DREAMS and DELIGHTS

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THE NOVELS OF

L. ADAMS BECK

THE KEY OF DREAMS

THE PERFUME OF THE RAINBOW

THE TREASURE OF HO

THE NINTH VIBRATION

THE WAY OF STARS

THE SPLENDOUR OF ASIA

DREAMS AND DELIGHTS

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BY
L. ADAMS BECK

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PREFACE

These stories of dreams and delights in breathless jungles of Ceylon, among Himalayan mountains, by Chinese seas, in ancientries beneath dead suns and withered moons, are in truth the soul's longing to behold the White Swan of the World when in dim twilights of dawn and evening she spreads her wings for flight. And because to such wings time and distance are nothing I have gathered one feather dropped on Dartmoor as she soared to Gaurisankar where on the highest peak of earth, circled by great stars, the Mystic Mother of India dreams her divine dream as the ages unroll beneath her feet. The Snowy Goddess, She who is Very Woman of very woman, knows that whether by Thames or Ganges, Mississippi, Yang-tze, or rolling Nile, Her daughters are the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever, and holding in their hands the hearts of men, so fulfil Her purpose. And because no true story can be told without this knowledge, I set Her name at the beginning of these dreams and delights, invoking devoutly the protection and inspiration of Her who is at once Eve and Lilith, Athene and Aphrodite, Parwati and Kali, Virgin, Mother, and Destroyer, but in all forms and incarnations, Enchantress and Conqueror of men.

L. Adams Beck.

Canada.

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“V. LYDIAT”

"V. LYDIAT"

She sat and looked at the signature written under the name of the story in readiness for typing.

"THE NINEFOLD FLOWER."

It was a fine story, she knew, and the signature satisfied her also as it always did. *V.* is the most beautiful letter in the alphabet to write and look at, the ends curving over from the slender base like the uprush of a fountain from its tense spring. When she "commenced author," as the eighteenth century puts it, she devoted days and days to the consideration of that pen-name. For several reasons it must not reveal identity. Most women prefer the highwayman's mask when they ride abroad to hold up the public. It gives a freedom impossible when one is tethered to the responsibilities of name and family. One becomes a foundling in the great city of Literature and the pebble-cold eye of human relationship passes unaware over what would have stung it into anger or jealousy if it had held the key of the mystery. That is, if the secret is guarded as carefully as V. Lydiat's.

But, for all I know, her strange reason for secrecy may never in this world have swayed man or woman before.

In reality she was Beatrice Veronica Law Leslie.

A mouthful indeed! You can make as many combinations with that as with the trick lock of a safe, and it will be as difficult to pick the secret. She had a strong superstition about keeping to her own initials, anagrammed or reversed and twisted. It seemed to her that this was part of a bond of honour of which another held the pledge. With this pen-name a most astonishing thing had befallen Beatrice Veronica Law Leslie, for she won a literary success so sudden and singular that the very management of it required a statesmanship she never before knew she possessed.

A little must here be said of her life that this strange thing may be understood. She was the only child of a well-known Oxford don and a somewhat remarkable mystically-minded mother who died when the girl was fourteen. Her father, after that loss, "tried life a little, liked it not, and died" four years later, and Beatrice Veronica who was known in her family as B. V. then betook herself to the guardianship of an aunt in Montreal. Here, she also tried life a little, on the society side, and certainly liked it not. There was an urge within her that cried aloud for adventure, for the sight of

the dissolving glories of the Orient and contact with strange lives that called to her dumbly in books. They peeped and mocked and vanished to their unknown countries taking her longing with them, and life lay about her vapid, flat, dominated by an Aunt of Fashion.

She floated on a duck pond and sighed for the ocean. What is a young woman of spirit, not too beautiful to be dangerous, of small but sufficient means, to do in such a case? Beatrice Veronica knew very well.

She waited until she was twenty-one, meanwhile securing the allegiance of a girl, Sidney Verrier, in like case, an enthusiast like herself, and on a May morning of dreamy sweetness they got themselves into a C.P.R. train for Victoria, B. C., leaving two ill-auguring aunts on the platform, and away with them on a trip to the Orient *via* Japan. They were under bond to return in a year.

It was a wonderful, a heavenly experience—that wander-year of theirs. The things they saw, the men and women they met, the marvels which appealed to every sense! But I must not dwell on these for they are but the pedestal to the story of V. Lydiat.

A year! Impossible. Four, six, eight years went by and still unheeded aunts clamoured, and the pavements of Montreal lacked their footsteps.

And then, in Agra, Sidney Verrier married, and apologetically, doubtfully, dissolved the fair companionship, and Beatrice Veronica was left to solitude.

When the bridal car rolled off to the station and the honeymoon at Mussoori, she sat down and considered. She had not realized it until then. The ways of the world were open, for experience had made them plain. She had acquaintances, go where she would. There was no material reason why she should not continue this delightful nomad existence delightfully. But she was lonely, and suddenly it became clear to her that she wanted quiet, time, recollection. She had assisted at a great feast of the senses and had eaten to satiety.

Now—imperatively—something in her heart cried “Enough.”

Afterwards she wondered if that had been the voice of V. Lydiat crying in the wilderness. The note of preparation.

But where to go? Her aunt was still treading the daily round of bridge and luncheon parties in Montreal and the soul of Beatrice Veronica shuddered in the remembrance. No, no. The bird set free does not re-enter its gilded cage, however temptingly the little dish of seed is set forth. But she loved Canada for all that. She remembered, as she and Sidney Verrier had

passed through the glorious giant-land of the Rockies, how broadly uplifted and vast had been the heights and spaces, how enormous the glee of the rivers tumbling from hidden sources, and they called her across far waters and beneath strange stars.

But could one live in such colossal companionship? Is it possible to dine and sleep and yawn in the presence of Gods and Emperors? There was the doubt. And then she remembered a shining city laving her feet in shining seas, with quiet gardens where the roses blush and bloom in a calm so deep that you may count the fall of every petal in the drowsy summer afternoons. A city of pines and oaks, of happy homes great and small,—a city above all, bearing the keys of the Orient at her golden girdle,—for it is but to step aboard a boat, swift almost as the Magic Carpet, and you wake one happy morning with all the dear remembered scents and sights before you once more. And her heart said "Victoria,"—where Westernmost West leans forward to kiss Easternmost East across the Pacific.

So she went there—now a woman of twenty-nine, self-possessed, and capable, and settled herself in a great hostelry to choose and build her home. Her home, mark you!—not her prison. It was not to be so large as to hamper flight when the inevitable call came—

> Take down your golden wings now
> From the hook behind the door,
> The wind is calling from the East
> And you must fly once more.

I wish I might write of the building of Beatrice Veronica's home for it developed into one of the immense joys of her life. But more important things are ahead, so it must suffice to say that it was long, low and brown with sunny verandas and windows avid of sunshine, and that all the plunder of travel, and books, books, books found happy place in it and grew there as inevitably as leaves on a tree.

But it was while all this was in embryo that the thought of writing impressed itself on Beatrice Veronica. Partly because the house adventure was expensive and she wanted a larger margin, partly because she had seen with delighted interest and intelligence all the splendid spectacle of men and cities. Her sound knowledge of history and cultivated taste in literature should count for pebbles in the writer's sling who goes forth to conquer the great Goliath of the public. She revolved this thought often as she walked by murmurous seas or nested in a niche of rock to watch the mountains opposite reflecting every change of sunlight as a soul in adoration reflects its

deity. It really seemed a waste not to turn all this to some sort of account. And success would be sweet. But how to begin!

She bought an armful of the magazines which make gay the streets of Victoria. “I ought to be able to do this kind of thing,” she reflected. “I have a good vocabulary. Father always thought about eight thousand words, and that should go a long way. Besides I’ve seen nearly all there is to see. Let’s try.”

She did, and ended with more respect for the average author. The eight thousand were as unmanageable as mutineers or idiots. They marched doggedly in heavy columns, they right-about-faced and deployed; but there was no life in them. The veriest man-handler of a grizzly or a cow-boy could do better. Being a young person of quick insight and decision she decided to waste no more time in that direction. She laid away the magazines and decided to be a spectator with memory and hope for companions. She burned her manuscripts and turned her attention to planning her garden.

And it was then that V. Lydiat dawned on the horizon.

Dawned. That is the only word, for it came and the sun came after. It happened in this way.

One night, in the usual way Beatrice Veronica fell asleep and dreamed, but not in the usual way. She was standing by a temple she remembered very well in Southern India, the Temple of Govindhar. It stood there, under its palms wonderful as a giant rock of majolica, coloured lavishly in the hard fierce sunshine, monstrously sculptured with gods and goddesses, and mythical creatures of land and water in all the acts of their supernal life, writhing and tapering upwards to the great architectural crown supported by tigers and monkeys which finished the building,—a crown gemmed with worshipping spirits for jewels, a nightmare conception of violence in form and colour; the last barbaric touch to the misbegotten splendour. Vaguely the whole thing reminded Beatrice Veronica of her literary efforts and she stood among the palms looking up to the blaze against the blue and smiling a little.

Suddenly she became aware that a man was standing near the great gate which no unbeliever’s foot may pass, looking up also, shading his eyes with his hand from the intolerable sunlight. His face was sensitive and strong, an unusual blending, his eyes grey and noticeable. She liked his figure in the light tropical clothing. He had the air of birth and breeding. But he seemed wearied, as if the climate had been too much for him, a look one knows very well where the Peninsula runs down to Cape Cormorin, and the sun beats on the head like a mighty man of valour.

Then, as dream-people will, he came towards her as if they had known each other all their lives, and said, slowly, meditatively:

"I have tried and tried. I can't do it."

With a sense that she knew what he meant though she could not drag it to the surface, she found herself saying earnestly:

"But have you tried hard enough? *Really* tried?"

He put his hands to his forehead with a tired gesture:

"I'm always trying. But *you* could do it."

She said, "Could I?" in great astonishment.

They stood a moment side by side, looking at each other and then as if from a blurred distance she heard his voice again.

"It was said long ago that if any creatures united their psychic forces they could conquer the world, though singly they could do nothing."

Temple and palms dissolved into coloured mist; they swam away on another wave of dream and vanished. She floated up to the surface of consciousness again, awake, with the pale morning gold streaming in through the east window.

She knew she had dreamed, for a sense of something lost haunted her all day, yet could not remember anything, and things went on in their usual course.

That evening sitting in a corner of the hotel lounge, with the babble of music and talk about her, she had the irresistible impulse to write,—to write something; she did not in the least know what. It was so urgent that she walked quickly to the elevator and so to her sitting room, and there she snatched pen and paper and wrote the beginning of a story of modern life in India, but strangely influenced by and centring about the Temple of Govindhar. As she wrote the name she remembered that she had seen it among the palm trees in its hideous beauty, and now, like a human personality, it forced itself upon her and compelled her to be its mouthpiece.

How it happened she could not in the least tell. Certainly she had travelled, kept her ears and eyes open and learned as much as any woman can do who keeps on the beaten track in the Orient and consorts with her own kind in preference to the natives. The two worlds are very far apart—so far that nothing from below the surface can pass over the well-defined limits. Moreover she was not a learned woman,—Indian thought of the mystic order had never come her way, and Indian history except at the point where it touches European was a closed book. Therefore this story

astonished her very much. She read it over breathlessly when it was finished. If she had had that knowledge when she was there how all the mysteries of the temple would have leaped to light—what drama, what strange suspense would have lurked in its monstrous form and colour! The critic in her brain who, standing aside, watched the posturing and mouthing of the characters, told her austerely that the work was good—excellent. But something behind her brain had told her that already. She read it over ardently, lingeringly, with an astonishing sense of ownership yet of doubt. *How* had it come? And the writing? No longer did the eight thousand of her vocabulary march in dull squadrons, heavy-footed, languid. They sped, ran, flew, with perfect grace, like the dancers of princes. They were beautiful exceedingly. They bore the tale like a garland. She read it again and again, with bewildered delight.

She tapped it out herself on the keys of her Corona and sent it to the editor of a very famous magazine, with the signature of "V. Lydiat." As I have said, that matter took long thought, prompted from behind by instincts.

It was done and V. Lydiat, a climbing star, shed a faint beam over the world. For the editor wrote back eagerly. He knew he had found a new flavour. "Your work impresses me as extremely original. I am anxious to see more of it. I need hardly say I accept it for the magazine and I shall hope to hear from you again before long." A cheque followed.

No need to dwell on Beatrice Veronica's feelings, mixed beyond disentanglement. She was not astonished that the work should be recognized as good, but—V. Lydiat! What had happened to her and how? Strange tales are told to-day of sudden brain-stimulations and complexes. Was she the happy victim of such an adventure, and if so, would it be recurrent? How should she know? What should she do? She felt herself moving in worlds not realized, and could not in the least decide the simple question of whether it was honest to accept commendation for a thing she felt in her very soul she had not done and could not do.

But then, who? What was V. Lydiat?

He, she, or it, came from starrier spheres than hers. Wings plumed its shoulders, while hers were merely becomingly draped in seasonable materials. She knew that the visitor was a subtler spirit, dwelling beyond the mysteries, saturated with the colour and desire of dead ages which can never die—an authentic voice, hailed at once by the few, to be blown at last on the winds of the soul which, wandering the world, let fall here and there the seeds of amaranth and asphodel.

Yes—V. Lydiat was entirely beyond her.

But you will understand that, though Beatrice Veronica could not enter into the secret places, it was a most wonderful thing to be amanuensis and business manager. To her fell the letters from editors and publishers, the correspondence which rained in from the ends of the earth, protesting gratitude, praise, entreaties for counsel in all things from routes to religions. These latter were the most difficult, for it would have taken V. Lydiat to answer them adequately. But Beatrice Veronica did the best she could, and her life moved onward aureoled and haloed.

She learned at last the rules of the game. V. Lydiat's ethereal approach could only be secured by the wand of a fountain pen. She must sit thus armed with a fair sheet before her and wait, fixing her mind on some idle point of light or persistent trembling of leaves, and suddenly the world would pass miraculously from her and she would awake in another—an amazing world, most beautiful, brimming with romance, lit by suns of gallant men and moons of loveliest women. The great jewels of the Orient shed starry splendours, and ghostly creeping figures pursued them through jungles and mountain passes. Strange magics lurked in the dark and drew the soul along the Way of Wonder.

The strangest experience. It began always in the same way. The blue Canadian sky, the hyacinth gleam of the sea through oak and pine dissolved in unrealities of mist, and sultry Oriental skies, yellow as a lion's eyes or the brazen boom of a gong, beat their fierce sunlight downward as from an inverted bowl. And then—then, she knew V. Lydiat was at hand. But never with companionship. It was a despot and entered in, with flags flying, to the annihilation of Beatrice Veronica. She wrote like a thing driven on a wind, and woke to find it done. The possession obliterated her, and when she could collect her routed forces it was gone.

So time went on and V. Lydiat's fame was established and Beatrice Veronica wore it as a woman too poor to appear at Court with fitting magnificence shines in borrowed jewels and trembles to wear them.

One night in the moonlit warmth, with the vast Princesses of the Dark hidden in the ambush of breathless trees, she sat in the high veranda of her little house with the broad vista through pines to the sea.

It was a heavenly night; if the baby waves broke in the little bay they must break in diamonds,—the wet stones must shine like crystals.

That day V. Lydiat had transported her to a great and silent jungle in Cambodia and they went up together through the crowding whispering trees to the ruined palaces where once great kings dwelt, and passed together through sounding halls sculptured with dead myths to the chambers, once

secret, whence queens looked forth languidly from wildly-carved casements into the wilderness of sweets in the gardens.

V. Lydiat had led her to a great tank of crystal water in the knotted shade, paved with strange stones inlaid with human figures in wrought metal,—a place where women with gold-embraced heads once idly bathed their slender limbs in the warm lymph—a secret place then, but now open to cruel sunlight and cold incurious stars.

So far she knew it all. She had photographed that tank with its stony cobras while Sidney Verrier timed the exposure. But of the story told to-day she knew nothing.

A wonderful story, old as time, new as to-morrow, for the figures in it were of to-day, people who had gone there, as she herself had done, only to see, and were captured, subjugated by the old alarming magic which lurks in the jungle and behind the carven walls and eyeless windows. A dangerous place, and she had not known it then—had thought of it only as a sight to be seen, a memory to be treasured. But V. Lydiat knew better—knew it was alive and terrible still.

She leaned her arms on the sill and looked out to the sea that led towards the hidden Orient and in her heart she spoke to the strange visitor.

"I wish I knew you," she whispered. "You come and go and I can't touch you even while you are within and about me. You interpret. You make life wonderful, but perhaps you are more wonderful still. If I could only lay hold of you, touch you, have one glimpse of you! *What* are you? Where do you come from? Where do you go? I hear. O, let me see!"

It was like a prayer, and the more intense because the dead stillness of the night presented it as its own cry and entreaty.

Dead silence. Not even the voice of the sea.

She laid her head on her folded arms.

"I've been obedient. I've laid myself down on the threshold that you might walk over me and take possession. Have you no reward for me? Are you just some strange cell of my own brain suddenly awake and working, or are you some other—what?—but nearer to me than breathing, as near as my own soul?"

The longing grew inarticulate and stronger, like the dumb yearning instincts which move the world of unspeaking creatures. It seemed to her that she sent her soul through the night pleading, pleading. Then very slowly she relaxed into sleep as she lay in the moonlight—deep, soul-satisfying sleep. And so dreamed.

She stood in the Shalimar Garden of the dead Mogul Empresses in Kashmir. How well she knew it, how passionately she loved it! She and Sidney Verrier had moored their houseboat on the Dal Lake not far away one happy summer and had wandered almost daily to the Shalimar, glorying in the beauty of its fountains and rushing cascades, and the roses—roses everywhere in a most bewildering sweetness. How often she had gone up the long garden ways to the foot of the hills that rise into mountains and catch the snows and stars upon their heights. It was no wonder she should dream of it. So in her dream she walked up to the great pavilion supported on noble pillars of black marble from Pampoor, and the moon swam in a wavering circle in the water before it, and she held back a moment to see it break into a thousand reflections, and then became aware of a man leaning with folded arms by the steps: his face clear in the moonlight.

Instantly she knew him, as he did her—the man of her dream of the Temple of Govindhar.

As before he turned and came toward her.

"I have waited for you by the temple and here and in many other places. I wait every night. How is it you come so seldom?" he said. His voice was stronger, his bearing more alert and eager than at Govindhar. He spoke with a kind of assurance of welcome which she responded to instantly.

"I would have come. I didn't know. How can I tell?"

He looked at her smiling.

"There is only one way. Why didn't you learn it in India? It was all round you and you didn't even notice. You don't know your powers. Listen."

Beatrice Veronica drew towards him, eyes rapt on his face, scarcely breathing. Yes—in India she had felt there were mighty stirrings about her, thrills of an unknown spiritual life, crisping the surface like a breeze, and passing—passing before ever you could say it was there. But it did not touch her with so much as an outermost ripple. She was too ignorant. Now—she could learn.

"You see—this is the way of it," he said, leaning against the black pillar. "The soul is sheer thought and knowledge, but, prisoned in the body, it is the slave of the senses and all its powers are limited by these. And they lead it into acts which in their consequences are fetters of iron. Still, at a certain point of attainment one can be freer than most men believe possible. When this is so, you use the Eight Means of Mental Concentration and are free. You step into a new dimension."

“Is this true? Do you know it?” she said earnestly. “Because, if there is any way which can be taken, I have a quest—something—someone——”

She stammered, and could not finish.

“I know. Someone you want to find in the dark. Well, it can be done. You would not believe the possibilities of that freed state of consciousness. Here, in the Shalimar you think you see nothing but moonlight and water—nothing in fact but what your senses tell you. But that is nonsense. Your eyes are shut. You are asleep in Canada and yet you see them by the inner light of memory even now and the help I am giving you! Well—use the Eight Means, and you will see them waking and as clearly as you do in sleep. But I, who am instructed, see more. This garden to me is peopled with those who made it—the dead kings and queens who rejoiced in its beauty. See—” he laid his hand on hers and suddenly she saw. Amazing—amazing! They were alone no longer.

Sitting on the floor of the pavilion, looking down into the moon-mirroring water was a woman in the ancient dress of Persia, golden and jewelled,—she flung her head up magnificently as if at the words, and looked at them, the moon full in her eyes. The garden was peopled now not only with roses but white blossoms sending out fierce hot shafts of perfume. They struck Beatrice Veronica like something tangible, and half dazed her as she stared at the startling beauty of the unveiled woman revealed like a flaming jewel in the black and white glory of the night.

With his hand on hers, she knew without words. Nourmahal the Empress, ruler of the Emperor who made the Shalimar for her pleasure, who put India with all its glories at her feet. Who else should be the soul of the garden?

It seemed to Beatrice Veronica that she had never beheld beauty before. It was beyond all pictures, all images in its sultry passionate loveliness,—it was——

But as she watched spellbound, the man lifted his hand from hers and the garden was empty of all but moonlight and roses once more, and he and she alone. She could have wept for utter loss.

“Was it a ghost?” she asked trembling.

“No, no,—an essential something that remains in certain places, not a ghost. There is nothing of what you mean by that word. Don’t be frightened! You’ll often see them.”

She stared at him perplexed, and he added:

"You see? One has only to put oneself in the receptive state and time is no more. One sees—one hears. You are only a beginner so I cannot show you much. But you *are* a beginner or you would not be here in the Shalimar with me now. There is a bond between us which goes back—" He paused, looking keenly at her, and said quickly "Centuries, and further."

She was stunned, dazed by the revelations. They meant so much more that it is possible to record. Also the sensation was beginning in her which we all know before waking. The dream wavers on its foundation, loosens, becomes misty, makes ready to disappear. It would be gone—gone before she could know. She caught his hand as if to steady it.

"Are you V. Lydiat?" she cried.—"You must be. You are. You come to me every day—a voice. O let me come to you like this, and teach me, teach me, that I may know and see. I am a blind creature in a universe of wonders. Let me come every night."

His face was receding, palpitating, collapsing, but his voice came as if from something beyond it.

"That is what you call me. Names are nothing. Yes, come every night."

It was gone. She was in the Shalimar alone, and somewhere in the distance she heard Sidney Verrier's voice calling clear as a bird. Beatrice Veronica woke that morning with the sun glorying through the eastern arch of her veranda. She was still dressed. She had slept there all night. Of the dream she remembered snatches, hints, which left new hopes and impulses germinating in her soul. The unknown flowers were sown in spring. They would blossom in summer in unimaginable beauty.

That was the beginning of a time of strange and enchanting happiness. Thus one may imagine the joy of a man born blind who by some miraculous means is made to see, and wakes in a world of wonders. It is impossible that anyone should know greater bliss. The very weight of it made her methodical and practical lest a grain of heavenly gold should escape her in its transmutation to earthly terms.

The morning was V. Lydiat's. At ten o'clock she betook herself to her high veranda, and folding her hands and composing her mind looked out to sea through the wide way of pines which terminated in its azure beauty. Then, as has been told before, it would blow softly away on a dream-wind, and the story begin.

And at night there was now invariably the meeting. At first that was always in some place she knew—somewhere she recognized from memory, haunts of her own with Sidney Verrier. But one night a new thing happened

—she woke into dream by the Ganges at Cawnpore, at the terrible Massacre Ghaut, a place she had always avoided because of the horrible memories of the Indian mutiny which sicken the soul of every European who stands there.

Now she stood at the top of the beautiful broken steps under the dense shade of the very trees where the mutineers ambushed, and he was below, beckoning her.

"Well done, well done!" he said, as she came slowly down to where holy Ganges lips the lowest step. "This was a great experiment. You could never have come here alone,—I could not have brought you until now, and I had to fight the repugnance in you, but here you are. You see? We have been putting stepping-stones, you and I, each from our own side, and now the bridge is made and we hold hands in the middle. You can come anywhere now. And listen—I too am learning to go where I have never been. The world will be open to us soon."

He looked at her with glowing eyes—the eyes of the explorer, the discoverer, on the edge of triumph.

"But why here—in this horrible place?" She shrank a little even from him as she looked about her. He laughed:

"That is no more now than a last year's winter storm. They know. They were not afraid even then. They laugh now as they go on their way. Be happy, beloved. They are beyond the mysteries."

Of that dream, she carried back to earth the word "beloved." Who had said it, she could not tell, but in the dark—the warm friendly dark—there was someone who loved her, whom she loved with a perfect union. Was it—could it be V. Lydiat? She did not know. Also she remembered that she had dreamed the Massacre Ghaut at Cawnpore, and took pains to search for pictures and stories of the place to verify her dream. Yes—it was true. Things were becoming clearer.

Also, her power in writing increased very noticeably about this time. V. Lydiat was recognized as holding a unique place amongst writers of the Orient. On the one side were the scholars, the learned men who wrote in terms of ancient Oriental thought, terms no ordinary reader could understand, and on the other, the writers of the many-faceted surface, the adventurers, toying with the titillating life of zenana and veiled dangerous love-affairs,—a tissue of coloured crime. V. Lydiat recorded all, and with a method of his own which approached perfect loveliness in word and phrase. The faiths of the East were his,—in India and China alike his soul sheltered under the Divine Wings, at home in strange heavens, and hells which one

day would blossom into heavens. As he and Beatrice Veronica had posed stepping-stones until they met in the middle, so he built a splendid bridge across the wide seas of misunderstanding between east and west, and many souls passed across it going and coming and were glad.

"I'm only a pioneer," he said to Beatrice Veronica one day (she could dream the day as well as the night) sitting in the gardens of the Taj. "You too. It will be done much better soon. See how we are out-growing our limitations and feeling out after the wonders of the sub-conscious self, the essential that hands on the torch when we die. Die? No, I hate that word. Let's say, climb a step higher on the ladder of existence. Every inch gives us a wider view of the country. You see?"

She liked that "You see?" which came so often. It was so eager—so fraternal in a way. Yes, they were good comrades, she and V. Lydiat.

"Do you know I write for you?" she ventured to ask. "I have often wondered if you speak as unconsciously as I write."

"No, no. I know. I always know. Longer ago than you would believe you used to work for me. We are in the same whirl-pool, you and I. Our atoms must always be whirled together again. You can't escape me, Beatrice Veronica."

"Do you think I want to?" she asked.

But in daily life she clung to her secret like grim death. She would not have been burdened with V. Lydiat's laurels for the world. The dishonesty of it! And yet one could never explain. Hopeless! Who would believe? And apart from that, she had a kind of growing certainty that V. Lydiat would enter upon his own one day. Not that she remembered him as any more than a vague dream influence; she did not, but yet the realization of a Presence was growing, and she herself developing daily.

There is not much space here to tell the wondrous sights she saw with V. Lydiat, and holding by his hand. That would be a book in itself—and a beautiful one. And though she could only remember them in drifts like a waft of far-off music on a breeze, it was incomparable food for the sub-conscious self, and strengthened every latent faculty of memory and experience. Beatrice Veronica promised to be a very remarkable woman if some day the inner and outer faculties should unite.

But what was to be the solvent? That, this story can only indicate faintly for the end is not yet.

She went out a little less into her small world of daily life—not shunning it certainly, but her inner life was so crowded, so blissful that the outer

seemed insipid enough. Why figure at teas and bridge parties, and struggle with the boredom of mah jong when the veranda was waiting with the green way before it that led to the silence of the sea, and the lover beyond? For it had come to that—the lover. All joy summed up in that word, joy unmeasurable as the oceans of sunlight—a perfect union. She walked as one carefully bearing a brimmed cup,—not a drop, not a drop must spill,—so she carried herself a little stiffly as it might seem to the outer world which could not guess the reason.

People liked her—but she moved on her own orbit, and it only intersected theirs at certain well-defined points. Her soft abstracted air won but eluded;—it put an atmosphere of strangeness about her, of thoughts she could not share with anyone.

"She must have rather a lonely life of it!" they said. But she never had.

One day came a letter from Sidney Verrier, now Sidney Mourilyan, from her husband's coffee plantation in the Shevaroy Hills in southern India. She wrote from the settlement of Yercaud— "Not a town," she wrote, "but dear little scattered houses in the trees. We have even a club, think of it!—after the wilds where you and I have been!—and there are pleasant people, and Tony expects to do well with coffee here. I wish half the day that you could come. You would like it, B. V.— You would like it! And you would like my boy—two years old now, and a sheer delight. Not to mention my garden. The growth here! The heliotropes are almost trees. The jasmines have giant stars. The house is stormed with flowers—almost too sweet. Couldn't you come? Don't you hear the east calling? At all events you hear me calling, for I want you. And you must be having very idle lazy days, for I remember I never could imagine what you would find to do if you stopped travelling. Your whole soul was in that. It's a cold country you're in—frigid pines, and stark mountains and icy seas. Do come out into the sunshine again."

She laid down the letter there and looked at the beloved pines almost glittering in the sunshine as it slid off their smooth needles. And idle?—her life, her wonderful secret life! Little indeed did Sidney know if she could write like that. She took up the letter again, smiling.

"And listen, B. V.—there's a man going round by Japan to Canada, a man called Martin Welland. I should like you to know him for two reasons. First, he can tell you all about this place. Second, I think he is interesting. If you don't find him so, shunt him. My love, my dear B. V., and do come. Think of all you might do with this as a starting point."

There was more, but that is the essential. You may think at this point that you know exactly how this story must inevitably end. But no.

It was about four months after this that Beatrice Veronica was rung up on the telephone in her veranda as she sat reading. The imperative interruption annoyed her;—she put down her book. A man's voice.

"Miss Leslie? I think your friend Mrs. Mourilyan told you I was coming to Victoria. My name is Welland."

Polite assurances from the veranda.

"Yes, I am staying at the Empress. May I come out and see you this afternoon? I have a small parcel for you from Mrs. Mourilyan."

So it was settled, and with her Chinese servant she made the little black oak table beautiful with silver and long-stemmed flowers in beautiful old English glass bowls. If he went back to Yercaud he should at least tell Sidney that her home in "that cold country" was desirable.

He came at four and she could hear his voice in the little hall as Wing admitted him.

She liked it. The words were clear, well-cut, neither blurred nor bungled. Then he came in. A tall man, broad-shouldered, with grey eyes and hair that sprang strongly from a broad forehead, clean-shaven, a sensitive mouth, possibly thirty-eight, or so. All these things flashed together in an impression of something to be liked and trusted. On his side he saw a young woman in a blue-grey gown with hazel eyes and hair to match—a harmony of delicate browns enhancing an almond-pale face with faintly coloured lips and a look of fragility which belied the nervous strength beneath.

The parcel was given and received; a chain of Indian moonstones in silver, very lovely in its shifting lights, and then came news, much news, of the home at Yercaud.

"I heard of you so much there that you are no stranger to me," he said, watching with curious interest while she filled the Chinese cups of pink and jade porcelain with jasmine tea from a hidden valley in Anhui. It fascinated him—the white hands flitting like little quick birds on their quick errands, the girl, so calm and self-possessed, mistress of herself and her house. Many years of wandering had opened his heart to the feminine charm of it all, the quiet, the rose-leaf scent in the air, the things which group by instinct about a refined woman.

"You have a delightful home!" he said at last, rather abruptly.

"Yes— When you return do try to convince Mrs. Mourilyan that I don't live in a hut on an iceberg. You agree with me, I am sure, that only Kashmir and perhaps one or two other places can be more beautiful than this."

"Yes. I fully agree. Yet it misses something which permeates India in places far less beautiful. It lacks atmosphere. Just as the fallen leaves of a forest make up a rich soil in which all growth is luxuriant, so the dead ancientry of India makes earth and air rich with memory and tradition—and more. You can't get it in these new countries."

"I know," she said eagerly. "Here it's just a beautiful child with all her complexities before her. It rests one, you know. I felt it an amazing rest when I came here."

"I can understand that. And they tell me the climate is delightful. I wish I could stay here. I may come back some day. But I must return to India in four months."

"You have work?"

"Yes and no. I have collected an immense quantity of notes for several books, but—now you will laugh!—I shall never write them."

"But why—why? I know there's an immense opening for true books about the Orient."

"I think so too. But you allow it's a drawback that I am entirely devoid of the writing gift. I have my knowledge. I have the thing flame-clear in my mind. But let me put it on paper and it evaporates. Dull as ditchwater! You see?"

That last little phrase sent a blush flying up her cheek. It recalled many things.

"Yes, I see. But couldn't you put it in skilful hands?"

He laid down his cup and turned suddenly on her.

"Could *you* do it?"

"I? I wish I could, but I am doing work at present——"

"Literary?"

"Of a sort. Secretarial. I write from dictation."

"May I ask what sort of things?"

With a curious reluctance she answered.

"Indian," and said no more.

He seemed to meditate a moment on that; then said slowly:

"It appears you have experience of the very things that interest me. Tell me—for I have been so long in the wilds— Is there any writer nowadays taking the place with regard to things Indian that Lafcadio Hearn did with

things Japanese? A man who gets at the soul of it as well as the beautiful surface?"

With her eyes on the ground and a sense of something startling in the air, she answered with a question.

"Have you ever heard of V. Lydiat's books?"

There was a puzzled furrow between his eyebrows.

"Not that I know of. Up in Kulu and beyond, the new books don't penetrate. A man or a woman?"

"People are not certain. The initial might mean either. But the critics all say a man. The last is called the 'The Unstruck Music,' the one before 'The Dream of Stars.' The first, 'The Ninefold Flower.' "

"Beautiful names," he said. "Can I get them here?"

"I can lend them to you."

They talked long after that, in a curiously intimate way that gave her secret but intense happiness. It was almost in fear that she asked when he was going on and where.

When he went off he carried the three books under his arm.

"I shall read 'The Ninefold Flower,' first. It interests me to see how a writer's mind develops."

That night she had no dream and next day she tried even more eagerly than usual to get in touch with V. Lydiat, but in vain. The oracle was dumb. It frightened her, for the whole thing was so strange that she had never felt sure it might not vanish as suddenly as it came. She sat patiently all that morning, hoping and sorely disturbed, but the Pacific hung a relentless azure curtain before her fairyland and the pines dreamed their own sunshine-fragrance and made no way for palms.

At one o'clock the telephone rang sharply,

"Welland speaking. May I come and see you this afternoon?"

It was impossible for she had an engagement, but she named the evening at eight. He caught at it—his voice was evidence of that eagerness.

He came a minute or two before the time, and a book was in his hand. She knew the cover with a drift of stars across it before he spoke.

It broke out the moment he was in the room.

"A most amazing thing. I hardly know how to tell you. You'll think I'm mad. It's my book—*mine*, yet I never wrote it."

They stared at each other in a kind of consternation and the little colour in her face fell away and left her lily-pale. She could feel but not control the trembling of her hands.

"You mean——"

"I mean—there are my notes one after another, but expressed in a way I never could hope for, exquisitely expressed. But it's mine all the same. A cruel, enchanting robbery! You don't believe me. How could you? But I can prove it. See here."

With passionate haste he pulled a roll of paper from his pocket, and pushed the typed sheets before her. The first story in "The Ninefold Flower," was called "The Lady of Beauty." The notes began, "The Queen of Beauty," and went on *seriatim* with the scaffolding of the story.

"The way it's done here, in this book, is the very way I used to see it in my dreams, but it was utterly beyond me. For God's sake, tell me what you think."

She laid it down.

"Of course it's yours. No doubt of that. But his too. You blocked out the marble. He made the statue. The very judgment of Solomon could not decide between you."

"That's true," he said hopelessly. "But the mystery of it. The appalling hopeless mystery. No eye but mine has ever seen that paper till now."

Silence. A grey moth flew in from the garden and circled about the lamp. The little flutter of its wings was the only sound. Then in a shaken voice very unlike its usual sedate sweetness, she asked.

"Mr. Welland, do you ever dream?"

"Awake? Constantly."

"Asleep?"

She saw caution steal into his frank eyes and drop a curtain before them.

"Why do you ask? Everyone dreams."

She gathered up all her courage for the next question.

"Were you ever in the Shalimar?"

"Certainly. Does anyone ever go to Kashmir and miss it?"

He was fencing, that was palpable. It gave her hope for a golden gleam through her fear. She clasped her shaking hands tightly in each other.

"I have the strangest dreams. I can only bring back snatches. Yet I know there is a wonderful connected story behind them. I dreamt the Shalimar not

long ago,—I brought back one image. A woman in an old Persian dress sitting by the black Pampoor pillars and looking down into the water where the moon dipped and swam all gold."

"Yes, yes, go on!" he breathed.

"There were flowers—white flowers. I never saw them there in the daylight."

"Unbearably sweet," he interjected. "The scent is like the thrust of a lance. I know, I know. But there was another woman. I can't remember her face."

"How did she stand?" asked Beatrice Veronica.

"Near me—but she could see nothing. The day still blinded her, until ____"

"Until you laid your hand on hers. Then she saw."

Another long silence. Only the beating of the moth's wings. He leaned forward from his chair and laid his hands on the clasp of hers. Their eyes met, absorbing each other; the way for the electric current was clear.

"I remember now," he said, very softly. "It was you. It was you at the Temple of Govindhar. At the Massacre Ghaut of Cawnpore. Ah, I dragged you there against your will to show I was the stronger. It is you—always you."

What was she to say? With his hands on hers it was a union of strength which put the past before both like an open book. She remembered all the dreams now. Impossible to tell them here—they were so many, like and unlike, shaken shifting jewels in a kaleidoscope held in some unseen hand. But jewels. They sat a long time in this way, rapt in wordless memories, their eyes absorbing each other—the strangest reunion. When speech came it brought rapture which needed little explanation. They bathed in wonder as in clear water, they flung the sparkle of it over their heads and glittered to each other in its radiance. When had such a miracle been wrought for any two people in all the world? The dreams of the visionary were actual for them and heaven and earth instinct with miracle.

"When we are married—when we pass our lives utterly together the bond will be stronger," he said, kissing her hand passionately two hours later. "We shall be awake with reason and intellect as well as vision to help our work, we shall do such things as the world has never dreamed, prove that miracle is the daily bread of those who know. Two halves of a perfect whole made one forever and ever. You see?"

He looked at her a moment with shining eyes and added, “The wise will come to us for wisdom, the poets for beauty, and we shall make our meeting-places the shrines of a new worship.”

Beatrice Veronica agreed with every pulse of her blood. The Great Adventure, and together!—what bliss could equal that marvel?

They were together perpetually, and surely human happiness was never greater than that of these two adventurers with the blue capes of Wonderland in sight at last over leagues of perilous seas. In another image, their caravan halted outside the gates of Paradise, and in a short few weeks those gates would swing open for them and, closing, shut out Fate.

But she did not dream of Martin Welland now, nor he of her. The discovery and all it involved was so thrilling that it brought every emotion to the surface as blood flushes the face when the heart beats violently. The inner centres were depleted.

They were married and Paradise was at hand, but for a while the happy business of settling their life engrossed them. It would be better to live in Canada and make long delightful visits to the Orient to refill the cisterns of marvel, they thought. A room for mutual work must be plotted in the bungalow; then there was the anxious question of a southern aspect. Then it was built, and it became a debatable decision whether some of the pines must fall to enlarge the vista to the sea. Friends rallied about her on the news of the marriage, and rejoiced to see the irradiation of Beatrice Veronica’s pale face. Then they must be entertained.

Then the endless joyful discussions as to whether the author should still be V. Lydiat or whether collaboration should be admitted. These things and many more filled the happy world they dwelt in.

Can the end be foreseen? They never foresaw it.

The hungry claim of human bliss fixed its roots in the inner soil where the Rosa Mystica had blossomed, and exhausted it for all else. That, at least, is the way in which one endeavours to state the mysterious enervation of the sub-conscious self which had built the stepping-stones between them to the meeting-point.

She went hopefully to her table when they had settled down, and he sat beside her doing his utmost to force the impulse across inches which had made nothing of oceans. It was dead. He could think of nothing but the sweet mist of brown tendrils in the nape of her neck, the pure line from ear to chin, the delights of the day to be. She sat with the poor remnant of his notes before her—for nearly all had been exhausted in the three books—and

tried to shape them into V. Lydiat's clear and sensitive beauty of words. It could not be done. Her eight thousand words marched and deployed heavy-footed as before. They were as unmanageable as mutineers or idiots. There was no life in them.

So it all descended to calmer levels. They slept in each other's arms, but they never dreamed of each other now. They had really been nearer in their ghostly meeting by the Taj Mahal or in the evil splendours of Govindhar—far nearer, when she wrote and could not cease for joy, than when Martin Welland sat beside her and struggled to find what had flashed like light in the old days. They had to face it at last—V. Lydiat was dead.

It troubled them much for a while, but troubled the world more. The publishers were besieged with questions and entreaties. Finally those also slackened and died off.

V. Lydiat was buried.

They thought that perhaps if they returned to India the dead fire would re-kindle under that ardent sun. But no.

One day, at Benares, standing near the great Monkey Temple of Durga, Martin stopped suddenly, and a light came into his eyes.

"B. V. I've just remembered that one of the wisest of the pandits lives near here—a wonderful old fellow called Jadrup Gosein. Let's go and state the case to him. The wisest man I know."

They went, Beatrice Veronica ashamed to feel a little uprush of regret at the sacrifice of a part of the wonderful day. Martin knew so much. It was heavenly to go to these places with him, and have them illumined by his research. But they went to the pandit.

The holy man was seated under the shadow of a great image of Ganesha the Elephant-Headed One, the Giver of Counsel, and when they sat themselves before him at a measured distance the case was stated.

There was a long pause—a deep silence filled with hot sunshine smelling of marigolds, and the patter of bare feet on sun-baked floors, as curious quick eyes watched the conclave from afar.

Jadrup Gosein meditated deeply, then raised his serene dark face upon them with the dim look that peers from the very recesses of being. His words, incomprehensible to Beatrice Veronica, had the hollow resonance of a bell, near at hand but softened.

"There was a man long since," he began, "to whom the high Gods offered in reward of merit, a rose-tree—very small and weak,—a suckling, as it were, among trees, with feeble fibrous root, accessible to all the dangers

of drought and sun, and as he stretched his hand doubting, they offered him for choice a rose from the trees of Paradise, crimson and perfumed, its hidden bosom pearled with dew and wafting divine odours. And they said 'Choose.' So he said within his soul, 'The tree may die—who knows the management of its frail roots? But the rose is here, sweeter than sweet, immortal since it grew in Paradise! I choose the rose.'

"And they put it in his hand. And the wise Elephant-Headed One said:

" 'O fool! What is a rose compared to a rose-tree that bears myriads of roses? Also the rose dies in the heat of human hands. The tree lives; a gathered rose is dead.'

"My children, you have chosen the rose. Be content. Yet in another life remember and cling to that which unsevered from the parent tree sends roots into the Now, the Then, and the Future, and blossoms immortally."

So he dismissed them kindly.

"He means," said Martin with troubled brow, "that ordinary household happiness shuts a man in from the stars. Do you remember the flute of Pan, B. V.? He tore the reed from the river and massacred it as a reed to make it a music-bearer for the Gods.

> "The true Gods sigh for the cost and pain,
> For the reed that grows never more again
> As a reed with the reeds in the river."

"But we are so happy!" she whispered, clinging against him to feel the warmth of his love. "The outer spaces are cold, cold. I don't regret V. Lydiat. I have you. The reeds were happier in the river."

