, but to myself. It happened that a few years ago I received an invitation from an old schoolfellow to spend Christmas week with him in his country house on the borders of North Wales, and, as I was then a happy bachelor, and had not seen my friend for a considerable time, I accepted the invitation, and turned my back upon London on the appointed day with a light heart and anticipations of the pleasantest description.

Leaving my City haunts by a morning train, I was landed early in the afternoon at the nearest station to my friend's house, although in this case "nearest" was indeed, as it proved, by no means near. When I reached the

inn where I had fondly expected to find "flys, omnibuses, and other vehicles obtainable on the shortest notice," I was met by the landlady of the establishment, who, with an apologetic curtsey and a deprecating smile, informed me that she was extremely sorry to say her last conveyance had just started with a party, and would not return until late at night. I looked at my watch; it was nearing four. Seven miles, and I had a large traveling-bag to carry.

"Is it a good road from here to—?" I asked the landlady.

"Oh yes, sir; very fair."

"Well," I said, "I think I'll walk it. The railway journey has rather numbed my feet, and a sharp walk will certainly improve their temperature."

So I courageously lifted my bag and set out on the journey to my friend's house. Ah, how little I guessed what was destined to befall me before I reached that desired haven! I had gone, I suppose, about two miles when I descried behind me a vast mass of dark, surging cloud driving up rapidly with the wind. I was in open country, and there was evidently going to be a very heavy snowstorm. Presently it began. At first I made up my mind not to heed it; but in about twenty minutes after the commencement of the fall the snow became so thick and so blinding, that it was absolutely impossible for me to find my way along a road which was utterly new to me. Moreover, with the cloud came the twilight, and a most disagreeably keen wind. The traveling-bag became unbearably heavy. I shifted it from one hand to the other; I hung it over my shoulder; I put it under my arm; I carried it in all sorts of ways, but none afforded me any permanent relief. To add to my misfortune, I strongly suspected that I had mistaken my way, for by this time the snow was so deep that the footpath was altogether obliterated. In this predicament I looked out wistfully across the whitened landscape for signs of an inn or habitation of some description where I

might "put up" for the night, and by good fortune (or was it bad?) I at last espied through the gathering gloom a solitary and not very distant light twinkling from a lodge at the entrance of a private road. I fought my way through the snow as quickly as possible, and, presenting myself at the gate of the little cottage, rang the bell complacently, and flattered myself that I had at length discovered a resting-place. An old man with grey hair answered my summons. Him I acquainted with my misfortune, and to him I preferred my request that I might be allowed a night's shelter in the lodge, or at least the temporary privilege of drying myself and my habiliments at his fireside. The old fellow admitted me cheerfully enough; but he seemed more than doubtful as to the possibility of my passing the night beneath his roof.

"Ye see, sir," he said, "we've only one small room—me and the missis; and I don't well see how we're to manage about you. All the same, sir, I wouldn't advise ye to go on tonight, for if ye're bound for Mr —-'s, ye've come a deal out of your way, and the storm's getting worse and worse every minute. We shall have a nasty night of it, sir, and it'll be a deal too stiff for travelling on foot."

Here the wife, a hospitable-looking old woman, interposed.

"Willum, don't ye think as the gentleman might be put to sleep in the room up at the House, where George slept last time he was here to see us? His bed's there still, ye know. It's a very good room, sir," she argued, addressing me; "and I can give ye a pair of blankets in no time."

"But," said I, "the master of the house doesn't know me. I am a stranger here altogether."

"Lor' bless ye, sir!" answered my host, "there ain't nobody in the place. The house has been to let these ten years at least to my knowledge; for I've

been here eight, and the house and the lodge had both been empty no one knows how long when I come. I rents this cottage of Mr Houghton, out yonder."

"Oh well," I rejoined, "if that is the case, and there is nobody's leave save yours to ask, I'm willing enough to sleep at the house, and thank you too for your kindness."

So it was arranged that I should pass the coming night within the walls of the empty mansion; and, until it was time to retire thither, I amused and edified myself by a friendly chat with the old man and his spouse, both of whom were vastly communicative. At ten o'clock I and my host adjourned to the house, which stood at a very short distance from the lodge. I carried my bag, and my companion bore the blankets already referred to, a candle, and some firewood and matches. The chamber to which he conducted me was comfortable enough, but by no means profusely furnished. It contained a small truckle bedstead, two chairs, and a washstand, but no attempt at pictures or ornaments of any description. Evidently it was an impromptu bedroom.

My entertainer in a few minutes kindled a cheerful fire upon the old-fashioned stone hearth. Then, after arranging my bed and placing my candle on the mantelpiece, he wished me a respectful goodnight and withdrew. When he was gone I dragged one of the chairs towards the fireplace, and sat down to enjoy the pleasant flicker of the blaze. I ruminated upon the occurrences of the day, and the possible history of the old house, whose sole occupant I had thus strangely become. Now, I am of an inquisitive turn of mind, and perhaps less apt than most men to be troubled with that uncomfortable sensation which those people who are its victims describe as nervousness, and those who are not, as cowardice. Another in my place might have shrunk from doing what I presently resolved to do, and that was

to explore, before going to rest, at least some part of this empty old house. Accordingly, I took up my candle and walked out into the passage, leaving the door of my room widely open, so that the firelight streamed full into the entrance of the dark gallery, and served to guide me on my way along it. When I had thus progressed for some twenty yards, I was brought to a standstill by encountering a large red baize door, which evidently shut off the wing in which my room was situated from the rest of the mansion, and completely closed all egress from the corridor where I then stood. I paused a moment or two in uncertainty, for the door was locked; but presently my glance fell on an old rusty key hanging from a nail, likewise rusty, in a niche of the wall. I abstracted this key from its resting-place, destroying as I did so the residences of a dozen spiders, which, to judge from appearances, seemed to have thrived excellently in the atmosphere of desolation which surrounded them. It was some time before I could get the clumsy old lock to act properly, or summon sufficient strength to turn the key; but at length perseverance met with its proverbial reward, and the door moved slowly and noisily on its hinges. Still bearing my candle, I went on my way into a second corridor, which was literally carpeted with dust, the accumulation probably of the ten years to which my host had referred.

All round was gloomy and silent as a sepulchre, save that every now and then the loosened boards creaked beneath my tread, or some little misanthropical animal, startled from his hermitage by the unwonted sound of my steps, hurried across the passage, making as he went a tiny trail in the thick furry dust. Several galleries branched off from the mainway like tributary streams, but I preferred to steer my course down the central corridor, which finally conducted me to a large antique-looking apartment with carved wainscot and curious old paintings on the panelled walls. I put the candle upon a table which stood in the centre of the room, and standing beside it, took a general survey. There was an old mouldy-looking bookcase in one corner of the chamber, with some old mouldy books packed closely

together on a few of its shelves. This piece of furniture was hollowed out, crescent-wise, at the base, and partially concealed a carved oaken door, which had evidently in former times been the means of communication with an adjoining apartment. Prompted by curiosity, I took down and opened a few of the nearest books on the shelves before me. They proved to be some of the very earliest volumes of the "Spectator,"—books of considerable interest to me,— and in ten minutes I was quite absorbed in an article by one of our most noted masters of literature. I drew one of the queer high-backed chairs scattered about the room, towards the table, and sat down to enjoy a "feast of reason and a flow of soul." As I turned the mildewed page, something suddenly fell with a dull "flop" upon the paper. It was a drop of blood! I stared at it with a strange sensation of mingled horror and astonishment. Could it have been upon the page before I turned it? No; it was wet and bright, and presented the uneven, broken disc which drops of liquid always possess when they fall from a considerable height. Besides I had heard and seen it fall. I put the book down on the table and looked upward at the ceiling. There was nothing visible there save the grey dirt of years. I looked closely at the hideous blotch, and saw it rapidly soaking and widening its way into the paper, already softened with age. As, of course, after this incident I was not inclined to continue my studies of Addison and Steele, I shut the volume and replaced it on the shelves. Turning back towards the table to take up my candle, my eyes rested upon a full- length portrait immediately facing the bookcase. It was that of a young and handsome woman with glossy black hair coiled round her head, but, I thought, with something repulsive in the proud, stony face and shadowed eyes. I raised the light above my head to get a better view of the painting. As I did this, it seemed to me that the countenance of the figure changed, or rather that a Thing came between me and it. It was a momentary distortion, as though a gust of wind had passed across the portrait and disturbed the outline of the features; the how and the why I know not, but the face

changed; nor shall I ever forget the sudden horror of the look it assumed. It was like that face of phantom ghastliness that we see sometimes in the delirium of fever,—the face that meets us and turns upon us in the mazes of nightmare, with a look that wakes us in the darkness, and drives the cold sweat out upon our forehead while we lie still and hold our breath for fear. Man as I was, I shuddered convulsively from head to foot, and fixed my eyes earnestly on the terrible portrait. In a minute it was a mere picture again—an inanimate colored canvas—wearing no expression upon its painted features save that which the artist had given to it nearly a century ago. I thought then that the strange appearance I had witnessed was probably the effect of the fitful candlelight, or an illusion of my own vision; but now I believe otherwise. Seeing nothing further unusual in the picture, I turned my back upon it, and made a few steps towards the door, intending to quit this mysterious chamber of horrors, when a third and more hideous phenomenon riveted me to the spot where I stood; for, as I looked towards the oaken door in the corner, I became aware of something slowly filtering from beneath it, and creeping towards me. O heaven! I had not long to look to know what that something was:—it was blood-red, thick, stealthy! On it came, winding its way in a frightful stream into the room, soddening the rich carpet, and lying presently in a black pool at my feet. It had trickled in from the adjoining chamber, that chamber the entrance to which was closed by the bookcase. There were some great volumes on the ground before the door,—volumes which I had noticed when I entered the room, on account of the thick dust with which they were surrounded. They were lying now in a pool of stagnant blood. It would be utterly impossible for me to attempt to describe my sensations at that minute. I was not capable of feeling any distinct emotion. My brain seemed oppressed, I could scarcely breathe—scarcely move. I watched the dreadful stream oozing drowsily through the crevices of the mouldy, rotting woodwork—bulging out in great beads like raindrops on the sides of the door—trickling noiselessly down the knots of

the carved oak. Still I stood and watched it, and it crept on slowly, slowly, like a living thing, and growing as it came, to my very feet. I cannot say how long I might have stood there, fascinated by it, had not something suddenly occurred to startle me into my senses again; for full upon the back of my right hand fell, with a sullen, heavy sound, a second drop of blood. It stung and burnt my flesh like molten lead, and the sharp, sudden pain it gave me shot up my arm and shoulder, and seemed in an instant to mount into my brain and pervade my whole being. I turned and fled from the terrible place with a shrill cry that rang through the empty corridors and ghostly rooms like nothing human. I did not recognise it for my own voice, so strange it was,—so totally unlike its accustomed sound; and now, when I recall it, I am disposed to think it was surely not the cry of living mortal, but of that unknown Thing that passed before the portrait, and that stood beside me even then in the lonely room. Certain I am that the echoes of that cry had in them something inexpressibly fiendish, and through the deathly gloom of the mansion they came back, reverberated and repeated from a hundred invisible corners and galleries. Now, I had to pass, on my return, a long, broad window that lighted the principal staircase. This window had neither shutters nor blind, and was composed of those small square panes that were in vogue a century ago. As I went by it, I threw a hasty, appalled glance behind me, and distinctly saw, even through the blurred and dirty glass, the figures of two women, one pursuing the other over the thick white snow outside. In the rapid view I had of them, I observed only that the first carried something in her hand that looked like a pistol, and her long black hair streamed behind her, showing darkly against the dead whiteness of the landscape. The arms of her pursuer were outstretched, as though she were calling to her companion to stop; but perfect as was the silence of the night, and close as the figures seemed to be, I heard no sound of a voice. Next I came to a second and smaller window which had been once boarded up, but with lapse of time the plank had loosened and partly fallen, and here I

paused a moment to look out. It still snowed slightly, but there was a clear moon, sufficient to throw a ghastly light upon the outside objects nearest to me. With the sleeve of my coat I rubbed away the dust and cobwebs which overhung the glass, and peered out. The two women were still hurrying onward, but the distance between them was considerably lessened. And now for the first time a peculiarity about them struck me. It was this, that the figures were not substantial; they flickered and waved precisely like flames, as they ran. As I gazed at them the foremost turned her head to look at the woman behind her, and as she did so, stumbled, fell, and disappeared. She seemed to have suddenly dropped down a precipice, so quickly and so completely she vanished. The other figure stopped, wrung its hands wildly, and presently turned and fled in the direction of the park-gates, and was soon lost in the obscurity of the distance. The sights I had just witnessed in the panelled chamber had not been of a nature to inspire courage in any one, and I must candidly confess that my knees actually shook and my teeth rattled as I left the window and darted up the solitary passage to the baize door at the top of it. Would I had never unlocked that door! Would that the key had been lost, or that I had never set foot in this abominable house! Hastily I refastened the door, hung up the rusty key in its niche, and rushed into my own room, where I dropped into a chair with a deadly faintness creeping over me. I looked at my hand, where the clot of blood had fallen. It seemed to have burnt its way into my flesh, for it no longer appeared on the surface, but, where it had been was a round, purple mark, with an outer ring, like the scar of a burn. That scar is on my hand now, and I suppose will be there all my life. I looked at my watch, which I had left behind on the mantelpiece. It was five minutes past twelve. Should I go to bed? I stirred the sinking fire into a blaze, and looked anxiously at my candle. Neither fire nor candles, I perceived, would last much longer. Before long both would be expended, and I should be in darkness. In darkness, and alone in that house. The bare idea of a night passed in such solitude was

terrible to me. I tried to laugh at my fears. And reproached myself with weakness and cowardice. I reverted to the stereotyped method of consolation under circumstances of this description, and strove to persuade myself that, being guiltless, I had no cause to fear the powers of evil. But in vain. Trembling from head to foot, I raked together the smouldering embers in the stove for the last time, wrapped my railway rug around me— for I dared not undress—and threw myself on the bed, where I lay sleepless until the dawn. But oh, what I endured all those weary hours no human creature can imagine. I watched the last sparks of the fire die out, one by one, and heard the ashes slide and drop slowly upon the hearth. I watched the flame of the candle flare up and sink again a dozen times, and then at last expire, leaving me in utter darkness and silence. I fancied, ever and anon, that I could distinguish the sound of phantom feet coming down the corridor towards my room, and that the mysterious Presence I had encountered in the panelled chamber stood at my bedside looking at me, or that a stealthy hand touched mine. I felt the sweat upon my forehead, but I dared not move to wipe it away. I thought of people whose hair had turned white through terror in a few brief hours, and wondered what color mine would be in the morning. And when at last—at last—the first grey glimmer of that morning peered through the window-blind, I hailed its appearance with much the same emotions as, no doubt, a traveler fainting with thirst in a desert would experience upon descrying a watery oasis in the midst of the burning sands. Long before the sun arose, I leapt from my couch, and having made a hasty toilette, I sallied out into the bleak, frosty air. It revived me at once, and brought new courage into my heart. Looking at the whitened expanse of lawn where last night I had seen the two women running, I could detect no sign of footmarks in the snow. The whole lawn presented an unbroken surface of sparkling crystals. I walked down the drive to the lodge. The old man, evidently an early bird, was in the act of unbarring his door as I appeared.

Halloa, sir, you're up betimes!" he exclaimed. "Will ye just step in now and take somethin'? My ole woman's agoin' to get out the breakfast. Slept well last night, sir?" he continued, as I entered the little parlour; "the bed is raythe hard, I know; but, ye see, it does well enow for my son George when he's up here, which isna often. Ye look tired like, this morning; didna get much rest p'raps? Ah! now then, Bess, gi' us another plate here, ole gal."

I ate my breakfast in comparative silence, wondering to myself whether it would be well to say anything to my host of my recent experiences, since he had clearly no suspicions on the subject; and, anon, wishing I had comported myself in that terrible house with as little curiosity as the "son George," who no doubt was content to stay where he was put at night, and was not given to nocturnal excursions in empty mansions.

"Have you any idea," said I, at last, "whether there's any story connected with that place where I slept last night? I only ask," added I, with a feeble grin, like the ghost of a smile that had been able-bodied once, "because I'm fond of hearing stories, and because, as you know, there generally is a legend, or something of that sort, related about old family mansions."

"Well, sir," answered the old man slowly, "I never heard nothin'; but then, you see, I never asked no questions. We came here eight years agone, and then no one round remembered a tenant at the big house. It's been empty somewhere nigh twenty years, I should say,— to my own knowledge more than ten,—and what's more, nobody knows exactly who it belongs to: and there's been lawsuits about it and all manner o' things, but nothin' ever came of them."

"Did no one ever tell you anything about its history," I asked, "or were you never asked any questions about it until now?"

"Not particularly as I remember," replied he musingly.

Then, after a moment's pause, he added more briskly, "Ay, ay, though, now I come to think of it, there was a man up here more'n five months back, a Frenchman, who came on purpose to see it and ask me one or two questions, but I on'y jest told him nothin' as I've told you. He was a popish priest, and seemed to take a sight of interest in the place somehow. I think if you want to know about it, sir, you'd better go and see him; he's staying down here in the village, about a mile and a half off, at the Crown Inn."

"And a queer old fellow he is," broke in my host's wife, who was clearing away the breakfast; "no one knows where he comes from, 'cept as he's a Frenchman. I see him about often, prowlin' along with his stick and his snuff-box, always alone, and sometimes he nods at me and says `good-morning' as I go by."

In consequence of this information I resolved to make my way immediately to the old priest's dwelling, and having acquainted myself with the direction in which the house lay, I took leave of my host, shouldered my bag once more, and set out en route. The air was clear and sharp, and the crisp snow crackled pleasantly under my Hessian boots as I strode along the country lanes. All traces of cloud had totally disappeared from the sky, the sun looked cheerfully down on me, and my morning's walk thoroughly refreshed and invigorated me. In due time I arrived at the inn which had been named to me as the abode of the Rev. M. Pierre,—a pretty homely little nest, with an antique gable and portico. Addressing myself to the elderly woman who answered my summons at the housedoor, I inquired if I could see M. Pierre, and, in reply, received a civil invitation to "step inside

and wait." My suspense did not last long, for M. Pierre made his appearance very promptly. He was a tall, thin individual with a fried-looking complexion, keen sunken eyes, and sparse hair streaked with grey. He entered the room with a courteous bow and inquiring look. Rising from the chair in which I had rested myself by the fire, I advanced towards him and addressed him by name in my suavest tones. He inclined his head and looked at me more inquiringly than before." I have taken the liberty to request an interview with you this morning," continued I, "because I have been told that you may probably be able to give me some information of which I am in search, with regard to an old mansion in this part of the county, called `Steepside,' and in which I spent last night."

Scarcely had I uttered these last words when the expression of the old priest's face changed from one of courteous indifference to earnest interest:

"Do I understand you rightly, monsieur?" he said. "You say you slept last night in Steepside mansion?"

"I did not say I slept there," I rejoined, with an emphasis; "I said I passed the night there."

"Bien," said he dryly, "I comprehend. And you were not pleased with your night's lodging. That is so, is it not, monsieur,—is it not?" he repeated, eying my face curiously, as though he were seeking to read the expression of my thoughts there.

"You may be sure," said I, "that if something very peculiar had not occurred to me in that house, I should not thus have troubled a gentleman to whom I am, unhappily, a stranger."

He bowed slightly and then stood silent, contemplating me, and, as I think, considering whether or not he should afford me the information I

desired. Presently, his scrutiny having apparently proved satisfactory, he withdrew his eyes from my face, and seated himself beside me.

"Monsieur," said he, "before I begin to answer your inquiry, I will ask you to tell me what you saw last night at Steepside."

He drew from his pocket a small, old-fashioned snuff-box and refreshed his little yellow nose with a pinch of rappee, after which ceremonial he leaned back at his ease, resting his chin in his hand and regarding me fixedly during the whole of my strange recital. When I had finished speaking he sat silent a few minutes, and then resumed, in his queer broken manner:

"What I am going to tell you I would not tell to any man who had not done what you have done, and seen what you saw last night. Mon Dieu! it is strange you should have been at that house last night of all nights in the year,—the 22nd of December!"

He seemed to make this reflection rather to himself than to me, and presently continued, taking a small key from a pocket in his vest as he spoke:

"Do you understand French well, monsieur?"

"Excellently well," returned I with alacrity; "a great part of my business correspondence is conducted in French, and I speak and hear it every day of my life."

He smiled pleasantly in reply, rose from his seat, and, unlocking with the key he held a small drawer in a chest that stood beside the chimney-piece, took out of it a roll of manuscript and a cigar.

"Monsieur," said he, offering me the latter, "let me recommend this, if you care to smoke so early in the day. I always prefer rappee, but you, doubtless, have younger tastes."

Having thus provided for my comfort, the old priest reseated himself, unfolded the manuscript, and, without further apology, read the following story in the French language:

Towards the latter part of the last century Steepside became the property of a certain Sir Julian Lorrington. His family consisted only of his wife, Lady Sarah, and their daughter Julia, a girl remarkable alike for her beauty and her expectations.

For a long time Sir Julian had retained in his establishment an old French maitre d'hotel and his wife, who both died in the baronet's service, leaving one child, Virginie, whom Lady Sarah, out of regard for the fidelity of her parents, engaged to educate and protect.

In due time this orphan, brought up in the household of Sir Julian, became the chosen companion of his heiress; and when the family took up their residence at Steepside, Virginie Giraud, who had been associated in Julia's studies and recreations from early childhood, was installed there as maid and confidant to the hope of the house.

Not long after the settlement at Steepside, Sir Julian, in the summary fashion of those days with regard to matrimonial affairs, announced his intention of bestowing his daughter upon a certain Welsh squire of old ancestry and broad acres. Sir Julian was a practical man, thoroughly incapable of regarding wedlock in any other light than as a mere union of wealth and property, the owners of which joined hands and lived together. This was the way in which he had married, and it was the way in which he intended his daughter to marry; love and passion were meaningless, if not

vulgar words in his ears, and he conceived it impossible they should be otherwise to his only child. As for Lady Sarah, she was an unsympathetic creature, whose thoughts ran only on the ambition of seeing Julia married to some gentleman of high position, and heading a fine establishment with social success and distinction.

So it was not until all things relative to the contract had been duly arranged between these amiable parents and their intended son- in-law, that the bride elect was informed of the fortune in store for her.

But all the time that the lawyers had been preparing the marriage settlements, a young penniless gentleman named Philip Brian had been finding out for himself the way to Julia's heart, and these two had pledged their faith to each other only a few days before Sir Julian and Lady Lorrington formally announced their plans to their daughter. In consequence of her engagement with Philip, Julia received their intelligence with indignation, and protested that no power on earth should force her to act falsely to the young man whose promised wife she had become. The expression of this determination was received by both parents with high displeasure. Sir Julian indulged in a few angry oaths, and Lady Sarah in a little select satire; Philip Brian was, of course, forbidden the house, all letters and messages between the lovers were interdicted, and Julia was commanded to comport herself like a dutiful and obedient heiress.

Now Virginie Giraud was the friend as well as the attendant of Sir Julian's daughter, and it was Virginie therefore who, after the occurrence of this outbreak, was despatched to Philip with a note of warning from his mistress. Naturally the lover returned an answer by the same means, and from that hour Virginie continued to act as agent between the two, carrying letters to and fro, giving counsel and arranging meetings. Meanwhile the bridal day was fixed by the parent Lorringtons, and elaborate preparations

were made for a wedding festival which should be the wonderment and admiration of the county. The breakfast room was decorated with lavish splendour, the richest apparel bespoken for the bride, and all the wealthy and titled relatives of both contracting families were invited to the pageant. Nor were Philip and Julia idle. It was arranged between them that, at eleven o'clock on the night of the day preceding the intended wedding, the young man should present himself beneath Julia's window, Virginie being on the watch and in readiness to accompany the flight of the lovers. All three, under cover of the darkness, should then steal down the avenue of the coach-drive and make their exit by the shrubbery gate, the key of which Virginie already had in keeping. The appointed evening came,—the 22nd of December. Snow lay deep upon the ground, and more threatened to fall before dawn, but Philip had engaged to provide horses equal to any emergency of weather, and the darkness of the night lent favor to the enterprise. Virginie's behavior all that day had somehow seemed unaccountable to her mistress. The maid's face was pallid and wore a strange expression of anxiety and apprehension. She winced and trembled when Julia's glance rested upon her, and her hands quivered violently while she helped the latter to adjust her hood and mantle as the hour of assignation approached. Endeavouring, however, to persuade herself that this strange conduct arose from a feeling of excitement or nervousness natural under the circumstances, Julia used a hundred kind words and tender gestures to reassure and support her companion. But the mote she consoled or admonished, the more agitated Virginie became, and matters stood in this condition when eleven o'clock arrived.

Julia waited at her chamber window, which was not above three feet from the ground without, her hood and mantle donned, listening eagerly for the sound of her lover's voice; and the French girl leant behind her against the closed door, nervously tearing to fragments a piece of paper she had taken from her pocket a minute ago. These torn atoms she flung upon the hearth,

where a bright fire was blazing, not observing that, meanwhile, Julia had opened the window- casement. A gust of wind darting into the room from outside caught up a fragment of the yet unconsumed paper and whirled it back from the flames to Julia's feet. She glanced at it indifferently, but the sight of some characters on it suddenly attracting her, she stooped and picked it up.

It bore her name written over and over several times, first in rather labored imitation of her own handwriting, then more successfully, and, lastly, in so perfect a manner that even Julia herself was almost deceived into believing it her genuine signature. Then followed several L's and J's, as though the copyist had not considered those initials satisfactory counterparts of the original.

Julia wondered, but did not doubt; and as she tossed the fragment from her hand, Virginie turned and perceived the action. Instantly a deep flush of crimson overspread the maid's face; she darted suddenly forward, and uttered an exclamation of alarm. Her cry was immediately succeeded by the sharp noise of a pistol report beneath the window, and a heavy, muffled sound, as of the fall of a body upon the snow-covered earth. Julia looked out in fear and surprise. The leaping firelight from within the room streamed through the window, and, in the heart of its vivid brightness, revealed the figure of a man lying motionless upon the whitened ground, his face buried in the scattered snow, and his outstretched hand grasping a pistol. Julia leaped through the open casement with a wild shriek, and flung herself on her knees beside him.

"Phil! Phil!" she said, "what have you done? what has happened? Speak to me!"

But the only response was a faint, low moan.

Philip Brian had shot himself!

In an agony of grief and horror Julia lifted his head upon her arm, and pressed her hand to his heart. The movement recalled him to life for a few moments; he opened his eyes, looked at her, and uttered a few broken words. She stooped and listened eagerly.

"The letter!" he gasped; "the letter you sent me! O Julia, you have broken my heart! How could you be false to me, and I loving you—trusting you—so wholly! But at least I shall not live to see you wed the man you have chosen; I came here tonight to die, since without you life would be intolerable. See what you have done!"

Desperate and silent, she wound her arms around him, and pressed her lips to his. A convulsive shudder seized him; his eyes rolled back, and with a sigh he resigned himself to the death he had courted so madly. Death in the passion of a last kiss!

