THE PERFUME OF THE RAINBOW

By

L. ADAMS BECK

Author of

"The Ninth Vibration"

"The Key of Dreams"

Etc.

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L. ADAMS BECK

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PREFACE

THIS is a book of dreams and delights gathered in many wanderings in by-ways of the Orient. It is an attempt to conserve the perfume of the rainbow where all the chorded colours are the spirits of the flowers that have perished on earth to live forever in the blue gardens of heaven. It is an effort to treasure a lost echo of the music of great sunsets and awful dawns breaking upon Himalayan peaks or burning on the reaches of enchanted rivers. It is the half-despairing struggle of the soul to voyage beyond dangerous seas and behold a loveliness enshrined in ancient palaces and temples with the dead ages strewn about them for wardens.

And because the rainbow shines sometimes against a livid cloud, I have told one story of horror,—one only,—that it may be remembered how in the Orient there is horror as well as beauty, and very near the surface. It lurks like a snake in a flower. If I dared to make a book of horror, it could be done. The truth is there.

That the perfume of the rainbow is faint and fleeting as the memory of a dream, that the music is a lost harmonic in empty air, that the soul returns all but dumb from the Quest, I know well. Words are a cup that beauty brims too soon, and the drink runs over and the thirsty sand swallows it.

Yet, even the remaining drops may perhaps give some far-off passion of the Exquisite, the incommunicable.

L. Adams Beck
Canada

I desire to tender my thanks to the Editors of *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Asia*, *The Quest*, *The Eastern Buddhist* and *The Hibbert Journal* in which magazines some of these stories were published. The others appear for the first time in this volume.

L. Adams Beck,
Canada

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The Perfume of the Rainbow

THE MAN AND THE LESSER GODS

A DREAM STORY IN TIBET

I HAD LEFT the Earthly Paradise which is called Kashmir behind and below and climbing the great Himalayan Pass, the Zoji La, had come to a strange wild land of mountains and desolation, cold raging rivers, swept by cruel winds, remote and terrible. This is Little Tibet, with its provinces of Ladakh and Skardo, now an appanage of the Maharaja of Kashmir. The lowest level of Ladakh is nine thousand feet, its mountain ranges average from seventeen thousand to peaks of twenty-five thousand feet, and many of the villages are from twelve to fifteen thousand feet above the sea. They say it is the highest inhabited country in the world, if the new investigations about Everest have not pitched the tune higher still.

It was July, for the Zoji La Pass is not hospitable to travelers until midsummer and in October snow falls again. The road is a track, stony and rocky, and yet, such as it is, along that road comes the traffic (carried by yaks and ponies) from Western Asia into Kashmir and India. During the months that the trade route is open the loaded kafilas (caravans) go up and down, heavy with bricks of Tibetan tea, carpets and rugs from Ladakh, the silky fleece of the goats that they breed for pashmina—the lovely woven wool of Kashmir, and many other strange and fascinating commodities. Or the laden beast may be the zho, a hybrid between the yak and the common Tibetan cow. Mostly the men of the kafilas were flat-faced Tibetans, once or twice there were women, riding astride among the heaped goods, easy-tempered laughing creatures, full of curiosity as the stranger and his goods hove in sight. But in this polyandrous country women are scarce and valuable.

This is no land for tents, it is too cold, and all along the way are little stone huts, built as strongly as gnomes' work, turning windowless backs on the west, whence the cruel winds roar down the valleys, and at intervals of twelve miles or so these become two-roomed huts for travellers. The furniture consists of two bed-frames, two chairs and a table; all the rest you must bring. But words cannot tell the comfort of seeing the little low roof

among the tumbled boulders, and knowing there is sure warmth and shelter from the night when the icy moonlight glares upon the rocky way. The wood for the fire comes from far for there are no trees and it is very costly, but it is good to see it crackling and blazing and to hear the cry of the wind outside. The little whitewashed walls, thick-built as a lighthouse, seem then a better shelter than a palace, and human life of as little account as the marmots shrieking outside. Less, for they belong to the desolation and we are but intruders.

All day long I had been riding through mighty mountains, walling the narrow track on either hand, a bitter wind blowing down the tunnel though the sun shone gloriously overhead. The snow lay quite near us and indeed we had to cross some snow bridges over the rivers. And this was July. What it must be in winter I know very well. There is scarcely ever the softening of rain in this wild land for the high mountains intercept the monsoon, and the savagery of the winter is frightful. But the mountains, sculptured by the wind and frost giants, were glorious beyond any I had ever seen. They were fretted into castles and turrets, rich and splendid shapes of frantic intricacy, pinnacles and airy battlements looking down from wreathing clouds upon the stern valleys beneath. They kindled strange imaginings. I thought that if an angry God built his defiant fortresses, thus and no otherwise he would build.

Only, because nothing in nature can be without grace, the lower slopes were clothed with a little crimson-leaved plant, growing in masses, which flung a robe of noble colour over the barrenness, and so it climbed to the awful crags, and there, with all life, it ceased.

At last, cramped with riding the rocky ridges, we suddenly rounded a corner as the evening fell, and in a deep gorge, strewn with giant boulders, was the little roof of the rest-house, and beside it the long low serai where the caravan would put up for the night, and above it a wild white peak, rending the sky. The ponies toiled wearily down and the day's work was done.

At the door stood the chokidar, the man in charge, a good-natured Mongolian, very willing to please the Sahib, and the men set to work and soon the fire was blazing in the little cell of a room, and I stood outside, waiting and watching the eagles flying about the peak above. At one moment I saw seven, and sometimes they swooped quite near, with a mighty spread of wing, and sweep and poise most wonderful to see. They might easily have carried off a lamb in those claws and rent it with their fierce hooked beaks. I would have watched their magnificence of power half the

night, but presently the word was given among them, and the evolutions ceased and they sailed away majestic on the wind to their eyries in the crags.

Then I was aware of a man coming down the gorge, leading a very wearied pony. He wore a vest open at the neck of Kashmiri woollen cloth embroidered in a rich Persian pattern, but this I saw later for he was muffled up to the throat in a great cloak. About his slender loins a red scarf with tarnished gold flowers was knotted. He wore the Kashmiri cap which always reminds me of the ancient Greek, or the French cap of Liberty. He gave somehow the impression of having lived hard and fast, of a kind of frayed splendour, not only of dress but character. The mouth was beautifully cut, cold but sensuous, the high nose and short upper lip the very features of pride. A handsome man, dangerous and attractive,—there were fifty histories of love and war written on his wide brows and unhidden by the black silken tumble of curls about them. A type not uncommon in the Orient, and always it carries its warning and its wooing. And as he passed me he said, saluting, "The Peace be upon you!" and I replied, "And upon you the Peace."

That night his story reached me, and I give it briefly for it leads to my own. They knew him well at the rest-house.

His name was Khanzada and they believed his home was somewhere in the dangerous hills beyond Peshawar—the British peoples have good cause to know what those hills hide and the ferocious tenacity that is lurking there! As the story went he had gone as far afield as Khorassan, and there among the almond blossoms that glorify the land with fragile faint rose in spring, he had fallen in love with another man's wife. A common enough story—a dangerous pastime in such a place. The poor fond fool fled with him, and as they travelled, he told her with careless cruelty that there was a woman in Peshawar beside whom he counted her love but as the sand of the desert, and when in a frenzy of grief and shame, she tried to escape, to face her husband and meet her death, he left her in the rugged ways and rode on, smiling and careless. A kafila came along and found her crazy and raving, and the husband following, with comparative mercy, stabbed her to the heart and left her to the vultures.

"And thus has been all his life!" said my Mohammedan servant. "The women love a lover! And when he comes this way, they haunt him like bees a rose. These women—daughters of unblessed mothers,—they know not chastity nor lawful behaviour. But down in Kashmir and India it is the same. Ya, Allah! he is the terror of husbands and lovers." He looked with profound admiration at the splendid scoundrel lounging in the firelight at the low door of the serai, with a group of men watching with delight for every word of his lurid adventures.

“And no one pities the women?” I asked, knowing the answer.

He looked at me with eyes of wonder.

“May the Presence be good to his servant! It is a jest. Who should pity an unchaste woman? And moreover it is known that the women scorn a man who is mild with them. They are as dogs that lick the hand that beats them. Inshalla, so they were created! So it must be. This man, Khanzada, he is rich with their gifts. His women have pearls for their necks and fingers.”

“And his women are faithful to him?” I asked.

“Bismilla, yes! As Layla to Mejnoon. How otherwise? They know a man and rejoice in his strength and the envy of the others. Surely this is the same all the world over? Allah made the woman for the man.” He spoke confidently. I dismissed him and took a last look at the hero,—his dark insolent beauty was a sight to see in the firelight that disputed it with the cold stare of the moon.

If that man could and would write his story what reading it would be. The cruelties of the Orient—the slavery of the Oriental woman, say many. But is it so different—so many worlds apart? The God of Passion is one and indivisible in every land I have known, and of the Lesser Gods of whom he is one, men only know their cruelties, and in every land the Over-Lord is silent.

And when I fell asleep I dreamed this story in clear outline which I have since filled up until in my mind, at least, it has become a picture of men and women as they are. There is no end to it—how could there be? There can never be an end until in some dim heaven of heavens sex ceases to be and duality ends its long war in unity.

Years ago a child was born, welcomed and loved, although so new to life. He was fair and straight-limbed and strong, with promise of height and breadth, and the small fingers clutched strongly and the baby feet that would have such long wayfaring through the untravelled years were arched and shaped for speed and lightness when their time should come for more than mother kisses and worship.

And the child lay in his cradle while the low sun was sinking in a rosy vapour.

Nowadays no fairies are asked to a christening. They migrated some time ago, possibly objecting to the advance of what we call civilization, and regretting the disappearance of many good old customs. It is indeed evident that they could scarcely be expected to survive the introduction of the

National School and the motor plough. Therefore this little child could hope for no fairy gifts at his christening, but this was of no great moment, for instead, and, indeed the day after his birth, the Lesser Gods paid him the visit which they never omit to any of the human race, the visit of recognition and predestination.

Now if you ask me who the Lesser Gods are I cannot say, further than that some call them the Powers, and it is believed that they rule in this lower world, and render account of their rule to the Over-Lord. Also it is certain that their gifts (unlike the fairy gifts of old), are neither good nor evil in themselves but have consequences according to their usage.

And in the gathering gloom they entered the room where the child slept, and grouped themselves silently about the cradle, looking down upon him with unpitying faces. And one, whose name is Oblivion, raised him and held him to a shadowy bosom, and touched him on the soft small brows, so that when the child was laid again in the cradle the doors of the past were shut behind him and he remembered no longer whence he came.

Now when this was done, the first of the Lesser Gods spoke in a voice inaudible to mortals, giving his gift to the newly begun life.

Courage he gave, daring, and the love of brave feats, and of such things as men delight in, free air, the wide spaces of hill and valley, the green gloom of the forest with its murmuring leaves, and the roll and thunder of the outward sea. And he gave also the love of manly sports, and a keen eye and cool brain, so that all these should be the child's pastime.

And the second of the Lesser Gods spoke, promising limbs straight and fair, strength, height, speed, and a neck like a column, and open brows, and the blue eyes and Saxon hair of the North, and hands strong to grasp and hold, and a mouth made for kind speech and kisses and laughter.

And the third of the Lesser Gods gave a good gift indeed, clear judgment, the rare sense which men call common, wise dealing with affairs, and power and determination to work as a man amongst men. And also that his blood should kindle at brave and generous deeds.

And the fourth gave the laughter that wins the heart of men and their good liking and kindliness, and a merry humour and a liberal hand.

And the fifth gave the love of justice, and of fair dealing, a noble gift.

And the sixth of the Lesser Gods gave him the love of women, that they should desire him and that he should desire them very greatly. But this is a perilous gift.

And others of the Lesser Gods gave things many and good, and it seemed that this child should be a noble man. So when all but one had

spoken there was a silence and in this silence the last of the Lesser Gods drew near the cradle and stood looking steadfastly at what lay within it and spoke as one foretelling the future.

"We have bestowed gifts, but what shall he worship? For it is certain that every child of man must serve some God. Therefore he shall worship me, and I am called Pleasure, but sometimes also Opportunity. And to each and all our gifts I add that this child shall be unstable as water, quick to see, but quick to forget. Therefore his moods shall drive him as a leaf before the wind. He shall resolve and fail. He shall touch and not attain. He shall barter the better for the worse, and sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. He shall know the lusts of the flesh, but not its sanctities. And from all this there shall be no redemption until his eyes are opened and he sees the mystery of Love."

And one of the Lesser Gods said in the silence, "This is a hard doom."

And the one who had last spoken answered, "My service is perfect bondage."

And the sun sank as he said it.

Now when and how the Lesser Gods departed I cannot say, but when the nurse returned, the room was empty of all but firelight, and the child was sobbing in his sleep.

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And the years went by swiftly as a reeling spindle, and the child was a man amongst men, tall, straight, and fair, fulfilling the promise of his boyhood. And he took a wife, and children were born to him, and the Lesser Gods who watch all things, laughed when they saw that marriage. For the wedlock of men is food often for their pitiless laughter, and they mock at the fatherhood of children born from passion or custom but not from love.

And the man worshipped at the altar foretold, and loved Pleasure and served him day and night in so far as opportunity was his.

Where he found his delight he grasped it, taking no thought, and this blinded his eyes and hardened his heart, and what ministered to his pleasures he forgot straightway until he desired it again, and though he enjoyed many women he loved none, and if any troubled him he hated her. So he went on his way, not knowing that he had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

Yet he wearied often both of work and play, and had seasons of satiety and anger that he could not understand, for he did not know that in these the

voice of Love was calling to his spirit in a strange language that as yet he knew not. And to one woman he brought great joy and sorrow.

If any man had asked "Is life good?" he would have replied, "Good. And yet—"

And the years went by, and he had labour and its reward and served faithfully at the altar of Pleasure, but often his soul was weary. And at last the time came when he must let labour and pleasure go, and taste the Knowledge that is called death.

So he passed through the desolate spaces into the presence of the Over-Lord, and the Lesser Gods stood waiting in a semi-circle and were silent.

Of the Over-Lord I can tell nothing, for He dwelt in a light more blinding than darkness. But it was asked of the man who stood alone before him what he had done with his life and the gifts that the Powers had given him.

The man bowed his head and uttered one word, "Waste."

Because in that moment his eyes were opened, and all the things that had seemed great to him became suddenly small, and the things he had not heeded became so great that they filled the earth and the sky and thundered at his ear.

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Then the Lesser Gods spoke all together, protesting that they had given good gifts, and most eagerly accusing him and demanding that he should be bound in the Outermost Places.

"For," they said, "there is no soul the better because he has lived, and many are the worse for him. We have witnesses. Hear them."

And there was much testimony of the deeds he had done and good fellowship, and of pleasant words and merriment, but the Lesser Gods jeered and said,

"What did this cost him? And what soul was the better?"

Then a woman came into the space and there was hatred in her eyes.