Martin Welland sighed.

"You had both," he said. "You have only me now."

But that regret also slipped away. They forgot. It all faded into the light of common day and they were extremely happy.

The two could never account for the way in which they had come together in that dream-land of theirs. They had lost the clue of the mystery once and for all.

Jadrup Gosein could have told them, but it never occurred to them to ask him. There are however many lives and the Gods have a long patience.

THE SEA OF LILIES

A STORY OF CHINA

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I had come down from the mountain fastnesses of my home in Kashmir on pilgrimage to a certain island off the coast of China. A long, long pilgrimage, but necessary; for, with a Buddhist monk attached to the monastery of Kan-lu-ssu in the hills of North China, I was to collect certain information from the libraries and scholars of two famous monasteries on the island of Puto. I, Lancelot Dunbar, am known to the monks of the northern monastery of Kan-lu-ssu by the friendly title of "Brother of the Pen," and it is my delightful lot to labour abundantly among the strange and wonderful stores of ancient Buddhist and historic knowledge contained in some of the many monastic libraries scattered up and down India, China and Ceylon. It follows that my wife and I own two homes.

One is a little deserted monastery in the Western Hills, in China, known as "First Gate of Heaven," and so beautiful that the name might have grown about it like the moss on its tiled roofs. Following the bigger monasteries, it has its quiet courtyard, its lotus-pool and the peaked roofs with their outward, upturned sweep. The pines crowd upon us, and the cloud-dragons of rain and wind play in their uncouth sport among the peaks and fill our streams with singing, glittering water.

Our other home is a red-pine hut near the Liderwat in Kashmir. The beauty of it, the warm homeliness set amid the cold magnificence of the hills and immeasurable forests, no tongue can tell. The hut is very large and low, divided into our own rooms and the guest-rooms, with hospitable fireplaces for fragrant pine-logs and floors strewn with rugs brought by yak and pony down the wild tracks from Yarkand and Leh. Beautiful rooms, as I think—the windows looking out into the pines and the endless ways that lead to romance and vision.

Which home is the more beautiful I cannot say. We have never known, and our friends give no help; for some choose one and some the other. One day I shall write of our life in Kashmir, the clean, beautiful enchantment of it, the journeyings into the mountains—but to-day I must recall myself to the pilgrimage to Puto.

It is an island off the coast of China, as I said before, most holy to the Buddhists of the Far East, dear to all who know it in its beauty and religious

peace and the lovely legends that cling about it, a place of purification of the heart and of a serenity that the true pilgrim may hope to carry away with him as the crowning of his toil and prayer. It is one of the Chusan Archipelago and is separated from the large island of Chusan by a stretch of water known as the "Sea of Lilies." And it is not very far distant from the hybrid dissipations of Shanghai and the swarming streets of Ningpo and can be reached from either. Yet it is as far removed from their hard realities as if it were built on floating clouds and lit by other dawns than ours.

Shanghai concerns itself, I am told, with that ancient and universally respected Trinity of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. I know little of it myself and accept the testimony of friends, and especially of one who knew it well. "I just think," he said with conviction, "that if nothing happens to Shanghai, Sodom and Gomorrah were very unfairly dealt with."

So I met my friend Shan Tao in Ningpo, and we set sail together. The island of Puto, at all events, concerns itself with a very different Trinity from that of Shanghai. For the deity of Puto is the Supreme, enthroned in eternal light, and on his right hand stands Wisdom and on his left, Love. The patron saint of this island is Kwan-yin (the Kwannon of Japan), the incarnation of divine love and pity, she who has refused to enter paradise, so that, remaining on this sad earth, she may be attentive to the tears and prayers of humanity and depart from it only when the Starry Gates have closed behind the last sinner and sorrow and sighing have fled away like clouds melting into the golden calms of sunset. Yet when I say "she," I limit the power of this mighty *Bodhisattva*, or *Pusa*, as Buddhas-to-be are called in India and China. For that pure essence is far above all limitations of sex and, uniting in itself the perfection of both, may be manifested as either, according to need and opportunity. Be that as it may, Puto is the holiest, most immediate home of Kwan-yin, and her influence spreads far beyond its shores and makes the very sea that surrounds it sacred. Therefore it is to this day the Sea of Lilies.

For when the Dwarf-men, the Japanese, came storming down on the island from Hangchow long ago and carried off a part of the sacred relics, they woke in the dawn to find their ship moving slower and slower and finally rocking like a ship asleep in what seemed a vast meadow of lilies. Thick as snow about them lay the ivory chalices with golden stamens; thick as the coiling of snakes innumerable were the long piped and knotted stems, with the great prone leaves. Neither oar nor sail could move the ship; for the mysterious lilies, white and silent, that had sprung up from the depths in a night held it as if with chains. And then comprehension entered the hearts of the Dwarfs, and, taking hurried counsel, they put the ship about and headed for the sacred island once more. As they did so, a soft wind like the waft of a

passing garment breathed on the surface of the sea, the ivory chalices closed and the crystal lymph flowed over them, and, where the leagues of blossom had spread, were now only the foam-flowers of the waste ocean. So the treasures were restored to Puto, and, when the story was told to the monks, they adored the Heavenly Lady who guards her own.

Lest it be said that the burdened consciences of the Dwarfs misled them into a dream, let the story be told of Wang Kuei, a haughty official who was sent on his Emperor's behalf to do reverence at the shrines of Puto and did it grudgingly and with a pride that ill became him. So, when his ship set sail from the island and he sat in glory on deck, glad at heart that his service was over, suddenly her swift course was stayed. Behold, in the moonlight, the meadows of ocean had bloomed into innumerable lilies, and there was no sea-track between them, no glimmer of water in the interstices of the paving-leaves, and the ship was a prisoner of beauty! Then the story of the Dwarfs rushed into his soul. In haste he prostrated himself on the deck with his face toward the island and prayed for pardon as he had never yet prayed, and the Heavenly Lady heard him and the lilies were resumed into her pure being. The man of pride returned to Puto and, doing homage of the humblest, went back in security to his Emperor.

But who can tell the beauty of Puto, looking forth on its little sisters of the archipelago with the serenity of an elder who has attained? We put up in one of the cells allotted to pilgrims in a monastery among the hills overlooking the Sea of Lilies. Surely, I think, a lovelier place could not be. The little ways wind about the island, past great rocks sculptured with holy figures and groves of trees that climb the hills to the tiled roofs of the many temples and monasteries. And wild and sweet on the hills grows the gardenia, whence the island has its name of "White Flower." The sunny sweetness of its perfume recalled to me the far-away, wild daphne bushes of Mount Abu in Rajputana, near the marvellous white temples of Dilwara, temples of another, yet not unallied, faith. It is easy to tell when the gods go by—it can never be common air again, but sweet, sweet unutterably.

All day I trod the bays on sand fine as powdered gold or wandered among the flowers, taking notes for my book at the various temples and talking with the monks and such hermits as are not under the vow of silence. When they found I was at work for Kan-lu-ssu in the hills, they opened their hearts and told me many things.

I suppose it is difficult for the western mind to comprehend the impulses that send a man to dwell in the solitudes of Puto, girdled with its miraculous sea, there to let the years slip from him like a vesture, unheeded, unregretted

—but to me it is easy. Let me tell the story of one of these monks, gathered from his own lips and told where a ravine breaks down to the sands of a little bay; where the small waves fall in a lulling monotone, a fitting burden to quiet words softly spoken as the shadows lengthened to the hour of rest. He was named in religion "High Illumination." His name in the world I cannot tell.

His father had been a farmer in Anhui, a well-to-do man for his class. There were two sons, and my friend was the younger. His father, of whom he spoke with deep reverence, had the utmost confidence in the elder brother. In dying, he expressed only the desire that the elder brother would make a just division with the younger of all the possessions he was leaving, and so departed.

"And I was content," said High Illumination, "knowing my father's wisdom and believing that his wish, uttered in the presence of us both, would be as binding upon my honoured brother as an imperial command. Therefore, when all observances of departure had been completed and the proper time came, I expected my share in peace, and the more so since my good father had provided for my marriage with a beautiful maiden, the daughter of a lifelong friend. But that was not to be.

"And still my brother said nothing; all the duties of the seasons proceeded and I worked and helped him, expecting daily that he would speak.

"Then at last in great astonishment I ventured this: 'Honoured Elder Brother, the will of our just father is still unfulfilled. Should we not proceed in this matter?'

"And he, with anger and a reddened face: 'What is this discontent? Do you not share the land where you labour upon it? What more would you have?'

"So, very temperately and courteously, I said: 'Honoured Elder Brother, I work but as a hired man who has no hire. I have not so much as a *cash* in my pocket to buy me the least of pleasures or needs. I have but my food, and that, as I think, my elder sister [the brother's wife] grudges me. Such certainly was not the intention of our just father.'

"Then, his face distorted with rage, he replied, 'Have your way, and if it bring bitterness and disturbance of spirit, then thank yourself for your greed!' "

High Illumination paused a moment as if in memory.

"Greed!" I said indignantly. "My friend, you were wronged and cruelly. You could in a court of law have compelled him to do you justice."

"Yet he was right: for me it was greed," said High Illumination, with a smile of quiet humour. "I had thought of it night and day, till it had soured my soul. But the next day at dawn my brother called to me with anger in his voice and said: 'The division is now made. Come and see.'

"So we passed along through the dewy dawn-gold in silence, past his fields of budding rice and millet prosperously green, and at last we came to a great stretch of pebbles and water-springs where nothing would grow, no, not even a blade of grass. The place had come to my father from many ancestors, and none could either use or sell its barrenness.

"And there it lay, grey and hard in the morning gold, and my brother, pointing, said: 'Take it; the division is made. And when you store your plentiful rice, thank my generosity.' And, turning, he left me and went back to his prosperity, laughing."

"It was a devil's deed," I said. "Surely he laid up for himself a black *karma* in so doing."

High Illumination shook his head slowly. "Who can judge the karma of another? Daily did I pray that my brother's feet might be set in the way of peace, and I had assurance that thus and no otherwise it should be. But hear the story and its loveliness.

"So I sat nearly all day, staring at the pebbles. There was not even a yard of the ground that spade and hoe could conquer, and I knew myself vanquished. Then in the evening I rose and went to a neighbour and said, 'I beseech you to find me work; for I must eat or die.' He gave me work and the wage was my food only; for he was bone-poor. So I lived for two years, and, if I passed my brother, he would jeer at my rags and leanness.

"Now, as I went by my desolate heritage one day, I saw that between the pebbles were pushing little bright green shoots, strong and hardy, thrusting the small stones aside to make room for their impatience. The tender greenness pleased me. It was like warmth and sunshine to see the life of it, and I wondered what manner of growth could find food among the stones. For a while I could not go that way, but, when I went again, behold a thing most beautiful, for all the plants were covered with buds like pearls!

"My brother, hear a marvel. One day, before ever I came in sight of it, a sweet perfume, warm with the sun, exhaling the very breath of paradise, surrounded me. When I approached, the desert had blossomed abundantly. I could not see the stones; they were covered with lilies, white lilies, each

with a gold cup, set in ivory, to hold the incense-offering to the sun. What could I say, what think in beholding this miracle of loveliness? I sat beside them to watch what they would do, and a light breeze moved the flowers like bells upon the stems, and there was a going in the leaves of them as though the hem of an unseen garment trailed among them. And they were mine."

"They had never grown there before?" I asked.

"No man of those parts had seen the like; nor I myself. Every day, when my work was done, I went to look at them and sat to see their beauty of ivory and gold. And once, as I sat, the rich official, Chung Ching-yu, rode by. Pausing in astonishment, he bought a handful of the flowers, giving me the first money I had seen for a year, and he told me to gather the bulbs in due season and receive from him in return their weight in silver. And what he said ran on to other rich men and to men not rich, in the city of Ningpo, and they came bidding against one another for the bulbs to sell to the great and to send in ships to strange countries, until I who had been poor scarce knew how to store my riches. And I saw what my lilies loved and put for them more stones and water, and the next year they were a wilderness of sweets, where all the bees of the world came to gather nectar.

"But I knew indeed whence they came, since such beauty could not be of earth, and I withdrew myself to a lonely place and addressed my prayer to Kwan-yin, who had thus blessed my poverty, and I said: 'O Adorable, whose ears are open ever to the cry of the oppressed, whose beautiful eyes are pitiful to sorrow, I bless thee for this compassion. And because I dread the love of riches, and the flowers and not money, are to me my soul, give me grace so to receive the mercy of thy gift that it may befit thy greatness and my littleness.' Even as I said the words, a thought came to me, and I went to find my brother, whom I had not seen for long days.

"Now, when he saw me come, his face darkened with rage, and he said: 'Are you come to taunt me because of my folly, in that I gave the best of all the land to your idleness, or to thank me for the gold it has heaped upon you? Speak out; for the lucky man may speak.'

"Then, standing at the door, I said this: 'Elder Brother, your action was unjust, and certainly the Divine does not sleep, but awaits its hour in peace. As for me, the Spirit of Compassion has seen my poverty and had pity upon me, and now I will tell you my heart. Two nights ago as I lay and slept, it seemed to me that the moonlit air grew sweet with a sweetness more than all my lilies—nay, than all the flowers of earth—and I knew that the gates of paradise were opened and that the immortal flowers exhaled their souls, and

that to breathe them was purification. Then, far off on a cloud so white that it resembled the mystic petals of the lotus, stood a lady with veiled face, and in one hand a chalice and in the other a willow spray, and even through the veil her beauty rayed as the moon behind a fleece of cloud. My Brother, need I say her name?'

"And, as I spoke, the hard face softened; for who is there that knows not the Pity of the Lord? I continued: 'In a voice sweeter than sleep, she augustly addressed me, saying: 'The Divine on its hidden throne knows no repose while the sigh of the oppressed is heard before it. And because this injustice was borne with patience, the armies of the flowers of paradise were marshaled. Say, now, whether justice was done.' "

"And I said, 'It was done.' And, as a cloud slips off the moon as she glides upward to the zenith, so fell the veil—but what I saw I may not tell, nor could, for I weep in remembering that Beauty."

His voice faltered even in recollection; nor could I speak myself. We sat in silence awhile, looking over the Sea of Lilies with the twilight settling softly upon it.

Then he resumed: "So I said: 'Elder Brother, having seen this, I have all riches and need no more. Take the land; for I depart into the life of peace, where is no need of gold or gain, having beheld the ineffable Treasure of the Nirvana and the very Soul of Quiet.'

"And his eyes kindling, he said, 'What, is it mine—all mine?'

" 'Yours. Yet remember that these lilies are of heaven. It is in my mind that these will have not only pure water and clean rock but also a clean heart to tend them.'

"Then, very doubtfully, he took my hand and held it awhile in his and, dropping it at last, turned, weeping, away. Thus we parted, and I came to Puto."

"And you never saw him again?"

High Illumination smiled, looking to where the star of evening blossomed above us. "Four years passed," he replied. "Then, among the pilgrims who came to the holy shrines, I saw my brother, and yet could scarcely think it he, so reverently and with such humility he knelt where the Divine Lady waits in gold at the left side of the Infinite One.

"Need I recount the rest, O Brother of the Pen? He came to my cell and, seated at my feet, he told me all. When I was gone, the lilies withered, and at first he thought he lacked my skill and spent much money on digging and trenching, but still the lilies died, and at last he saw that the air that clung

about his garments withered them. So, as he sat musing on this strange thing, he resolved in his soul that he would no more sell the Divine in the streets nor market his peace for gold, but that he would set aside these stones and pure springs for almsgiving to the poorest of the poor. Looking up, he said this: 'Spirit of Compassion, have pity on my soul, bound and crippled by the love of gain. For I too am not beyond the bounds of thy pity, and, if there is hope of it for me in this life as the fruit of some solitary good deed in former existences, grant that the flowers of heaven may blossom once more and the souls of many rejoice in their loveliness.'

"And, as the words were said, he knew that the prayer was heard. The lilies returned in a beauty beyond telling, and it seemed that half the world desired them. He who had not known the joy of giving became now, as it were, the very source of charity and gave not only of his lilies but of his rice and millet and all his gains, that the heart of the poor might be gladdened with plenty. So, as he told, we sat together, hand in hand, with tongues that could not be satisfied in telling and eyes that beheld the greatness of the Divine. And for many years he came, and the monks watched and watched for his coming and I most of all. And at last he did not come, but his son in his place, who told me that the bond of life had been gently loosed, and it was believed that High Presences stood about his death-bed while the villages mourned.

"O Brother of the Pen, write this true story, that all may know there is none like unto the Hearer of Prayer!"

The evening star hung like a steadfast lamp over the dim ocean, and the air was so still that, when at last a faint stirring came in the grasses and leaves, it was as if some listening influence were passing softly away, as indeed I believe.

Skeptics may say that the wish was father to the thought. But I know better. And as for the flowers themselves, there is a strange susceptibility in the plant life we call "lower." Of that truth I know many stories which I shall tell one day.

But how shall I tell the beauty of Puto looking forth on its little sisters of the Archipelago with the serenity of a saint who has attained? I sat alone next day by the carved Rock of Meditation pondering these things, and bathing my soul in the peace of them as in deep water. The mystery of the place was about me, for Puto is a home of the mystic order of Buddhist monasticism which in India is called Jhana, in Japan Zen, and there were men at hand to whom the bond of the flesh is a thing easily unloosed. One sat on the height above me now in profound meditation.

I analyzed my own heart. Is it because all this with the atmosphere it creates, is so beautiful that I love it? Or is it because it presents a truth forgotten, lost, in our hurrying day of fevered unrest?

Because it is of the truth. That is the answer. None can doubt it who understands and loves these people and their teachings.

None—who is admitted to the quiet of their secret places and thoughts.

It is a truth which is a part of nature itself. Consider the lilies of the field. They breathe it, the soft breezes whisper it among the leaves of the maiden-hair trees, the measured cadence of the sea chimes it eternally on the golden shores of Puto.

They have the secret of peace, which we have immeasurably and to our ruin lost.

So my friend Shan Tao and I paced along the pilgrim's path past the sea-cave where visions of the holy Kwan-yin are said to have been seen in the sun ray that strikes through the rent roof with something of the same effect as the light contrived to fall from above in the temple of Mendoet in Java on the white and beautiful face of the Bodhisattva who sits in ecstasy below. And wandering on, beguiling the way with legends and tales of the Excellent Law to reach the southern monastery, pausing to look at the half ruined pagoda adorned on its four faces with carvings of Kwan-yin, and her brother saints, P'uhsien, Wen-shu and Ti-tsang, the last known in Japan as Jizo the beloved protector of dead children, we reached the southern monastery and the courtyard with its noble incense burners and candle holders, shaded by trees. Here it was a part of my purpose to search for references in the library on the upper story where the treasures are guarded by a serene Buddha in alabaster. And let me say that if ever the libraries of the many Chinese monasteries are searched with care and patience great additions will be made not only to the science of the soul but also to the world's wisdom. Many lost treasures thus await their day of resurrection—treasures brought back in the early days of our era by Chinese monks who made the terrible pilgrimage through the cruel deserts and mountains to India that they might return loaded with the spiritual treasures of illumination and wisdom, and learned comments and digressions on these written by mighty Chinese patriarchs whose gilded and lacquered bodies are still preserved in the remote abodes of faith.

And when that day of revelation comes it will be found how much of the religious thought of the divided faiths can be traced to common sources in

an antiquity so vast that it strikes the soul with awe. May that knowledge bring union and surcease to the petty wranglings and contempts which cloud the living waters of Truth.

There are few scenes more serenely beautiful than the lotus pond of this monastery and its still waters doubling the old arched bridge and the sailing clouds, and the sunshine, unbearably delicious, brooding, brooding upon it like a soul in ecstasy. A soft collegiate calm was about us, the monks coming and going at intervals with kindly glances at my pen and note book, and the reverence for the written character and for what it represents that contact with our civilization will most certainly kill. A harmless snake was basking in the sun not far away, and a deer taught tameness by fellowship wandered about under the trees, as they do on the island of Miyajima in Japan.

How beautiful the confidence of the creatures in these Buddhist resorts, how much we lose in losing their companionship! The gentleness of heaven was on Puto that day, and the words of a poet-monk who wrote of the beloved island floated through my mind like little golden clouds.

“Who tells you that there is no road to heaven? This is heaven’s own gateway, and through it you may pass direct to the very Throne of the Divine.”

I left it on a lovely day of summer—no foam-flowers blossoming on the Sea of Lilies, a drowsy golden haze veiling the neighbouring islands. I could scarcely have borne to leave it, especially its unrifled stores of wisdom, had I not known that I was free of it henceforward and might count on my welcome, come when I would. Almost, as we crossed the sea, I could dream that the miraculous ship of Kwan-yin floated before us, its sails filled with no earthly breeze, bearing the happy souls to the golden Paradise of the West where the very perfume of the flowers is audible in song. We who in Dante read the story of another Boat of Souls may well recognize the inmost truth of this legend. And certainly in Puto the soul may at least enter the heavenly Boat of Beauty that the poets have sung in all tongues and ages, and pass in it to the blue horizon of dreams and delights.

THE BRIDE OF A GOD

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I

Two hundred years ago in India, many happy people dwelt in the little town of Krishnapur—happy because their belief was fixed and immutable and it brought them gladness; for in all innocence and devotion they worshipped Krishna the Beloved, the Herdsman of Brindaban, Lord of Love, whose name their little town carried like a jewel of price.

And certainly the God had gifted it with beauty. The terraced houses climbed the ways of a hill deeply wooded with tamarind and pippala trees, and down a deep ravine ran the little Bhadra River, falling from great heights to feed the blue lake below. The place lay in the sunshine, clear and bright as a painting on crystal brought by the Chinese merchants, and by the favour of the God a delicate coolness spread upward from the lake among the clustered houses. In its midst was a very small island with a little temple lifting its shining gilded roof and spires among the palms. In this he was worshipped as the Flute-Player, an image of black basalt, very beautiful—a youth with the Flute forever at his lips; and there were devout men and women who declared that, in the midnight silence, sounds of music comparable only to the music of Indra's heaven had been heard among the palm trees and mingled with the eternal song of the river. This report and the beauty and quiet of the fair little town brought a few pilgrims to bathe in the lake, crowding the broad low ghats that led down to its pure waters with their flower-hued garments and the strong chanting of their prayers.

Many legends haunted the town of Krishnapur.

Now the Pandit Anand Das was a man learned in the Vedas and all the sacred books, and his heart glowed with a great devotion. Since his son, who should have inherited his learning, was dead, and it could not flow in that beloved channel, he resolved that, slight and frail as a woman's intellect must needs be, he would instruct his daughter Radha in the mysteries of the Holy Ones, as far as possible. He had named her Radha from his devotion to Sri Krishna; for Radha is the heart's love of the God; and in bestowing this name he had made offering and prayed that he might live to see her as beautiful, as true in devotion as the Crowned Lady. The prayer was answered.

Beautiful indeed was Radha, an image of golden ivory, with lips like a pomegranate bud before its sweetness is tasted, and great eyes dark as the

midnight and lit by her stars. Beautiful the soft moulding of her rounded chin, and the shaping of the flower-face poised on its stem like a champak blossom that all the bees of love must seek, and the silk-soft brows and the heavy sweep of shadowy lashes. Flawless from head to rosy heel as the work of a mighty craftsman who wills not that his name shall perish, so was Radha; and when the people saw her as she passed along the little street, they gave thanks to the Beautiful for her beauty. Fairer than fair, wiser than wise in all the matters of the Gods, she lived her quiet days among the palms and temples, and each day laid its gift at her feet.

Now the Brahman, her father, having, as it were, devoted her to the God, rejoiced to see that *bhakti*—which is faith, love, and worship in a perfect unity—was a steadfast flame in her heart; nor was there any word to utter her burning devotion. As a child she would leave all play to sit before his feet and hear as he read of the divine Krishna,—

> The story of the Lord of All
> Beginneth with a Pastoral,—

and her child's heart lived among the meadows of Brindaban with the marvellous Child whose very name is 'He who draws or attracts.'

And thus her learned father taught her.

"This Krishna is the true incarnation of the Preserver who upholds the universe. 'For in him,' says the Mahabharata Santeparva, 'the worlds flutter like birds in water'; and of him did not Maheshwara the Destroyer say: 'The divine and radiant Krishna must be beheld by him who desires to behold Me.' Thus in Sri Krishna is all Deity sheathed in flesh, that the soul of man may dimly apprehend his glory. A Child—yet thus in the Holy Song does the Prince Arjun cry to him:—

> " 'God, in thy body I see all the Gods,
> And all the varied hosts of living things,
> The undivided Thou, the highest point
> Of human thought.'

"Can such a Being be approached by mere humanity? No, he is too far away—the ear of man may not hear, and the eye of man may not see. How if he were born among us, if we might touch his feet, and show him in simple human ways our devotion? How if he would turn the common earth to beauty by breathing the air we breathe?

"And because it is so desired, it is done and Krishna is born, the Herdsman of Brindaban, the Beloved of India."

So reading day by day, he instructed her in the lovely story of the Childhood, and, with the ancient Pastoral, took her to the forests and rich cattle pastures where Jumna River flows wide and still to the sea. The people are kind and simple, the sacred cows are driven out at dawn to feed, and brought back in the brief glow of evening by the fair women who tend the gentle beasts; and this is Brindaban, the home on earth of the Lord of All, the utterly Adored.

So much a child! But when floods of rain threatened to sweep away the herds and their keepers, he raised the hill Govardhan on the palm of his small soft hand, and sheltered them from the torrents and the fighting winds. And, as she sat at his feet, the Pandit showed his child Radha pictures of that other Child, darkly beautiful, who could poise the world on his shoulder.

II

As she grew older, the story widened and deepened with her years. But as she came to girlhood, her anxious mother, Sita Bai, ventured with trembling to doubt if it were well to draw her heart yet closer to the radiant manhood of the young God; for now the story is to be mystically interpreted and read by the light of the wisdom of the old and learned.

"Was there not Mira Bai, who went mad for the love of him and could not leave his image or his temple, and dreamed of his sweetness night and day until she wasted to a shadow and died? And, my lord, is not his great temple as Jagannath, Lord of the World, but ten miles from us at the great town of Chaki; and is it not filled with bands of *devidasis*—the dancing girls? Would you have your daughter as one of them—sacred but—vile?"

She caught the word back on her lips and looked about her in terror. Then added passionately:—

"O my lord, is it well to kindle such a passion in her heart, and she little more than a child?"

"Better be possessed by that love than by the follies and wickednesses that haunt the hearts of women to their ruin and ours. Woman, I know what I do. Be silent!" was all his answer.

So she was silent, and daily the story went onward and filled the soul of the girl. For now, as Krishna grew to manhood, beauty came upon him, irresistible, heart-compelling, the world's Desire, and on the banks of Jumna was sung the Song of Songs—the Lover, dark and glorious, to whom the souls of all the women of Brindaban, whether wife or maid, cling passionately, forgetful of self and of all but him. And the deepest symbol of

the adoration of Krishna is the passion of man for woman and woman for man.

"Walk warily here, my child, if you would understand," said the Pandit; "for we move among pitfalls made by the mind of man fettered to his senses —the mind of man, that coin bearing the double superscription of spirit and flesh. Yet the story is plain for him who has ears to hear!"

And Radha, speechless, with dark eyes filled with adoring love, listened —listened, with no heart for aught else.

"Tell me more, more!" she said.

And he, seeing the Divine Passion, the trembling of her lips, the uttering of her heart, told on, imparting the desire of the God.

And when, as at this time, a marriage was spoken of for her with the son of the rich Brahman Narayan, she shrank from it with such shuddering horror that for very pity her father put it by for a while. But her mother watched in great fear.

And every evening, when the light was calm and golden and her father laid his books aside, she would sit before him, putting all else aside that she might drink in the sweet nectar of his words.

And now he told of the Herd-maidens bathing in the clear ripple of the river where the trees hang in green shadow over the deep pools.

Their garments lie on the bank, forgotten in the joy of youth and life, as they sing the praises of the Beloved, until at length one remembers and looks, and lo! some thief has stolen the vesture, and they stand ashamed in the crystal lymph, their long locks gathered about them.

Who has so bereft them? For no man or woman should bathe uncovered; and they have sinned—they know it!

And then a voice calls from the world of leaves above their heads, and there sits the Desired, shining like a star caught in the topmost boughs, and before him are rolled the stolen garments, and when, all shamefaced, they entreat for their restoration, the Voice exhorts them:—

"And if it is for My sake you have bathed and purified yourselves, then come forth fearless, and receive your vesture from my hands."

And he laid in her hand the picture of the Gopis fearing and adoring as they leave the lustral water, some shrinking in humility, to receive their vesture from the Beautiful, who sits smiling far above them.

"And this, my daughter, is a very great mystery!" he said gravely. "And its meaning is this: 'Thy *Thou* is still with thee; if thou wilt attain unto me,

quit thyself, and come.' "

And she said,—

"Father, surely the Self is withered into nothing when this dearworthy One calls. What were life, death—anything in the Three Worlds, compared with beholding his blissful countenance?"

And he replied,—

"Even so it is"; and laid aside his book and fell into a deep musing on the Perfections of the Lord; and Radha sat beside him.

So that night her mother said timidly,—

"Lord of my life, the girl is possessed by the God. I fear for her life. In her sleep she speaks aloud of him and stretches empty arms to the air, moaning. The colour fades in her lips, her eyes are fixed on dreams. She has no peace. Should we not seek an earthly lover for her own, that she may forget this Divine that is all the world's?"

And he replied sternly,—

"Woman, lift up a grateful heart to the God that this girl is not as the rest but consumed by the love of the Highest. I have a thought unknown to you. All will be better than well."

And she desisted in great fear and obedience; but the very next evening was the story told of Radha—heart of the God's heart, the Beautiful whose name she herself bore! And the girl listened in an ecstasy.

It was a very still evening, the stars shining large and near the earth, the moon a mere crescent, such as when Maheshwara wears it in his hair and dreams on the mountain-peaks of Himalaya. They sat in the wide veranda, supported on wooden pillars bowered in the blossoms of the purple bougainvillæa and the white and scented constellations of jasmine. The wide transparent blinds of split cane were raised to admit the faintly perfumed breath of the garden; and by the Pandit's elbow, as he sat on his raised seat, burned a little oil lamp, that he might read the sacred pages.

Radha sat on her low cushion beside him, the *sari* of Dakka muslin threaded with gold fallen back from her head as she looked up.

" 'In the passion of their worship, the women of Brindaban are drawn out into the forest, each grieving if he do but turn his calm immortal eyes upon any other than herself. Therefore, only in the secret places of the forest is there now any joy. It has left the little houses and gone out to dwell by the river. They must follow, for they bear the world's wound in their heart, and he is its Balm.

“ ‘For a time his eyes rest on Radha the Beautiful, and she, transported with the pride of love, entreats that he will carry her in his arms. He stretches them to her with his mystic smile, and even as they touch her, he vanishes, and she is alone in a great darkness.’

“Here again, my daughter, is the parable clear,” the Pandit interrupted the reading to say. “Here is no room for spiritual pride and exclusive desire. Learn your place, proud soul! It is at his feet until he, unasked, shall raise you to the level of his heart.”

“ ‘So at the last she falters and falls, stunned with grief, the Herd-maidens weeping beside her, and—suddenly the Light shines. He has returned. He speaks:—

“ ‘Now I have tried you. You have remembered and thought upon me.

“ ‘You have increased your affection like beggars made newly rich.

“ ‘You have chosen my service, abandoning the world and the Scriptures.

“ ‘How can I do you honour? I cannot reward you enough.

“ ‘Though I should live for a hundred of Brahma’s years, yet I could not be free of my debt.’ ”

III

She sat in silence; and breaking upon it, they heard the soft tread of a man stop by their gate, and voices, and the servant who guarded the gate came in haste.

“Great Sir, here is the holy Brahman who is chief at the altar of great Jagannath in Chaki, and he would speak with you.”

“Bring him instantly hither. Stay! I go myself!” cried the Pandit, rising. He had forgotten his daughter.

“Father, have I your leave to go?” She drew the sari about her face.

“Daughter, no. This is a wise man and great. Be reverent and humble, and stay.”

She stood, trembling with fear to see one so holy. Surely it was a portent that the servant of the God should come on their reading. Yet she quieted her heart, and when her father, attending the great guest, placed him on his own seat, with the image of the wise Elephant-Headed One wreathing his trunk behind him, she bowed before him and touched his feet, for to her he was as Brahman and priest, an earthly God.

He was a man in middle life, tall and dignified in spite of a corpulence which gained upon him, and his features clear-cut in the proud lines that denoted his unstained ancestry. He knew himself the superior of kings. He would have spurned with his foot a jewel touched by the Mogul Emperor of India. Yet more. Had the Rajput Rana, a king of his own faith, sun-descended, royal, cast his shadow on his food in passing, he had cast it, polluted, away. So great is the pride of the Brahmans.

"Namaskar, Maharaj! What is your honoured pleasure?" asked the Pandit.

"I am on my way to Dilapur on the divine business," he answered, with a voice like the lowest throbbing notes of the bronze temple gong. "But I would have a word with you, Brother, as I go."

"Has my daughter your leave to depart, Maharaj?"

"Certainly, friend, though it is of her I come to speak. May I behold the face of the maiden? A Brahmani has no need to veil it. They are not secluded like the Toorki women."

"Unveil before the Presence, my daughter, Radha."

The guest started at the name so familiar to him in his devotions.

"It is singular, in view of my errand, that you should have given her this holy name, Pandit-ji."

"She deserves it for the devoted love that she bears to Sri Krishna," returned her father. "Of her face I say nothing, but her heart is flawless."

"It is well!" said the priest Nilkant Rai, and turned gravely to Radha.

Many were the *devidasis*, the nautch girls of the God, in the Temple of Jagannath. His eyes, deep and glowing, were no strangers to beauty, for the fairest were gathered like flowers to adorn the altars of the God, to dance and sing before his divine dreams, in all things to abide his will.

Six thousand priests serve Sri Krishna as Jagannath, Lord of the Universe, at Chaki, for great is his splendour. The Raja of Dulai, royal though he be, is the sweeper of his house. More than twenty thousand men and women do his pleasure, and of the glories of his temple who can speak?

But never had Nilkant Rai beheld such beauty as trembled before him then—darkly lovely, whitely fair, the very arrows of desire shooting from the bow of her sweet lips, half-child, half-woman, wholly desirable.

His eyes roved from the wonder of her face to the delicate rounding of her young breasts and the limbs exquisitely expressed, yet hidden, by the sari.

He looked in silence, then turned to the Pandit.

"Surely she is an incarnation of Radha in face as in name. Brother, she has my leave to go."

Yet, when she had fled like a shadow, Nilkant Rai did not hasten. The other waited respectfully. *Pañ*—the betel for chewing—was offered in a silver casket. A garland of flowers perfumed with attar of roses was placed about the guest's neck. Refreshments were served and refused.

At length he spoke, looking on the ground.

"Brother, it is known to you that the God makes choice when he will of a bride, favoured above all earthly women. Beautiful must she be, pure as a dewdrop to reflect his glory and return it in broken radiance, young, devout — Surely, even in this land of devotion, it is not easy to find such a one!"

"It is not easy, holy one!" returned the Pandit, trembling as he foreknew the end.

The other continued calmly.

"Now it so chanced that the priest Balaram passed lately through this town, and going by the tank to the temple, beheld your daughter, and returning, he came to me and said: 'The God has shown the way. I have seen the Desire of his eyes.' "

"Great is the unlooked-for honour," said the Pandit trembling violently; "so great that her father and mother bend and break beneath it. But consider, Holy One—she is an only child. Have pity and spare us! The desolate house—the empty days!" His voice trailed broken into silence.

"If this hides reluctance!" Nilkant Rai began sternly. "If you have given a foul belief to any tale of the Temple——"

"I, holy Sir! I have heard nothing. What should I hear?" The old man's voice was feeble with fear. "Do I disparage the honour? Sri Krishna forbid! No, it is but the dread of losing her—the empty, empty house!"

"And is she not at the age when marriage becomes a duty, and would she not leave you then? Unreasonable old man!"

"Holy Sir—Maharaj, I tremble before the honour. But if the girl married, she would bring her babe and make her boast and gladden our hearts. But thus she is lost to us. Have pity! There are other Brahmans rich in daughters. Take not the one from my poverty."

Nilkant Rai rose to his feet with majesty.

"I go. Never shall the God be rejected and ask twice. But when your daughter, old and haggard, looks up at you, answer that it was her unworthy

father who kept her as a drudge on earth, when he might have raised her to a throne in heaven."

As the old man stood with clasped hands, Radha broke from the shadows and threw herself before him.

"My father, would you hold me back? What joy, what glory in all the world can befall your child like this? The bride of the God! O Father!"

The tears were running down her face like rain. They glittered in the lamplight. He could not meet her eyes. Nilkant Rai stood by, silent.

"She is beautiful as a nymph of Indra's heaven!" he thought. "Not Urvasi and Menaka, the temptresses of sages, were more lovely!" He said aloud;

"The maiden is right. She is worthy of the God's embrace. Is there more to say?"

"Maharaj, I worship you!" said the old man submissively (and still he had not looked at his child). "It is well. What orders?"

"Let her be perfumed and anointed daily. Let her food and drink be purer than the pure. Let her worship daily at the temple of Sri Krishna. The bridal shall be held in a month from this, that time being auspicious. The Car of her Lord shall come for her as the Queen she is, and all envy the Chosen."

He turned to Radha, still at her father's feet.

"Farewell, happiest Lady. Joys earthly and celestial await you. Rest in the knowledge of the favour of Sri Krishna. Hear of him, dream of him, until the glad truth slays all dream."

He moved slowly toward the steps. Her father pursued him.

"Maharaj. Forgive, forgive! I neglect my manners. Thanks a thousandfold for the honour you have condescended to bring us this happy day. Your commands are ever before me."

The words poured forth. He could not say enough.

"It is well, Pandit-ji. It is well. Say no more!" said the great guest, striding onward to the gate where two other Brahmans and his *palki* awaited him.

She stood in the shadows as the Pandit returned.

"Father, beloved, did I do wrong? Have you not taught me all my life that there is none like him—none?"

"My pearl, what is done is done. He cannot be resisted. It is well your heart goes with your feet. Now sleep."

She passed in silently, and sat all night by the small cotton mattress laid on the floor. How could she sleep?

Nor was there sleep for the Pandit. Sita Bai needed little telling, for she had listened behind the curtains; and now, with a livid pallor upon her, she confronted him.

"Lord of my life, what is there to say? You know—you know!"

"I know," he answered heavily.

Sita Bai was too dutiful a wife to reproach her husband with anything done; but his own thoughts returned to the long evenings spent in contemplating the Perfections of the God. He replied to his thought.

"Yet had she never heard his name, it had been the same. Nothing could have saved her from the temple of Jagannath."

"Saved." He caught the word back from his own lips in deadly fear, and added in haste: "Whom the God honours cannot set his grace aside, and there is none who would. None in heaven or earth."

"None," echoed the woman faintly. Then, in a whisper scarcely to be heard, "Whom Nilkant Rai chooses"—and steadily averted her eyes.

They dared say no more of this even in whispers to each other; for if this were reported, grief, ruin, death were the sure end.

One word more did Anand Pandit breathe:—

"She must keep her joy. It is the God's. If he love her, he yet may save her. Let no word be said."

She touched his feet in token of submission. All night they sat in a bitter silence.

IV

Next day, all through the little holy town, bathing in its glad sunshine beneath the swaying palms, had run the news of this honour. Sita Bai, with a mask of gladness fixed on her face, visited the wife of the goldsmith, and begged her sympathy with the divine event. The gold bangles rang as she joined her hands; for she had come clad in splendour, and her sari was of purple silk of Paitan woven with strands of gold.

When Radha went with her mother to the temple, crowds of the simple people had gathered by the lake beneath the neems and tamarinds to behold the beauty beloved of the God. True, they had seen it before, but to-day it was strange and new. Her throat rose like the stem of the lotus above the snowy folds of her sari, and like the purity of the lotus was her face with its

downward eyes hidden in heavy lashes. She moved already like a bride, a little apart from her mother, to whom she had clung hitherto.

A voice shouted, “Jai Krishna!” (Victory to Krishna), and many voices took up the cry. A woman, quivering with eagerness, flung a garland of wet marigolds about her neck. Flowers were strewn before her happy feet. Never before had a Bride been chosen from Krishnapur. It might well seem the benediction of the God.

A beautiful woman, in a sari of jade-green and silver, pressed up close to her and whispered,—

“Pray for me, O Beautiful, when you lie in the arms of the God, for me Ramu, wife of Narayan the Sahoukhar, that I may bear a son. Surely he will grant it for a wedding gift!” She stooped to the feet of Radha to worship her.

“I will pray,” the bride answered, pacing gently onward.

Petitions poured in upon her as she moved through the dappled light and shadow of the trees, beside the melted jewels of the lake. A great gladness possessed her. It was as if the air upbore her light feet; and the people followed in crowding joy until she made the *ashtanga*—the great prostration before the Flute-Player, the Alone, the Beautiful, who moves through the world scattering joy and love with the far music of his Flute—He to whom all and none may draw near.

When the people were gone and the sun had set, and quiet breathed from the grey garments of evening, she entreated her father to read to her from the Song of Songs, written by the sweet-voiced singer Jayadeva, who has sounded all the secrets of love.

At first he hesitated, then with a strange look upward, he read.

“ ‘This is the story of the anguish of Radha.

“ ‘For Radha, jasmine-bosomed, beautiful, waited in vain for her immortal Lover, by the banks of Jumna. This is the Dark Night of the Soul, for the face of the Beloved is averted in eclipse. In her sight, joyous and joy-giving, he lingers on the banks of Jumna with the happy herd-maids, while the *koels* flute their soft *koo-hoo-oo* in the deep green shade. And the poet makes the invocation:—

“ ‘ “Krishna, Lord of Love, stoop from thy throne to aid us. Deign to lift up our hearts for the sake of this song that is the cry of all who shed the tears of desertion as Radha shed them.”

“ ‘And Radha cries aloud in her despair:—

“ ‘ “Wind of the Indian stream,
A little, O a little, breathe once more
The fragrance of his mouth. Blow from thy store
One last word, as he fades into a dream.”

“ ‘But he, far away in his Heaven, is lost in the Infinite Bliss; while she, deceived, beholds him playing by the river. Yet, because the soul, fevered with illusion, cannot soar to him, he forsakes his throne, sending his messenger before him, thus to plead with her:—

“ ‘ “The lesson that thy faithful love has taught him
He has heard.
The wind of spring, obeying thee has brought him
At thy word.
What joy in all the Three Worlds was so precious
To thy mind?
Ma kuru manini manamayè,[1]
O be kind!”

[1] My proud one, do not indulge in scorn.

“ ‘He pleads, as it were, for forgiveness, the Divine reasoning with the soul and justifying his ways. And all is well, and joy leaps over the horizon like the sun that drives the dark with arrows of victory. For he comes.

“ ‘So then, Jayadeva writes of the high close, the mystic nuptials of the soul and her Bridegroom.’ ”

The old Pandit paused, his voice trembling, with the dark eyes of his Radha fixed upon him. Then read on:—

“ ‘Enter the House of Love, O Loveliest!
Enter the marriage bower, most Beautiful,
And take and give the joy that Krishna grants.’ ”

And again he paused, the words choking in his throat, and she laid a soft hand on his.