Julia sat still, the corpse of her lover supported on her arm, and her hand clasped in his, tearless and frigid as though she had been turned into stone by some fearful spell. Half hidden in the bosom of his vest was a letter, the broken seal of which bore her own monogram. She plucked it out of its resting place, and read it hastily by the flicker of the firelight. It was in Lady Sarah's handwriting, and ran thus:

"My Dear Mr Brian,—Although, when last we parted, it was with the usual understanding that tonight we should meet again; yet subsequent reflection, and the positive injunctions of my parents, have obliged me to decide otherwise. You are to know, therefore, that, in obedience to the wishes of my father and mother, I have promised to become the wife of the gentleman they have chosen for me. All correspondence between us must therefore wholly cease, nor must you longer suffer yourself to

entertain a thought of me. It is hardly necessary to add that I shall not expect to see you this evening; your own sense of honor will, I am persuaded, be sufficient to restrain you from keeping an appointment against my wishes. In concluding, I beg you will not attempt to obtain any further explanation of my conduct; but rest assured that it is the unalterable resolve of cool and earnest deliberation. "For the last time I subscribe myself "JULIA LORRINGTON.

"Postscript.—In order to save you any doubt of my entire concurrence in my mother's wishes, I sign and address this with my own hand, and Virginie, who undertakes to deliver it, will add her personal testimony to the truth of these statements, since she has witnessed the writing of the letter, and knows how fully my consent has been given to all its expressions."

"With my own hand!" Yes, surely; both signature and address were perfect facsimiles of Julia's writing! What wonder that Philip had been deceived into believing her false? Twice she read the letter from beginning to end; then she laid her lover's corpse gently down on the snow, and stood up erect and silent, her face more ghastly and deathlike than the face of the dead beside her.

In a moment the whole shameful scheme had flashed upon her mind; Virginie's treachery and clever fraud; its connection with the torn fragment of paper which Julia had seen only a few minutes before; the deliberate falsehood of which Lady Sarah had been guilty; the bribery, by means of which she had probably corrupted Virginie's fidelity; the cruel disappointment and suffering of her lover; all these things pressed themselves upon her reeling brain, and gave birth to the suggestions of madness.

Stooping down, she put her lithe hand upon the belt of the dead man. There was, as she expected, a second pistol in it, the fellow of that with which he had shot himself. It was loaded. Julia drew it out, wrapped her mantle round it, and climbed noiselessly into her chamber through the still open window. Crossing the room, she passed out into the corridor beyond, and went like a shadow, swift and silent of foot, to the door of her father's study,—an apartment communicating, by means of an oaken door, with the panelled chamber.

Virginie, from a dark recess in the wall of the house, had heard and noted all that passed in the garden. She saw Julia open and read the letter; she caught the expression of her face as she stooped for the pistol, and apprehending something of what might follow, she crept through the window after her mistress and pursued her up the dark passages. Here, crouching again into a recess in the gallery outside the panelled room, she waited in terror for the next scene of the tragedy. Julia flung open the door of the study where her father sat writing at his table, and, standing on the threshold in the full glare of the lamplight which illumined the apartment, raised the pistol, cocked and aimed it. Sir Julian had barely time to leap from his chair with a cry when she fired, and the next instant he fell, struck by the bullet on the left temple, and expired at his daughter's feet. At the report of the pistol and the sound of his fall, Lady Sarah quitted her dressingroom and ran in disordered attire into the study, where she beheld her husband lying dead and bloody upon the floor, and Julia standing at the entrance of the panelled chamber, with the light of madness and murder in her eyes. Not long she stood there, however, for, seeing Lady Sarah enter, the distracted girl threw down the empty weapon, and flinging herself upon her mother, grasped her throat with all the might of her frenzied being. Up and down the room they wrestled together, two desperate women, one bent upon murder, the other battling for her life, and neither uttered cry or groan, so terribly earnest was the struggle. At length Lady Sarah's strength gave

way; she fell under her assailant's weight, her face black with suffocation, and her eyes protruding from their swelling sockets. Julia redoubled her grip. She knelt upon Lady Sarah's breast, and held her down with the force and resolution of a fiend, though the blood burst from the ears of her victim and filmed her staring eyes; nor did the pitiless fingers relax until the murderess knew her vengeance was complete. Then, she leapt to her feet, seized Philip's pistol from the floor, and, with a wild, pealing shriek, fled forth along the gallery, down the staircase, and out into the park,—out into the wind, and the driving snow, and the cold, her uncoiled hair streaming in dishevelled masses down her shoulders, and her dress of trailing satin daubed with stains of blood. Behind her ran Virginie, well-nigh maddened herself with horror, vainly endeavouring to catch or to stop the unhappy fugitive. But just as the latter reached the brink of a high precipice at the boundary of the terraced lawn, from which the mansion took its name of "Steepside," she turned to look at her pursuer, missed her footing, and fell headlong over the low stone coping that bordered the slope into the snowdrift at the bottom of the chasm.

Virginie ran to the spot and looked over. The "steep" was exceedingly high and sudden; not a trace of Julia could be seen in the darkness below. Doubtless the miserable heiress of the Lorringtons had found a grave in the bed of soft, deep snow which surrounded its base.

Then, stricken through heart and brain with the curse of madness which had already sent her mistress red-handed to death, Virginie Giraud fled across the lawn—through the parkgates—out upon the bleak common beyond, and was gone. The old priest laid aside the manuscript and took a fresh pinch of rappee from the silver snuff box.

"Monsieur," said he, with a polite inclination of his grey head,
"I have had the honor to read you the history you wished to hear."

"And I thank you most heartily for your kindness," returned I. "But may I, without danger of seeming too inquisitive, ask you one question more?"

Seeing assent in his face, and a smile that anticipated my inquiry wrinkling the corners of his mouth, I continued boldly, "Will you tell me, then, M. Pierre, by what means you became possessed of this manuscript, and who wrote it?"

"It is a natural question, monsieur," he answered after a short pause, "and I have no good reason for withholding the reply, since every one who was personally concerned in the tragedy has long been dead. You must know, then, that in my younger days I was cure to a little parish of about two hundred souls in the province of Berry. Many years ago there came to this village a strange old woman of whom nobody in the place had the least knowledge. She took and rented a small hovel on the borders of a wood about two miles from our church, and, except on market days, when she came to the village for her weekly provisions, none of my parishioners ever held any intercourse with her. She was evidently insane, and although she did harm to nobody, yet she often caused considerable alarm and wonderment by her eccentric behavior. It is, as you must know, often the case in intermittent mania that its victims are insane upon some particular subject, some point upon which their frenzy always betrays itself,—even when, with regard to other matters, they conduct themselves like ordinary people. Now this old woman's weakness manifested itself in a wild and continual desire to copy every written document she saw. If, on her market-day visits to the village, any written notice upon the churchdoors chanced to catch her eye as she passed, she would immediately pause, draw out pencil and paper from her pocket, and stand muttering to herself until she had closely transcribed the whole of the placard, when she would quietly return the copy to her pocket and go on her way.

"Thinking it my duty, as pastor of the village, to make myself acquainted with this poor creature, who had thus become one of my flock, I went occasionally to visit her, in the hope that I might possibly discover the cause of her strange disorder (which I suspected had its origin in some calamity of her earlier days), and so qualify myself to afford her the advice and comfort she might need. During the first two or three visits I paid her I could elicit nothing. She sat still as a statue, and watched me sullenly while I spoke to her of the mysteries and consolations of our faith, exhorting her vainly to make confession and obtain that peace of heart and mind which the sacrament of penance could alone bestow. Well, it chanced that on the occasion of one of these visits I took with me, besides my prayerbook, a small sheet of paper, on which I had written a few passages of Scripture, such as I conjectured to be most suited to her soul's necessity. I found her, as usual, moody and reserved, until I drew from my missal the sheet of transcribed texts and put it into her hand. In an instant her manner changed. The madness gleamed in her eyes, and she began searching nervously for a pencil. `I can do it!' she cried. `My writing was always like hers, for we learnt together when we were children. He will never know I wrote it; we shall dupe him easily. Already I have practised her signature many times—soon I shall be able to make it exactly like her own hand. And I shall tell her, my lady, that he would have deceived her, that I overheard him love-making to another girl— that I discovered his falsehood—his baseness—and that he fled in his shame from the county. Yes, yes, we will dupe them both.'

"In this fashion she chattered and muttered feverishly for some minutes, till I grew alarmed, and taking her by the shoulders, tried to shake back the senses into her distracted brain. `What ails you, foolish old woman? cried I `I am not "miladi;" I am your parish pastor. Say your Pater Noster, or your Ave, and drive Satan away.'

"I am not sure whether my words or the removal of the unlucky manuscript recalled her wandering wits. At any rate, she speedily recovered, and, after doing my best to soothe and calm her by leading her to speak on other topics, I quitted the cottage reassured.

"Not long after this episode a neighbor called at my house one morning, and told me that, having missed the old woman from the weekly market, and knowing how regular she had always been in her attendance, he had gone to her dwelling and found her lying sick and desiring to see me. Of course I immediately prepared to comply with her request, providing myself in case I should find her anxious for absolution and the viaticum. Directly I entered her hut, she beckoned me to the bedside, and said in a low, hurried voice:—

"Father, I wish to confess to you at once, for I know I am going to die.'

"Perceiving that, for the present at least, she was perfectly sane, I willingly complied with her request, and heard her slowly and painfully unburden her miserable soul.

"Monsieur, if the story with which Virginie Giraud intrusted me had been told only in her sacramental confession, I should not have been able to repeat it to you. But, when the final words of peace had been spoken, she took a packet of papers from beneath her pillow and placed it in my hands. `Here, father,' she said, `is the substance of my history. When I am dead, you are free to make what use of it you please. It may warn some, perhaps, from yielding to the great temptation which overcame me.'

"'The temptation of a bribe?" said I, inquiringly. She turned her failing sight towards my face and shook her head feebly.

"`No bribe, father," she answered. `Do you believe I would have done what I did for mere coin?"

"I gave no reply, for her words were enigmatical to me, and I was loath to harass with my curiosity a soul so near its departure as hers. So I leaned back in my chair and sat silent, in the hope that, being wearied with her religious exercises, she might be able to sleep a little. But, no doubt, my last question, working in her disordered mind, awoke again the madness that had only slumbered for a time. Suddenly she raised herself on her pillow, pressed her withered hands to her head, and cried out wildly:—

"`Money!—money to me, who would have sold my own soul for one day of his love! Ah! I could have flung it back in their faces!—foo's that they were to believe I cared for gold! Philip! Philip! you were mad to think of the heiress as a wife; it had been better for you had you cared to look on me —on me who loved you so! Then I should never have ruined you—never betrayed you to Lady Sarah! But I could not forgive the hard words you gave me; I could not forgive your love for Julia! Shall I ever go to paradise —to paradise where the saints are? Will they let me in there?—will they suffer my soul among them? Or shall I never leave purgatory, but burn, and burn, and burn there always uncleansed? For, oh! if all the past should come back to me a thousand years hence, I should do the same thing again, Phil Brian, for love of you!'

"She started from the bed in her delirium; there came a rattling sound in her throat—a sudden choking cry—and in a moment her breast and pillow and quilt were deluged with a crimson stream! In her paroxysm she had burst a blood-vessel. I sprang forward to catch her as she fell prone upon the brick floor; raised her in my arms, and gazed at her distorted features. There was no breath from the reddened lips. Virginie Giraud was a corpse.

"Thus in her madness was told the secret of her life and her crime; a secret she would not confess even to me in her sane moments. It was no greed of gold, but despised and vindictive love that lay behind all the horrors she had related. From my soul I pitied the poor dead wretch, for I dimly comprehended what a hell her existence on earth had been.

"The written account of the Steepside tragedy with which she had intrusted me furnished, in somewhat briefer language, the story I have just read to you, and many of its more important details have subsequently been verified by me on application to other sources, so that in that paper you have the testimony of an eyewitness to the facts, as well as the support of legal evidence.

"Some forty years after Virginie's death, monsieur, family reasons obliged me to seek temporary release from duty and come to England; and, finding that circumstances would keep me in the country for some time, I came here and went to see that house. But the tenant at the lodge could only tell me that Steepside was empty then, and had been empty for years past; and I have discovered that, since that horrible 22nd of December, it never had an occupant. Sir Julian, to whom it belonged by purchase, left no immediate heirs, and his relatives squabbled between themselves over the property, till one by one the disputing parties died off, and now there is no one enterprising enough to resuscitate the lawsuit."

Rising to take my leave of the genial old man, it occurred to me as extremely probable that he might have been led to form some opinion worth hearing with regard to the nature of the strange appearances at Steepside, and I ventured accordingly to make the inquiry.

"If my views on the subject have any value or interest for you," said he, "you are very welcome to know them. As a priest of the Catholic Church, I cannot accept the popular notions about ghostly visitations. Such

experiences as yours in that ill-fated mansion are explicable to me only on the following hypothesis. There is a Power greater than the powers of evil; a Will to which even demons must submit. It is not inconsistent with Christian doctrine to suppose that, in cases of such terrible crimes as that we have been discussing, the evil spirits who prompted these crimes may, for a period more or less lengthy, be forced to haunt the scene of their machinations, and re-enact there, in phantom show, the horrors they once caused in reality. Naturally—or perhaps," said he, breaking off with a little smile, "I ought rather to say super-naturally— these demons, in order to manifest themselves, would be forced to resume some shape that would identify them with the crime they had suggested; and, in such a case, what more likely than that they should adopt the spectral forms of their human victims—murdered and murderer, or otherwise—according to the nature of the wickedness perpetrated? This is but an amateur opinion, monsieur; I offer it as an individual, not as a priest speaking on the part of the Church. But it may serve to account for a real difficulty, and may be held without impiety. Of one thing at least we may rest assured as Christian men; that the souls of the dead, whether of saints or sinners, are in God's safe keeping, and walk the earth no more."

Then I shook hands with M. Pierre, and we parted. And after that, reader, I went to my friend's house, and spent my Christmas week right merrily.

III. Beyond the Sunset
A Fairy Tale for the Times

I.

Once upon a time there was a Princess. Now, this Princess dwelt in a far-off and beautiful world beyond the sunset, and she had immortal youth and an ancestry of glorious name. Very rich, too, she was, and the palace in which she lived was made all of marble and alabaster and things precious and wonderful. But that which was most wonderful about her was her exceeding beauty,—a beauty not like that one sees in the world this side of the sunset. For the beauty of the Princess was the bright-shining of a lovely spirit; her body was but the veil of her soul that shone through all her perfect form as the radiance of the sun shines through clear water. I cannot tell you how beautiful this Princess was, nor can I describe the color of her hair and her eyes, or the aspect of her face. Many men have seen her and tried to give an account of her; but though I have read several of these accounts, they differ so greatly from one another that I should find it hard indeed to reproduce her picture from the records of it which her lovers have left.

For all these men who have written about the Princess loved her; none, indeed, could help it who ever looked on her face. And to some she has seemed fair as the dawn, and to others dark as night; some have found her gay and joyous as Allegro, and others sad and silent and sweet as Penseroso. But to every lover she has seemed the essence and core of all beauty; the purest, noblest, highest, and most regal being that he has found it possible to conceive. I am not going to tell you about all the lovers of the

Princess, for that would take many volumes to rehearse, but only about three of them, because these three were typical personages, and had very remarkable histories.

Like all the lovers of the Princess, these three men were travelers, coming from a distant country to the land beyond the sunset on purpose to see the beautiful lady of whom their fathers and grandfathers had told them; the lady who never could outlive youth because she belonged to the race of the everlasting Gods who ruled the earth in the old far-off Hellenic times.

I do not know how long these three men stayed in the country of the Princess; but they stayed quite long enough to be very, very much in love with her, and when at last they had to come away—for no man who is not "dead" can remain long beyond the sunset—she gave to each of them a beautiful little bird, a tiny living bird with a voice of sweetest music, that had been trained and tuned to song by Phoebus Apollo himself. And I could no more describe to you the sweetness of that song than I could describe the beauty of the Princess.

Then she told the travelers to be of brave heart and of valiant hope, because there lay before them an ordeal demanding all their prowess, and after that the prospect of a great reward. "Now," she said, "that you have learned to love me, and to desire to have your dwelling here with me, you must go forth to prove your knighthood. I am not inaccessible, but no man must think to win me for his lady unless he first justify his fealty by noble service. The world to which you now go is a world of mirage and of phantasms, which appear real only to those who have never reached and seen this realm of mine on the heavenward side of the sun. You will have to pass through ways beset by monstrous spectres, over wastes where rage ferocious hydras, chimeras, and strange dragons breathing flame. You must journey past beautiful shadowy islets of the summer sea, in whose fertile

bays the cunning sirens sing; you must brave the mountain robber, the goblins of the wilderness, and the ogre whose joy is to devour living men. But fear nothing, for all these are but phantoms; nor do you need any sword or spear to slay them, but only a loyal mind and an unswerving purpose. Let not your vision be deceived, nor your heart beguiled; return to me unscathed through all these many snares, and doubt not the worth and greatness of the guerdon I shall give. Nor think you go unaided. With each of you I send a guide and monitor; heed well his voice and follow where he leads."

II.

Now, when the three travelers had received their presents, and had looked their last upon the shining face of the donor, they went out of the palace and through the golden gate of the wonderful city in which she dwelt, and so, once again, they came into the land which lies this side of the sun.

Then their ordeal began; but, indeed, they saw no sirens or dragons or gorgons, but only people like themselves going and coming along the highways. Some of these people sauntered, some ran, some walked alone and pensively, others congregated in groups together and talked or laughed or shouted noisy songs. Under the pleasant trees on the greensward were

pavilions, beautifully adorned; the sound of music issued from many of them, fair women danced there under the new-blossoming trees, tossing flowers into the air, and feasts were spread, wine flowed, and jewels glittered. And the music and the dancing women pleased the ear and eye of one of the three travelers, so that he turned aside from his companions to listen and to look. Then presently a group of youths and girls drew near and spoke to him. "It is our festival," they said; "we are worshippers of Queen Beauty; come and feast with us. The moon of May is rising; we shall dance all night in her beautiful soft beams." But he said, "I have just returned from a country the beauty of which far surpasses that of anything one can see here, and where there is a Princess so lovely and so stately that the greatest Queen of all your world is not fit to be her tiring maid." Then they said, "Where is that country of which you speak, and who is this wonderful Princess?" "It is the land beyond the sunset," he answered, "but the name of the Princess no man knows until she herself tells it him. And she will tell it only to the man whom she loves."

At that they laughed and made mirth among themselves. "Your land is the land of dreams," they said; "we have heard all about it. Nothing there is real, and as for your Princess she is a mere shadow, a vision of your own creation, and no substantial being at all. The only real and true beauty is the beauty we see and touch and hear; the beauty which sense reveals to us, and which is present with us today." Then he answered, "I do not blame you at all, for you have never seen my Princess. But I have seen her, and heard her speak, and some day I hope to return to her. And when I came away she warned me that in this country I should be beset by all manner of strange and monstrous spectres, harpies, and sirens, eaters of men, whom I must bravely meet and overcome. I pray you tell me in what part of your land these dangers lie, that I may be on my guard against them."

Thereat they laughed the more, and answered him, "Oh, foolish traveler, your head is certainly full of dreams! There are no such things as sirens; all that is an old Greek fable, a fairy tale with no meaning except for old Greeks and modern babies! You will never meet with any sirens or harpies, nor will you ever see again the Princess of whom you talk, unless, indeed, in your dreams. It is this country that is the only real one, there is nothing at all beyond the sunset."

Now, all this time the little bird which the Princess had given to him was singing quite loudly under the folds of the traveler's cloak. And he took it out and showed it to the youths who spoke with him, and said, "This bird was given me by the Princess whom you declare to be a myth. How could a myth give me this living bird?" They answered, "You are surely a madman as well as a dreamer. Doubtless the bird flew into your chamber while you slept, and your dreaming fancy took advantage of the incident to frame this tale about the Princess and her gift. It is often so in dreams. The consciousness perceives things as it were through a cloud, and weaves fictions out of realities."

Then he began to doubt, but still he held his ground, and said, "Yet hear how sweetly it sings! No wild, untaught bird of earth could sing like that." Whereat they were vastly merry, and one cried, Why, it is quite a common 'tweet-tweet!' It is no more than the chirp of a vulgar, everyday thrush or linnet!" And another, "Were I you, I would wring the bird's neck; it must be a terrible nuisance if it always makes such a noise!" And a third, "Let it fly, we cannot hear ourselves speaking for its screaming!" Then the traveler began to feel ashamed of his bird. "All that I say," he thought, "appears to them foolish, even the Princess's gift is, in their eyes, a common chirping chaffinch. What if indeed I have been dreaming; what if this, after all, should be the real world, and the other a mere fantasy?"

The bird sang, "Away! away! or you will never see the Princess more! The real world lies beyond the gates of the sunset!"

But when the traveler asked the youths what the bird sang, they answered that they had only heard "Tweet-tweet," and "Chirp-chirp." Then he was really angry, but not with them, as you would perhaps have thought. No, he was angry with the bird, and ashamed of it and of himself. And he threw it from him into the air, and clapped his hands to drive it away; and all the youths and girls that stood around him clapped theirs too. "Sh-shsh," they cried, "be off, you are a good-for-nothing hedge-finch, and may be thankful your neck has not been wrung to punish you for making such a noise!"

So the bird flew away, away beyond the sunset, and I think it went back to the Princess and told her all that had happened. And the traveler went, and danced and sang and feasted to his heart's content with the worshippers of Queen Beauty, not knowing that he really had fallen among the sirens after all!

III.

Meanwhile the two other travelers had gone on their way, for neither of them cared about pleasure; one was a grave-looking man who walked with

his eyes on the ground, looking curiously at every rock and shrub he passed by the wayside, and often pausing to examine more closely a strange herb, or to pick to pieces a flower; the other had a calm, sweet face, and he walked erect, his eyes lifted towards the great mountains that lay far away before them.

By-and-by there came along the road towards the two travelers a company of men carrying banners, on which were inscribed as mottoes—"Knowledge is Freedom!" " Science knows no law but the law of Progress!" "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!" "Utility is Virtue," and a great many other fine phrases. Most of the persons who marched first in this procession wore spectacles, and some were clad in academical costumes. The greater number had gone past, when the grave-looking traveler—he who had interested himself so much in the stones and foliage by the wayside—courteously stopped one of the company and asked him what the procession meant. "We are worshippers of Science," answered the man whom he addressed; "today we hold solemn rites in honor of our deity. Many orations will be made by her high priests, and a great number of victims slain,—lambs, and horses, and doves, and hinds, and all manner of animals. They will be put to death with unspeakable torments, racked, and maimed, and burned, and hewn asunder, all for the glory and gain of Science. And we shall shout with enthusiasm as the blood flows over her altars, and the smoke ascends in her praise."

"But all this is horrible," said the grave man, with a gesture of avoidance; "it sounds to me like a description of the orgies of savages, or of the pastimes of madmen; it is unworthy of intelligent and sane men." "On the contrary," returned his informant, "it is just because we are intelligent and sane that we take delight in it. For it is by means of these sacrifices that our deity vouchsafes her oracles. In the mangled corpses and entrails of these victims our augurs find the knowledges we seek," "And what knowledges

are they?" asked the traveler. "The knowledge of Nature's secrets," cried the votary of Science with kindling eye, "the knowledge of life and death; the magic of the art of healing disease; the solution of the riddle of the universe! All this we learn, all this we perceive, in the dying throes of our victims. Does not this suffice?—is not the end great enough to justify the means?"

Then, when the second of the travelers heard these words—he whose face had been lifted as he walked—he drew nearer and answered:—

"No; it is greater to be just than to be learned. No man should wish to be healed at the cost of another's torment." At which the stranger frowned, and retorted impatiently, "You forget, methinks, that they whom we seek to heal are men, and they who are tormented merely beasts. By these means we enrich and endow humanity." "Nay, I forget not," he answered gently, "but he who would be so healed is man no longer. By that wish and act he becomes lower than any beast. Nor can humanity be enriched by that which beggars it of all its wealth." "Fine speeches, forsooth!" cried the worshipper of Science; "you are a moralist, I find, and doubtless a very ignorant person! All this old-fashioned talk of yours belongs to a past age. We have cast aside superstition, we have swept away the old faiths. Our only guide is Reason, our only goal is Knowledge!" "Alas!" returned the other, "it is not the higher but the lower Reason which leads you, and the Knowledge you covet is not that of realities, but of mere seemings. You do not know the real world. You are the dupes of a Phantasm which you take for Substance." With that he passed on, and the man of Science was left in the company of the traveler who had first accosted him. "What person is that?" asked the former, looking after the retreating figure of him who had just spoken. "He is a poet," returned the grave-faced traveler; "we have both of us been beyond the sunset to see the lovely Princess who rules that wonderful country, and we left it together on a journey to this world of yours."

"Beyond the sunset!" repeated the other, incredulously. "That is the land of shadows; when the world was younger they used to say the old Gods lived there." "Maybe they live there still,' said the traveler, "for the Princess is of their kith and lineage." "A pretty fable, indeed," responded the scientific votary. "But we know now that all that kind of thing is sheer nonsense, and worse, for it is the basis of the effete old-world sentiment which forms the most formidable obstacle to Progress, and which Science even yet finds it hard to overthrow. But what is that strange singing I hear beneath your cloak?"

It was the bird which the traveler had received from the Princess. He drew it forth, but did not say whose gift it was nor whence it came, because of the contempt with which his companion had spoken of the mystic country and its Rulers. Already he began to waver in his loyalty towards the Princess, and to desire greatly the knowledges of which the stranger told him. For this traveler, though he cared nothing for pleasure, or for the beauty of sensuous things, was greatly taken by the wish to be wise; only he did not rightly know in what wisdom consists. He thought it lay in the acquirement of facts, whereas really it is the power by which facts are transcended.

"That is a foreign bird," observed the scientific man, examining it carefully through his spectacles, "and quite a curiosity. I do not remember having ever seen one like it. The note, too, is peculiar. In some of its tones it reminds me of the nightingale. No doubt it is the descendant of a developed species of a nightingale, carefully selected and artificially bred from one generation to another. Wonderful modifications of species may be obtained in this manner, as experiments with fancy breeds of pigeons has amply proved. Permit me to examine the bill more closely. Yes, yes—a nightingale certainly—and yet—indeed, I ought not to decide in haste. I should greatly

like to have the opinion of Professor Effaress on the subject. But what noise is that yonder?"

For just then a terrible hubbub arose among a crowd of people congregated under the portico of a large and magnificent building a little way from the place where the scientific man and the intellectual traveler stood conversing. This building, the facade of which was adorned all over with bas-reliefs of Liberty and Progress, and modern elderly gentlemen in doctors' gowns and laurel wreaths, with rolls of paper and microscopes, was, in fact, a great Scientific Institution, and into it the procession of learned personages whom the travelers had met on their way had entered, followed by a great multitude of admirers and enthusiasts. In this edifice the solemn rites which the votary of Science had described were to be held, and a vast congregation filled its halls. All at once, just as the sacrifices were about to begin, a solitary man arose in the midst of the hushed assembly, and protested, as once of old, by the banks of the far-away Ganges, Siddartha Buddha had protested against the bloody offerings of the priests of Indra. And much after the same manner as Buddha had spoken this man spoke, of the high duty of manhood, of the splendour of justice, of the certainty of retribution, and of the true meaning of Progress and Freedom, the noblest reaches of which are spiritual, transcending all the baser and meaner utilities of the physical nature. And when the high priests of Science, not like the priests of Indra in older tines, answered the prophet disdainfully and without shame, that they knew nothing of any spiritual utilities, because they believed in evolution and held man to be only a developed ape, with no more soul than his ancestor, the stranger responded that he too was an Evolutionist, but that he understood the doctrine quite differently from them, and more after the fashion of the old teachers,—Pythagoras, Plato, Hermes, and Buddha. And that the living and incorruptible Spirit of God was in all things, whether ape or man, whether beast or human; ay, and in the very flowers and grass of the field, and in

every element of all that is ignorantly thought to be dead and inert matter. So that the soul of man, he said, is one with the soul that is in all Nature, only that when man is truly human, in him alone the soul becomes self-knowing and self-concentrated; the mirror of Heaven, and the focus of the Divine Light. And he declared, moreover, that the spiritual evolution of which he spoke was not so much promoted by intellectual knowledge as by moral goodness; that it was possible to be a very learned ape indeed, but in no wise to deserve the name of man; and that inasmuch as any person was disposed to sacrifice the higher to the lower reason, and to rank intellectual above spiritual attainment, insomuch that person was still an ape and had not developed humanity.