"He won what heart I had to give," she said, "and he taught me the crooked ways of deceit instead of the straight high-ways of truth, so that I learnt to lie, and I gave my purity for an hour's pleasure, and no child has ever sucked at my bosom, and I have been no man's wife in open honour, but a seeker of stealthy ways and dark places, and my life was like water spilt in the sand. Let him therefore be bound in the Outermost Places."

Then she slunk back into the shadows, and so spoke many women, one after another, and, however they had seemed to love him once, all stood aloof now, and each brought against him her humiliation and his faithlessness and the harm wrought to her soul, clamouring that he should be bound in the Outermost Places. For so each thought to shift the guilt from herself to him. And the Lesser Gods clamoured with them like hounds, and said,

"There is no soul the better for him, and there is still one woman whom he trampled lower than all these. Hear her, and let him then be bound in the Outermost Places."

But the Over-Lord was silent, looking out into the worlds, and the man who had believed these women loved him stood with bowed head, unpitied.

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Then a woman came running so swiftly, that she stumbled as she ran, and she stretched out her hands to the Over-Lord and spoke without any fear, so eager was she.

"I am the better for his life," she said.

And the Lesser Gods answered,

"No; for of all the women, he dragged this woman down into the very depths, so that she accepted his faithlessness and made herself one with humiliation knowing the things that he did, and taking the leavings of the other women's wantonness. And this she did for the sake of the pleasure of the flesh, and the deed was shameful. Therefore let them both be bound in the Outermost Places."

But the Over-Lord was silent, looking out into the worlds, and the woman gathered strength as she pleaded.

"Pleasure!" she said, and her voice was like a bell tolling grief and scorn. "O Thou that knowest, hear me! Had I not good gifts? I had love at my feet, and the seeing eye and the hearing ear that make the world a treasure house. No hour passed but brought its joy and innocent laughter, and chastity was in my soul and I met the eyes of all unafraid.

"But my heart was hard because I had not loved, and I took love as my right and slighted it, and made light account of its sorrow. And as I walked I drew my skirts aside from sin, and I was proud because I was stainless. Then I loved him, believing him faithful. My life flowed into him, my soul into his soul. In his kiss I tasted the joy that recreates the earth in spring, and in the passion of our embrace the very arms of Love enfolded me. When he

came the sun rose and my heart stopped for delight. When he went, it was night in my soul. To touch his hair and his eyes so marvellously made, so soft in their lashes, to feel the curve of his lips, to see his strength, to clasp his hand, so large and warm as mine clung within it,—O this was joy so keen that I could not tell it from pain.

"Thou knowest—Thou knowest, who made the woman for the man, and the man for the woman."

And there was silence. And the Over-Lord looked out still into the worlds and made no sign.

She spoke lower, but still unafraid.

"And when I rested on his love, and most trusted it I learnt that it was not mine—that from my arms he went to the arms of another woman and yet others. And my love was no better to him than theirs. He had taken the sacrament of my love and flung it into the mud for dogs to eat. And under the beating of my heart lay his child.

"Then, O Thou that knowest, I prayed for death in a great agony, and I sought it, but the time was not yet, and I wasted and agonised, and he went from my tears to their laughter, and when I clung to him and implored, he thrust me from him with words that were like a sword.

"Then my pride was broken and lay in the dust where all pride should lie, and I saw that I who had thought all worship was my right, had none and was despised. And I who had forgotten the sorrow of love denied, tasted it now. And the Power called Vengeance showed me that these women were in my hand to shame if I would. But I endured and was dumb. And he returned to me promising fidelity, and once more I believed, and again he betrayed me.

"Then, O Thou that knowest, with my humbled pride and broken heart I learnt the very mystery of love, and I knew that I was his past redemption. If he were faithless I must be faithful. If he were shaken I must abide. If he sought another I must wait his return. For what else is Love? And if this were shame in me Thou too art shamed, O Eternal, for with this same love hast *Thou* loved us, awaiting us patient and unwearied when we return wearied with false pleasures to Thee.

"Therefore I learnt Thy patience, and covered my grief with laughter, that he might be glad. When he pushed me from him I kissed his hands and his feet. When he called me I ran, and when he chose another, I waited. Alone, and for his sake I travailed in agony, and he gave me no word of comfort or sorrow, so that I looked on the dead face of my child and said,

" 'It is best, for now I only need endure.'

“Sometimes I dreamed that he loved me, for his ways were most sweet, and again I knew he did not, but always I was patient, for I saw the knowledge growing in his heart, and that he learnt what I had learnt of him —that there is a Power most mighty called Love, and that his service is perfect freedom. At last he knew Love, and though he wounded and crucified it, yet he believed in it.

“Then he entreated my help that he might sever himself from me and from these, and this too I did, strengthening and arming him against my love. And, O Eternal, in all this anguish I have not known if he loved me, or could love any. Or if he despised me and loved another. So that I have wandered in a great darkness unhelped.”

Her voice sank for weariness, but endured to the end.

“Only this I know, that if my body travailed, my soul travailed also and brought forth Very Love of Very Love, and this gift he has given me, even as he gave me the child. Also his heart is full of noble things that await only their season. So, for all the good things he has done for me, let him go free, and let me be bound in his stead in the Outermost Places. For he has shown me the thing that the angels desire to look into, and to this man most dear, I owe it.”

She stopped, appealing with outstretched arms to the Judge, and there was a great hush, and the Judge looked upon her.

And in silence it was said,

“Let them go free.”

And the woman turned to depart alone as she had come, but the man looked into her eyes, and opened his arms to her, and she ran to him, and hid her face upon his breast, while they clung together, in an embrace so close that it made them one.

And the veil of star-drift and cloud-drift fell over them, and the Lesser Gods had departed, and they stood alone before the Over-Lord.

So nature rent apart in some fierce and unimaginable convulsion travails in groanings that cannot be uttered until the Day of Reconciliation. There is now no answer that any man can find to the riddle of the scornful Sphinx.

I woke to a day of still glory in the desolation, the shrill vibrating scream of the marmots about us in the silent blue and gold of dawn. A man came and pointed upward, and another who could speak Hindustani added that there was a ruined Buddhist lamasery on the height of a mighty mountain which seemed to block our onward way, and that it is believed to be haunted

by strange and sacred Presences. I shall never forget that sight—the mountain heaving up its incredible towers and buttresses into the cloudless sky less stainless than its snows, and on the uttermost height what seemed the turreted ruins of some noble building, so far, so high, that I cannot tell whether it was man's work or nature's. What a place for life! I could see no way to it at all. It was as divorced from the uses of common men as a star on its lonely orbit, terrible in its solitudes. I longed for the snowy towers where now there is no life and the night walks alone through the ruined chambers.

And as I turned from it to begin the march the man of the last night's story passed me, leading his saddled pony on his way down to the lower world and the black chequer-work of his life of lust and cruelty. He saluted humbly, lowering his hawk's eyes as he passed the Sahibs. I watched him mount the crest and disappear beyond it.

Very wonderful are the mountains of Tibet; no such colours in all the world. I saw them that day turn to glowing copper in the sun, tawny golden red like mountains with fire at their hearts and crags so fantastic that they might have been the flickering tongues of flame. And when I neared them they were grey again with only the gold of the late summer on their lower ramparts.

An arid desert, made splendid with colour and form that supplies all the waving grace of woodland in happier lands, it leads you on always to the great adventure. The Dark Tower may be hidden behind those wild rocks. Strange men and things may lie in wait through the lone stone valleys or lurk in the fierce rivers. It is like a world not ours, some colder planet, remote from the sun, and drawing its cruel beauty from the central fires and not from his light. A world with an alien life that concerns itself little with man.

Yet, of the wonders I saw there, man with his illimitable and insatiable lusts, living his brief and cruel day in this great world seems to me still the most wonderful. The vastnesses emphasized it. The desolation cried it aloud, as I went on my way to the upper world and its stony deserts.

JUANA[1]

A STRANGE STORY OF INDIA

NOW this is the story Lindsay told me one night in June when we were sitting on the rose-tapestried veranda of my country home with a full moon as big as a balloon floating up into the air. The scent of the roses mingled with the scent of our cigars. It was an hour when the secret places of men's hearts open and the ghosts rise and walk.

We could only see the dim outline of each other's faces. The talk had been of Southern India and the wild magic of the Hill peoples, a lower and more primitive race than elsewhere in the Peninsula. He had drifted on from one revelation to another and I said nothing. Get a man going like that and you may hear strange truths! At last he spoke like one in a dream of memory.

The Belur Hills—what a place it was! I was up North and didn't want to go south though my young cousin, Jim Daly, was there already, and when our boss sent me down I tried to chuck it. But it had to be, and old Carrick the coffee planter gave me a chit to a neighbour of his, a Spaniard by descent, the Señor Oquenda, and the Don, as they called him, asked me up to his coffee estate in the hills before I had been a week in Madras. And there I saw what I saw.

Jim had been up there before. I liked Jim, he was a fine upstanding young fellow with a simple honest kind of a look that took me at once, and he was as keen as mustard to do the honours of the country, for I was a Johnny Raw there and he knew it well. I shall never forget that ride up the mountain. The Oquenda estate was high on the hills and from the plains the road wound endlessly up, sometimes through blazing sunlight, sometimes through cool green jungle where the giant ferns were thick over the streams tearing down from the heights. I didn't want to talk or listen for there was such a lot to see. The north and south in India are two different worlds. You may know the one all your life and be a fool in the other,—the people, their ways, their looks and talk, all a sealed book until you begin to pick your way about.

I looked down as we coasted a precipice from which the magnificent view stretched away blue in the distance. Far below a river roared unheard

on its wild way and the dense forests were like the matted hair of the great God Shiva who is the Mountain Lord. Dark and untrodden, swarming with game, the haunt of the tiger, the breeding place of fever, nothing could look more beautiful and terrible. I said something of the sort to Jim, as he leaned over from his pony to look down. He pointed to one spot far below where the trees broke away from a great bluff above the river.

"We know as little of what goes on in those jungles as of the depths of the sea, but there are tribes living in the wildest wilds who have never seen a white man. And that rock—d'ye see it? like a skull; (the name means the Skull). There are a few huts there of men and women who keep up the old rites of snake worship—the oldest in the world and very strange things may be seen there about new moon time. You're getting into the beginnings of things up here, Lindsay."

"That's jolly interesting," I said in my ignorance. "It's a blessing there's anybody left to keep us out of the deadly rut of civilization. I'll go down and pay my own homage to the Snake. After all, we all owe him something for getting us out of the Garden into real life."

"You won't get back alive, if you do. No white man has ever entered that village. Nor wants to!" said Jim. "They have their own little ways and they don't sound attractive."

"Well, the place is attractive anyhow. Good Lord, what burdens we tie on our backs! What can a man want more than a hut and a gun in this divine air and let the world go by!"

The Don, riding a little in front, turned and laughed:

"There was a snake in Eden and there was also Eve. I, alas! have no Eve of my own, for my wife died many years ago. Life without an Eve would be dull enough even here but I fortunately have my daughter. She has never tasted the forbidden fruit, and is little more than a child."

This I had heard from Carrick and also that the girl was a bit of an heiress and a beauty in her way. She was said to be very shy and young, and this seemed to have kept marriage at a distance, so far. But I thought young Jim looked a bit sheepish when she was mentioned, and liked him none the less for it.

But it did not interest me one way or another. Every idea I had was lost in the lavish beauty about me, and as the day grew hotter and the way steeper we came at last to a big wooden gateway where several Tamil servants were on the look out. We stopped and dismounted and a few more steps brought us to the bungalow, and such a bungalow!—long, low, wooden, colonnaded, that it might catch every breeze, the jasmines hanging

a cloud of white and perfumed stars over every ledge and projection of the building—such a mass of blossom as even I had never seen in all my Indian life.

A low gate led into a sort of square court round which the house was built, and there was in the middle a small fountain contrived from a mountain stream which ran through it deliciously. Lying beside it in a low chair, with a book dropped idle upon her lap, I saw my host's daughter.

It is difficult in the light of after events to recall my first impression, but I'll do my best. Half the court was in shadow, cool and refreshing to the eye —; half in the glare of the sloping sun which cut every shadow black as ebony on the ground and turned the fountain to a shower of dazzling diamonds. This was the half she had chosen, and there she lay in full sunshine, her slender figure lost in the big chair, with the sun on her uncovered head and closed eyelids, basking luxuriously in the heat and perfume.

Her hair was of a pale gold, the colour you see in young children, and all the outline of her face was so soft, so childlike, so delicately pure that I was at once impressed with the thought that here was one of those child-woman natures, frail, transparent, clinging, which had always been my ideal. Forbidden fruit indeed! One had only to look at her to know that her Eden was safe for ever.

As for Jim, his eyes fastened on her. I never mistook his feelings for a moment and perhaps that kept me from any folly on my own account. When her father spoke she opened her eyes as if startled, and instantly the whole meaning of her face was changed. I could scarcely hear what she said for looking at those wonderful eyes, pools of light. Were they green, were they grey? I could not for the soul of me tell, but all the life of the small pale face was centred there as she flashed a swift glance at me and dropped the fringed lids again.

Then first I saw, crouched at the other side of her chair an old Tamil woman of forbidding aspect, almost black in colour, but evidently a favoured servant, for the girl touched her shoulder kindly as she dismissed her.

Her father left us and we talked about the views and the ride and I paid little attention to the matter of her words for their manner was so charming. She had a little sibilant lisp which gave a fascinating hesitation to all she said, and though she spoke English perfectly there were foreign touches which I found delightful.

"No, it is never dull up here," she was saying to Jim. "I only want the sun and my pets to be perfectly happy. I care very little about people—Except now and then!"

She swept her eyes upon us both. Either of us might take the exception to himself. Jim stooped to pick up her handkerchief and then she looked straight at me with those intricate eyes and again my impression of the childish character of her beauty was disturbed. It wavered. For the instant I was aware of a faint tingling sensation in my temples until she looked down again and I could only see the innocent soft lashes on the pure oval of her cheek.

She raised her hand to her bosom and I saw the ruffled laces stir and a small arrowy head protrude itself from that warm nest, circling in the air and fixing me with its malignant gaze. It was a very small green snake, exquisitely jeweled in a brightly coloured pattern, beautiful in its hateful way, but at the moment it seemed the vision of the hidden evil that lurks in every one of us, and I shuddered to see her soothe it back to its resting-place.

"You do not like snakes?" she asked indolently. "Yet they are very affectionate and grateful. This one is a mascot. The natives here say that if you have one of these about you the poisonous snakes never bite you. Many of them carry them. So I have tamed it and it is a great pet. Never mind. Tomorrow I will show you things more to your liking."

That first evening is rather vague to me now. It was a glorious night and after dinner we sat on the veranda and while we smoked and the old man dozed, she got out her guitar and sang, very beautifully, old French melodies, passionate little Spanish serenades, and one or two wild songs of the hills, picked up in the hot noonday silence when the jungle swoons in the sunlight. She had the Spanish mastery of the guitar and I listened in delight. She laid it down, then snatched it again as if on some strange impulse, and what followed was different—another wilder world breaking through a surface that hid but could never stifle it wholly. Subtle chanting for the voice, low, penetrating, at first, supported on barbaric chords, rising louder, harder, a savage call. I can't describe it—I can only say the thought possessed me that in this fashion the women in the jungle might begin their mysterious rites with the invocation of some dark ancestral god.