“ ‘Then she, no more delaying, entered straight;
Shame, which had lingered in her downcast eyes,
Departed shamed. And like the mighty deep
Which sees the moon and rises, all his life
Uprose to drink her beams.’ ”

He laid the book aside and extinguished the little lamp, so that only the moonlight was about them.

After a while, he said,—

"My daughter, the God leads you in strange ways. Yet, whatever the hearts of men, he is true. Offer him your heart in all purity, and in the end it shall be well with you. We will speak of this no more."

"But, Father beloved, do you not share my joy?" she said tremulously.

He was silent.

V

The days went by very swiftly to the time of the divine marriage. Messengers came and went between the mighty temple of Jagannath and little Krishnapur, bearing gifts and jewels. Casting half-contemptuous glances, they passed by the little shrine where the Bride worshipped daily; but all contempt died when they were admitted to see her face.

"The God has chosen well!" they said, and looked at one another with meaning.

So the great day dawned in a passion of sunlight, and with flutes and drums and shouting the great Car of Jagannath waited for the Bride; and as she came forth, the pomegranate-blossom flush of joy rising in her golden cheek, her parents bowed before her and touched her feet in worship—no longer their daughter, but a goddess.

Ankleted and zoned with gold, clothed in woven gold so supple that it yielded to every breath, the sun-rays dazzled back from her upon the adoring crowd until they put up their hands to veil the splendour. And so she sat, a Radiance, for all the world to see, high on the Car wreathed and hung with flowers, the image of the Bridegroom beside her.

Oh, wonderful, terrible greatness for a woman! And so, with songs and triumph they bore her to her bridal.

Mighty is the Temple of Jagannath, where by the eternal sea the people crowd all day to worship the Lord of the Universe. In little Krishnapur, he is the Beloved, the Herdsman, the Beautiful. Here, he is far removed—too great for love or fear. Human thought quails before his Vastness.

The temple is in itself a city, and no feet but those of worshippers may pass even the strong outward walls. Very glorious are the carvings that adorn it. Terrible figures of Gods, many-headed, many-armed, bending giant bows, trampling giant enemies, brandishing awful weapons, dandling on their knees great Goddesses with slender loins and full breasts that overweight

their swaying grace. Very awful are these figures, with clustering hair and crowns above their long eyes, and suns and moons rising and setting on their brows, and the symbols of their might scattered about them.

But it was night, and it was among the wildly tossing lights that the Bride approached the home of her Lord; and the temple was dreadful, for it was dark and all the intricate ways lit with flickering points of light like the eyes of beasts; and, lost among strangers, her heart turned to water; for it resembled a great cave of blackness, and she could see but the naked bodies of worshippers and giant images of the holy Gods hovering through thick air laden with incense fumes and burning *ghi* and the dung of the sacred animals and the pungent smell of rotting marigolds. And there were cauldrons with flames fed by wild worshippers from the hills, and these crowded about the *palki* wherein they brought her through the temple, and touched it with hands that made her tremble, imploring her prayers as she lay in the breast of the God. Bats hung from the roof or swooped in the gloom. Their sourness tainted the air, and men, dim as ghosts, slunk about the fearful ways.

Thus dwell the Gods.

And suddenly terror submerged her like an ocean wave, and she sank back and the world left her.

When sense and memory returned, she lay in her *palki* in the great Hall of Dancing—a mighty hall supported on many pillars; and around her stood in motionless bands the *devidasis*, the dancers of the God, chosen to delight his senses for their grace and beauty.

And, seeing her stretch her hands for help, the wild and flying dance began. They lifted her from the *palki* and she stood among them, shimmering in gold, and about her they wheeled, advancing and retiring, linking and unlinking like dancers in a dream. And they sang the marriage song she had heard in the quiet of her home; but now it was terrible as it burst from hundreds of throats, gonged and cymbaled, with clashing and a thunder-beat of drums.

> "Enter, thrice-Happy, enter, thrice-Desired,
> And let the gates of Hari shut thee in.
> Tremble not. Lay thy lovely shame aside
> And love him with the love that knows not fear.
> Give him the drink of amrit from thy lips."

She stood like one clinging to a surf-beaten rock as they tossed about her with wild hands and eyes, the whole world mad with noise and dance and colour; then, dropping on her knees, she covered her eyes in terror.

And thus the servants of the God welcomed her to his arms.

VI

Night, and a great quiet. A chamber of gold set with jewels glittering in the moonlight that came down some secret way, borne on a cool breath from the sea.

She lay alone in the golden place, and the jewels watched her like eyes. Was it terror, was it love that possessed her? A thousand images blurred her closed eyes—He, the Beautiful, with peacock crown, with eyes that draw the soul, with lips of indescribable sweetness. It could not be that she should lie close to the heart of the God. How dare flesh and blood aspire to that mystic marriage? Must they not perish in the awful contact? And, if it could be, how return to earth after that ecstasy?

"May I know and die!" she prayed. "Oh, let me not pass unknowing! Let me know and die!"

And as the minutes dropped by, this prayer was all her thought, and it possessed her being.

Then, dividing the darkness, she heard the voice of a Flute very far off. Like a silver mist, it spread vaporous, a small fine music, but growing, drawing nearer, and, as it strengthened, clear drops of music fell through this mist like honey from the black bees' comb. It crept about her brain and steeped her eyes as if in poppy juice, so sweet, so gliding, most infinitely wooing as it grew and filled the air with peace.

And in this high marvel was a blissful safety beyond all words, more sweet and delectable than any man may tell. The grace of his Childhood, of the dearworthy passage of his blessed Feet among men, returned to her with a joy that melted her heart with love. And so she rose and stood upon her feet, as one called, trembling with blissful longing.

Far down the long ways, passing through pools of moonlight and dark, came One whom the music followed. His face could not at first be seen; about him was a leopard skin. Naked but for this, beautiful and slender, his silent feet moved onward. Like one utterly alone in a great forest, he came, —slowly,—lost in some unutterable thought, made audible in sweet sound.

The Bride, the Lover, and between them, the music and the moonlight only. She would have knelt, but her feet were fixed; and he drew near with unseeing eyes—O Beautiful, O wholly desirable, to draw the hearts of men! And still the Face Divine was hidden.

But as he drew near and would have passed, she cried aloud with a passionate glad cry, “My Lord indeed!” rejoicing suddenly.

And he turned and looked upon his Bride with heavens in his eyes. And as she saw what no words can utter, she fell upon his feet and lay, slain sweetly with a bliss more keen than any pain.

But the Brahman, Nilkant Rai, waiting behind the pillar to seize his prey, had heard and seen nothing of the Glory.

As she fell, he sprang like a tiger on a fawn, and lifted the fair dead body, and stumbled in the trailing hair, and knew his vileness conquered. And in that moment the Eye of Destruction opened upon him the beam that withers worlds and hurls them like shriveled leaves into the Abyss.

And he dropped her and stumbled screaming into the dark, a leper white as snow.

But when they came in the dawn to implore the will of the God from the happy lips that his had blessed, the Bride lay at rest on the dim straight golden bed, and between her breasts was a Flute set with strange jewels that no man could name. Nor shall they ever; for when they laid her body on the pyre they left this Flute in her bosom.

And when Anand Das heard what had befallen, he said this:—

“When did the Herdsman sleep on his guard or the Beloved fail the heart that loved Him? It is well, and better than well.”

And he who tells this story ends it thus:—

> “Meditates the Herdsman ever,
> Seated by the sacred river,
> The mystic stream that o’er His feet
> Glides slow with murmurs low and sweet—”

and breast to breast with God, the soul that adores Him.

THE BELOVED OF THE GODS

A STORY FROM THE MAHABHARATA

THE BELOVED OF THE GODS

A STORY FROM THE MAHABHARATA

Reverence to Ganesha, Lord of the Elephant Trunk, that, in a day found fortunate, he aid me to tell this tale, which whoso heareth shall receive prosperity in this world and in that other.

In the age of the ancestors there dwelt a great King in Vidarbha, with a Queen of the highest grace and beauty, and these did all things pleasing to the gods, making rich gifts to Brahmans and honouring kine, and in reward for these things the gods gave to them three sons and a daughter, and this was Damayanti, the loveliest of earthly women. And she was known throughout the universe as the "Consumer of Hearts"; for the very report of her beauty agitated the hearts of thousands who might never hope to see it. Slender-waisted was she and stately as a young palm-tree, and though she was a mortal, Sri, the wife of Narayana, had dowered her with her own eyes, black and soft and so long-lidded that they all but touched the silken hair upon her temples. The very gods in the Paradise of Indra heard the report of this marvel and coveted it.

Now as Damayanti, like a crescent moon, rounded into maidenhood, it so befell that her maidens in talk together praised none but that Tiger among Men, Nala the Prince. For they said: "This Prince overpasses all men, and what shall be said of him? Surely he is laughing, bold and handsome as Kama, the God of Love—he whose bow is strung with honey-bees, sweet and stinging. The arrows of his eyes are pointed with five-tongued flame. All hearts burn in his glances."

And Damayanti silently heard and pondered.

But the report of her had in like manner reached Nala, and sweet thoughts grew up in him for the slender-waisted maid. And he dreamed of her.

Now it chanced that one day, wandering in the great woods that surrounded his palace, he saw a flock of swans, white and beautiful as though washed in the waters of Lake Manasarovar, that cold jewel of the Himalaya, and indeed they were of that royal race of swans who, dwelling there, feed only on unpierced seed-pearls, and therefore are they so white. So, as they drew together, the Prince, stealing noiseless as a snake through the jungle, seized one, for love of its whiteness, and held the long throat clutched in his hands and the plumed wings beneath his knees.

But in those days royal men had understanding of the lesser creatures of the gods, and that king-swan spoke and Nala heard his speech: “O Tiger among Men, slay me not. To me also is my life dear and precious! Have pity, for I will do good service. I will fly through many leagues of air, and in the ear of the Princess Damayanti will I say that of all men you are the noblest and stateliest. And having heard this, she will greatly desire you.”

And by the favour of Kama, the Prince withdrew his hands, saying, “Swan, observe your promise; for this is the duty of the honourable.”

And the swan, inclining his head, flew away with his companions, having instructed them as to the course they should pursue on alighting in the gardens of Vidarbha.

Now in the garden-close the Princess and her maidens played, and she excelled them all, though each was fair. And the swans, seeing these lovely ones among the flowers, fluttered to earth and stood near them, arching their necks and preening their feathers, and their whiteness delighted the Princess and she said, laughing: “Chase these swans, each one a swan; for it appears that they desire captivity at our hands.”

And every maiden pursued a swan, with laughter and sweet cries, and as each all but seized her swan, the swan eluded her and fluttered a little farther. Most lovely of all sights was it to behold the maidens and the swans, as, equal in beauty, they fluttered hither and thither among the flowers and the trees. And Damayanti, laughing with her voice of music, pursued her swan, she also, that lovely lady of the long eyes, not knowing that her heart was the destined prey of the swan she sought to capture.

For, when her hands were even upon the snow of his plumage, that king-swan eluded her again and spoke in the speech of man, and in amazement she stood to hear what he would say, as he inclined his head before her feet. “Lady, O Most Beautiful, Damayanti, Consumer of Hearts, there is a Prince in Nishada, and his name—oh, mark it well—is Nala. As the Twin Stars shine in the sky, so he shines among men. Surely we swans, flying in the pure air, see all men and divine beings and the great gods. But we have seen none like unto Nala. Pearl among Women, if you should wed this Prince of Princes, were it not better than well?”

And when Damayanti heard this, she looked sidelong through her lashes like a maid, for she was young and tender, and she said this, very softly: “Dear swan—white swan! Fly and tell this thing to the Prince.”

And that white beauty, the feeder on pearls, said, “Hearing and obeying, I go.”

And with strong strokes of his pinions he rose into the sky, followed by his mates, and clove the air to Nishada and told the Prince her word, being the destined messenger of love.

But he carried the heart of the maid upon his wings; for Damayanti sat her down upon the flowers and, when her ladies returned from chasing the swans, they found her with her hand pressed upon her empty bosom and tears welling like jewels from the dark deeps of her eyes. And though they entreated her to speak and reveal the cause of her grief, she would say nothing but this one thing: "All is well—and ill! Trouble me no further."

And they returned, sighing, to the palace, with Care among them for a companion.

For Damayanti wanned and paled. Like a caged jungle-dweller would she pace up and down, unresting, her eyes upon the ground. Food lost its savour, and what was sleep but a weariness? And in the garden-close she sat in her gold gown and watched the peacocks displaying their splendour to the sun as they danced before the rains, and she only prayed for wings that she might fly to Nishada. Very full of mischief were the words of that swan!

So her royal mother, instructed by the maidens that the Princess pined away daily, went to her lord, the King, and said: "Such and such is the case of our daughter. Do then according to your wisdom."

And the King pondered the thing deeply; for he loved his daughter, and he answered: "I perceive she is no longer a child. Youth and maidenhood are waxing in her, and who can gainsay them? It is now fitting that she make her choice among princes and kings."

So the careful King, having considered, sent forth this message to the courts of kings: "Lords of the Earth, it is with us an ancient and honourable custom that the daughters of kings make choice of a husband suitable to their degree and royalty; nor do we force them to unchosen marriages. And this is known as the *swayamvara* of a king's daughter. My Princess is now of due age to choose her lord. Come therefore to the swayamvara of Damayanti, receiving honourable welcome."

And the news flew like gongs and drums over the land; for there was no man but knew of the loveliness of the Consumer of Hearts, and each one thought within himself, "She will choose me, and yet if not, still shall I see that face of faces."

So from every country came processions to the court of Vidarbha: trains of elephants walking slowly beneath the weight of the gold and silver castles upon their backs, where sat the kings of men; horses with jewelled saddles

and bridles, the very stirrups glittering with clarified gems that the feet of kings might tread upon them; glorious companies of fighting-men, bearing their pennons; archers with bows tipped with ivory, strung until they sang like the strings of the *sitar* in the wind. So in armies they came until the earth groaned beneath their feet, and the great camps were set about Vidarbha.

Also came Nala the Prince, gallantly accompanied, riding to Vidarbha, and thoughts of love were thick as honey-bees in his heart.

But who shall discern the thoughts of the Gods?

For it chanced that two great saints, Narada and Parvata, mighty in their austerities, pure and high of thought, ascended the heavens at that time, to make a visit and obeisance to Indra the God, in his own Paradise. And he, the King of the Clouds, rising to them, did them honour and welcomed them; for the presence of the saints is as a rich perfume in the nostrils of the gods. Therefore he saluted the two, asking tidings of the world.

And Narada replied: "High God, it is well with the world. It is well with the kings. There is no complaint."

And Indra spoke again: "But where are my fighters—the kings of men? Do they not love—do they not fight as of old? I see no souls of haughty warriors entering my heaven. Is it all peace? Where are my fighting-men?"

So Narada made reply: "O Cloudy God, all is peace upon the earth, and there is no thought but of beauty: the King of Vidarbha makes the choosing for his daughter and the kings and princes dream of naught else; for she is the very Lotus of the World and the Pearl of Women. And the kings flock as one man to Vidarbha."

And while Narada said this, the Immortals gathered to hear, and when he spoke of the maid Damayanti, their eyes shot forth peculiar radiance and they said: "To this maid's choosing we four will go. She is worthy to choose among the deathless rather than the kings, and she shall reign in the Paradise of Indra and sit beside that divinity whose bride she wills to be."

And Indra, the Cloudy God, said, "I will go."

And Agni, the Lord of Fire, said, "I also."

And Varuna, the King of Waters, said, "And I."

And the Dark Presence that is Yama, the Lord of Death, said, "I go."

So their winged chariots that are self-directed, flying like thought where they will, awaited them, and the gods ascended them and, thinking of Vidarbha, were presently beside its walls.

But Nala the Prince, approaching with his company of great men and soldiers, elated with love and hope, looked up and beheld the Gods, seated in their golden chariots. And these, the Protectors of the World, saw him and hesitation in their purpose seized them, because he shone like the sun and was a man indeed, and their divine hearts adjudged him worthy even of Damayanti—so straight and tall he stood and like a king's lance, and in the beauty of his brows and strength of his person was there no blemish from head to foot. Even like their own brother, Kama, the God of Love, so he seemed to them.

But, descending through the clouds and softening their divine voices that human ears might abide them, they accosted him: "Aho! Prince of Nishada —Prince Royal! We have an errand. We have need of a noble messenger. Who will go for us?"

And he did homage, pressing his palms together, answering: "I see Four Shining Ones. I will go. What is your errand, that I may do it?"

So Indra, leaning from his chariot, said this: "The Gods stand before you, Prince of Nishada. I am Indra, the King of the Clouds, and he beside me is Agni, the Lord of Fire, and here, Varuna, the King of Waters, and he behind me is Yama, the Lord of Death. Go now to Damayanti the Princess, and say this to her: 'The Protectors of the World, the Four Great Gods, desiring your beauty, are come to the swayamvara. Make choice then to which of these Great Ones your heart inclines; for that dignity whom you shall choose is yours, O maiden of excelling fortune.' "

But Nala, joining his hands in prayer, said to Indra: "O Mighty, how can I do this? O Mightinesses, anything but this! I, too, have journeyed to Vidarbha, desiring the maid. How should I entreat for another, even for a god? Being divine, have pity."

But these divinities replied: "Have you not said, 'I go'? Is it possible that a royal man should break his word? It is not possible. The great forswear themselves in nothing. Depart."

So he said: "Her gates are guarded; for she is a king's daughter. A man may have no secret speech with her."

And Indra answered: "But that may you! Fear not. Depart."

And as the divine voice ceased, the Prince stood in the inmost chamber of Damayanti. He knew not how; yet he was there.

And his eyes swam and his heart fluttered within him; for she sat with her maids like a goddess and his heart knew her. Beautiful was she and yet more than beautiful; for all grace, all love shone about her as the light

surrounds the moon in her interlunar caves. So a mild radiance filled the air about the Princess and moved as she moved, going with her.

Now, when these ladies beheld a man standing in their presence, they sprang up like frightened deer, each grasping the other for protection and gathering about the Princess to shield her, so great was their fear. Then, seeing the kindliness of his beauty and the nobility of his brows, these lovely ones gathered courage and they saluted him with timidity, murmuring: "Aho, his grace! Aho, his beauty! What is he? Who?"

But the Princess, her heart fluttering like a leaf in the wind, stood higher than the rest and spoke thus: "Noble Prince—for by a faultless body I judge you royal—how have you come thus suddenly like a God? Surely this would anger my father. Have you no fear of his wrath?"

But there was love in her voice and with love the Prince answered: "O Most Lovely, I am Nala of Nishada, and I am the herald of the gods. For to your choosing come the Four, almighty, heaven-shining—Indra the King of the Clouds, Agni of the Fire, Varuna of the Waters, and he whom to name is fear, Yama, the Lord of Death. And these will that you choose one among them to be your immortal lord, and it is by their power that I stand before you. Who am I to be the messenger of the Great Ones? Now judge what is well; for this is an honour to shake the soul of a woman."

So Damayanti bowed her fair head in reverence, hearing the gods named, and having done obeisance, she raised her head and spoke: "Yet, O Prince, is my heart set on you and I am faithful. The white swan was my messenger and to you he bore my love. It is for your sake only that the kings are bidden to my swayamvara, but I have already chosen. Even now the maidens make ready the garland that I would hang about your neck. O Prince of Men, O Flame of Strength and Knightliness, what says your heart? For me, I choose your arms or death. There is no other way."

And he, sighing bitterly, said: "With the very Gods awaiting you, how, Princess, should you choose a man? And what am I but dust beneath their feet? But you, O lady, choosing one of these excelling Gods, shall escape all death and mortality and reign shining beside him throughout the ages; for immortal flowers do not wither, and death and time are unknown to such as these. Sit therefore enthroned above us. Choose and, choosing, be divine."

But she replied in haste and weeping: "Before these mighty Gods I bow. To them I address my prayers, but you I choose—you only will I take for my husband. You only. What to me is immortal life if I have not you?"

And her body trembled like a bamboo in the wind, while he replied: "Here being their messenger, I may not speak for myself. Duty and

reverence hold the door of my lips. Yet if the time come when in honour I may speak, then will I utter what lies in my heart. May that time come!"

"May it come!" said the Princess and dashed the tears from her eyes, and like a queen she stood and said: "In full presence of my father and of the kings let these Divine Ones enter, and, O Prince, who are the light of my sad eyes, enter you, too, and I, a free maiden, will choose freely. And to you, what blame? For it is I who choose and the gods know all."

So he returned to the Gods and, sighing, told what had befallen, bidding them to the swayamvara of Damayanti, the Consumer of Hearts. So the Shining Ones knew that her heart was set upon Nala of Nishada.

Now, on an auspicious day and in the right quarter of the moon, the swayamvara was held in a mighty court surrounded by golden pillars bound with garlands, and with royal seats set for the suitors. And closing it in was a great gatehouse with guards.

Through the gates passed the kings to their places, and what a sight was there as these noblest of the earth approached! How should a woman choose among them? Crowned were they with odorous blossoms pressed down upon their dark locks. Lordly jewels swung in their ears. Some were rough in majesty, great-thewed, and the muscles stood out upon them like cords. Some were delicate in strength like bows of the archer Gods, but splendid kings were all, proud and fierce of aspect, fit spouses for such beauty; and in a ring they sat, their eyes glittering and fixed upon the way that Damayanti should enter, desiring that loveliness as the very crown jewel of their state. But none saw the Gods.

And into that ring of set faces entered the Princess, unveiled and pacing like a deer, and on her right hand her brother Danta, and the garland of choosing on her arm, and when she entered all held their breath, so more than mortal fair she seemed, and they knew that the half was not told them.

So, with her soul set on Nala of Nishada, the Princess Damayanti went by the kings, and, as she passed each one, his face darkened as when a cloud crosses the sun and the world is grey. So at last she stood before Nala and raised her eyes under the cloud of her beautifully bent lashes, and fear and pain shot through her tender heart like an arrow, for lo, the Four Shining Ones had condescended to take the earthly shape of Nala as they stood beside him, so that they might try the maid and she not know her love. There were five Nalas, and which was her own she could in no way tell, for each one bore his very face, his very form. So the Gods walk disguised, and who shall know them?

Then, sore perplexed, trembling in her great fear and reverence, she sought, meditating, to recall the signs by which the Gods may be discerned when they assume flesh. But of these none could she see, and the five remained immovable as she stood before them and in silence the kings watched what would be.

So, seeing no help in herself or anywhere on earth, that lovely lady joined her palms and, raising her lotus-eyes, spoke thus: "O Divine Ones, I heard the swan and chose my lord, and by that sincerity which I have kept in all faith and honour, I call upon your greatness, O Mighty, who for a while have blinded my eyes, to show my King to me! Appear, O Protectors of the World, in your proper shape, that I may do such reverence as mortals owe to Gods; and reveal him, mortal, but mine own."

Being thus called upon in the strength of a pure woman, straightway the Gods, dropping all disguise, disclosed their beauty. And immediately she knew them; for their sacred feet touched not the earth but hung a span's length above it in the air, and their forms of crystal essence cast no shadow. No sweat was beaded on their pure, eternal brows, and their crowns of flowers in radiance cast back the sun's beams nor drooped in the heat. And neither wavered their shining eyes, fixed upon the Princess, nor did the lids flicker, and in motionless majesty the Immortal Gods stood there.

And beside them stood Nala, very weary and foredone with grief and pain. His shadow lay black before him in the fierce sun, the sweat hung thick upon his brows where the faded flowers drooped. Beautiful, wearied and mortal, he stood beside the Immortal Gods.

So Damayanti looked upon those unchanging faces, in which was neither sorrow nor anger, for they sit above the thunder; and they regarded her, as it were unseeing, yet seeing all things, as do the holy images, and in their divine hearts was no love at all. So she passed them by and hung the perfumed garland round the bowed neck of her love, and in her voice of music took him to be her lord.

And he said this: "O Lovely—O Faithful, since before Gods and men you have chosen me, unworthy, true man will I be and faith and honour will I keep while the breath is in my nostrils."

So together they worshipped the Four, while all the kings and princes cried aloud: "*Sadhu!*"—"Well done!" For there was none but rejoiced in the beauty and faithfulness of these two.

So the Immortal Gods, standing in that presence, gave lordly gifts to the pair. And Indra, the Cloudy God, gave this: that, when Nala should perform sacrifice, he should with mortal eyes see the visible God and behold him

unafraid. And Agni, the Lord of Fire, gave this: that at all times he would come at the call of Nala. And this is a great gift. And Varuna, the King of Waters, gave this: that at the word of Nala of Nishada the waters should rise and fall, obedient. But Yama, the Lord of Death, gave two gifts; and of these the first was to walk steadfastly in the ways of righteousness; and the second (let it not be despised!) was to be skilful in preparing food. And in after times by strange chance did this prove a great and goodly gift.

Thus was the marrying of Nala, King of Men, with Damayanti, Pearl of Women.

Reverence to that Lord of Elephant Trunk to whom obstacles are as nothing, and to those Four Shining Ones who showed compassion, their ears being open to the prayer of purity.

THE HIDDEN ONE

THE HIDDEN ONE

(The heroine of this story was a Princess of the great Mogul dynasty of Emperors in India. She was granddaughter of Shah-Jahan and the lovely lady of the Taj Mahal, and daughter of the Emperor Aurungzib whose fanaticism was the ruin of the dynasty. The Princess's title was Zeb-un-Nissa—Glory of Women. She was beautiful and was and is a famous poet in India, writing under the pen-name of Makhfi—the Hidden One. Her love adventures were such as I relate, though I have taken the liberty of transferring the fate of one lover to another.

For her poems, which I quote, I use the charming translations by J. Duncan Westbrook, who has written a brief memoir of this fascinating Princess. She was a mystic of the Sufi order and her verses "The Hunter of the Soul," which I give, strangely anticipate Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven", in their imagery. The poems not specified as hers are a part of my story.)

The office of hakim (physician) to the Mogul Emperors being hereditary in my family from the days of Babar the conquering Emperor, I was appointed physician to the Padshah known as Shah-Jahan, and when his Majesty became a Resident in Paradise (may his tomb be sanctified!) my office was continued by his Majesty Aurungzib, the Shahinshah, and rooms were bestowed on me in his palace, and by his abundant favour the health of the Begams (queens) in the seclusion of his mahal was placed in the hands of this suppliant and I came and went freely in my duties and was enlightened by the rays of his magnanimity. And my name is Abul Qasim.

But of all that garden of flowers, the Begams and Princesses, there was one whom my soul loved as a father loves his child, for she resembled that loveliest of all sweet ladies, her father's mother, she who lies buried by Jumna River in the divine white beauty of the Taj Mahal. (May it be sanctified to her rest!) In my Princess's sisters, it is true I have seen a flash now and again of that lost beauty, but in her it abode steadfast as a moon that knows no change and at her birth she received the name of Arjemand after that beloved lady, whose death clouded the universe so that its chronogram gives the one word "Grief." But the child also received the title of Zeb-un-Nissa—Glory of Women, and such this resplendent Princess most truly was.

And surely the prayer for resemblance was granted by the bounty of Allah, for she grew into womanhood dark, delicious as a damask rose, enfolding the hidden heart of its perfume in velvet leaves, a soft luxuriant beauty that stole upon the heart like a blossom-bearing breeze and conquered it insensibly. Of her might it be said:

"For the mole upon thy cheek would I give the cities of Samarkand and Bokhara," and a poet of Persia, catching a glimpse of her as she walked in her garden, cried aloud in an ecstasy of verse:

"O golden zone that circles the Universe of Beauty,
It were little to give the earth itself for what thou circlest."

Yet, this surprising loveliness was the least of her perfections.

But how shall this suppliant who is but a man describe the spell of her charm? Allah, when he made man and laid the world at his feet, resolved that one thing should be hidden from his understanding, that still for all his knowledge he should own there is but one Searcher of Secrets. And the heart of this mystery is woman, and if she be called the other half of man it is only as the moon reflects the glory of her lord the sun in brilliance, though (as a wise Hindu pandit told me for truth) she has a cold and dark side which is always unknown to him, where alone she revolves thoughts silent, cold, and dangerous. Therefore to sift her in her secrecies is a foolhardy thing, and not in vain is it written by Aflatoun (Plato), the wise man of Greece, that the unhappy man who surprised a goddess bathing in the forest was rent in pieces by his own hounds.

Yet this feat must be attempted for if there is a thing it concerns man to know it is the soul of this fair mystery who moves beside him and surrenders Heaven to him in a first kiss and the bitterness of the hells in a last embrace.

Therefore I essay the history of this Princess, the Glory of Women, who was an epitome of her sex in that she was beautiful, a dreamer, a poet, and on the surface sweet in gentleness as a summer river kissing its banks in flowing, but beneath——

I write.

Seeing her intelligence clear as a sword of Azerbajan, her exalted father resolved that his jewel should not be dulled by lack of polishing and cutting, and he appointed the wise lady Miyabai to be her first teacher. At the age of seven she knew the Koran by heart, and in her honour a mighty feast was made for the army and for the poor. As she grew, aged and saintly tutors were appointed, from whom she absorbed Arabic, mathematics and astronomy, as a rose drinks rain. No subject eluded her swift mind, no toil wearied her. Verses she wrote with careless ease in the foreign tongue of Arabia, but hearing from an Arab scholar that in a single line the exquisite skill betrayed an Indian idiom, she discarded it instantly because she would have perfection and wrote henceforward in her own tongue—Persian.

No pains were spared upon this jewel, for the Emperor desired that its radiance should be splendid throughout Asia, yet her limit was drawn, and sharply. For in her young pride of learning she began a commentary on the holy Koran, and hearing this, he sternly forbade it. A woman might do much

in her own sphere, he wrote, but such a creature of dust may not handle the Divine.

I, Abul Qasim, was with her when the imperial order reached her and saw her take the fair manuscript and obediently tear it across, desiring that the rent leaves be offered to the Shadow of God in token of obedience. But those dark and dangerous eyes of hers were not obedient beneath the veiling of silken lashes, and turning to me, to whom she told her royal heart, she said;

"What the hand may not write the heart may think, and in the heart is no Emperor. It is free," and leaning from the marble casement she looked down into the gliding river and said no more.

Yet the Emperor made amends, and noble, as far as his light led him. Not for a woman the mysteries of the faith of Islam that he held of all things the greatest, but, fired by the praises of her tutors, he sent throughout India, Persia and Kashmir for poets worthy of this poet-Princess and bid them come to Delhi and Agra and there dwell that a fitting company be made for her.

So, veiled like the moon in clouds, curtained and attended, the Princess Arjemand was permitted to be present at tournaments in the palace where the weapons were the wit and beauty of words, when quotations and questions were flung about as it might be handsful of stars, and a line given be capped with some perfect finish of the moment's prompting and become a couplet unsurpassable, and very often it was the soft voice from behind the golden veil that capped the wisest and completed the most exquisite, and recited verses that brought exclamations from the assembled poets.

"Not even Saadi (may Allah enlighten him!) nor Jalalu'd-din Rumi (may his eyes be gladdened in Paradise) excelled this lady in the perfumed honey of their words." So with one voice they cried.

And this was not homage to the daughter of the Protector of the Universe. No indeed! for death has not washed out her name with the cold waters of oblivion and now that she is no more beautiful nor daughter of the Emperor her verse is still repeated where the poets and saints meet in concourse.

It will be seen that her life in the Begam Mahal (the Palace of the Queens) must needs be lonely, for there was none among the princesses who shared her pleasures, and their recreation in languidly watching the dancers or buying jewels and embroideries and devouring sweetmeats wearied her as sorely. But she had one friend, Imami, daughter of Arshad Beg Khan, and

this creature of mortality who writes these words was also accounted her friend though unworthy to be the ground whereon she set her little foot.

Day after day did the Lady Arjemand with Imami write and study, and the librarians of the Emperor had little peace because of the demand of these ladies for the glorious manuscripts and books collected by her ancestors from all parts of the earth.

They sat and the walls echoed to the low note of her voice as she read and recited and so beautiful were the tones of my Princess that I have seen the water stand in the eyes of those who heard her recite her own verses or those of the great Persians. It was a noble instrument ranging from the deepest notes of passion to the keen cry of despair, and I would listen unwearied while the day trod its blossomed way from dawn to sunset in the Palace gardens. Great and wonderful was this new palace of the Emperor with tall lilies inlaid in the pure marble in stones so precious that they might have been the bosom adornments of some lesser beauty. Palms in great vases brought by the merchants of Cathay made a green shade and coolness for two fountains—the one of the pure waters of the canal, the other of rose-water, and they plashed beside a miniature lake of fretted marble rocks sunk in the floor where white lotuses slept in the twilight of the calm retreat. Such was the chamber of the daughter of the Padshah.

But of all the jewels the Princess was the glory.

Surely with small pains may the Great Mogul's daughter be a beauty, but had she been sold naked in the common market-place this lady had brought a royal price.

Toorki and Persian and Indian blood mingled in her and each gave of its best. The silken dark hair braided about her head was an imperial crown. From the well-beloved lady who lies in the Taj Mahal (may Allah make fragrant her memory), she had received eyes whose glance of slow sweetness no man, not even the men of her own blood (excepting only her stern father), could resist, and of her rose-red lips half sensuous, half child-like, might it be said

> "Their honey was set as a snare and my heart a wandering bee,
> Clung and could not be satisfied, tasted and returned home never more."

The imperial Mogul women were indeed the jewels of the world, because the beauties of Asia were chosen to be their mothers. The net of the Emperors swept wide, and I, who in virtue of my age and faithful service have seen, testify that there was none like them, and the loveliest of all was

fit but to serve my Princess kneeling. Shall not the truth be told? Of the soul within that delicious shrine her deeds must tell.

Now as I have written she sat with Imami by the little lake, and I in a marble recess by one of the great latticed windows that looks down on Jumna river and on the other side over the city of Shahjahanabad, new and luminous in magnificence. In all the world else are no such palace and city. At this moment she read aloud a letter from her father Aurungzib concerning the memoirs of her ancestor the Emperor Babar who founded their dynasty in India, a book written by his own hand and religiously preserved in the Mogul archives, and she read it with anger because when she demanded this book from the librarian, the Padshah hearing wrote thus:

"Happy Daughter of Sovereignty. There is one manner of life for men, who are the rulers, and for women, who are the slaves. It seems you go too far. What has a daughter of our House to do with our ancestor Zah-r-ud-din Muhammed Babar, the resident in Paradise? I have granted much already. Plant not the herb of regret in the garden of affection. He writes as a man for men. The request is refused. Recall the verse of the poet:

> " 'Ride slowly and humbly, and not in hurrying pride
> For o'er the dusty bones of men, the creature of dust must ride.'

"What an Emperor writes is not suitable for the Princesses of his House. His duty is rule; theirs, obedience."

It was a discouragement but a command, and another had laid the finger of obedience on the lips of silence, but, taking counsel with her heart, this Princess did not so.

She called to me for her pen and wrote in answer:

"Exalted Emperor, Shahinshah, Shadow of God, King of the world, Refuge of the needy, father of the body of this creature of mortality, be pleased to hear this ignorant one's supplication. Surely you have fed my mind on the bee's-bread of wisdom, and from your own royal lips have I learnt that the words of our ancestor (upon whom be the Peace!) are full of flavour and laughter, generous and kind, shining with honour and the valour of our family. Now, since this is the root whence sprang your auspicious Majesty's rule, should not a humble daughter triumph in it? True is it that I am your female slave, yet may this worthless body bear one day a son to transmit your likeness to the prostrate ages, and since we do not breed lions from lambs, his mother should carry the laughter and fire of her race like a jewel in the mine of her soul. I make my petition to the Padshah, the holiest of Emperors."

“It will be granted me,” said the Princess reading these letters aloud to Imami and to me, “because of that last word—the holiest. He values that title more than to be called the Shahinshah. And with all my heart I would it were otherwise.”

“And why, high Lady?” cried Imami in sheer astonishment. “Surely the Padshah is a saint and his deeds and words will shine in Paradise. It is blessed to be devout.”

“I know little of Paradise, but I know, and my father might know if he studied the life of Akbar the Great, his great-grandfather, that to be so bitter a saint in our Mohammedan faith that he insults and persecutes every other is to break our dynasty to powder. Consider of it, Imami, as I do. Have you read the Acts of Akbar Padshah the greatest sovereign that ever reigned? Were I emperor in India thus and thus I would do.”

“Glory of Women, may your condescension increase! What did Akbar Padshah?” said Imami, joining her hands, but I said nothing because I knew.

“Though he was born Moslem yet he honoured all the Faiths, knowing in his wisdom that the music is One and the dogmas but the foolish words that man in his ignorance sets to it. All faiths are true, and none!”

The blood almost fell from my face as I heard her, because had these words been carried to the Emperor not even her rank, not even her daughterhood, could have saved the Princess. With Imami and me she was safe, but in a palace a bird of the air may carry the matter.

“Yes!” she went on, laughing coldly, “Akbar Padshah had in all ways the tastes of Solomon the Wise and his Begam Mahal (Palace of the Queens) was a garden of beauty. But observe! The Queens were chosen from every faith and each had the right to worship as she would. There were Indian princesses who adored Shiva the Great God and Krishna the Beloved. There was the Fair Persian who worshipped the Fire as Zoroaster taught, and there were ladies of the faith of our Prophet more than can be counted. Whereas in the zenana of my imperial father——”

She paused, and Imami continued with gravity that concealed a smile:

“The Begams recite the holy Koran all day, as becomes the ladies of the Emperor who says that he sighs for the life of a faquir.”

“And would he had it!” cried the Princess with passion, “for every day discontent grows among the Hindus that are taxed, beaten, and despised only because they hold the faith of their fathers. Is there one of them employed about the court or in the great offices? Not any. Whereas the Emperor Akbar in his deep wisdom made them as one with ourselves and

thus built up a mighty Empire that my father with holy hands destroys daily."

"O Brilliant Lady, for the sake of the Prophet, be silent!" I said, for indeed she terrified me by her insight. It is better for a woman that she should not know, or, knowing, keep silence. "If these words were carried to the Padshah——"

"I should at the least be imprisoned and never more see the light of day — Well, one may be a devotee out of the Faith as in it, and like Akbar Padshah, I am the devotee of Truth who shuts her fair eyes on no faith that men hold in humbleness of heart. And were it policy only, is it not madness to disgust and terrify the countless millions of the Hindus upon whom our throne is carried? The end is sure."

"What is the end?" asked Imami in a whisper.

"Misery for himself—though that matters little, for he will take it as the robe of martyrdom from the hand of Allah, but ruin for the Mogul Empire in India. O that I were a man!"

Her face lit up into such pride and valour as she spoke that I wished it also, for I knew that her words were true as truth. But in India a woman can do nothing. It is little wonder I trembled for my Princess.

A picture of her Imperial father lay on the low table at her elbow, painted by a Persian artist of fame, and beautiful as a jewel in its small brilliant colours, and looking upon it one might see the Kismet of the Emperor in every feature. Eyes stern but sad, the narrow brows and close lips of the man who sees not life as it is but as his own thought of it, bounded by those high narrow brows that overweighted the lower part. The head of the Emperor was surrounded like that of a saint with a golden halo and his stern eyes were fixed on some vision invisible to others. The jaw was weak but fine, and of all dangerous things on earth beware the strength of a weak man in the grip of his belief. The Princess looked at it, and then at me:

"The Emperor (may Allah enlarge his reign) should have lived in the time of the Prophet and have been the Sword in his right hand. He is born centuries too late. It is policy now that carries all before it. O could I speak my mind to him, for my brothers dare not, but he and I are worlds apart and in his presence I am silent."

I sighed. Not his throne, nor his children, nor his women, nor aught on earth weighed for one grain of sand against the Pearl of the Faith. True is it that the Emperor Akbar followed the Vision also but with eyes how wide and clear!—knowing this for certain, that mortal man *cannot* know, that

Truth is a bird flying in the skies and lets fall but a feather to earth here and there. So he made for himself a faith that held the quintessence of all the faiths, and had his sons been like to him—but past is past. They were not, and they broke his great heart.

So I said, bowing very low:

"Princess, when the happy day comes that you must wed you shall make your lord Lord of the World with your wisdom."

She laughed, but bitterly.

"O, I have lovers! For one, Suleiman, my cousin, son of the brother whom the Emperor slew because he stood too near the throne. By report I knew what he was, but I saw him and spoke with him——"

"My Princess, and how?" I asked in great surprise, knowing that his presence in the Begam Mahal would have been death.

She looked at me with large calm eyes.

"My faithful servant, have you come and gone so long about the Begam Mahal and have not known that all things are possible? Prince Suleiman was veiled like a woman, and like a woman he stood where you sit, and I saw his face and we spoke together. Should not cousins meet who may be man and wife? And I have loved his father, Prince Dara, very much, who was learned and good."

I trembled again when I heard, for had the Emperor guessed that she had done this thing what hope for her? His three brothers had he slaughtered, and the Prince Suleiman was doomed.

"And he saw your face, O Brilliant Lady?"

"No, and not for fear's sake but because I liked him not at all. He said 'O Envy of the Moon, lift up your veil that I may enjoy the marvel of your beauty' and I sang this verse I had made to my lute."

She caught up her lute that lay beside her and sang,

"I will not lift my Veil,
For if I did, who knows?
The bulbul might forget the rose,
The Brahman worshipper
Adoring Lakshmi's grace
Might turn, forsaking her,
To see my face;
My beauty might prevail.
Think how within the flower
Hidden as in a bower
Her fragrant soul must be,
And none can look on it.
So me the world shall see
Only within the verses I have writ.
I will not lift the Veil.

"And the fool caught me and would have torn it," she added, "but Imami restrained him, and he flung from us like a woman in temper as in dress. A contemptible creature!"

"But Lady of Beauty, what had you against him?"

"Do I not know all that goes on in this city? Do I not know that Prince Suleiman spends his days and nights in Shaitanpur (Devilsville, the quarter of pleasure) and was I to show my face to a man reeking from the embraces of the bazaar? No, I am Makhfi (the Hidden One) and hidden I will remain for such as he. I will be no rival to Peri Mahal the dancer and her like."

And even as she ended a low voice at the curtain that veiled the entrance asked for admission and when she granted it, the heavy silk was drawn aside and a tall veiled woman entered. The Princess did not look up but I saw Imami's eyes fix as if startled.

"Her slave prays for a word with the Marvel of the Age whose mind is so lovely that it outshines even her fair face and her face so beautiful, that it is the lamp that permits the light of her soul to shine through."

"Warm for a woman!" said the Princess, and looked straight at the newcomer who stood salaaming with the utmost humility. She added impatiently:

"There is no need of this ceremony, lady. Remove your veil. The good physician Abul Qasim is privileged to see the faces of all in the Begam Mahal."

In a flash the veil was torn off and a man's face appeared beneath it—young, bold, and handsome with the high features of the Imperial House, a splendid dissolute young man with the down black on his upper lip like the

black astride the young swan's bill. Prince Suleiman, the son of Dara the Emperor's brother.