Now, the stranger who was brave enough to say all this was no other than the traveler poet, and all the time he was speaking, the bird which the Princess had given him lay hid in his bosom and sang to him, clear and sweet, "Courage! courage! these are the ogres and the dragons; fight the good fight; be of a bold heart!" Nor was he astonished or dismayed when the assembly arose with tumult and hooting, and violently thrust him out of the Scientific Institution into the street. And that was the noise which the other traveler and his companion had heard.

But when the greater part of the mob had returned into the building there was left with the poet a little group of men and women whose hearts had been stirred by his protest. And they said to him, "You have spoken well, sir, and have done a noble thing. We are citizens of this place, and we will devote ourselves to giving effect to your words. Doubt not that we shall succeed, though it may be long first, for indeed we will work with a will." Then the poet was glad, because he had not spoken in vain, and he bade them good speed, and went on his way. But the scientific man, who was with the other traveler, heard these last words, and became very angry. "Certainly," he said, "this foolish and ignorant person who has just been

turned out of the assembly must have insulted our great leaders! What presumption! what insolence! No one knows what mischief he may not have done by his silly talk! It is deplorable! But see, here comes Professor Effaress, the very man I most wished to see. Professor, let me present this gentleman. He is the owner of a rare and remarkable bird, on which we want your opinion."

The Professor was a very great personage, and his coat was covered all over with decorations and bits of colored ribbon, like those on a kite's tail. Perhaps, like a kite's tail, they weighted and steadied him, and kept him from mounting too high into the clouds. The Professor looked at the bird through his spectacles, and nodded his head sagaciously. "I have seen this species before," he said, "though not often. It belongs to a very ancient family indeed, and I scarcely thought that any specimen of it remained in the present day. Quite a museum bird; and in excellent plumage, too. Sir, I congratulate you."

"You do not, then, consider, Professor," said the traveler, "that this bird has about it anything transcendental—that it is—in fact— not altogether—pardon me the expression—a terrestrial bird?" For he was afraid to say the truth, that the bird really came from beyond the sunset.

The decorated personage was much amused. He laughed pleasantly, and answered in bland tones, "Oh dear, no; I recognise quite well the species to which it belongs. An ancient species, as I have said, and one indeed that Science has done her utmost to extirpate, purposely in part, because it is proved to be a great devastator of the crops, and thus directly injurious to the interests of mankind, and partly by accident, for it has a most remarkable song-note, and scientific men have destroyed all the specimens they have been able to procure, in the hope of discovering the mechanism

by which the vocal tones are produced. But, pardon me, are you a stranger in this city, sir?"

"I am," responded the traveler, "and permit me to assure you that I take a lively interest in the scientific and intellectual pursuits with which in this place, I perceive, you are largely occupied."

"We have a Brotherhood of Learning here, sir," returned the Professor; "we are all Progressionists. I trust you will remain with us and take part in our assemblies." But, as he said that, the fairy bird suddenly lifted up his song and warned the traveler, crying in the language of the country beyond the sunset, "Beware! beware! This is an ogre, he will kill you, and mix your bones with his bread! Be warned in time, and fly; fly, if you cannot fight!"

"Dear me," said the Professor, "what a very remarkable note! I am convinced that the structure and disposition of this bird's vocal organs must be unique. Speaking for my scientific brethren, as well as for myself, I may say that we should hold ourselves singularly indebted to you if you would permit us the opportunity of adding so rare a specimen to our national collection. It would be an acquisition, sir, I assure you, for which we would show ourselves profoundly grateful. Indeed, I am sure that the Society to which I have the honor to belong would readily admit to its Fellowship the donor of a treasure so inestimable." As he spoke, he fixed his eyes on the traveler, and bowed with much ceremony and condescension. And the traveler thought what a fine thing it would be to become a Professor, and to be able to wear a great many bits of colored ribbon, and to be immensely learned, and know all the facts of the universe. And, after all, what was a little singing bird, and a fairy Princess, in whose very existence the scientific gentlemen did not in the least believe, and who was, perhaps, really the shadow of a dream? So he bowed in return, and said he was greatly honored; and Professor Effaress took the bird and twisted its neck

gravely, and put the little corpse into his pocket. And so the divine and beautiful song of the fairy minstrel was quenched, and instead of it I suppose the traveler got a great deal of learning and many fine decorations on his coat.

But the spirit of the slain bird fled away from that inhospitable city, and went back to the Princess and told her what had befallen.

IV.

As for the poet, he went on his way alone into the open country, and saw the peasants in the fields, reaping and gleaning and gathering fruit and corn, for it was harvest time. And he passed through many hamlets and villages, and sometimes he rested a night or two at an inn; and on Sundays he heard the parish parson say prayers and preach in some quaint little Norman or Saxon church.

And at last he came to a brand-new town, where all the houses were Early English, and all the people dressed like ancient Greeks, and all the manners Renaissance, or, perhaps, Gothic. The poet thought they were Gothic, and probably he was right.

In this town the talk was mostly about Art, and many fine things were said in regard to "sweetness and light." Everybody claimed to be an artist of some kind, whether painter, musician, novelist, dramatist, verse-maker, reciter, singer, or what not. But although they seemed so greatly devoted to the Graces and the Muses, it was but the images of the Parnassian Gods that they worshipped. For in the purlieus of this fine town, horrible cruelties and abuses were committed, yet none of the so-called poets lifted a cry of

reform. Every morning, early, before daybreak, there came through the streets long and sad processions of meek-eyed oxen and bleating lambs, harried by brutal drovers, with shouts and blows,—terrible processions of innocent creatures going to die under the poleaxe and the knife in order to provide the "pleasures of the table" for dainty votaries of "sweetness and light." Before the fair faint dawn made rosy the eastern sky over the houses, you might have heard on every side the heavy thud of the poleaxe striking down the patient heifer on her knees,—the heifer whose eyes are like the eyes of Here, say the old Greek song-books, that were read and quoted all day in this town of Culture and of Art.

And a little later, going down the byways of the town, you might have seen the gutters running with hot fresh blood, and have met carts laden with gory hides, and buckets filled with brains and blood, going to the factories and tanyards. Young lads spent all their days in the slaughter-houses, dealing violent deaths, witnessing tragedies of carnage, hearing incessant plaintive cries, walking about on clogs among pools of clotting or steamy blood, and breathing the fumes of it. And scarce a mile away from the scene of all these loathsome and degrading sights, sounds, and odors, you might have found fastidious and courtly gentlemen, and ladies all belaced and bejewelled, sentimentalising over their "aspic de foie gras," or their "cotelettes a la jardiniere," or some other euphemism for the dead flesh which could not, without pardonable breach of good breeding, be called by its plain true name in their presence.

And when the poet reminded them of this truth, and spoke to them of the demoralisation to which, by their habits, they daily subjected many of their fellowmen; when he drew for them graphic pictures of the slaughteryard, and of all the scenes of suffering and tyranny that led up to it and ensued from it, they clapped their hands to their ears, and cried out that he was a shockingly coarse person, and quite too horribly indelicate for refined

society. Because, indeed, they cared only about a surface and outside refinement, and not a whit for that which is inward and profound. For beauty of being—they had neither desire nor power of reverence; all their enthusiasm was spent over forms and words and appearances of beauty. In them the senses were quickened, but not the heart, nor the reason. Therefore the spirit of the Reformer was not in them, but the spirit of the Dilettante only.

And the poet was grieved and angry with them, because every true poet is a Reformer; and he went forth and spoke aloud in their public places and rebuked the dwellers in that town. But except a few curiosity hunters and some idle folks who wanted higher wages and less work, and thought he might help them to get what they wished for, nobody listened to him. But they went in crowds to see a conjurer, and to hear a man who lectured on blue china, and another who made them a long oration about intricate and obscure texts in a certain old dramatic book. And I think that in those days, if it had not been for the sweet and gracious song of the fairy bird which he carried about always in his bosom, the poet would have become very heartsick and desponding indeed. I do not quite know what it was that the bird sang, but it was something about the certainty of the advent of wisdom, and of the coming of the perfect day; and the burden of the song was hope for all the nations of the earth. Because every beautiful and wise thought that any man conceives is the heritage of the whole race of men, and an earnest and foregleam of what all men will some day inviolably hold for true. And forasmuch as poets are the advanced guard of the marching army of humanity, therefore they are necessarily the first discoverers and proclaimers of the new landscapes and ranges of Duties and Rights that rise out of the horizon, point after point, and vista after vista, along the line of progress. For the sonnet of the poet today is to furnish the keynote of the morrow's speech in Parliament, as that which yesterday was song is today the current prose of the hustings, the pulpit, and the market. Wherefore, O

poet, take heart for the world; thou, in whose utterance speaks the inevitable Future; who art thyself God's prophecy and covenant of what the race at large shall one day be! Sing thy songs, utter thine whole intent, recount thy vision; though today no one heed thee, thou hast nevertheless spoken, and the spoken word is not lost. Every true thought lives, because the Spirit of God is in it, and when time is ripe it will incarnate itself in action. Thou, thou art the creator, the man of thought; thou art the pioneer of the ages!

Somewhat on this wise sang the fairy bird, and thereby the poet was comforted, and took courage, and lifted up his voice and his apocalypse. And though few people cared to hear, and many jeered, and some rebuked, he minded only that all he should say might be well said, and be as perfect and wise and worthy as he could make it. And when he had finished his testimony, he went forth from the gates of the town, and began once more to traverse the solitudes of moor and forest.

But now the winter had set in over the land, and the wastes were bleak, and the trees stood like pallid ghosts, sheeted and shrouded in snow. And the north wind moaned across the open country, and the traveler grew cold and weary. Then he spoke to the bird and said, "Bird, when I and my companions set out on our journey from the land beyond the sunset, the Princess promised us each a guide, who should bring us back in safety if only we would faithfully heed his monitions. Where then is this guide? for hitherto I have walked alone, and have seen no leader.

And the bird answered, "O poet, I, whom thou bearest about in thy bosom, am that guide and monitor! I am thy director, thine angel, and thine inward light. And to each of thy companions a like guide was vouchsafed, but the man of appetite drove away his monitor, and the man of intellect did even worse, for he gave over to death his friend and his better self. Gold against dross, the wisdom of the Gods against the knowledges of men! But

thou, poet, art the child of the Gods, and thou alone shalt again behold with joy the land beyond the sunset, and the face of Her whose true servitor and knight thou art!"

Then the traveler was right glad, and his heart was lifted up, and as he went he sang. But, for all that, the way grew steeper to his feet, and the icy air colder to his face; and on every hand there were no longer meadows and orchards full of laboring folk, but glittering snow-wreaths, and diamond-bright glaciers, shining hard and keen against the deeps of darkening space; and at times the roar of a distant avalanche shook the atmosphere about him, and then died away into the silence out of which the sound had come. Peak above peak of crystal-white mountain ranges rose upon his sight, massive, and still, and awful, terrible affirmations of the verity of the Ideal. For this world of colossal heights and fathomless gulfs, of blinding snows, of primeval silence, of infinite revelation, of splendid lights upon manifold summits of opal, topaz, and sardony, all seemed to him the witness and visible manifestation of his most secret and dreadful thoughts. He had seen these things in his visions, he had shaped them in his hidden reveries, he had dared to believe that such a region as this might be—nay, ought to be—if the universe were of Divine making. And now it burst upon him, an apocalypse of giant glories, an empire of absolute being, independent and careless of human presence, affirming itself eternally to its own immeasurable solitudes.

"I have reached the top and pinnacle of life," cried the poet; "this is the world wherein all things are made!"

And now, indeed, save for the fairy bird, he trod his path alone. Now and then great clouds of mist swept down from the heights, or rose from the icy gorges, and wrapped him in their soft gray folds, hiding from his sight the glittering expanse around him, and making him afraid. Or, at times, he

beheld his own shadow, a vast and portentous Self, projected on the nebulous air, and looming in his pathway, a solitary monster threatening him with doom. Or yet again, there arose before him, multiplied in bewildering eddies of fog-wreath, a hundred spectral selves, each above and behind the other, like images repeated in reverberating mirrors—his own form, his own mien, his own garb and aspect—appalling in their omnipresence, maddening in their grotesque immensity as the goblins of a fever dream. But when first the traveler beheld this sight, and shrank at it, feeling for his sword, the fairy bird at his breast sang to him, "Fear not, this is the Chimaera of whom the Princess spoke. You have passed unhurt the sirens, the ogres, and the hydra-headed brood of plain and lowland; now meet with courage this phantom of the heights. Even now thou standest on the confines of the land beyond the sunset; these are the dwellers on the border, the spectres who haunt the threshold of the farther world. They are but shadows of thyself, reflections cast upon the mists of the abyss, phantoms painted on the veil of the sanctuary. Out of the void they arise, the offspring of Unreason and of the Hadean Night."

Then a strong wind came down from the peaks of the mountains like the breathing of a God; and it rent the clouds asunder, and scattered the fog wreaths, and blew the phantoms hither and thither like smoke; and like smoke they were extinguished and spent against the crags of the pass. And after that the poet cared no more for them, but went on his way with a bold heart, until he had left behind and below him the clouds and mists of the ravines among the hills, and stood on the topmost expanse of dazzling snow, and beheld once more the golden gate of the Land that lies beyond the Sun.

But of his meeting with the Princess, and of the gladness and splendour of their espousals, and of all the joy that he had, is not for me to tell, for these things, which belong to the chronicles of that fairy country, no mortal

hand in words of human speech is in any wise able to relate. All that I certainly know and can speak of with plainness is this, that he obtained the fulness of his heart's desire, and beyond all hope, or knowledge, or understanding of earth, was blessed for evermore.

And now I have finished the story of a man who saw and followed his Ideal, who loved and prized it, and clave to it above and through all lesser mundane things. Of a man whom the senses could not allure, nor the craving for knowledge, nor the lust of power, nor the blast of spiritual vanity, shake from his perfect rectitude and service. Of a man who, seeing the good and the beautiful way, turned not aside from it, nor yielded a step to the enemy; in whose soul the voice of the inward Divinity no rebuke, nor derision, nor neglect could quench; who chose his part and abode by it, seeking no reconciliation with the world, not weakly repining because his faith in the justice of God distanced the sympathies of common men." Every poet has it in him to imagine, to comprehend, and desire such a life as this; he who lives it canonises his genius, and, to the topmost manhood of the Seer, adds the Divinity of Heroism.

IV. A Turn of Luck

"Messieurs, faites votre jeu! . . . Le jeu est fait! . . . Rien ne va plus! . . . Rouge gagne et la couleur! . . . Rouge gagne, la couleur perd! . . . Rouge perd et la couleur! . . . "

Such were the monotonous continually recurring sentences, always spoken in the same impassive tones, to which I listened as I stood by the

tables in the gaming-rooms of Monte Carlo. Such are the sentences to which devotees of the fickle goddess, Chance, listen hour after hour as the day wears itself out from early morning to late evening in that beautiful, cruel, enchanting earthly paradise, whose shores are washed by the bluest sea in the world, whose gardens are dotted with globes of golden fruit, and plumed with feathery palms, and where, as you wander in and out among the delicious shadowy foliage, you hear, incessantly, the sound of guns, and may, now and then, catch sight of some doomed creature with delicate white breast and broken wing, dropping, helpless and bleeding, into the still dark waters below the cliff. A wicked place! A cruel place! Heartless, bitter, pitiless, inhuman! And yet, so beautiful!

I stood, on this particular afternoon, just opposite a young man seated at one of the rouge et noir tables. As my glance wandered from face to face among the players, it was arrested by his,—a singularly pallid, thin, eager face; remarkably eager, even in such a place and in such company as this. He seemed about twenty- five, but he had the bowed and shrunken look of an invalid, and from time to time he coughed terribly, the ominous cough of a person with lungs half consumed by tubercle. He had not the air of a man who gambles for pleasure; nor, I thought, that of a spendthrift or a "ne'er-do-weel;" disease, not dissipation, had hollowed his cheeks and set his hands trembling, and the unnatural light in his eyes was born of fever rather than of greed. He played anxiously but not excitedly, seldom venturing on a heavy stake, and watching the game with an intentness which no incident diverted. Suddenly I saw a young girl make her way through the throng towards him. She was plainly dressed, and had a sweet, sad face and eyes full of tenderness. She touched him on the shoulder, stooped over him, and kissed him in the frankest, simplest manner possible on the forehead. "Viens," she whispered, "je m'etouffe ici, il fait si frais dehors; sortons." He did not answer; his eyes were on the cards. "Rouge perd, et la couleur," said the hard official voice.

With a sigh, he rose, coughed, passed his hand over his eyes, and took his wife's arm.—(I felt sure she was his wife.) They passed slowly through the rooms together, and I lost sight of them. But not of his face—nor of hers. Sitting by the fountain outside the gaming saloons half an hour afterwards, I fell to musing about this strange couple. So young,—she scarcely more than a child, and he so ill and wasted! He had played with the manner of an old habitue, and she seemed used to finding him at the tables and leading him away. I made up my mind that I had stumbled on a romance, and resolved to hunt it down. At the table d'hote dinner in my hotel that evening I met a friend from Nice to whom I confided my curiosity. "I know," said he, "the young people of whom you speak; they are patients of Dr S. of Monaco, one of my most intimate acquaintances. He told me their story." "They," I interpolated,—" is the wife, then, also ill?" My friend smiled a little. "Not ill exactly, perhaps," he answered. "But you must have seen,—she will very shortly be a mother. And she is very young and delicate." "Tell me their story," I said, "since you know it. It is romantic, I am certain." "It is sad," he said, "and sadness suffices, I suppose, to constitute romance. The young man's name is Georges Saint-Cyr, and his family were `poor relations' of an aristocratic house. I say `were,' because they are all dead,— his father, mother, and three sisters. The father died of tubercle, so did his daughters; the son, you see, inherits the same disease and will also die of it at no very distant time. Georges Saint-Cyr never found anybody to take him up in life. He was quite a lad when he lost his widowed mother, and his health was, even then, so bad and fitful that be could never work. He tried his best; but what chef can afford to employ a youth who is always sending in doctor's certificates to excuse his absence from his desk, and breaking down with headache or swooning on the floor in office-hours? He was totally unfit to earn his living, and the little money he had would not suffice to keep him decently. Moreover, in his delicate condition he positively needed comforts which to other lads would have been superfluous. Still he managed to

struggle on for some five years, getting copying-work and what-not to do in his own rooms, till he had contrived, by the time he was twenty-two, to save a little money. His idea was to enter the medical profession and earn a livelihood by writing for scientific journals, for he had wits and was not without literary talent. He was lodging then in a cheap quarter of Paris not far from the Ecole de Medecine. Well, the poor boy passed his baccalaureat and entered on his first year. He got through that pretty well, but then came the hospital work; and then, once more he broke down. The rising at six o'clock on bitter cold winter mornings, the going out into the bleak early air sometimes thick with snow or sleet, the long attendance day after day in unwholesome wards and foetid post-mortem rooms; the afternoons spent over dissecting,—all these things contributed to bring about a catastrophe. He fell sick and took to his bed, and as he was quite alone in the world, his tutor, who was a kind- hearted man, undertook to see him through his illness, both as physician and as friend. And when, after a few weeks, Georges was able to get about again, the professor, seeing how lonely the young man was, asked him to spend his Sundays and spare evenings with himself and his family in their little apartment au ca'nquieme of the rue Cluny. For the professor was, of course, poor, working for five francs a lesson to private pupils; and a much more modest sum for class lectures such as those which Georges attended. But all this mattered nothing to Georges. He went gladly the very next Sunday to Dr. Le Noir's, and there he met the professor's daughter—whom you have seen. She was only just seventeen, and prettier then than she is now I doubt not, for her face is anxious and sorrowful now, and anxiety and sorrow are not becoming. You don't wonder that the young student fell in love with her. The father, engrossed in his work, did not see what was going on, and so Pauline's heart was won before the mischief could be stopped. The young people themselves went to him hand in hand one evening and told him all about it. Madame Le Noir had long been dead, and the professor had two sons

studying medicine. His daughter was, perhaps, rather in his way; he loved her much, but she was growing fast into womanhood, and he did not quite know what to do with her. Saint-Cyr was well-born and he was clever. If only his health were to take a turn for the better, all might go well. But then, if not? He looked at the young man's pale face and remembered what his stethoscope had revealed. Still, in such an early stage these physical warnings often came to nothing. Rest, and fresh air, and happiness, might set him up and make a healthy man of him yet. So he gave a preliminary assent to the engagement, but forbade the young people to consider the affair settled—for the present. He wanted to see how Georges got on. It was early spring then. Hope and love and the April sunshine agreed with the young man. He was much stronger by June, and did well at the hospital and at his work. He had reached the end of his fin d'aunee examinations; a year's respite was before him now before beginning to pass for his doctorate. Le Noir thought that if he could pass the next winter in the south of France he would be quite set up, and lost no time in imparting this idea to Georges. But Georges was not just then in funds; his time had been lately wholly taken up with his studies, and he had been unable to do any literary hacking. When he told the professor that he could not afford to spend a winter on the Riviera, Le Noir looked at him fixedly a minute or two and then said:— 'Pauline's dot will be 10,000 francs. It comes to her from her mother. With care that ought to keep you both till you have taken your doctorate and can earn money for yourself. Will you marry Pauline this autumn and take her with you to the south?' Well, you can fancy whether this proposal pleased Georges or not. At first he refused, of course; he would not take Pauline's money; it was her's; he would wait till he could earn money of his own. But the professor was persuasive, and when he told his daughter of the discussion, she went privately into her father's study where Georges sat, pretending to read chemistry, and settled the matter. So

the upshot of it was that late in October, Pauline became Madame Saint-Cyr, and started with her husband for the Riviera.

"The winter turned out a bitter one. Bitter and wild and treacherous over the whole of Europe. Snow where snow had not been seen time out of mind; biting murderous winds that nothing could escape. My friend Dr S. says the Riviera is not always kind to consumptives, even when at its best; and this particular season saw it at its worst. Georges Saint-Cyr caught a violent chill one evening at St Raphael, whither he and his wife had gone for the sake of the cheapness rather than to any of the larger towns on the littoral; and in a very short time his old malady was on him again,—the fever, the cough, the weakness,—in short, a fresh poussee, as the doctors say. Pauline nursed him carefully till March set in; then he recovered a little, but he was fair from convalescent. She wrote hopefully to her father; so did Georges; indeed both the young man and his wife, ignorant of the hold which the disease had really got upon him, thought things to be a great deal better than they actually were. But as days went on and the cough continued, they made up their minds that St Raphael did not suit Georges, and resolved to go on to Nice. March was already far advanced; Nice would not be expensive now. So they went, but still Georges got no better. He even began to get weaker; the cough `tore' him, he said, and he leaned wearily on his wife's arm when they walked out together. Clearly he would not be able to return to Paris and to work that spring. Pauline, too, was not well, the long nursing had told on her, and she had, besides, her own ailments, for already the prospect of motherhood had defined itself. She wrote to her father that Georges was still poorly and that they should not return home till May. But before the first ten days of April had passed, something of the true state of the case began to dawn on Saint-Cyr. `I shall never again be strong enough to work hard,' he said to himself, `and I must work hard if I am to pass my doctorate examinations. Meantime, all Pauline's dot will be spent. I may have to wait months before I can do any consecutive work; perhaps,

even, I shall be unable to make a living by writing. I am unfit for any study. How can I get money—and get it quickly—for her sake and for the child's?'

"Then the thought of the tables at Monte Carlo flashed into his mind. Eight thousand francs of Pauline's dot remained; too small a sum in itself to be of any permanent use, but enough to serve as capital for speculation in rouge et noir. With good luck such a sum might produce a fortune. The idea caught him and fascinated his thoughts sleeping and waking. In his dreams he beheld piles of gold shining beside him on the green cloth, and by day as he wandered feebly along the Promenade des Anglais with Pauline he grew silent, feeding his sick heart with this new fancy. One day he said to his wife:— 'Let us run over to Monte Carlo and see the playing; it will amuse us; and the gardens are lovely. You will be delighted with the place. Everybody says it is the most beautiful spot on the Riviera.' So they went, and were charmed, but Georges did not play that day. He stood by the tables and watched, while Pauline, too timid to venture into the saloons, and a little afraid of 'le jeu,' sat by the great fountain in the garden outside the casino. Georges declared that evening as they sat over their tea at Nice that he had taken a fancy for beautiful Monaco, and that he would rather finish the month of April there than at Nice. Pauline assented at once, and the next day they removed to the most modest lodgings they could find within easy access of the gardens. Then; very warily and gently, Saint-Cyr unfolded to Pauline his new-born hopes. She was terribly alarmed at first and sobbed piteously. 'It is so wicked to gamble, Georges,' she said;—' no blessing can follow such a plan as yours. And I dare not tell papa about it.' 'It would be wicked, no doubt,' said Georges, 'to play against one's friend or one's neighbor, as they do in clubs and private circles, because in such cases if one is lucky, someone else is beggared, and the money one puts in one's pocket leaves the other players so much the poorer. But here it is quite another thing. We play against a great firm, an administration, whom our individual successes do not affect, and which makes a trade of the whole

concern. Scruples are out of place under such circumstances. Playing at Monte Carlo hurts nobody but oneself, and is not nearly so reprehensible as the legitimate "business" that goes on daily at the Bourse.' 'Still,' faltered Pauline, `such horrid persons do play, —such men,—such women! It is not respectable.' `It is not respectable for most people certainly,' he said, `because other ways of earning are open to them. The idle come here, the dissolute, the good-for-nothings. I know all that. But we are quite differently placed; and have no other means of getting money to live with. At those tables, Pauline, I shall be working for you as sincerely and honestly as though I were buying up shares or investing in foreign railroads. It is the name and tradition of the thing that frightens you. Look it in the face and you will own that it is simply . . . speculation.' `Georges,' said Pauline, you know best. Do as you like, dear; I understand nothing, and you were always clever.'

"So Saint-Cyr had his way, and went to work accordingly, without loss of time, a little shyly at first, not daring to venture on any considerable stake. So he remained for a week at the roulette tables; because at the rouge et noir one can only play with gold. The week came to an end and found him neither richer nor poorer. Then he grew bolder and ventured into the deeper water. He played on rouge et noir, with luck the first day or two, but after that fortune turned dead against him. He said nothing of it to Pauline, who came every day into the rooms at intervals to seek him and say a few words, sometimes leading him out for air when he looked weary, or beguiling him away on pretence of her own need for companionship or for a walk. No doubt the poor girl suffered much; anxiety, loneliness, and a lingering shame which she could not suppress, paled her cheeks, and made her thin and careworn. She dared not ask how things were going, but her husband's silence and the increased sickliness of his aspect set her heart beating heavily with dread. Alone in her room she must have wept much during all this sad time, for my friend Dr S. says that when she made her first call

upon his services he noted the signs of tears upon her face, and taxed her with the fact, getting from her the reply that she 'often cried.'