And as she sang I thought I saw the laces at her bosom stir as if some living thing crept beneath them. Hideous! I brushed my hand over my eyes for the music was creeping through my veins with a kind of fluid sweetness that made the pulses throb in my wrists and temples, and I fancied that the very night paused to listen. Jim leaned forward in his chair, his eyes fixed on

her, hanging on every note. I pushed my chair roughly back and the spell broke. She laid the guitar down and would sing no more and a cool little breeze wandered in from the forest and blew through the colonnades.

That night as I leaned from my window to breathe the freshness, I saw a white figure glide from the arch of the courtyard to the night of the great trees that circled the gardens, bending an instant as it passed a flat brass vessel of milk which I had noticed beside the pergola of blossoming vines. It flitted on into the midnight and I lost it. The scents of the garden and the jungle beyond were heavy and sweet. The moon had set.

If I tried I could not describe the next few days. The old Don, who was evidently ruled in all things by the girl, left us three almost entirely to ourselves, and I, taking the hint that observation gave me, took myself off in turn, leaving the other two as much as possible together, while the servants, of course, might have been so many bronze images for all the part they had in our affairs. I did notice sometimes a quick startled look as Juana came into a room with her languid grace that seemed to melt from one slow movement into another, but they spoke only in response to orders. Silent, secretive, furtive, they glided about us. Her old ayah was often with her and seemed a privileged person, yet she too, apparently, held her young mistress in some awe. Still, I respected the girl for keeping them all in their places. A very necessary precaution in India.

A feeling of strangeness grew on me. The real world was receding, and something took its place,—lulling (how shall I describe it?), narcotic, like the enchantments of a hashish dream. My dreams, by the way, were extraordinary. Strange figures, eyes that watched from furtive places, dim passings, vanishings,— One can't get these things into words. They escape. I thought it might be a touch of the sun.

Did Jim love her? At this minute I can't say. At least he could not leave her. It was no mental charm for she spoke very little and cared nothing for the world outside. And there was something in her beauty that repelled while it attracted. An invisible aura surrounded her and its influence was numbing. The touch of her frail cold little hand implored protection, and yet when she opened those great eyes full on me I had a glimpse of something infinitely older, stronger than myself—some secret hidden desire that had come from strange forbidden places to perplex the hearts of men.

One afternoon Jim had gone off with her father and Juana and I were sitting in the shade of a great tree when a little half-naked Tamil boy came by at a run. He did not see us, and suddenly stopping with a cry of disgust he caught up a big stone and hurled it at something stirring in the grass beyond. What it was I had no time to guess, for, with a cry, Juana sprang up and

grasping the terrified child by the shoulder, she bent her face to his and said some passionate words in a language I did not know, then flung him violently from her with such force that he fell into the grass and lay there as if stunned.

What a sight I had seen in that flash—the lovely face, ghastly, distorted with fury, the lips drawn back, showing the teeth scarcely whiter than they! A mask of hate! Then, as if exhausted, she sank back into her chair, pressing her hand to her heart. I rushed to the boy, not liking the way he lay prone, but she held me back, drawing her breath in gasps.

"Let him lie—the wretch, the little black fiend!" she panted;— "To kill a happy beautiful thing like that! He deserves to die. If I had my will I would flog him till the blood ran. Let him lie!"

I shook her hand from my arm, sickened by the tone and expression, and lifted the child from the ground. He lay with his foot almost resting on a small gray snake, feebly writhing under the stone. And to my horror, I saw two small punctured marks on the cheek which made it evident that even in dying, the snake had avenged itself. I was too ignorant to know if it were a venomous snake or no, and when I appealed to Juana she only shook her head, still pressing her hand to her heart like a fainting woman.

"I'm ill—I'm faint!" she said brokenly. "Give him to one of the gardeners—they know what to do. And call my nurse."

I shouted to a man working at some distance. He looked at the snake and pronounced it harmless, and then, taking the child, now ashen grey and collapsed, he ran at full speed to the native quarters. I was hurrying off to call her nurse, when she caught my arm and lifted her little white face and looked at me pitifully, her hands pleading for her.

"I was so frightened—so horribly frightened, and I can't bear to see death in any form. It pierces my heart. The children know they are forbidden to kill anything in these gardens. Was I very fierce? Do you hate me? Forgive me."

Her face was so gentle and beseeching that I could not resist it, and for one mad moment that I loathe to remember, I held her in my arms, and kissed her—but only as a man might kiss a penitent child.

And so she lay a minute, and then drew herself away and with an exquisite smile eluded me, and glided through the arch of the courtyard.

I had clean forgotten the child, but that evening the native gardener told me he was dead. I failed to understand the story for he still persisted the snake was harmless, yet the child had died in an hour with every symptom of poisoning. I could only think it was a case of shock and dismiss the

hateful business from my mind as soon as possible. After all, he had done a forbidden thing and any woman would have resented it though not perhaps as she had done.

That evening marked a change in her manner to Jim. Every touch of her hand—every glance was a caress. I saw it and saw she shot a glance swiftly at me now and then to see how I took it. I made no sign. My mind was disturbed, but with a subtler under-current than jealousy.

She sang for us again, sitting in the moonlit veranda—old songs of the Sierras, and then changing the notes to a dull throbbing of the guitar like a tom-tom, she sang the song of the Tamil women when they go out to the unhallowed jadu rites of the jungle.

At first it was processional—the muted beat of the strings was like the thud of bare feet on the earth. I saw the women marching out—terrible, sombre, wild for the solitudes and fierce aromatic smells of the jungle. The notes changed—now they were dancing as they went, to a harsh horrible tune that suggested abandonment to every wild impulse. Faster and faster it whirled, the voice but a cry among the strings. What were they seeing—what doing? What dreadful deity awaited them under the palms and lianas?

I could not see her face—that was in shadow, though the moon was full on her bright hair, but the music swept on sonorous, terrible, till with a discordant crash it stopped, and she flung the guitar on the chair.

"Hateful," she said. "Isn't it horrible? I can't finish it. It smells of earth and the rotting trees in the jungle. And yet it draws one—did you not feel how it draws one?"

The spell was broken again. I knew the devil-music for what it was, but Jim looked dazed—absorbed in a way I did not like.

"Beastly!" I said coldly. "I rather wonder you sing that sort of thing. How did you pick it up? There are things just under the surface in this country that recall the very shady gods and goddesses whose worship is just as well forgotten, and that sounds like one of them."

She laughed in rather a constrained way.

"They live out in the jungle still, according to our people. How did I pick it up? From my old ayah's sister who used to croon it to herself. We once had a great musician here who thought it wonderful and he noted it down. But there is more."

Her eyes narrowed and dropped, and when Jim besought her to go on, she would not. The moon hid her pale glory in the trees before we spoke again.

She turned to me very sweetly:

“What must you have thought of me this afternoon, Mr. Lindsay? I have been wretched ever since. I loathe anything cruel, and sometimes that makes one cruel oneself.”

I said nothing and she turned to Jim:

“Don’t think the worse of me. I would not lose your good opinion for all the world.”

Her voice was inexpressibly mournful and touching with its little childish lisp. He looked at her fervently:

“I shall never think worse of you than I do now, and how that is I think you know very well.”

He tossed his cigar away and drew his chair up to hers. I left them—I knew the tide had swept him away—the poisoned sweetness of that night under the moon. And when her father came in and I followed at a discreet distance, we found them, as I knew we should, promised lovers. With the joy on her father’s face mingled the strangest expression of relief. I did not understand it then. As for Jim—I never saw a fellow so overcome. He was flushed and stammering, like a drunken man.

At the breakfast table I had a letter from Soames. You never saw Soames, and I remember you never could read his book on the Nature Creeds. Well, he wrote to say he was at Madras, had been told my whereabouts, and wanted me to meet him and join him in an expedition to the Gonda Islands, where he had heard the people had extraordinary ceremonies for the New Moon; well worth study. The Islands were fifty miles out and he had the promise of a native sailing boat in a fortnight and an old fellow to go with us who knew all there was to know about the strange island customs. In fact it was the chance of a life-time, he wrote, to get off the beaten track and add some knowledge to Southern Indian folk-lore.

This was an offer after my own heart. I passed the letter to my host.

“Ask him here for the fortnight,” was his ready solution, offered with all the boundless hospitality of India. Jim put in his word:

“There’s plenty to study here too. I heard Carrick say once that Juana’s old ayah could give any man points in that jadu business. And, with the full moon coming on, there should be lots to interest Soames here.”

“An excellent idea,” said the Don. “But don’t either of you talk to Juana about this business. She knows nothing of these native beliefs and had much better not. She is too nervous, and you know there is rather an alarming side to this jadu, though it’s the merest nonsense. The old woman began to gossip

about it once, and Juana spoke of it quite innocently to me. I saw the ayah and told her she must be off at once if it ever happened again. It never did!"

Of course I assented. But I wondered. Did she really know as little as this implied? That fierce song—that ardent drumming music! How could a mind even if pure as snow escape the shadow of the dark and superstitious minds about it? And there were times when it sent a cold chill down my back to see that horrid old hag fondling the hand of her mistress.

Three days later Soames came. He was no beauty; a hard, bold, sinewy, sort of chap with harsh red hair and an eye like a cobbler's awl. He had the scent of a hound for all the queer by-ways of life, and God only knows what he had seen and heard in his time! I told him frankly of Jim's affair with Juana for I was afraid he might make himself a nuisance butting in. He wished them luck with the greatest cordiality, for her beauty and tired little ways moved him as they did most people, and he summed her up as "a sweet girl." Personally, I was beginning to feel this was not at all an adequate description of Juana, but I left it at that, and he dismissed her from his mind. As a matter of fact her old wrinkled ayah interested Soames far more than the sweetest girl ever born, and I soon saw him trying to make a favourable impression in that quarter, and succeeding very badly, for the old lady vanished round the nearest corner whenever he came in sight. A wholesomer atmosphere came with Soames, cool, matter-of-fact, practical. We wanted it by that time!

His last stay had been in the Punjab, and one evening when the breeze was cool and pleasant, and we were all on the veranda except the Don, Juana asked him some question about the Golden Temple at Amritzar that set him off at score. How well I remember that scene—Soames's harsh voice and brick-dust colour, and the girl like a calla lily beside him, and Jim in the shadow, touching her hand.

He described the Temple excellently—the long golden reflections in the water, the sickly smell of marigolds, the feast of colour, and then finished up by saying:

"And it was there on the long bridge that I met the queerest old boy I ever met, even in India. What do you think he was carrying about with him, Miss Juana? His only friend, he called it— A snake—a kerait, simply deadly, you know! Touch and go with a kerait. I give you my word."

She sat perfectly still. Was it fancy that I saw the laces at her bosom stir, as if something crept beneath them?

"How curious!" she said composedly;—"how dangerous! But I suppose the poison teeth had really been drawn. I've heard the snake-charmers in

India always do that."

"This was not a snake-charmer, my dear young lady. He was a holy man of sorts, and I saw that kerait bite a pariah dog, and in a very brief time he was gone where the good pariahs go. No—it was the real thing, and he had his reasons, which were very curious reasons indeed."

"Do tell me!" she said with pretty eagerness. "I myself am fond of the little grass snakes. All our people here believe that if you carry one about it keeps the dangerous ones off. I do that sometimes and am quite fearless where I go."

Soames looked at her seriously; "I shouldn't trust to a mascot like that. You've some nasty chaps on these hills. But as I was saying—this fellow had a very queer reason for the presence of his uncomfortable pet. But I don't know that it would interest a young lady like you."

"It does interest me. Please go on."

I hoped he was not going to make an ass of himself, for I knew that once let loose on his favourite topics, discretion left him, and whether his audience were a girls' school or a collection of scientists it would be all the same to him. He lit another cigar and leaned back comfortably.

"Well, he told me that in his case and many others in the Punjab there is a sort of unholy alliance with the snake tribe. A kind of Mutual Benefit society. For health, the man needs the contact of the serpent—the serpent needs the contact of the man. It's a kind of animal dope. They call it "Mar-ashakh" which means "serpent-need," and for my part I think it's founded on the old serpent worship of which there are so many traces all over the world. My man every month or so, got ill and restless, so he said, twitching all over the body, shooting neuralgias in the temples and along the nerves, and the only cure was the bite of a venomous snake. That made him sound at once, and the benefit to the snake was so obvious that at this especial time snakes were drawn to him wherever he might be. Once, on a pilgrimage to Benares, he saw the waters of the sacred Ganges part, and a black snake, very poisonous, crawled out to his feet and with its bite brought him perfect relief. He showed me the tiny scars on his legs and arms, and fresh ones on the wrist, newly bitten by the snake reposing inside his rags."

"Sounds like a sort of animal cocaine!" said Jim.

"Exactly. Dope of the worst sort."

"Those pilgrims," said I, repressing a shudder, "are often the greatest liars on earth. They'll say anything for money, and no doubt he scented a rupee at the end of his tale."

"No doubt. And he got it. But the subject happened to interest me, for in China and Japan I had been working at snake lore, and it fitted in with some very curious information I got there. But, to return to the Punjab— Off I went to Lahore, and began to investigate through a priest of Shiva who knows all there is to know about the Punjab superstitions, though that's not what *he* calls them! And I collected in a month fifty cases of this habit. These people know instinctively when a snake is near them. They profess, both men and women, that they must bring their minds into perfect tune with the snake state of being, so that for the time the human nature is obscured, and they feel, think, and act as snakes until the effect of the bite is worn off and they need the next inoculation."

I was interested in spite of myself.

"And is there any cure at all?"

"The yogis are said to have a cure, but as it only consists of an amulet and some charms I don't see there's much in it, unless indeed it affects the nerves. O, by the way, I learnt from my man the infallible test to be applied if you suspect any one is a victim to this pleasing habit. Suppose one of the natives here were "mar-ashakh" I could detect it as a matter of course. Shall we try? We might easily find it here, for it is said to prevail in the Gonda Islands where we are going. And the sooner an end is put to these modern snake-worshippers the better, for they have one very unpleasant peculiarity —they become as poisonous as their friends, and their bite, or even the saliva is deadly. I have seen a dog die from it."

"Is it possible, my dear fellow, that you take all this seriously?" I said; "I thought you were yarning."

"It's a plain truth, Lindsay, and that's one of the things I'm going to look up in the Gondas. By the way, Miss Juana, your old ayah hails from there. I'm trying to get her to give me a few tips to start with."

Juana did not reply. Her head lay back on the cushion and the golden lashes were immovable on her cheek.

"Asleep!" said Soames, shrugging his shoulders, "and a very fair set-down for my prosing. But I never was any good at parlour tricks. Good God! what's that?"

He leaped to his feet and I saw a small snake curve out from under the girl's chair and make swiftly for the garden. In terror lest her sleep might not be natural Jim caught her hand sharply:

"Juana, wake up! What is it?"