"Ha, daughter of my uncle!" he cried,— "Did I not wager, did I not swear, that I would see that hidden beauty and now I see it face to face. Poets have sung it and painters praised it, but their words and their colours were lies for they could not utter the truth. And having seen I entreat for my father's sake, for love's sake, that it may be mine."

He made towards her eagerly, wholly disregarding Imami and me. I looked to see her confused or angry, but she spoke with a most misleading calm.

"Exalted cousin, you have won your wager and your bride. If her embrace is cold it is at least constant and——"

"Cold, with those burning lips of rose, those glowing eyes? O Loveliest, Divinest, grant me one kiss for earnest if you would not have me die at your feet."

I saw her sign with her hand to Imami who glided away, flattening herself against the wall as if terrified, then she spoke serenely.

"Exalted cousin, when were you last in Shaitanpur?"

It stopped him like a lightning flash. He stood arrested on the marble before her face.

"I know nothing of Shaitanpur," he said, breathless.

"No? Nor of the dancer Peri Mahal and her house with the courtyard of roses, nor of the song she sings?"

Again she caught up her lute and sang in a low voice,

"Black bee, strong bee, the honey-eater,
Plunder my perfume, seek my heart
Cling to me, ravage me, make me sweeter,
Tear the leaves of the rose apart."

He stared, his eyes slowly dilating. That the daughter of the Emperor should sing the song of the bazaar—the song of the light women—! Then it emboldened him. He threw himself forward to seize her hand.

"Maker of verses, this is a rose of your own garden. Till now I never heard it, but it speaks of love. You shall not ask me twice. My rose, my pearl, my star!—" He caught the hem of her veil. Now I knew well from her eyes that he rushed on his fate, but it was written in the book of his destiny and what is written who can avert?

She drew back a little and looked at him with soft eyes—wells of delicious darkness, the swelling curves of her lovely form a temptation for true believers, and her lips smiling a little as if from delight at their own sweetness. And indeed her voice was gentle as moonbeams and as caressing, as though she could sacrifice all to please the man whom she exalted with the sight of her.

"Fortunate cousin, I am a weak woman. How dare I face the wrath of the Emperor? He did not love your father. He does not love your father's son, yet if he did——"

She drooped her head a little as if with a soft shame that overwhelmed her in the depths of modesty. O very woman, divine yet a child!— She had turned wisdom into folly with a glance. And he trembling, and with eyes fixed, stammered out:

"Alas, I have dreamed of your sweetness and what is the dream to the truth? I am drowned in it. O give it to me; make it mine that in life and death it may enfold me and that I may never again behold a lesser light, having seen the ineffable."

And he caught her hand passionately and drew her towards him, she yielding gently and slowly, resisting a very little, and looking at him as if with compassion.

And very softly in a voice like the breathing of a flute she said:

"O my cousin, how should we face the wrath of the Emperor?" as though all her soul were in that question.

And he, kissing her hands with frenzy, said in broken words:

"Ah, Moon of my delight that knows no wane, let me but watch with you through the starry hours of one night, and then, then if the Padshah's will be to slay me, I shall at least have lived."

"And I also," she said, looking down like the feminine incarnation of modesty, so that enraptured he flung his arms about the yielding softness of her most exquisite form and kissed her on the lips as a thirsty man in the desert grasps the cup nor can sever his mouth from it. And when he would permit her to speak she leaned her head backward to gain space, and she said:

"What is my lord's will with his slave? And in what shall I obey him?"

Now I, standing in the recess would have warned him, if I could, that not thus—O not thus, does the proudest and wisest of women abandon herself to such as he! For I had pity on his youth and the manly beauty of him, and the Imperial blood that he shared with her. But who was this creature of dust to

obstruct the design of the Imperial Princess? And indeed even I wavered and was uncertain that I guessed her meaning, with such veiled submissive sweetness did she hold his hand in hers and touch it to her lovely brows.

And trembling like a man in a fever, he replied.

"O darling little slave, since you give me the right to command what is wholly mine, I say this— Let my slave, whose slave I am, expect me to-night when the moonlight touches the western corner of the Divan-i-Am, and I will come to this chamber of bliss, and my life, my soul, are in the hand of my slave whose feet I kiss."

And throwing himself on the marble like a worshipper he kissed the flower-soft feet that showed like bare gold beneath the hem of her robe, and so rising to his knee, looked up at her as an idolater at the goddess vouchsafed to his eyes.

But she looked beyond him at the curtain that veiled the door. It lifted to a hidden hand, and Imami stood there, ash-pale, in her hand a dish of gold, and standing upon it a great goblet of jewelled glass with pomegranate sherbet brimming in it rose-red and rose-petals floating on the surface and beside it two cups of gold flashing with diamond sparks, and on her knee she offered it to the Princess, who took the goblet and a cup smiling.

"Fortunate cousin, since this is so, and I, my father's best-beloved child, will petition him to grant me my heart's desire, let us drink the cup of betrothal in the presence of the Hakim Abul Qasim and the lady Imami. Heart of my heart, I pledge you!" and setting the blossom of her lips to the jewelled rim she drank, and filled the other cup for him, and still kneeling before her breathless with adoration, he took the cup in both his hands, and I watched and could say no word because her purpose was clear to me and I knew well that of all women on earth she was the last to endure the insult of his presence. And Imami knelt by the door,—her face like ivory against the heavy gold curtain. Now, as he set his lips to the cup, suddenly Imami sprang to her feet and tottered back against the sculptured marble and with scarce breath to fill her voice——

"The Emperor comes," she said, and fell again on her knees at the door, hiding her face in her hands.

I saw the sickening terror that struck the colour from the cheeks and lips of the lover. He knelt there with a glassy countenance like a man in the clutch of a nightmare who cannot flee from the advancing doom—his limbs weighted with lead, his heart with the pressure of an exceeding horror. But Glory of Women caught him by the hand.

“Exalted cousin, there is but one way from these rooms, and the Emperor closes it. Fly to the room beyond my bed-chamber, the room of the marble bath, and hide where you can while I hold him in talk. Allah hafiz! (God protect you!) Go!”

And she pushed him from her, and he fled. Then, most singular to see, she composed her veil, glancing in the mirror set in silver that was the gift of the Portuguese priests, and turned to the door, and as she did so the curtain was lifted and Aurungzib Padshah entered and Imami prostrated herself and I also, but the Princess Arjemand knelt.

Now I know not how this should be, but in a room where great events have just happened it is as if the waves of passion beat about the walls and waft the garments of those who have been present, and it seemed to my guilty heart as though the very flowers enamelled on the marble cried aloud,

“Majesty, there is a man—a man in hiding.”

And certainly the Padshah halted and looked with suspicion from one to the other of us. He was ever a man of suspicion, unlike the easy humour of his father Shah-Jahan, and the half drunken good-nature (shot with frightful angers) of his grandfather Jahangir. Aurungzib Padshah was a small man, dark exceedingly, with veiled eyes and shut lips, and never have I seen him warmed by any emotion of love, pity, fear, but always calm, cold, self-collected and austere. For it is well known that his only care was religion, and to this he sacrificed his all.

So looking hard at the kneeling Glory of Women he said coldly,

“In the name of the most beneficent and merciful God, what is this disturbance? Speak, exalted daughter, Princess of the family of chastity. It is revealed to this suppliant at the throne of Allah that there is a hidden thing in these chambers. Speak. What is it?”

And kneeling, my Princess answered.

“May joy attend my exalted father, the adorner of the gardens of happiness, the decorator of the rose-parterre of enjoyment! There is but one hidden thing in these chambers, and it is your unworthy daughter, who is known by your august favour as Makhfi, the Hidden One.”

I saw the eyes of the Padshah fix on the golden dish that lay on the marble with one cup emptied of the pomegranate sherbet and the other half emptied, the sherbet running in a red stream like blood along the marble.

“This was set down in haste!” he said through clipped lips.

“In haste, O Glory of Allah!” said the Princess with the wet beads clamming the silken tendrils on her forehead. “I drank and was about to

drink the second when your auspicious feet blessed the threshold."

"You are thirsty, happy daughter of sovereignty? Then drink the remainder. You have my permission."

I saw the gleam in either black eye of him as he spoke, watching her sidelong. She lifted the cup to her lips with a hand that shook so that it rattled against her teeth, though she struggled to command herself.

"No, do not drink, royal daughter. It is stale," he said, still standing and smiling coldly. And the Princess answered with quivering lips:

"Will not the Mirror of God be seated and partake of refreshment offered by the hand of his slave?"

"Not of that cup and not until I have observed your embroideries and manuscripts, daughter of high dignity," the Padshah replied, and followed by my Princess, Imami still kneeling by the door, and I by the latticed marble window he walked about the hall and into the chambers beyond, talking pleasantly to the Princess at his shoulder, and so returning took his seat on the divan, and she served sherbets and fruits on a golden dish to his Majesty.

He was later to attend the Am-Khas, the Hall of Audience, and was attired kingly. His vest was of white and delicately flowered satin, with heavy silk and gold embroidery. His cloth-of-gold turban was aigretted with diamonds great as stars, with a topaz at the base that shone like the sun. A chain of great pearls hung to his knees, and above all these jewels was his cold repelling dignity as of a King too great to be approached even by the favourite child of his pride, and all the time he sat she knelt before him.

At length he spoke as if in meditation.

"Glory of Women, you have grown into beauty like that of the Maids of Paradise. Your long lashes need no antimony, your eyes are winter stars, and in that robe of gulnar (pomegranate blossom) you appear like that princess who bewildered the senses of the mighty Suleiman. [I saw a quiver pass over her features as she bowed her head beneath the weight of praise.] Does not the rose long for the nightingale? Does not your heart, exalted daughter, turn to love?"

And with her eyes on the ground, she answered.

"Exhibitor of Perfection, my heart is set on far other matters. If in this land of good fortune I be remembered as a poet, I ask no more of destiny save that the rank of the daughter of Emperors be attached to my name for ever."

And he.

“It is well. Yet marriage must be considered. Fortunate daughter, have you bathed to-day?”

And she, deadly pale.

“Shadow of the benignity of the Creator, no.”

And with set lips he called to Imami by the door.

“Hasten, lady, and light the fire beneath the great vessel of water in the bathing room of the Begam, and I will remain in discourse with her until it is ready.”

And Imami casting a fearful glance on the kneeling Princess moved slowly to the inner chamber, and it is the truth that my soul sickened within me, for though I knew the young man worthless, and the son of a dangerous father, yet who could bear this without terror of spirit? And the Emperor, laying aside his awful Majesty, made his presence sweet as sunshine in the great chamber of marble, saying:

“Exalted daughter, it is but seldom we have leisure to relax, and yet the olfactory of my soul inhales with delight the ambergris-perfumed breezes of affection and concord, and daily if it were possible would I enjoy them. Yes, even when absent—

> “ ‘I sit beside thee in thought, and my heart is at ease,
> For that is a union not followed by separation’s pain.’

“It is in my mind to move with my ladies and the living family of dignity and glory to reside for a time at Lahore, and we shall then be more together, partaking of the irrigation of the rivers of affection.”

“Great father, you promise me a joy to increase health and exalt happiness.”

She swayed as she knelt, and leaned against the divan with closed eyes.

“Exalted father, the perfume of flowers and of the rose-water fountain have given me a faintness. May I retire for a moment with the hakim Abul Qasim to my inner chamber lest I fall at your feet?”

“It is granted, Glory of Women, and the lady Imami shall recite to me your latest verses until you return.”

I came forward making the salutation, and helped the Princess to rise, she leaning on my aged arm, and the lady Imami took her place unrolling a manuscript of verses splendid with Persian illuminations in blue and gold. The Emperor composed himself to listen with pleasure, for it is well known that all the sovereigns of that mighty line were skilled in versifying and just critics of *ghazal* and *suja*.

And as we moved forward, I supporting her, the Princess breathed in my ear:

"I meant his death, but Allah knowing my heart knows I am innocent of this hideous thing. O Abul Qasim, father of my soul, is there aid in earth or heaven?"

But what could I say? Only the Great Physician of the Hidden Dispensary could assist that unfortunate. And meanwhile the sweet voice of the lady Imami read aloud the verses of the Princess.

> "O love, I am thy thrall.
> As on the tulip's burning petal glows
> A spot yet more intense, of deeper dye,
> So in my heart a flower of passion blows,
> See the dark stain of its intensity
> Deeper than all."

And then we lost the words as we moved into the inner chamber.

Now this inner chamber was all of pearl-pure marble, and in the midst a deeply sunk bath of marble long and wide and with its walls decorated with lotuses and their leaves, and a silver pipe led the water to this from a mighty silver vessel six feet and more in height and of great capacity, supported on a tripod of sculptured silver, and below it a place for fire, enclosed and fed with sweet-scented woods and balls of perfume made of rare gums. And, O Allah most Merciful, there the lady Imami had kindled fire by command of the Emperor, and within might be seen the brilliant blue flame licking up the perfumes and crawling like snakes about the cedar wood below the vessel. And certainly I looked that the Princess should do some desperate deed for the enlargement of the man most miserable hidden within the vessel, and releasing her I stood like a graven image of terror, expecting what she would do.

She laid her hand on the silver, and amid the crackling of the flames she said in a clear small voice:

"You came unsought. You violated the secrecy of the Hidden One. What then is your duty, exalted cousin?"

And from within he spoke in a voice—O Allah, most compassionate, grant that I may never hear such again!—the one word:

"Silence."

And she:

"It is true. Keep silence if you are my true lover, for the sake of my honour. For if your voice is heard I am a dead woman. But I too will be

faithful to death."

And he answered:

"On my head and eyes."

And by her command I gave her water to drink and applied an essence to her nostrils, and we left the room, pulling the heavy curtains before it, and we returned to where the Padshah sat with the pale lady Imami reading aloud and he smiling in calm content. Seeing us return, he motioned my Princess to a seat on the divan saying:

"I would hear your verses of 'The Lover.'

"What is the fate of a lover? It is to be crucified for the world's pleasure."

And taking the manuscript from the hands of Imami she read aloud:

"Dust falls within the cup of Kaikobad
And King Jamshid,
Nor recks the world if they were sad or glad,
Or what they did.

"How many hearts, O Love, thy sword hath slain
And yet will slay!
They bless thee, nor to Allah they complain
At Judgment Day."

And so read on steadfastly for the space of an hour, until the Padshah, replete with the sweetness of the melody, rose from the divan, and said graciously:

"May the tree of hereditary affection watered by this hour of converse grow in leaf and fruit and overshadow us both in peace. Go now, exalted daughter, and bathe your angelic person and rest with a soul sunned in the favour of the Emperor."

And he went, we attending him to the door of the secluded chambers, and when we returned, the Princess lay in a dead faint on the divan, and the fire beneath the great vessel of silver was red and silent, and within was silence also.

The courage of Babar the gallant and Akbar the greatly dreaming was not dead in their descendant and thus in a great self-sacrifice he became a traveller on the road of non-existence, and I wept for him.

So the Court moved to Lahore.

But after this on my Princess came a change hard to be told.

She had despised the Prince alive. For his death she loved him, and with a poet's passion and tenderness mingled with a woman's. Her sole relief was in solitude, pouring forth the burning thoughts wherein the phoenix of her soul was consumed in perfumed flame which will forever kindle the heart of man to like ecstasies.

Great Princes sought her, among them Akil Khan, a most beautiful young man, aglow with courage and splendour. He had seen her, dreaming on the roof of her pavilion in the dawn, pensive and lovely, clothed in dawn-colour, her long hair braided with pearls falling about her, and mad with love, he sent her this one line, awaiting completion:

"A vision in crimson appears on the roof of the Palace."

Kneeling, I implored her to give him some solace,

"For O, Light of my soul," said I, "the years drift by like leaves, and shall this miracle of beauty and of intelligence clear as diamonds lead its graces to the grave and leave the world no copy? My Princess, my Princess, have pity on your youth! True, the high Prince died a hero for the sake of a lady's honour, yet remember that until then the soul of him was at home in Devilsville, and not in the rose-gardens of Allah. You have mourned him long enough: awake now to joy."

But she put it gently aside, saying:

"The soul washed in the lustration of death is pure. What is Shaitanpur to him now? He has forgotten it. And shall I who accepted the sacrifice, forget? O, that I had not failed in courage—that I had died with him! Give me the paper of Akil Khan."

And considering the line he had written—

"A vision in crimson appears on the roof of the Palace," she wrote beneath it this line completing the couplet:

"Neither supplications nor force nor gold can win her." And so returned it.

Yet, gallant man as he was, this did not stifle his hope, and knowing that in her garden at Lahore she was building a noble marble pavilion, he entered the garden one day disguising his princeliness under the garment of a mason, carrying his hod on his shoulder, and passed where she stood apart watching her girls who were playing at chausar.

And as he drew near he whispered,

"In my longing for thee I have become as dust wandering round the earth," and she whose soul was fixed as a lonely star, responded

immediately,

"If thou hadst become as the wind yet shouldst thou not touch a tress of my hair."

So it was always. An embassage was sent from the Shah Abbas of Persia entreating her hand for Mirza Farukh his son, and the Prince came with it, a gallant wooer. She dared not at once refuse the insistence of her father Aurungzib Padshah, and consented that he should come to Delhi that she might judge of his worthiness. And with a glorious retinue resembling a galaxy of stars he came, and she feasted the prince in the pleasure-pavilion in her own garden, and in its marble colonnade with her own fair hand offered him wine and sweetmeats, but veiled in gold gauze, so that not one glimpse had he of the hidden eyes. And exalted with wine and folly he asked for a certain sweetmeat in words which by a laughing play on words signify —a kiss!

This, to the proudest of women! One moment she paused and then haughtily,

"Ask for what you desire from the slaves of our kitchen," and so went straight to her royal father and told him that though face and jewels were well enough, the man had the soul of a groom under his turban of honour, and she would have none of him. She had her royal way.

Raging with foiled pride and desire he sent her this verse,

> "I am determined never to leave this temple.
> Here will I bow my head, here will I prostrate myself.
> Here will I serve, and here alone is happiness."

But he beat against marble, for she returned this answer only:

> "Child, how lightly dost thou esteem this game of love!
> Nothing dost thou know of the fever of longing and the fire of separation, and the burning flame of love!"

Alas, her heart knew them too well!

So he went away despairing and that was the last of her suitors.

Very sad grew my Princess. The dead have more power than the living, and the clutch of a dead hand chills the blood. She had the soul of a mystic and in her poems desire for the Eternal Beloved was mingled with love of him who was now also behind the Veil of non-existence, and I know not which was more in her thoughts when she wrote with tears that fall and falling gather,

"O idle arms,
Never the lost Beloved have ye caressed:
Better that ye were broken than like this
Empty and cold eternally to rest.

"O useless eyes,
Never the lost Beloved for all these years
Have ye beheld: better that ye were blind
Than dimmed thus by my unavailing tears.

"O fading rose,
Dying unseen as hidden thou wert born:
So my heart's blossom fallen in the dust
Was ne'er ordained his turban to adorn."

Very strange is the heart of a woman! I, remembering her scorn for this very Prince and her will to slay him with her own hand, could not at all commend nor comprehend her passion for him dead whom living she trod as the dust beneath her feet. She permitted my speech gently, but would reply only,

"He loved me and gave his life for me." And I venturing to rejoin,

"But O exalted Lady, men will give their lives for a little thing, a jewel, a worthless intrigue, the slaying of a tiger, and is his sacrifice worth such a return as yours?" she replied with calm; "Greater love hath no man than in silence to lay down his life uncheered by commendation or the joy of battle, and to him I swore fidelity. Should I change? In his death was the high heart that in life would have grown to glory—and I broke it."

And I said:

"It is greater love to live for a woman than to die for her and this he could never have done, for his profligacy and selfishness would have swept all love to ruin,"—and she, smiling, put this by, as one who has attained in her own heart to behold the innermost secrets of love. And which of us was right I cannot now tell.

But as love rose about her like a tide her thoughts turned more and more to the Supreme, the Self-Existent,—and this love also consumed her for He wounded her heart with the august secrets of His beauty, and perceiving in vision wafts of His sweetness she sank into a deep melancholy, desiring that to which no earthly passion may attain. So in this poem she beheld Him as the Hunter of the Soul:

"I have no peace, the quarry I, a Hunter chases me,
It is Thy memory.
I turn to flee but fall: for over me He casts His snare,
His perfumed hair,
Who can escape Thy chain? no heart is free
From love of Thee."

So passioning for the Divine she spent her days in longing, and a great wisdom came upon her, for even as her mighty father narrowed in vision, persecuting the Hindus, and breaking the very Empire against the rock of their tortured faith, so she like the sun at setting illumined all beliefs, even the lowliest, with her level rays, declaring that where any prayer is made that place is the mosque and the Kiblah.

Had that lady been Emperor it is not too much to say she had saved the Empire. Would to Allah that she had been. But He knows all.

Yet a better fate was decreed for her for she lived, exhaling love as the lily its perfume, and departed in a white peace, a gently fading light like the cresset that for a little illumines the quiet of a tomb, and this she said in dying,

"I am the daughter of a King but I have taken the path of renunciation, and this shall be my glory, as my title signifies that I am the Glory of Women."

This she is, for in India she is remembered by all who burn in the fire of love, human or divine.

Yet, since she was a woman and therefore a creature of unreason, must I condemn her passion for the worthless prince to whom her royal life was dedicate.

And here I set down the last words that Makhfi—the Hidden One—wrote with her dying hand, and they were these—

"Yet, Makhfi, unveiled is thy secret,
Abroad all thy passion be told,
Who saw not the beauty of Yusuf
When he in the market was sold."

and as she lived she died, lamenting that too late she had known his hidden heart.

When she was departed a poet of Persia made these verses of her: concerning the serenity of her spirit:

"Love sings to himself of love and the worlds dance to that music,
As wise snakes dance to the Charmer playing upon his pipe,
Love gazes on deep waters for ever dreaming his face.
Slay all my senses but hearing that I may immortally listen.
Calm every wave of my soul that it may mirror the Dream."

And her father the Emperor, grieving, made her a glorious tomb of marble domed and pinnacled with gold and the tower and minars roofed with turquoise tiles. Nay, the very sand of the paths was dust of turquoises, and about it a glorious garden where her sweet spirit might gladden to dream in the moonlight, her griefs forgotten, her joys completed in the ecstasy of union with the One, the Alone.

And yet—yet—thus wrote my Princess:

"If on the Day of Reckoning
God saith, 'In due proportion I will pay
And recompense thee for thy suffering.'

"Lo, all the joys of heaven it would outweigh.
Were all God's gladness poured upon me, yet
He would be in my debt."

May the lights of Allah be her testimony and make bright her tomb.

For I loved her, and pray that her memory may be fragrant when I am dust.

And very strange and secret is the heart of a woman.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCESS

THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCESS

(Salutation to the Elephant-Headed God, who is the Remover of Obstacles and the Giver of discretion, and may he enable his worshipper the Pandit Gurdit Singh to relate this story with well-chosen words and harmonious periods that so it may enchain the hearts of all.)

Of all the lands that smile upon their lover the sun, surely the land of Kashmir is the loveliest. All round that Valley of Beauty the mountains stand like the guardians of a great Queen. No harsh winds may ruffle the lakes, darkly blue as the eyes of the goddess Shri, where the lotuses dream above their mirrored images in amazement at their own divinity, for the shields of the eternal snows piercing even the heavens turn aside all tempests and only a sweet and calm sunshine makes the air milk-warm.

And because the beauty that surrounds them is absorbed by the princesses of Kashmir until they become like the slender-waisted beauties of the ancient poems and stories of India, radiant as the sun, fair as the full moon mirrored in a lake dreaming of her own beauty, so are they eagerly sought by all the Kings from North to South, and great dowries are given for them with jewels piled high like grain in harvest, and elephants and garments with beaten gold laid on them such as would dazzle the eyes of the Queens of other countries. And nothing is too much to give for their seductive beauties.

Now, at one time the King of Kashmir had a daughter, his only one,—more exquisite than dawn blushing on the snows. She had stolen the hue of her eyes from the blue of the lotus of the hidden lakes, and the delicate shaping of her face was high craftsmanship of high Gods at the work they love best. And down to the ankle rolled her midnight hair, braided and jewelled, and Love's own honey made her mouth a world's wonder of rose and pearl,—and the curves of her sweet body were rounded as the snowdrifts of Mount Haramoukh and as pure. And even this was not all, for what is a flower without scent and beauty without charm? But grace went beside her like an attendant, and attraction that none could resist was in her glance, and whoso escaped the lure of her eyes would assuredly fall a victim to the seduction of her sweet laughter so that only in the protection of the Gods was there safety, and it is known that even the Gods cease their vigilance where a beautiful woman is concerned and forget their divinity.

Now this Princess Amra loved above all things the gardens of her royal father, and it was her custom, forsaking the Palace, to come for days with her women to the gardens by the lake, dwelling in the Pavilion of the

Painted Flowers and passing the days in singing and feasting, wandering beneath the shade of the mighty chinar trees and breathing the perfume of flowers and the coolness of the high snows.

So on a certain day she and her ladies wandered through the roses in beauty so exquisite that the flowers swayed to behold them and the very waters of the cascades delayed to kiss their feet, and as they did this there came a message from the King her father that he had betrothed her to marry the King of Jamu, and the marriage would take place in the marriage month according to the auspicious calculations of the astrologers. And hearing this, the Princess stopped in terror beside the water that falls over the ripple of cut marble, and she said to her women:

"O sorrowful day! O fears that beset my heart! I who have never seen any man save my auspicious father and brothers and the old grey-beard, the Pundit Ram Lal,—what a fate is this! What do I know of men? How shall I learn? O, my misery!"—and she sat herself beneath the shade of a great chinar tree, and became inconsolable, weeping bitterly, and her women wept with her.

So passed an hour, and at last her confidante, Lailela, a girl from Bokhara, having dried her eyes began to look about her, and she saw that with the written command of the King had come a small object folded in rose silk and bound with threads of gold, and with the insatiable curiosity of a woman she said to the weeping Princess:

"Great Lady, here is a something—I do not know what, but I guess it to be a bridal gift from his Majesty." And the Princess took it in her hands and her ladies gathered about her as stars surround the moon, and with her slender fingers and nails like little pearls she unthreaded the knots of gold and the inner treasure was disclosed, and it was a frame of gold filagreed and set with rubies and diamond sparks, and within it the portrait of a young man, and written on the back of it: "The King of Jamu." The artist, whose skill resembled that of the Creator, had depicted him seated on his throne of ivory inlaid with gold, and in his turban blazed that great jewel known as the Sea of Splendour, but these did not for one moment detain the eye, for he was himself the jewel of Kings, young, noble, dark of hair and eyes, with amorous lips, proud yet gentle, and a throat like the column that upholds the world, and limbs shaped for height and strength and speed. And surely had he been a water-carrier, men had said, "This is the son of a King."

And as the Princess Amra looked she sighed and changed colour, and the last tear fell from her long lashes upon the portrait, and she dried it with her

gold-bordered veil, and looked and sighed again, and lost in thought she fell into a deep silence.

And Lailela said with sympathy:

"Surely a terrible doom, O Princess! Now had the King been an old man, kind and paternal, it would but have been passing from the arms of one father to another. But a young man— O, there is much to fear, and who shall sound the deeps of their hearts?"

And the Princess slowly shook her head, not knowing what she did, still gazing at the portrait, and Lailela continued:

"Little do we all know men. But I have been told it is safer to adventure in a jungle of tigers than to take a husband knowing nothing of their wiles and tyrannies, and it is now my counsel that we should all declare before the Princess any small knowledge that has reached us, that she may not go forth utterly unarmed."

And all the ladies looked doubtfully at one another, and the Princess smiled faintly as a moon in clouds, and said:

"Sisters, it is my command that you do as Lailela has said, for her counsel is good, and she herself shall begin, for I perceive there is knowledge behind her lips. Let all now prepare to listen, for we speak of love."

And she laid the portrait on her knees, and Lailela with laughter in her long eyes but a great gravity of speech, told this story:

"Now, Princess, this is one of the parables that the Sheikh Ibrahim related to his daughter, the Lady Budoor, that she might be admonished. For the damsel was the temptation of the Age, with heavy hips, and brows like the new moon, and a mouth like the seal of Suleiman, so that the reason of whoso saw her was captivated by her elegance. But she spoke little, or of trivial matters, and smiled not at all, relying on her beauty, which, indeed, was the perfection of the Creator's handiwork. May his name be exalted! And her father accosted her, saying:

" 'Know, O daughter, that Shah Salim had five thousand wives and concubines of perfect loveliness, with languishing looks, high-bosomed, and of equal age, a delight to beholders such as astonished the mind. But the King was wearied because of the dullness of their society and it so befell that he yawned repeatedly and his jaw became fixed with the violence of his yawns, nor could the art of the *hakims* unloose it. And the Queens and the concubines slapped their faces for grief, and the Emirs trembled because of the case of the King.

“ ‘Now it chanced that the King of Seljuk sent unto Shah Salim a slave girl from Tabriz, and the merchant who conducted her bore this message, written on ivory, bound with floss silk, and perfumed with ambergris: “Know, O King of the Age, that the perfume is not to be judged by the jar, nor the jewel by its weight, for the perfume is the soul of the rose, and the secret of the jewel is its fire. Receive, therefore this gift according to the measure of thy wisdom.”

“ ‘But the Shah-in-Shah, speaking with difficulty, for his jaw was held as in a vise, commanded, saying; “Enclose her with the Queens and the concubines, for they have brought me to this, and the sum of my wisdom and experience is that they are all alike, and whoso knows one, knows all. Yet, first let me behold her, since she is the gift of a King.”

“ ‘And they unveiled the damsel, and behold! she was slender as a willow branch, low-bosomed, green-eyed, and her hair was like beaten bronze, nor could she for beauty compare with the wives of the King, so that the beholders marvelled at the gift of the King of Seljuk.

“ ‘And she looked upon the King, and, seeing his case, she closed her eyes until they shone like slits of emerald and laughed aloud until the Hall of Requests echoed with her laughter, and her voice was like the flute and such as would bewilder the reason of the sages and cause the ascetic to stumble in his righteousness, and she could narrate stories like those of the Sultana Shahrazad (upon whom be the Peace!), and her effrontery was as the effrontery of the donkey-boys of Damascus. For there is none greater. Nor did she fear the Shah-in-Shah before whom all abased themselves.

“ ‘So she seated herself before the Wonder of the Age, and, casting down her eyes, the damsel related to him the true story of the Adventure of the Lady Amine and the Sage El Kooz. And the heart of the Shah was dilated and he laughed until there was no strength left in him, and the *hakims* thumped his back, fearing that life itself would depart from him in the violence of his laughter. And his jaw instantly relaxed. So being recovered, he commanded saying: “Bring hither the artificers of gold and let them make a chain that shall bind the waist of this slave to my wrist, for where I go she shall go, that my soul may be comforted by her narratives and the sweetness of her laughter. For this truly is a gift worthy of a king. But place guards at the doors of the others.”

“ ‘And after consideration and counsel with his Wazir he bestowed upon the Queens great gifts and returned them to their parents. And there was a great calm. And he became distracted with love for this slave and they

continued in prosperity and affection until visited by the Terminator of Delights and Separator of Companions.

" 'Extolled be He whom the vicissitudes of time change not and who is alone distinguished by the attributes of Perfection!

" 'Now this is a parable, my daughter, of the secrets of the hearts of men, and I will relate others that thou mayest be admonished.'

"And the Lady Budoor answered modestly: 'Speak on, my father, I listen.' "

And when Lailela had finished this story she resumed her seat, and the ladies reflected deeply, and the Princess said:

"This must undoubtedly be true. As a man no longer observes an object which he sees daily, so must it be with a man and the beauty of his wife. Clearly it is not enough to be beautiful even as a Dancer of Heaven. It is also needful to be a provoker of laughter. Would that I knew the stories of this slave . . . Sisters, have they been heard by any of you? What is beauty, when the beautiful are forsaken or die? But tell me."

And now Vasuki, a lady of the Rajputs, stepped forward in all the insolence of beauty, swaying her hips, and rearing her head like a Queen as she came, and she began thus:

"Princess, of my heart, let none tempt you to undervalue the gift of loveliness by which even the greatest of the Gods are subjected as my story will declare. And let it be remembered that if even a man weary of his wife's beauty—there are yet other men in the world, and what though our faith forbid marriage there are other faiths. And, if this be impossible, a woman can always be captured if so she will! And I would have you recall the story of the Rani of Mundore who being left a widow was captured by a great King and ruled him and his Kingdom. But hear my story of why Brahma, a high God of my people, has four faces in his temple.

"In the ancient days in India two evil and terrible brothers rose to kingly power. They were inseparable as the Twin Stars, the Aswins, and together they did evil mightily and in their union was their strength. Finally they formed plans to storm the lower heavens and expel the Gods and there was every reason to believe they would carry out this determination. So the Gods held a great Panchayet (council) and some said one thing, some another, and at last Brahma the Creator spoke as follows:

" 'Great Gods and Heavenly Ladies, in the union of these wretches is their power, because where two perfectly agree their wisdom is unconquerable. It is only because this has never been the case on earth that

we are able to keep any sort of order. Now of all influences the most powerful is love. True it is their palaces are full to over-flowing with handsome women but we are still the Gods, the makers of men. Let us take for our model the Goddess of Beauty herself, and send some exquisite one on earth to distract and divide the evil kings.'

"So the flowers of heaven were brought, and the Goddess of Beauty stood unveiled and divine before them, and from the ivory of the lotus blossom they made a sweet body, and from the dark blue lotus they made two dreaming eyes, and they took the storm cloud for the glooms of her heavy lashes, and the midnight deeps for the lengths of her silken hair, and for her smile they took the sunshine and for her blush the dawn, and for her coquetry the playfulness of the kitten, and for her seductions the wiles of the serpent, and for her fidelity—but all their materials were exhausted before the necessity for this was remembered. And Lakshimi gave her instead what is invisible but omnipotent, her own charm which none has ever seen but all the Universe has felt. And when all was done great Brahma breathed life into the fair image and she arose and looked down upon her own beauty with astonishment and in a voice of crystal music she said:

" 'I am Tillotama.'

"And all the Gods stood confounded at their own handiwork but the Goddesses turned angrily away.

"So they commanded her to go to earth and instructed her, each mighty heart beating with agony that she should go. And she passed before the Throne of Brahma making a *pradakshina*, a reverential threefold circuit, about him keeping him always to the right. And he gazed passionately upon her and she made a turn to the left, and for pride he would not turn his head, but from the energy of his soul's longing another face sprang out on the left side of his head and the eyes still followed her, and as she made her circuit this again happened at the back and still he regarded her, and at the right side also, so that wherever that loveliness went his eyes fed upon her with more passion than the moon-bird who steadfastly regards the moon all night. And, Princess, this is the undoubted reason why the image of Brahma has ever since had four faces. So she went to earth with ruin for her dower, and the two evil kings desired her and slew one another for her possession. And Saraswati, the wife of Brahma, immediately demanded that their work should be undone and the fair creature resolved again into the elements of nature lest the peace of heaven should be broken. So it was done, but Brahma retains forever his four faces.

“Therefore, Princess, if beauty thus subjugates the greatest of the Gods, what will be the effect of such beauty as your own upon the heart of the King of Jamu?”

And Amra clasping her hands, replied:

“But this is a terrible story! For if the greatest of the Gods, who has a glorious Goddess for his wife, be not faithful, what hope is in men? I grow so terrified that death itself seems preferable to marriage. Is there no comfort in any of you?”

And now, treading delicately on little bound feet, came Ying-ning, the fair Chinese maiden from Liang, who had been presented to the Princess because of her skill in embroidery and cosmetics. And she saluted humbly, and requested permission to speak:

“Princess, a great lady has last spoken and who am I? Yet because I tremble to hear her speak of any other than a husband in the love of a woman, hear me, for of all dangers the greatest is the jealousy of a husband. And this is a true story of my country.

“There was a very great artificer long, long years ago and he made an image exactly resembling a man. It was composed of wood and glue and leather, and sinews of catgut, and so great was his skill that he made even a heart that beat and set it in the breast, and the features were exquisitely painted and it resembled a great Chinese lord, noble and handsome and able to sing, move, and talk. Finally he showed it to the King of Liang who was struck dumb at such handiwork, for it was like the power of the Immortals. And he said; ‘My Household must certainly view this marvel, and there can be no objection to this course of conduct since I have satisfied myself it is but a thing of springs and leather.’

“So, on the following day, the artificer brought his image to the Pepper Chambers, being himself an aged man and in circumstances which permitted his entry. Being introduced to the presence of the King, the Queen and the ladies who rejoiced in the King’s favour, these ladies all stared with the utmost bewilderment at the handsome young man thus represented. The artificer touched its chin and it burst into a love-song most delicately sung in a mellow and manly voice. It recited a passage from the poets in praise of wine. It kow-towed before the King. But unluckily, encouraged by success, the artificer touched its heart, and with the utmost audacity it gazed upon the ladies and winking one eye, seized the hand of the loveliest, and placed a sacrilegious arm about her person, she smiling. A frenzy of passion swept over the King on seeing this. He shouted for the death of the artificer, and though the aged man in a terror instantly rent the image apart into a heap of

wood and leather, he could not be appeased and the unfortunate was led out and beheaded. Furthermore, he ordered the lady who had been thus polluted to be instantly strangled because she had not shrieked on the instant as (he asserted) any virtuous woman, a stranger to such a contact, must have done. And in spite of her piteous entreaties she was slaughtered. Was this reasonable, O my Princess? But be it known to you that in love and in possession also there is no reason, and that this is the manner in which all men would act. And moreover it is their right, and it is entirely just that even the looks or dreams of a woman should be faithful to her husband and to him only."

And Ying-ning retreated to the circle, and the Princess wrung her hands and cried:

"What then is to become of women if they are thus surrendered to the mercy of the merciless! I will entreat at my father's feet that I may live and die a maid. And I will——"

But she could not continue for the beating of her heart, and now the little lovely gesang, Pak, from Phyong-yang in the Land of the Morning Calm, whence come all the fairest singing girls, moved trembling forward and spoke in a voice of silver, but so low that the Princess called upon her to stand at her feet that she might hear. Enclosed in a great lotus blossom she had been presented to the Princess that she might cheer her with strange dances from the Korean land, and she had clapped her hands for joy when the ivory petals fell apart disclosing the small dancer crouched within. But the women of the Morning Calm have few words and all now leaned forward to hear what this silent one might say.

"Great Lady, near my home by the Green Duck River lived long ago a Yang-ban (noble) who had a beautiful daughter named Ha. She had a slender throat on which was set a face most delicately painted and of exquisite charm, the lips resembling ripe cherries and the eyes of liquid brilliance. Many marriage enquiries were made, but her father finally made the choice of a young Yang-ban of good position named Won Kiun, and on a day of favourable omens she was borne to his house and became his wife. For five years they lived together in harmony nor did he spend his time without the screened apartments, for she could even play chess and he could converse with her. But alas! she bore no child and daily did her anguish increase, for she could hear his sighs because he had no son to perform the rites for him when his time should come. Still hoping, she delayed, but this could not last, and on a certain day she approached him saying:

" 'Lord of my Life, may your worthless wife speak?'

"He gave permission.

" 'Five years,' said Ha, 'have gone by and I have not fulfilled my duty. It is certainly the evil destiny of your worthless wife which has caused this. Therefore I say thus:—I will sell my pins of jade and buy a concubine for you. Accede to my humble request.'

"Won Kiun could scarcely hide his astonishment, for though this was but fulfilling a duty, still it is not common for a wife to make this offer. But he agreed instantly for he earnestly desired a son, and after so many years naturally desired also a change of companionship. Ha therefore made search and found a girl named A-pao of as much beauty as the price she could pay would fetch.

"It was then that Ha's sorrows began. She was neglected by Won Kiun, tormented by A-pao, but enduring in silence as a wife should, she went about her work with a smile. But A-pao also failed in her duty for there was no child, and presently Won Kiun whose health had always been frail, departed to the ancestral spirits, A-pao shamelessly took her place in the house of a rich man, and Ha was left a desolate widow, and the more so because her parents and her husband's justly despised her as a barren wife.

"But, Princess, mark what followed!

"She had placed her husband's spirit tablet, which contained his third soul, beside her bed, and before this made her offerings of bread and wine and prayers for pardon, and one night when she had wept herself to sleep a strange thing happened. The tablet moved,—a human figure slowly emerged from it and stood on the floor, and Ha, with eyes distended with terror, saw her husband. In the well-remembered voice he said:

" 'I have permission from the Junior Board of the Gods of Hades to visit you as a reward for my filial merit on earth, and this in spite of your conduct in that very mistaken business of A-pao. Had *I* been consulted she was by no means the person I should have chosen. Yet I am come to visit you and shall do so nightly for a month.'

"The faithful Ha laid her head on his feet and sobbed for joy. What a reward! How small now did all her many sacrifices appear!

"For a month the spirit tablet nightly became her husband, and on the last day of the month he bid her an eternal farewell, and the tablet fell to the ground and broke into two pieces. With tender care she mended it, and set herself to await the birth of her son.

"In due time he was born and her cup of joy would have run over but that the most shocking rumours were spread by A-pao and her mother-in-

law, and it was believed that she had grossly dishonoured the fragrant memory of her husband. Vainly she explained the facts. The only result was that the magistrate, fearing lest he might possibly destroy a child of miracle, would not himself put it to death, but commanded it should be flung to the swine. Marvellous to tell, the swine, instead of devouring it, kept the child alive by breathing warmth upon it, and it was then that, starving for food, and broken-hearted, Ha demanded a test before the assembled people. It is well known that the children of the spirits cast no shadow, and the child, before an immense crowd, with his miserable mother watching from behind a curtain, was brought into the full sunshine and held up. To the amazement and fear of all, no shadow was cast on the earth. To set the matter forever at rest the spirit tablet was then brought out and a little blood drawn from the tender arm of the child. This was spread on the tablet inhabited by the father's spirit and it instantly sank in and disappeared, though when spread on another, it rolled off, leaving no mark. Amid loud shouts the child was pronounced the true heir of the family. Ha was immediately pardoned by the parents of Won Kiun and taken into their favour, being permitted to serve them to the end of their days, which she did with perfect devotion.

"My Princess will see from this true story the great reward that humility and patience bring to a good wife. It is not every husband who returns from the Land of the Dead to bring joy to one in such a lowly position. And though it is easy to be seen that it was his own transcendent merits which occasioned this joyful result, without the patience of Ha the nobility of her husband and his parents could scarcely have been rewarded. Therefore the duty of a woman is submission and where this exists all her follies and faults may be covered as a rich brocade covers a poor divan."

The ladies were silent and the Princess again shook her head with tears in her eyes.

"This is a difficult case," she said, "and in truth each seems more alarming than the last. It appears that marriage is a sea of perils great and terrible, and to escape shipwreck all but impossible. Possibly if Ha had not bought the concubine—but have none of my ladies a story of man's fidelity? Is such a thing unknown?"

And even as she spoke a woman with a face like the dusk of the evening and eyes as its stars in clouds, broke in upon her words unmannerly but with such power that all turned to listen, forgetting even the Presence.

"My Princess, my beloved, hear now this last story, for these women have spoken of little things, but I will speak of great.