"Little by little, being a kind and sympathetic man, he drew from her the story I have told you. Georges became his patient also, but was always reticent in regard to `le jeu.' Dr S. tried to dissuade him from visiting the tables, on the ground that the atmosphere in the saloons would prove poisonous to him and perhaps even fatal. But although, in deference to this counsel, the young man shortened somewhat the duration of his `sittings,' and spent more time under the trees with Pauline, he did not by any means abandon, his `speculation,' hoping always, no doubt, as all losers hope, to see the luck turn and to take revenge on Fortune."

"And the luck has not turned yet in Saint-Cyr's case, I suppose?" said I.

"No," answered my friend. "I fear things are going very ill with him and poor Pauline's dot."

As he spoke he rose from the dinner-table, and we strolled out together upon the moonlight terrace of the hotel. "In ten minutes," said I, "my train starts. I am going back to Nice tonight. Despite all its loveliness, Monte Carlo is hateful to me, and I do not care to sleep under its shadow. But before I go, I have a favour to ask of you. Let me know the sequel of the story you have told me tonight. I want to know how it ends—in triumph or in tragedy. Dr S. will always be able to keep you informed whether you remain here or not. Write to me as soon as there is anything to tell, and you will do me a signal kindness. You see you are such an admirable raconteur that you have interested me irresistibly in your subject and must pay the penalty of talent!"

He laughed, broke off the laugh in a sigh, then shook hands with me, and we parted.

About two months later, after my return to England, I had from my friend the following letter:—

"You have, I do not doubt, retained your interest in the fortunes of the two young people who so much attracted you at the tables last April. Well, I have just seen my friend Dr S. in Lyons, and he has related to me the saddest tale you can imagine concerning Georges and Pauline. Here it is, just as he gave it, and while it is fresh in my memory. It seems that all through the month of April and well into May, Saint-Cyr's ill luck stuck to him. He lost daily, and at last only a very slender remnant of his wife's money was left to play with. Week by week, too, he grew more wasted and feeble, fading with his fading fortune. As for Pauline, although she did not complain about herself, Dr S. saw reason to feel much anxiety on her account. Grief and sickened hope and the wear of the terrible life she and Georges were leading combined to break down her strength. Phthisis, too, although not a contagious malady in the common sense of the term, is apt to exercise on debilitated persons constantly exposed to the companionship of its victims an extremely baleful effect, and to this danger Pauline was daily and nightly subjected. She became feverish, a sensation of unwonted languor took possession of her, and sleep, nevertheless, became almost impossible. Georges, engrossed in his play, observed but little the deterioration of his wife's health; or, perhaps, attributed it to her condition and to nervousness in regard to her approaching trial. Things were in this state, when, one day towards the close of May Georges took his customary seat at the rouge et noir table. The weather had suddenly become extremely hot, and the crowd in the `salles de jeu' had considerably diminished. Only serious and veteran habitues were left, staking their gold, for the most part, with the coolness and resolution of long experience. Pauline remained in her room, she felt too ill to rise, and attributed her indisposition to the heat. Very sick at heart, George entered the gaming-rooms alone, and laid out on the green cloth the last of his capital. Then occurred one of those strange

and compete reversions of luck that come to very few men. Georges won continuously, without a break, throughout the entire day. After an hour or two of steady success, he grew elated, and began to stake large sums,—with a recklessness that might have appalled others than the old stagers who sat beside him. But his temerity brought golden returns, every stake reaped a fruitful harvest, and louis d'or accumulated in tall piles at his elbow. Before the rooms closed he had become a rich man, and had won back Pauline's dowry forty times over. Men turned to look at him as he left the tables, his face white with fatigue, his eyes burning like live coals, and his gait unsteady as a drunkard's. Outside in the open air, everything appeared to him like a dream. He could not collect his thoughts; his brain whirled; he had eaten nothing all day, fearing to quit his place lest he should change his luck or lose some good coup, and now extreme faintness overcame him. Stooping over the great basin of the fountain in front of the Casino he bathed his face with his hands, and eagerly drew in the cool evening breeze of the Mediterranean, just sweeping up sweet and full of refreshment over the parched rock of Monte Carlo. Then he made his way home, climbed with toil the high narrow staircase, and entered the little apartment he shared with Pauline. In the sitting room he paused a minute, poured out a glass of wine and drank it at a draught, to give himself courage to tell her his good news like a man. His hand turned the key of his bedroom; his heart beat so wildly that its throbbing deafened him; he could not hear his own voice as he cried: `Pauline—darling! —we are rich! my luck has turned!' . . . But then he stopped, stricken by a blow worse than the stroke of death. Before him stood Dr S., and a woman whom he did not recognise, bending over the bed upon which Pauline lay, pallid and still, with hands folded upon her breast. Georges flung his porte-monnaie, stuffed with notes, upon the foot of the bed, and sank down on his knees beside it, his eyes fixed upon his young wife's face. Dr S. touched him upon the shoulder.

Du courage, Saint-Cyr,' he whispered. `She has gone . . . first.' The kindly words meant that the separation would not be for long. The woman in charge by the couch of the dead girl wept aloud, but there were no tears yet in the eyes of Georges. `And the child?' he asked at length, vaguely comprehending what had happened. They lifted the sheet gently, and showed him a little white corpse lying beside its mother. 'I am glad the child is dead, too,' said Georges Saint-Cyr.

"He would not have her buried by the Mediterranean;—no—nor would he let the corpse be taken home for burial. The desire for flight was upon him, and he said he must carry his dead with him till be himself should die. That night he left Monte Carlo for Rome, bearing with him those dear remains of wife and child; and the good doctor seeing his desperation and full of pity for so vast a woe, went with him. 'Perhaps,' he told me, `had I not gone, Georges would not himself have reached Rome alive.' They traveled night and day, for the young man would not rest an instant. His design was to have the body of his wife burned in the crematorium of the Eternal City, and Dr S. was, fortunately, able to obtain for him the fulfilment of his desire. Then Saint-Cyr enclosed the ashes of his beloved in a little silver box, slung it about his neck and bade his friend farewell. I asked the doctor where he went. `Northward,' he answered, `but I did not ask his plans. He gave me no address; he had money in plenty, and it matters little where he went, for death was in his face as he wrung my hand at parting, and he cannot live to see the summer out."

That was the end of the letter. And for my part, with the sole exception of Georges Saint-Cyr, I never heard of any man who became rich over the tables of Monte Carlo.

V. Noemi; or, the Silver Ribbon

I.

I have often heard practising physicians and students of pathology assert that no one ever died of "a broken heart,"—that is, of course, in the popular sense of the phrase. Rupture of the heart, such as that which killed the passionate tyrant John of Muscovy, is a rare accident, and has no connection with the mental trouble and strain implied in the common expression "heart-breaking." I have, however, my own theory upon this question,—a theory founded on some tolerably strong evidence which might serve more scientifically- minded persons than myself as a text for a medical thesis; but, as for me, I am no writer of theses, and had much ado to get honestly through the only production of the sort which ever issued from my pen, my These de Doctorat. For I studied the divine art of AEsculapius at the Ecole de Medicine of Paris, and it was there, just before taking my degree, that I became involved in a singular little history, the circumstances of which first led me to adopt my present views on the subject alluded to in the opening words of this story.

It is now many years since I inhabited the "students' quarter" in the gay city, and rented a couple of little rooms in an hotel meuble not far from the gardens of the Luxembourg. Medical students are never rich, and I was no exception to the rule, though, compared with many of my associates, my pecuniary position was one of enviable affluence. I had a library of my own, I drank wine at a franc the litre, and occasionally smoked cigars. My

little apartment overlooked a wide street busy with incessant traffic, and on warm evenings, after returning from dinner at the restaurant round the corner, it was my habit to throw open my window-casement and lean out to inhale the fresh cool air of the coming night, and to watch the crowds of foot-passengers and vehicles going and coming like swarms of ants along the paved street below.

On a certain lovely July evening towards the close of my student career, I took up my favourite position as usual, luxuriating in the fumes of my cigarette and in that sweetest of mental enjoyments, absolute idleness, carried at the cost of hard and long-continued toil. The sun had but just gone down, the sky was brilliant with pink lights and mellow tints of golden green blending with the blue of the deep vault overhead, scores of swift-darting birds were wheeling about in the still air, uttering sharp clear cries, as though calling one another to rest below, women stood at their house-doors gossiping with their neighbours; peals of laughter and the incessant chatter of feminine voices mingled with the din of horses' hoofs on the hard road and with the never-ending jingle of the harness-bells.

Gazing lazily down into the street, my attention was suddenly arrested by the singular appearance and behavior of an odd-looking brown dog, which seemed to be seeking someone among the hurrying crowds and rattling carts. Half-a-dozen times he ran up the street and disappeared from view, only to retrace his steps, each time with increasing agitation and eagerness of manner. I saw him cross the street again and again, scan the faces of the passersby, dash up the various turnings and come panting back, his tongue, his tail drooping; one could even fancy there were tears in his eyes. At length, exhausted or despairing, he crossed the street for the last time and sat down on the doorstep of the house I inhabited, the picture of grief and dismay. He was lost! Now I had not served my five years' apprenticeship to medical science in Paris without becoming intimate with the horrible

secrets of physiological laboratories. I knew that a lost dog in Paris, if not handsome, and valuable to sell as a pet, runs a terrible chance of falling directly or indirectly into the hands of vivisecting professors, and dying a death of torture. He may be picked up by an employee engaged in the search for fitting victims, and so handed over to immediate martyrdom, or he may be hurried off to languish for weeks in that horrible fourriere for lost dogs whose managers hang their wretched captives by fifties every Tuesday, and liberally supply the demands of all the physiologists who take the trouble to send to them for "subjects." Knowing these things, and perceiving that my concierge was absorbed in discussing scandal on the opposite side of the street, I took advantage of her absence from her post to slip down to the rez-de-chaussee, pounce on the unfortunate dog, whom I found seated hopelessly at the entrance, and smuggle him upstairs into my rooms. There I deposited him on the floor, patted him encouragingly, and gave him water and a couple of sweet biscuits. But he was abjectly miserable, and though he drank a little, would eat nothing. After taking two or three turns round the apartment and sniffing suspiciously at the legs of the chairs and wainscot of the walls, he returned to me where I stood with my back to the window watching him, looked up in my face, wagged his tail feebly, and whined. I stooped again to caress him, and, so doing, observed that he had, tied round his neck, and half-hidden in his rough brown hair, a ribbon of silver tinsel, uncommon both in material and design. I felt assured that the dog's owner must be a woman, and hastily removed the ribbon, expecting to find embroidered upon it some such name as "Amelie" or "Leontine." But my examination proved futile, the silver ribbon afforded me no clue to the antecedents of my canine waif. And indeed, as I stood contemplating him in some perplexity, the conviction forced itself on my mind that he was not exactly the kind of animal that Amelie or Leontine would be likely to select for a pet. He was a poodle certainly, but of an ill-bred and uncouth description, and instead of being

shaved to his centre, and wearing frills round his paws, his coat had been suffered to grow in its natural manner,— an indication either of neglect or of want of taste impossible in a feminine proprietor. But his fact was the most puzzling and at the same time the most fascinating thing about him. It bore a more human expression than I had ever before seen upon a dog's countenance, an expression of singular appeal and childishness, so comic withal in its contrast with the rough hair, round eyes, and long nose of the creature, that as I watched him an involuntary laugh escaped me. "Certainly," I said to him, "you are a droll dog. One might do a good deal with you in a traveling caravan!" As the evening wore on he became more tranquil. Perhaps he began to have confidence in me and to believe that I should restore him to his owner. At any rate, before we retired to rest he prevailed on himself to eat some supper which I prepared for him, pausing every now and then in his meal to lift his infantile face to mine and wag his tail in a half-hearted manner, as though he said, "You see I am doing my best to trust you, though you are a medical student!" Poor innocent beast! Well indeed for him that he had not chanced to stop at the door of my neighbor and camarade, Paul Bouchard, who had a passion for practical physiology, and with whom no amount of animal suffering was of the smallest importance when weighed against the remote chance of an insignificant discovery, which would be challenged and contradicted as soon as announced by scores of his fellow- experimentalists. If torture were indeed the true method of science, then would the vaunted tree of knowledge be no other than the upas tree of oriental legend, beneath whose fatal shadow lie hecatombs of miserable victims slain by its poisonous exhalations, the odour of which is fraught with agony and death!

My poodle remained with me many days. No one appeared to claim him, and no inquiries elicited the least information regarding him. A douceur of five francs had soothed the natural indignation and resentment displayed by my concierge at the first sight of my canine protege; the restlessness and

suspicion he had evinced on making my acquaintance had subsided; and we were getting on in a very comfortable and friendly manner together, when accident threw in my way the clue I had laboriously but vainly sought. Returning one day from a lecture, and being unusually pressed for time, I took a shorter cut homeward than was my wont, and at the corner of a narrow and ill-smelling street I came upon a little heterogeneous shop, in the windows of which were set out a variety of faded and bizarre articles of millinery. Hanging from a front shelf in a conspicuous position among the collection was a strip of the identical silver ribbon which had encircled Pepin's throat—I called the dog Pepin—on the night I rescued him from the streets. Without hesitation I entered the shop and questioned a slatternly woman who sat behind the counter munching gruyere cheese and garlic.

"Will you tell me, madame," said I with my most agreeable air, "whether you recollect having sold any of that tinsel ribbon lately, and to whom?"

She was not likely to have much custom, I thought, and her clients would be easily remembered.

"What's that to you?" was her retort, as she paused in her meal and stared at me; "do you want to buy the rest of it?"

I took the hint immediately, and produced my purse. "With all the pleasure in life," I said, "if you will do me the favour I ask."

She darted a keen look at me, laughed, pushed her cheese aside, and took the ribbon from its place in the shop window.

"I sold half a metre of it about three weeks ago," said she slowly, "to Noemi Bergeron; you know her, perhaps? She's not been this way lately. There's a metre of it left; it's one franc twenty, monsieur."

"And where does Noemi Bergeron live?" I asked, as she dropped the money into her till.

"Well, she used to lodge at number ten in this street, with Maman Paquet. Maybe she's gone. I've not seen either her or her dog this fortnight."

"A poodle dog," cried I eagerly, "with his coat unclipped,—a rough brown dog?"

"Yes, exactly. Ah, you know Noemi,—bien sur!" And she leered at me, and laughed again unpleasantly.

"I never saw her in my life," said I hotly; "but her dog has come astray to my lodgings, and he had a piece of this ribbon of yours round his throat; nothing more than that."

"Ah? Well, she lives at number ten. Tenez,—there's Maman Paquet the other side of the street; you'd better go and speak to her."

She pointed to a hideous old harridan standing on the opposite pavement, her bare arms resting on her hips, and a greasy yellow kerchief twisted turban-wise round her head. My heart sank. Noemi must be very poor, or very unfortunate, to live under the same roof with such an old sorciere! Nevertheless, I crossed the street, and accosted the hag with a smile.

"Good-day, Maman Paquet. Can you tell me anything of your lodger, Noemi Bergeron?"

"Hein?" She was deaf and surly. I repeated my question in a louder key. "I know nothing of her," she answered, in a voice that sounded like the croak of a frog. "She couldn't pay me her rent, and I told her to be off. Maybe she's drowned by this."

"You turned her out?" I cried.

"Yes, turned her out," repeated the hag, with a savage oath. "It was her own fault; she might have sold her beast of a poodle to pay me, and she wouldn't. Why not, I should like to know,—she sold everything else she had!"

"And you can tell me nothing about her now,—you know no more than that?"

"Nothing. Go and find her!" She muttered a curse, glared at me viciously, and hobbled off. I had turned to depart in another direction, when a skinny hand suddenly clutched my arm, and looking round, I found that Maman Paquet had followed and overtaken me. "You know the girl," she squeaked, eyeing me greedily,—"will you pay her rent? She owed me a month's lodging, seven francs."

She looked so loathsome and horrible with her withered evil face so close to mine that I gave a gesture of disgust and shook her off as though she had been a toad.

"No," said I, quickening my steps; "she is a stranger to me, and my pockets are empty."

Maman Paquet flung a curse after me, more foul and emphatic than the last, and went her way blaspheming.

I returned home to Pepin saddened and disquieted. "So, after all," I said to him, "your owner belongs to the fair sex! But, heaven! in what misery she and you must have lived! And yet you cried for her, Pepin!"

Not long after these incidents—three or four days at the latest— a party of my fellow-students came to smoke with me, and as the shell always

sounds of the sea, our conversation naturally savoured of our professional pursuits. We discussed our hospital chefs, their crotchets, their inventions, their medical successes, their politics; we criticised new methods of operation, related anecdotes of the theatre and consulting-room, and speculated on the chances of men about to go up for examination. Then we touched on the subject of obscure diseases, unusual mental conditions, prolonged delirium, and kindred topics. It was at this point that one of us, Eugene Grellois, a house-surgeon at a neighbouring hospital, remarked,—

"By the way, we have a curious case now in the women's ward of my service, a pretty little Alsatian girl of eighteen or twenty. She was knocked down by a cart about three weeks ago and was brought in with a fracture of the neck of the left humerus, and two ribs broken. Well, there was perforation of the pleura, traumatic pleurisy and fever, and her temperature went up as high as 41-8. She was delirious for three days, and talked incessantly; we had to put her in a separate cabinet, so that the other patients might not be disturbed. I sat by her bed for hours and listened. You never heard such odd things as she said. She let me into the whole of her history that way. I don't think I should have cared for it though, if she were not so wonderfully pretty!"

"Was it a love story, Eugene?" asked Auguste Villemin, laughing.

"Not a bit of it; it was all about a dog who seemed to be her pet. Such an extraordinary dog! From what she said I gathered that he was a brown poodle, that he could stand on his head, and walk on his hind paws, that he followed her about wherever she went, that he carved in wood for illustrated books and journals, that he wore a silver collar, that she was engaged to be married to him when he had earned enough to keep house, and that his name was Antoine!"

All his hearers laughed except myself. As for me, my heart bounded, my face flushed, I was sensible of a keen sensation of pleasure in hearing Eugene describe his patient as "wonderfully pretty." I leapt from my chair, pointed to Pepin, who lay dozing in a corner of the room, and exclaimed,—

"I will wager anything that the name of your Alsatian is Noemi Bergeron, and that my dog there is Antoine himself!" And before any questions could be put I proceeded to recount the circumstances with which my reader is already acquainted. Of course Pepin was immediately summoned into the midst of the circle we had formed round the open window to have his reputed accomplishments tested as a criterion of his identity with Antoine. Amid bursts of laughter and a clamour of encouragement and approbation, it was discovered that my canine protege possessed at least the first two of the qualifications imputed to him, and could walk on his hind legs or stand on his head for periods apparently unlimited.

In fact, so obedient and willing we found him, that when for the third time he had inverted himself, no persuasion short of picking him up by his tail, a proceeding which I deemed necessary to avert asphyxia, could induce him to resume his normal position. But that which rendered the entertainment specially fascinating and ludicrous was the inimitable and unbroken gravity of Pepin's expression. No matter what his attitude, his eyes retained always the solemnity one observes in the eyes of an infant to whom everything in the world is serious and nothing grotesque.

"But now for the engraving on wood!" cried Jules Leuret, when we had exhausted ourselves with laughing. "What a pity you have no implements of the art here, Gervais!"

"That's Eugene's chaff!" I cried. "Noemi never said anything of the sort, I warrant!"

"On my honour she did," said he, emphatically. "Come and see her tomorrow; she's quite sane now, no fever left at all. She'll be delighted to hear that you have her dog, and will tell you all about him, no doubt."

"After the chefs visit, then, and we'll breakfast together at noon."

"Agreed. Laughing makes one dry, mon ami; let me have some more of your wine. We can't afford good wine like that, nous autres!"

II.

When the following morning arrived, I rose sooner than my wont: Eugene's service was an early one, and by half-past ten o'clock he and I were alone in the wards of his hospital. He led me to a bed in one of the little spaces partitioned off from the common salle for the reception of special cases or refractory patients. There, propped up on her pillows, her arm bandaged and supported by a cushion, lay a young girl with fair braided hair and the sweetest face I had ever seen out of a picture. Something in the childish and wistful look of her deep eyes and serious mouth reminded me strangely of Pepin; it was Pepin's plaintive expression refined and intensified by spiritual influence, a look such as one might imagine on the face of some young novice, brought up in a convent and innocent of all evil,—an ingenue untainted by the world and ignorant of its ways. Could such a creature as this come out of the foul and sin-reeking quartier I had visited four days ago, with its filthy houses, its fetid alleys, its coarse blaspheming women and drunken men? My mind misgave me: surely, after all, this could not be Noemi Bergeron!

I put the question to her fearfully, for I dreaded to hear her deny it.
She was so beautiful; if she should say "no" I should be in despair.

A voice as sweet as the face answered me, with jus' a faint inflexion of surprise in it, and as she spoke a slight blush suffused her cheeks and showed the delicate transparency of her skin.

"Yes, that is my name. Does monsieur know me, then?"

In my turn I blushed, but with delight. No wonder Pepin had repined at separation from so lovely a mistress!

"I went to your house to inquire for you the other day, mademoiselle," stammered I, " for I think I have a dog which belongs to you. Have you not lost a brown poodle with a ribbon like this round his throat?"

As I spoke I produced the tinsel ornament from my pocket, but before I finished my last sentence she started forward with a joyous cry, and but for the timely intervention of Eugene, who stood beside the bed, the injured arm might have suffered seriously from the effects of her excitement.

"Ah!" she cried, weeping with joy; "my Bambin, my dear Bambin!
He is found then,—he is safe, and I shall see him again!"

"Bambin!" repeated I, dubiously. "Monsieur Grellois thought that his name was Antoine!"

The rosy color deepened under her delicate cheeks and crept to the roots of her braided hair.

"No," she replied in a lower tone, "monsieur is mistaken. My dog's name is Bambin; we called him so because he is so like a baby. Don't you think him like a baby, monsieur?"

She looked wondrously like a baby herself, and I longed to tell her so; I could not restrain my curiosity, her blushes were so enticing.

"And Antoine?" persisted I.

"He is a friend of mine, monsieur; an engraver on wood, an artist."

Eugene and I exchanged glances.

"And you and he are engaged to be married, is it not so?"
Unconsciously I questioned her as I might have questioned a child.
She hardly seemed old enough to have the right over her own secrets.

"Yes, monsieur. But I do not know where he is; and I have looked for him so long, ah, so long!"

What, have you lost him too, then, as well as Bambin?"

She shook her head, and looked troubled

"Tell me," said I, coaxing her, "perhaps I may be able to find him also."

"We are Alsatians," said Noemi, with her eyelids drooping, doubtless to hide the tears gathering behind them; "and we lived in the same village and were betrothed. Antoine was very clever, and could cut pictures in wood beautifully,—oh so beautifully,—and they sent him to Paris to be apprenticed to a great house of business, and to learn engraving thoroughly. And I stayed at home with my father, and Antoine used to write to me very often, and say how well he was getting on, and how he had invented a new method of wood-carving, and how rich he should be some day, and that we were to be married very soon. And then my father died, quite suddenly, and I was all alone in the house. And Antoine did not write; week after week there was no letter, though I never ceased writing to him. So I grew miserable and frightened, and I took Bambin—Antoine gave me Bambin, and taught him all his tricks—and I came to Paris to try and find him. I had a little money then, and besides, I can make lace, and I thought it would not

be long before Antoine and I got married. But he had left the house of business for which he had worked, and they knew nothing of him at his lodgings, and there were ever so many of my letters on the table in the conciergerie unopened.—So I could learn nothing, for no one knew where he had gone, and little by little the money I had brought with me went in food for me and Bambin. Then somebody told me that Maman Paquet had a room to let that was cheap, and I went there and tried to live on my lace-making, always hoping that Antoine would come to find me. But the air of the pace was so horrible—oh, so horrible after our village!—and I got the fever, and fell sick, and could do no work at all. And by degrees I sold all the things I had—my lace-pillow and all—and when they were gone the old woman wanted me to sell Bambin, because he was clever, and she was sure I could get a good price for him. But I would rather have sold the heart out of my body, and so I told her. Then she was angry, and turned us both out, Bambin and me, and we went wandering about all day till at last I got very faint and tired, for I had been ill a long time, monsieur, and we had nothing to eat, so that I lost my senses and fell in the road all at once, and a cart went over me. Then the people picked me up, and carried me here, but none of them knew Bambin, and I had fainted and could tell them nothing. So they must have driven him away, thinking he was a strange dog, and had no right to follow me. And when my senses came back I was in the hospital, and Bambin was gone, and I thought I never should see him again."

She sank down on her pillow and drew a great sigh of relief. It had evidently comforted her to tell her story to sympathetic listeners. Poor child! Scant sympathy could she have found in Maman Paquet's unwomanly breast and evil associations. We were silent when she had finished, and in the silence we heard through the open window the joyous song of the birds, and the hum of the bees wandering blithely from flower to flower, laden with their sweets,—sounds that never cease through all the long summer days. Alas! how strange and sad a contrast it is,—the eternal

and exuberant gladness of Nature's soulless children,—the universal inevitable misery of human lives!

Presently the religieuse who had the charge of the adjoining ward opened the door softly and called Eugene.

"Monsieur, will you come to No. 7 for a moment? Her wound is bleeding again badly."

He looked up, nodded, and rose from his seat.

"I must go for the present, Gervais," said he. "If you stay with our little friend, don't let her disarrange her arm. The ribs are all right now, but the humerus is a longer affair. Au revoir!"

But I found Noemi too much excited and fatigued for further conversation; so, promising to take every possible care of Bambin and to come again and see her very soon, I withdrew to the adjoining ward and joined Eugene.

No need to say that both these promises were faith-fully observed.

Throughout the whole of July and of the ensuing month Noemi remained an inmate of the hospital, and it was not until the first two weeks of September were spent that the fractured arm was consolidated and the mandate for dismissal issued. Two days before that fixed for her departure I went to pay her the last of my customary visits, and found her sitting at the open window busily engaged in weaving lace upon a new pillow, which she exhibited to me with childish glee.

"See, monsieur, what a beautiful present I have had!" she cried, holding up the cushion for me to examine. "It is much better than the old one I sold; only look how prettily the bobbins on it are painted!"

I had never before beheld a lace pillow, and the curiosity which I displayed fairly delighted Noemi.

"And who is your generous benefactor?" I asked, replacing the cushion in her lap.

"Don't you know?" she asked in turn, opening her eyes wide with surprise. "I thought he would have been sure to tell you. Why, it was that good Monsieur Grellois, to be sure! He gave some money to the sister to buy it for me."

Kind Eugene! He had very little money to live upon, and must, I know, have economised considerably in order to purchase this gift for his little patient. Still I was not jealous of his bounty, since for many days past I had been greatly occupied with Noemi's future welfare, and had busied myself in secret with certain schemes and arrangements the issue of which it remained only to announce.

"So," said I, taking a chair beside her, "you are going to earn your living again by making lace?"

"To try," she answered with a sad emphasis.

"Lace-making does not pay well, then?"

"Oh no, monsieur! It cannot be done quickly, you see,—only a little piece like this every day, working one's best,—and so much lace is made by machines now!"

"But it cannot cost you much to live, Noemi?"

"The eating and drinking is not much, monsieur; it is the rent; and all the cheap lodgings are so dirty! It is that which is the most terrible. I can't bear

to have ugly things about me and hideous faces,—like Maman Paquet's!"

She had the poet's instincts, this little Alsatian peasant. Most girls in her case would have cared little for the unlovely surroundings, so long as food and drink were plentiful.