Slowly her eyes opened and a faint smile dawned in them:

“I was asleep. How rude of me! But I am not clever, you know—not a bit! and the talk was too grave for me. I—”

She turned and caught sight of Soames, who, armed with a stick, had made an end of the snake. It still writhed on the ground but it would never bite again. I never saw a face so stiffen into horror as hers. The colour seemed to fall away even in the great staring eyes. Her lips were ashen. She put her hands to her head, and mutely refusing Jim’s help, tottered from the place. I could hear her stumbling steps crossing the hall.

“She’s so sensitive,” I said hurriedly. “She can’t stand any shock. I’ve seen it before.”

Soames did not hear. He was bending over the snake. “What does it mean?” I heard him say. Jim had gone after her, and we were alone. He raised himself and stared at the ground. Not a word would he say—he went off in dead silence. When I went to bed I caught a glimpse of him standing outside the porch with a huddled figure that I thought was the old ayah—the hag, as Jim called her.

Next morning Soames did not appear. We waited, and then the Don sent a polite message to his room. He was found in a state of coma, breathing like a man in apoplexy, and frightfully ill. A doctor was sent for in hot haste and I went on guard. The coat of his pajamas had fallen open and at the base of the throat I saw two tiny punctures, both a little inflamed. I pointed them out to the dark native woman who was helping, but she only shook her head with a mouth like a shut trap. Evidently her thoughts were not for publication.

In an hour Soames was dead. The doctor said it was snake bite. And the Don, very pale and subdued, told us it was well known snakes hunted in couples and probably the mate of the one Soames had killed had thus avenged itself.

It was a ghastly business and an awful shock for us all, and I was not surprised to hear Juana was quite overwhelmed. Jim, in an agony, questioned the old woman, but she would only shake her head, her withered face grey with fear.

“Missy Sahib sick—sick!” was all we could get from her.

That afternoon poor Soames was buried. We were a shocked and silent little crowd. Death comes swiftly in these latitudes. In many places a grave is always kept yawning, ready for emergencies,—but Soames had been such a strong eager fellow so few hours before that it was as if we had seen a black trap-door swallow him up. A ghastly business!

The Don called me aside after, and asked me as Soames's friend to go through his papers and get the address of his sister, the only relative we knew of; so, late in the evening, I went alone into the large and shadowy death chamber where two lamps fought unsuccessfully with the dark. It was a tough job. A Presence seemed to sit beside me—the memory of the poor fellow lying out under the pall of the night. My hand shook as I unlocked the leather case where he kept his papers—it was a long business and a dreary one.

Time had gone by when I found a note-book with addresses and notes, and instantly my eye caught my own name. I read it.

"Dear Lindsay, if by chance anything should go wrong with me and I don't have time to explain, leave this place instantly, and *take Jim Daly*. Go. I gave that old devil drink and got a little from her and am on the track, but my life is in my hand. If I don't see you again, don't think I am mad, but avoid the girl and *Go!* R. Soames."

That was all. What had he meant to tell me? "The old devil." An awful flash of light in my brain—Juana's old ayah! I had seen him with her. She was from the Gondas—what did she know?—what had he dragged out of her? "The girl"? Why—that was Juana! And then, flash after flash lit up my brain, and wild suspicion sprang to life. Events grouped themselves with horrible precision. Every doubt I had had fell into shape. I could not know all, but I guessed. And Soames had known— He had become a danger and he was dead! The house frightened me horribly; the dark frightened me. My nerves thrilled to the horror like a taut bow-string. It was late now—dead midnight. Every one asleep. I felt the cold wet on my body. Here, in this room, in what ghastly slinking form had death approached that poor fellow? What had he heard?—a stirring outside the door sent every pulse of my soul flying, and I sprang at it. Yes—outside, crouched, listening, spying, was the black ayah. I grasped her arm and dragged her into the room, so bowed with terror that she looked more like a heap of rags than a human being. The rage in her face was hideous, yet there was defiance too, and I saw I must keep a stern hold on myself or I might slip down into some abyss of horror and be lost. I flung her into Soames's chair, and stood over her with a grip on her bony arm that might have held an athlete. It had all passed in dead silence—it was a dumb struggle. Now staring into her eyes I whispered:

"Tell me the truth—what you told him last night. Every word! I'll choke the life out of you if you lie."

She stared back at me, the strength of her eyes matching my own till it was odds which won. Then suddenly I felt her relax, and like dying lights they seemed to waver and go out and her head dropped on her breast. My

clutch hardened as if I had been at grips with the devil as I well think I was. At last she spoke.

The greater part of what she said in that thick muttering is not for human ear. It made a black stain on my thought that still wakes me up shuddering in the small hours—that aches like an old wound, and turns me sick with evil knowledge. The village, the village on the bluff—the place of the snake-worshippers—the black men and women, shunned by all. Jadu at its worst—a young life fed on the perversions that drag souls into the Pit. A horrible magic that walks the jungle in the Night of No Moon. A girl, poisonous in mind and body— No, I have said too much! Behind the worst I had guessed lay a Worse.

It was long past midnight when she ceased her muttering and crawled away so black, so lost, that her very presence seemed the doom of the house and all in it. I remained to think my way through the tangle. I won't dwell on what I thought and felt, but when the sun leaped up as it does in India my plan was made. I never doubted nor had a moment's hesitation.

I went before breakfast to Jim's room, only to find he had started with the Don to the other end of the estate, but would return that evening. After dark he came, looking weary and depressed. He looked ill too and no doubt he was anxious about her, but there was no possibility of sparing him, or even of delay. The swiftest stroke was the best mercy. I went straight to his room, and there, looking in every corner first and locking the door, I told him what it was absolutely necessary he should know. A part—a part only of what Juana really was. From the worst I saved him—that I swear. I showed him Soames's note. I recalled to him Soames's story of Lahore. I never saw a man go so white. The blood fell away out of his face like the sand from an hourglass. When he could speak he swore she was innocent but he did not tell me I lied; he saw too well what it cost me. I remember he said:

"Look at her. You can't believe it—she's like a little child. That old devil —" And much more. Much more.

But why recall that? He would see her and alone. I said he should not, and when he shook me off I followed close behind. I knew better than he what he was up against. I had no plan. I simply stood by him.

The room behind the veranda was lit with a low light, and she was lying there, pale and beautiful with tear-marks about her eyes. All in white. She looked more like a woodland lily than the lost soul I knew her for. Jim went straight up to her chair and my flesh crawled on my bones when I saw him take her hand.

"Juana—Sweetest—Dearest! They have blackened you to me. They have said you go out into the jungle at night,—that the cursed jadu has got you, that—Good God! I can't say it. Look at me. Show me your eyes and I shall know it for the lie it is. You never saw that cursed village!"

She looked up into his face, all pleading purity and loveliness. He bowed his head over her. Then, sitting in the chair with his arms about her, she looked at me across his shoulder with a grin of black hate and despair, and—whether it was the light and shadow or my own nerves gone to blazes, as they were!—I can't tell you even now, but I swear I fancied I saw her head flatten into the likeness of the reptile and a forked tongue flicker in and out between her lips. Madness, you say! Very likely—but I tell you the truth.

I leaped at them—I dragged them apart. I spoke to her as I never thought to speak to any woman. She clung round him, and his head had fallen in a kind of stupor against her bosom. I saw her put her lips to his cheek. Then first, in the heaped shadows of a corner, I saw the old ayah swaying to and fro and muttering to herself with malignant eyes on me. I got Jim by the shoulders, and as I did so, he lifted his head and looked at Juana—and with a hoarse cry he collapsed.

I took her by the throat and, desperately as she clung, I threw her to the ground, writhing like the snake she was, and as she lay, I carried him, a dead weight, out of the room and into the veranda.

There I shouted and two native gardeners came running. I sent them for the overseer, a clean white man,—and in half an hour, during which I never left him, they rigged up a kind of litter, and we laid him on that and stumbled away into the dark. By dawn we got him down to the village in the plains and the dak bungalow, and by that time he was raving. I don't know how many hours it took—I don't know anything, for I don't shame to tell you I had cold feet that night if ever I had, and there wasn't a rustle in the jungle that didn't raise my hair. I remembered after, that I had seen the father's face white and scared as we passed, but I knew later that a hurried exit was no new thing in his experience.

Jim was as bad as a man could be and live. The doctor said he must have been sickening for jungle fever, and we left it at that.

When he picked up a bit he told me what he had seen when she tried to kill him with her horrible kiss. It was only a word or two, but it curled me up and we dropped the subject by common consent after he had thanked me in a very manly way for what I had done.

A few days later we heard that Juana was ill, and later that she and her ayah had taken passage for Spain. Then a blaze of gossip broke out. Spain—

that was the polite name for the Gonda Islands! She had fled to the lower race where she could find her own evil level and there was no more to be said, though plenty said it!

Oquenda sold the coffee estate and went to Europe. I have often wondered how much he knew or suspected, but I never heard of him again.

"And your theory about this business, Lindsay?" I asked when he was silent.

"My theory sounds so like sheer lunacy that I had better keep it dark."

It took some arguing before I could drag it out of him.

"Comparing it with Soames's Punjab cases," he said reluctantly; "I think the girl was 'Mar-ashakh.' She had been bitten so often that she was immune and a poison-carrier. Her vitality depended upon human contact as well for a restorative, and when she bit the boy and Soames, it was partly in a cold snake-like rage, partly as a means of reviving her dull reptilian life. The snake she always carried was a poisonous one. I discovered that later. That's what I think,—and what I know is, that hearing all this you'll expect to see me in a strait-waistcoat before long. But, you see, my dear fellow, you didn't live through it and I did. And I haven't told you the whole by any means."

"Lindsay, is it all a plant?"

His face twitched with nerves. I was answered.

"Take it at that, if you like, but for Heaven's sake, drop it! I was a d—— d fool to begin. I never did before, and I never will again."

I looked at his working face, thinking less of what he had said than what he had left unsaid.

But who shall plumb the abyss of human nature in the dark places of the earth?

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[1] (This story is founded on a belief which I have found in various parts of India.)

THE COURTESAN OF VAISALI

A STORY OF THE BUDDHA FOUNDED ON ANCIENT TIBETAN AND INDIAN RECORDS

NOW this is told by me who have journeyed from very far to visit the place that now is desolate—the great city of Vaisali. And what is my name that I should tell it—I who am nothing and pass into the Silence? Hear me but as a wandering wind, crying through broken roofs and eyeless windows, and, forgetting all else, consider the great Law that like a conqueror is throned upon the years, and in eternity shall not change.

And thus I begin.

So, having crossed the wide river, the Ganges, and journeyed on afar, we came to a place of ruins—the work of mighty men who had built greatly in the times that are dead, and in the tumbled stones, knotted together with creepers and rank vines, we could perceive the remnants of high gates and royal palaces and among them a pillar crowned with a lion, that men might thereby remember the Exalted One, the Buddha, that Lion of the Sakya tribe. And here and there had villages sprung up upon these fallen ruins of the kings, using the sculptured stones to make a shelter for their wretchedness—these stones which had once sheltered the royal, the noble, who, being impermanent, have now passed into the Silence and concern themselves no more with worldly glory. Yet was this a very piteous sight, and, covering my face with my sleeve, I shed tears, knowing that here had trodden the feet of the World-honoured, the Excellent Lord. And my companions also were moved, though very simple people, seeing the poisonous serpents glide in and out of queens' chambers, and, for singing and rejoicing, desolation. And in the monastery of the great forest standing about the ruins—that which is built by the Monkey Tank, so called because it was there that the monkeys, seeing the Blessed One fainting with hunger, climbed the trees and collected honey for his need—the brethren gave us shelter, receiving us with kindness and bestowing pure food according to the Law.

Now this dead city of Vaisali is the more to be reverenced because it was from here that the Blessed One set forth to depart utterly from the sight of

man, and true it is that I have seen that ruin of the Western Gate where he stood, and, turning, pronounced these words: “In this place have I wrought the last religious act of my life, and now I go forward to take the way of all transient things into the great Silence.” And when I came there and stood among the tumbled stones, I prostrated myself and laid my face on the earth.

But this Vaisali was a very great city and this can be seen by the glory of its ruins. It was walled for safety with watch-towers at intervals and great gates, through which went in and out the armies and elephants of the king. Noble houses stood within those walls, with balconies of marble adorned with precious substances, so that each of them might in another city be the palace of a prince. These also are but heaps of stone veiled with waving weeds. The fair carved windows, the steps where men went gladly up and down, the closed chambers of the women are now the habitation of the dusky-winged bat and the dwelling-place of the great-eyed owl. True are the words of the Holy One: “Transitory are all component things, and we walk in the mists of illusion.”

Now where one house stood in the Street of Flowers, the street of the light women of Vaisali, is a strange thing. For there have men built with pious hands a *stupa* great and wonderful. It is a domed building of bricks and stone, solid, but in the heart of it a very small chamber containing a relic of the Holy One. Already in the crevices of the brick have trees and plants set their roots, and these will destroy it, but that which it commemorates cannot pass. Therefore I record this story of the Lady Amra, and if any marvel that a stupa should stand in the street of the light women, let him hear and, hearing, lay his hand upon his mouth.

Long, long since, there was a man of noble birth in Vaisali, and his name was Mahanaman. His house was glorious with marble and precious woods, the marble inlaid with lapis-lazuli and carnelian. At the outer gates were stationed slave-maidens of enchanting beauty, and with laughing faces of felicity they paid reverence to his guests and welcomed them. Proceeding farther, these came to the inner gates, and there on either side was a slave-girl of yet more exquisite grace, each one holding garlands and a golden vessel of perfume, to be offered to those whom Mahanaman would honour. Before them in the gardens was a tank of wrought marble with arches and pavilions to catch the wandering breeze, and here were the guests bidden to bathe themselves, that they might be anointed with perfumes and garlanded and so enter the presence of the lord of the palace. And this was called the House of the Blue Lotus. But this rich man had no daughter, and he was grieved, desiring the tender ministration of such a one.

But through his hospitality to the poor and to the Brahmans he had acquired much merit, and it so chanced that, having one day fed and clothed a holy mendicant, he lamented to him his hard case, and this wise man, summoning his spiritual power, looked forth into the world and said this: "Many men have daughters according to the flesh. To a few come daughters born of their good deeds, and such a daughter is invariably of exquisite beauty and a queen in heart, superior to all other women and a world's wonder. Fear not, O noble person, for such a daughter shall be yours. Go on the eighth day from this into the *amra* grove in your garden of pleasure and accept with gratitude what the high gods send."

So the householder Mahanaman made great preparation. He caused the gardens to be emptied of all rough stones and gravel and sprinkled with sandal water, so that even persons approaching the city perceived the delicate fragrance. And from the trees were hung rich hangings of embroidery and sewn gold, and everywhere were flowers strewn. And on the appointed day he and his wife went out with a company of friends and kindred, and they sat in the pavilions by the Lake of the Blue Lotuses and rejoiced with mirth and song.

And suddenly two slave-girls came running and crying: "See, O auspicious one, what we have found in the amra grove. Surely the gods are gracious unto us this day!" And lo, they unwrapped from the wound silk a girl-child, lovely among the lovely, perfect in every part of her little person, an image, as it were, of pure gold.