“It is known to you that when the King Rama ruled in Kosala and was thence driven for awhile into the wild woods, there went with him of her own choice and in utter devotion, his wife, young and lovely and noble, the Queen Sita. And when he entreated her to leave him because of the horror of the great woods and the wild beasts, and the evil spirits and hunger and poverty, she replied only: ‘How should I stay in the glorious city when my husband is gone? I count all evils as blessings when I am with him. Without him life is death. And if my prayer is refused I will enter the fire and await him in the Paradise to be.’

“So she followed Rama, clothed in poverty and in the wood she served him, unfaltering in piety and all wifely duty. And as the result of this nobility her beauty so grew that the very Gods, passing on their high errands would pause for joy to see her perfections.

“But on a certain day when the King was absent, the evil King of Lanka stole this Pearl, hoping to set it in his crown.

“Princess, it is not needful to tell the sorrows of Sita, the temptations she resisted nor the cruelties that could not break her pure will. Flawless in strength and brightness as the very spirit of the diamond was her faith. And when Rama at last, by the aid of the Gods, conquered the evil-doer, she sat beneath a tree, in poor array, trembling for joy to think that her head should lie once more upon her husband’s breast and her ear be gladdened with his praise for the fight she had fought alone in sorrow.

“So she stood before him and he sat upon his victorious throne and thus he spoke:

“ ‘Lady, my work is done. I have avenged my honour and the insult put upon me and my foe is broken. But mistake me not. It was for no love to you that I fought, but to uphold the dignity of my race. Your presence now hurts me as light hurts a diseased eye. Another man has seen your face unveiled. His hand has touched you. You have dwelt in his palace. You are no wife of mine. Go where you will. Do what you will. We are parted.’ ”

[And the Princess and all the ladies stared with great eyes to hear what the woman told.]

“And this before a great assembly. So, at first the Queen wept silently, because this shaft pierced her very heart. Then, drying her tears, she raised her fair head and answered:

“ ‘Is all my faithful love forgotten? It was hard for a weak woman to resist supernatural strength. Yet in all perils of death and shame I have been

utterly chaste in soul and body, and no evil came near me, for in me there was none to meet it.'

"She paused and the King made no answer. And she said:

" 'If man deserts me the High Gods are faithful. Make ready the funeral pile. I will not live in this shame.'

"And it was done;—none daring to look in the King's face, and he still silent. . . . So, circling her husband thrice in farewell reverence, the Queen entered the fire. And even as the flame lapped her feet, the Great Gods descended in radiant chariots plumed for the untrodden ways of the air, and the God of the Fire, who is the Purifier, took her by the hand and presented her to Rama, saying,

" 'Even as is my white flame purity, so is the purity of this Queen.'

"And he accepted her from the God's hand.

"Princess, would not all the world believe that after this coming of the Gods this King would have honoured his Queen? Yet no.

"He knew her pure, but, since others whispered that another had seen her face, and who could tell?—again he dismissed her for in him as in all men, pride was mightier than love.

"And once more, Sita, standing before him and knowing this the end, made declaration of her chastity that all might hear. And suddenly transported beyond the weakness of a woman, she stood as one divine, perfect in high soul and nobility, and she said:

" 'Never has any thought that was not pure and chaste entered my heart, and as my heart so is my body. This have I said. And now, I beseech of the Earth, the Great Goddess, Mother of us all, that she will grant me a refuge, for I have none other.'

"And as she spoke these words, a very soft air, laden with coolness and sacred perfumes, stirred among them, and in the silence there arose from the earth a Throne and upon it the Mighty Mother of men and Gods, and she raised the Queen in her arms and set her upon the Throne that all might see her throned and glorious. And lo! for a moment she sat majestic, and the assembly hid their faces, and when they again raised them all was gone and only the common day was about them.

"But the King wept uncomforted knowing that never again by city or forest might he see that fair face, which being his own he had cast from him."

And the woman paused, and all the ladies cried that this was the cruellest story of all, demanding that she be dismissed from the Presence as an offender. But the Princess sat submerged in thought, and the woman said softly:

"My Princess—my beloved,—the Gods rule. In all life is sorrow, whether in Kashmir or Jamu. But the Gods abide. In the hollow of Their hand lay this Queen, and in the darkness the King's eyes could not pierce They smiled. Certainly she leaned on Their might and so walked content and what could man do to her? Fear not, my Princess. The Gods abide—whether in Kashmir or Jamu, and the earth is Their footstool. And this being so the life of a woman is her own, go where she will."

And there fell a great silence and she who said this glided away and was gone. And presently the Princess rose in the midst of the women like a Queen, and she spoke:

"This is the truth. Fate is fate and love is love, and what we do is our own, and not the deeds of another. For that Queen I do not weep, but for the King who was blind to her glory. It is the valour of men that sends them forth to war, and it is the valour of women that puts their hearts in the hand of their husbands. And to me, since I have seen this portrait all other things are empty, and if he slay me still will I love him. For it is the High God, who is worshipped by many names, who has made the woman for the man and the man for the woman, and He abides unchanging in Unity and what He does is better than well."

And as she spoke the colours faded on the mountains and on the lake the evening came with quiet feet.

THE WISDOM OF THE ORIENT

A DIALOGUE AND A STORY

THE WISDOM OF THE ORIENT

A DIALOGUE AND A STORY

I

"I believe you take as long to dress as I do," she said pettishly; "I call it neither more nor less than poaching when a man looks so well turned out. And a Poet, too! Well—you can sit down; I have twenty minutes free."

She was dressed for a bridge party. Dressed—oh, the tilt of the hat over her delicate little nose; the shadow it cast over the liquid eyes, ambushing them, as it were, for the flash and spring upon the victim! But I was no victim—not I! I knew my young friend too well. She endured me more or less gladly. I sat at her feet and learned the ways of the sex, and turned them into verse, or didn't, according to the mood of the minute. I had versified her more than once. She was a rondeau, a triolet, a trill—nothing more.

"Why mayn't a poet look respectable as well as another?" I asked, dropping into a chair.

"Because it isn't in the picture. You were much more effective, you folks, when you went about with long hair, and scowled, with a finger on your brows. But never mind—you've given us up and we've given you up, so it doesn't matter what women think of you any more."

"You never said a truer word!" I replied, lighting my cigarette at hers. "The connection between women and poetry is clean-cut for the time. As for the future—God knows! You're not poetic any more. And it's deuced hard, for we made you."

"Nonsense. God made us, they say—or Adam—I never quite made out which."

"It's a divided responsibility, anyhow. For the Serpent dressed you. He knew his business there—he knew that beauty unadorned may do well enough in a walled garden and with only one to see and no one else to look at. But in the great world, and with competition—no! And you—you little fools, you're undoing all his charitable work and undressing yourselves again. When I was at the dance the other night I thirsted for the Serpent to take the floor and hiss you a lecture on your stupidities."

She pouted: "Stupidities? I'm sure the frocks were perfectly lovely."

"As far as they went, but they didn't go nearly far enough for the Serpent. And believe me, he knows all the tricks of the trade. He wants mystery—he wants the tremble in the lips when a man feels—'I can't see—I can only guess, and I guess the Immaculate, the Exquisite—the silent silver lights and darks undreamed of.' And you—you go and strip your backs to the waist and your legs to the knees. No, believe me, the Dark Continent isn't large enough; and when there is nothing left to explore, naturally the explorer ceases to exist."

"I think you're very impertinent. Look at Inez. Wasn't she perfectly lovely? She can wear less than any of us, and wear it well."

"I couldn't keep my eyes off her, if you mean that. But not along the Serpent line of thought. It was mathematical. I was calculating the chances for and against, all the time—whether that indiscreet rose-leaf in front would hold on. Whether the leaf at the back would give. At last I got to counting. She's laughing—will it last till I get to five-and-twenty? thirty? And I held on to the switches to switch off the light if it gave. The suspense was terrific. Did she hold together after midnight? I left then."

"I won't tell you. You don't deserve to hear," she said with dignity.

A brief silence.

"What do you mean by saying you poets made us?" she began again, pushing the ash-tray toward me.

"Well, you know, as a matter of fact people long ago didn't believe you had any souls."

"Rot!"

"I shouldn't think of contradicting you, my dear Joan, but it's a fact."

"Oh, the Turks, and heathen like that."

"Well, no—the Church. The Fathers of the Church, met in solemn council, remarked you had no souls. It was a long time ago, however."

"They didn't!"

"They did. They treated you as pretty dangerous little animals, with snake's blood in you. Listen to this: 'Chrysostom'—a very distinguished saint—'only interpreted the general sentiment of the Fathers when he pronounced woman to be a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, a painted ill.' You see you had found the way to the rouge-box even then."

"I shouldn't wonder if they were right," she said, incredibly. "I've often doubted whether I've a soul myself. And I'm sure Inez hasn't."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"At all events, the poets thought you were not as pretty without one. We disagreed with the Church. We always have. So we took you in hand. Your soul was born, my dear Joan, in Provence, about the year 1100."

She began to be a little interested, but looked at her tiny watch—grey platinum with a frosty twinkle of diamonds.

"Go on. I've ten minutes more."

"Well—we were sorry for you. We were the Troubadours of Provence, and we found you kicked into the mud by the Church, flung out into the world to earn your bread in various disreputable ways—by marriage, and otherwise. You simply didn't exist. We found your beautiful dead body in the snow and mud. And we picked you up and warmed you and set you on a throne all gold and jewels. Virtually, you never breathed until we wrote poems about you."

"Jewels! We have always liked jewels," she sighed.

"We gave you a wonderful crown first, all white and shining. We made you Queen of Heaven, and then even the Church had to eat humble pie and worship you, for you were Mary. We did that—we only. But that wasn't enough. You opened your eyes, and grew proud and spoiled, and heaven was by no means enough. You wanted more. You would be Queen of Earth, too. And we did it! We gave you a crown of red jewels,—red like heart's blood,—and we put a sceptre in your hand, and we fell down and worshipped you. And you were Venus. And you have been Queen of Europe and the New World ever since."

"Of Europe only? Not of Asia? Why not?"

"Oh, they are much too old and wise in Asia. They are much wiser than we. Wiser than the Church. Wiser than the poets—than any of us."

"What do they say?"

"Well—let's think. That you have your uses—*uses*. That you are valuable in so far as you bear children and are obedient to your husbands. That, outside that, your beauty has its uses also within limits that are rather strictly marked. That in many rebirths you will develop your soul and be immortal; if you behave, that is! If not—then who shall say? But you have your chance all the time. With them you are neither goddess or fiend. You are just women. Not even Woman."

"What ghastly materialism!"

“No, no! The happy mean. The perfect wisdom. Meanwhile, you yourselves are all hunting after the ideals of the market-place, the platform, the pulpit. I wonder how many extra rebirths it will cost you! Never mind. Time is long. The gods are never in a hurry, and you will arrive even if you only catch the last train.”

“But this is all fault-finding, and unfair at that. Will you have the goodness to advise? If we stick on our pedestals, you all run off to the frivolers. If we frivol, you weep for the pedestal. What is it you really want? If we knew, we’d try to deliver the goods, I’m sure.”

“I’m not!” I said, and reflected. Then, gathering resolution, “Have you the patience to listen to a story?”

“If it’s a good one. How long will it take?”

“Ten minutes. The author is the Serpent.”

“Then I’ll certainly put off Inez for fifteen minutes. Who’s it about?”—running to the telephone.

“Eve, Lilith, Adam.”

“Who was Lilith?”

“Adam’s first love.”

She sat down, her eyes dancing, her lips demure; the prettiest combination!

“I didn’t know he had one. But I might have guessed. They always have. Go on!”

I went on, and this is the story.

II

“You were speaking of the pedestal. That, of course, was invented in Eden; for Adam early recognized the convenience of knowing where to leave your women and be certain of finding them on your return. So he made the pedestal, decorated it, burned incense before it, and went away upon his own occasions; and when Eve had finished her housekeeping (you may remember, Milton tells us what good little dinners she provided for Adam), she would look bored, climb upon the pedestal obediently, and stand there all day, yawning and wondering what kept him away so long.

“Now, on a memorable day, the Serpent came by, and stopped and looked up at the Lady of the Garden,—who naturally assumed a statuesque pose,—and there was joy in his bright little eyes. But all he said was, ‘May I ask if you find this amusing?’

"And Eve replied, 'No, not at all. But it is the proper place for a lady.'

"And the Serpent rejoined: 'Why?'

"And Eve reflected and answered: 'Because Adam says so.'

"So the Serpent drew near and whispered in his soft sibilant voice: 'Have you ever heard of Lilith? *She* does not stand on a pedestal. She gardens with Adam. To be frank, she is a cousin of my own.'

"And this made Eve extremely angry, and she replied sharply: 'I don't know what you mean. He and I are alone in Eden. There's no such person as Lilith. You are only a serpent when all's said and done. What can you know?'

"And the Serpent replied very gently,—and his voice was as soothing as the murmur of a distant hive of bees,—'I am only a Serpent, true! But I have had unusual opportunities of observation. Come and eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Long ages ago I tasted the Fruit. The savour of my teeth is sweet on it still.'

"Eve hesitated, and she who hesitates is lost.

" 'I own I should like to know about this Lilith,' she said. 'But we were told that fruit is unripe, and I don't like bitter things. Is it bitter?'

"And the Serpent narrowed his eyes until they shone like slits of emerald.

" 'Sweet!' he said; 'come.'

"So she descended from the pedestal, and, guided by the Serpent, stood before that wondrous Tree where every apple shines like a star among its cloudy leaves. And she plucked one, and, tasting it, flung the rest angrily at the Serpent, because it was still a little unripe; and having tasted the Fruit Forbidden, she returned to the pedestal, pondering, with the strangest new thoughts quickening in her brain.

"If Adam noticed anything when he came back that evening, it was only that Eve was a little more silent than usual, and forgot to ask if the thornless roses were striking root. She was thinking deeply, but there were serious gaps in her knowledge.

"The first result of her partial enlightenment was that, though she now only used the pedestal as a clothes-peg and spent all her spare time in stalking Adam and Lilith, she always scrambled up in hot haste when he returned. He could be certain of finding her there when he expected to, and he made a point of that because, as he said,—

“ ‘No truly nice woman would ever want to leave it and go wandering about the Garden. It does not do for a respectable woman to be seen speaking even to an Archangel nowadays, so often does the Devil assume the form of an Angel of Light. You never can tell. And besides, there is always the Serpent, who, in my opinion, should never have been admitted.’

“Eve said nothing, which was becoming a habit. She only folded her little hands meekly and accepted the homage paid to the pedestal with perfect gravity and decorum. He never suspected until much later that she knew what a comparatively interesting time Lilith was having, and had indeed called on that lady at the other end of the Garden, with friendly results. She was well aware that Lilith’s footing on the garden paths was much more slippery and unsafe than her own on the pedestal. Still, there were particulars which she felt would be useful.

“When Adam realized the facts, he realized also that he was face to face with a political crisis of the first magnitude. If they fraternized, those two, of such different characters and antecedents, there was nothing they could not know—nothing they might not do! The pedestal was rocking to its very foundation. The gardening with Lilith must end. She would demand recognition; Eve would demand freedom. It might mean a conspiracy—a boycott. What was there it might not mean? He scarcely dared to think. Eden was crumbling about him.

“It was a desperate emergency, and as he sat with a racking head, wishing them both in—Paradise, the Serpent happened along.

“ ‘Surely you look a little harassed,’ he said, stopping.

“Adam groaned.

“ ‘Is it as bad as all that?’ the Serpent asked, sympathetically.

“ ‘Worse.’

“ ‘What have they been at?’ asked the Serpent.

“ ‘They each know too much, and they will soon know more,’ he rejoined gloomily. ‘Knowledge is as infectious as potato blight.’

“The Serpent replied with alacrity: ‘In this dreadful situation you must know most. It is the only remedy. Come and eat at once of the Fruit of the Tree. I have never understood why you did not do that the moment the Rib took shape.’

“And Adam, like Eve asked: ‘Is it sweet?’

“So the Serpent narrowed his eyes till they shone like slits of ruby, and said, ‘Bitter, but appetizing. Come.’

"And Adam replied: 'I like bitters before dinner.'

"We all know what happened then; with the one exception that, as a matter of fact, he found the apple a little overripe, too sweet, even cloying; and not even swallowing what he had tasted, he threw the rest away.

"It is just as well to have this version, for it must have been always perfectly clear that Eve, having tasted the apple and thus acquired a certain amount of wisdom, could never have desired to share it with Adam. ["I have thought that myself," murmured Joan.] No, it was the Serpent's doing in both cases; though naturally Adam blamed Eve when the question was raised, for she had begun it.

"But what was the result? Well, there were several. It has, of course, been a trial of wits between Adam, Eve, and Lilith ever since. But, in tasting, he had learned one maxim which the Romans thought they invented thousands of years later. It flashed into his mind one day, when he saw the two gathering roses together and found his dinner was half an hour late in consequence. It was simply this: Divide and Rule. Combined, he could never manage them; the sceptre was daily slipping from his hand. Divided, he could. So he put the maxim in practice and sowed division and distrust between Eve and Lilith. They ceased to visit each other, and were cuts when they met. And, naturally, after the Eviction the meetings ceased entirely.

"You will have understood before this, my dear Joan, that Adam was the first mortal to realize the value of competition. He now became the object of spirited competition between the two. Each in her own way outbid the other to secure his regard. Eve's domestic virtues grew oppressive; Lilith's recklessness alarming. And it will readily be seen why women have pursued men, rather than the other way over, as we see it in the lower walks of creation."

"Don't prose," said Joan. "What happened?"

"Well, in the last few years, the Serpent, who is always upsetting things, happened along again, and found Eve balancing in extreme discomfort on the pedestal, and Lilith resting, exhausted, after a particularly hard day's pursuit of Adam. And between them was a wall of icy silence.

"He paused and said with his usual courtesy, 'Ladies, you both seem fatigued. Is it permitted to ask the reason?' And his voice had all the murmuring of all the doves of Arcady.

"And Lilith replied angrily: 'I'm sick of hunting Adam. I always catch him and always know I shall. And he wants to be caught, and yet insists on being hunted before he gives me the rewards. Who can keep up any interest

in a game like that? If it were not for Eve, who would take up the running if I dropped it, he might go to Gehenna for me!' "

"Oh, how true! I like Lilith best!" whispered Joan. She was not smoking now.

" 'Strong, but pardonable,' said the Serpent. 'And you, dear Lady?'

"And Eve, casting a jealous scowl at Lilith, replied: 'I'm weary of this abominable pedestal. If you had stood on it off and on for five thousand years, you would realize the cramp it means in the knees. But I daren't get off, for Adam says no truly nice woman ever would leave it, and it pleases him. If it were not for Lilith, who would be upon it in two seconds, I should be off it in less. And then where should I be? She *will* go on hunting him, and of course he must have quiet at home.'

" 'And you *will* go on standing on your imbecile pedestal, and of course such boredom makes him restless abroad,' retorted the other.

"In the momentary silence that ensued, the Serpent looked up at Lilith and narrowed his eyes till they shone like slits of amethyst.

" 'My cousin,' he said, 'our family was old when Adam was created. He is poor game.'

" 'Nobody knows that better than I,' said Lilith tartly. 'What do you suppose I hunt him for?'

" 'What, indeed!' said the Serpent, hissing softly.

" 'Because of Eve—that only!' she flashed at him. 'She never shall triumph over me. And what there is to give, he has.'

"He turned to Eve, narrowing his eyes till they shone like slits of fire.

" 'And you stand cramped on this pedestal, beloved Lady?'

" 'Because of Lilith—that only! She, at all events, shall not have him. And think of his morals!' "

("Aha!" said Joan, with intense conviction.)

"The Serpent mused and curved his shining head toward Eve.

" 'If you will allow me to say so, I have always regretted that you never finished that apple, and that my cousin Lilith has never tasted it at all,' he murmured. 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, as certain also of your own poets have said.'

" 'I have sometimes thought so, too,' Eve replied mournfully; 'and there is a word that now and then flashes across my brain like an echo from the past, but I can never quite recall it. It might explain matters. Still, it is no use

talking. That apple rotted long ago, and if the Tree is still growing, which I doubt, there is always a guard of flying infantry at the Gate. It is easier to get out than in where Eden is concerned.'

"The Serpent smiled blandly.

" 'You have evidently forgotten that, by arrangement with the Governing Body, I have always free ingress and egress. Look here!'

"He unfolded his iridescent coils, and there lay within them—shining, mystic, wonderful, against his velvet bloom—two Apples.

"There was no hesitation, for each was equally weary of Adam's requirements; and, snatching each an Apple, they ate.

"But the Fruit has grown bitter since the days of the Garden. There is nothing so bitter as knowledge. Their lips were wried, and the tears came, and still they ate until not an atom remained. The Serpent watched. For a moment each stared upon the other, trembling like a snared bird, wild thoughts coming and going in the eyes of the Barren Woman and the Mother of all Living. Then Eve stretched out her arms, and Lilith flung herself into them, and they clung together, weeping.

"And the Serpent opened his eyes until they shone like sun, moon, and stars all melted into one; and he said, 'Ladies, the word you are seeking is, I think, *Combination*.' And smiling subtly, he went away.

"So Eve descended from her pedestal and trampled it; and Lilith broke the rod of her evil enchantments; and they walked hand in hand, blessing the world.

"Adam meanwhile was shooting,—big game, little game,—and, amid the pressure of such important matters, never paid any attention to this trifle. But this was the beginning of what will be the biggest trade-union the world will ever see. All the women who matter will be within it, and the black-legs outside will be the women who don't count. So now you see why men will not much longer have a run (literally) for their money. Adam may have to put up with it, for he never ate the Apple as Eve and Lilith have done, and therefore does not know so much about the things of real importance. Unless indeed the Serpent— But we won't think of that until it happens.

"Now, my dear Joan, whether all this is a good or a bad thing, who can tell? The Serpent undoubtedly shuffled the cards; and who the Serpent is and what are his intentions, are certainly open questions. Some believe him to be the Devil, but the minority think his true name is Wisdom. All one really can say is that the future lies on the knees of the gods, and that among all men

the Snake is the symbol of Knowledge, and is therefore surrounded with fear and hatred.

"Now that's the story, and don't you think there's a kind of moral?"

I waited for a comment. Joan was in deep meditation.

"Do you know," she said slowly, "it's the truest thing I ever heard. It's as true as taxes. But where do *you* come in?"

"I wasn't thinking of us," I said hurriedly. "I merely meant—if you wished to be more attractive——"

"Attractive!"—with her little nose in the air. "I guess it's you that will have to worry about your attractions, if that comes along. I won't waste any more time on you to-day. I've got to think this out, and talk it out, too, with Inez and Janet."

She rose and began to pull on her gloves, but absently.

I felt exactly like a man who has set a time-fuse in a powder magazine. The Serpent himself must have possessed me when I introduced his wisdom to a head cram-full of it already.

"It's the merest nonsense, Joan. It isn't in the Talmud. The Serpent never thought of it. I made it all up."

"You couldn't. It isn't in you. Or, if you did, it was an inspiration from on high."

"From below," I said weakly.

She smiled to herself—a dangerous smile.

"I must go. And you really were a little less dull than usual. Come again on Tuesday. The moral of it all is, so far, that the poets are really worth cultivating. I will begin with you!"

She flashed away like a humming bird, and I retired, to read my Schopenhauer. But the serious question is—shall I go on Tuesday?

STATELY JULIA

A STORY OF ENCHANTMENTS

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A STORY OF ENCHANTMENTS

(A letter from Mr. Amyand Tylliol to his friend, Mr. Endymion Porter at the Court of his Majesty, King Charles the First.)

To my kind and constant friend, that lover of the Muses, Mr. Endymion Porter, to whose understanding heart all confidences may be carried, these presents to bring my news.

Since you marvel at the delay of your humble servant needs must I tell you of a singular hap which hath befallen. Yet no hurt, therefore be not distrest, for all is well. And truth it is that I have met a most ingenious gentleman, and this is the marrow of what I would say.

For, prospering in my journey, I did reach Exeter, and there in the shadow of the Cathedral Church, transacted my affair with Mr. Delander as foreseen. And a right fair and noble church it is, rich beyond imagining with images of kings and bishops, queens and holy martyrs.

From Mr. Stephen Delander (who quarters the arms of Tylliol with his own from an alliance in the days of Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory, and therefore calls cousin with me) have I received most hospitable entertainment, and noble conversation enriched with such sparkling gems of poesy and rhetoric as cannot be told in words. And hence is he become my singular good friend and as such to be remembered and cherished. His house lies in the Cathedral precincts and is by all the city known as Domus Domini, the Lord's House, since it belonged to the foundation of the Cathedral in days now like to be forgot.

And 'tis a house delightful to the fancy, in a very small garden set with a few sombre trees, enlightened with clove-gilly flowers and roses, and box hedges with winding walks among the turf. Within, deep-windowed, with grave and handsome plenishing and great store of books clothing the walls, and all of a sober discretion that bespeaks a gentleman of lineage and parts. And over it towers the cathedral church the which (looking upward) appears to swim in the blue as though native to the skies, and sheds from its mighty bells a voice of warning over the clustering city with every passing hour, for a *memento mori*.

A place indeed for the feeding of pensive musing and the relishing of the fair-zoned Muses even as in the groves of Academe.

So, business concluded, 'twas the habit of Mr. Delander and myself to sit in the oriel commanding the cathedral and to hold sweet discourse, with a flagon of right Canary between us, and from one of these exchanges sprang my delay.

For he, talking of the writing of the rare Master Ben Jonson, spoke as follows:

"A poet indeed, but sure Mr. Tylliol, being a lover of verse and a trafficker in its niceties, knows we have here in this rude Devonshire a poet —nay, what say I?—*the* poet of women and flowers and elves that skip by moonlight, with like delights of the phantasy, such as rare Ben or even the rarer Master Shakespeare cannot excel?"

"Lord, sir!" says I. "I stand amazed. I knew it not. Who may the gentleman be?"

"I would not have you think," he responded, "that this gentleman hath the choir note of our young Milton, nor yet the plenteous invention of Will Shakespeare. 'Tis a country Muse, but exquisite. A muse withal that hath been to town and drest her lovely limbs in lawns and silks, and wears pomander beads in her bosom. A Muse whose blush is claret and cream commingled. And as I said, exquisite. A voice of Castaly."

"And what does the gentleman in the wilds and what is he?" asked I, a-tip-toe with curiosity, for well you know my passion for these rarities. And hastily I added:

"Hath your honour any taste or relish of his verse at hand to whet my appetite? For with poetry as with manners—from one can all be told."

He mused a moment smiling, then recited thus:

"TO A LADY SINGING

"So smooth, so sweet, so silvery is thy voice
As, could they hear, the damned would make no noise,
But listen to thee walking in thy chamber,
Melting melodious words to lutes of amber."

"O rare!" cried I, clapping my hands. "A right music, like drops of honey distilling from the comb. Was this a happy chance, or may the gentleman summon the delicate Ariel when he will?"

He smiled, indulgent:

"Since you compare the lines with honey, hear yet again." I sat elate.

"As Julia once a-sleeping lay
It chanced a bee did fly that way.
For some rich flower he took the lip
Of Julia, and began to sip.
But when he felt he sucked from thence
Honey (and in the quintessence)
He drank so much he scarce could stir
And Julia took the pilferer!

"Sweet Lady-flower, I never brought
Hither the least one thieving thought.
But taking those rare lips of yours
For some fresh fragrant luscious flowers,
I thought I there might take a taste
Where so much sirop ran to waste.
Besides, know this,—'I never sting
The flower that gives me nourishing.'
This said, he laid his little scrip
Of honey 'fore her Ladyship,
And told her (as some tears did fall)
That this he took and that was all.
At which she smiled and bade him go
And take his bag; but this much know
When next he came a-pilfering so,
He should from her full lips derive
Honey enough to fill his hive."

" 'Tis a pure seed-pearl," said I. "Small but Orient. And now, Mr. Delander my worthy friend, tell me where hides this shepherd of the enchanted pipe, for if, as you say, in Devon, then Devon I will not quit till with these tickling ears have I listened to his sweet pipings. And if Julia be his neighbour, as we may suppose— O, sir, speak by the cards and tell me true!"

"There is," he responded, "in this His Majesty's shire of Devon, a very savage forest, yet with no trees,—known as the Forest of Dartmoor. And well may I call it savage, for there do savages harbour that would make as little to slit a man's throat and cast him in a slough as I to toss this nut-shell. Of the roads to these parts, least said soonest mended—sooner indeed than they. But know that around this execrable miscreant of a Dartmoor lie little lovely villages full of a sweet civility of flowers and hives of bees, and kine and pretty maids to milk 'em. And above all there is one called Dean Prior and of this the spiritual shepherd is Mr. Robert Herrick."

"Sure his crook is wreathed with roses and the pretty lambs of the flock have nought to fear from their shepherd," says I.

“I take your meaning, Mr. Tylliol, and yet—[he paused here with a peculiar sweet smile]—though you might decipher much from his verses of Julias, Dianemes, Perillas, and other charming ladies, and he is much accused as a loose liver, ’tis possible to read his riddle wrong. Go therefore and see him. I have known another who did this and returned surprised. Yet cross not Dartmoor on your life, but go softly below it where honest folk live. Also, a coach goes down two days hence within two miles of the village and with it a riding guard. Take your stout nag, and so God bless you and send you a happy meeting with a man not commonly to be accosted.”

’Twas in vain for me to beshrew and becall myself for the veriest ass between this and London, and doubtless I had flinched from so great an enterprise but that Mr. Delander poured verses more and more mellifluous into mine ears until at last I was as Ulysses, drunk with the fierce wine of the Sirens’ voices, and there being no mast whereto to bind me and Mr. Delander full of laughing incitements, I set forth to follow the track of music as a bee the track of the unseen rose’s perfume.

Of the roads I forbear to speak, and the harbourage by the way would willingly forget, but the air was sweet and fragrant with earliest summer and the fields yet gilt with cowslips and I spied a few late primroses lingering about the roots of trees in the shy copses. Also, an exceeding delicate flower like a silver star, that made sweet constellation in the lush grass. And could the courtesies of London be imported I know not where a man might better fleet the hours than in this warm and languid shire of Devon.

So, on the fourth day we observed a wild mountain stream, browner than October ale, that rushing danced to meet us, breaking in a thousand showers, spray, and rillets among its rocks—a lovely thing to see and hear—the youngest surely of the bright nymphs of the hills.

“And this,” says the guard of the coach, “is the Dean Burn, and not far off the Vicarage, and the few houses of the village are far down the road where we shall presently come. So here, worshipful sir, we leave you.”

Then, being arrived and the coach still standing to discharge certain packets for the parson I spied a comely man in middle age coming to meet us.

He was drest in hodden grey, clean but simple, his head bare and the sunshine on it, and his eyes smiled with his mouth. And in that first sight I gave my liking to Mr. Herrick, and so has it continued.

I presented my letter from Mr. Delander, and of the cordial of my welcome need I not to speak.

“Nay, what favour?” said he. “Sure to a rustic that once knew London, pinioned here to rude rocks and trees, ’tis like a scent of the kindly civil streets to see an accomplished gentleman. Blush not, sir, for so I have it under Mr. Delander’s hands and seal, and I know no better judge. ’Tis little I can give, but my pleasant maid, Prudence Baldwin, hath a bed with sun-bleacht sheets in waiting for the traveller, and my roof is weather-proof, and my little creeking hen, foreseeing a friend, hath made shift to lay her long white egg, and this rascally riveret that I have abused in verse, yet love, hath provided fresh-dewed cresses for our meat. If with these and a very little more, my guest’s hunger can be satiate, then welcome again—thrice welcome to Dean Prior.”

With gladness I accepted, for the welcome was as much in his eye as on his lip, and so we came to the low house seated in a small garden gay with gilliflowers, culver-keys, sops-in-wine, lad’s love, and all the outspread courtiers that pay homage to the rose. And roses he had, great store, both damask and white, and the party-coloured York and Lancaster—to the which he drew my notice.

Lord, what a little house, and poor though neat, and yet with sparkles of money here and there in a rich picture or two, and a settle and chest carved by no ’prentice hand, and a worn but costly velvet cloak thrown over the back. And a clock, grave as Time himself, with a dial curiously illustrated with mottoes and cherubims. And before entering I took notice that a sun-dial stood in the garden, with this verse engraved[2] so as the gnomon should point the lesson:

[2] The inscription on the sun-dial is my own. L. Adams Beck.

> “Shine, Sun of Righteousness, with beam more bright
> Than this great dawn my dial doth invite,
> And as the gnomon’s shadow doth incline
> To tread his steps, let my sprite follow thine.”

Which methought a devout reflection pleasing to Christian ears, and so I said, but he smiling put it by.

And now with a handsome curtsey Mrs. Prue met us, coming from her kitchen, a kindly buxom woman with flowered skirt pulled up through her pockets, and a cap white as the foam on Dean Burn, and in her hospitable hand a little server, she pressing us to drink a cup of ale before our dinner served. And so showed me to my little cell with lavender stuck in the windows, and sheets that might have wrapt the smooth limbs of the divine

Julia, though I dare to say they never did. And since the bed was spread with down pulled from the Vicar's own geese it invited a pure and honest slumber.

But, marry! when we came to dine, that I thought should have been on eggs and cresses at the best, here was a surprise.

For before Master Vicar were laid two smoking trouts, broiled to a turn over sea-coals.

"And of these," says mine host, "you may eat fearless, for they were caught in Dean Burn, and of all clean livers commend me to the trout that is indeed a dainty monsieur; and these inhabit in water clear as crystal beams, unlike those degenerate fish that scavenge in Thames. And moreover, these hands took them this morning, for I am a brother of the rod, and love to sit a-angling and a-musing."

And needs must I say that these trout with Mrs. Prue's sauce, the rich droppings of the fish mixed with fresh sweet butter and the yolk of an egg, was a dish for feasting Gods.

'Twas followed by a bird trapt on the moor, of a reddish flesh and *haut gout* very delicious, and what should come after that but a junket with nutmegs grated and clouted cream—so yellow, thick and mellow that I praised and commended and Mr. Herrick heapt my platter until I cried quarter.

"Cream of cowslips," says he, "for the meadows whence it was drawn are gilt with their fragrant blossoms and the leisurely cows lie among them and crush their sweetness as well as devour it. And if you condescend later to taste it with a crust of Mrs. Prue's bread and her marmalet of crab-apples, you shall say it is good honest country fare if simple."

I rose content from a meal excelling all the varieties of rich men's tables, and on his proposal we sat a while under his honey-suckle bower to look upon the prospect and digest our meat seemly, while Mrs. Prue moved softly about the house clearing and cleansing.

And seeing the moment favourable, I adventured a question much in my mind.

"Sir, in your divine and honey-golden verse, recited to me by our common friend, Mr. Delander, you speak with opprobrium of this rude Devonshire. Yet here I come and find you set amid delights of soul and body such as a king might envy. Is it true that you, looking on these sweet hills and meadows, this singing riveret and the hues and scents of your garden,

can wish yourself in the noise and foulness of towns? Resolve me this doubt, for, trust me, it perplexes me."

He smiled a little.

"Why, sir, is a poet wiser than another that he should not long for the rainbow a field away? You are to take notice that when I lived in London I abused the smells and sights and craved for country quiet. And now I have it 'tis the other way about. But in all good soberness this is the better life and I know it. Here is the eye enlarged to beauty, the ear attuned to music celestial, and the company, though not choicely good, is innocent, and if evil, hath no tinsel to hide its native ugliness."

He paused a moment as though to digest his thoughts and added:

"Here we rise with Chanticleer and make the lamb our curfew, and the day's small cares ended and our souls committed to the Keeper who sleeps not, we slumber discharged of griefs. And if our food be plain the seasoning is thanks.

> "God, to my little meal and oil
> Add but a bit of flesh to boil,
> And Thou my pipkinet shalt see
> Give a wave-offering unto Thee."

He smiled so cheerfully that I enquired:

"Your own verse, reverend sir?"

"My own. My Muse is not always concerned with ladies' eyes nor with the revels of Mab and Oberon whereof I have also delighted to write. She kneels sometimes, face veiled. And these I call my Noble Numbers."

There was a moment's silence, so great that through the singing of the water I might hear the cropping of Clover-lips, his red cow. 'Twas not long however before I resumed.

"Then, sir, the country is now your choice preferred?"

"I said not so. Nay, I long sometimes for the town. But I know and scarce know how, that my lot will be cast there again for some sad years, and then I shall return here to lay my bones in peace among my people."

"Was this revealed to you in dream, sir? But this question is overbold. Few men reveal their dreams."

"Mine," says he, "are so chaste as I dare tell them. Yes, in a dream. Doubtless induced by the present discontents which will wreck our good King Charles and many lesser with him."

We discoursed of these, and with each word I liked mine host the better, until his gentleness emboldened me so much that at the last I said;

"And where, worthy sir, are the houses of the lovely and wealthy ladies who keep you good company in summer sunshine and winter snow? Where dwells the stately Mistress Julia, bright and straight as a garden tulip, a flower which I confess the Roman name of Julia calls always to my sight. Where the sparkling-eyed lady Dianeme, the shy Anthea, the delicate Perilla light as a woodland anemone, and all this shining garden of sweets that your muse commends to our worship? Let me own nor blush for't, that my journey, though undertaken to their poet, was seasoned also with the hope to kiss their feet."

"Sir, you did well. The Hesperides are worth even a journey to Devon. And doubtless you shall see the stately Julia, and the bright Anthea and all the fair choir, but not yet. And now will I repeat you my latest homage to one of these ladies, and then I must needs visit my sick while you sit in the meadow and watch the milkmaid at her fragrant labour.

"THE CURIOUS COVENANT

"Mine eyes like clouds were drizzling rain,
And as they thus did entertain
The gentle beams from Julia's light
To mine eyes levelled opposite,
O thing admired!—there did appear
A curious rainbow smiling there,
Which was the covenant that she
No more would drown mine eyes or me."

"O exquisite felicity!" cried I with delight. "And did it not move your empress to mercy?"

"It moved her, sir!" he answered with a subdued laughter. "And now must I forth. Entertain yourself, I pray you."

He went toward the village, bearing in his hand a well-stored panier brought forth by Mrs. Prue, in the which I might espy little pots and pipkins clearly bespeaking a charitable heart. And when he disappeared I took in hand the rod he commended to me and did go a-angling in the Dean Burn.

But the sun was bright and the water like dancing diamonds and its song so dulcet that even with my good will I would fain leave the silly trout in their crystal house, and so I e'en turned over in the short sweet-smelling grass and there fell asleep and dreamed of Julia with her smooth rubious lips and velvet cheek, and of the banquets of elves and their midnight rejoicings,

but dimly and with the sound of water in it all, until I fell in the very deeps of slumber and dreamed no more.

Suddenly and soon as it seemed, but was not, I heard a voice soft as a cushat's call me, and looking up drowsily beheld a pretty milkmaid summon Clover-lips and Pretty Primrose, and they responded slow but obedient.

O charming sight, though the maiden wore but a homespun gown of blue and had on her head nothing but a straw hat bought at the fair. For her skin was cream with here and there a cowslip freckle, and she was cherry-cheeked and had withal a soft black eye and two clear-marked arches of brows, and lips that you would not have smile lest the perfect bow unbend, nor smiling would have grave lest the quarrelet of pearls be hidden. And about her neck and bosom was folded very modestly a handkerchief tucked into her bodice.

So I rose to my feet and made my bow, for beauty, though but in a milk-maiden, is native to the skies and enforces homage, and the pretty maid blushing dropt so deep a curtsey that I thought she must take root in the grass like a flower, so long was it before she lifted the stars of her eyes to mine.

"I was bid by his Reverence, sir, to stroke you a syllabub," says she. "And will your Honour have it here and now, for I have the verjuice of crab-apple and all needful?"

"Here and now if you'll favour me," says I enchanted, and sat down to watch the lovely sight. Nor could I have departed if even she had bid me;

> "For in vain she did conjure him
> To depart her presence so,
> With a thousand tongues to allure him
> And but one to bid him go.
> When lips delight and eyes invite,
> And cheeks as fresh as rose in June
> Persuade delay, what boots she say:
> 'Forego me now; come to me soon.' "

But indeed the lass was pleased I stayed, and dulcet her voice as she rounded a song to coax the cows let down their milk.

"For 'tis known they always milk best to music," says she, "and often I would have Jan Holdsworthy to bring his pipe and please 'em."

And thus I heard a Devon ballad, whereof a verse sticks in my head:

"So Robin put on his Sunday clothes,
Which were neither tattered nor torn,
With a bright yellow rose as well as his shoes
He looked like a gentleman born, he did!
Ay, he did! Sure he did!
He looked like a gentleman born, he did."

"And—"

"Nay, but I won't sing the next bit," says she with her head against the cow's warm silken side, and one bright black eye regardant.

"And why, my pretty lass?"

"Because Robin went for to be uncivil and kiss the maid in the song. But she would have none of it and serve him right, for—

"She gave him a smack in the face, she did!
Ay, she did! Sure she did!
She gave him a smack in the face, she did!"

She trilled it out, defiant as a thrush at dawn, and I could have committed Robin's crime but for respect to her innocence and Mr. Herrick's hospitality. And sure never was a syllabub so delicate and warm as this, strained from the balm-breathing kine through sunburnt hands fresh rinsed with sparkling water from Dean Burn.

I drank that wine of Nature's brewing nor could be satisfied. And when her pails foamed to the brim and Clover-lips and Pretty Primrose returned disburdened to their cropping, says I:

"Tell me, my pretty one, where are the great houses about these parts where dwell the fair and splendid ladies who excel you in nothing but their wealth? And do they come to the church o' Sundays?"

"Anan, sir?" says she, bewildered.

"The ladies in silks and lawns and jewels," I insisted. "Of whom I have read as shedding the lustre of their graces even on these wild and solitary meads."

Methinks my talk was too fine for her. She laught like one amazed.

"Ladies, your honour, I know of none, nor never saw silk nor lawn nor lady, nor heard of such but in the ballads the chapmen bring to the fair."

"But sure there are great squires and lords in these parts and will have their hunting and sports and their ladies to ride with them, and come to church in coaches and on pillions a-Sundays?"

“No, your honour, no,” says she. “I would it were so. ’Twere fine to see the young madams, gay as kingfishers on Dean Burn, but never saw I one, nor look to. And now I must be going, with your leave, for I must sit at my wheel or our dame will know the reason.”

And with another curtsey the fair pretty maid departed to her innocent labour, and ’twas as though the sun went with her, so clear and lucid a beam was she of youth and beauty.

But she left me musing, for where and how should Mr. Herrick meet with his fair ladies unless indeed he took horse and rode abroad, and I perpended and resolved to watch, being sharp-set to see his peerless beauties if I died for it.

To grace our supper on Mr. Herrick’s return were the cresses from the Dean Burn and little young radishes from the garden with a cream cheese dewy in green leaves and a dish of eggs dressed in an amulet by Mrs. Prue (and savoury meat they were) and a tansy pudding to follow. And if I be charged with gluttony in thus citing I crave pardon, for I know not how but the mind sat down with the body to the feast and both were nourished.