"But supposing you had a nice room of your own, clean and comfortable, with an iron bedstead like this one here, and chairs and a table, and two windows looking out over the Luxembourg gardens,—and nothing to pay."

"Ah, monsieur!"

She dropped her pillow, and fixed her great brown eyes earnestly on my face.

"It is impossible," pursued I, reddening under her gaze, "for you to return to the horrible quartier in which Maman Paquet lives. It is not fit for a young girl; you would grow wicked and base like the people who live there, —or else you would die,—and I think you would die, Noemi."

"But I have no money, monsieur."

If you have no money, you have friends; a friend has given you your new pillow, you know, and another friend, perhaps, may give you a room to live in."

Her eyelids drooped, her color came and went quickly, I detected beneath her bodice the convulsive movement of her heart. The agitation she betrayed communicated itself to me; I rose from my chair and leaned against the window-sill, so that my face might be no longer on a level with her eyes.

"I understand you, monsieur!" she cried, and immediately burst into tears.

"Yes, Noemi," I said, "I see you understand me. There is really a room for you such as I have described. In two days you will leave the hospital, but you are not without a home. The woman of the house in which you will live is kind and good, she knows all about you and Bambin, and has promised me to take care of you. Your furniture is bought, your rent is paid, —you have nothing to do but to go and take possession of the room. I hope you and Bambin will be happy there."

She made me no reply in words, but bending forward over her pillow she took my hand and timidly kissed it.

It would be hard to say which of us was the happier on the day which saw Noemi installed in her new abode,—-she, or I, or Bambin. Bambin's delight was certainly the most demonstrative; he careered round and round the room uttering joyous barks, returning at intervals in a panting and exhausted condition to his pretty mistress to give and receive caresses which I own I felt greatly disposed to envy him. I left my four-footed friend with some regret, for he and I had been good companions during Noemi's sojourn at the hospital, and I knew that my rooms would at first seem lonely without him. His fair owner, as she bade me goodbye at the door of her new domicile, begged me to return often and see them both, but hard as I found it to refuse the tempting request, I summoned up resolution to tell her that it would be best for us to meet very seldom indeed, perhaps only once or twice more, but that her landlady had my name and address and would be able to give me tidings of her pretty often.

Her childlike nature and instincts were never more apparent than on this occasion.

"What have I done, monsieur?" she asked with a bewildered expression, her brown eyes lifted pleadingly, and the corners of her mouth depressed. "I thought you would like to come and see us. Bambin is so fond of you, too, —we shall both be so sorry if you don't come."

As gently and as tenderly as I could, I tried to explain to her our mutual position and the evil construction which others would be sure to place on any friendship between us. But she only shook her head in a troubled way and sighed.

"I don't understand," she said, "but of course you know best. I used to hear something like that at Maman Paquet's, about other girls, but I never understood it. Only say that you are not angry with me, and let me hear about you as often as you can."

I promised, smiling, and left her standing at the open door with Bambin tucked under her arm, looking after me down the street and nodding her pretty golden head.

Many days went by. I concentrated my mind upon my books, and devoted the whole of my time and of my thoughts to preparation for my last two doctorate examinations, contenting myself with only a few passing inquiries of Noemi's landlady concerning the welfare of her lodger, and with the assurance that both she and her dog were well and happy.

But one evening late in September, as I sat immersed in study, my ear caught the sound of light girlish footsteps on the staircase leading to my rooms; then came a momentary pause, a tap on the door, and the next minute Noemi herself, closely followed by the faithful Bambin, burst upon my solitude.

"I have found him, monsieur!" she cried breathlessly. "I came at once to tell you,—I knew you would be so glad!"

"What,—Antoine?" I asked, rising and laying my book aside.

"Yes; Antoine! I met him in the street. He was dressed like a gentleman; no one would have known him except me! He had no idea I was in Paris; he turned quite white with the surprise of seeing me. And I told him what a search I had made for him, and how miserable I had been, and how good you were to me, and where I was living. And he is coming to see me this very evening! Oh, I am so happy!"

"You should have sent me word of this, Noemi," said I gravely. "You ought not to have come here. It is very foolish—"

She interrupted me with an imploring gesture.

"Oh, yes, I know; I am so sorry! But just at the moment I forgot. I longed to tell you about Antoine, and everything else went out of my head. Don't be cross with me!"

Could any one be angry with her? She was thoroughly innocent, and natural, as innocence always is.

"My child, it is only of yourself I am thinking. Antoine will teach you to be wiser by-and-by. Tell him to come and see me. I suppose you will be married soon now, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, very soon! Antoine only wanted money, and he has plenty now; he has a business of his own, and is a patron himself!"

"Well, Noemi, I am very glad. You must let me come to your wedding. I shall call at your house tomorrow, and ask all about it; for

no doubt Antoine will want you to settle the arrangements at once.
And now run home, for your own sake, my child."

"Goodbye! monsieur." She paused at the door and added shyly, "You will really come tomorrow morning?"

"Yes, yes; before breakfast. Goodbye, Noemi."

III.

At about ten on the ensuing day I repaired to Noemi's lodging, and found Madame Jeannel, the landlady, on the look-out for me.

"Noemi told me you were coming," she said; "I will go and fetch her.
Her fiance was here last night, and she has a great deal to tell you."

In two minutes she returned with my pretty friend, radiant as the sunlight with happiness and renewed hope. Antoine loved her more than ever, she said, and he had brought her a beautiful present, a silver cross, which she meant to wear on her wedding-day, tied round her throat upon the bit of tinsel ribbon I had given her, and which matched it exactly. And was the wedding-day fixed? I asked. No, not the precise day; Antoine had said nothing about it; but he had spoken much of his love; and of the happiness

in store for them both, and of the lovely things he should give her. The day was nothing; that could be settled in a minute at any time. Then she fetched me some lace she had made, and told me that Antoine knew of a rich lady who would buy it,—a marquise, who doated on lace of the sort, and who gave enormous sums for a few yards; and the money would do for her dot, it would buy her wedding-dress, perhaps. So she prattled on, blithe and ingenuous, the frank simplicity of her guileless soul reflected in the clear depths of her eyes, as the light of heaven is mirrored in pure waters.

Days went by, and weeks, but Antoine never came to see me, and whenever I called at Madame Jeannel's and asked for Noemi—which I ventured to do several times, now that the good woman knew she was engaged to be married, and understood so well our relations with each other —I always heard the same story; and always received, on Antoine's behalf, the same vague excuses for the postponement of the visit I had invited him to pay me. At one time, he bade Noemi tell me his work was too pressing, and he could find no time to come; at another, that he feared to disturb me, knowing I was very busy; and again, that he had been just about to start when an important letter or an inopportune customer had arrived and detained him. As for the wedding-day, he would never come to the point about it, and Noemi, naturally shy of the subject, never pressed him. She was quite happy and confident; Antoine loved her with all his heart, and told her so every day. What more could she want? He brought her lovely bunches of red and white roses, little trinkets, sweetmeats, ribbons; indeed, he seemed never to come empty-handed. She used to take walks with him when his day's work was over, in the Luxembourg gardens, and once or twice they went out as far as the Champs-Elysees. Oh, yes, Antoine loved her dearly, and she was very happy; they should certainly be married before long. We were already in November, the days were getting bleak and chill, I had to light my lamp early and close my windows against the damp evening

air. One afternoon, just as it was beginning to grow dark, Madame Jeannel came to see me, looking very disturbed and anxious.

"Monsieur," she said, "a strange thing has happened which makes me so uneasy that I cannot help coming to tell you of it, and to ask your opinion and advice. Antoine came about half-an-hour ago and took Noemi out for a walk. Not ten minutes after they had left the house, a lady whom I do not know came to my door and asked if Mademoiselle Bergeron lived there. I said yes, but that she was out. The strange lady stared hard at me and asked if she had gone out alone. I told her no, she was with her fiance, but that if any message could be left for her I would be careful to give it directly she should return. Immediately the lady seized me by the arm so tightly I almost screamed. She grew white, and then red, then she seemed to find her voice, and asked me if she could wait upstairs in Noemi's room till she came back. At first I said `No,' but she would not take a refusal; she insisted upon waiting; and there she is, I could not get her to leave the place."

Madame Jeannel stood opposite to me; I lifted my eyes, and met hers steadily. When I had satisfied myself of her suspicions, I said in a low voice,—

"You have done rightly to fetch me. There is great trouble in store for our poor child. I fear this woman may have a better right to Antoine than Noemi has."

"I am sure of it," responded Madame Jeannel. "If you could but have seen how she looked! Thank the good God she has come in time to save our Noemi from any real harm!"

"It will blight the whole of her life," said I; "she is so innocent of evil, and she loves him so much."

I took up my hat as I spoke, and followed Madame Jeannel downstairs and into the street. When we reached her house, I left her in her own little parlour upon the entresol, and with a resolute step but a heavy heart I went alone to confront the strange woman in Noemi's room. Alas! the worst that could happen had already befallen. Noemi had returned from her walk during the absence of her landlady, and I opened the door upon a terrible scene. My poor child stood before me, with a white scared face, and heaving breast, upon which was pinned a bunch of autumn violets, Antoine's last gift to her. Her slender figure, her fair hair, her pallid complexion looked ghostlike in the uncertain twilight; she seemed like a troubled spirit, beautiful and sorely distressed, but there was no shame in her lovely face, nor any sense of guilt. Seeing me enter, she uttered a cry of relief, and sprang forward as though to seek protection.

"Speak to her, monsieur!" she exclaimed in a voice of piercing entreaty; "oh, speak to her and ask her what it all means! She says she is Antoine's wife!"

The strange woman whose back had been turned towards the door when I opened it, looked round at the words, and her face met mine. She was a brunette, with sharp black eyes and an inflexible mouth, a face which beside Noemi's seemed like a dark cloud beside clear sunlight.

"Yes indeed!" she cried; and her voice was half choked with contending anger and despair, "I am his wife; and what then is she? I tracked him here. He is always away from me now. I found a letter of hers signed with her name; she writes to him as if she loved him! See!"

She flung upon the table a crumpled scrap of paper, and suddenly burying her face in her hands, burst into a torrent of passionate tears and sobs. Noemi stood silent and watched her, terrified and wondering. I closed the

door softly, and approaching the unfortunate woman, laid my hand upon her shoulder.

"It is your husband who is alone to blame," I whispered to her. "Do not revile this innocent girl; she suffers quite as much as you do,—perhaps even more, for she was betrothed to him years ago."

My grief for Noemi, and my resentment against Antoine made me imprudent;
I spoke unjustly, but the provocation was great.

"You take her part!" she cried, repelling me indignantly. "Innocent— she innocent? Bah! She must have known he was married, for why else did he not marry her? Do you think me a child to be fooled by such a tale?"

"No," answered I sternly, looking away from her at Noemi. "You are not a child, madame, but she is one! Had she been a woman like yourself, your husband would never have deceived her. She trusted him wholly."

With a gesture that was almost fierce in its pride, Antoine's wife turned her back upon Noemi, and moved towards the door. "I thank my God," she said solemnly, choking down her sobs, and bending her dark brows upon me, "that I was never such an innocent as she is! I am not your dupe, monsieur; I know well enough what you are, and what it is that constitutes your right to defend her. The neighbors know her story; trust them for finding it out and repeating it. This room belongs to you, monsieur; your money paid for everything in it, and your `innocent' there no doubt is included in the bargain. Keep her to yourself for the future; Antoine's foot shall never again be set in this wicked house!"

She opened the door with the last words, and vanished into the darkness without.

For a moment there was a deep silence, the voice which had just ceased seemed to me to ring and echo around the dim, still room. The sense of a great shame was upon me; I dared not lift my eyes to Noemi's face.

Suddenly a faint cry startled me. She stretched her arms towards me and fell on her knees at my feet.

"O monsieur! Antoine is lost! My heart is dead!" Then she struck her breast wildly with her clenched hand, and swooned upon the floor.

None of us ever saw Antoine again after that terrible evening. Whether he had been most weak or most wicked we could not tell; but, for my part I always believed that he had really loved Noemi, and that his marriage had been one of worldly convenience, contracted, in an evil hour, for the sake of gain. His wife was rich, Noemi was a beggar. As for her, poor child, she never uttered a word of reproach against him; never a gesture of impatience, or an expression of complaint betrayed her suffering. She had spent all her innocent life upon her love, and with the love her life also went from her. Day after day she lay on her bed like a flower crushed and fading slowly. There were no signs of organic disease in her, there was no appreciable malady; her heart was broken, so said Madame Jeannel, and more than that the wisest could not say. Bambin, dimly comprehending that some great sorrow had befallen his dear mistress, lay always at her feet, watching her with eyes full of tender and wistful affection, refusing to leave her by night or by day. It must have comforted her somewhat to see in him, at least, the evidence of one true and faithful love.

So white and spirituelle she grew as she lay there, day by day, so delicately lovely, her deep lustrous eyes shining as with some inward light, and her hair of gold surrounding her head like the aureole of a pictured saint, that at times I fancied she was becoming dematerialised before our

eyes; her spirit seemed as it were to grow visible, as though in the intensity of its pure fire the mere earthly body which had contained it were being re-absorbed and consumed. Sometimes in the evenings her pulse quickened and her cheeks flushed with the hectic touch of fever; it was the only symptom of physical disorder I ever detected in her;—but even that was slight,—the temperature of her system was hardly affected by it.

So she lay, her body fading, day after day and hour after hour.

Madame Jeannel was deeply concerned, for she was a good woman, and could sympathise with others in sorrow, but nothing that she could say or do seemed to reach the senses of Noemi. Indeed, at times I fancied the poor child had no longer eyes or ears for the world from which she was passing away so strangely; she looked as though she were already beginning life in some other sphere and on some other plane than ours, and could see and hear only sights and sounds of which our material natures had no cognisance.

"C'est le chagrin, monsieur," said Madame Jeannel; "c'est comme ca que le chagrin tue,—toujours."

Early in the third week of December I received my summons to pass the final examination for the M.D. degree. The day was bitterly cold, a keen wind swept the empty streets and drove the new-fallen snow into drift-heaps at every corner. Along the boulevards booths and baraques for the sale of New Year's gifts were already in course of erection, the shops were gay with bright colored bonbonnieres. Children, merry with anticipations of good things coming, pressed round the various tempting displays and noisily disputed their respective merits. All the streets were filled with mirth and laughter and preparations for festivity, and close by, in her little lonely room, Noemi lay dying of a broken heart!

I underwent my ordeal with success; yet as I quitted the examination-room and descended into the quadrangle of the Ecole, crowded with sauntering groups of garrulous students, my spirit was heavy within me, and the expression of my face could hardly have been that of a young man who has safely passed the Rubicon of scientific apprenticeship, and who sees the laurels and honors of the world within his reach. The world? The very thought of its possible homage repelled me, for I knew that its best successes and its loudest praise are accorded to men whose hearts are of steel and whose lives are corrupt. I knew that still, as of old, it slays the innocent and the ingenuous and stones the pure of spirit.

Escaping somewhat impatiently from the congratulations of the friends and colleagues whom I chanced to encounter in the quadrangle, I returned gloomily home and found upon my table a twisted note in which was written this brief message:—

"Pray, come at once, monsieur, she cannot live long now.
I dare not leave her, and she begs to see you. —Marie Jeannel"

With a shaking hand I thrust the paper into my vest and hastened to obey its summons. Never had the distance between my house and Noemi's been so long to traverse; never had the stairs which led to her room seemed to me so many or so steep. At length I gained the door; it stood ajar; I pushed it open and entered. Madame Jeannel sat at the foot of the little white-draped bed; Bambin lay beside his mistress; the only sound in the room was the crackling of the burning logs on the hearth. As I entered, Madame Jeannel turned her head and looked at me; her eyes were heavy with tears, and she spoke in tones that were hushed and tremulous with the awe which the presence of death inspires.

"Monsieur, you come too late. She is dead."

I sprang forward with a cry of horror.

"Dead?" I repeated, "Noemi dead?"

White and still she lay—a broken lily—beautiful and sweet even in death; her eyes were closed lightly, and upon her lovely lips was the first smile I had seen there since the day which had stricken her innocent life into the dust. Her right hand rested on Bambin's head, in her left she held the piece of silver ribbon I had given her,—the ribbon she had hoped to wear at her wedding.

"They are for you," said Madame Jeannel softly. "She said you were fond of Bambin, and he of you, and that you must take care of him and keep him with you always. And as for the ribbon,—she wished you to take it for her sake, that it might be a remembrance of her in time to come."

I fell on my knees beside the bed and wept aloud.

"Hush, hush!" whispered Madame Jeannel, bending over me; "it is best as it is, she is gone to the angels of God."

Science has ceased to believe in angels, but in the faith of good women they live still.

The chief work of the "wise" among us seems to me to consist in the destruction of all the beautiful hopes and loves and beliefs of the earth; of all that since the beginning of time till now has consoled, or purified, or brought peace to the hearts of men. Some day, perhaps, in the long-distant future, the voice of Nature may speak to us more clearly through the lips of a nobler and purer system of science than any we now know, and we may learn that Matter is not all in all, nor human love and desire given in vain;

but that torn hearts may be healed and ruined lives perfected in a higher spiritual existence, where, "beyond these voices, there is peace."

Meanwhile Noemi's body rests in its quiet grave, and upon the faithful bosom lies the silver cross which her lover gave her.

She was one of those who could endure all things for love's sake, but shame and falsehood broke her steadfast heart. And it was the hand of her beloved which dealt the blow of which she died!

VI. The Little Old Man's Story

"O love, I have loved you! O my soul,
I have lost you!"
—Aurora Leigh

Chapter I.

"It is getting very dark now, and I have been sitting at my open bay window ever since sundown. How fresh and sweet the evening air is, as it comes up from my little flower garden below, laden with the fragrance of June roses and almond blossom! Ah, by the way, I will send over some more of those same roses to my opposite neighbor tomorrow morning,—and there is a beautiful spray of white jasmin nodding in at the casement now, and only waiting to be gathered for him. Poor old man! He must be very lonely and quiet, lying there day after day in his dark little bed-chamber, with no companions save his books and his old housekeeper. But then Dr. Peyton is with him very often, and Dr. Peyton is such a dear kind soul that he makes every one cheerful! I think they have drawn down the blinds earlier than usual tonight at the little old gentleman's. Dr. Peyton says he always likes to sit up in his armchair when the day closes, and watch the twilight gathering over the blue range of the Malvern hills in the distance, and talk dreamy bits of poetry to himself the while, but this evening I noticed the blinds were pulled down almost directly after sunset. And such a lovely sunset as it was tonight! I never beheld anything more glorious! What a wondrous glamour of molten mellow light it threw over all the meadows and cottage gardens! It seemed to me as though the gates of heaven itself were unfolded to receive the returning sun into the golden land of the Hereafter! Dear, dear, I shall get quite poetical in my old age! This is not the first time I have caught myself stumbling unawares on the confines of romance! Miss Lizzie, Miss

Lizzie, you must not be fanciful! Do you forget that you are an old maid! Yes, an old maid. Ah, well-a-day, 'tis a very happy, contented, peaceful sound to me now; but twenty years ago,—Here comes dear old Dr. Peyton himself up my garden path! He does not seem to walk so blithely tonight as usual,—surely nothing is the matter; I wish I could see his face, but it is much too dark for that, so I'll go at once and let him in. Now I shall hear news of my opposite neighbor! Ah, I hope he is no worse, poor little old man!"

Gentle reader, I shall not trouble you much in the story I am going to tell, with any personal experiences of my own. But you may as well understand before we proceed farther, that I—Miss Elizabeth Fairleigh—am a spinster on the shady side of forty-five, that I and my two serving-maids occupy a tiny, green-latticed, porticoed, one-storeyed cottage just outside a certain little country town, and that Dr. Peyton, tile one "medical man" of the parish, is a white-haired old gentleman of wondrous kindliness and goodness of heart, who was Pythias to my father's Damon at college long, long ago, and who is now my best friend and my most welcome and frequent visitor. And on the particular evening in question, I had a special interest in his visit, for I wanted very much to know what only he could tell me,—how matters fared with my neighbor and his patient, the little old man who lay sick over the way.

Now this little old man bore the name of Mr Stephen Gray, and he was a bachelor, so Dr. Peyton said, a bachelor grown, from some cause unknown to my friend, prematurely old, and wizened, and decrepit. It was long since he had first come to reside in the small house opposite mine, and from the very day of his arrival I had observed him with singular interest, and conjectured variously in my idle moments about his probable history and circumstances. For many months after his establishment "over the way," this old gentleman used morning and evening to perambulate the little

country road which divided our respective dwellings, supporting his feeble limbs with a venerable-looking staff, silver-headed like himself; and on one occasion, when my flower garden happened to look especially gay and inviting, he paused by the gate and gazed so wistfully at its beauties, that I ventured to invite him in, and presented him, bashfully enough, with a posy of my choicest rarities. After this unconventional introduction, many little courtesies passed between us, other nosegays were culled from my small parterre to adorn the little old gentleman's parlour, and more than once Miss Elizabeth Farleigh received and accepted an invitation to tea with Mr Stephen Gray.

But by-and-by these invitations ceased, and my neighbor's pedestrian excursions up and down our road became less and less frequent. Yet when I sent my maid, as I often did, to inquire after his health, the answer returned alternated only between two inflections,—Mr Gray was always either "pretty well," or "a little better today." But presently I noticed that my friend Dr. Peyton began to pay visits at my opposite neighbor's, and of him I inquired concerning the little old man's condition, and learned to my surprise and sorrow that his health and strength were rapidly failing, and his life surely and irrecoverably ebbing away. It might be many long months, Dr. Peyton said, before the end, it might be only a few weeks, but he had seen many such cases, and knew that no human skill or tenderness had power to do more than to prolong the patient's days upon earth by some brief space, and to make the weary hours of feebleness and prostration as pleasant and calm as possible.

When Dr Peyton told me this, it was late autumn, and the little old gentleman lived on in his weakness all through the snow-time and the dim bleak winter days. But when the Spring came round once more, he rallied, and I used often to see him sitting up in his armchair at the open window, arrayed in his dressing-gown, and looking so cheerful and placid, that I

could not forbear to nod to him and smile hopefully, as I stood by my garden gate in the soft warm sunshine, thinking that after all my opposite neighbor would soon be able to take his daily walks, and have tea with me again in his cosy little parlour. But when I spoke of this to Dr. Peyton, he only shook his head incredulously, and murmured something about the flame burning brighter for a little while before going out altogether. So the old gentleman lingered on until June, and still every time I sent to ask after his health returned the same old reply,—his "kind regards to Miss Fairleigh, and he was a little better today." And thus matters remained on that identical evening of which I first spoke, when I sat at the bay window in my tiny drawing-room, and saw Dr. Peyton coming so soberly up the garden path.

"Dr Peyton," said I, as I placed my most comfortable chair for him in the prettiest corner of the bay, "you are the very person I have been longing to see for the last half-hour! I want to know how my neighbor Mr Gray is tonight. I see his blinds are down, and I am afraid he may be worse. Have you been there this evening?"

I paused abruptly, for my old friend looked very gravely at me, and I thought as his eyes rested for a moment on my face, that notwithstanding the twilight, I could discern traces of recent tears in them.

"Lizzie," said he, very slowly, and his voice certainly trembled a little as he spoke, "I don't think Mr Gray was ever so well in his life as he is tonight. I have been with him for several hours. He is dead."

"Dead!" I echoed faintly, for I almost doubted whether my ears heard aright. "My little old gentleman dead? Oh, I am very, very grieved indeed! I fancied he was getting so much stronger!"

Dr. Peyton smiled, one of his peculiar, sweet, grave smiles, such as I had often seen on his kindly face at certain times and seasons when other men

would not have smiled at all.

"Lizzie," he answered, 'there are some deaths so beautiful and so full of peace, that no one ought to grieve about them, for they bring eternal rest after a life that has been only bitter disquiet and heaviness. And such a death—aye, and such a life—were Mr Gray's."

He spoke so certainly and so calmly, that I felt comforted for the little old man's sake, and longed to know,—woman-like, I suppose,— what sad story of his this had been, to which Dr. Peyton's words seemed to point.

"Then he had a romance after all!" I cried, "and you knew of it!
Poor old gentleman! I often wondered how he came to be so lonely.
May you tell me, as we sit here together? I should so like to hear
about it."

"Yes," said he, with that same peculiar smile, "I may tell you, for it is no secret now. Indeed, I came here partly for that very purpose, because I know well how much you were interested in your opposite neighbor, and how you used to speculate about his antecedents and associations. But I have not known this story long. He only told it me this evening; just an hour or two before he died. Well, we all have our little romances, as you are pleased to call them!"

"Yes, yes, all of us. Even I, unpretentious, plain Elizabeth Fairleigh,—but no matter." I mind me, reader, that I promised not to talk of my own experiences. Ah, there are no such phenomena in the world really, as "commonplace" lives, and "commonplace" persons!

"Poor little old man!" I sighed again. "Did he tell you his story then of his own accord, or"—And I paused in some embarrassment, for I remembered that Dr. Peyton was a true gentleman, and possessed of far too much

delicacy of feeling to question anybody upon personal matters or private concerns. But either he did not actually notice my hesitation, or perhaps understood the cause of it well enough to prevent him from appearing to notice it, for he resumed at once, as though no interruption to his discourse had taken place.

"When I went this afternoon to visit your neighbor, Lizzie, I perceived immediately from the change in him that the end was not far off, though I did not think it would come today. But he did. He was in bed when I entered his room, and as soon as he saw me, he looked up and welcomed me with a pleasant smile and said, `Ah, Doctor, I am so glad you are come! I was just going to send round for you! Not that I think you can do me any more good upon earth, for I know that tonight I shall go to my long rest. To my long rest.' He lingered so strangely and so contentedly over these words, that I was singularly touched, and I sat down by his bedside and took his thin white hand in mine. 'Doctor,' said he, presently, `you have been very good and kind to me now for more than ten months, and I have learned in that time to trust and esteem you as though I had known you for many long years. There are no friends of mine near me in the world now, for I am a lonely old man, and before I came here I lived alone, and I have been lonely almost all my life. But I cannot die tonight without telling you the story of my past, and of the days when I used to be young,—very long ago now,—that you may understand why I die here alone, a white-haired old bachelor; and that I may be comforted in my death by the knowledge that I leave at least one friend upon earth to sympathise in my sorrow and to bless me in my solitary grave. 'It is a long story, Doctor,' said the little old man, 'but I feel stronger this afternoon than I have felt for weeks, and I am quite sure I can tell it all from end to end. I have kept it many years in my heart, a secret from every human soul; but now all is over with my sorrow and with me for ever, and I care not who knows of it after I am gone.' Then after a little pause he told me his story, while I sat beside him holding his hand in mine,

and I think I did not lose a word of all he said, for he spoke very slowly and distinctly, and I listened with all my heart. Shall I tell it to you, Lizzie? It is not one of those stories that end happily; like the stories we read in children's fairy books, nor is it exciting and sensational like the modern popular novels. There are no dramatic situations in it, and no passionate scenes of tragical love or remorse; 'tis a still, neutral-colored, dreamy bit of pathos; the story of a lost life,— that it will make you sad perhaps to hear, and maybe, a little graver than usual. Only that."

"Please tell it, Dr Peyton," I answered. "You know I have a special liking for such sad histories. 'Tis one of my old-maidish eccentricities I suppose; but somehow I always think sorrow more musical than mirth, and I love the quiet of shadowy places better than the brilliant glow of the open landscape."