So, rejoicing, he took her into his hands and presented her to his noble wife, saying: "This is the issue of my good deeds, and because she was found in the amra grove, she shall be the Lady Amra. Rejoice with me, my friends, because I am no longer daughterless."

And there was great rejoicing. And some believed this was a child of the King of Vaisali, but this I know not.

So this little maiden grew up into perfect beauty, more lovely, as it seemed, than any child of man. Her eyebrows were black as a swarm of honey-bees, her nostrils delicately arched, her lips rose-coral and shaped like the *bimba* fruit, disclosing when she laughed the little white seeds of teeth that should bite only pomegranates and melons. And her limbs were bewildering to see, clothed as if in a queen's garment with the long silken locks of her perfumed hair. And as for her eyes, they were deep and darkly blue as Lake Manasarowar, and the sweet thoughts floated in them as floated the holy Parvati in those unsounded waters. And this loveliness was arrayed in splendour of many-coloured robes, worked with gold and modestly concealing her breasts, arched like the shells of young tortoises.

And now that she had grown from childhood to maidenhood, many men from many lands came to woo this glorious one, the sons of kings and ministers and of great merchants and many more. And at last her father reflected that to whoever might obtain her, the award would be an occasion of strife, and this was a source of anxiety. He finally bethought him to ask counsel of the Brahmans and great householders of Vaisali, for this concerned the peace of the city, and on a certain day he assembled them in the Amber Court of his house, thus named because it was of golden woods wrought into leaves and flowers.

And when they were seated according to rank, he said: "Noble persons, attend to my words. I have brought up my daughter into perfect beauty and her fame has run through the world, so that it seems all the young men of riches and high birth will consider no other. And I foresee that this must be a cause of strife and bloodshed. What then should I do? I seek the refuge of your wisdom."

And they replied: "Noble householder, long ago a law was made in Vaisali for such cases. And thus it was that when a maiden surpassed all others in beauty and became a very pearl of beauty, she was not permitted to marry, because this would be the occasion of strife and bloodshed."

And Mahanaman said, "This is a hard law and a cruel."

And they replied: "There is yet more. She may not marry, but, being a pearl of women, she shall belong to the enjoyments of the people. Bring her forth that we may judge."

And in great doubt and fear he went to the women's chambers and came forth, leading the maiden Amra. Now she was clad in a vesture of pale rose veiled with silver transparent as air, and she was like the young moon floating in the sunset. The weight of her hair was upbound with strings of rubies, and by each fine ear fell her veil seeded with silver, and between her black brows the great ruby known as the "Rose of Kailas." About her neck was a fine silk thread with one hundred and eighty great pearls, and she wore her armlets and anklets of beaten gold set with jewels and on either breast a shield of gold, and each was linked to the other with chains of gems. Yet was all this as nothing in the blue light of her eyes and the angelical sweetness of her face and parted lips, whence issued the fragrance of roses as she breathed quickly for fear of the assemblage. And she raised her eyes, dark blue as those of the ruru deer, and fixed them beseechingly on the faces of her judges, dreading she knew not what.

So they considered her, and she was perfect from the silk-soft hair to the soles of her little feet, reddened with lac and fit to lie in the breast of a great king. And they said: "Noble householder, this is undoubtedly a pearl of

women. Never has there been such; never will there be. She cannot marry, lest the country run with blood and men curse her birth. She shall belong to the enjoyments of the people."

And her father wept.

Later, when all were gone, the maiden came timidly to his feet and, seeing him sad and in deep thought, she knelt and touched them and asked the cause and the meaning of this judgment.

And he said: "O daughter, you have been recognized as a pearl of women. Alas for the beauty that I rejoiced in, that was my pride. In it did I behold the reflection of my good deeds shining like the sun, but now it has covered me with sorrow and shame; for the householders have doomed my child, that she shall be no man's wife in honor, but a minister to the enjoyments of the people."

And hearing this, she rose, hiding her face in trembling hands and quivering from head to foot like a plantain shaken in the wind. And silence possessed her, and she stood before her father like an image of despair.

And seeing it, he said very pitifully: "There is no help. I have no power. O would that a pearl of women had never been found in my family!"

And he hid his face in his robe, and, when he lifted it, she was gone. So for eight days he did not see the maiden nor inquire concerning her; for her name that had been as music in his ears now blistered them. But on the eighth day she came into the Amber Court, clothed in coarse white and divested of all her jewels, like a widow.

And she spoke, and her voice was as the voice of a stranger. "Since there is no help for this and I have willed to die and cannot, hear me, O noble householder. If the people will grant me these wishes, I will belong to their enjoyments. They shall allot me a great house in the Street of Flowers; for on this house never will I look again. When a man has entered my house, none else shall enter it until my leave is asked. At the time when houses are searched, my house shall not be searched until after seven days' notice. And no heed shall be taken of any that go in or come out of my house. For I will not be a slave like those others who live in the Street of Flowers. Lay this before the people, and, if they refuse, I also refuse and will find a way."

And greatly fearing her eyes, her father laid these conditions before the assemblage of wise men, and they said: "If she asks for a great house in the Street of Flowers, certainly this befits a pearl of women and cannot be denied. If she asks that, when a man has entered her house, no other should enter, she displays her wisdom, for this would bring about the bloodshed we fear. If she asks that her house be not searched without due notice, that too is

reasonable, for what danger can accrue from one so noble and sweet? And if she wishes that no heed be taken of those who enter or leave her gate, this cannot be denied, for who would enter if the world watched his footsteps?"

So they refused nothing, and, had she asked the world, they would have given it, and therein was no help. Then without any farewell to her father and her mother and the people of the household, she passed out from among them in the dark of a moonless night and her name was no more spoken and she was dead to them. And so she became a minister to the enjoyments of the people.

Now what she thought in her heart, I who tell, know not, and certainly the Lady Amra told it not to man or woman. If her heart dwelt uncomforted behind her laughter, none could know; for the brilliance of her speech and her shining eyes and the music of her voice like a river's ripple and her singing and the languorous poses of her dancing so bewildered the minds of men that they neither knew nor cared for aught else. And she said: "What they will, I give—my beauty. What they do not ask, I do not give. My heart and the thoughts within it are mine, and the lotus of my soul that is rooted in the mud is now a shut flower."

Many fair women dwelt in the Street of Flowers, but of them all not alone the fairest but the cruelest was the Lady Amra, for her heart was hard and bright as rock-crystal, and, when men spoke of her, they said: "Beautiful is Ahalya and fairer still is Vasavi, but most beautiful of all the women is Amra, and surely she has no heart for any man, but only for gold and cruel laughter, and scorn shoots its arrows from the bow of her lip." And they crawled at her feet like dogs.

And from all parts the princes and merchants came to the Street of Flowers. It half circled the lake where the lotus-flowers bloomed in season, and it might have been an abode of deities for its splendour; for the houses of the fair women stood about it in their gardens with pavilions of marble over the water, and steps descended thereto with boats and shallops moored to the steps, and these were most richly painted and gilded. And when the moon came up and walked with shining feet upon the water, persons with sweet voices would sing aloud, floating on the lake until the whole city rejoiced as at the music of the heavenly Dancers. And the merchants carried the fame of these things all through the world, desiring only to return to Vaisali as to a city of Heaven.

O impermanence of the glory of this world! Now is this lake a swamp, where frogs and the great lizards and doleful creatures abide, and a fearful silence overshadows it. With these eyes have I seen.

But of all the houses the house of Amra was the noblest, for the wealth of the world was brought to adorn it. For her pleasure the loaded camels died among the Bactrian ways; for her the merchants of China strewed their bones along the desert of Lop and, dying, commanded that the silks and ivories and the Precious Thunder tea be laid at her feet, with their last words of longing. For her the pearls of Lanka, the woven air of the gauzes of the South.

Very terrible is the power of a fair woman. There is none like it. The kings take counsel with their ministers, the wise men with the gods, but there is none that controls the will of a woman.

So she sent for the men of skill and commanded them to paint on the walls of her great hall, in gold and blue and cinnabar and scarlet, all the men who had loved her and each with a collar of gold and a chain about his throat like her tame ape, and this she did to scorn them. And when it was done, she clothed herself in jewels and went and sat in the hall and said: "Among these are great princes but no king. What king is there worthy to be pictured on my walls?"

And they said: "Lady, there is Bimbisara, king of Magadha, and he is a great and noble king, stately as Indra when he thunders. But such a man would not enter the city of a foe, and he has queens many and fair, and such a king would not enter the Street of Flowers."

But Amra said, laughing: "When I raise my hand, a man, be he king or merchant, must surely come. Make ready your gold and scarlet to paint him on my walls."

And the men went away in fear for the beauty of her, saying: "It is true. This is true."

And she sent her picture, wrapped in silk and perfumed with ambergris, to the King, and he took it amazed; for never had he seen such beauty, and he came in the royal car with white oxen tasseled with gold and Gopala, his minister, seated beside him. Nor did he regard any danger, for this great King came eager as a boy to her feet, and she greeted him like a goddess and in her House of the Precious Pearl he stayed six days without fear because of the promise of the people to her that none should molest her guests, and on the seventh he mounted his car and she drove beside him to the Eastern Gate, scorning those who watched her with great eyes. But when he would have taken her with him to his city, she refused, saying: "I am not for a king nor any man but for a day and an hour. I belong to the enjoyments of the wide world."

Nor could gold or love constrain her. So he went, leaving behind him such jewels as the world had not seen, and she had his picture painted on her walls, collared and chained with gold like her tame ape, and she looked upon it and laughed.

Now it chanced that one day a Prince from a far country came to her gate, richly attended, a noble man and calm and beautiful as are the great, and, entering her presence, he saluted her, and she rose to meet him and touched her brows with her hands as she bowed.

And he said: "I am come that I may see the most beautiful thing in all the wide world; for this is the report and the rumour spread everywhere of the Lady Amra by the princes and the merchants. And I am one who cannot be content with less than the most lovely, and therefore am I here. Convince me of this."

And she replied, smiling like the Dancers of Indra: "Stay with me three days, and if it is not then in your heart, O Prince, that I am the loveliest, say it not with your lips. What is rumour? Let each judge for himself."

And he consented, and she said to her women: "Use your skill like a burnished weapon of war. Seek out my jewels. Make me more beautiful than beauty's self; for I would have this man collared and chained upon my walls with the lowest there. Robe me in shining gold; for never have I heard one breathe a doubt and all have fallen at my feet when I unveiled my face."

And that night she shone indeed like the moon in the midnight sky, and there was no star to set beside her, for all were drowned in the ocean of her glory.

So they sat in the painted hall, reclining on cushions sewn with pearls and gold birds and fishes, and her women cooled the air with *chowries* of white yaks' tails, the handles set with moonstones and jargoons, and her eyes were brilliant and tender, but what was in her thoughts who could tell—for it is easier to discover a white crow or the print of fishes' feet than to know what is in the mind of a woman. And beside her burned a small turret, made of costly perfumes mixed with pounded gold and pearls.

And the Prince said softly: "Fair one with the long, sweet eyes, show me a marvel; for I have heard say that all the marvels of the world are outdone here and are as nothing to the marvels of Vaisali."

And, laughing, she sent for her man of skill in magic, a man grey-bearded and old, and he showed these strange things done by the power of *dharani*—the mystic charms of India.

First, placing a table before them made of ox-red sandalwood and smooth as the face of water, he stood three feet from it and muttered, and, as

he muttered, two green leaves shot up from the table, and, as he still muttered, stems put forth from the leaves and more leaves and blossoms like the white *champak*, and it grew swiftly and wound about the table and bowered it with sweetness and flowering green, and Amra plucked a wreath from it, as it swayed in the wind of the chowries, and twisted it into a garland and put it about the Prince's neck and said sweetly: "What of my wise man? There are no such marvels."

And the Prince replied gravely: "It is a great marvel, but I have seen greater. Show me more, O Beautiful."

So they brought in the dead body of a child whom a serpent had bitten, and they laid it at the jeweled foot of Amra, and she, resting her chin on her hand, looked down upon it coldly, but the Prince, with locked lips. And the wise man with mutterings and incantations paced round and about the body, and the child was stark and by the door the mother wept alone. So then, redoubling his power, he spread above the body a cloth worked with strange images and sprinkled this with water that, as it were, boiled and yet was cold, and he flung himself on the ground and cried and foamed at the mouth but did not touch the child. And at the long last, rising, he raised the cloth and the body of the child was gold, through and through, heavy and yellow and splendid like an image of the gods.

And, smiling coldly, Amra said: "Behold, Prince, our inexhaustible riches. Give this to the mother, to dry her tears; for better than warm flesh and blood is gold. This at least cannot die."

And they dragged it along the floor, ringing and heavy, but the mother wept and would have none of it.

And the Prince said: "Very wonderful was this—worthy to be told before kings. But I have seen a greater marvel. Show me more, O Beautiful."

So the man, enraged that he was despised, cried aloud, "Behold, O scornful lord, for never have you seen the like of this." And seizing the sword of the Prince, where he had laid it on the mats, and sweeping furiously in air, he cut off his own head, and the blood spurted like a fountain and he fell at their feet. But the head rolled bounding away, still muttering, and lo, as it muttered, it turned in its course and rolled again toward the body, where it lay at the foot of the Prince, and it united itself to the neck, and the magician rose and kneeled before them, saying, "This is my greatest marvel."

But the Prince, watching with calm eyes, replied: "I have seen a greater marvel than this. Show me more, O Beautiful."

And angry and lovely, she leaped to her feet and cried aloud: “There are no such marvels anywhere and no such man of skill as my magician. What you have seen, speak, or be dragged from my door as a liar.” For the women stood like images about her, quailing at her wrath, and the magician knelt and whimpered, and she looked to see the Prince utterly abashed.

But he gazed at her with grave eyes. “I have seen a man in Magadha that is no magician; yet, were all these marvels and more done in his presence, there is not one—no, not even a woman—who would give one thought to these, but would steadfastly gaze upon him, heeding no other thing. For in him all marvels meet. And those who have not seen that man have seen nothing.”

“And what, then,” she cried furiously, “is the secret of his magic?”

So he spoke, musing, as it were, upon a remembered sweetness: “Child, it is a small thing to play with illusion and bewilder the fallible senses of man. Lo you now, in this are you yourself a greater magician than your wise man; for all see you as the very glory of women, lovely as a nymph of Indra’s Heaven, utterly desirable, a flaming fire of beauty, and yet in truth you are a portress to the Gate of Darkness and a flame that lights the Highway of Horror.”

And she clenched her hands until the veins knotted on them and she shrieked for the sword, that she might slay him, and he stood gravely with eyes that did not fall. And suddenly, at last, she tore the jewels from her hair, and it fell about her like a perfumed cloud that clothed her from head to feet, and she rent her robe from bosom to hem and it dropped in a rosy heap beside her, and so she stood like an image of that Beautiful whom the high gods made from flowers, and cried with a voice that rang through the house: “See me as I am, unadorned and naked. Am I not beautiful? Is there in all the world a woman like unto me? For if it be so, I will be her slave.”

And he, calmly regarding her, replied: “There is no woman so beautiful, but what of that when there is a man of whom it is true that if you, lady, stood beside him, radiant as now you are, there is no eye that would turn to you but all would fix on him and him only.”