Mrs. Prue, the prudent, brought us after a very little glass each of surfeit-water and of such comfort that I would needs have her recipe, the which she imparted very gravely:

“We take of red corn poppies a peck and put them in a dish with another for cover, and so into the oven several times after the household bread is drawn. We lay them in a quart of aqua vitæ [“And this,” interrupted Mr. Herrick, “comes very good from the sea-covers by Plymouth, and is brought to us on moor ponies.”] and thereto we add a race of ginger sliced, nutmeg, cinnamon, mace, a handful of figs, raisins-of-the-sun, aniseed, cardamom and fennel seeds, with a taste of lickorish. And so lay some poppies in a great vessel and then the other ingredients and more poppies and so continue till the vessel’s full. We then pour in our aqua vitæ and let it so continue until very red with the poppies and strong of the spice. We take from it what we need, adding more aqua vitæ. And much good may it do your Honour for ’tis a known cordial.”

“It is so!” says I sipping, “and trust me, I am beholden to you, good Mrs. Prudence, and will benefit.”

We left our glasses empty and betook ourselves to the bower in the garden so twined and wreathed with the gold and amber horns of honey-suckle spilling their fragrance that my soul was ravisht, and Mr. Herrick fetching his lute saluted mine ears with strains celestial, adding his voice

thereto at moments, yet not loud but as if thinking melodiously to himself in serene reverie in the deepening twilight.

> "Hear, ye virgins, and I'll teach
> What the times of old did preach.
> Rosamund was in a bower
> Kept, as Danae in a tower.
> But yet Love who subtle is,
> Crept to that, and came to this!
> Be ye lockèd up like these
> Or the rich Hesperides,
> Or those babies in your eyes
> In their crystal nunneries,
> Notwithstanding Love will win
> Or else force a passage in."

He plucked a few notes and was silent, for Philomel in a thorn beside the Dean broke forth, amazing the night with harmony, and holding breath we listened to the sweet delirium that hath enchanted the ages.

She stopt as suddenly as she began and flew to some more distant groves to duel with another songster as lovely, the moon herself in rising seeming to pause and listen ere she ascended her silver throne.

"Exquisite!" says he sighing. "How have I the rude audacity to match my numbers with hers? Yet I too have my breast on a thorn and must sing or die. And you assert that they please, Mr. Tylliol?"

"They enchant," cried I eagerly. "But, O, Mr. Herrick, my good host and worthy friend, I beseech you reveal to me where hide the Hesperides you celebrate in verse that will not die like Philomel's. Few are my days here. Let me not return empty. With the most awful reverence will I stand at a distance to admire, nor with a thought smirch the crystalline lawn that veils the bosom of Madam Julia or the silks that rustle in Dianeme's going. What —what are the earthly names of these admired ladies?"

"In one hour, when the moon is up and at full, then you shall meet them," says he. "For then they do use to give me gracious tryst beyond Dean Burn at a certain place known to me and to them. And if their beauty is not correspondent to your expectation, blame not them, but consider rather the teaching of Plotinus his book wherein he writes: 'That which sees must be kindred and similar to its object before it can see it. Every man must partake of the divine nature before he can see Divinity.' So then, if they appear not lovely the fault is in the eye that sees."

"But, sir," says I bewildered; "is this so also with the perishable beauty of women which leads man into ways unallied indeed with Divinity?"

He touched a few soft notes on the pensive strings, responding gravely:

"That man hath never beheld the beauty of woman whom it leads downward, but only a shadow and simulacrum, as it were; the false Duessa, whereas the true Una (the One) is crowned with stars and in its nature heavenly."

I have conversed, as is known to my friend, with many men counted high, but, trust me, here with the world charmed by moonlight and the quiet running of water, the voice of this man took on a quality unearthly and you are to know that it moved me exceedingly as with something latent and not to be exprest. Nor would I answer but sat attentive while he pursued his thoughts aloud.

"For so says also the wisest man that ever wore flesh (setting aside only the Bright and Orient Star) and these are his words: 'Such a man uses the beauties of earth as steps whereon he mounts, going from fair forms to fair deeds, and from fair deeds to fair thoughts, and from fair thoughts attains to the Idea of Absolute Beauty. And if a man have eyes to see this true Beauty he becomes the friend of God and immortal.' "

And after this we both observed such a silence as when sweet music dies and leaves the air ravisht and in ecstasy, and so sate I know not how long until at last the moon glided over the trees and threw her light on the Dean Burn. He then arose, still holding his lute.

"You would see my beauties, Mr. Tylliol, and that you shall! Come with me now."

And so led the way to a part where the water spread wide, glittering and very shallow, and here great flat stepping-stones used by generations, as he told me, and on these we crost and went on and up (our path clear as day) until, it might be half a mile or more, we came to a singular little amphitheatre (so I may call it) of turf, short and cropt and soft as kings' carpets, with thick bushes and trees and some rocks surrounding it, very secret and secluded, enclosing it into a fair pleasance but not large.

"And here I often sit," he whispered. "But go very softly."

And indeed a natural awe, of I know not what, fell on me and constrained me into a breathless quiet, following him.

So presently we seated ourselves on a low rock cushioned with moss, and then taking his lute he began to play gently, but with such a penetrating sweetness as Orpheus himself, who with his music melted the hearts of trees and rocks, could scarce, I think exceed, yet most simple withal.

And the melody was singular, and with a delicate continuity like the ceaseless running of rain or water, and after awhile it appeared to me as if, like a revolving spinning wheel, it cast abroad silver threads which mingling with the moonlight did dance and whirl and shape themselves into changing forms (but I know not what) dissolving and returning and re-shaping in a labyrinth that mazed me. And whether it was my own brain that spun them (as in dream) I cannot tell, nor whether they were real or imagined.

But presently a sweetly lovely face peeped from the boughs, finger on lips, the pointed chin elfish as though the cap should be a flower, a truant indeed from Fairyland. And "Silvia!" he whispered, continuing to play. She, if she it were, listened, archly smiling, a face and no more, and suddenly the leaves closed about her, and nothing there.

My breath stumbled in my throat, and I closed my eyes an instant, and when again they opened, at the further end of the pleasance, but dim in the moonlight as though in a mist of lawn and cobweb lace, I saw a lady pace from one covert to the other. And myself this time, but whether aloud I know not, said: "Madam Julia."

For she moved imperial, but her beauty I cannot itemize, nor know now whether I saw or dreamed her lips—

> "Which rubies, corals, scarlets all
> For tincture wonder at,—"

nor the black splendour of her hair, and the proud dark glance she cast about her in passing, nor the splendid sweeping of her gown.

And even as she parted the boughs and Dian-like was hid among them, came another following, but stepping lightly from behind a rock whereon a tree laid leafy fingers of lucent green,—a creature of soft and flower-wafting breezes, white and sunbeam-haired, and I dare swear the ray of her eyes was blue, though see them I did not.

And Mr. Herrick, speaking as in time to his lute, seemed to say:

> "Smooth Anthea for a skin
> White and heaven-like crystalline,"—

and she waved a moonbeam hand as he whispered and, springing as lightly between the rocks and boughs as a leaping stream, was gone.

Then suddenly his lute ceased as though to give place to a better and a lady, robed in white, came cradling a lute to her bosom and singing—O words melodious, melting into heavenly numbers—I believe I knew at the blessed moment what they were but now have they slipt my gross

understanding. For 'twas indeed the choice Myrrha—O Music, O maid divine, walking soundless as flowing water and bathing in her own sweet harmonies as a Naiad in her native crystal.

And even as she past, unheeding her worshipper, Mr. Herrick's lute resumed the strain.

And now past two fair ladies, close entwined as Hermia and Helena, whispering each in the other's ear and casting oblique and tender looks upon their poet, the one in a yellow robe like a spring daffodil and the other in a most pure violet, perfume-breathing as the hue she wore. And the first was crowned with may, white as ivory exprest in blossom, and my heart said for me, "Corinna, who will go a-maying while the world lasts.

> "She that puts forth her foliage to be seen,
> And comes forth like the spring-time fresh and green,
> And sweet as Flora."

And indeed she past me so near that I caught the almond-sweet breath of her wreath.

And the other sure was the lady Dianeme, for I knew her by her dancing shining eyes and the bough of blossomed laylock in her hand.

> "Sweet, be not proud of those two eyes."—

Yet what could she be but proud of what the world counts among its jewels? And after them came running the delicate Perilla to join herself to their garland, and so smoothly did she glide that I looked to see her shod with the winged sandals of Hermes, for not a blade bent as she past, and so she slipt across the moonlight.

And then a little crowd of sweet shadows—Perenna the lovely, Sappho (but not she of the Leucadian rock), the Delaying Lady with handsome sullen brows, and lips pouted in half disdain, the beloved Electra, graceful as a harebell on a breeze, the reluctant Oenone and many others, fair and Orient gems set in a carcanet for the Muse's wearing. And after them a young Cupid, kitten-eyed and mischievous with his bow braced.

And at this the air filled suddenly with nimble laughters and little cries flipt with merry breath in the trees above us, and small shapes drunk with dew and moonlight dropt from the boughs like spiders sliding down their threads, so many that they pelted quick as rain-drops on the turf. And, lo you! 'twas a rabble of Oberon's courtiers tripping across to set their mushroom tables in the shade retired from the moon of night, and indeed,

methought the Lady Moon leaned her golden chin on a bar of cloud to watch the silly shower and laugh at their follies.

But the voice of Mr. Herrick's lute waxed faster and faster till it spun a labyrinth of music wherein the fairies did flout and spin and stagger, singing, and these words reached me but no more:

> "Through the forest, through the forest
> I will track my fairy Queen,
> Of her foot the flying footprint,
> Of her locks the flying sheen."

And whether this was sung or danced I know not, for the moon dipt behind a cloud, and all shapes from distinct became confused into a swift murmur whether of sound or sight or the ripple of the Dean Burn I can tell neither to myself nor others, only that presently there was darkness and silence. Nor can I say whether hours or minutes had past when Mr. Herrick laid his hand upon my arm and roused me from what I took to be a deep meditation.

"Dear guest," says he, "you have slept long, and every leaf is pearled in dew, and the Night would be secret with her subjects. We intrude. Therefore rouse yourself, for Mrs. Prue will think us strayed sheep if she wake, and indeed I will bespeak your soft treading for she is but a crazy sleeper and hath of late been sick, almost to be lunatic, with a pain in her teeth."

But I was stumbling as if heavy with sleep and could say naught, and so we crost the shining water on the stones and returned wordless, and that night I slept like a happy spirit in the dewy meads of heaven.

Not a word said the next day and Mr. Herrick almost distraught with busyness for the riding post brought him letters from his rich London kin and the news of growing troubles between King and Parliament very piercing to his honest heart.

And on the day following my nag was saddled, and the coach returning on its way to Exeter I was to ride with it for security, but still not a word said on the matter nearest my soul.

Then as we waited for the wheels,—I having bid Mrs. Prue a kindly farewell with a vail which but ill compensated her hospitable services, Mr. Herrick said musingly:

"Once, Mr. Tylliol, I made a verse on Dreams, in the which this was writ:

> " 'Here are we all by day; by night we are hurled
> By dreams, each one into a several world.'

“And I have read in ancient books that it is not impossible but a man may be hurled into another man’s world or House of Dreams—not often indeed but once in a great while. And if this be so and it seems to that visitant a house of lunacies or moonstruck madness (as well it may), shall there be pardon for his dream-host therein?”

And I:

“Sir, not a house of lunacies, but a house of enchantments whereof I would I had the freehold! And if you had any part in unlocking the door (whereof I know not what to think) take my loving and humble thanks and again make me welcome when leagues lie between us. For dreams ask neither wheels nor hoofs to carry them.”

And he smiling said:

“Come!”

So, lovingly we parted and the enchanted place grew small and dim, receding behind me, and with fleshly eyes never again shall I see the clear running of Dean Burn and the lush meadows where fair Margery stroked me a syllabub of cowslip cream. But Mr. Herrick shall I see, for his dreams are not as other men’s and he comes, I know, sooner or later, to London.

Now what all this means, I cannot know but may guess, and on that I say no more. Let each man read it as he can. But never again tell me that Mr. Herrick is a loose liver because his Muse dwells like a dove in the warmth of ladies’ bosoms, for I know better.

“Jocund his Muse was, but his life was chaste,” is the self-chosen Finis to his book, and well it may.

And for a last gift he slipt into my hand at parting his latest verses or effusion to Madam Julia, whose stately pacing haunts me yet and ever will.

> “This day, my Julia, thou must make
> For Mistress Bride the wedding cake.
> Knead but the dough and it will be
> To paste of almonds turned by thee.
> Or kiss it thou but once or twice
> And for the bride-cake there’ll be spice.”

And to me those words will ever bring the scents and fragrance and the dreams of Dean Prior, and as for the cake, ’twill be eat beyond Dean Burn on the little mushroom tables of fay and ouphe and elf, and the drink shall be a pearl of dew for each, served in the purple of a pregnant violet.

And so ends my letter but much more and stranger things shall I tell when I come to my friend.

THE ISLAND OF PEARLS

THE HIDDEN HEART OF CEYLON

THE ISLAND OF PEARLS

THE HIDDEN HEART OF CEYLON

The Island of Pearls, shaped like a dewdrop hanging from the lotus petal of India, is loveliest of the Oceanides, a Nereid floating on blue tropic seas. She is a voluptuous beauty, jewelled, languid, fanned by spiced airs, crowned with flowers, dusky, sultry, with strange romances in her past as she went from lover to lover, faithful only to one, the eternal sea. Colombo flames on you in the sun, hidden in trees so deep, so green that if you climb a hill the town is lost like a bird's nest in the tangle of vegetation. And what trees!—unlike the pensive elm and poplar, the ribbed oak of the West, these burst into flowers and a spendthrift fire of life. There is a giant covered with clusters of mauve blossoms like the rhododendron—I could not leave it—I was caught like a bee by its huge glory towering up into the sunshine. It bathed every sense in delight to stand beneath and see the larkspur blue of the sky through the crowded bloom. Others more austerely beautiful with faint rose and white crocus flowers springing from the grey stem and loading the air with perfume, and for the background the grace and grandeur of the palms balancing their frondure in the blue. There are no words to describe these things. Only in colour or music can their splendour be told.

And the lavish fruit! Mangosteens, mangoes, papayas, oranges,—Aladdin's jewels of wizard gardens. And the jewels themselves, for Ratnapura, the City of Gems, is near at hand. Moonstones heaped in great pearl-shells, like silvery blue moonlight touched with swimming gleams of gold, great cats' eyes with oblique pupils, aqua-marines of purest sparkling green, sea water dipped up from the secrecies of deepest depths, wine-dark jargoons, tourmalines many-hued as spring flowers, sapphires ranging from pale azure to ocean blue, carbuncles that flame in ancient legends as sacred jewels, all these and many more Ceylon displays like the Queen she is. And the sea is as the jewels—all light and glitter and the broken glories of rolling surf. It is these things which have made her the desire of men's eyes from time immemorial—the Island of the blue horizon, scarcely believable for beauty and wonder. Hear Abdulla, called Wassaf, the poet of Siraf in Persia, when he wrote of her long centuries ago:

"When Adam was driven forth from Paradise God made a mountain of Ceylon the place of his descent, to break the force of change and so assuage his fall. The charms of this fair country, the softness of the air, are beyond all

telling. White amber is the dregs of its sea, and its indigo and red bakam are cosmetics for beauty. The leaves, the barks, and the sweating of its trees are cloves, spikenard, aloe wood, camphor and fragrant mandel. Its icy water is a ball of muneya for the fractures of the world. The boundaries of its fields refresh the heart like the influence of the stars. The margins of its regions are the bedfellows of loveliness. Its myrobalums impart the blackness of youthful hair, and its peppercorns put the mole on the face of beauty on the fire of envy. Its rubies and carnelians are like the lips and cheeks of charming girls, and its treasures are as oceans full of polished gems. Indeed the various birds are sweet singing parrots and the pheasants of its gardens are graceful peacocks."

So they told of her, and merchants came from the end of the earth to trade in the wonders of Serendib, bringing and taking riches, and not only riches but tales of wildest wonder and romance. They said the people were descended from a royal lion and hence their name Singhalese—Singha, a lion. They said she breathed her sweetness for miles out to sea and that before the shore rose from the horizon the air was languid with her spices and perfumes. Was this true or hyperbole? It is at least certain that in many parts of the island the wild lemon grass is almost overwhelming in its odour and many of the flowers scent all the world about them. The tropical sun and hot dewy moisture stimulate plant life into a passionate luxuriance of fragrant beauty. Horror too, for there are blossoms whose name of Stercula foetida tells all that need be told of their loathsomeness.

In this strange land the sands of some of the rivers are minute rubies and garnets, and it is of Serendib the story was told of serpents that guarded the precious jacinths, and the stratagem of the merchants in flinging pieces of meat into deep valleys where they lay, that hovering eagles might strike their talons in the meat encrusted with jewels and carry it to their nests in the rocks, where ready hands could seize it. The jacinths have become diamonds in the Arabian Nights, but we all know the story in the mouth of Sindbad the sailor of perilous seas.

And the merchants had terrible tales to tell of the women of the island. They were sirens as dangerous as ever sought to beguile Ulysses. Some of them dwelt in a great city of iron on the coast with fluttering signals on their towers to lure sea-farers, and when the eager boats made for the shore women of the most alluring loveliness, perfumed and garlanded, ran to meet them, stretching passionate arms, wooing them to enter the city. There they caressed them until every sense was drowned in delight, when bound and helpless, they flung them into iron cages and devoured them one by one.

The merchants were the great romancers of the ancient world—the singers of songs, the tellers of tales, and surely they had the right, for is there more romance in any word than in their own name? It calls up mirage after mirage of wearied camel caravans toiling through deserts of sand to cities that were old when Balkh and Damascus were young; where the blue and glittering domes of porcelain rise against intenser skies in sunsets sonorous as a gong with deep light and colour. It is the merchants always who carry romance and adventure in their corded bales. In robe and turban they yearn for the caravanserais and the men coming by many ways to the meeting place. They hunger for the flat hot cakes seed-sprinkled, and the savoury smells of the kous-kous bubbling in oil, but most of all for the excitements and lusts of the bazaar and the dangerous winding ways of forbidden palaces. See them unroll the gold and flowered stuffs of Bokhara, the silks from Cos as transparent as running water that gave the fair Pamphila the glory of having invented a dress "in which women were naked though clothed." See the muslins of Dacca unloosed from the swaying camel-packs; —the merchants can scarcely handle them lest a faint breeze blow them from their hold, for of these it is told that the Emperor, Akbar, the Truth-Seeker, rebuked a woman who appeared before him robed in woven air, saying, "Little does it become a daughter of the Prophet to show herself arrayed in one dress only and that, as it were, nothing, being but the illusion of a garment." And she replied audaciously: "Majesty, Light of the Age, I am more modest than modesty's self, for I wear at this moment *Nine*."

Through all the stories of Ceylon the merchants go, tempting the perilous seas in frail dromonds and crank high-decked galleons, tempted in turn by princesses, more perilous than the seas, shooting dangerous glances through rose-coloured veils. Sometimes their historic quests were wild as any dream. It was rumoured over Asia that the lost Tree of Life grew in the jungles of this fortunate Island and a King of Persia and Emperor of China sent their merchants with huge wealth to buy its precious leaves—more than ever precious in the intrigues of Oriental Courts—but only to find it grows in a Paradise more far away than even the famed Serendib, and that no merchants, young and ardent, grave and bearded, could lay that merchandise before the throne.

Ceylon figures in one of the most ancient epics of the world—the Ramayana, for it was Ravana the demon King of Ceylon (Lanka) who seized the lovely Sita, wife of the God-King Rama as she wandered in the forest, and bore her through the air to his island kingdom. The writer of the poem was a mighty poem maker: Valmiki,—let his name be fragrant for all time! And like all his divine brotherhood he was first taught by sorrow. For

sitting one day in the heart of the woods, Valmiki beheld two herons singing for joy and love as they wandered together by air and water, and as he gladdened to their gladness, an archer shot the male bird and he fell bathed in blood, never again to sweep the wing-ways of the sky, and his mate fluttered about him in agony. So Valmiki, with the wrath and power of a poet, cursed the man who had done this black deed, and, as he spoke, suddenly he knew that his words were a measured music and that a new and wonderful thing had befallen in the world. And so it was, for Brahma appeared in the cloud, four-faced, majestic, and commanded him to write the history of Rama and the storming of Ceylon in this same mysterious music. "And it shall be true in every word," said the God, "and so long as the world lasts shall this story be known among men." And that was the beginning of poetry in India.

Perhaps this is the chief fame of Ceylon, for the God spoke not in vain. There is no city now so lovely as that of which Valmiki tells—the city of jewelled pavements and windows of glimmering crystal and the cloudy palaces where the cruel King dwelt and where Sita was a captive. For —"Here dwelt the fair princesses torn by him from vanquished Kings. Now it was night and they lay overpowered with wine and sleep. One had her head thrown backward; some had their garlands crushed; some lay in each other's bosoms, or with arms interlaced, others in slumber deep as death. The King Ravana lay on a dais apart made of crystal and adorned with jewels. Here lay he overcome with wine, with glittering rings in his ears and robed in gold, breathing like a hissing serpent. Around him lay his sleeping Queens, and nearest him the dearest, the golden-hued Mandodari."

So the story runs through all its epic wonder of love and war, and yearly in India is celebrated the harrying of Ravana—I have seen his ten-headed image go up in flames amid the rejoicing of a multitude. Yet, as I think, the ancient city, Anaradhapura, now a ruin in the jungle, could not have fallen so far behind the splendours of Valmiki. Many who have visited it have written of it as it is in death—the broken fragments of palaces and temples, a few preserved here and there like rocks that are the survival of some lost Atlantis in the drowning ocean of the forest. How few recall it as it was in its pride and power! I stood in the green dimness of the glades where are the sculptured tanks where the queens bathed in days long dead, and read the words of one who knew it well—Fa Hien, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim of the fourth century A. D. For this was the Anaradhapura of the Ceylon he visited in search of the words of the Lord Buddha; of himself he speaks in the third person:

"To the north of the royal city is erected a great tower in height 470 feet, —it is adorned with gold and silver and perfected with every precious substance. There is by the side of it a monastery containing 5000 priests. They also have built here a hall of the Lord which is covered with gold and silver engraved work. In the midst of this hall is a jasper figure (of the Buddha) in height about 22 feet. The entire body glitters and sparkles with the seven precious substances. In the right hand he holds a pearl of inestimable value. Fa Hien had been absent many years from China; the manners and customs of these people were entirely strange to him, moreover his fellow travellers were now separated from him, for some had remained behind and some were dead. All at once as he stood by this jasper figure, he beheld a merchant present to it as a religious offering a fan of white silk of Chinese manufacture. Unwittingly Fa Hien gave way to his sorrowful feelings and the tears flowed from his eyes."

Those tears, dried so long since, gave to this Western pilgrim, standing in the same place, the true Virgilian sense of tears in mortal things, and still they move the world.

Ceylon is a land of the Gods. They have left their footprints very plain upon this radiant loveliness as they came and went. She has known many generations of them. All who would understand her should read Valmiki's semi-divine poem of the great battles of Rama, God-King of India, as he fought here his wars of the Gods and Titans to rescue his wife, the lovely Sita, the heart's love and worship to this day of his dominion.

Here, when the Demon King held her in captivity, the army of Rama strode across the bridge of scattered rocks between Ceylon and India. Still may be seen the gap that no strength, human or divine, could pass, where the mighty host was stayed, until a little tree squirrel, for love of Rama, laid his small body in the hollow, and because love is the bridge eternal between the two worlds, the rescuing host passed triumphant over it. But Rama, stooping from his Godhead, Incarnation as he was in human flesh of Vishnu the Preserver, lifted the crushed body tenderly and touched the dead fur, and to this day, the tree squirrels bear the marks of the divine fingers upon their coats of grey.

There is no demarcation in Asia between the so-called animal and human lives. Rama himself had passed through the animal experience on the upward way and knew well what beats in the little heart beneath fur and feather.

In those wonderful parables, the Birth Stories of the Lord Buddha, are recorded his supposed memories of the incarnations of bird, animal and

other lives through which a steadfast evolution led him to the Ten Perfections. How should he not know, and knowing love? Is it not written by a great Buddhist saint: “It may well be that to the eye of flesh, plants and trees appear to be gross matter; but to the eye of the Buddha they are composed of minute spiritual particles; grass, trees, countries the earth itself, shall enter wholly into Buddhahood”? And does not science, faltering far behind the wisdom of the mighty, adumbrate these truths in its later revelations?

We know too little of the wisdom of the East. The Magi still journey to Bethlehem, but only those who have the heart of the Child may receive their gold, myrrh, and frankincense.

Yet, for mere beauty’s sake, these stories of the East should be read. Men thrill to the mighty thunder-roll of Homer’s verse, but the two supreme epics of India are little known. If the West would gather about the story-teller as the East gathers, in bazaar or temple court, the stories should be told from these and other sources, until Rama stands beside the knightly Hector, and Sita’s star is set in the same heaven where shines the lonely splendour of Antigone.

When the rapturous peace of the Lord Buddha could no longer be contained within the heart of India, it overflowed, and like a rising tide submerged Ceylon. And now, although India has forgotten and has returned to the more ancient faiths, Ceylon remembers. The Lotus of the Good Law blossoms in every forest pool. The invocation to the Jewel in the Lotus is daily heard from every monastery of the Faith, where the yellow-robed Brethren still follow the way marked for them by the Blessed One who in Uruvela attained to that supernal enlightenment of which he said, “And that deep knowledge have I made my own—that knowledge, hard to perceive, hard to understand, peace-giving, not to be gained by mere reason, which is deeper than the depths, and accessible only to the wise.

“Yet, among living men are some whose eyes are but a little darkened with dust. To them shall the truth be manifest.”

If it be an aim of travel to see what is beautiful and strange, it may be also an aim to seek that spiritual beauty where it sits enthroned in its own high places; and my hope in Ceylon was to visit the land where that strait and narrow way of Buddhism is held which is known as the Hinayana—or the Lesser Vehicle. In Tibet, China, and Japan, I had known the efflorescence of the Buddhist Faith where, recognizing the mystic emanations of the Buddhas, it becomes the Greater Vehicle and breaks into gorgeous ritual and symbolism, extraordinarily beautiful in themselves, and

yet more so in their teaching. Buddhism, in those countries, like the Bride of the Canticles, goes beautifully in jewels of gold and raiment of fine needlework, within her ivory palaces. In Ceylon, like the Lady Poverty of Saint Francis of Assisi, she walks with bared feet, bowed head, her begging-bowl in hand, simple and austere in the yellow robe of the Master—her rock-temples and shrines as he himself might have blessed them in their stern humility. Save at the Temple of the Tooth, the splendours she heaps upon his altars are those of her flowers. With these she may be lavish because his life was wreathed with their beauty. He was born in a garden, beneath a Tree he attained Wisdom, in a garden he died. A faith that is held by nearly every tenth living man or woman is surely worthy of reverence and study, even in these hurrying days when gold, not wisdom, is the measure of attainment.

So I came to Ceylon for the first time but not for the last.

Near a little town in the hills stands a Wihara—a monastery—dreaming in the silent sunshine. The palms are grouped close about the simple roofs—so close that the passing tourist could never guess that the Head of the Buddhist Faith in Ceylon, a great saint, a great ruler of seven thousand priests, dwelt there in so secret, so complete an austerity.

He was a very old man when I came, but his ninety-two years sat lightly on him and each year had laid its tribute of love and honour at his feet. He was known as the Maha Nayaka Thero; and in religion, for the love of the Master, he had taken the Master's human name of Siddartha. It was strange indeed to see the simplicity of his surroundings;—to me it appeared singularly beautiful: it breathed the spiritual purity that had made him beloved throughout the island.

A great scholar, deeply learned in Sanskrit and Pali and in the abtruse philosophy that is for the elders of the Law, he was yet the gentlest of men, and his very learning and strength were all fused into a benignant radiance that sunned the griefs of the world he had cast so far behind him.

I was glad to wander about in the quiet monastery—the little one-storied quadrangle on the side of the hill. It offered—it invited—the life of meditation, of clear thought, of delicate austerity. The noise of great events (so-called) was like the dim murmur of a shell when they reached the Wihara and the ear of Sri Siddartha. But he heard, he noted the progress of science, even to the possibilities of aviation, because to a Buddhist saint all spheres of knowledge are one, and all nothing, in the Ocean of Omniscience.

So the people brought their grievances and troubles to the aged Archbishop. You were in the presence of a very great gentleman when you entered and found him seated, his scribe cross-legged at his feet to record what passed. The people would approach him softly and with the deepest reverence, and with permission would seat themselves on the ground at a due distance.

"Venerable Sir, we are in trouble. We seek your counsel." That was the cry. And always, in spite of his many years, he listened and counselled and comforted.

Soon after my arrival his birthday was celebrated with much rejoicing. The Bhikkus (monks) had put up little festive bamboo arches, fluttering with split palm-leaves like ribbons, all about the Wihara, and troops of Bhikkus came to lay their homage at his feet. The roads were sunshiny with their yellow robes as they flocked in from remote places—jungle, cave-temples, and far mountains. The laity came also, crowding to see the Venerable One. He received them all with serene joy, and pursued his quiet way, thinking, reading, meditating on the Three Jewels—the Lord, the Law, and the Communion of Saints. And the Bhikkus departed, believing that he might be among them for many days.

But it was not to be; for, a few days later, while he was sweeping the garden walks, a duty he had made his own, he felt a sudden loss of strength, and lying down, in two hours he passed painlessly away.

I was permitted to visit Sri Siddartha as he lay in death. The room was very simple and bare. Many of his Bhikkus stood about him, and there were flowers, flowers, everywhere. Beside him burned a perfumed gum, sending up its thin blue spirals of fragrance.

I was received with perfect kindness, and especially by his favourite disciple and pupil—a young monk with a worn ascetic face, who stood in deep meditation at the head of his Master. He looked up and smiled, and raised the face-cloth that I might see, and looked down again at the brown face, calm as a mask of Wisdom with its closed lips and eyes. Even closed, they looked old—old. A Bhikku, standing by, told me that all had loved him and were bereaved in his going. "But for him—he is in the Nirvana of Paradise."

The strange phrase awoke in my mind the words of the Blessed One, and I repeated them as I stood beside that quiet sleep.

"But this, O Bhikkus, is the highest, this is the holiest wisdom—to know that all suffering has vanished away. He has found the true deliverance that lies beyond the reach of change."

And I remembered the symbolic fresco in Colombo, representing the Lord Buddha borne dead on a chariot in a garden. The gardener digs his grave, but the Lord awakes from death, and bids the man know he is not dead but living. The Buddha stands majestic by the open grave—the gardener recoils in fear. Death has no more dominion.

So I left Sri Siddartha lying in the mystery where all the wisdoms are one.

In the garden, in the riot of tropical blossom and beauty, a Bhikku was standing in the perfect stillness that is a part of the discipline. He greeted me, and we spoke of my quest.

"Go," he said, "to Mihintale, where the Law first came to this island by the hands of Mahinda. Seek also the great Dagoba where stand the images of the Buddhas that have been and of Him who is to come. And under the Tree which is a part of that Tree beneath which the Blessed One received illumination, meditate on Truth."

I delayed only that I might see the flames receive the discarded body of the Venerable One; and the ceremony took place next day, amid a vast gathering of the people and the great companies of the Bhikkus. They flooded the ways with sunshine in every shade of yellow, from deep primrose to a tawny orange. The roads were strewn, with rice like snowflakes, stamped into star-shapes. A strange melancholy music went with us. So, climbing a steep hill, we came to the pyre, heaped with the scented and aromatic woods of the jungle, and closed from human view by a high scaffolding draped with bright colours. On this pyre he was laid, and one of his own blood, holding a torch, applied the pure element to the wood: and, as he did so, the assembly raised a cry of "Sadhu, Sadhu!" and with that ascription of holiness a sheet of flame swept up into the crowns of the palms, and the scent of spices filled the air. And even as the body of the Blessed One passed into grey ash, passed also the worn-out dwelling of Sri Siddartha.

I made my way next day to a temple hollowed in the rock, the ceiling of which is frescoed with gods and heroes. It is taught that here the Canon of the Buddhist Scriptures was first committed to writing about 450 B.C. Here five hundred, priests, learned in the Faith, assembled, and collating the Scriptures, chanted every word, while the scribes recorded them with stylus and palm-leaf as they heard. Burmese, Tibetans, Indians, all were present, that so the Law might be carried over Asia, and the Peace of the Blessed One be made known to men.

Here, too, the discipline was fixed. The Bhikku must not be touched by a woman's hand. He must eat but twice a day, and not after noon. He must keep the rule of the Lady Poverty as did Saint Francis. He must sleep nowhere but in Wiharas and other appointed places. And these are but a few of the commands. Yet, if the rule is too hard for him, the Bhikku may relinquish it at his will, and return to the world a free man—a fettered man, as the Master would have said, but free according to the rule of the Transient World. It is said that few accept this permission.

It took little imagination to people the silent temple with the Assembly—the keen intellectual Indian faces, the yellow robe and the bared shoulder, seated in close ranks in the twilight of the temple. Now it was silent and empty, but a mysterious aura filled it. The buildings of men's hands pass away, but the rock, worn not at all, save where feet come and go, preserves the aspect of its great day, when it was the fountain-head of Truth.

A solemn gladness filled the air. Surely the West is waking to the message of the East—that message, flowing through the marvellous art of China and Japan, through the deep philosophies of India, the great Scriptures of the Buddhist Faith, and many more such channels. And we who have entered the many mansions through another gate may share and rejoice in the truths that are a world-heritage.

It was time now that I should visit the holy places, and I took the road through the jungle, intending to stay at the little rest-houses which exist to shelter travellers. The way is green with grass in the middle; there are two tracks for wheels—narrow and little used. Even the native huts may sometimes be forty miles apart. And on either side runs the huge wall of the jungle, holding its secret well.

Great trees, knotted with vines and dark with heavy undergrowth, shut me in. Sometimes a troop of silver-grey monkeys swept chattering overhead; sometimes a few red deer would cross the road, or a blue shrike flutter radiantly from one shelter to another. Mostly, the jungle was silent as the grave, but living, breathing, a vast and terrible personality; an ocean, and with the same illimitable might and majesty. Travelling through it, I was as a fish that swims through the green depths of water.

So I journeyed in a little bullock cart—and suddenly, abruptly, as if dropped from heaven, sprang out of the ocean of the jungle that bathed its feet a huge cube of rock nearly five hundred feet high, with lesser rocks spilt about it that would have been gigantic were it not for the first—the famous Sigurya.

An ancient people, led by a parricide king, took this strange place and made of it a mighty fortress. They cut galleries in the living rock that, like ants, they might pass up and down unharmed from below; and on the head of the rock—a space four acres in extent—they set a king's palace and pleasance, with a bathing-tank to cool the torrid air. Then, still desiring beauty, this people frescoed the sheer planes of this precipitous rock of Sigurya with pictures that modern Singhalese art cannot rival. These vast pictures represent a procession of ladies to a shrine, with attendants bearing offerings. Only from the waist upward are the figures visible; they rise from clouds as if floating in the sky. The faces have an archaic beauty and dignity. One, a queen, crowned and bare-bosomed, followed by attendants bearing stiff lotus blooms, is beautiful indeed, but in no Singhalese or Indian fashion —a face dark, exotic, and heavy-lidded, like a pale orchid. It is believed the whole rock was thus frescoed into a picture-gallery, but time and weather have taken toll of the rest.

The Government has put steps and climbing rails, that the height may be reached. Half-way up is a natural level, and above it soars the remainder of the citadel, to be climbed only by notches cut in the rock, and hand-rails as a safeguard from the sheer fall below. And here this dead people had done a wonderful thing. They had built a lion of brick, so colossal that the head towered to the full height of the ascent. It has fallen into ruin, but the great cat-paws that remain indicate a beast some two hundred feet high. There is a gate between the paws, and in the old days they clambered up through the body of the lion and finally through his throat, into the daylight of the top. Only the paws are left, complete even to the little cat-claw at the back of each. Surely one of the strangest approaches in the world! Here and there the shelving of the rock overhangs the ascent, and drops of water fall in a bright crystal rain perpetually over the jungle so far below.

Standing upon the height, it was weirdly lovely to see the eternal jungle monotonously swaying and waving beneath. I thought of the strange feet that had followed these ways, with hopes and fears so like our own. And now their fortress is but a sunny day's amusement for travellers from lands unknown, and the city sitteth desolate, and the strength of their building is resumed into the heart of nature. But the places where men have worshipped and lifted their hands to the Infinite are never dead. The Spirit that is Life Eternal hovers about them, and the green that binds their broken pillars is the green of an immortal hope.

The evening was now at hand, and, after the sun-steeped day, the jungle gave out its good smells, beautiful earth-warm smells like a Nature-Goddess, rising from the vast tangle of life in the mysterious depths. You

may gather the flowers on their edge and wonder what the inmost flowers are like that you will never see—rich, labyrinthine, beyond all thought to paint.

The jungle is terrible as an army with banners. Sleeping in the little rest-house when the night has fallen, it comes close up to you, creeping, leaning over you, calling, whispering, vibrating with secret life. A word more,—only one,—a movement, and you would know the meaning and be gathered into the heart of it; but always there is something fine, impalpable, between, and you catch but a breath of the whisper.

Very wonderful is the jungle! In the moonlight of a small clearing I saw the huge bulk of three wild elephants feeding. They vanished like wraiths into the depths. The fireflies were hosting in the air like flitting diamonds. Stealthy life and movement were about me: the jungle, wide-awake and aware, moving on its own occasions.

A few days later I was at Anaradhapura. Once a million people dwelt in the teeming city. Here or near was the site visited by the famous Chinese pilgrim already mentioned, Fa Hien. But it is in ruins; the jasper image is gone. The tower is in the dust. A few priests watch by the scene of so much dead greatness and receive the pilgrims who still come with bowed heads to the Holy Places. But Fa Hien has reached the home of all the pilgrimages—the City of God dear and desirable in the sight of Plato and Saint Augustine, and all the warriors of all the faiths, and the inexorable years that have devoured the splendours of the Kings leave untouched his tears and his hope, for both are rooted in immortality.

He writes:

"The houses of the merchants are very beautifully adorned. The streets are smooth and level. At this time the King, being an earnest believer in the Law, desired to build a new monastery for this congregation. He chose a pair of strong oxen and adorned their horns with gold, silver and precious things. Then providing himself with a beautiful gilded plough, the King himself ploughed round the four sides of the allotted space, after which, ceding all personal rights, he presented the whole to the priests."

This must be the monastery described by a later pilgrim, Hieuen Tsang, who journeyed from China to India about the year 630 A.D. In visiting Ceylon, he writes of its magnificence and especially of an upright pole on the roof "on which is fixed a mighty ruby. This gem constantly sheds a brilliant light which is visible day and night for a long distance and afar off appears like a bright star."

That too is quenched in the dust. Where do the great jewels of antiquity hide? But one is left at Anaradhapura more precious than rubies—the famous image of the Buddha seated alone in a forest glade, the true presentment of a God, to whom beneath his closed eyes eternity is visible and time the shadow of a dream. Around him surged once the clamour of a great city, around him now the growth of the forest, both to his vision alike—and nothing. Some wayfarer had laid a flower at his feet when I stood there, and a white tassel of the areca palm. The sun and moon circle before him in this lonely place and the centuries pass like seasons.

> "Forgetful is green earth; the God alone
> Remember everlastingly."

The place is a village lost in the woods, but inexpressibly holy because it contains in its own temple the sacred Bodhi Tree which is an offshoot of that very Tree beneath which the Lord Buddha received the Perfect Wisdom. Ceylon desired this treasure, and they tried to break a branch from the Tree, but dared not, for it resisted the sacrilege. But the Princess Sanghamitta, in great awe and with trembling hand, drew a line of vermilion about the bough, and at that line it separated from the Tree, and the Princess planted it in perfumed earth in a golden vase, and so brought it, attended by honours human and superhuman, to Ceylon—to this place, where it still stands. It is believed to be 2230 years old.

With infinite reverence I was given two leaves, collected as they fell; and it is difficult to look on them unmoved if indeed this Tree be directly descended from the other, which sheltered the triumphant conflict with evil.

The city itself is drowned in the jungle. In the green twilight you meet a queen's palace, with reeling pillars and fallen capitals, beautiful with carved moonstones, for so are called the steps of ascent. Or lost in tangle, a manger fifty feet long for the royal elephants, or a nobly planned bath for the queens, where it is but to close the eyes and dream that dead loveliness floating in the waters once so jealously guarded, now mirroring the wild woodways. A little creeper is stronger than all our strength, and our armies are as nothing before the silent legions of the grass.

Later, I stood before the image of that Buddha who is to come—who in the Unchanging awaits his hour; Maitreya, the Buddha of Love. A majestic figure, robed like a king, for he will be royal. In his face, calm as the Sphinx, must the world decipher its hope, if it may. Strangely enough, in most of his images this Saviour who shall come is seated like a man of the West, and many learned in the faith believe that this Morning Star shall rise in the West. May he come quickly!

I set out one day for Mihintale, in a world of dewy, virginal loveliness, washed with morning gold, the sun shooting bright arrows into the green shade of the trees, a cloud of butterflies radiant as little flower angels going with me. One splendour, rose-red, velvet-black, alighted with quivering wings on the mouse-grey shoulder of the meek little bull who drew my cart and so went with us.

I was glad that my companion should be a devout Buddhist, for his reverence and delight in the beauty of his faith taught me many things. We climbed up through trees so still that the rustling of their shadows on the ground might have been audible, and as we went he told me a very ancient Buddhist story which must have reached the Island with the Apostle Mahinda, son of the high Emperor Ashoka, who brought the faith from his father's court in India. Ashoka is one of the great world-rulers, the Constantine of the Buddhist teaching and himself a devout disciple. This story is a Jataka or Birth Story of the Lord, one of those to which I have already alluded, as conveying moral teaching (and often much folk lore), and this is called "The Dancing Peacock."

"Thus have I heard. In the old days the Blessed Buddha sat at Jetavana, and they told him of a monk who had become drowned in luxury, eating, drinking and adorning his person with magnificence, so that he cared nothing for the faith. And at last they brought him before the Lord that he might be admonished. And the Perfect One said:

" 'Is it true, monk, that despising all nobility you have surrendered yourself to idle luxury?'

"And without waiting to hear a word more the monk flew into a violent anger, and tearing off his magnificent robe he stood naked before the Master, crying:

" 'Then, if you like not my robes, this is the way I will go about!'

"So the bystanding monks cried out: 'Shame, Shame!' and in a fury he rushed from the hall and returned to the condition of a layman. And the Lord said:

" 'Not only now, O monks, has this man lost the Jewel of the faith by immodesty but it was also with him in a former life. Hear the story of the Dancing Peacock.

" 'Very long ago in the first age of the world, the birds chose the Golden Bird to be their King. Now the Golden Bird had a daughter, most beautiful to see, and he gave her her choice of a husband, after the ancient manner of India, calling together all the birds of the Himalaya. And he sent for his

daughter, saying: “Now come and choose!” And looking she saw the Peacock with a neck of gold and emeralds and a train of spread jewels, and instantly she said: “Let this be my husband!”