"You are right, Lizzie," he returned. "That is the feeling of the true poet in all ages, and the most poetical lives are always those in which the melancholy element predominates. Yet it is contrast that makes the beauty of things, and doubtless we should not fully understand the sweetness of your grave harmonies, nor the loveliness of your shadowy valleys, were all music grave and all places shadowy. And inanimate nature is most assuredly the faithful type and mirror of human life. But I must not waste our time any longer in such idle prologues as these! You shall hear the little old man's story at once, while it is still fresh in my memory, though for the matter of that, I am not likely, I think, to forget it very easily." So Dr Peyton told it me as we sat together there in the growing darkness of the warm summer night, and this, reader mine, is the story he told.

Chapter II.

Some forty years ago, there lived in one of the prettiest houses in Kensington, a rich old wine-merchant, and his two only children. These young men, Stephen and Maurice Grey, were twins, whose mother had died at their birth, and all through their infancy and childhood the old wine-merchant had been to them as father and mother in one, and the brothers had grown up to manhood, loving him and each other as dearly as heart could wish. Already Stephen, the firstborn of the twins, had become partner in his father's flourishing business, and Maurice was preparing at a military college for service in the army, which he was shortly to join, when a certain event occurred at Kensington, trifling enough in itself, but in the sequel pregnant with bitter misfortune to at least two human souls.

There came to reside in the house adjoining old Mr Gray's, an elderly widow lady and her orphan niece,—Mrs. Lamertine and Miss Adelais Cameron. They came there principally for the sake of the latter,— a pale consumptive girl of eighteen, whose delicate health and constitution it was thought might be considerably benefited by the mild soft air of that particular neighborhood. Soon after the arrival of these ladies in their new abode, the old wine-merchant in his courtesy and kindliness of heart saw fit

to pay them a visit, and in due time and form the visit was returned, and a friendly come-and-go understanding established between the two houses. In this manner it happened that Stephen, the elder son, by living always in his father's house, from which he was absent only during the office-hours of the day, saw a great deal of Adelais Cameron, and learnt before long to love her with all the depth and yearning that a young man feels in his first rapturous adoration of a beautiful woman.

For a beautiful woman Adelais certainly was. Very fair to look upon was the pale, transparent face, and the plentiful braided hair, golden and soft almost as undyed silk, that wreathed about the lovely little head. Clear and sweet too were the eyes whence the soul of Adelais looked forth, clear and brown and sweet; so that people who beheld her fair countenance and heard her musical voice for the first time, were fain to say in their hearts, "Such a face and such a voice as these are not earthly things; Adelais Cameron is already far on her road towards the land of the angels."

But at least Mrs Lamertine and her friendly neighbors the Grays could perceive that the pale girl grew none the paler nor sicklier for her residence at Kensington, and as days and weeks flew pleasantly by in the long autumn season, the old lady talked more and more confidently of her niece's complete restoration to health and youthful vigour. Then by-and-by Christmas drew round, and with it Maurice Gray came home to his father's house for his last vacation-time; Maurice, with his frank handsome face and curly hair, always so cheerful, always so good-humoured, always so unconscious of his own attractiveness, that wherever he went, everybody was sure to trust and to idolise him. Ay, and to love him too sometimes, but not as Adelais Cameron did, when her full womanly soul awoke first to the living intensity of passion, and she found in him the one god at whose feet to cast all her new wealth of tenderness and homage. Never before had Maurice Gray been so beloved, never before had his own love been so

desired and coveted by human soul. And now that the greatest blessing of earth lay so ready to his grasp, Maurice neither perceived the value of the gift, nor understood that it was offered to him. Such was the position when Christmas Day arrived, and the widower begged that Mrs Lamertine and her niece would do him the pleasure to dine in his house and spend the evening there, that they might sing songs and play forfeits together and keep up the ancient institutions of the time, as well as so tiny and staid a party could manage to do; to which sociable invitation, the old dame, nothing averse to pleasant fellowship at any season, readily consented. But when Adelais Cameron entered Mr Gray's drawing-room that Christmas evening with her soft white dress floating about her like a hazy cloud, and a single bunch of snowdrops in the coils of her golden hair, Stephen's heart leapt in his throat, and he said to himself that never until now had he known how exceeding perfect and sweet was the beautiful woman whom he loved with so absorbing a tenderness. Alas, that life should be at times such a terribly earnest game of cross purposes, such an intensely bitter reality of mistakes and blunders! Alas, that men and women can read so little of each other's heart, and yet can comprehend so well the language of their own!

All the evening, throughout the conversation and the forfeits and the merry-making, Stephen Gray spoke and moved and thought only for Adelais, and she for Stephen's twin brother. It was for Maurice that she sang, while Stephen stood beside her at the piano, drinking in the tender passionate notes as though they were sweet wine for which all his soul were athirst; it was at Maurice that she smiled, while Stephen's eyes were on her face, and to Maurice that she prattled and sported and made mirthful jests, while Stephen alone heeded all that she said and did; for the younger brother was reflected in every purpose and thought of hers, even as her own image lay mirrored continually in the heart and thoughts of the elder.

But before the hour of parting came that night, Stephen drew Adelais aside from the others as they sat laughing and talking over some long-winded story of the old wine-merchant's experiences, and told her what she, in the blindness of her own wild love, had never guessed nor dreamed of,—all the deep adoration and worship of his soul. And when it was told, she said nothing for a few minutes, but only stood motionless and surprised, without a blush or tremor or sigh, and he, looking earnestly into her fair uplifted face, saw with unutterable pain that there was no response there to the passionate yearning of his own.

"Adelais," said he, presently, "you do not love me?"

"Yes, yes, Stephen," she answered, softly; "as a brother, as a dear brother."

"No more?" he asked again.

She put her hand into his, and fixing the clear light of her brown eyes full upon him: "Why," she said, hurriedly, "do you ask me this? I cannot give you more, I cannot love you as a husband. Let no one know what has passed between us tonight; forget it yourself as I shall forget also, and we will always be brother and sister all our lives."

Then she turned and glided away across the room into the warm bright glow of the fireside, that lay brightest and warmest in the corner where Maurice sat; but Stephen stood alone in the darkness and hid his face in his hands and groaned. And after this there came a changeover the fortunes of the two households. Day by day Adelais faded and paled and saddened; none knew why. People said it was the winter weather, and that when the springtime came the girl would be herself again, and grow brisker and stronger than ever. But when Maurice was gone back to his college, to fulfil his last term there before leaving for India, the only brother of Adelais came

up from his home by the seaside, on a month's visit to his aunt and his sister at Kensington. He was a man of middle age almost, this same Philip Cameron, tall and handsome and fair-spoken, so that the old wine-merchant, who dearly loved good looks and courteous breeding, took to him mightily from the first, and made much of his company on all occasions. But as he stayed on from week to week at Mrs Lamertine's house, Philip saw that the pale lips and cheeks of Adelais grew paler and thinner continually, that the brown eyes greatened in the dark sockets, and that the fragile limbs weakened and sharpened themselves more and more, as though some terrible blight, like the curse of an old enchantment or of an evil eye, hung over the sweet girl, withering and poisoning all the life and the youth in her veins.

She lay on a sofa one afternoon, leaning her golden head upon one of her pale wan hands, and gazing dreamily through the open casement into the depths of the broad April sky, over whose clear blue firmament the drifting clouds came and went incessantly like white- sailed ships at sea. And Adelais thought of the sea as she watched them, and longed in her heart to be away and down by the southern coast where her brother had made his home, with the free salt breeze blowing in her face, and the free happy waves beating the shore at her feet, and the sea-fowl dipping their great strong wings in the leaping surge. Ah to be free,—to be away,—perhaps then she might forget, forget and live down her old life, and bury it somewhere out of sight in the sea-sand;—forget and grow blithe and happy and strong once more, like the breeze and the waves and the wild birds, who have no memory nor regret for the past, and no thought for any joy, save the joy of their present being.

"Phil," she said, as her brother came softly into the room and sat beside her, "take me back with you to the sea-side. I am weary of living always here in Kensington. It is only London after all."

"My dearest," he answered, kindly, "if that is all you wish for, it shall certainly be. But, Adelais, is there nothing more than this that troubles you? There is a shadow in your eyes and on your lips that used not to be there, and all day long you sit by yourself and muse in silence; and you weep too at times, Adelais, when you fancy none is by to see you. Tell me, sister mine, for the sake of the love that is between us, and for the sake of our father and mother who are dead, what cloud is this that overshadows you so?"

Long time he pressed and besought her, pleading by turns his power to help, and her need of tenderness; but yet Adelais was afraid to speak, for the love that was breaking her heart was unreturned. So the next day he found her alone again, and prayed her to tell him her sorrow, that even if he could not help nor comfort her, they might at least lament together. Then at last she bowed her head upon his breast, and told him of Maurice, and of his near departure for India, and of her own disregarded love; but not a word she said of Stephen, because she had promised him to hold her peace. And when she had told her brother all, she laid her arms about his neck and cried, weeping, "Now you know everything that is in my heart, Phil; speak to me no more about it, but only promise to take me away with you when you go, that I may the sooner forget this place and all the sorrow and the pain I have suffered here."

And Philip Cameron kissed her very tenderly, and answered, "Be at rest, sister, you shall have your will."

But when the evening came, he went over to the house of the wine-merchant, and questioned him about Maurice, whether he cared for Adelais or no, and whether he had ever said a word to his father or brother of the matter.

"Ay, ay," quoth the old gentleman, musingly, when Philip had ceased, "'Tis like enough if there be anything of the sort that the boys should talk of it between them, for, God be thanked, they were always very fond of each other; yet I never heard it spoken about. But then youth has little in common with age, and when young men make confidences of this kind, it is to young men that they make them, and not to grey-beards like me. But tell me, Cameron, for you know I must needs divine something from all this; your sister loves my boy Maurice?"

"If you think so, sir," answered Philip, "you must keep her secret."

"Cameron, Cameron," cried the wine-merchant, "Adelais is failing and sickening every day. Every day she grows whiter and sadder and more silent. Don't tell me it's for love of Maurice! It's not possible such a woman as she is can love anybody in vain! She's an angel on earth, your sister Adelais!"

Then because the old man was kindly and wise and white-headed, Philip told him all that Adelais had said, and how he had promised to take her home with him, and had come unknown to any one to ask before they went whether or not there was any hope for her of the love on which she had so set her heart.

And when Philip was gone the old gentleman called his elder son, Stephen, and asked him—but warily, lest he should betray Adelais— how Maurice bore himself in Stephen's presence when they were alone together and chanced to speak of her, and if Stephen knew or guessed anything of what was in his mind towards her. Then the young man understood for the first time all the blindness of his eyes and the dulness of his heart; and the pain and the desolation and the hopelessness of his life that was to be, rose up before him, and he knew that from thenceforth the glory and the light of it were put out for ever.

"Father," he said, "I know nothing whatever of all this. Is it your wish then that these two should marry?"

"It is my wish, Stephen, and the wish also of our friend Philip himself. Maurice could not take with him to India a sweeter or a worthier wife than Adelais Cameron."

"And does she wish it too?" he asked again. "Tell me, father, for I have guessed already." He lifted his eyes to the old man's face as he spoke, and perceived at once the sudden confusion arid surprise that his words had caused there, yet he said no more, but waited still for a reply.

"My dear boy," said the old gentleman at last, "if you have guessed anything, that is enough; say no more about it, but let it rest with yourself. I have never yet deceived either of my sons. But when Maurice comes home again you can help us very much, for you can question him on the matter more naturally than I could do, and no doubt he will tell you his mind about it, as you say he always does about everything, but with me he might be reserved and bewildered perhaps. Ask him, my boy, but keep your guesses to yourself."

"Father," cried Stephen, pressing his hands together in agony as though his heart were between them, and he would fain crush it into dust and destroy it for ever; "tell me, if I am to do this, does Adelais love my brother?"

"If I tell you at all, boy," said the wine-merchant, "I shall tell you the truth; can you hold your peace like a man of discretion?"

"I have kept other secrets, father," he answered, "I can keep this."

Then his father told him.

Early in May, Adelais Cameron went to the Devonshire sea-coast with her brother and her aunt, and they stayed there together a long while. But the accounts that came from week to week to Kensington were none of the best, for Adelais had borne the long journey but ill, and her strength did not return. Then came the summer and the vacation-time, and Maurice Gray was home again, full to the brim of schemes for his future life, and busy all day with head and hands over his preparations for leaving England in the autumn. But when Stephen talked to him of Adelais, and told him she was gone to the sea-side, Maurice only laughed and answered lightly, that she was a sweet lovable girl, and that he grieved to hear of her illness; no doubt the southern breezes would bring back the color to her cheeks, and he should hear before he had been long gone that she was quite well and strong again. At least he hoped so.

"Then, Maurice, you don't care to see her once more before you sail? You don't want to say goodbye?"

"O well, if she's here, of course, but that's another thing; I wouldn't for worlds have her come back to Kensington just to bid me goodbye. And really you know, Steenie, I've too much to do just now to be running about and saying farewells everywhere. The time that's left me now to be at home with you and my father is none too long. What is Adelais Cameron to me, when all my world is here?"

"Maurice," said Stephen again, in a voice that sounded strained and hard, like the voice of an old man trying to be young; "you're a dear affectionate fellow, and as things are, perhaps this is all very well. But supposing Adelais loved you, and my father and— and—everybody else you know, wished her to be your wife, how would you feel towards her then? Supposing, Maurice—only for the sake of supposing, of course."

"What a strange fellow you are, Steenie! Why, supposing as you say, such a very wild improbable circumstance were to occur, I should be heartily sorry for poor Adelais! Only imagine me with such a wife as she would make! Why I wouldn't have so transparent, white- skinned a beauty about my house all day for a mine of gold! I should be seized with lunacy before long, through mere contemplation of her very unearthliness, and be goaded into fancying her a picture, and hanging her up framed and glazed over my drawing-room mantelpiece! No, no, I'll leave Miss Cameron for you, you're just her style, I take it; but as for me, I never thought of marrying yet, Steenie, for I never yet had the luck or ill-luck to fall in love, and certainly you'll allow that nobody ought to think of marriage until he's really in love. So I'll wish you all success, old boy, and mind you write and tell me how the wooing gets on!"

O Maurice! Maurice!

Then, by-and-by, the young officer sailed, and Adelais heard of his going, and her heart died within her for greatness of sorrow and pain, yet still she held her peace, and lived her life in patience.

And so for two whole years they kept her by the sea, hoping against hope, and whispering those idle convictions that affection always suggests, about the worst being over now, and the time of convalescence being always tedious and unpromising. But in the third year, when the autumn days grew darker, and the sun set redder in the sea, and people began to talk again of Christmas, Adelais called her brother one evening and said:—

"Philip, I have been here very long, and I know that nothing more on earth can ever make me well again now. You will not refuse me the last request I shall make you, Phil? Take me back to the old house at Kensington, that I may see dear old Mr. Gray, and my friend Stephen, once

more; and you, Phil, stay with me and Auntie there until I die, for it won't be very long now, and I want to see you near me to the last."

So they brought her back again to the old house, next door to the wine merchant's, and they carried her over the threshold, because she was too weak to walk now, and laid her on the old sofa in the old place by the window, for she would have it, and Philip Cameron did her bidding in everything. And that same evening, Stephen Gray came in to see her, and they met as old friends meet who have been long parted, and sat and talked together until past sunset. But at length Adelais asked him for news of Maurice, what he was doing, and how he was, and when they heard from him last, and what he thought of India and of the new life there, and his companions, and the climate, and the customs of the place; for she never guessed that Stephen knew of her hopeless love. But Stephen turned away his face and answered her briefly, that his brother was well and prosperous, and wrote home constantly. How could he tell her that Maurice had already found himself a rich handsome wife in India?

Chapter III.

Soon after these things, old Mr Gray fell ill of a violent cold, which attacked him suddenly one afternoon on his return from his office. It was Christmas weather then, and the cold and the frost of the season were unusually keen, so that the physician, whom Stephen called in to see his father, looked very grave and dubious; and before many days of his patient's illness were past, he asked the young man whether there were any brothers or sisters of his, whom the merchant might wish to see. Stephen's heart beat fast when he heard the ominous question, for he understood what tidings the grave tone and the strange inquiry were meant to break to him, and knew well that the physician who spoke was one of the wisest and most skillful in London. But he answered as calmly as he could, and talked of Maurice, and of the boy's fondness for his father, and added, that if there were really imminent danger, he should like his brother to be called home, because he was sure Maurice would wish it; but that otherwise the voyage was tedious and the need unimportant.

"Let him be sent for," said the physician. "There is just time."

So Stephen wrote to his brother, and bade him leave his wife with her parents in India, and come home quickly, if he would see his father again, for the time was short, and in those days the only way open to Maurice was the long circuitous sea-route.

Maurice arrived only three days before the old man's death. He had not left his wife behind him, as Stephen suggested, for she loved her husband too dearly to be parted from him, and Maurice brought her with him to his father's house.

From her place on the sofa by the window, Adelais Cameron looked wearily out, watching for the coming of the one she loved most upon earth. And at last the coach drew up at the old gentleman's gate, and she saw Maurice dismount from the box-seat by the driver and open the coach door to hand out a handsome lady, with dark hair and bright glowing eyes.

"Who is that?" she asked of the maid, who was arranging the tea-table beside her.

"Don't you know, Miss?" said the girl, surprised at the inquiry. "That's Mrs Maurice, the rich young lady he married in India a year ago; I was told all about it by the cook at Mr. Gray's, ever-so- long ago."

But as the words were spoken, Stephen entered the room with a message for Philip Cameron, and overheard both the question and the answer. Adelais turned towards him and said, "Stephen, you never told me that Maurice had a wife."

The next week they buried the old wine merchant very quietly and simply. Only three mourners attended the funeral,—Stephen and Maurice and Philip Cameron; but Adelais, looking down on them from her casement corner, as the coffin was carried forth from the house, laid her golden head

on her aunt's bosom and cried, "Auntie, auntie, I never thought to live so long as this! Why must those always die who are needed most, while such as I live on from year to year? I fancied I had only a few weeks left me upon earth when we came back to Kensington, and yet here I am still!"

Then after a little while the brothers parted once more; Maurice and his wife went back to India, and Stephen was left alone, sole successor to his father's business, and master of the old house. But Adelais Cameron still lived on, like the shadow of her former self, fading in the sunset of her womanhood, the beauty sapped out from her white death-like face, and the glitter of youth and the sweetness of hope quenched for ever in the depths of her luminous eyes.

Then when the days of mourning were over, Stephen came again to Adelais, to renew the wooing of old times; for he said to himself, "Now that Maurice is married, and my father dead, she may pity me, seeing me so lone and desolate; and I may comfort her for the past, and make her amends with my love, for the pain and the bitterness that are gone by."

But when he knelt alone by the couch whereon Adelais lay, and held her white blue-veined hands in his and told his errand, she turned her face from him and wept sore, as women weep over the dead.

"Adelais, O Adelais," he cried in his despair, "Why will you refuse me always? Don't you see my heart is breaking for love of you? Come home with me and be my wife at last!"

But she made answer very sadly and slowly:—

"Stephen, ought the living and the dead to wed with one another? God forbid that you in your youth and manhood should take to wife such a death-like thing as I! Four years I have lain like this waiting for the

messenger to fetch me away, and now that at last he is near at hand, shall I array myself in a bridal veil for a face-cloth, and trailing skirts of silk or satin for a shroud? Dear Stephen, don't talk to me any more about this,—we are brother and sister still,—let nothing on earth break the sweetness of the bond between us."

"Not so, Adelais," cried he, passionately; "you cannot, you must not die yet! You do not know what love can do, you do not know that love is stronger than death, and that where there is love like mine death dare not come! There is nothing in all the world that I will not do for your sake, nothing that I will leave undone to save you, nothing that shall be too hard a condition for me to perform, so that I may keep you with me still. Live, live my darling, my beloved, and be my wife! Give me the right to take you with me, my sweet; let us go together to Madeira, to Malta, to Sicily, where the land is full of life, and the skies are warm, and the atmosphere clear and pure. There is health there, Adelais, and youth, and air to breathe such as one cannot find in this dull, misty, heavy northern climate, and there you will grow well again, and we will think no more about death and sickness. O my darling, my darling, for God's sake refuse me no longer!"

She laid her thin transparent palm wearily over her left side, and turned her calm eyes on the passionate straining face beside her.

"There is that here," she said, pressing her wounded heart more tightly, "that I know already for the touch of the messenger's hand. Already I count the time of my sojourn here, not by weeks nor even by days,—the end has come so very, very near at last. How do I know but that even now that messenger of whom I speak may be standing in our presence,—even now, while you kneel here by my side and talk to me of life and youth and health?"

"Adelais," pleaded the poor lover, hoarsely, "you deceive yourself, my darling! Have you not often spoken before of dying, and yet have lived on? O why should you die now and break my heart outright?"

"I feel a mist coming over me," she answered, "even as I speak with you now. I hear a sound in my ears that is not of earth, the darkness gathers before my face, the light quivers and fades, the night is closing about me very fast. Stephen, Stephen, don't you see that I am dying?"

He bowed his head over the damp colorless brow, and whispered:
"If it be so, my beloved, be as my wife yet, and die in my arms."

But while he uttered the words there came a change over her,—a shadow into the sweet eyes and a sudden spasm of pain across the white parted lips. Feebly and uncertainly she put out her hands before her face, like one groping in the darkness, her golden head drooped on his shoulder, and her breath came sharp and thick, with the sound of approaching death. Stephen folded his arms about her with a cry of agony, and pressed the poor quivering hands wildly to his bosom, as though he would fain have held them there for ever.

"O God!" he groaned in his unutterable despair; "is there no hope, no redemption, no retrieving of the past? Is this the bitter end of all, and must I lose my darling so? O Adelais, Adelais, my beloved!" But even as he spoke, the gathering shadow broke softly over all her face, the sobbing, gasping breath ceased in the stillness of the darkened room, the golden head fell lower,—lower yet upon the desolate heart whose love had been so steadfast and so true; and Stephen covered his face with the hands of the dead, and wept such tears as men can only weep once in a lifetime,—tears that make brown hairs grey and young men old.

Philip Cameron and his aunt did not stay long at Kensington. They gave up the house to strangers, and went away to the Continent for awhile, where they traveled about together, until the old lady grew tired of wandering, and settled down with her maid in a little villa near Geneva; and after that, Stephen heard no more of her nor of Philip. But Stephen himself stayed on in the old house until he grew old too, for he loved the place where Adelais had lived, and could not bear to leave it for another. And every evening when he came home from his office, he would sit alone at the window of his study whence he could see across the garden into the little chamber next door, the little chintz-curtained old-fashioned chamber where she used to lie in her weakness years and years ago, where they two had so often talked and read together, and where she had died at last in his arms. But he never wept, thinking of these things now, for he had grown into a little withered dried-up old man, and his tears were dried up also, and instead of his passionate despair and heart-breaking, had come the calm bitterness of eternal regret, and a still voiceless longing for the time that every day drew nearer and nearer, and for the coming of the messenger from the land that is very far off.

But when Maurice came home once more to settle in England with his handsome wife and his children, rich and happy and prosperous, he would fain have taken some new house in London to share with his twin brother, that they might live together; but Stephen would not. Then when Maurice had reasoned and talked with him a long time in vain, pleading by turns the love that had been between them long ago, the loneliness of his brother's estate, and his own desire that they should not separate now, he yielded the contest, and said discontentedly,—

"Have your own way, Steenie, since you will make a solitary bachelor of yourself, but at least give up your useless toiling at the wine- office. To what end do you plod there every day,—you who are wifeless and childless,

and have no need of money for yourself? Give me up this great house in which you live all alone, like an owl in an oak-tree, and let me find you a cottage somewhere in the neighborhood, where I can often come and see you, and where you may spend your days in happiness and comfort."

And the little old man shook his head and answered, "Nay, brother Maurice, but I will go away from here to some country village where I am not known, for I have toiled long and wearily all my life, and I cannot rest in peace beside the mill where I have ground down my life so many years. Do not trouble yourself about me, Maurice, I shall find a home for myself."

Then they parted. Maurice and his family came to live in the big house at Kensington, for they liked to be near London, and Stephen sold his father's business to another merchant, and went away, Maurice knew not whither, to bury himself and his lost life in some far-off village, until by-and-by the messenger for whom he had waited and yearned so long should come also for him, and the day break and the shadows flee away."

Such, reader mine, is in substance the story that Dr. Peyton told me. The words in which he related it I cannot of course quite remember now, so I have put it into words of my own, and here and there I have added somewhat to the dialogue. But the facts and the pathos of the romance are not mine, nor his; they are true, actual realities, such as no dressing of fiction can make more poetical or complete in their sorrowful interest.

"It was a long history," said I, "for a dying man to tell."

"Yes," answered he. "And several times it was evident enough from his quick-drawn breath and sudden pauses, that the recital wearied and pained him. But he was so set upon telling, and I, Lizzie, I confess, so much interested in hearing it, that I did not absolutely hinder his fancy, but

contented myself with warning him from time to time not to overtask his strength. He always answered me that he was quite strong, and liked to go on, for that it made him happy even to talk once more about Adelais, and to tell me how beautiful and sweet and patient she had been. It was close upon sunset when he ended his story, and he begged me, that as his fashion was, he might be lifted out of bed and carried to his armchair by the window, to look, as he said, for the last time, at the going down of the sun. So I called the housekeeper, and we did what he desired together, and opened the green Venetian blinds of the casement, which had been closed all the afternoon because of the heat. You remember, Lizzie, what a wonderfully bright and beautiful sunset it was this evening? Well, as we threw back the outer shutters, the radiant glory of the sky poured into the room like a flood of transparent gold and almost dazzled us, so that I fancied the sudden brilliancy would be too much for his feeble sight, and I leaned hastily forward with the intention of partly reclosing the blinds. But he signed to me to let them be, so I relinquished my design, and sent the housekeeper downstairs to prepare him his tea, which I thought he might like to take sitting up in his chair by the window. I had no idea—doctor though I am—that his end was so near as it proved to be; for although certainly much exhausted and agitated with the exertion of telling me his story, I did not then perceive any immediate cause for apprehension. Still less did I understand that he was then actually dying; on the contrary, I began to think that my first impressions of his danger when I entered the room that afternoon had been erroneous, and that the change I had observed in him might possibly be an indication of temporary revival. At all events, I fancied the cup of tea which was then being made ready, would be of great use in stimulating and refreshing him after the weariness caused by his long talk, and I promised myself that if I could only persuade him to silence for the rest of the evening, he would be none the worse for the recent gratification of his whim. We sat some time by the open window, watching

the sun as it sank lower and lower into the golden-sheeted west, and some unconnected speculations were straying through my mind about `the sea of glass mingled with fire,' when the old man's words aroused me in the midst of my dreaming, and the voice in which he spoke was so unusual and so soft that it startled me.

"`Doctor,' he said, `I think I am dying.'

"I sprang from my seat and stood at his side in a moment, but before the utterance had well passed from his lips, I perceived that it was no mere invalid's fancy.

"'Thirty-five years ago,' he continued, speaking still in that new unusual voice,—`thirty-five years ago this very selfsame day, my Adelais died in my arms as the sun went down. Today, as the sun goes down, I shall die also.'

"Surely," cried I, "this is a very singular incident! Does it not seem so to you! This evening, then, was actually the anniversary of poor Miss Cameron's death! How strange!"