But she said: “This cannot be. Where I stand, men have no breath, no heart but for me, and they are my slaves to slay or save as I will.”

And he answered gravely, “Yet, O lady, this is true.”

And she, staring at him with great eyes: “Then shall he be my lord and my love, and never another shall kiss my foot. Where is this man, that I may send swift messengers?”

“Very certainly he should be your Lord, and, seeing him, you will desire none other. But, as for sending, there is no need, for even now he comes to Vaisali.” So said the Prince, a little smiling.

And she angrily: “Then to my arms, also, for what man comes hither that does not entreat at my gates? But now I make this wager. If, when I have seen this man, I confess that his beauty is more glorious than mine, then will I be his slave and see my lovers no more, but if this is not so, then shall your picture be set, collared and chained like an ape, among the men I have subdued, and in the face of the city shall you kiss my feet and serve in my household.”

So he said: “Content. And now give me leave, O Lotus-eyed, to depart; for it is needful that I should tell this man of the glory and the beauty of you, and I weary also to be with him in whom is summed up the world’s desire.”

And seeing that his eyes were cold and his heart elsewhere, she permitted him to depart and flung herself on the mats, raging with shame and anger to be so scorned.

And at the curtain he turned, saying: “I bid you farewell, most beautiful lady. Doubtless, in coming to this house, the Prince of whom I have spoken shall find a treasure such as his soul covets, for he is a strong hunter of men and women. Peace abide with you.”

And the very next day the steward who controlled her great gardens came and bowed at her feet, and, leave given, he said this: “Lady, a wandering *rishi*—a wise man—comes this way, and it is reported that he has nowhere to lay his head. Surely it is an auspicious thing to welcome the wise, and in your Garden of Mangoes outside the city is the fair little pavilion, the House of Tranquility, where such a one might rest with his following. Much good fortune may thus be acquired.”

So, touching idle notes on the *sitar*, she gave permission. “It is well, good Appaji, though I have enough of happy fortune and to spare. But enough of this rishi. If you hear tidings of a great Prince, beautiful and noble, who comes this way, I would know instantly; for upon that I have a wager.”

And in three days he returned.

“O auspicious lady, I know not how it is, but all the nobles and people are afoot, making their way to the Garden of Mangoes, and when I ask the reason, they reply: ‘It is because of this man who rests there. There is none like him—none. And he is the son of a King, who has forsaken his kingdom that he may find a greater treasure.’ ”

And she leaped to her feet, laughing, and said: “Is it so? Then make ready my vehicles and I will go with Subaddha to see the man.”

And they harnessed her white oxen with tassels of gold to her gilded car, and, unveiled, she took her place with the woman Subaddha at her feet and a canopy of gold above her head, and she went like a queen.

Now it was so early in the day that the folk were busied with their labours and the nobles were yet sleeping and the way was clear before her, and the oxen trod quietly between the plantain-trees and the fan-palms until she came to the gate of her Garden of Mangoes, and there they halted in the young sunlight and the dew of dawn. And a man stood by the gate as though he guarded it, and he was robed in yellow with his arm and shoulder bare, and, when she would have entered, he stretched out his arm and forbade her, and he said: “Lady, being such a woman as you are, shameless and unveiled, how is it seemly that you should enter this garden? Return whence you came.”

And the blood fell away from her face and left her pale at the saying; for she had lived all her life like a queen and now it seemed that the days of scorn were come upon her, and her beauty nothing, though she shone as a night of moon and stars in her woven webs of gold. And silence fell upon her as she looked upon this young man, severe and beautiful, who regarded her not; nor could she say, “The garden is mine,” for she was afraid.

So then between the feathering palms and the bamboos that floated on the still air came another man, also clothed in the yellow robe, and she looked up, trembling, and behold it was the Prince that had scorned her magician, and he said softly to the other: “Stay her not, O Brother, for the Master would look upon her beauty. Descend, lady, and follow.”

And a little comforted at this saying, she descended from beneath the canopy and followed through the palms and the mango-trees that were her own and now seemed not hers. And there was a great quiet; for the Prince said no word, and the leaves forebore to stir, and not a cricket chirped and the sun was very early and dewy in the green ways. And she thought: “What shall I see? A King—a Prince? But they have feared me and I mocked them. And if he be wise, yet have the ascetics of the forests—those whom the very gods feared—been seduced from their wisdom by the nymphs of Heaven and gone utterly astray, and very certainly I am beautiful as even Menaka or Urvasi.”

And now they turned a green path beside the tank where the lotuses bloomed, and it was cool and dim with a deep shade of trees; for there trees let down their pillared stems to root again in earth and make a forest temple that scarcely a ray might pierce. And within the shade was One seated with

folded hands and feet, and behind his head a raying light that shone like a moon at midnight, and, lost in calm, he looked out into the Worlds.

And the man beside her fell on his knees and hid his face.

Not for me—oh, not for me, the lowliest of all the disciples, is it meet that I should tell of this or of the similitude of the Blessed One—the very wise, the passionless, the desireless Lord! Only this I know—that the woman stood amazed, forgetting her beauty, forgetting herself, forgetting all in the Three Worlds but only that One. And the rock-crystal that was her heart melted within her and flowed away in a flood of tears; nor could she stay her feet, but slowly, very slowly she approached and before his feet she fell and laid her face on the earth.

Now after a while the Exalted One commanded her to rise and be seated, and he incited and gladdened her with high discourse, so that she could no longer fear, but only love, in hearing those great words with ears that drank them as the parched earth yearns for the rains. And if it be asked how a woman of evil life should be thus honoured, should thus harken with love and understanding, I tell this which is true.

Many lives ago was there a deep forest where the beasts and birds dwelt and nourished their young in peace, and one day a great wind blew and brought on its wings a great fire. And none had pity on the perishing beasts and birds save only one pheasant, glorious of plumage, and this, caring nothing for her own life plunged into a stream of pure water and, flying upward, shook the drops from her feathers on the flames. Thereupon Indra, king of the gods, seeing, said: “Foolish bird, and what can this do? Surely you weary yourself in vain! This is a deed for the great and not for a little bird.” And she: “You are Indra, the great god, and with a wish you could quench this fire, yet do not. But as for me, while it burns, I have no time for words.” And again she flew upward, sprinkling the water. And the great god blew with his breath and extinguished the fire, but the pheasant had perished in the flames. Now in that former life was the Lady Amra that bird, and because the fruit of a good deed can never perish, so, passing through many lives, she attained at last to lie at the feet of the Blessed One. Just and perfect is the Law!

So, seated at his feet, she received the Heart of Wisdom and accepted the first Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering. And when the Exalted One judged that she could receive no more that day, he dismissed her, and she bowed at his feet and said this: “Oh, may the Lord in deep compassion do me the honour of eating at my house tomorrow.”

And all thought this could not be, but the Blessed One gave by silence his consent, and again she bowed down, rejoicing, and circling reverently

about him three times, she departed, glad of heart, and the people made way for one so honoured.

Now the nobles of Vaisali had come forth to greet the World-honoured, and they were on the road, and Amra in the joy of her heart drove up against them, axle to axle, and they said angrily, “How is it, Amra, that you, being such a one, drive up against us?”

And she cried aloud, “Noble persons, I have bidden the Blessed One for tomorrow’s meal, and he comes—he comes!”

And they halted and said, “Sell us this meal for great weights of gold.”

But she, glowing with joy, “Noble persons, were you to offer all Vaisali with it subject territories, yet would I not give up this honourable meal!”

And the nobles cast up their hands, crying: “We are outdone by this mango-girl! We are outreached by this mango-girl!”

And in anger they proceeded to the garden and went in before the Lord, where he sat surrounded with calm, and they said, “May the World-honoured do us the honour of taking his meal, together with his disciples, at our house tomorrow?”

But he replied: “Noble persons, I have promised to eat tomorrow with the Lady Amra.”

And again they threw up their hands, exclaiming: “We are outdone by this mango-girl! Great shame to us is this!” So they bowed before the Exalted One and departed.

And the Lord Buddha robed himself early in the morning and took his begging bowl, and his disciples followed and he went to the Street of Flowers, and Amra set sweet rice and cakes before the Lord and his following, and she herself attended upon them in great humility, and they ate the food they had not thought to eat, and when it was eaten, she sat lowly by his side and, folding her hands, said: “Lord, I present this house to the Order. Accept it if it be your will.”

And the Blessed One accepted the gift, seeing the heart that made it, and after instructing her and gladdening her with high discourse, he rose and went his way. And the Prince Ananda, the cousin of the Lord and his most beloved disciple, stayed his foot a moment on the threshold, saying, “Lady, is the wager won?”

And she replied, shining with joy: “It is won. I am his slave.”

So she sent for her men of skill, and they defaced the pictures of the princes collared and chained like apes, and they painted instead a seat upon which none sat; only a great light hovered about it, and before it in the ground were the shining prints of two feet. For in those days men dared not

to picture the holy face nor person. But before this they painted a woman who knelt, veiled in her hair, and about her neck were the collar and chain of a slave.

So in merciful deeds and right living this lady grew old, and the Heart of Wisdom waxed and strengthened, in her, and in this very life she became a saint—a great *Arhat*—and entered into the Nirvana. For, as the lotus-flowers do not grow on dry land but spring from the black and watery mud, so, even by the strength of her passion and sin and the deeps of her experience, she reached the heights. And she it was who made the "Psalm of Old Age" and smiled in its making.

"Glossy and black as the down of the bee my curls once clustered,
They, with the waste of the years, are liker to hemp or to bark-cloth.
Such and not otherwise runneth the rune of the Soothsayer.

"Lovely the lines of my ears as the delicate work of the goldsmith.
They, with the waste of the years, are seamed with wrinkles and
pendent.
Such and not otherwise runneth the rune of the Soothsayer.

"Full and lovely in contour rose of old the small breasts of me.
They, with the waste of years, droop shrunken as skins without water.
So and not otherwise runneth the rune of the Soothsayer.

"Such hath this body been. Now age-weary, weak and unsightly,
Home of manifold ills; old house whence the mortar is dropping.
So and not otherwise runneth the rune of the Soothsayer."

And inasmuch as the Sister thus discerned impermanence in all phenomena, she, making clear her insight, attained, leaving behind her all fear and grief. Now, this is why the stupa stands in the Street of Light Women, and I, who have seen, record it as it is. For who shall measure the bounds and the deeps and the heights of that Wisdom that is one with Love?

And so I end my story that grows like a lily in desolate places, but my name I do not tell, for I am but a wind crying in the ruins of Vaisali the dead city.

(I believe the translation of the Psalm of Amra to be by C. F. Rhys Davids.)

THE FLUTE OF KRISHNA

ADORATION to Krishna the Beloved, to the Flute-player whose breath is the Divine, whose flute is the Heart of Man. Adoration to him who, as the Lover of the Herd-maidens, is the Soul among the Five Senses, who, as the Lover of Radha, is the Divine that embraces the Soul. May he who is the Dancer, the Lord of Illusion, diffuse the attar of his presence throughout this story, and may the passion of his music be heard in its silences!

Long ages ago a King of Jambudwipa desired a child, but, though he had three Queens, he was childless. Great sacrifices were performed by him and on his behalf by the Brahmans and ascetics, who received in reward gifts of exceeding value, and at last, on a certain day, an ascetic, emerging from the forest where he dwelt in deepest meditation, presented him with a fruit, which should be given to the most beautiful of his Queens, that she might bear his child.

Now these three Queens were so beautiful that each separately resembled Lakshmi, that Sea-born who is the Lady of Beauty, and together they formed a constellation that even the Pleiads could not equal.

So with the fruit concealed in his breast, the King entered the palace of his wives, that he might make his decision. This had become a matter of great anxiety to him; nor had he dared to speak of it to any person, lest it should reach the Queens and provoke discord between them. Having ascended to the Hall of White Marble, where they sat with their attendants like roses fallen on the snows of Himalaya, the King commanded them to continue their occupations as though they were not in his presence, so saying that he might observe and compare them at his leisure, deciphering, as it were, the secrets of their beauty. And fixing his eyes upon them, he considered them earnestly.

Now the first Queen, Urmila, was playing with a casket of jewels, and with these she adorned her beauty. In the small shells of her ears she fixed precious hoops of gold set with blood-rubies. In the delicate curve of either nostril she placed a jewel of rubies like a flower. She set on her head an ornament resembling the outspread tail of a peacock, glowing like the

inmost essence of the heart of the rose, and about her neck she hung chain after chain of rubies, depending to the lowest dimple of her knee. Her slender fingers she loaded with rubies, and on each slim ankle she placed bangles of gold and rubies, and little rings on the great toe of each lovely foot. And thus, in the blood-red splendour, like a Queen of fire, or a salamander in the core of the flames, she came and stood before the King, laughing with pleasure and saying, "O *Aryaputra* [son of a noble father], am I not beautiful?"

And in his heart he awarded her the prize; for her eyes were long and dark as a gazelle's, and in either lake of darkness he could see a little picture of himself, seated like Vishnu upon those waters of beauty. And her mouth bewildered the senses, and the ruffled silk of her hair held the heart faster than chains of iron. So, being intoxicated with loveliness, he would have laid the fruit in her hand, but wisdom prevailed, and he said, "Sit you on the cushion at my right hand, that I may see your sisters."

So he fixed his eyes on the second Queen, Urvasi, and her person was of a pale gold colour, like silver bronze, and shaped divinely as a cup shaped by a skilful craftsman for kings to drink from. Her lips were blood-red as with the blood of those who had lost their lives for the sake of her beauty, and the long lashes veiled her eyes like shadows in which the senses might wander and be entangled. But when she raised them, behold, a sunrise of light and laughter that banished darkness. And this most beautiful lady had decked herself with the greenest of emeralds from Lanka, and about her waist that a child might span she wore a girdle of emeralds, which hung about the curves of her swelling hips in long fringes like dripping waters from a fountain of green fire and tinkled as she went, and she also came before the King and said very softly, like a child, "Aryaputra, am I not beautiful?"

And bewildered, he had almost given the fruit to Urvasi, but reason prevailed once again and he said, "Sit on the cushion on my left hand, that I may see your sister."

So he fixed his eyes upon the youngest Queen, and she, not knowing of his entrance, sat far off by the fretted marble of a window, weaving garlands of jasmine flowers.

Her beauty resembled that of the Goddess Umā, when she did penance in the waters of Lake Maneswar for her passion that had disturbed the meditation of the God. For this lady was like a figure of ivory made by a mighty maker, and her eyes were cold as dawn, and she stood on the verge where girlhood melts into womanhood and none can say which it is. The heaviness of her black hair, black as *kadumba* boughs, almost bowed her

head; her eyes were the dark blue of the midnight sky when the moon is full, and her beauty must have been pronounced the very triumph of perfection, were it not that, since she had entered the palace of the King, she had never smiled—no, not even when he had drawn her to his arms.

And now she had made a crown of white stars for her head, and to each fine ear she had hung a cluster of jasmine flowers, and about her neck a garland, and in her hand long stems of these perfumed blossoms, so that in her white robe she appeared an image of ebony and ivory, and her eyelashes lay like dark crescents upon the pallor of her cheek. And her name was Malati.