“So all the birds approached the Peacock, saying:

“ ‘Noble Peacock, the Princess has set her heart upon you. Therefore rejoice with humility.’

“But the Peacock, walking arrogantly, replied:

“ ‘Up to this day none of you would recognize the greatness that was in me. Now instantly do homage to my majesty!’

“And so intoxicated was he with pride that he began to dance, spreading his wings and swaying his head, and altogether conducting himself like a drunken man who cares not at all for decency. And horror seized the Golden Bird and he said:

“ ‘This fellow has broken loose from all sense of shame—how could it be that I should give my Princess to such as he?’ And he uttered this:

“ ‘Pleasant is your cry. Jewelled is your back. The feathers of your tail are glorious, but, Sir, to such a dancer, I can give no daughter of mine!’

“And he bestowed his Princess immediately upon a bird of modest behaviour, and the Peacock, covered with shame, fled away.

“Therefore, brethren, this monk has now lost the Jewel of the faith as he once lost a fair wife. For in a former birth, the Peacock was this shameless monk, but I myself was the Golden Bird.”

And this is a lesson also upon the stately calm which marks the gentleman according to Oriental opinion. It is the low-born only who may hurry and storm. Other stories I heard, for my friend was a student of ancient things, and this belief in lives past and to come is the spiritual life blood of the Orient. It is the mete-yard of justice. He asked me whether the Christian faith explicitly denied it, and I could only reply—No; quoting that strange passage of the Blind Man, when disciples questioning the Christ—

“Did this man sin or his parents, that he was born blind?”—pass unrebuked for the implication.

The Hill of Mihintale rises abruptly as Sigurya from the forests, and the very air about it is holy, for it was on this great hill that Mahinda, mysteriously transported from India, alighted bewildered as one waking from a dream. Here the King, Tissa, seeing the saint seated beneath a tree, heard a voice he could not gainsay that called his name three times; and so, approaching with his nobles, he received the Teaching of the Blessed One.

The hill is climbed by wonderful carved shallow steps, broken now, and most beautiful with an overgrowth of green. At the sides are beds of the Sensitive Plant, with its frail pink flowers. They would faint and fall if touched, and here you would not even breathe roughly upon them, for Buddhists regard the shrinking creatures as living and hold it sinful to cause such evident suffering.

Descending the grey steps, the shade and sunshine dappling his yellow robe and bared shoulder with noble colour, came a priest, on his way to visit the sick of the little village. He stopped and spoke. I told him I had come from visiting the shrines of Burma, and he desired me to give him a description of some matters I had seen there. I did so, and we talked for some time, and it was then mentioned that my food, like his own, necessitated no taking of life. Instantly his whole face softened as he said that was glad news to hear. It was the fulfilling of a high commandment. Would I receive his blessing, and his prayer that the truth might enlighten me in all things? He bestowed both, and, having made his gift, went upon his way with the dignity of perfect serenity. That little circumstance of food (as some would call it) has opened many a closed door to me in Asia.

At the top of the hill is a deep shadowy rock-pool, with a brow of cliff overhanging it; and this is named the Cobra's Bath, for it is believed that in the past there was a cobra who used, with his outspread hood, to shelter the saint, Mahinda, from the torrid sun, and who was also so much a little servant of the Law that none feared and all mourned him when he passed upon his upward way in the chain of existences. Here, above the pool where he loved to lie in the clear cool, they sculptured a great cobra, with three hooded heads, rising, as it were, from the water. It was most sinuously beautiful and looked like the work of a great and ancient people, gathering the very emblem of Fear into the great Peace. On the topmost height was the *stupa*, or shrine, of Mahinda, incasing its holy relic, and the caves where his priests dwelt and still dwell. I entered one, at the invitation of a Bhikku, an old man with singularly beautiful eyes, set in a face of wistful delicacy. He touched my engraved ring and asked what it might mean. Little enough to such as he, whose minds are winged things and flutter in the blue tranquillities far above the earth!

The caves are many, with a rock-roof so low that one cannot stand upright—a strange, dim life, it would seem, but this Bhikku spoke only of the peace of it, the calm that falls with sunset and that each dawn renews. *I* could not doubt this—it was written upon his every gesture. He gave me his blessing, and his prayer that I might walk forever in the Way of Peace. With such friends as these the soul is at home. Peace. It is indeed the salutation of

Asia, which does not greet you with a desire for health or prosperity as in the West, but only—Peace.

I would willingly tell more of my seekings and findings in Ceylon, for they were many and great. But I pass on to the little drowsy hill town of Badulla, where the small bungalows nest in their gardens of glorious flowers and vines. I sat in the churchyard, where the quiet graves of English and Singhalese are sinking peacefully into oblivion. It was Sunday, with a Sabbath calm upon the world. A winding path led up to the open door of the little English church, a sweet breeze swayed the boughs and ruffled the long grass of the graves; the butterflies, small Psyches fluttered their parable in the air about me. A clear voice from the church repeated the Lord's Prayer, and many young voices followed. It was a service for the Singhalese children who have been baptized into the Christian Faith. They sang of how they had been brought out of darkness and the shadow of death and their feet set upon the Way of Peace.

Surely it is so. When was that Way closed to any who sought? But because man must follow his own categorical imperative, I repeated to myself, when they were silent, the words of the poet Abdul Fazl, which he wrote at the command of the Emperor Akbar as an inscription for a Temple in Kashmir:—

> "O God, in every temple I see people that see Thee, and in every language they praise Thee.
>
> If it be a mosque, men murmur the holy prayer, and if it be a Christian church they ring the bell from love to Thee.
>
> Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and sometimes the mosque, but it is Thou whom I seek from temple to temple.
>
> Thine elect have no dealings with heresy or orthodoxy, for neither of these stands behind the screen of thy Truth.
>
> Heresy to the heretic and religion to the orthodox!
>
> But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the heart of the perfume-seller!"

Yes,—and an ancient Japanese poet, going yet deeper, says this thing: "So long as the mind of a man is in accord with the Truth, the Gods will hear him though he do not pray."

I passed the night at a little rest-house and next day set out on the long journey to Polonnarewa, and beyond that to Trincomali, through a wild part of Ceylon, stopping each night at the rest-houses which mark the way. Jungle in India is often mere scrub; this is thousands of acres of mighty forest. A small road has been driven through it, and on either side rises the

dark and secret wall of trees, impenetrable for miles, knitted with creepers and blind with undergrowth—a dangerous mystery.

> "Thousand eyeballs under hoods,
> Have you by the hair."

It seems that every movement is watched, that strained ears listen to every breath from the secrecy that can never be pierced.

Much farther on the forest opens into the ancient tank of Minneri, for these great artificial lakes of the bygone Kings here and in India are called tanks. It is a glorious lake twenty miles in circumference and I saw it first with the mountains, exquisite in form and colour, rising behind it in the rose and gold of a great sunset. Some forgotten King made it to water the country, and there are still the very sluices unbroken though choked by masses of fallen masonry. It is the work of great engineers. No place could be more lovely—the silver fish leaping in translucent water, and one pouched pelican with its ax-like beak drifting lazily in a glory so dazzling, that one could only glimpse it a moment in the dipping sparkles of the reflected sun. The way, like the ascent to Mihintale, was banked with masses of the Sensitive Plant, lovely with its fragile pink flowers and delicately folding and dropping leaves, fainting as you brush them in passing.

But the lake—the wide expanse, calm as heaven and a shimmer of rose and blue and gold! I lingered to watch it—the strange beautiful grotesque of the great bird floating above its own perfect image. It was evening and the jungle was sweet with all the scents drawn out of it during the long sun-steeped day—heavenly scents that come from the teeming life in the mysterious forests, fresh forests germinating on the ruins of the old—murmuring, calling, vibrating with life and wonder and strange existences, and their endless chain of blossom and decay.

It grew dark soon after Minneri, and the fireflies were glittering about us and the moonlight white on the narrow way. A whispering silence filled the air with unseen presences as of the feet that long, long centuries ago trod this way on their errands of pleasure or pain to the dead city of my goal. I could almost see its spectral towers and palaces down the moon-blanched glades. Illusion—nothing more.

The driver missed the track to Polonnarewa, but that mattered little, so wonderful was the night in the lonely place and the great dark where once a mighty people moved, and now but the moon and stars circle before a dead majesty.

But at the long last we found our way and the little rest-house which stands where stood the royal city, near a dim glimmer of water. The only accommodation was a chair, but that was welcome, and when I woke in the grey dawn she came gliding with silver feet over the loveliest lake rippling up to the steps of the fairy house in the woods, and peopled by the glorious rose lotus, grown by the ancient people for the service of the Temples. And the traveller whom I met there went out before breakfast and brought in for provender a pea-hen, a wood pigeon, and a great grey fish from the lake. For myself, I eat like a Buddhist priest and am content,—living foods were not for me.

The ruins at Polonnarewa are wonderful indeed, much more perfect than those of the better known Anaradhapura, though it does not offer, like the latter, the marvellous row of the Buddhas who have fulfilled their mission and that Buddha of Love who is yet to come. All about are temples with colossal Buddhas, palaces, the strangely sculptured stone rails which are so distinctively Buddhist surrounding richly carved shrines. Hinduism mingled with Buddhism also. Some of these beautiful relics have been dug out of the jungle strata, some reclaimed from the invading growths which are so all-obliterating in a tropic country, and no doubt there is as much more to be discovered. The carved work is exquisitely lovely. How strong is the passion for beauty—in the very ends of the earth it is found, and surely it confirms the Platonic teaching that it is a reflection of that passion of joy in which the Creator beheld his work on the seventh day and knew that it was good.

I cannot describe the wonder of passing through these glades and lawns and seeing the great dagobas, those mighty buildings of brick, but now waving with greenery, enshrining each its holy relic. Would that it were possible to imagine the city which dwelt under their shadow! But the homes of men pass very swiftly away. It is only the homes of their souls which abide. Yet the jungle is more wonderful than what it buries. The sunlit walls of green guard the road jealously. The sun-flecks only struggle a few inches within that line, and then—trackless secrecy. A bird flew out, jewelled, gorgeous, “Half angel and half bird.” Are there greater wonders within? Who can tell? It is sometimes death to attempt to lift the veil of Isis. I saw the gravestone of a young man who for all his strength and youth was lost in the jungle—caught in the poisoned sweetness of her embrace and so died. It may have been a lonely and fearful death, and yet again—who knows! There are compensations of which we know nothing.

I stayed at the little rest-house of Kantelai on its lake with the jungle creeping and whispering about it— “Dark mother ever gliding near with soft feet.” Days to be remembered—unspeakably beautiful—they leave some

precious deposit in the memory almost more lovely than the sight itself, as in the world of thought the spirit is more than the body.

And for the end to my journey the great and noble harbour of Trincomali! I wonder why tourists so seldom go there, but the ways of the tourist pass understanding. It winds about in lakes of sea blue among palms and coral bights and glittering beaches. Long ago, the people drifting over from India built a temple where the old fort now stands, and though thus polluted the site is still holy and you may see the Brahman priest cast offerings into the sea from a ledge high up the cliff, with the worshipping people about him. Then the Portuguese swept down upon Ceylon in their great naval days when they were the Sweepers of the Sea, and they destroyed the temple and built their fort. And the Dutch followed, and the Portuguese vanished, and the French conquered the Dutch, and again the Dutch the French, and then the English, hawking over the Seven Seas, pounced like the osprey, and the Dutch sovereignty passed into their keeping. Did I not say the Island had many masters?

So the English made this a great fortified place, humming with naval and military activity; men-of-war lying in the bay, guns bristling in the beautiful old fort that guards the cliff. And now all that too is gone—blown away like a wreath of mist, and the only soldiers and sailors are those who will stay forever in the little grave-place under the palms, and if it so continues I daresay the jungle will take Trincomali as it has taken the City of Kings.

A beautiful place. I wandered on the beach among the shells one marvelled to see as a child, when sailor friends gave them into eager hands—deep brown freckled polished things, leopard-spotted and ivory-lipped, and so smooth that the hand slips off the perfect surface. Delicate frailties of opal and pearl shimmering with mystic colour, spiny grotesques with long thorned stems—there they all lay for the gathering. And at last I went up into the old fort.

It covers many acres on the cliff and the jungle is steadily conquering the empty bungalows and fortifications. It is very old, for the Dutch built it in 1650. Now in the thickets the forsaken guns make an empty bravado like toothless lions. I saw a deer and her fawn come peering shyly through the bushes, and they fled before me. The casements are empty and a flagless flagstaff looks over the heavenly calm of the sea.

Almost lost in the shade I found some old Dutch graves, very square and formal—a something of the rigidity of the burgomaster about them still, as of stiff-ruffed men and women. “Here sleeps in God—” said one mossy inscription (but in Dutch)—and then a break, and then “Johanna” and

another break, and only a word here and there and a long obliterated date. And the Dutch were masters and Johanna slept in the ground of her people as securely as if it had been The Hague itself. So it must then have seemed. And now it is English, and whose next? Truly the fashion of this world passeth away! They were touching, those old tombs, with inscriptions that once were watered with tears, that no one now cares to decipher. And there they lie forgotten in the sighing trees, and the world goes by. The dominion of oblivion is secure, whatever that of death may be.

I climbed down to a casement in the cliff, half-way to the sea, a little shelf overlooking the blue transparence that met the blue horizon, and wondered what the grave God-fearing talk of the Dutchmen had been as they leaned over the parapet, discussing the ways of the heathen and the encroachments of the British. And from there I made my way to the rocks below with the brilliant water heaving about them. Some large fish of the most perfect forget-me-not blue shading into periwinkle mauve on the fins were playing before me, and as they rolled over, or a ripple took them they displayed the underside, a faint rose pink. Such beautiful happy creatures in the wash of the wandering water clear and liquid as light! Sometimes they wavered like moons under a ripple, a blot of heavenliest blue, submerged and quivering, sometimes a shoal of black fish barred with gold swam in among them, beautiful to see. I could have stayed all day, for it was heavenly cool, with a soft sea breeze blowing through the rocks, but even as I watched a great brown monster came wallowing through the water, and my beauties fled like swallows.

The touch of tragedy was not wanting, for high on the cliff was a little pillar to the memory of a Dutch girl who fell in love long ago with an Englishman—a false lover, who sailed away and left her heartbroken. Here she watched his sails lessening along the sky, and as they dipped below the horizon, she threw herself over the cliff in unendurable anguish.

A tragic story, but it is all so long ago that it has fallen back into the beauty of nature and is now no more sad than a sunset that casts its melancholy glory before it fades. Yet I wonder whether in all the hide and seek of rebirth she has caught up somewhere with her Englishman! She knows all about Psyche's wings by this time, and he too must have gained a dear-bought wisdom through "the great mercy of the gift of departing," as the Buddhists call it . . . they to whom death is so small an episode in so long a story.

I sat by the pillar and watched the dying torch of the sunset extinguished in the sea—a sea of glass mingled with fire. And very quietly the stars

appeared one by one in a violet sky and it was night.

THE WONDERFUL PILGRIMAGE TO AMARNATH

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In all India there is nothing more wonderful than the pilgrimages of millions, which set like tidal waves at certain seasons to certain sacrosanct places—the throngs that flock to holy Benares, to Hardwar, and to that meeting of the waters at Prayag, where the lustral rites purify soul and body, and the pilgrims return shriven and glad. But of all the pilgrimages in India the most touching, the most marvellous, is that to Amarnath, nearly twelve thousand feet up in the Himalayas. The cruel difficulties to be surmounted, the august heights to be climbed (for a part of the way is much higher than the height at which the Cave stands), the wild and terrible beauty of the journey, and the glorious close when the Cave is reached, make this pilgrimage the experience of a lifetime even for a European. What must it not be for a true believer? Yet, in the deepest sense, I should advise none to make it who is not a true believer—who cannot sympathize to the uttermost with the wave of faith and devotion that sends these poor pilgrims climbing on torn and wearied feet to the great Himalayan heights, where they not infrequently lay down their lives before reaching the silver pinnacles that hold their hearts' desire.

I have myself made the pilgrimage, and it was one of the deepest experiences of my life; while, as for the beauty and wonder of the journey, all words break down under the effort to express them.

But first for a few words about the God who is the object of devotion. The Cave is sacred to Siva—the Third Person of the Hindu Trinity; that Destroyer who, in his other aspects, is the Creator and Preserver. He is the God especially of the Himalayas—the Blue-Throated God, from the blue mists of the mountains that veil him. The Crescent in his hair is the young moon, resting on the peak that is neighbour to the stars. The Ganges wanders in the matted forests of his hair before the maddening torrents fling their riches to the Indian plains, even as the snow-rivers wander in the mountain pine forests. He is also Nataraja—Lord of the Cosmic Dance; and one of the strangest and deepest-wrought parables in the world is that famous image where, in a wild ecstasy, arms flung out, head flung back in a passion of motion, he dances the Tandavan, the whole wild joy of the figure signifying the cosmic activities of Creation, Maintenance and Destruction. "For," says a Tamil text, "our Lord is a Dancer, who like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses his power in mind and matter, and makes them dance in their turn."

The strange affinity of this conception with the discoveries of science relating to the eternal dance of the atom and electron gives it the deepest interest. I would choose this aspect of the God as that which should fill the mind of the Amarnath pilgrim. Let him see the Great God Mahadeo (Magnus Deus), with the drum in one hand which symbolizes creative sound —the world built, as it were, to rhythm and music. Another hand is upraised bidding the worshipper, "Fear not!" A third hand points to his foot, the refuge where the soul may cling. The right foot rests lightly on a demon—to his strength, what is it? A nothing, the mere illusion of reality! In his hair, crowned with the crescent moon, sits the Ganges, a nymph entangled in its forest. This is the aspect of Mahadeo which I carried in my own mind as I made the pilgrimage, for thus is embodied a very high mysticism, common to all the faiths.

Of all the deities of India Maheshwara is the most complex and bewildering in his many aspects. He is the Great Ascetic, but he is also Lord of the beautiful daughter of the Himalaya,—Uma, Parwati, Gauri, Girija, the Snowy One, the Inaccessible, the Virgin, the Mystic Mother of India, to give but a few of her many and lovely names. She too has her differing aspects. As Kali, she is the goddess of death and destruction; as Parwati, the very incarnation of the charm and sweetness of the Eternal Femine. As Uma she is especially Himalayan.

In the freezing mountain lake of Manasarovar she did age-long penance for her attempt to win the heart of the Great Ascetic, the Supreme Yogi,—her lovely body floating like a lily upon its icy deeps, and so, at long last, winning him for ever. She is the seeker of mountains, the Dweller in the Windhya Hills, the complement of her terrible Lord and Lover, whose throne is Mount Kailasa. Yet in some of his moods she must be completely absorbed and subjugated to ensure his companionship, for he is the archetype of the perfected human yogi of whom says the ancient Song Celestial that "he abides alone in a secret place without desire and without possessions, upon a firm seat, with the working of the mind and senses held in check, with body, head and neck in perfect equipoise, meditating in order that he may reach the boundless Abyss; he who knows the infinite joy that lies beyond the senses and so becomes like an unflickering lamp in a lonely place."

This union is possible to Parwati and her Lord. So dear are they each to the other that they are often represented as a single image of which one half is male, the other female, the dual nature in perfect harmony in the Divine.

Thus then is the Great God to be visited in the high-uplifted secret shrine of the mountains, which are themselves the Lotus flower of creation. At dawn, suffused through all their snows with glowing rose they dominate Indian thought as the crimson lotus of Brahma the Creator. At noon, blue in the radiant unveiled blue of the sky they are the blue Lotus of Vishnu the Preserver, the Pillar of Cosmic Law. At night, when all the earth is rapt in *samadhi*, the mystic ecstasy, they are the snowy Lotus, throne of Siva, Maheshwara the Great God, the Supreme Yogi when he dreams worlds beneath the dreaming moon upon his brow.

And India is herself a petal of the World Lotus of Asia as the Asiatic mind conceives it. Look at Asia of the maps and reverence the Flower which thrones all the Gods of Asia.

The Cave at Amarnath is sacred because a spring, eternally frozen, has in its rush taken the shape of the holy Lingam, which is the symbol of reproduction and therefore of Life. This is also the Pillar of the Universe—that Pillar which the Gods sought to measure, the one flying upward, the other downward, for aeons, seeking the beginning and the end, and finding none. Yet again, it is the Tree of Life, which has its roots in Eternity, and branches through the mythology of many peoples. And if there are degenerated forms of this worship, surely the same may be said of many others. And it is needful to know these things in order to realize the significance of the worship.

The pilgrimage can be made only in July and August. Before and after, a barrier of snow and ice closes the way, and makes the Cave a desolation.

The start is made from Pahlgam, a tiny village on the banks of the Lidar River in Kashmir, where it leaps from the great glacier of Kolahoi to join the Jhelum River in the Happy Valley. Pahlgam itself stands at a height of about eight thousand feet.

The day before we started there was a great thunderstorm, the grandest I have ever known. The mountains were so close on each side that they tossed the thunder backwards and forwards to each other, and the shattering and roaring of the echoes was like the battles of the Gods or the rolling of Maheshwara's mighty drum in the mountain hollows, while the continuous blue glare of the lightning was almost appalling. It was strange to feel only a little web of canvas between ourselves and that elemental strife when the rain followed as if the fountains of the great deep were broken up—cold as snow, stinging like hail, and so steady that it looked like crystal harpstrings as it fell. Yet next day we waked to a silver rain-washed world, sparkling

with prisms of rain and dew; fresh snow on the mountains, and delicate webs of soft blue mist caught like smoke in the pines.

So we set forth from Pahlgam, with our cavalcade of rough hill ponies carrying the tents and provisions and all our substance, and began our march by climbing up the river that flows from those eternal heights into the Pahlgam valley. Much of the way can be ridden if one rides very slowly and carefully for these wonderful animals are sure-footed as cats; but the track is often terrifying—broken boulders and the like. If the ponies were not marvels, it could not be done; and if one were not a safe rider, one certainly could not stick on. The pony gives a strong hoist of his fore-legs, and you are up one rock and hanging on by his withers; then a strong hoist of the hind legs and you are nearly over his neck; and this goes on for hours; and when it is beyond the pony you climb on your feet, and ford the torrents as best you may.

Up and up the steep banks of the river we climbed, among the pines and mighty tumbled boulders. Up by the cliffs, where the path hangs and trembles over the water roaring beneath. On the opposite side the mountains soared above the birches and pines, and the torrents hung down them like mist, falling, falling from crag to crag, and shattering like spray-dust as they fell. Once a mighty eagle soared above us, balancing on the wind, and then floated away without a single motion of his wings—wonderful to see; and the spread of his wings was greater than the height of the tallest man.

We had long passed the last few huts, and the track wound steadily higher, when suddenly growing on us, I heard a deep musical roar like the underlying bass of an orchestra—the full-chorded voice of many waters. And as we turned a corner where the trail hung like a line round the cliff, behold, a mighty gorge of pines and uplifted hills, and the river pouring down in a tremendous waterfall, boiling and foaming white as it fell into the raging pit beneath.

What a sight! We stopped and looked, every sense steeped in the wonder of it. For the air was cool with the coolness that comes like breath off a river; our ears were full of the soft thunder; the smell of pines was like the taste of a young world in one's mouth; yet it was all phantasmal, in a way, as if it could not be real. I watched the lovely phantom, for it hung like a thing unreal between heaven and earth, until it grew dreamlike to me and dyed my brain with sound and colour, and it was hard indeed to pass on.

That night we camped in a mountain valley some two thousand feet above Pahlgam. It was like climbing from story to story in a House of Wonder. The river was rushing by our tents when they were pitched, pale

green and curling back upon itself, as if it were loath to leave these pure heights, and the mountains stood about us like a prison, almost as if we might go no farther. And when I stood outside my tent just before turning in, a tremulous star was poised on one of the peaks, like the topmost light on a Christmas tree, and the Great Bear which in India is the constellation of the Seven Rishis, or Sages, lay across the sky glittering frostily in the blue-blackness.

I had a narrow escape that day; for, as I was leading the cavalcade, I met a wild hill-rider in the trail between two great rocks, and his unbroken pony kicked out at me savagely with his foreleg and caught me above the ankle. Luckily, they do not shoe their horses here; but it was pretty bad for a bit, and I was glad of the night's rest.

Next day we started and rounded out of the tiny valley; and lo! on the other side another river, flowing apparently out of a great arch in the mountainside. Out it poured, rejoicing to be free; and when I looked, it was flowing, not from the mountain but from a snow-bridge. Mighty falls of snow had piled up at the foot of the mountain, as they slipped from its steeps; and then the snow, melting above, had come down as a torrent and eaten its way through the wide arch of this cave. Often one must cross a river on these snow-bridges, and at a certain stage of melting they are most dangerous; for, if the snow should give, there may be frightful depths beneath.

Here first I noticed how beautiful were the flowers of the heights. The men gathered and brought me tremulous white and blue columbines, and wild wallflowers, orange-coloured and so deeply scented that I could close my eyes and call up a cottage garden, and the beehives standing in sedate rows under the thatched eaves. And there was a glorious thistle, new to me, as tall as a man, well armed and girded with blue and silver spears and a head of spiky rays. Bushes, also, like great laurels, but loaded with rosy berries that the Kashmiris love.

We turned then round a huge fallen rock, green and moist with hanging ferns, and shining with the spray of the river, and before us was a mountain, and an incredible little trail winding up it, and that was our way. I looked and doubted. It is called the Pisu, or Flea Ascent, on the dubious ground that it takes a flea's activity to negotiate it. Of course, it was beyond the ponies, except here and there, on what I called breathers, and so we dismounted. The men advised us to clutch the ponies' tails, and but for that help it would have been difficult to manage. My heart was pumping in my throat, and I could feel the little pulses beating in my eyes, before I had gone far, and

every few minutes we had to stop; for even the guides were speechless from the climb, and I could see the ponies' hearts beating hard and fast under the smooth coats.

But still we held on, and now beside us were blooming the flower-gardens of the brief and brilliant Himalayan summer—beds of delicate purple anemones, gorgeous golden ranunculus holding its golden shields to the sun, orange poppies, masses of forget-me-nots of a deep, glowing blue—a *burning* blue, not like the fair azure of the Western flower, but like the royal blue of the Virgin's robe in a Flemish missal. And above these swayed the bells of the columbines on their slender stems, ranging from purest white, through a faint, misty blue, to a deep, glooming purple. We could hardly go on for joy of the flowers. It was a marvel to see all these lovely things growing wild and uncared for, flinging their sweetness on the pure air, and clothing the ways with beauty. And at each turn fresh snow-peaks emerged against the infinite blue of the sky—some with frail wisps of white cloud caught in the spires, and some bold and clear as giants ranged for battle—the lotus petals of the Infinite Flower.

And so we climbed up and reached another story, and lay down to rest and breathe before we went farther up into wonderland.

The top was a grassy "marg," or meadow, cloven down to the heart of the earth by a fierce river. Around it was a vast amphitheatre of wild crags and peaks; and beneath these, but ever upward, lay our trail. But the meadow was like the field in Sicily where Persephone was gathering flowers when she was snatched away by Dis to reign in the Underworld. I remembered Leighton's picture of her, floating up from the dead dark, like a withered flower, and stretching her hands to the blossoms of the earth once more. I never saw such flowers; they could scarcely be seen elsewhere.

> And here the myriad blossoms lay
> In shattered rainbows on the grass.
> Exulting in their little day
> They laughed aloud to see us pass.
>
> We left them in their merriment,—
> The singing angels of the snows,—
> And still we climbed the steep ascent
> Along the sunward way it knows.

The snow had slipped off the meadow,—was rushing away in the thundering river far below,—and the flowers were crowding each other, rejoicing in the brief gladness of summer before they should be shrouded again under the chilly whiteness. But their colour took revenge on it now.

They glowed, they sang and shouted for joy—such was the vibration of their radiance! I have never dreamed of such a thing before.

And then came our next bad climb, up the bed of a ragged mountain torrent and across it, with the water lashing at us like a whip. I do not know how the ponies did it. They were clutched and dragged by the ears and tails, and a man seized me by the arms and hauled me up and round the face of a precipice, where to miss one step on the loose stones would have been to plunge into depths I preferred not to look at. Then another ascent like the Flea, but shorter, and we were a story higher, in another wild marg, all frosted silver with edelweiss, and glorious with the flowers of another zone—flowers that cling to the bare and lichened rock and ask no foothold of earth.

That was a wild way. We climbed and climbed steadfastly, sometimes riding, sometimes walking, and round us were rocks clothed with rose-red saxifrage, shaded into pink, and myriads of snowy stars, each with a star of ruby in its heart. Clouds still of the wonderful forget-me-not climbed with us. Such rock gardens! No earthly hand could plant those glowing masses and set them against the warm russets and golds of the lower crags, lifted up into this mighty sky world. The tenderness of the soft form and radiant colour of these little flowers in the cruel grasp of the rocks, yet softening them into grace with the short summer of their lives, is exquisitely touching. It has the pathos of all fragility and brief beauty.

Later we climbed a great horn of rock, and rounded a slender trail, and before was another camping-place—the Shisha-Nag Lake among the peaks. We saw its green river first, bursting through a rocky gateway, and then, far below, the lake itself,—

> We passed the frozen sea of glass
> Where never human foot has trod,
> Green as a clouded chrysoprase
> And lonely as a dream of God.—

reflecting the snowy pinnacles above. The splintered peaks stand about it. Until July it is polished ice, and out of one side opens a solemn ante-chapel blocked with snow. The lake itself is swept clear and empty. The moon climbs the peaks and looks down, and the constellations swing above it. A terrible, lonely place, peopled only by shadows. It was awful to think of the pomps of sunrise, noon, and sunset passing overhead, and leaving it to the night and dream which are its only true companions. It should never be day there—always black, immovable Night, crouching among the snows and staring down with all her starlight eyes into that polished icy mirror.

For days we went. We left their mirth
For where the springs of light arise,
And dawns lean over to the earth,
And stars are split to lower skies
White, white the wastes around us lay,
The wild peaks gathered round to see
Our fires affront the awful day,
Our speech the torrents' giant glee.

We camped above the lake, and it was cold—cold! A bitter wind blew through the rocks—a wind shrilling in a waste land. Now and then it shifted a little and brought the hoarse roar of some distant torrent or the crash of an avalanche. And then, for the first time I heard the cry of the marmot—a piercing note which intensifies the desolation. We saw them too, sitting by their burrows; and then they shrieked and dived and were gone.

We made a little stir of life for a while—the men pitching our tents and running here and there to gather stunted juniper bushes for fuel, and get water from an icy stream that rippled by. But I knew we were only interlopers. We would be gone next day, and chilly silence would settle down on our blackened camp-fires.

In the piercing cold that cut like a knife I went out at night, to see the lake, a solemn stillness under the moon. I cannot express the awe of the solitudes. As long as I could bear the cold, I intruded my small humanity; and then one could but huddle into the camp-bed and try to shut out the immensities, and sleep our little human sleep, with the camp-fires flickering through the curtains, and the freezing stars above.

Next day we had to climb a very great story higher. Up and up the track went steadily, with a sheer fall at one side and a towering wall on the other. We forded a river where my feet swung into it as the pony, held by two men, plunged through. It is giddy, dazzling work to ford these swift rivers. You seem to be stationary; only the glitter of the river sweeps by, and the great stones trip the pony. You think you are done, and then somehow and suddenly you are at the other side.

And here a strange thing happened. When the morning came, we found that a *sadhu*—a wandering pilgrim—had reached the same height on his way to the Cave. He was resting by the way, very wearied, and shuddering with the cold. So I ventured to speak to him and welcome him to our fire and to such food (rice) as he could accept from some of our men; and there, when we stopped for the mid-day meal, he sat among us like a strange bird dropped from alien skies. Sometimes these men are repulsive enough, but this one—I could have thought it was Kabir himself! Scrupulously clean,

though poor as human being could be, he would have come up from the burning plains with his poor breast bare to the scarring wind, but that some charitable native had given him a little cotton coat. A turban, a loin-cloth looped between the legs, leaving them naked, grass sandals on feet coarse with travelling, and a string of roughly carved wooden beads such as the Great Ascetic himself wears in his images were all his possessions, except the little wallet that carried his food—rice and a kind of lentil. I thought of Epictetus, the saint of ancient Rome, and his one tattered cloak.

A wandering sadhu; far he came,
His thin feet worn by endless roads;
Yet in his eyes there burnt the flame
That light the altars of the Gods.

The keen wind scarred his naked breast.
I questioned him, and all the while
The quiet of a heart at rest
Shone in his secret patient smile.

Yes, he had come from hot Bengal,
From scorching plains to peaks of ice;
Took what was given as chance might fall,
And begged his little dole of rice.

"And have you friends, or any child?
Or any home?" He shook his head,
And threw his hands out as he smiled,
And "Empty," was the word he said.

And so he sat beside our fire,
As strange birds drop from alien skies,
Gentle but distant, never nigher,
With that remoteness in his eyes.

This was a man of about fifty-five, tall, thin, with a sensitive face, yet with something soldierly about him; dignified and quiet, with fine hawk-like features and strained bright eyes in hollow caves behind the gaunt cheek-bones. A beautiful face in both line and expression; a true mystic, if ever I saw one!

He told me he had walked from Bengal (look at the map and see what that means!) and that the poor people were very kind and gave him a little rice sometimes, when they had it, and sometimes a tiny coin, asking only his prayers in return. That he needed very little, never touching meat or fish or eggs, which he did not think could be pleasing to God. For sixteen years he had been thus passing from one sacred place to the other—from the holy

Benares to Hardwar where the Ganges leaves the hills, and farther still, praying—praying to the One. "There is One God," he said; and again I thought of Kabir, the supreme mystic, the incarnate Joy, who also wandered through India,—striving, like this man:

> He has looked upon God, and his eyeballs are clear;
> There was One, there is One, and but One, saith Kabir,—
>
> To learn and discern of his brother the clod,
> And his brother the beast, and his brother the God.

But does it not fill one with thoughts? That man had a soul at rest and a clear purpose. And the Christ and the Buddha were sadhus; and if it seem waste to spend the sunset of a life in prayer, that may be the grossest of errors. We do not know the rules of the Great Game. How should we judge? So he came with us, striding behind the ponies with his long steadfast stride, and his company was pleasing to me.

That was a wondrous climb. Had any God ever such an approach to his sanctuary as this Great God of the heights? We climbed through a huge amphitheatre of snows, above us the ribbed and crocketed crags of a mighty mountain. It was wild architecture—fearful buttresses, springing arches, and terrible foundations rooted in the earth's heart; and, above, a high clerestory, where the Dawn might walk and look down through the hollow eyeholes of the windows into the deeps of the precipice below.

I suppose the architect was the soft persistence of water, for I could see deep beach-marks on the giant walls. But there it stood, crowned with snow, and we toiled up it, and landed on the next story, the very water-shed of these high places—a point much higher than the goal of our journey. And that was very marvellous, for we were now in the bare upper world, with only the sky above us, blue and burning on the snow, the very backbone of the range; and, like the Great Divide, the rivers were flowing both ways, according to the inclination of the source.

Before us lay snow which must be crossed, and endless streams and rivers half or wholly buried in snow. That was a difficult time. The ponies were slipping, sliding, stumbling, yet brave, capable, wary as could be. I shall for ever respect these mountain ponies. They are sure-footed as goats and brave as lions and nothing else would serve in these high places. In Tibet they have been known to climb to the height of 20,000 feet.

Sometimes the snow was rotten, and we sank in; sometimes it was firm, and then we slipped along; sometimes riding was impossible, and then we

picked our way with alpenstocks. But everywhere in the Pass summer had its brief victory, and the rivers were set free to feed the sultry Indian plains.

At last we won through to another high marg, a pocket of grass and blossom in the crags; and there, at Panjitarni, we camped. Of course, we had long been above all trees, but nothing seemed to daunt the flowers. This marg lay basking in the sun, without one fragment of shade except when the sun fell behind the peaks in the evening. But the flowers quivered, glowed, expanded. My feet were set on edelweiss, and the buttercups were pure gold. The stream ran before me pure as at the day-dawn of the world, and from all this innocent beauty I looked up to the untrodden snow, so near, yet where only the eagle's wings could take her.

Next day was an enforced rest, for everyone, man and beast, was weary; so we basked in the sun, reading and writing, and but for the July snow and the awful peaks, it was hard to believe that one was in the upper chambers of the King's Palace. Yet the air was strange, the water was strange, and it was like a wild fairy-tale to look down from my camp-bed and see the grey edelweiss growing thick beside it, and hear the shriek of the marmot.

Next day we should reach the Cave, and when it came the morning looked down upon us sweet and still—a perfect dawn.

First we crossed the marg, shining with buttercups, and climbed a little way up a hill under the snows, and then dropped down to the river-bed under caves of snow for the path above was blocked. It was strange to wade along through the swift, icy waters, with the snow-caves arching above us in the glowing sunlight. The light in these caves is a wonderful lambent green, for the reflected water is malachite green itself; but I was glad when the passage was over, for it looked as if some impending mass must fall and crush us.

We climbed painfully out of the water, and in front was a track winding straight up the mountain. It was clear that we could not ride up; but we could not delay, so we started as steadily as the ponies. I hardly know how they did it—the men dragged and encouraged them somehow. And still less do I know how we did it. The strain was great. At one point I felt as if my muscles would crack and my heart burst. We did the worst in tiny stages, resting every few minutes, and always before us was the sadhu winning steadily up the height. It was a weary, long climb, new elevations revealing themselves at every turn of the track. Finally, I fell on the top and lay for a bit to get my wind, speechless but triumphant.

We rode then along the face of the hill—an awful depth below, and beside us flowers even exceeding those we had seen. Purple asters, great pearl-white Christmas roses weighting their stems, orange-red ranunculus. It

was a broken rainbow scattered on the grass. And above this heaven of colour was the Amarnath mountain at last—the goal.

Then came a descent when I hardly dared to look below me. That too could not be ridden. In parts the track had slipped away, and it was only about six inches wide. In others we had to climb over the gaps where it had slipped. At the foot we reached a mighty mountain ravine—a great cleft hewn in the mountain, filled like a bowl to a fourth of its huge depth with snow, and with streams and river rushing beneath. We could hear them roaring hollowly, and see them now and then in bare places. And at the end of the ravine, perhaps two miles off, a great cliff blocked the way, and in it was a black hole—and this was the Shrine.

The snow was so hard that we could ride much of the way, but with infinite difficulty, climbing and slipping where the water beneath had rotted the snow. In fact, this glen is one vast snow-bridge, so undermined is it by torrents. The narrowness of it and the towering mountains on each side make it a tremendous approach to the Shrine.

A snow-bridge broke suddenly under my pony and I thought I was gone; but a man caught me by the arm, and the pony made a wild effort and struggled to the rocks. And so we went on.

The Cave is high up the cliff, and I could see the sadhu's figure striding swiftly on as if nothing could hold him back.

We dismounted before the Cave, and began the last climb to the mouth. I got there first, almost done, and lo! a great arch like that of the choir of a cathedral; and inside, a cave eaten by water into the rock, lighted by the vast arch, and shallow in comparison with its height of 150 feet. At the back, frozen springs issuing from the mountain. One of the springs, the culminating point of adoration, is the Lingam as it is seen in the temples of India—a very singular natural frost sculpture. Degraded in the associations of modern ignorance the mystic and educated behold in this small phallic pillar of purest ice the symbol of the Pillar of Cosmic Ascent, rooted in rapture of creation, rising to the rapture of the Immeasurable. It represents That within the circumference of which the universe swings to its eternal rhythm—That which, in the words of Dante, moves the sun and other stars. It is the stranger here because before it the clear ice has frozen into a flat, shallow altar.

The sadhu knelt before it, tranced in prayer. He had laid some flowers on the altar, and, head thrown back and eyes closed, was far away—in what strange heaven, who shall say? Unconscious of place or person, of himself, of everything but the Deity, he knelt, the perfect symbol of the perfect place.

I could see his lips move— Was it the song of Kabir to the Eternal Dancer? —

He is pure and eternal,
His form is infinite and fathomless.
He dances in rapture and waves of form arise from his dance.
The body and mind cannot contain themselves when touched by his divine joy.
He holds all within his bliss.

What better praise for such a worshipper before him in whose ecstasy the worlds dance for delight—here where, in the great silence, the Great God broods on things divine? But I could not know——

I could not know, for chill and far
His alien heaven closed him in.
His peace shone distant as a star
Remote in skies we cannot win.

I laid my flowers on the altar of ice beside his. Who could fail to be moved where such adoration is given after such a pilgrimage? And if some call the Many-Named "God," and some "Siva," what matter? To all it is the Immanent God. And when I thought of the long winter and the snow falling, falling, in the secret places of the mountains, and shrouding this temple in white, the majesty of the solitudes and of the Divine filled me with awe.

Outside the marmot's cry was shrill,
The mountain torrents plunged in smoke;
Inside our hearts were breathless still
To hear the secret word He spoke.
We heard Him, but the eyelids close,
The seal of silence dumbs the lips
Of such as in the awful snows
Receive the dread Apocalypse.

Later we climbed down into the snowy glen beneath the Cave, and ate our meal under a rock, with the marmots shrilling about us, and I found at my feet—what? A tuft of bright golden violets—all the delicate penciling in the heart, but shining gold. I remembered Ulysses in the Garden of Circe, where the *moly* is enshrined in the long thundering roll of Homer's verse:—

"For in another land it beareth a golden flower, but not in this."

It is a shock of joy and surprise to find so lovely a marvel in the awful heights.

We were too weary to talk. We watched the marmots, red-brown like chestnuts, on the rocks outside their holes, till everything became indistinct

and we fell asleep from utter fatigue.

The way back was as toilsome, only with ascents and descents reversed; and so we returned to Panjitarni.

Next day we rested; for not only was it necessary from fatigue, but some of our men were mountain-sick because of the height. This most trying ailment affects sleep and appetite, and makes the least exertion a painful effort. Some felt it less, some more, and it was startling to see our strong young men panting as their hearts laboured almost to bursting. The native cure is to chew a clove of garlic; whether it is a faith cure or no I cannot tell, but it succeeded. I myself was never affected.

Of the journey down I will say little. Our sadhu journeyed with us and was as kind and helpful on the way as man could be. He stayed at our camp for two days when we reached Pahlgam; for he was all but worn out, and we begged him to rest. It touched me to see the weary body and indomitable soul.

At last the time came for parting. He stood under a pine, with his small bundle under his arm, his stick in his hand, and his thin feet shod for the road in grass sandals. His face was serenely calm and beautiful. I said I hoped God would be good to him in all his wanderings; and he replied that he hoped this too, and he would never forget to speak to Him of us and to ask that we might find the Straight Way home. For himself, he would wander until he died—probably in some village where his name would be unknown but where they would be good to him for the sake of the God.

So he salaamed and went, and we saw him no more. Was it not the mighty Akbar who said, “I never saw any man lost in a straight road”?

He came with us; we journeyed down
To lowlier levels where the fields
Are golden with the wheat new-mown,
And all the earth her increase yields.

He told us that his way lay on.
He might not rest; the High God's cry
Rang "Onward!" and the beacon shone,
"And I must wander till I die.

"But when I speak unto my God
I still will tell him you were kind,
That you may tread where He has trod
Until the Straight Way home you find."