"It certainly appeared so to me at first," he rejoined. "But when my mind reverted to it afterwards, I thought it exceedingly probable that his own knowledge of the fact had itself hastened his end, for he had no doubt been long brooding over it, and maybe desired that his death should occur that particular day and hour. In his enfeebled condition, such a desire would have great physical effect; I have known several similar cases. But however that may have been, I of course have no certain means of deciding. I have already told you, that immediately on my entering his chamber in the afternoon, he expressed to me his conviction that tonight he should go to his `long rest,' and in the certainty of that conviction, related to me the story you have heard. But though it has been the necessary lot of my calling to be present at so many deathbeds, I never before witnessed a calmer or a more

peaceful end than Stephen Gray's. In his changed face, in his watchful eyes, in every placid feature of his countenance, I beheld the quiet anticipation of that `long rest' about which he had spoken so contentedly an hour or two since.

"He took no further heed of me whatever,—I doubt if he was even aware of my presence. Wearily he laid his head back upon the white pillows I had placed in the armchair behind him, folded his hands together, and kept his eyes fixed steadfastly, and—I thought—even reverently, upon the setting sun that was now fast sinking like a globe of fire, towards the blue ridge of the Malvern hills, and my heart beat violently as I saw it touch the topmost peak. While I watched, there broke suddenly forth from between the low lines of sunset cloud, a long ray of golden light, that fell full on the uplifted face of the little old man. He did not turn his head, or shrink from its intense brightness, but his lips moved, though the utterance of the words he spoke was so broken and indistinct, that I stooped to hear them.

"'Adelais,—O my lost darling,—my Adelais,—let me come to thee and be beloved at last!'

" Then I looked again at the western sky, and saw that the sun had gone down."

Next morning I gathered my June roses and sweet jasmin, and took them over to the house of the little old man. I went upstairs into the darkened chamber where they had laid him, and bestowed the flowers reverently about the white-draped bed. All the wrinkles were wiped out of his pallid face now, and he looked so wondrously calm and peaceful, lying there with his closed eyelids and crossed hands, in the unbroken silence of the room, that the tears of pity I thought I should have wept at the sight never rose in my eyes; but instead, as I turned away, there came to my memory certain

closing lines of a most beautiful poem, written not very long ago by a master-hand that surely held God's commission to write. It is a dead hand now, but the written words remain, and the singer herself has gone to the land of the Hereafter, where the souls of the poets float for ever in the full light of their recovered Godhead, singing such songs as mortal ear hath not yet heard, nor mortal heart conceived of. And the poem of which I spoke, has this ending:—

"`Jasper first,' I said,
`And second, sapphire; third, chalcedony.
The rest in order,—last, an amethyst.'"

VII. The Nightshade

"But silence is most noble till the end."—Atalanta in Calydon.

Chapter I.

Somebody, the other day, presented me with a bunch of crimson roses and purple nightshade, tied together.

Roses and nightshade!

I thought the combination worthy of a poem!

For the rose, as all the world conceives, is the emblem of love; and the nightshade typifies silence.

I put my posy in a little vase filled with water, and when night came, I lay down to rest, with my head full of vague rhymes and unfledged ideas, whose theme was still my eccentric nosegay. Sleep, however, overtook the muse, and the soft divinities of darkness, weaving their tender spells about me, dissolved my contemplated sonnet into a dream.

It seemed to my sleeping fancy that I stood in a deep, serene light of shadowy purple, grave and sombre,—a light which suggested to me the sound of low minor chords, the last notes of some organ voluntary, dying beneath a master's touch, and rolling down the hazy aisles of an empty cathedral, out into the gloomy night, and upward to the stars.

A spirit floated in the air before me,—a phantom draped in heavy sweeping robes of dense purple, but with eyes of such vivid and fiery

brightness, that I could not look upon them; and my heart quailed in my bosom with a strange oppressive sense of fear and wonder. Then I felt that her awful gaze was fixed upon me, and a voice, low and sonorous as the tones of an organ, broke on my ear with an intense pathos, unutterably solemn:—

Daughter of earth, I am the spirit of the purple Nightshade, the Atropa Belladonna of the south,—the scent of whose dusky chalice is the fume of bitterness; the taste of whose dark fruit is death. And because the children and the maidens shun my poisonous berries, when they go out into the woods to make garlands for Mary's shrine, or for wedding gala; and because the leech and herbalist find in me a marvellous balm to soothe the torments of physical anguish; because I give the sick man ease, and the sleepless man oblivion, and the miserable man eternal rest; because I am sombre of hue and unsweet of odour, able to calm, to hush, and to kill, the sons of earth have chosen me to be the emblem of silence. There is a shadow on your brow: my words sound strange and bitter to you; yet hear me: for once on earth I dwelt with one who thought and labored in silence. His name is inscribed upon no calendar of the world's heroes; it is written only in heaven!

Not far from a certain large town in Piedmont there was once a miserable little cottage. It had been let when I knew it, to a poor invalid woman and her only child, a boy about nine or ten years old. They were very poor, this mother and son; and the little living they had, came mostly by means of needlework, which the woman did for people in the town, and by the sale of dried herbs and suchlike. As for the cottage itself, it was a crazy, tumble-down tenement, half in ruins, and all the outside walls of it were covered with clinging ivies and weeds and wild climbing plants. I was one of these. I grew just underneath the solitary window of the small chamber wherein the poor woman slept,—the whole but consisted of only two rooms,—and I

climbed and sprouted and twisted my head in and out of the network of shrubs about me, and clung to the crumbling stone of the wall, and stretched myself out and up continually, until I grew so tall, that I could look in at the casement and see the inside of the room. It was in the summertime that I first managed to do this, and I remember well what a burning, sultry summer it was! Everything seemed parched and calcined under the pitiless Italian sun, and the whole sky was like a great blazing topaz,—yellow, and hard to look at; and the water disappeared from the runlets, and there was not a breath of wind from one end of the sky to the other.

So it was no great marvel to me, when one day, not long after my first appearance at the windowsill, I saw the poor woman come into the room with a very faltering step, and a whiter, sicklier look on her wan face than was usual to it. She threw herself wearily down upon her bed in the corner, and panted for breath. She had been to the town to take thither the last piece of needlework she had done, and she laid on the wooden table by the bedside the money the people had given her for her labor. Hard-earned coins, and few of them! She put her thin, wasted hands to her head as she lay, and I heard her murmur to herself in broken words that seemed interspersed with half suppressed sobs, and I could not understand what she said. But by-and-by, when she had grown a little calmer,— there was a sharp, swift tap at the door of the room, and the boy entered, with a small book in his hand, and a sparkle of pleasure in his eyes.

"Look, mother!" he cried, holding up the volume gleefully; "this is one of the great German Professor's 'Treatises on Chemistry!' Herr Ritter has bought it for me! Isn't it good of him? And he is here, and wants to know if he may come and see you!"

She smiled,—such a poor ghost of a smile as it was!—and answered feebly, "Let him come; 'Tista." But I suppose the Herr had heard even that

broken message, for at the words the door was pushed open a little further, and an old man appeared, bare-headed, wearing a long white beard, and carrying a staff in his hand. He was bent with age, and his forehead and cheeks were marked about with many lines and crosses,—deep furrows ploughed by the harrow of thought and sorrow. I had often seen him before, for he came frequently to the cottage, but I had never been so close to him as on this occasion, and had never before noticed how poor and worn his garments were. He came into the room with a courteous greeting on his lips, half-Italian, half-German in its phraseology, and signed with a nod of his head to the boy Battista to be gone, who immediately obeyed, hugging his prize, and closed the door softly behind him.

"Herr Ritter," said the woman, raising herself on the pillow, and putting both her hands into his; "you are too good to, my 'Tista, and too good to me. Why will you do these things?"

He smiled, as though the matter were not worth a word; but she went on, —

"I say you are too good, dear friend. Never a day passes, but you bring me something,—wine or fruit or some piece of dainty fare; and as for 'Tista, there is nothing he does not owe to you! All he knows, you have taught him. We can never repay you."

"My dear Frau 'Lora, who thinks of such things twice? Chut! But you look ill and over-tired this evening. You have been to the town again?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. You must lie here and rest now. It will get cooler by-and-by; and look, I have brought you some bunches of grapes and some peaches. They will do you good."

"Oh, Herr Ritter!"

"Don't cry 'oh, Herr Ritter!' in that reproachful manner, for this fruit really cost me nothing. It was given to me. Little Andrea Bruno brought it to me today."

"The fruit-seller's child? Yes, yes, I daresay; but it was not meant for me! It's no use trying to hide your good deeds, Herr Ritter! 'Tista has told me how kind you were to Andrea's little sister when she sprained her foot last month; and how you bandaged it for her, and used to go and read to her all the morning, when her father and Andrea were out selling fruit, and she would have been left alone but for you; and I know, too, all about poor crippled Antonia and Catterina Pic—. Don't go away, I won't say any more about it! But I couldn't help telling you I knew; you dear, good Herr Ritter!"

He had half-risen, but now he reseated himself, and drew his chair nearer her couch. In doing this his eyes met hers, and he looked earnestly into them a moment.

"Lora, you have been weeping. What is the matter?"

She moved restlessly on her hard pillows, and dropped her gaze from his face, and I noted that a faint blush stole over her sunken cheeks and touched her forehead. With that tender glow, under the faded skin, she looked almost beautiful. She was young, certainly, not more than thirty at the utmost; but she was very poor and desolate, and there is nothing so quick at sapping the blood and withering the beauty of women as poverty and desolation. Nothing.

"Herr Ritter," she said, after a little pause, "I will tell you what is the matter. Perhaps you may be able to advise me; I don't quite know what to do. You know how very, very much my 'Tista wants to be a chemist, so I

needn't say anything about that. Well, he must be brought up to something, you know; he must learn to be something when the time comes for him to live without me, and I don't think, Herr Ritter, it will be very long— before —before that time comes, now."

I noted again that the old man did not contradict her. He only watched her drooping face, and listened.

"I have worked early and late," she went on in low, swift tones, "to try and lay by a little money towards getting him apprenticed to some chemist in the town. He has worked, too, poor child. But it is little—nothing—we could save between us; for we must live meanwhile, you know, dear friend, and there is the rent to pay. Well, now I am coming to my story. When I was a young girl, I had a sister, ten years older than I. We were orphans, and an old aunt took care of us. I married—against my aunt's wish, in the face of my sister's warnings,—a poor improvisatore. We were poor enough, of course, before that, my sister and I, but we were not beggars, and the husband I took was below me. Well, my sister was very angry, dreadfully angry, but I was young and strong, and I was in love, so I didn't care much about it then. My husband traveled from place to place, telling his stories and singing his rhymes, and I went with him, and soon lost sight of my sister. At last we came to Rome. 'Tista was born there, and soon after I got some news of my old home from a wandering pedlar, who had passed through the village where I used to live. My aunt was dead, and my sister had married,— married a rich inn-keeper; a match as far above our station as mine had been below it. Well, Herr Ritter, my husband was badly hurt in a quarrel one evening in one of the squares. Somebody insulted him before all the people as he was telling one of his stories, and his blood got up and he struck the man, and they fought; and my husband was brought home to me that night, half-murdered. He didn't live long. He had had a heavy fall, I think, in that fight, for the back of his head was cut open, and he took brain-

fever from it. I did my best, but our money was scarce, and our child was too young to be left alone with a sick man, and I could get no work to do at home. So one day, at noon, my husband died. Poor Battista! I could not help it! I could not save him! Ah Jesu! what a terrible thing poverty is! what a mournful thing it is to live!"

She shrouded her face in her hands, but not to weep, for when, after a little silence, she raised her large dark eyes again to meet the old German's compassionate gaze, I saw that they were calm and tearless.

"After that, I used to leave little 'Tista in the care of a woman, next door to me, while I went out as a model. I was handsome then, the painters said, and my hair and my complexion were worth something in the studio; but not for long. My color faded, and my hair grew thin, for I pined and sorrowed day and night after the husband I had lost, and at last no one would give two scudi for me, so I took 'Tista and left Rome to tramp. Sometimes I got hired out in the vine-harvest, and sometimes I sold fruit, or eggs, or fish in the markets, till at last I got a place as a servant in a big town, and 'Tista went to school a bit. But seven months ago my mistress died, and her daughters wouldn't keep me, because I had become weak and couldn't do the work of their house as well as I used to do it. And nobody else would take me, for all the people to whom I went said I looked halfway in my grave, and should be no use to them as a servant. So I gave it up at last, and came on here and got this cottage, almost for nothing, though it's something to me; but then they give me so little for my work, you see, in the town. Well, Herr Ritter, I daresay you think my story a very long one, don't you? I am just near the end of it now. I went into the town today, and while I was standing in the shop with my needlework, a lady came in. The shop-woman, who was talking to me about the price of the things I had done, left me when the lady came in, and went to serve her. So I had to stand and wait, and when the lady put back her veil to look at something

she was going to buy, I saw her face. Oh, Herr Ritter! it was my sister, my sister Carlotta! I was certain of it! I was certain of it! Nevertheless; after she had gone, I asked the shop-woman some questions about the lady. She did not tell me much, for I fancy she thought me inquisitive; but she told me, at least, all I had need to know. Her customer, she said, was the wife of a very rich inn-keeper, and her name was Carlotta Nero. She is lodging, the woman told me, at the Casa d'Oro. I didn't go to see her then, of course, because she could not then have reached home; but I want to go tomorrow, if I can manage to walk so far, for I think she would like to see me again, and I am sure I should like to see her. And, shall I tell you what else I am thinking about, Herr Ritter? It is that, perhaps,—perhaps, her husband, being so rich, he might be able to put 'Tista in the way of doing something, or of getting me some work, so that we could save up the money for his apprenticeship by-and-by. What do you think of it now, Herr Ritter? My sister, you know, is the only friend I have in the world, except you, kind, dear Herr! and I don't think she would mind my asking her this, though we did part in anger; do you? For that was ten years ago."

She paused again, and Herr Ritter gazed tenderly at the poor sharp face, with its purple eyelids and quivering parted lips, through which the heavy rapid breath came every moment with a sudden painful shudder, like a sob. I think he was wondering, pityingly, what such a feeble, shattered creature as she could have to do with work, at least, on this side of death.

"Herr Ritter! Herr Ritter!" cried 'Tista, bursting open the door of the little chamber, in a state of great delight; "look what Cristofero has just given me! These beautiful roses! Will you have them?"

"Not I, 'Tista, thank you. Gay colors and sweet odours are not for me. Put them here in this cup by your mother's side. Now, Frau 'Lora, I will not be contradicted!"

"Won't you have one of them, Herr Ritter?" asked the boy, wistfully, holding out towards the old man a spendid crimson bud.

He answered hurriedly, with a gesture of avoidance.

"No, no, 'Tista! I never touch roses! See here, I'll take a cluster of this, 'tis more in my line a great deal." He turned away to the lattice as he spoke; rather, I thought, to conceal a certain emotion that had crossed his face at the sight of the roses than for any other reason, and laid his hand upon me.

"Why, that's nightshade!" cried the boy in surprise.

"No matter," answered the old German, breaking off my blossom-head, and tucking its stalk into the buttonhole of his rusty coat; "I like it, it suits me. Belladonna is not to be despised, as you ought to know, Master Chemist!" Then, in a softer tone, "I shall come and see you tomorrow morning, Frau 'Lora, before you start. Goodnight."

He went out, shutting the door behind him gently, and I went with him. He did not walk very far. About half-a-mile from the town there stood three or four old-fashioned houses, with projecting gables and low green verandahs sloping over their wide balconies, and it was in the first of these houses that Herr Ritter lodged.

He had only one room, a little dark, studious-looking apartment, scantily furnished, with a single window, opening on to the balcony, and in one corner a deep recess, within which was his bed. There were some shelves opposite the window, and upon these several ponderous old tomes in faded covers; a human skull, and a few fossils. Nothing else at all, except a tiny picture, hung upon the wall above the head of his couch; but this I did not see at first.

Later, when he had taken me out of his coat, and put me in water, in a little glass bowl, I was able to turn my great yellow eyes full upon the painting, and I saw that it was the miniature of a beautiful young girl, dressed in a very old-fashioned costume, and wearing upon her fair bosom a knot of crimson roses. "Ah," I said to myself, "there has been a romance in this old German's life, and now there is—silence."

Chapter II.

Very early the next morning Battista came to see Herr Ritter. In his hand the boy carried a large clay flowerpot, wherein, carefully planted in damp mould, and supported by long sticks set crosswise against each other, I beheld my own twining branches and pendulous tendrils; all of myself, indeed, that had been left the day before outside the cottage window. Battista bore the pot triumphantly across the room, and deposited it in the balcony under the green verandah.

"Ecco! Herr Ritter!" cried he, with vast delight. "You see I don't forget what you say! You told me yesterday you liked the belladonna, so when you were gone I went and dug up its root and planted it in this pot for you, that you may always keep it in your balcony, and always have a bunch to wear in your coat. Though, indeed, I can't think how you can like it; it smells so nasty! But you are a strange old darling, aren't you, Herr Ritter?"

Battista had set down his pot now, and was looking into the old German's face with glistening eyes.

"Child," answered the Herr, smiling very gravely and tenderly, as one may fancy that perhaps a Socrates or a Plato may have smiled sometimes;

"your gift is very welcome, and I am glad to know you thought of me. These are the first flowers I have ever had in my little dark room; and as for the scent of them, you know, 'Tista, that is a matter of taste, isn't it, just like color."

"Yes," quoth 'Tista, emphatically, "I like roses!"

But Herr Ritter interposed hurriedly.

"Tista, how is your mother today?"

"That is one of the things I came to talk about. She is ill; too ill to rise this morning, and she wants to see you. Will you come back with me, for I think she has something particular to say to you?"

"Yes, 'Tista, I will come."

He took down his old velvet cap from its peg behind the door, and stooping over the little glass dish in which he had placed the spray of my blossoms the preceding day, lifted me carefully out of the water, wiped the dripping stem, and fastened me in his coat again. I believe he did this to show the boy a pleasure.

But a little while after this, and Herr Ritter sat again in the old wooden chair by the widow's couch. Early that morning she had written to her sister a long letter, which she now put into the old German's hands, begging him to carry it for her to the Casa d'Oro, and bring her in return whatever message or note Carlotta Nero should give him. "For," said the poor woman, with anxious eyes, and pallid lips that quivered under the burden of the words they uttered, "I do not know for how long my sister may be staying here, and perhaps I shall never meet her again. And since I am not able to go myself into the town today, and I fear to miss her, I thought, dear

friend, you would not mind taking this for me; and, perhaps, if my sister should ask you anything, saying you know me, and—and—'Tista?"

She faltered a little there, and the old man took her hand in his with the tender, pitying gesture we use to little children.

"Be at ease, dear 'Lora," he murmured, "I will bring you good news. But the hour is early yet, and if I start so soon, your sister may not be able to receive me. So I'll go back and take my cup of coffee at home before I set out."

He was rising, but she laid her hand on his arm gently.

"Dear friend, why should you leave us? 'Tista is getting my breakfast ready now, let him get yours also."

So Herr Ritter stayed, and the three had their morning meal together. There was a little loaf of coarse black bread, a tin jug filled with coffee, and some milk in a broken mug. Only that, and yet they enjoyed it, for they finished all the loaf, and they drank all the coffee and the milk, and seemed wonderfully better for their frugal symposium when 'Tista rose to clear the table. Only black bread and coffee; and yet that sorry repast was dignified with such discourse as those who sit at the tables of Dives are not often privileged to hear.

For Herr Ritter was a scholar and a philosopher. He had studied from his youth the strange and growing discoveries of geology, astronomy, and chemistry; he had wrested from the bosom of Nature her most subtle secrets, and the earth and the heavens were written in a language which he understood and loved to read. I learned that he had been a student in earlier days at a German university, and had there first begun to think. From the time he was twenty, until this very hour in which he sat by the side of 'Lora

Delcor, he had been thinking; and now that he had become an ancient man, with a beard of snow, and a face full of the deep furrows of a solitary old age, he was thinking still. He had given up the world in order to think, and yet, he told us, he was as far from the truth as ever, and was content to know nothing, and to be as a little child in the presence of Life and of God.

And when 'Lora asked him why he had never cared to enter into the lists of argument and controversy with other learned philosophers and doctors of his time, and to make himself a name that should have been reverenced among men, he answered mildly, that he had no ambition, or if he had once had any, he had always felt the mysteries of existence too profoundly to make them stepping-stones to worldly honor. "It is impossible," he said, "that any man should be able, in this sphere of life, and under these conditions of being, to penetrate into the meaning of things,—or to touch their inmost source with fingers of flesh. All that we can attain to know is this, that we can know nothing; and the fairest answer we can give when we are questioned, is that we do not know. If, then, we know so little about life, much less can we ever hope to discern the meaning of death. And as for the lesser considerations of our daily being, what are they? Long ago I ceased to desire; ambition and love are things of the past to me."

I thought the shadows of the hanging vine outside the lattice darkened over the old man's face as he spoke, and there seemed to come into his clear keen eyes a sudden mist as of tears that would not flow. Whether or not the gentle woman beside him also saw these things, I cannot tell, but when he paused she asked him softly, if his life had not been a sorrowful one? She feared he must have suffered deeply.

"To all of us," he answered, "life is a sorrowful thing, because to all of us it is a mystery past finding out. Have you found it sweet, Frau 'Lora? no? nor have I. But what I have lost, if indeed I lost anything, I lost not wilfully.

Well,—I have realised my destiny; the meanest can do no less, the greatest can do no more."

"But you withdrew yourself of your own accord from the world, dear Herr; you buried yourself in your own solitude, and kept yourself apart from the honor you might have earned by your learning in the world? You chose to be silent?"

"Yes," he echoed, mournfully, "I chose to be silent. Why should I have wasted my breath in idle disputation, or to what end should I have laboured to get a string of empty letters tacked to my name, like the flypapers of a boy's kite? I do not seek to be dragged back to the ground, I prefer to mount without a string. Everything we attempt to do falls short of its conception in its fulfilment. All glory is disappointment,—all success is failure; how acutely bitter, only the hero himself can know!"

"You lave no regrets, then, Herr Ritter?" said 'Lora, with her clear earnest gaze full upon his face.

"None," he answered, simply.

"And will you always keep silence?"

"Always, so far as I can see," said the old German. "There are quarrels enough in the world without my intervention, there are dogmas enough in the world without my enunciations. I do not think I should do any good by speaking to men. Could I make them any wiser, purer, gentler, truer than they are? Could I teach them to be honest in their dealings with each other, compassionate, considerate, liberal? If they have not heard the prophets, nor even the divine teacher of Nazareth, shall I be able to do them any good? Are not their very creeds pretexts for slaughter and persecution and fraud? Do they not support even their holiest truths, their sincerest beliefs, by

organised systems of deceit and chicanery? Chut! I tell you that the very vesture which men compel Truth to wear, is lined and stiffened with lies! The mysteries of life are so terrible, and its sadness so profound, that blatant tongues do not become philosophers. Words only serve to rend and vex and divide us. Therefore I think it best to hide my thoughts in my heart, believing that in matters which we cannot fathom, silence is noblest; and knowing that when I say, `I am nothing, but God is all,—I am ignorant, but God is wise,'—all I am able to say is said. By-and-by, in the brighter light of a more perfect day beyond the sun, I shall see the King in His beauty, face to face; I shall know, even as I am known!"

"This, then," asked 'Lora, gently, "is why you gave up the world, that you might be alone?"

"I gave up the world, dear Frau, because I found in it all manner of oppression done in the names of justice and of Virtue. My heart turned against the Wrong, and I had no power to set it Right. The mystery of life overcame me; I refused the gold and the honours which might have been mine, if I could have been content in being dishonest. But God gave me grace to be strong, and the world cast me out of its gilded nursery. I became a man, and put away childish things."

Then he rose slowly from his seat, and as he laid his hand on the door-latch, and lifted it to go out, a welcome little puff of outside air darted into the chamber, and stirred the nightshade blossoms in the breast of the old rusty coat. And I raised my dark purple head, and perceived that the mournful shadow rested again upon the face of Herr Ritter, like a cloud at sunset time, when the day that has passed away has been a day of storm.

We went to the Casa d'Oro.

Carlotta Nero was in her sitting-room, and would see the Herr there, said the dark-haired smiling contadina, who admitted the old German into the house. She was a native of the place, and evidently remembered him with gratitude and pleasure. So we presently found ourselves in a small well-appointed chamber, on the first floor of the Casa.

On a tapestry-covered dormeuse, by the open window, and carefully protected with gauze curtains from the glare of the coming noon, reclined a handsome woman of middle age, so like, and yet so strangely unlike 'Lora Delcor, that my dusky blooms quivered and fretted with emotion, as the contadina closed the door behind us.

The same delicate features, the same luxuriance of hair, but—the eyes of 'Lora! ah,—a soul, a divinity looked out of them; but in these one saw only the metallic glitter of the innkeeper's gold! They turned coldly upon Herr Ritter as he stood in the doorway, and a hard ringing utterance—again how unlike 'Lora ! for this was the dry tintinnabulation of coin—inquired his errand.

"Herr Ritter, I am told. You wish to speak to me?"

I observed that she allowed the old man to stand while she spoke.

"Yes; Signora," he answered, mildly, "I bring you this letter; may I beg you will read it now, before I go? for the writer charged me to carry back to her your answer."

He drew 'Lora's note from his vest with a gesture of reverent tenderness, as though he loved the very paper his friend had touched, and were something loath to part with it to such indifferent hands and eyes as these. Carlotta Nero took it coldly, and glanced through the close-written pages with the languid air of a supercilious fine lady. Once I fancied I saw her

cheek flush and her lip quiver as she read, but when she looked up again and spoke, I thought I must have been mistaken in that fancy, or else her emotion had been due to another cause than that I had imagined. For there was no change in the ungentle glittering eyes; no softening in the dry tinkle of the voice that delivered the Signora's answer.

"I am sorry I can do nothing for your friend. You will tell her
I have read her letter, and that I leave this place tomorrow morning."

She inclined her head as she said this, I suppose by way of indication that the Herr might accept his dismissal; and laid the letter on an ebony console beside her sofa. But the old German kept his ground.

"Signora," he said, tremulously, and my blossoms thrilled through all their delicate fibres with the indignant beating of his heart; "do you know that letter comes from your sister? That she is poor, in want, widowed, and almost dying?"

Carlotta Nero lifted her pencilled eyebrows.

"Indeed?" she said. "I am pained to hear it. Still I cannot do anything for her. You may tell her so."

"Signora, I beg you to consider. Will you suffer the—the fault of ten years ago to bear weight upon your sisterly kindness,—your human compassion and sympathy, now?"

"Excuse me, Herr Ritter, I think you are talking romance. I have no sisterly kindness, no compassion, no sympathy, for any one of— of this description."

She motioned impatiently towards the letter on the console; and
I thought she spoke the truth.

Her Ritter was speechless.

"Dolores chose her own path," said the innkeeper's wife, seeing that her visitor still waited for something more, "and she has no right to appeal to me now. She disgraced herself deliberately, and she must take the consequences of her own act. I will not move a finger to help her out of a condition into which she wilfully degraded herself, in spite of my most stringent remonstrances. All imprudence brings its own punishment,—and she must bear hers as other foolish people have to do. She is not the only widow in the world, and she might be worse off than she is; a great deal."

"I am to tell her this"—asked Herr Ritter, recovering himself with a prodigious effort "from you?"

"As you please," returned the great lady, still in the same indifferent tone. "It will be useless for her to call here, I cannot see her; and besides, I leave tomorrow with my husband."

Again she bowed her head, and this time Herr Ritter obeyed the signal. I felt his great liberal heart heaving,—thump, thump, under the lapel of the old rusty coat; but I breathed my spirit into his face, and he said no more as he turned away than just a formal "Buon giorno, Signora."