So the King watched her, and suddenly it seemed to him that he had never seen her face until that hour. And he called her, gently, and, staring as from a broken dream, she came and knelt silently before him, and he spoke, forgetting the others as if they had not been and she alone with him alone.

"O Lotus-eyed, what shall I say?—for surely you are like the Queen Draupadi, of whom it was said thus: 'You might indeed be the mistress of all for your beauty. Your heels are not prominent, and your thighs touch one another. You have great intelligence and your words are well chosen. And the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet and your face resemble a pearl, and your speech is sweet, even as the voice of a swan. And your hair is beautiful, your bosom shapely, and you are possessed of the highest grace. Like a Kashmiri mare you are furnished with every auspicious mark. Your eyelashes are beautifully bent, your lip is like the rosy gourd. Your waist is slender. Indeed your countenance is like the moon, your eyes are as the petals of the lotus, and your body has its fragrance. Surely you are a goddess or an Apsaras of the Heavens.' And even this praise leaves unpraised the wooing of your eyes. Beloved, I would answer it with love!"

And, as he stretched out his hand to her, a great noise broke forth below the windows, and starting up in anger, he looked through the lattice of marble and beheld the people of the palace, streaming from every door into the Queens' gardens, surrounding a mendicant who held a flute, and some were weeping, some mocking, some struggling to clasp his feet. And the King looked down in great anger at this unseemly tumult in the forbidden gardens, but, as he was about to command their annihilation in his fury, the man flung up his hand for silence, and instantly they all hushed and stood as still as images. And placing the flute to his lips, he began to play, and the King listened in the utmost astonishment; for it appeared to him that the player repeated only two notes again and again with unwearied iteration, and yet, though many mocked, there also were many who kissed his feet with tears.

And the King said: “Am I mad, and has my reason wholly left me, that I hear nothing but the dull repetition of two notes? Here is a mystery.”

And so saying, he clean forgot his wives and looked from the lattice with an insatiable curiosity, but, even as he looked, the dwarfish mendicant passed away among the flowering trees and was seen no more, and the people stared on one another as those awaking from a dream.

So the King went out and summoned his Chief Minister and demanded what this might mean, and the Minister replied: “Is it not wonderful, O King, that men should follow this divine music. I myself would have followed were it not for my duty to the kingdom, for it was the very Voice of Love. Many mocked, but many are weeping because he is gone, and the women will not look upon their husbands for love of the mendicant.”

Then seized with fear, the King ran back to the Hall of White Marble, and Urvasi and Urmila were speaking angrily together, torn with jealousy, nor had they heard the music. And on the gold cushions lay Malati in a deep sleep; nor could they rouse her. But that her bosom rose and fell like the lotus swaying on a pool, he might have believed her dead, for she was beyond speech or touch. So they bore her away and laid her in the Hall of Quiet until her spirit should return to her.

But the Queen, leaving her fair body, passed out of the palace and through the garden, following the Flute-player, not seeing him but hearing the music as from a very great distance. And she could not restrain her longing, and still she followed through prickly cactus and all the scrub of the jungle, and her robe was torn by the bushes, and her feet bruised. Now, presently, she came into an open space where the bushes and trees fell back, and she saw the Flute-player, sitting upon a fallen tree, and, as she came near, he laid the flute aside and looked at her. But surely he was of all men the strangest. In height he reached but to her shoulder, brown and wizened like the bark of an old tree, with small bright eyes; and long wisps of black hair fell over his face, so that he peered between them like a thing in ambush, and, when he spoke, his voice was like dry leaves, rattling in the wind.

And still seated, he said, “Why has the Queen followed?”

And looking very earnestly at him, she replied, “Because I would know the secret.”

And smiling secretly, he answered, “What secret? The secret of Love? If it be this, a Queen so beautiful cannot need to ask it of a Flute-player.”

And kneeling before the mendicant, she said: “What should I know of Love? It has not been asked of me. I have not known it.”

So, as she knelt, he took her hand and looked into her eyes, saying, "See!"

And instantly the sunshine was gone, and a great moon was looking down from a midnight sky and the stars were low and bright. And through the forest came a sighing breeze, bearing the odour of sandalwood and the sound of a flute, so sweet and piercing that it divided the marrow, and the ears tingled that heard it. And it drew nearer, and she rose up on her knees, because she heard the moving of feet in the forest that came with that divinest sound.

Then, suddenly, in a glade of the wood-ways she saw a great Lotus of heavenly blue, and One stood on it with the flute at his lips, and his face was dark and beautiful, and the jewels on his head and throat and about his middle glittered in the moonlight, and around him were dancing in a ring, five maidens, fair as the nymphs of Paradise, and—most strange to see—with each one of them danced the likeness of the Flute-player, embracing her, so that each believed he danced with her only, and the face of every maiden was bright with joy.

And the old mendicant said to the Queen, "What have you seen?"

And she answered, "A young man—a God of heart-piercing beauty—playing upon the flute, and a likeness of him dances the Rasa with each of the five Herd-maidens that surround him."

And laughing harshly, he said, "Clear eyes—too clear!" and he drew his hand across her eyes and bade her look again.

And looking very earnestly, she said: "I see a man alone, and he plays his flute, and his face is dark and of an inexpressible beauty. And he is alone and sad, and none to comfort him, and he craves my love and my presence. Should I not go?"

And he said, "Is it possible to withhold yourself if he is lonely?"

And sobbing, she said: "There are tears in his eyes. How can I but have compassion on one so alone? Let me go."

But he held her by force and she wept. "He stretches his arms, he calls me. O Beautiful, O Desired, I come!"

And saying this, she looked up and, lo, the arms that held her were no longer the arms of the mendicant, but those of the Flute-player of the forest, and he held her to his breast. And she clung there and did not see that the eyes of evil spirits and shape-changers were glittering all about the forest like fireflies as they watched. And a voice said this in her ear: "In this dark night, burning with ecstasies, have you sought my face whom your soul craved. Float therefore like a fish in the ocean of my divine sweetness,

dream like a mote in the sun. The unbreathed music is about us. Lie in the arms of the Hidden One. Eat of the honey that steeps the petals of the Lotus. Mad with joy, cling to me who am yours as you are mine, O Soul that thirsts with passion for my beauty."

So he kissed her on the mouth and in that kiss, sweet and stinging as a honey-bee, he drew her very soul through her lips. And she said: "Lover divine and tender, never again do we part. Surely we are one until the night of Brahma darkens the universe, and the gods themselves fall into sleep."

And holding her, he said: "Return to the King and bear his child, but when I call, be it night or day, you will come. For we are One, and the mouth I have kissed is mine."

And she wept, "I cannot, O Lotus-eyed!"

And wooing and laughing, he said: "Surely. For the light of my eyes will be about you, and the music of my flute in your ears, and, when you least think it, I will call, and at my music all doors open. Nay, the King will see your semblance in the palace while in the forest you lie on my breast. Have no fear, O Beautiful, but give me your beauty and go. For I am yours."

And so it was, for her whole soul he absorbed into his beauty as a fierce sun drinks the dew. And she, drowned in illusion, believed that Sri Krishna was hers and hers only, and was like to die for love and joy.

So presently he unloosed his arms, and she kissed his feet, golden with the pollen of the Lotus, and with tears and a rapture of sobbing she looked up into his face, and, lo, it was the hateful mendicant that had embraced her, and in the glade of the forest she saw the Herd-maidens dancing again about the divine Krishna, delirious with passion, and a shape of him held the hand of every one of them, so that each, being blinded, believed herself the Chosen, and he, alone and midmost of them all, played upon his flute a music frenzied and terrible.

And the Queen stood, staring and lost, outside her Paradise, and she said, "O Lord of Brāj, have pity, have pity upon my shame!"

But he had no pity, laughing and sporting with the Gopis, and taking no heed of her. So she fled, weeping bitterly, and for the last time she turned, before the trees took her, and saw the Dancer, the Delight of the Wide World, and at the beauty of him her heart was pierced with the very wound of Love, and she cried, "What have I done?" and fled, shuddering with shame and fear, into the hard sunlight that waited outside the forest.

In the evening she awoke in the Hall of Quiet, and, as her eyes unclosed, she saw that the King sat beside her in patience, and she knew that her

absence was a secret, for he greeted her with joy and kindness, and she gazed at him in silence.

Then he put in her bosom the fruit that the Brahman had given him, saying, "Eat, O Lady of bewildering beauty, and be the mother of my child; for I have chosen you from your sisters, and they are nothing to me, and I will return them with great gifts to their homes."

And in the morning, when she was alone, she ate it slowly, and it was bitter.

Now in due time she bore a son, beautiful as Sri Krishna himself, lotus-eyed and lovely, so that even in his cradle the women of the palace clustered about him like brown bees that seek the jasmine.

But Queen Malati could not look upon the child, the sight of him so pierced her with fear and shame, and every day she grew more lovely, so that the King, drowning in the ocean of her sweetness, regarded none other and neglected wholly the duties of a King. All day would he sit and look upon her while her heart sickened of the palace and his worship.

But the music of the flute, wandering about her, never called her, and the face of the Flute-player, winning and trampling all hearts, burned in her soul, and she cried, "My Dancer, my Delight, Oh, call me!" But none answered, and she pined away, dry and withered with passion.

Then, seeing her wane like a moon at dawn, the King sent for that ascetic who had bestowed the fruit, a great saint, aged and skilled in reading the soul, and, since he was so aged and venerable, the King brought him into the presence of the Queen, where she lay on her cushions, like a withering flower, beside the great water-pool in the gardens, and begged his instruction as to her case and withdrew.

So the aged man seated himself beside her, his long beard sweeping the ground, and she opened her dark blue eyes and viewed him indifferently. And he fixed his eyes with power on her and said, "Royal Daughter, instruct me yourself as to your case and its cause."

And with white lips drawn back from her teeth, she said, "The Flute-player."

And he fixed his eyes on hers in meditation and said, "Speak on."

"Out in the forest"—her voice was faint and low—"is the Flute-player, Sri Krishna, the Beloved. About him is the joy of spring. The breezes from Malay bring the scents of sandalwood and flowers, less sweet than his breath. In his eyes is the longing for Love, which every soul yearns to satiate, each believing that she is the Chosen—the Only. Oh, I believed this! No traveller in the desert ever poured more eagerly his last cup of water than

I have poured my soul to slake his thirst that cannot be slaked. And he did not drink. He flung the cup away into the sand. And I, having given him all, beheld him the Lover of others, and I was but one deceived among the many. Yet, O Delight, what can I do but love what is fairest? Oh, why were my eyes opened? Had I not seen him with the Gopis—had I believed that he was true! What were life or death to me if this Divinest were mine? Listen—the flute! the flute!"

Her voice died away, and she struggled to rise and follow, but for weakness she could not, and her face was distorted with anguish.

"O would that the Gods would dwell in their Paradises, and leave us, miserable, to our little joys, without breaking us with love of theirs. Why were my eyes freed from illusion, that I should see him wholly fair—yet evil? Listen again—the flute!"

And the old ascetic lifted his head, as one who hears an indescribable sweetness; nor did he speak until the music had drifted by and the face of the Queen relaxed. And in the silence he spoke: "Royal Daughter, very sad is your case, not because your eyes were opened, but because illusion holds them still. Had you seen truly, you had seen that the God is utterly fair. But you have seen in part and in a dream and not face to face. Very fortunate, however, are those who see even a little. Lying in this extremity, would you be as your sister Queens, who, hearing nothing, continued to play with their jewels?"

And Malati answered, "No," with her eyes still closed and the sweat of agony distilling on her forehead.

"Hear then, Royal Daughter, my instruction, and learn to distinguish illusion and truth. The music you heard is the Voice of the Unutterable, which may not speak in words. You heard—you followed, and he who hears that music forsakes all lesser things. And so, being led, you beheld One fairer than man, his foot on the Lotus of Beauty, his music at his lips. As man you saw him—how should you see the Glory of the God? So he wooed your soul, entreating, who might have commanded, and in the mystic Union made you his. Was this illusion or truth?"

And Malati said: "I saw him and I sought him. I had him and I desired him."

And the ascetic replied: "You have him. For having once had, never can you lose the embrace of the Divine."

But Malati, her eyes still closed, murmured, "I have seen him in the embrace of others."

“Shall the Flute-player, whose flute is the heart of man, not draw myriad modulations from the souls of all that love him? Shall the sun not be mirrored in the myriad dewdrops which, each a little sun, reflect his ray? O Royal Daughter, in that you saw this thing there was enlightenment, but what is there to grieve?”

“I had given him my all. Should he not give?”

“He is the Lover of the Worlds. Open the eyes of your soul and know that you are One with him. You lived and rejoiced in the Rasa Dance. As each clung to him, you clung with her. For they and you and he are One. And Love is all.”

“And when I saw him as the loathsome mendicant, what was that horror?”

“The jealousy of your own narrow soul that would have him only yours. For if you clutch him, hating all else who are his, he will seem a dwarfed and wizened thing, a shame to touch and hold.”

“Why did I see him as a Lover?” she asked with a red glow spreading in her cheek.

“Because in the Lower Heaven, sex reigns supreme, in the Higher it is not remembered, and in the Highest it does not exist.”

“The child?”

“Is the child of the King. But the spirit of Sri Krishna is upon him because the eyes of his mother were opened though but a little. Dwell no longer in the house of abjection. Awake to joy!”

And, as he would have continued, the sound of the flute was about them, as though One passed, playing with a crystal sweetness, and the ascetic rose and did obeisance to the Unseen, and the Queen murmured, “My Beloved is mine and I am his.” Then, standing upon her feet, she said: “I would dwell in the forest, that I may serve him in purity. Take me to be your daughter, that I may wash your feet who have brought me peace, and that I may dwell always with the music and the vision.”

But he replied: “To those whose eyes are clear, forest and palace are alike. Remain here. The music will not be silent.”

And kneeling, she said, “Could I but see him as he is, I would return in peace to my husband.”

“As he is in the height of your own height, O Royal Daughter, see him. More you cannot.”

So, for a moment, beneath her closed eyelids, she beheld unutterable Beauty, and Life flowed into her.

When this had passed, she looked about her once more, and the ascetic had departed and she saw the King standing in his place. And she went to him, radiant in health, and made obeisance, saying, “Aryaputra, I am healed, and very certainly by my affection and obedience will I make amends for this sickness and sorrow.”

So this Queen dwelt henceforth in perfect peace; for he who beholds all things in the Self and the Self in all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be for him?

THE EMPEROR AND THE SILK GODDESS

A CHINESE HUMORESQUE

IN the ancestral days the Peaceful Jade Emperor sat on the throne in the city of Ch'ang-an, and he was beloved of Heaven—God himself being pleased by his intelligent virtue.