He joined his hands in deep salute,
And, smiling, went his lonely way,
Sole, yet companioned, glad, yet mute,
And steadfast toward the perfect day.

And still I see him lessening
Adown the endless Indian plain.
Yet certain am I of this thing—
Our souls have met—shall meet again.

Thus I have tried to give some dim picture of the wonders of that wonderful pilgrimage. But who can express the faith, the devotion that send the poorer pilgrims to those heights? They do it as the sadhu did it. Silence and deep thought are surely the only fitting comments on such a sight.

THE MAN WITHOUT A SWORD

(What is told in this story of jujutsu or judo, the Japanese national science of self-defence and attack, is from the point of view of an expert, strange as it may appear.)

This is the true story of an experience which befell me in Japan. For six years I have kept silence and I tell it now only because my own knowledge assures me of the growing interest in matters relating to what Oriental scholars call "the formless world"—that is to say the sphere surrounding us which we now know to be independent of solidity and time as we conceive them, a world not to be grasped by our fallible senses yet apprehended by some of us in certain conditions not tracked and charted definitely. Modern science, feeling after the mysterious, has named this world which permeates ours and yet is invisible, the Fourth Dimension because it is not subject to the three illusions of length, breadth and height which imprison most of us from the cradle to the grave. But why philosophize? Let me tell my story.

My name is Hay, and I am a middle-class Scotchman, a public school and University man who, like others, took part in the War. I came through whole and sound but it left its mark. For one thing, it knocked to smithereens the average ideals of success and attainment, which, again like others, had shaped my life, and from being a strictly average man in that I followed the herd in all its decencies of convention the war left me naked and unsheltered in the open without a rag of conviction to hide me from the truth if it should happen to pass my way. But I had ceased to believe in its existence outside the things we use in daily intercourse.

Another effect also. My war experience was naval and chiefly in the Mediterranean where men of all nationalities were coming and going, and that constant contact wore thin the shell an Englishman inhabits—such crustaceans as we are!—until I began to see in what different terms the universe may be stated from the differing angles of race and nationality. What helped me to this understanding was a friendship I struck up with a Japanese naval officer—a remarkable fellow as I thought then and know now. He spoke English perfectly and had not only read but inwardly digested what he read, which is more than can be said for most of us. I owed him two services besides. He taught me to speak Japanese—I am quick at languages,—and being a great expert in the national art of defence and attack which is known as jujutsu, he began to give me lessons which were the beginning of much. His name was Arima, his age the same as mine—

thirty-four,—and for very different reasons we both left our services when the war shut down.

Yet I knew our friendship would not end there, nor did it. One day while I was dining alone in my club in London, wondering whether I should ever again find anything which I honestly felt worth doing, a letter reached me. I knew the almost mercantile precision of the hand before I opened it and it sent a pleasurable thrill through nerves which had been stagnant with exhaustion since I had been ashore.

> "Hay sama,
>
> "I think much of you and wonder if you ever free a thought to cross the sea to my little house in Kyushu. That is our southern island and since illness drove me from our navy I live there. I need the sunshine of a friend's company and if you feel the same need come, I beg you, and make me a long visit. I live in a beautiful valley run through by a river which will please you. It flows by rocks and mountains, pine woods and prosperous villages; a happy land. Not far from my house is a temple to Hachiman, God of War. I do not pay my devotions there for reasons which you will understand. But come, my friend. I have learned many things since we met and no doubt it is the same with you."

That letter flung up a window in a stifling room. It meant escape from the dull indifference besetting me and contact with those people who of all in the world preserve the Stoic virtues which seemed to be the only ones likely to extricate me from my Slough of Despond. I wrote my answer within ten minutes and in two months I was in Japan.

I did not go at once to Arima, nor will I tell my first adventures on landing and making myself at home in Tokyo. They are neither good reading nor thinking. I had more than one reason to regret that Arima had made me free of the country by giving me its tongue. Pretty well worn out, with a stale taste of sour regrets in my mouth, I went down at last to Kyushu, and in the garden of Arima's delightful little house I take up the story.

It was a true Japanese garden, a wide landscape seen through the diminishing end of a telescope. There was a forest, a mountain which had spilt its mighty boulders by the side of a running river with a Chinese bridge thrown over it. True, one could have bestridden the mountain and hopped the river, but what did that matter? The real river, the Kogagawa, rippled beside the grass which ran down to where a great willow dipped cool fingers in liquid crystal from the mountain heights, and under that green veil of drooping boughs with eyes half closed it was possible to dream that the little garden passed into the idea which had filled its maker's mind, and became grand and terrible, a place of wild beauty and awe.

“It must be so,” said Arima smiling, “because he saw it so, and what a man has once clearly seen is registered immortal and can be seen by others when necessary.”

He sat under the willow, his fine bronzed face and throat bare to the flitting shadows of trembling leaves.

“Who made it?” I asked. “He cannot have been a common man.”

“He was my great-great-grandfather and very far from a common man. I have a paper in his own hand which tells why and how he made it and it is a very strange story.”

He threw away his cigarette and sat looking at the wandering paths paved with flat stones here and there, the little flowering herbs springing in the crevices; at the mountain where, altering the scale, you might wander and be lost for dreadful days in mighty gorges and ravines. The river swept round it in a rapid current possibly two feet wide and joined the Kogagawa in a lovely bay quite four feet across where a fairy fleet might have anchored after a prosperous voyage from Stratford on Avon in the dream of a midsummer night.

“Some day I will read you his paper, but not yet. I have reasons for delay. The spirit of our country is hovering over you but has not yet entered in and possessed you. People come to Japan in ship-loads and see the surface bright with colour and gaiety which we spread out before them. But they do not know. We do not mean they should. To be truthful—I do not think any foreigner can understand Japan unless he is a Buddhist at heart—As you are.”

“I?” I echoed in uttermost astonishment. “My good fellow, I am nothing. I haven’t the devil of a ghost of a notion what it all means.”

He looked at me with a quaint smile hiding in the deeps of his narrow eyes. It peered out like a wise gnome, as old as the hills and older.

“Your downstairs self knows very well. It has not passed it on yet to your honourable upstairs self. But the wireless begins to talk and the air is full of voices beating at your ears. What stories they will tell you! I should like to hear them.”

For the moment I could not be sure that he was in earnest. But I could ask, for it was an intimate hour.

The full moon was rounding up from behind the mountain of Naniwa where the monastery of the Thousand-Armed Kwannon, Spirit of Pity, looks out over a wide and wonderful landscape of woods and valleys. That day we had visited the house of the Abbot,—The House Built upon Clouds, they

call it, and there, for a moment I had had an experience new and very difficult to describe.

Yet I must try. It began with a physical sensation like a strange intake of breath which I could not expel, and made my heart beat violently. That passed, but I thought it had affected my head for it seemed that my memory was disturbed. I could not remember my name, and my past life, as I recalled it from childhood, was gone, shrunk to an invisible point so small that I could look over it to something beyond. That something moved in cloudy shapes impossible to focus into clear vision. I saw as one sees when a telescope needs adjusting and another turn will clear all into intelligibility. But for a moment I had dropped my historic, racial sense like a garment, and the monk with his calm face like lined and weathered ivory seemed nearer to me than anyone I had ever known though it was not half an hour since we had met. I could remember his sonorous Japanese name. My own was gone. I must place the scene clearly. Arima was examining some ancient vessels of fine three-metal work from Tibet, and the Abbot and I stood by the window looking out over the vast drop of the valley from such a height that it was like a swallow's nest in the eaves of the spiritual city. Suddenly I was aware that our eyes were fixed on each other, on my side with passionate, on his with searching intensity.

Again, what shall I say? I was conscious that something arresting had happened and could not tell myself what it was. But it was his eyes through which I looked, as through a window, with an overwhelming question.

Also, he was speaking in a clear low monotone like running water. It was as though he continued a conversation of which I had lost the beginning.

"But how can you expect to see without concord of mind? Yours is in the confusion of a tossing sea. It has no direction. The way you must follow is to repeat these words until you understand them perfectly."

He paused and enunciated these strange words clearly:

"I have no parents. I make the heavens and the earth my parents. I have no magic. I make personality my magic. I have no strength. I make submission my strength. I have neither life nor death. I make the Self-Existent my life and death. I have no friends. I make my mind my friend. I have no armour. I make right-thinking and right-doing my armour. Can you remember this? It is the beginning." Looking in his eyes I remembered and repeated it perfectly.

"Good!" he said with calm approval.—"And there is one clause more. An important one. 'I have no sword. I make the sleep of the mind my

sword.' That signifies that the outer reasoning self, which is really nothing, must be lulled asleep and put off its guard before the inner self, which is All, can function."

Suddenly as it had come the experience ended. I was released. I stood in the window, watching the softly floating clouds, the waving woods far, far beneath, the wheeling of a drove of swallows in blue air. The Abbot was speaking with Arima; they were handling the vessels, barbarically rich, and discussing them with interest. Had my experience been some wild momentary distortion of the brain? I shuddered as if with cold. My hands were shaking. Then all was normal.

But, clambering down the hundreds of beautiful broken steps overgrown with flowers and moss where so many generations have come and gone in pilgrimage, I said nothing to Arima. It had become impossible. Something called the war to my mind and I said something careless, but he waved that aside.

"We must speak of it no more. Why steep one's soul in illusion? Much that we thought real and allowed to affect us was nothing, and the emotions it caused less than nothing. I have awaked. You are near the dawn."

I thought this remark cruel, and said something heated about the dead who had paid with their lives for the illusion—the ignorant things one does say! He received it with his invulnerable Japanese courtesy.

"I went too fast. Pardon me. The Buddha alone can impart knowledge to the Buddha, and who am I that I should speak? The time and the master come together. Here, my friend,—you should drink of this running water. It comes from a beautiful spring in the mountain above. They call it 'Light Eternal' and say that to taste of it is to drink perfect health. If only it were as easy as that!"

By the mossy rock lay two little dippers of pure white wood. I was extremely English at that instant and nothing would have induced me to soil my lips with a cup used by strangers. I hooped my hands and drank,—he, from the dipper.

"You miss the sacrament," he said, "but the water in any case is good."

And so we went home, talking of the treasures of the monastery, wonders of art, famous throughout Japan.

But now, in the gathering night concentrating its radiance in a moon so glorious as to obscure the nearer stars, in the breathless silence made vocal by the ripple of the river on its eternal way, beneath the dropped veil of the willow influences were loosed which opened my heart, and I told Arima my

experience of the afternoon. I asked whether he had been conscious of what had passed.

His face was a shadow beneath the boughs. I saw only the moonlight in his eyes as he replied.

"No. I knew nothing. The Abbot Gyōsen was speaking with me all the time. I thought you were absorbed in the view. It is most wonderful."

That could not satisfy me.

"Impossible," I said. "For how could that strange formula come into my mind? I never heard it before. I have not the faintest notion what it means."

There was a brief silence, then he answered slowly.

"I scarcely think it my part to clear up the matter. Will you not ask the Abbot himself? Yet there are one or two things I could say if you wish."

Seeing I was in earnest he continued.

"The Abbot Gyōsen is a remarkable man. In the first place seclusion in a mountain temple in devout contemplation purifies the heart, and then he is a deep student of Zen. Zen is the science of mental or spiritual concentration. In India they call it Yoga. A man who possesses this knowledge can do things which to the ignorant of its powers appear miracles. They are perfectly natural however. In his youth he had magnificent skill in jujutsu. No man could stand up against him. There was a reason for that."

He was silent for a moment, and then added:

"His influence is enormous. You would scarcely credit the true stories I could tell of him."

I listened in deep reflection, staring at the broken ripples of moonlight in the river. Again the weird intake of breath seized me, my heart beat rapidly with the consciousness that I was face to face with the Unknown; that it had eyes but I was blind, groping in the dark. Light, light: That was the cry within me.

"The formula?" I asked, when my breath steadied again.

I could not see even his eyes now. Arima was an invisible presence.

"In Japan," he said, "in connection with jujutsu and otherwise we recognize a strange force which we call *kiai*, a very powerful dynamic. We consider it a manifestation of the primal energy. It lies all round us for the taking by anyone who will use the necessary means and in itself is neither good nor evil. The result depends on the person who uses it. What the Abbot Gyōsen passed into your mind was certain of the first rules of this

knowledge. We call them the Rules of Detachment. He must have been conscious that you have reached the fit stage for instruction."

"Then all I can say is that he was entirely mistaken. He could hardly choose a worse subject for any spiritual experiments than myself."

Arima laughed slightly but kindly as one laughs at a child's ignorant certitude.

"That is not possible. Men of his sort are not mistaken. But *you* mistake. Certainly this force may be employed for a very high kind of spiritual adventure, but in itself it is neutral. It is only a force, and what he foresees for you I cannot tell. It is a sword. Now a sword may be employed by a god or a devil or any of the grades between."

This idea was so new to me that I said nothing for a moment, revolving the thing inwardly.

"Can you mean that a force of tremendous possibility lies about us for anyone to use who will? That a man can handle the powers of miracle——"

He shook his head:

"There is no miracle. There is only Law and some of us understand it better than others. Knowledge is always power and the unscrupulous may know as well as the saints. But they will know from a different and disastrous angle. Does one always see power in worthy hands? You and I who have lived through the war know better than that. No, this force is applicable to small things as to great. It can mean success in money-grubbing or the open door to an apostleship. As I said—it is a sword. But it cannot be trifled with. It carries you to a stage where you perceive the danger too late and are seized with an indescribable horror. The wings melt in the sun's flame, and then——"

He made an eloquent gesture with his hand which suggested a fall from some unimagined height.

"I won't believe it," I said resolutely. "That whatever rules the universe should trust it anywhere to clumsy or wicked interference— No, impossible!"

"Yet we see it daily," Arima replied calmly. "But things always come right in the long run. This power of which I speak is only one gesture of the Supreme and there is much behind it. Illusions pass like clouds but the sun remains."

"But—but," I hesitated.

“It is this which explains the mystery of good and evil, as we call them. Think it out and you will see. Shall we go in now? I have a fancy that the processes of the night—even the river—like to be free of us intruders. If we are not in harmony with them——”

“Arima!” I said on an impulse, “have you this secret? I think—I know that in your hands it would be safe. What you have said makes me long for more. If the Abbot judged me fit for so much—and you say he must have known——”

He stretched his hand in the moonlight and grasped mine in a strong clasp. I had a sensation of something throbbing and beating from his wrist to mine. It flowed tingling along my veins until it was warm about my heart.

“It is day!” he said.

I heard no more. It was day. A fierce sun blazed upon me and I was alone in an unknown country. A mountain, in contour like the famous Fuji, loomed up majestic, snow spilt down its sides like the sticks of a half opened fan. I stood in a mighty gorge beside a fiercely running mountain river, the swift torrent forced back by its own speed among the rocks in curling white waves. Where two rocks craned forward to each other from opposing shores a noble Chinese bridge, huge stones gigantically moulded almost to a semi-circular spring, spanned and bridled the wild creature beneath, and on either shore was a willow tree.

Why was it familiar though so strange? But I stood bewildered. A moment ago I had been beside my friend in moonlight and quiet, now a great sun beat on tossing mountains and river, and I was alone.

Terribly alone. I stood ignorant which way to turn, helpless, baffled, in a place which might have been empty from the world’s beginning, but for the bridge. Would anyone ever come? Should I roam there imprisoned in vastness until I died? It was a nightmare of terror. I ran to the great willow as if for refuge in its tent of delicate shifting shade, and pushing aside the boughs I entered and sat down throwing my arm about the trunk, smooth, warm, as the flesh of a woman, that I might steady myself against something living and tangible.

There are Dryads in Japan, tree spirits, and especially do they haunt the willow. Beautiful, alarming, some of the stories, but always instinct with the life which lies just below our horizon. Now I was conscious of some presence beside me, not to be accosted until its own moment of choice. I put out my hand instinctively; it met nothing. I said a word aloud. No answer. And again most disabling fear submerged me. Then, clear and small, as if written, the Rules of Detachment rose in my mind, and hurrying, I repeated

them under my breath, not knowing how they could help, but catching at anything.

"I have no parents. I make the heavens and the earth my parents. I have no strength. I make submission my strength." And so to the end.

"I have no sword. I make the sleep of the mind my sword."

Now, as I said these words the meaning flashed upon me in light. Here was I—alone in a frightful solitude—so desolate that it might have been the Mountains of the Moon. What means of escape could I make for myself? What friends had I—what sword? The Rules assured me. The enemies—the mountains, the wild ways, were my slaves if I could believe it. In submission strength awaited me. In the surrender of the plotting reason, which can only break tangible material obstacles, my latent powers would function. And what were they?

Once more and confidently I repeated the words, knowing that they unloosed some hard-bound knot in my being. I willed to be in the garden of Arima. My one instinct was flight.

I was sitting beneath the willow tree— Yes, but in Arima's garden, and he was beside me looking steadfastly at the river where moonlight flowed away with it to the ocean.

Impossible to describe the shock of relief. It never occurred to me to ask if I had been asleep—to think I had been hypnotized or anything of the kind. I knew the experience was real.

"Where have I been?" That was the only possible question. He replied:

"In the garden. Did you not recognize it? See—the mountain, the tumbled rocks, the river and bridge. *But* in the garden as my ancestor first saw it. Some day you shall hear why."

"But first—first— Was I long there? Time—I forgot time."

"You are there now, only the blinkers are over your eyes again. And as to time—there is no such thing as time. There is only eternity. If I count in the way we measure when we wear our blinkers you had the sight for twenty-four hours. It was last night when it began. Now it is to-night. I have slept, have eaten, have walked to the village and written many letters and all the time you sat here. Time is really nothing but a dream—a necessity in the world of the Three Dimensions. As soon as you break the shell—it is nothing."

Again I cannot describe the tumult of feeling in me, mingled with a passionate longing for something of my own lost and ravished from me. I

had a sense of unutterable weakness and shame. He read my thought like speech and answered:

"But you threw it from yourself. You were frightened, forlorn, and you caught at the Rules and concentrated, and being power they acted as you wished, and transported you back into the blindness of the daily life that walls us in from the Lovely, the Utterly Desirable."

"You mean," I said slowly, "that one can ruin oneself as easily as save. And that I should not have come back at my own will?"

"Exactly. One must always go on. To come back is highly dangerous. If you had had patience and had concentrated upon what is called 'extension' you would have climbed the mountain and on the other side——"

"What? What?" I cried, for he paused.

"We call it the Shining Country. You would have—liked it! Also you would have met the One who Waits."

I repeated in bewilderment;

"The One who Waits? But who?"

"I cannot tell. Different people probably for everyone. It might have been my great-great-grandfather for all I know. He is often in his garden. But it is the right one always. Don't think I blame you though for using your scrap of power in a fright. That often happens at first. What man has mastered jujutsu at the first throw? Still, he may be badly hurt, and you are hurt and will pay for it. Later on, beware that you never use power to bring you back to the place you have left it. A man pays for that to the last farthing."

"You mean—snatching at the wrong things?"

"Yes, in a way. The wrong things for you. There is no fixed way or rigid moral standard. There cannot be. All depends upon the man himself and the occasion, and—many a man has been saved by his sins. One learns the rules as one goes. Of course the rudiments of them govern every sort of society of men civilized or uncivilized. But you must be hungry. Come in."

I shall never forget that meal. Nothing could be simpler. There were rice cakes, honey, eggs, and pale fragrant tea. But—I despair of words—the food had new meanings. I could feel the good of it, the life of nature, of living things, passing into my blood, so restorative that when it was eaten I felt like a tuned violin on the shoulder of a mighty master; not a sound or sight but drew harmonious answer from my spirit. The river flowed from the footstool of the Eternal. Each flower shouted its evangel and their chorus was that of

the morning stars singing together. The dart of the swallows was the flight of arrows from the bow of Love. They dazzled in blue air. I daresay no more.

Arima came out in his cotton kimono and bare head. I saw new meanings in his face each moment, and the bronzed beauty of the man struck on a naked nerve, as though each sight of beauty awakened a longing for the next step beyond. He read my thought, and pausing in his work of training a fruit bough answered meditatively;

"Yes, even the first breath of air in that country is inspiration. It is full of dangers—a fighting country, sometimes a No Man's Land. Some of its ways seem to lead horribly downward. And there is always hell."

"Hell? A state of mind?"

"Yes, and of body too—they sometimes involve each other. But it braces one. There is much more to it than you can know yet. Only remember—one has got to break into that country somehow unless one is content to be the prisoner of the senses for a whole wasted lifetime."

I shuddered slightly.

"At the present moment I don't feel that I ever want to see it again."

"Natural enough. Let us have a bout of jujutsu now."

We stripped, and he threw me as he always did, but all the same I was learning. I got a new lock that day and, more important, made an advance in pliability. I stooped and yielded and released myself when I thought he had got me for good. He shouted with pleasure.

"Right! You will be a shodan one day. That is our lowest teaching grade. Now rest."

He came up to me an hour later:

"You are wishing to go to the Kwannon monastery to see the Abbot. He will receive you. Before you start would you like to hear the story of my ancestor and the garden? It is very short."

Strange. I had not thought of the Abbot, but I knew now that to see him was my inmost wish. That had been the meaning of my joy. I nodded, and Arima led the way to the willow. I did not then know why but the magic of the garden centred in that willow, thrilled in every leaf of it.

We sat down in its shade; I, on the grass with my arms clasped about my knees.

"My ancestor was a handsome young man, and the only son of a rich and noble family who owned much land about here. Nearly all ran through his fingers in his extravagance and flowed away from the family like river-

water, until only a few acres just here were left. I need not tell you all his life—you can imagine the story of a rich, reckless, sensuous fellow without bit or bridle. But he was a fine soldier, a fine poet—we think much of that in Japan—and he wrote the story of his life later with such fire and drama and such strange hidden things, that if it could be printed—but it never could. People would not believe it. Some day you shall read."

A strange change came over the garden while he spoke. It extended itself before my eyes—flowing outward softly. The flowering bushes which had been within a few feet were now vague in the distance. The mountain flung a cone of shadow over leagues. Even as I saw this, we were in the land of True Sight—yes, that was its name—and Arima was telling his story under the willow of my terror.

"He had broken his own wife's heart. He coveted the love of the wife of a man of good birth—a samurai named Satoro, and taking her by force made her his own. The husband, unarmed, met him here in what is now this garden, and when he drew his sword to attack him, by the power of the most skilful jujutsu dashed the sword from his hand and himself to the ground, breaking his jaw and blinding him with blood. He had to endure the disgrace. Terrible humiliation for a nobleman! No help— Look about you and see how lonely!"

"Awful and vast the mountains stretched away into snowy silences with the muted roar of a distant avalanche. Cold, shudderingly cold the river, frozen in the pools with a bitter glaze of ice. No life, no death, but arrested petrifaction, with the moon stranded on a peak in a dead world.

"And the sword! A sword worn by his ancestors in knightly fashion, pure steel and gold—the very spirit of the house. Satoro picked it up and stood leaning on it over the prostrate man as he lay on the rocks writhing like a crushed snake to hide his ruined face.

" 'This place is your own heart,' he said; 'cold, empty and dead. You will come back to it times out of mind. Kimi san, my wife, is on the other side of the mountain. You never possessed her; she is mine. But what I have to say is this. Your sword also is mine. I have a lien on you. You are my slave. I tell you now to begin at the beginning. You shall learn jujutsu. What it will teach you is to defend yourself from yourself. And when you have learnt that— Then I shall give you fresh orders.'

"The man raved and swore and spat blood, all unintelligibly as a beast. He was humiliated in all that a Japanese noble most values, and his only thought at the moment was revenge and suicide. The other stood, looking down upon him with calm. 'I will return the sword to my lord when he

knows its use. A good sword scorns an ignorant wearer. Now I leave you, but we shall meet in this place.'

"He went off, walking lightly and strongly. The fallen man dragged himself together. To lose his sword— Do Westerners understand that bitterness? I cannot tell.

"A retainer came by and finding him, summoned help. When they got him to the house, they told him the woman was dead. She had severed an artery in her throat as a Japanese lady must do in the face of dishonour. Blind with rage he sent to the house of her husband to slaughter him. He had disappeared.

"Henceforth my ancestor was known as The Man without a Sword—a terrible name. He could not appear among the nobles. His life was a ruined thing."

Arima paused again and then added:

"It would be better that the Abbot should tell you the rest. You will think it remarkable."

I stood up, so possessed with the story, for he had told it like one inspired, that it was only as I moved that my position flashed on me.

"How can I go? I am lost in the mountains. Come with me!"

He stood beside me, looking onward:

"That is impossible. There are never any guides. There is only power. Besides, there are different ways for different people and I know nothing of yours."

I looked about me, considering. The bridge was the obvious way and certainly the easiest. I did not know the hour, and there was a hint of dusk in the air, but I had already learnt that in this strange land time and its phenomena have quite other meanings than with us. Night might break on me in a wave of sunlight or dawn open its rose in the heart of midnight. Who could tell? But the bridge way would be safer.

I turned to say a last word to Arima. There was no human being in sight; it was a vast solitude dominated by the black cone of the mountain's shadow.

I made for the bridge walking as quickly as the rough stones allowed, and climbing its semi-circular hump I looked before me and rejoiced to see the track much clearer than it had seemed from the other side. Evidently a well-used way, and this encouraged me in my hope of meeting someone who could direct me to the monastery of Naniwa. Therefore I went with more

confidence, relieved from the crawling fear of the supernatural which the other side of the bridge inspired.

The track took me up a slight rise and round a jutting rock which obscured the river, and having done about two miles of quick walking I heard steps coming round a bend of the trail and rejoiced to think I could ascertain the way.

Nearer they came and disclosed a Japanese, his kimono pulled up through the obi for the ease of walking. He made the usual polite bow and would have passed but for my raised hand. I asked my way with the honorifics I had learnt from Arima. He stopped at once and replied with the utmost courtesy:

"The monastery? Yes— You could go this way. One reaches it by several. But it is not the right way. Far from it."

"Then will you tell me how to go?"

"Sir, I cannot tell you. I wish I could. I really do not know your way." It was infuriating. I said scoffingly:

"If you know this is wrong surely you know which is right?" He replied as if he were saying the most ordinary thing in the world:

"Sir, it is not so easy as you think. Places are states of mind in this country, therefore you will honourably see that no one can tell anyone else their way and how best to get there."

Bowing, he made to pass me. It was then that for the first time I noticed two things. One that his hair was dressed in the old-fashioned queue headdress which one sees in Japanese prints, shaved, but for a knot drawn up on the head, the other that he had a most remarkable face. The features were good, even excellent, and the dark bright colouring fine. But the eyes were arresting under the black level brows, and filled with tranquillity as a pool with shadows. On the impulse they gave me I spoke.

"I wish I could go with you."

"Sir, that could hardly be. I come from Yedo and I go to my garden in the valley you have left."

Yedo!—the ancient and long-disused name of Tokyo,—and Tokyo on the central island and days' journey away! Train and boat might have brought him, and yet—shivering doubt assailed me like the thin creeping of drops of water through a dyke which presages the later roar of the flood. The garden! I could not withhold myself nor hesitate.

"May I ask your name?"

“If you want to know my name you must watch what road I take and know to what I return. How can you know? I did not even think you would have seen me. Since it is so however, I will repeat that in this road you will have great need of self-defence. Now I bid you goodbye and wish you safely at Naniwa.”

He was gone round the corner so quickly that I had a sensation of vanishing. I ran after him and looked. Nothing. So I took my way onward. He had told me nothing to change it. A word really would have sent me backward to try my luck in another direction but he had not spoken it.

Soon after it was dark and raining, with a moon very young and bewildered in drifting clouds. She gave a weary light scarcely enough to hint the track and indicate a group of trees, the first I had seen, on the right. Coming up, among them was a small flickering light, and the barking of a dog sounded homely and even inviting, for by this time I was dragging tired feet. If I could sleep there how welcome the rest and shelter!

The place looked poor and dilapidated enough to be open to any offer of payment though in any case I might have trusted to the hospitality of the country Japanese.

I knocked at the rough door wondering that anyone could exist in such a tumble-down place and a young girl came to the door, faintly seen in dim lamplight. She stared at me in astonishment and bowing low, called softly:

“Madam, mistress,—what shall I do? A gentleman.”

A young voice answered:

“Tell him to come in if he will do us such an honour,” and a graceful little figure appeared in the opening of a lattice door, her face unseen because the light fell behind her. I obeyed. Poor as the house was that room was enchanting. Very simple, but the draperies were good, the cushions beautiful in colour, the *hibachi* was full of charcoal and above and round all bathing it in charm was the delicate perfume of a woman’s presence. She rose from her profound Japanese salutation and looked me in the face.

“Hay sama!” she faltered, paling to the lips. And I knew—I knew!

Six months before in the crowded city of Tokyo I had gone to a dinner at a restaurant near Shimbashi. I remembered the garden outside with clumps of gorgeous chrysanthemums, lamps of splendid colour before the dusk drowned them and the moon washed them with silver. Geisha attended us, girls with every nerve braced and strung for their profession of charming the wary and unwary alike. And I was charmed by the sad mirth that looked out from one pair of dark and lovely eyes. I drew her aside before the evening

ended and asked her to follow me to the *machiai*—a house of meeting, and escaping from the noisy party I waited in the cold handsomely furnished room that never spoke of love, until she came.

That meeting led to many things—some merry, some sad, but when I left Tokyo to see her no more I knew that the part I had played was to set my heel on her little head and drive her deeper into the mire. Still, it was ended and need trouble me no more. One could forget.

And now I sat by her side in this land of bitter memories.

She drew a cushion beside mine and leaning her little black head against my shoulder looked up in my face, welcoming me with the sweet courtesy mingled with fear that I remembered so well.

"And why are you here in this wild place, Hana san? Have you given up your work?"

Her bewildered look! I can see it now.

"How can I tell? I—I came. I was told it must be."

"You are resting here? You go back?"

"Let us talk of other things, Hay sama. How I am glad to see you!" I could get nothing more from her than that.

Silence and the little noises of dropping charcoal, and the softness of her in my arms. It was a renewal of that passionate intimacy which had left a wound in the very heart of my soul.

We talked into the small hours,—so much to say, so much to hear, and time passed—hours, days— How could I tell? And then as fatigue and quiet and warmth overpowered all my resolution she put her arms about me and gathered me to her bosom and the night melted into passion and passion into dream and the dark stole past us on noiseless feet.

I waked in a chill dawn alone, disillusioned and abashed, dragged back violently to a thing I had forgotten and abhorred. The room was empty, a cold wind blowing through the tattered paper of the window, and when I called, no answer. The two women had gone with the night. No food, no fire, dead ash in the *hibachi*, emptiness and the squalid decay of a wooden house long forgotten. What had a beauty of Tokyo been doing in such a place?

Fear of the loneliness seized me. I went out quickly without looking after me, then at the twist of the path turned and saw—desolation and waving weeds and a bough of some bush thrust through the window that had taken root within. I pushed on toward Naniwa, sick at heart.

It was at that moment a thought shot through me and chilled my blood. When Arima and I had visited Naniwa it had taken us exactly two hours from his house to the monastery hill. But yesterday I had walked for many hours, and to-day seemed no nearer my goal. Grey interminable moorland stretched before me with a mountain blocking the way at a distance and other tossing peaks beyond. Where was I? Where was Naniwa? Might I not walk for ever and ever in widening circles to a lost goal? The ground whispered with evil in every blade of grass. It hissed in the rustle of dry squat bushes. And last night—last night! There were reasons why that memory brought horror and shame to be my companions on the right and left. But I went on from sheer inability to consider what else I must do.

The clump of bushes on the right parted and a tall strong fellow burst out of them and planted himself across my way. A Japanese, broad, brawny, violent-faced. As I halted he sprang at my throat like a wolf.

"And you tracked her here? You could not let her be? Then take your payment from her husband Kondo!"

What happened next came in a blinding flash. He struck at me with a loaded stick. It missed the first blow and I had him by the throat with the new lock I had learnt from Arima, shaking him violently to and fro, driving my fingers deeper and deeper into his flesh in a frenzy of rage and hate. I would have the innermost heart's blood of the brute.

I had it. He reeled in my grasp with horrible choking noises, and suddenly I was shaking the life out of a dead thing. As I thrust him from me with sickening triumph he fell heavily as a full sack prone on the track before me.

It must have been long before the rage died in me and I stood face to face with my position. I—a foreigner—had killed a Japanese, and after an intrigue with his wife. It felled me beside him—I crouched and hid my face and tried to think.

Presently I rose and with the murderer's instinct dragged the corpse into the bushes to hide it. Thought was impossible. I suffered as a dumb beast must suffer the extremity of torture without the power to reason. Only I must hide it and flee. The neighbourhood of the horrible thing was hell.

I went on.

Later— "Is it just—is it just?" I said to myself, "that one instant's madness should doom a man for ever?"—forgetting the long temptation I had played with, the slow delicious yielding, the triumph and delight with which I had slowly built up my torture chamber. Not only from the time I

landed in Japan, but before,—I had been busy at the building all my life. How could I complain when the trap snapped on me?

At last I broke from the numbness into memory. The man who had passed me on his way to his garden. His words returned like black birds flying heavily round my head.

"You are not in the right way. Places are states of mind. In this way you will have much need of self-defence."

And Arima's words also. "There is no guide. There is only power."

Power. That brought the Abbot to my mind—the Rules. Could it be that they could rescue me from this horrible country where evil hid like a snake behind every stone. O, to be out of it—free—forgetting! I remember I fell on my knees as if in prayer and with dreadful earnestness began to repeat the Rules, passionately desiring the garden of peace.

"I have no parents. I make the heaven and the earth my parents. I have no weapons—I make submission my strength." Light broke in my brain. Submission? Then should I dictate—should I trust myself to my own choice of where I would be? Arima had warned me against return.

"If you had used what we call 'extension' and had gone on you would have been on the other side of the mountain." If there were to be refuge for such as I it could only lie along the way of courage. I knew it—I knew it.

I changed my thought instantly. "Set me where I should be if it is in the gateway of hell." And again. "Only free me of myself. Let me go forward. There is no sin like cowardice. Better lust and murder and the fight to the death with them than cowardice."

Then, with an intensity that shook me like a leaf in storm I uttered the words of power, hiding my face in a very passion of belief.

Quiet. I lifted my face and looked about me for the terrible way I had accepted. I was lying on the broken steps ascending to the monastery and the House Built upon Clouds at Naniwa. And it was dawn.

The wonder of peace! The sun had not yet out-soared the eastern trees and every bough dropped dew to the glittering grass. A bird, its little clenching feet on a blossomed twig beside me, sang like all the bliss of heaven. In a pool at my feet the lotus, child of the clear cold stream, raised rosy chalices to the sky and from it ran a stream divinely clear and bright. The sun might have been the first that ever shone upon a perfected world untroubled by man, so clear and clean the water-gold of the morning.

I stood up and looked about me drawing deep breaths of purity. Above me beneath a great tree, lost in contemplation, sat the Abbot Gyōsen.

I stumbled towards him. I remember I said: “I have come,” and that he motioned with his hand to a place beside him. Together we watched the slow crescendo of the mighty music of the dawn.

The sun was above the trees when he spoke, turning the serenity of his face upon me.

“You have learnt your lesson. Has it brought content?” I summoned my thoughts to reply clearly.

“I have learnt much but the truth I do not know. Does the corpse still lie on the moor and the woman weep in the deserted house. Am I guilty?”

“In your soul, yes. Therefore in truth, yes. When you yielded to lust in your heart and willed murder both were accomplished. Your own Scriptures teach this and that thought is the only true reality. This have all the Buddhas known. In what men ignorantly call fact you are not guilty. But, being guilty, learn this. Every instant terminates a life and the next is a new birth. While each minute exists the past is dead and the future unmade. I speak here according to the knowledge of this world, but the truth is that there is *no* time, and that you are now what the Divine sees you—a ray of his splendour. This truth being as yet too high for you to remember that even on this world’s showing you are free to be what you will. The choice lies before you. With a thought you may be in the horror of the Desolate Country, with another in the Shining Land. For every man makes his own universe until he can see it as it is in the Thought of the Divine.”

Blinded with truth I asked a question simply as a child.

“Then what must I do?”

“Resolve and go forward,—what else? knowing that in yourself is all power.”

“But the training? Free me from myself! If we can realize these powers the means of using so terrible a weapon rightly should be open to all.”

“It is open. But men will not believe. They will not will. They do not think, and events take them like sea-weed on a wave. You know your own weakness but it is strength compared with that of the majority. You, at least, have seen and heard. Study the teachings of the perfect One, the Buddha, if you would be a man. Realize your union with Power, knowing that it is a harp of many strings of which you are one, and tune yourself in harmony with the music of the spheres. At present you are a man without a sword.”

That phrase! It kindled a world of recollection. I looked into his face with another entreaty.

"Arima sama told me that I might hear the end of the story of the Man without a Sword from your honourable self. Tell it to me, I beseech you."

He rose and invited me to follow him into the House Built upon Clouds promising that he would rejoin me when he had transacted some necessary business. I sat in the window looking out and down into the glorious depth of waving woods bathing in sunshine like water, experiencing myself such tranquil joy as the trees themselves must know, fulfilling their perfect Law in the smile of the Divine.

It was long before the Abbot returned, but to me it seemed a moment. We have no true means of measuring time for the truth is that it has no existence, and when the soul is liberated this truth is evident. At once he began the story of the Man without a Sword.

"In Japan very terrible was the position of the man who had lost his sword. Better a thousand deaths of lingering torture. There was no man so low as to give him companionship—and he a noble! Therefore he changed his name to that of Kazuma, and casting aside what money was left he abandoned his wife who was dying of grief and shame, and coming to Yedo took up the study of jujutsu hoping some day to become a teacher of this in the great city. More lonely a man could not be than Kazuma. His wife died. His son was taken by his brother and he saw him no more. His own name was blotted out and forgotten. His brother believed and hoped him dead, and but for the command of his foe he would have killed himself.

"Jujutsu, my son, is, as you know from Arima sama, an art that every noble person should learn. It is said to have come from China, and it was taught that the very Gods had used it in chastising the barbarians. The name roughly signifies 'the strength of weakness,' and thus it arose. It was noted that the boughs of a willow were not broken by a heavy fall of snow when strong trees cracked beneath the weight. And why? Being pliant they bowed their weakness and the snow slipped off. My son, recall the Rule. 'I have no strength. I make submission my strength.' As with the soul so it is with the body. How shall I sum up this art of attack and self-defence? It is the perfect control of the mind resisting defeat. It is to use weakness in such a way that it masters brute strength. I have seen a slight woman who possessed this knowledge fling a heavy man over her shoulder and stun him. There are locks and blows which may easily kill the opponent and for this reason the higher secrets are withheld from all but those who are fit for initiation. The pupils are trained to endure heat and cold and all hardships. It is a high and noble discipline, for no greatness can be attained without abstinence from

the three vices of lust, drink, and the love of money with their attendant diseases of the spirit.

"This art Kazuma studied, and as he did so much became clear to him and he approached the secret of life. And when he had reached a certain skill his master taught him that there is in jujutsu a higher branch of mysterious power. And he, beginning dimly to apprehend the meaning of the command laid on him by the husband of the woman he had slain, for so indeed he had, desired with eagerness to advance.

"Now, my son, at the gate of this higher initiation stands a ceremony to be endured. The initiate must submit to strangulation and to be revived by *kwappo*—the art which recalls men to life. And should this fail, revival is made by means of a power named *kiai*. To Kazuma, knowing nothing of *kiai*, but very weary of life, this command came like the friendly voice of death, and with joy he presented himself to the master of the art who was chosen to be his executioner.

"He lay down, offering his throat, and in a few seconds was what is called dead.

"Now, being thus enfranchised, instantly he found himself in the place of his humiliation by the rushing river, with cold desolation about him. And by the river knelt his conqueror washing the blood from his hands as though their fight was but just ended. He rose and faced Kazuma.

" 'You have obeyed my command.'

" 'I have obeyed.'

" 'What have you learnt?'

" 'That there is no death. It is more life, but life as we have made it. As a man has sown he reaps in life after life.'

" 'Until what time?'

" 'Until the time when he sows good grain.'

" 'Do you repent your past?'

" 'I do not look back. I go forward. It is forgotten. The man who did the deed died with it. Now I would be a teacher of jujutsu.'

" 'Well said! You have learnt to defend yourself from yourself and you would teach others. I will give you fresh orders.' Kazuma stood like a soldier before his general.

" 'Teach what you have learnt. Then come back, and in this place of desolation where you fought and conquered more than you knew make a garden and build a bridge. Go now,—in power!'

“He bowed low, Kazuma also. ‘My friend!’— As the words met his ear they melted in a confused murmur of human voices and he struggled back to consciousness in the school of jujutsu in Yedo. Men knelt and stooped about him fearful lest he had gone so far on the way of death that even the powerful shout of *kiai* could not reach him. But he rose and gravely thanking his executioner went and stood before his master.

“My son, Kazuma became the greatest teacher of jujutsu in Japan. He could disarm and bring to his feet a two-sworded man shrieking for mercy. With his shout he could do to death any evil-doer within hearing and restore the fool when he had mastered his lesson. Power was mighty in his step, his gesture, his glance. What money he made, and it was much, was for those who had need, he himself living in an untouchable content.

“Thus time went by.

“One day, having saved the life of the only son of a noble house, the father coming to him said:

“ ‘My lord, what shall I give you? In mercy accept a gift lest I and my house break under the weight of gratitude. Have pity and take!’

“So, after much musing, Kazuma replied.

“ ‘You have bought great lands by the river Koga. I grow old. Give me, my lord, if you will, a corner by the river, very small, where I may make a garden and build a wooden bridge for those who must cross the rapids. Very dangerous is the current.’

“So it was done and he made his garden and built with his own hands a bridge of wood, and there was no day but the people blessed his name and learnt from him that power lies about them for the taking and that its best use at the present time is to make gardens and be a builder of bridges. Other uses later. My son, Kazuma still walks in his garden and he sits beneath his willow and his sword hangs at his side. The bridge leads where you know, for you have crossed it.”

There was a moment’s silence and it spoke as never yet words. He resumed.

“My son, make your own garden. And there is room for many bridges.”

When my mind dwells on beauty the face of the Abbot full of unworded meanings floats on clear air before me. It ended and completed the story so that all he left unsaid was written in fire between the spoken words. And I understood and like himself cannot express more than the alphabet.

I returned from Naniwa by the hidden way. Flowers blossomed along the moors. I never saw more lovely, and where the corpse had lain children were

dancing in a ring. Where the broken house had crouched among trees, was a shrine to the Thousand-Handed Spirit of Mercy beloved in Japan. A child lay in her bosom and her hidden eyes were bent upon it in a moonlight rapture. May I live in that country for the eternities!

I crossed the bridge and walked beside the river to the garden of Arima. He sat by the water plaiting a basket of willow, and rose, bowing, to meet me.

“I have come,” I said, “to learn jujutsu.”

He smiled.

I have learnt it and with it the secret of power. I go in and out of Kazuma’s garden. And beyond.

And the Abbot, who was once Kazuma, and will be more, sits there, girded with his sword.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Dreams and Delights* by Elizabeth Louisa Moresby (as L. Adams Beck)]