"Silence is best," I whispered.

Chapter III.

He went home to his little dark studio, where the sunlight so rarely entered, and where the big tomes and the skull and the fossils, and the picture of the beautiful girl and her crimson roses, greeted him with unchanged looks. All the room was pervaded with the aroma of the belladonna plant in the balcony, and all the soul of the old philosopher was filled with an atmosphere of silent liberality.

He stood before the bookshelves and laid his withered fingers falteringly upon the volumes, one after another. I knew already what was passing in his heart, and my rising perfume assisted the noble sacrifice. Then he lifted the books from their places,—one, two, three,—the volumes he prized the most, ancient classical editions that must have been an El Dorado of themselves to such a student and connoisseur as he. For a moment he lingered over the open pages with a loving, tremulous tenderness of look and touch, as though they had been faces of dear and life-long friends; then he turned and looked at the picture in the dark corner. A name rose to his lips; a soft-sounding German diminutive, but I hardly heard it for the exceeding bitterness of the sigh that caught and drowned the muttered utterance. But I knew that in that moment his liberal heart renounced a

double sweetness, for surely he had cherished the gift of a dead love no less than he had treasured the noble work of immortal genius.

Then, with his books under his arm, he went silently out of the studio, and back again into the town, along many a dingy winding court, avoiding the open squares and the market-place, until we came to a tall dark-looking house in a narrow street. There Herr Ritter paused and entered, passing through along vestibule into a spacious apartment at the back of the house, where there was a gentleman lounging in an easy attitude over the back of an armchair, from which he seemed to have just risen, and slashing with an ivory paper-knife the leaves of a book he was holding. The room in which we found ourselves had a curiously hybrid appearance, and I could not determine whether it were, indeed, part of a publisher's warehouse, or of a literary museum, or only the rather expansive sanctum of an opulent homme de lettres.

Herr Ritter laid down his three big volumes on a table that was absolutely littered from end to end with old manuscripts and curious fossilised-looking tomes in vellum covers.

"Ah, 'Giorno, Herr!" said the gentleman, looking up from his book; "what is that?"

He came towards us as he spoke, and opening the topmost volume of the pile which the old man had deposited on the table, examined the title-page.

"Sancta Maria! " cried he, his whole manner changing in a moment from easy indifference to earnest interest: "what, you will part with this after all? Why, it is the same book I offered you two hundred pistoles for at Rome! You wouldn't sell it then at any price, you said!"

"No, Signor, but I will now."

Ah, it was a generous martyrdom, but the pangs of it were very grievous; what wonder that the martyr sighed a little!

"The same price, then, Herr? Don't let us bargain about it. The Eminenza is liberal in these things, you know; and you're poor, my friend, I know."

He nodded at the old German with a sort of familiar patronage, as though he would have said, "Don't be modest, I'll stand by you!"

But the Herr seemed to notice neither words nor manner, though I thought the heart beneath the shabby coat recoiled at that instant somewhat unusually.

"The same price, if you please, Signor."

The Cardinal's agent, for such I guessed this tender-hearted individual before us to be, flashed a keen sudden glance of mingled scrutiny and surprise at the calm dignified face of the philosopher, whistled pleasantly a short aria of two notes, apparently with some design of assisting his mental digestion to victory over a tough morsel; and then turning to an iron-bound cashbox at his elbow, unlocked it, and produced therefrom the stipulated sum, which he counted out with much celerity, and forthwith handed to the old German. With tremulous fingers the Herr gathered up the money, as though it had been the price of a friend's betrayal, and drooped his noble head upon his breast, like a war-horse smitten to the heart in the passionate front of battle.

What he had done was registered in Heaven.

"Addio, Herr."

"Guten-tag, Signor."

Herr Ritter did not go back to his lodgings then. He went past the low house with its green verandah, blistering under the fierce noon-sun, and across the pastures to the cottage of 'Lora Delcor. She was sitting at the open door, her thin transparent palms pressed tightly together, as though she were praying, and her great fringed eyelids dark and heavy with their burden of pain. Ah! 'Lora! 'Lora! "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!" Not in the world that men have made, daughter of earth, ah, not in that; but in the world that God shall make hereafter!

"Herr Ritter! you have been? O tell me what she said! 'Tista is not here, he is gone into the woods to gather herbs."

"Have you told 'Tista anything?"

"About this? Nothing. I thought I would wait until I knew—"

She had risen from her seat to greet him, with painful agitation; and now she staggered, and I think would have fallen, but that the old man timely caught and held her in his gentle grasp.

"Be comforted, dear 'Lora," he whispered; " bring you good news."

She dropped into her wooden chair and covered her face with her bloodless hands, weeping and sobbing for joy, as only women can who have suffered much and long and alone.

Herr Ritter stood by, watching her kindly, and stroking his white flowing beard in silence, until she had wept her fill; and her dark blissful eyes, dreamy with the mist of fallen tears, were lifted again to his face, like caverned pools in summer refreshed with a happy rain.

"What did she say? she sent me a note? a message?"

Herr Ritter poured his pistoles into her lap.

"I bring you these," said he, simply.

"Jesu-Maria! She sent me all this! how good! how generous! but ought I to take it, Herr?"

"It is for 'Tista; to pay his apprenticeship. But there is a condition, dear Frau; 'Tista is not to know who sends him this gift. He is to be told it comes from an unknown friend. When he is older he will know, perhaps."

"My kind dear 'Lotta! Ah, she would have 'Tista learn to love her, then, before she tells him of her goodness! For him I cannot refuse the money; can I, Herr? But I may go and thank her myself; I may go and thank her?"

"Not just yet, 'Lora. Your sister is obliged to leave this place tomorrow morning; Signor Nero's engagements compel him to proceed; and so for the present time she charged me to bear you with the gift, her greeting, and her farewell."

He was looking at her with grave mild eyes, while he leant against the cottage-wall and stroked his silver beard.

Daughter of earth, let God be judge; for He alone understands the heart of mortal man. As for me, I am only a flower of the dust of the ground, yet I confess I thought the deceit the old philosopher used, at least more graceful and gentle than the candour of Carlotta Nero.

"'Lora: you are happy now?"

She looked up and smiled in his eyes.

In that smile the philosopher had his reward.

Soon afterwards Battista Delcor was apprenticed to a chemist in the town, and the cup of his content was filled to the brim; but as yet, neither his mother nor Herr Ritter told him the name of his unknown friend. Then it grew towards the end of summer, and the ferns and the brake began to tarnish in the woodlands, and Dolores Delcor sickened, and failed, and whitened more and more from day to day, till at last she could do no work at all, but lived only at the hands of 'Tista and Herr Ritter.

As for me, I blossomed still in the balcony beneath the green verandah, looking always into the dark studio, and noting how, one by one, the tall musty books upon the old German's shelves were bartered away for gold.

But one morning, just at dawn, the woman of that sorrowful name and dolorous life passed away into her rest, while she slept. And when 'Tista, with his heart almost breaking for grief, came at the hour of sunrise to tell Herr Ritter that she was dead, the old man looked out across the hazy blue of the eastern reaches at the sea of golden splendour breaking beyond them, and answered only in his quiet patient way, that he had known it could not be for long.

I heard the words and understood them, but to the boy they meant nothing.

Then there came a night when the shelves stood empty, save for the skull and the fossils, and Herr Ritter wore a strange luminous aspect upon his placid face, that was not of the shadows nor of the lights of earth. For five days he had broken no bread, and his strength had failed him for want and for age, and no friend had been to visit him. 'Tista, I suppose, had his business now, and of late his presence in the dark studio had become more and more rare; not that he was unkind, but that he was full of youth, and the vigorous love of youth; and the old man's talk was wearisome to ears that delighted in sounds of laughter and frolic. And besides all this, he did not

know how much he owed to the old philosopher, for Herr Ritter still kept silence.

All the autumn day had been sultry, and the wind seemed to have fallen asleep in some remote corner of the sky, for there had scarce been air enough to stir the feathery tassels of the pasture grasses, and the stillness of drought and heat had been everywhere unbroken.

But when I looked towards the west at sundown, I saw that all the long low horizon was shrouded in twirling cumuli, with tops of lurid flame; and great shafts of red tempestuous light, shot upward from the dying sun, launched themselves over the heavens, and hung there like fiery swords above a city of doom.

Herr Ritter sat up late that night, reading a packet of old worn- looking letters, which he had taken out of a small wooden box beneath his bed; and as he read them, burning them to tinder one by one in the flame of his lamp. A little torn morsel of a note, yellow with age, and half charred with the smoke of the destruction it had escaped, fluttered down from the table through the open casement, and fell in the balcony by my side. There were words on the paper, written in stiff German characters, orthodox and methodical in every turn and upstroke and formal pothook. They were these:—

"I distinctly refuse to give my daughter in marriage to a man who is so great a fool as to throw away his chances of wealth and fame for the sake of a mere whim. Yesterday you thought fit to decline a Professorship which was offered you, on account of a condition being attached to your acceptance of it. You fancied you could not honestly fulfil that condition, and you lost your promotion. Very well: you have also lost my daughter. I see plainly that you will never be rich, for you will never get on in the

world, and no child of mine shall be wife to you. Consider your engagement with her at an end."

Alas! In this, then, was the story of the crimson roses!

It was far into the night when the last letter dropped to powder upon the table, and the old German, not pausing to undress, laid himself wearily down upon the little bed in the dark corner to take his rest. The oil of the lamp was well-nigh spent then, and its languid flame quivered dimly upon the wan starved hands that were folded above the rusty coat, and on the noble face with its pale closed eyelids and patient lips, stedfast and calm as the face of a marble king. Over his head the beautiful woman and her crimson flowers ever and anon brightened in the fitful leaping light, and shone like a beacon of lost hope upon a life that had been wrecked and cast adrift in a night of storm. He died as he had lived, in silence; and his death was the sacrifice of a martyr, the fall of a warrior at his post.

Then the tempest broke over all the Piedmont lands, and the wind arose as a giant refreshed with his rest, and drove the dark thunder- clouds upward before the sounding pinions of his might like demon hounds upon the track of a flying world. Then came the sharp swift hiss of the stinging hail and rain, and the baying of the hurricane, and the awful roll of the storm that shook the whole broad heaven from end to end. Strange! that in the tumult of such a wild and terrible night as this, so gentle and so calm a soul should be destined to pass away!

Once again for a single instant I saw him, in the midst of a dazzling flash of lightning that showed me, clear and distinct as in a mirror, the whole of the silent chamber where the lamp had gone out, and the charred tinder of the burnt letters was scattered over the wooden table.

He lay motionless upon the white draped bed, a hero slain in the hour of his triumph, with broad chivalrous brows and tranquil lips, whence speech had fled for ever, grand and serene in the repose of a sleep that, like 'Lora's, had borne him away into peace.

For him there was no longer storm, nor darkness, nor conflict. He beheld his God face to face in the light of the Perfect Day.

Slowly at last, beyond the farthest bounds of the dull landscape, broke the white ghostly lines of dawn; and the shouting of the wind, and the rage of the chattering tempest fled down the watery sky with the flying scuds of cloud, away into the distant horizon of the west. But the belladonna-plant lay dead on the stones of the balcony, torn and beaten by the hail and the wind, its trailing stem and clinging tendrils seared with the lightning, its purple blooms scattered among the shards of the broken flowerpot and the burnt tinder on the floor of the desolate studio.

High above the white front of the coming morning, the wind, returning into the bosom of God, bore upon its limitless wings a twofold burden, the spirit of a perished flower, the oblation of a Gentle Life.

The grave, sonorous intonation sank and ended as it had begun, like the organ-roll of minor cadences; and the countenance of the phantom grew indistinct and fluctuating, till it seemed to blend with the sombre purple atmosphere that surrounded us. But as I perceived her bright eyes still fastened upon my face, I lifted my hands imploringly towards the floating presence, and would fain have caught her fading impalpable garments.

"Spirit!" I cried, "one question more! The boy 'Tista surely came with the morning, and learned at last, even though too late, who had been his unknown friend?"

"Daughter of mortality," returned the dying voice of the phantom, "I cannot tell. That night my mission upon earth was ended. But some of my sister-flowers, which bloom about the graves of the dead, have sent me messages from time to time by the breath of God's messenger, the errant breeze of heaven. And they tell me that a certain rich chemist of a large town in Piedmont, a handsome prosperous young man, named Battista Delcor, has caused a great white cross to be set above the resting-place of Herr Ritter. And upon the base of the cross these words are graven in letters of gold: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

And again, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these
My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

VIII. St. George the Chevalier*

During the last few years a growing interest in the subject of religious metaphysic has shown itself in certain strata of our intellectual world. This interest has taken many forms, and attached itself to many developments, some of which have been chiefly distinguished for

————————- * Although, strictly, neither a "dream" nor a "dream-story," this paper is included by the express wish of its writer, the interpretations contained in it being largely the product of instructions received by her in sleep.—Ed. ————————

eccentricity, and have attracted attention rather by this quality than by their intrinsic value as solid contributions to thought. Phrases, symbols, and expositions of theosophical doctrine gathered from sources unfamiliar to the ordinary Western mind, and requiring for their comprehension the study of a foreign tongue and of a strange and intricate psychology, task too much the intellect of a seeker trained in the Christian faith and seriously bent on the profitable study of its mysteries. Fain would he learn what are these mysteries without recourse to a foreign interpreter. His own Church, his own creed, he thinks, should teach him all that he seeks to know, and he cares not to set aside and reject names and symbols hallowed by the use of ages among his people, in favour of others new to his ear and tongue. If a revival of religious metaphysic is imminent among us, let it then be directed along the old channels worn deep by the prayers and aspirations of our fathers. Let us hear what the tradition of our faith has to unfold to us of arcane secrets, and to what mystic heights of transcendental thought the paths trodden by Christian saints can lead us. For the legends and visions of the saints are full of precious testimonies to the esoteric origin and nature of Catholic dogma; and the older and more venerable the tradition, the more fundamental and spiritual its character. Chiefest for us, and most important among such sacred legends, is that of ST. GEORGE the Champion, not only because he is for English folk pre-eminent among the saintly throng celebrated by our Church as each November-tide comes round, but also because his story is thoroughly typical of the class of esoteric tradition in which Catholic truth and faith crystallised themselves in simpler and purer-hearted times than these. Students of religious mystic thought can scarce do better than turn to such a tale by way of proem to more elaborate research. There, in softened outlines and graceful language, they will find an exposition of the whole argument of spiritual metaphysics, and a complete vindication of the method of theosophy. At the outset of a new line of inquiry the mind is usually more quickened to interest by parable than by

dissertation. All great religious teachers have recognised this fact, and have directed their instructions accordingly. Nor can those who care to pursue a systematic study of Christian mysticism afford to despise these poetic embodiments.

The highest form of thought is, after all, imaginative. Man ends, as he begins, with images. Truth in itself is unutterable. The loftiest metaphysic is as purely symbolic as the popular legend.

The Catholic tale of St. George, our national patron and champion, was once of worldwide renown. But since our youth have taken to reading Mill and Huxley, Spencer and Darwin, in place of the old books wherein their ancestors took delight, the romances of the Paladins and the knights-errant of Christian chivalry lie somewhat rusty in the memories of the present generation. I propose, then, first to recite the legend of the great St. George and his famous conquest, and next to offer an interpretation of the story after the esoteric manner.

According to Catholic legend, St. George was born in Cappadocia, and early in the fourth century came to Lybia in quest of chivalrous adventure. For this great saint was the noblest and bravest knight- errant the ranks of chivalry have ever known, and the fame of his prowess in arms vied with, the glory of his virtue, and made his name a terror to all evil-doers the wide world over.

In Lybia there was, in those days, a city called Silena, near whose walls lay a great lake, inhabited by a monstrous and fearsome dragon. Many a redoubted knight had fallen in conflict with this terrible beast; none had obtained the least advantage over it; and now for a long time it had laid waste and ravaged all the country round, no man daring to attack or hinder it. Every day for many a long year past the miserable inhabitants of Silena had delivered up to the dragon a certain number of sheep or kine from their

herds, so that at least the monster might be appeased without the sacrifice of human life. At last all the flocks and the kine were devoured, and the townspeople found themselves reduced to a terrible strait. The dragon besieged the walls of the city, and infected all the air with his poisonous breath, so that many persons died, as though smitten by a pestilence. Then, in order to save the people, lots were cast among all those who had children, and he to whom the die fell was forced to give a son or daughter to the monster. This terrible state of things had already continued for some time, when one day the fatal lot fell to the king, none being exempted from the tax.

Now the king had an only child, a fair and virgin daughter. To save her from so horrible a doom he offered to any man who would redeem the tax, his crown, his kingdom, and all his wealth. But the people would hear of no exchange. They demanded that the king should bear the stroke of fate in common with the meanest citizen. Then the king asked for a reprieve of eight days to lament his child and prepare her for her death. Meanwhile the dragon, infuriated at the unusual delay, hung continually about the city gates, expecting his victim, and poisoned all the sentinels and men-at-arms who guarded the walls. Wherefore the people sent messengers to the king and reproached him with his faint-heartedness. "Why," said they, "do you suffer your subjects to die for your daughter's sake? Why doom us to perish daily by the poisonous breath of the dragon?"

Then the king, perceiving that he could put off the evil hour no longer, clad his daughter in royal apparel, embraced her tenderly, and said, "Alas! dear child, I thought to see my race perpetuated in thine heirs; I hoped to have welcomed princes to thy nuptials; but now thou must perish in the flower of thy youth, a sacrifice to this accursed monster! Why did not the Gods decree my death before I brought thee into the world?"

When the princess heard these sorrowful words she fell at her father's feet, and, with tears, besought his blessing. Weeping, he gave it, and folded her a last time in his arms. Then, followed by her afflicted women and a great concourse of people, she was led like a lamb to the gates of the city. Here she parted from her companions, the drawbridge was lowered across the deep moat, and alone she passed forth and went towards the lake to meet her destroyer.

Now it chanced that just then St. George, in his shining armour, came riding by, and, seeing a fair damsel alone and in tears, he sprang from his horse, and hastened to offer her his knightly service. But she only waved him back, and cried, "Good sir, remount your steed and fly in haste, that you perish not with me!" But to this the Saint responded, "Tell me first why thou art here with such sad mien, and why this crowd of people on the city walls gaze after us so fearfully." And the Princess answered him, "Thou hast, I see, a great and noble heart; but make the more haste to be gone therefore. It is not meet that one so good should die unworthily."

"I will not go," returned the knight, "until thou tell me what I seek to know."

So she told him, weeping, all the woeful tale; and St George made answer with a brave heart, in a voice that all the townfolk on the walls could hear, "Fear not, fair maid; in the name of Christ I will do battle for thee against this dragon."

Then the Princess loved him, and wrung her hands and cried, "Brave knight, seek not to die with me; enough that I should perish. There is no man living that can stand against this dragon. Thou canst neither aid nor deliver me. Thou canst but share my doom."

As she spoke the words, the waters of the lake divided, and the monster rose from its depths and espied its prey. At that the virgin trembled, and cried again, "Fly! fly! O knight! stay not to see me perish!"

For all answer St George flung himself upon his steed, made the holy sign of the cross, and, commending himself to Christ, lowered his lance and rushed full on the open jaws of the hideous beast. With such force he directed his aim that the dragon was instantly overthrown, and lay, disabled and powerless, at the feet of the saint. Then, with the words of a holy spell, St. George cast a great fear upon the monster, so that it was shorn of all its fury, and durst not lift its body from the dust. Thereupon the blessed knight beckoned to the Princess to approach, and bade her loose her girdle, and, without fear, bind it about the dragon's neck. And when this was done, behold, the beast followed the maid, spellbound, and thus they entered the city.

But the people, when they saw the dragon approaching, fled tumultuously on every side, crying out that they would all surely perish. St. George therefore struck off the monster's head with his sword, and bade them take heart and fear nothing, because the Lord had given him grace over all evil things to deliver the earth from plagues.

So, when the people saw that the dragon was slain, they thronged about St. George, and kissed his hands and his robe; and the king embraced him joyfully, praising his valour and prowess above the fame of all mortal men. And when the saint had preached to them the faith of Christ, the whole city was straightway baptised; and the king thereafter built a noble church to the honour of our Lady and of the brave St. George. And from the foot of the altar flowed forth a marvellous stream, whose waters healed all manner of sickness; so that for many a long year no man died in that city.

Such is the legend of the patron saint of England,—a legend reproduced in Spenser's poem of the "Faery Queen," wherein St. George appears as the Red Cross Knight, and the Princess as Una, the mystical maid, who, after the overthrow of the dragon, becomes the bride of her champion.

Need I recall to any student of classic story the resemblance between this sacred romance and that of the Greek hero Perseus, who rescued the fair Andromeda from the fangs of the sea-monster which would have devoured her? Or whose divine favour it was that directed and shielded the Argive champion; whose winged sandals bore him unharmed across sea and land; whose magic sword and helm armed and defended him?

With all these symbols the name of HERMES is indissolubly connected. His are the Wings of Courage, the Rod of Science, and the Helmet of Secrecy. And his, too, is the Sword of Power, the strong and steadfast Will, by which the elemental forces are overcome and controlled, and the monsters of the abyss bound in obedience,—those spiritual dragons and chimeras that ravage the hopes of humanity and would fain devour the "King's Daughter."

For Hermes—Archangel, Messenger of Heaven, and slayer of Argos the hundred-eyed (type of the stellar powers)—is no other than Thought: Thought which alone exalts man above the beast, and sets him noble tasks to do and precious rewards to win, and lifts him at last to shine evermore with the gods above the starry heights of heaven.

All the heroes are sons of Hermes, for he is the Master and Initiator of spiritual chivalry. The heroes are the knights-errant of Greek legend. Like St. George and his six holy peers; like Arthur's knights; like the Teuton Siegfried, the British Artegal, and many another saintly chevalier "sans peur et sans reproche," the heroes of yet older days—Heracles, Bellerophon, Theseus, Jason, Perseus— roamed the earth under divine guidance, waging

ceaseless warfare with tyranny and wrong; rescuing and avenging the oppressed, destroying the agents of hell, and everywhere delivering mankind from the devices of terrorism, thrall, and the power of darkness.

The divine Order of Chivalry is the enemy of ascetic isolation and indifferentism. It is the Order of the Christ who goes about doing good. The Christian knight, mounted on a valiant steed (for the horse is the symbol of Intelligence), and equipped with the panoply of Michael, is the type of the spiritual life,—the life of heroic and active charity.

All the stories about knights and dragons have one common esoteric meaning. The dragon is always Materialism in some form; the fearsome, irrepressible spirit of Unbelief, which wages war on human peace and blights the hopes of all mankind. In most of these tales, as in the typical legend of St. George, there is a princess to be delivered,—a lady, sweet and lovely, whose sacrifice is imminent at the moment of her champion's arrival on the scene. By this princess is intended the Soul:—the "Woman of Holy Writ," and the central figure of all sacred dramatic art of every date and country. That the allegory is of such wide and ancient repute, proves the identity of the needs and troubles of humanity throughout the ages. Yet one cannot fail to be struck with its special bearing on the present state of thought. It seems, indeed, as though the story of St. George and the Dragon might have been written yesterday, and dedicated to the men and women of our own times. Never, surely, has the dragon ravaged and despoiled the earth as he does now. When at first he came upon us, it was not much that the monster's appetite demanded. It was satisfied with the sacrifice of a few superstitions and antique beliefs, which we could well spare, and the loss of which did not greatly affect us. These were the mere sheep and kine of our outlying pastures. But at length all these were swept away, and the genius of Materialism remained unsatisfied. Then we began, reluctantly, to yield up to it far more precious things,— our religious convictions, our hold on sacred

Scriptures, our trust in prayer, our confidence in heavenly providence,—the very children of our hearts, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, endeared to us by the hereditary faith which had become even as nature itself. All these we gave and with tears; many of them had made life lovely and desirable to us, and without them our hearth seemed desolate. But complaint and resistance we knew to be in vain; materialistic science devoured them one by one; none were left in all that ancient city, the Human Kingdom, whose ruler and monarch is Mind. This our sovereign-Mind—had hitherto cherished with fond delight one lovely and only child, the Soul. He believed that she would survive and perpetuate him, and that for ever her heirs should sit on the throne of his kingdom. To part with her would be blight and ruin to all his hopes and aspirations. Better that he should never have drawn breath than that he should be forced to see the child he had brought into the world perish before his eyes.

Still, with ominous persistence the terrible monster hangs about the gates of the city. All the air is filled with the pestilent effluvium of his nostrils. Relentless, indeed, is this pessimistic science. It demands the sacrifice of the Soul itself, the last lovely and precious thing remaining to despoiled humanity. Into the limbo of those horrid jaws must be swept—with all other and meaner beliefs and hopes—faith in the higher Selfhood and its immortal Life. The Soul must perish! Despair seizes the Mind of man. For some time he resists the cruel demand; he produces argument after argument, appeal after appeal. All are unavailing. Why should the Soul be respected where nothing else is spared? Forced into surrender, the Mind at last yields up his best-beloved. Life is no more worth living now; black death and despair confront him; he cares no longer to be ruler over a miserable kingdom bereft of its fairest treasure, its only hope. For of what value to man is the Mind without the Soul?

Poor and puny now indeed the crown, the wealth, the royalty of Mind. Their value lay alone in this, that some day they should devolve on her, that for her they were being garnered and stored and cherished.

So the dragon triumphs; and the Soul, cast out of the city, stands face to face with the black abyss, expecting her Destroyer.

Then, even at that last and awful hour, the Divine Deliverer appears, the Son of Hermes, Genius of Interpretation, Champion of the Spiritual Life. As Hercules slew the Hydra, the Lion, and many another noxious thing; as Theseus the Minotaur, as Bellerophon the Chimera, as Rama the Ogre Ravan, as David the Giant, as Perseus the Gorgon and Sea-monster, so St. George slays the Dragon and rescues from its insatiable clutch the hope and pride of humanity.

This hero of so many names is the Higher Reason; the Reason that knows (gnosis) as distinguished from the Lower Reason of mere opinion (doxa). He is no earthly warrior. He carries celestial arms, and bears the ensigns of the God. Thus the commemoration of St. George, and of the famous legend of which he is the hero, involves the praise of all valiant knights of the Hermetic art throughout the ages. Every divine man who has carried the enchanted sword, or worn the sandals of the winged God, who has fought with monsters and championed the King's daughter—Una, the one peerless maid—is celebrated in the person of our national patron saint. The Order to which he belongs is a Spiritual Order of the Garter, or Girdle of the Virgin; and its ensign is the armed chevalier trampling under his horse's hoofs the foul and furious agent of the nether world.

The idea of knighthood implies that of activity. The pattern saint and flower of chivalry is one who gladly fights and would as gladly die in noble causes. The words pronounced of old times on the dubbing of a knight, "Be gentle, valiant, and fortunate," are not words which could realise

themselves in the dullard or the churl. To the good knight, the ardent love of beauty, in all its aspects is indispensable. The fair lady of his dreams is the spiritual bright-shining of goodness, which expresses itself to him fitly and sweetly in material and visible things. Hence he is always poet, and fighter in some cause. And he is impelled to fight because the love of beauty burns so hot within him that he cannot abide to see it outraged. His very gentleness of heart is the spur of his valour. Champion and knight as well as thinker and student, the Son of Hermes is of necessity a reformer of men, a redeemer of the world. It is not enough for him to know the doctrine, he must likewise do the will of the gods, and bid the kingdom of the Lord come upon earth without, even as in the heaven within his heart.

For the rule of his Order is the Law of Love, and "Love seeketh ssnot her own."

The End

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