Now the Dowager Empress, the second widow of his august father, had four years previously become a guest on high, and, having clad her in the robes of immortality and laid her head upon the cockcrow pillow in the coffin of precious lacquered woods that he had himself presented to her on her sixtieth birthday, he betook himself to mourning and devoted all his thoughts to his celestial second mother, as beseemed a son of filial piety. This was the more virtuous as in life the departed Dowager had been the enemy of his own celestial mother and had been abhorrent in his own eyes. Nor had she at all reverenced the power of the Sacred Car (the Emperor). Yet, when she sought the Yellow Springs he became on her account a devotee, forsaking his Empire and his friends. He broke off all family intercourse and retired to his inner courts, daily reading in the Classics and abjuring the society of the Hidden Flowers.

Such filial virtues merit extraordinary blessings.

Now the affairs of State suffered very greatly by the preoccupation of the Peaceful Jade Emperor, and his ministers knew not how to act, for the times were urgent, and the viceroys of the North and the South reported incursions of the barbarians by land and of the Wo-jin (Japanese dwarfs) by war-junks. But none dared disturb the meditations of the Son of Heaven. And finally the sun was eclipsed, a thing of the worst omen, and the moon appeared as small as a nut, and on this celestial failure the Grand Astronomer swallowed gold-leaf from great alarm of mind. Therefore the high ministers met at the yamen of the highest, the Prince of Lu, to take counsel, and he, a learned and pious graduate of venerable age and countenance, addressed them thus:

"Throughout the Empire there is now no government and the moon has presaged evil and we endured it, but now the sun has been eclipsed and how dreadful is that! Mourning is commendable, but the mean is in all things to be desired. What then should be our procedure?"

The Northern Viceroy then spoke thus:

“Let a sacrifice be performed and cups of jade offered. Benefits may thus accrue.”

And the Eastern Viceroy said:

“Let the Prince of Lu commit suicide before the eyes of the Son of Heaven as a testimony that the black-haired people are almost in revolt—saying, ‘We have no Emperor, for his heart is ascended on the Dragon with his departed parent.’ ”

And the Western Viceroy said:

“Let the literati of the Forest of Pencils offer suitable examples and poetic encouragements that may cheer the Imperial Spirit.”

But the Southern Viceroy said, laughing:

“The Son of Heaven has forgotten the Flowers of the Inner Chambers. Send officials to the Divine Empress and ask counsel of her, for very great is the wisdom of a beautiful woman.”

So the Prince of Lu replied:

“All this is good counsel, but the counsel of the Southern Viceroy is the best. I will ask audience of Her Majesty.”

They therefore dispersed in anxiety of spirit, and two great officials, being summoned, were made bearers of a missive to that great lady, engrossed on six thicknesses of imperial silk upon a background of auspicious clouds, fit for the eye of Majesty.

She condescended to notify by the Chief Eunuch, An Lung, that on the following day she would receive the Prince of Lu, whom she had venerated from the days of earliest youth, and who was indeed the uncle of her august aunt.

Words fail to describe the beauties of the gardens and palaces of the Forbidden Precincts. On a hill where the singing streams descended to the lake through mossy rocks, with gardens of tree-peonies inhabited by silver peacocks, was placed the Golden Palace of the Empress.

The curved roofs of royal yellow porcelain diffused a sunshine of their own and were mirrored in the lake beneath like a more sumptuous day. Pleasure-boats, moored to the marble balustrades that surrounded the majestic lake, floated like hovering butterflies among the lotus blossoms that reared their pure chalices in the clear air. Pavilions of choicest lacquer, illustrating in golden pictures the histories of sages, awaited fair occupants rejoicing in the lute and wine-cup, but, save for the voices of birds and gentle tinkling of the crystal wind-bells, deep silence and emptiness reigned supreme. The Prince of Lu sighed as he alighted from his chair at the Pearl Portal, the half of his liver admiring the filial constancy of the Jade Emperor,

the other half lamenting the grief it entailed upon the Royal Consort and the whole civilized world.

Her Majesty sat meanwhile in the Hall of the Discreet Feminine Virtues, and the magnificence of her attire put even the peonies to shame, for, at the expiration of two years' mourning for his celestial parent, the Jade Emperor had willed that none but himself should continue to mourn. The most glorious Empress was therefore attired thus. She had an underdress of yellow silk flowing to her august extremities, decorated with golden flowers. Her coat was composed of woven gold, with dragons and branches of willow embroidered on it in green gold. Her head was tiered with a high head-dress of stiff silk, worked with jade and priceless jewels and fringes of pearls, which drooped above her eyes, veiling their splendour and almost concealing her shell-like ears and the long jade ornaments that swung beside her cheeks like lamps to illumine their beauty. But how was it possible for those who beheld to remember these jewels in viewing the lady who adorned them?

Her cheeks were clear as white jade but tinged with a delicate flush resembling the hibiscus blossom. The vermilion of her lips might stain the ivory cup she drank from. Her eyebrows suggested a "line of beauty" drawn by the hand of a skilled artist, and the shape of her face was as a pearl of price. Her loveliness was supported on feet resembling those of a day-old infant, so that she swayed in moving as a willow bough sways in the wind. Yet all this beauty was still virgin, the Dowager Empress having suddenly become a guest on high on the marriage day of Her Majesty.

On her right hand stood the three secondary wives, known as the *Fu-jins*, second in beauty only to the Empress, and a world's wonder, each one. Their robes were worked with kingfisher feathers in five shades of colour. On her left stood the *Pins*, the seven chief concubines, every one a reward for a monarch, and each appearing in a robe of yellow silk. On either side of these most honoured ladies were grouped the thirty-seven *Chi-fus*, the concubines of the next grade, robed in silken robes of the green of the summer apple, with rose silk fringes dangling at either ear; and behind all, and garmented in black with embroideries of golden bamboos, were the eighty *Yen-tsis*, the lower concubines, chosen from among the loveliest maidens presented yearly for service in the Golden Palace. But of all these ladies the Empress was the eye of the peacock. The ungraded concubines were not in attendance.

So sat the Empress, her throne supported on the Four Supernatural Creatures—the Unicorn, the Phœnix, the Tortoise and the Dragon—and

draped with green and blue silk, and the eunuchs, kowtowing, attended into her sacred presence the venerable Prince of Lu.

Even he did not lift his eyes to the divine countenance, but, being privileged on account of age and rank, he did not kowtow face downward upon the floor of white jade, but performed the lesser abasement and knelt upon the lowest step of the Seat of Heavenly Grace.

In the low voice suited to female excellence, the Flower Empress demanded his business with her, and with humility he replied: "Most glorious Empress, the matter is one of urgency and secrecy. Be pleased therefore to hear me in private."

The Flower Lady moved her fan with a graceful gesture like the tendrils of a creeper in a gentle breeze, and in dignified silence the Blossoms of the Palace, headed by the three Fu-jins, departed from the Hall of the Discreet Feminine Virtues and thus quenched the flame of collected beauty that might dry up the eloquence of the wisest, leaving the Empress seated, with two matrons kneeling out of earshot at the end of the Hall.

"Most illustrious Queen," began the Prince, "not without reason have I ventured to disturb the august propriety of your seclusion. The Son of Heaven has mourned for his celestial parent, who in felicity ascended on the Dragon, with all the piety that the Book of Rites commands. Three years of mourning is the time appointed for the Superior Man. Twenty and seven months is the custom. But His Majesty has mourned without intermission for four years, the faces of his subjects grow lean with anxiety and gall rises in their throats because the Middle Kingdom, without hand to guide it, staggers like a blind man on the highway. Nor dare we approach the Brother of the Sun and Moon with remonstrance—no, though the Dragon has lately swallowed the Sun and restored him miraculously to the world. An evil portent and much to be feared!"

"And what can a mere woman accomplish?" inquired the Empress, gently shifting her jade girdle-pendants.

There was a pause, while the Prince of Lu collected his thoughts that he might express them with befitting delicacy.

"The voices of those we esteem are pleasant in our ears. How much more the words of the Flower Empress in those of the Son of Heaven!"

A slight frown darkened the pearly brow of the great lady.

"That were well if my voice could reach His Majesty, but for four years he has not condescended to enter the Pepper Chambers, nor have I seen his face. I am an autumn fan—no more. A fan, needed in summer, laid aside in autumn."

“Yet what is Your Majesty’s counsel? Not for nothing is it said by the sages, ‘Wise and crafty are the hearts of women. The rulers they rule. The pride of the proud is abased before them!’ ”

The Flower Empress slightly smiled, disclosing the snow of her teeth within the roses of her lips.

“This is a hard task!” she said and fell into reflection, supporting her chin upon her hand white as the petals of the camellia. Silence reigned in the Hall of the Discreet Feminine Virtues, save that twice, opening his snuff-bottle, the Prince of Lu refreshed himself with a pinch of scented powder.

At length he spoke again. “There have been heroines among the ancients. There was that sweet Blossom who, finding herself without children, reverently offered up a sacrifice and was rewarded by a heavenly Birth. There was—”

“All this is known to me,” interrupted the Empress. “The excellence of prayer is indisputable, but there are cases—”

She fell again into musing.

Finally she raised her august head and the fringes of pearl about her eyes made a dry music as she did so.

“In the Imperial Pleasance is a shrine to the Lady Yuen Fi, who invented the cultivation of the silkworm and the spinning of silk and who shall be honoured to the end of time. Let it be known to the Son of Heaven that the silkworms are dying in their myriads throughout the Empire, and make it known to me on what day he proceeds to this temple to beseech the Good Goddess. For this he will certainly do.”

“But, O August One, we are troubled already by the muchness of his prayers and fasting. Is there no better way?”

“If you have sought my counsel because I am wise, heed it!” said the Flower Empress. “And if you are wiser than I and my ladies in dealing with men, go your own way and forget me as His Augustness has done.” And she laughed gently, closing her august eyes.

So the Prince of Lu, this time performing the greater abasement, prostrated himself and returned to his chair and was borne swiftly to his yamen, where the ministers and viceroys awaited him with anxiety. And, taking his seat, he said only this: “I have presented the matter before the Seat of Heavenly Grace, and it is now in the hands of the Flower Empress.”

“And what is the august counsel?” asked the Northern Viceroy.

“As gold grows by natural evolution so does astuteness grow in the soul of a woman. Her Majesty did not say. She reflected only.”

“How then was it known to your wisdom that Her Majesty’s complete virtue would aid us?” inquired the Eastern Viceroy.

“Because she laughed gently, as if her thoughts were pleasing to her.”

“The battle is already won!” said the Southern Viceroy and laughed also.

So they dispersed, and the Prince of Lu, unable to gain admission, memorialized the Son of Heaven in the elegant calligraphy of the palace, to the effect that the silkworms throughout the Empire were dying in their myriads, and forwarded this missive, sealed and bound with floss silk.

On the following day it was announced by a secret messenger to the Flower Empress that, on the Day of the Young Moon, the Sacred Car (the Emperor) would privately make a great prayer in the Jewel Temple of the Silk Goddess, the Lady Yuen Fi. And, withdrawn apart, she began her preparations.

On the evening of the Young Moon, which was reflected in the lake like a nail-paring from the hand of Divinity, the Imperial Chair, embellished with white mourning ornaments, proceeded to the Jewel Temple in the peony gardens of the Golden Palace. Naturally it was empty, that the devotions of the Emperor might be private, for he who himself fills the most sacred of offices, requires the assistance of no priest. In solemn silence he was aided to alight, and the bearers and officers departed to a respectful distance of one *li* from the Pearl Portal. A deep hush reigned, and the gloom of the inner shrine was illumined only by points of light from the cressets fed with the oil of the camellia seed. The perfume of incense pervaded the shrine, and through it the August Image could be seen, seated in a beneficent attitude, composing to the mind of the worshipper.

The Son of Heaven advanced respectfully and three times prostrated the Imperial Person; then rising and standing, he thus addressed the Deified Lady:

“O Goddess of the Golden Weave, honoured and venerated throughout the land of the Black-Haired people, hear me, the orphan of calamity, forsaken (doubtless for my extinguished virtue) by a parent now departed to the peaceful sunlight of the Nine Springs in the Vale of Ancestral Longevity. Representative of my myriad people, I beseech that your creatures, the silkworms, may flourish as the sands of the sea, that they may greedily devour their food, that their cocoons may increase in size and that the weaving of silk may be known in every hamlet. O, beautiful Queen of Industry, receive my prayer, praise and thanks, and, if grace be bestowed, incline your gracious head in assent.”

With such eloquence and blossoms of speech did the Son of Heaven, Brother to the Sun, address the Lady Yuen Fi, and, looking reverently upward to the gracious countenance, awaited a sign of approval.

The August Image, however, robed in the rich silks of her own invention, did not incline her head. Only a small, clear voice responded thus: "Not so acceptable are overlong funeral observances as the sincerity of grief. And what is insincere is disapproved by the spirits of the Ancestors and is rent by them into bits as small as the flash of diamonds. To beget sons is better than to mourn overlong for a parent departed to the Vale of Ancestral Longevity. How should my silkworms flourish in the Middle Kingdom when the hated Wo-jin assail it from the sea, and the Northern barbarians from the borders? Fowls that limp with gangrene, reptiles spotted with leprosy—their breath pollutes the Celestial Kingdom with pestilence and my silkworms perish."

Much alarmed, yet conscious of the dignity of a Son of Heaven with whom Heaven deigns to converse, His Majesty responded, "And where, O Divine One, shall counsel and safety be found?"

And the Sacred Voice replied, coming as from a great distance, "In the arms of the Flower Empress."

The Emperor prostrated himself on the marble floor, and his liver quaked within him, for, though divinities had undoubtedly discussed affairs of State with the Ancestors, it was an event that had by no means recently occurred. And, having performed this sweet and flower-scented duty, he had certainly expected to be extolled for a filial piety without example. The shock was severe. If it be permitted to compare divine things with human, His Majesty experienced the sensations of a feast-goose in the pen with the knife hovering above him.

The cresset-lights were expiring as he concluded his devotions, and, at the end of the appointed time, the Imperial Chair awaited him at the Pearl Portal. The bearers assisted him to mount and began their journey to the Dragon Palace.

On their arrival, the Emperor's voice arrested them. "Proceed to the Golden Palace of the Forbidden Precincts."

It was four years since such an order had been given.

A swift runner went before, and the Flower Empress awaited His Majesty, enthroned in the state in which she had received the Prince of Lu, washed in orchid water, bathed in perfumes and surrounded by the three Fu-jins, the seven Pins, the thirty-seven Chi-fus and the eighty Yen-tsis.

On the Emperor's entering the Hall of the Discreet Feminine Virtues, all prostrated themselves as when the wind, sweeping over a parterre of flowers, bows their elegant heads, and His Majesty took his seat upon the Throne of the Four Supernatural Creatures, which the Empress had vacated. With a wave of his hand he dismissed the other ladies, and with a gracious gesture summoned the Empress to approach the throne and kneel upon the highest step. This she did, modestly concealing her eyes with the pearl fringes of her head-dress.

It was four years since the Imperial Eyes had beheld Her Majesty, and then but twice, and the willow-like maiden of sixteen auspicious years was now the Divine Empress of twenty. But it was not her beauty that filled the Son of Heaven with awe. It was the likeness of her august features to those of the Image of the Deified Lady, before whom he had so recently bowed himself.

"This is indeed marvellous!" said his Majesty, and became pensive and wrapped in thought.

Rousing himself, he put this question to Her Majesty, "Lady of Exalted Virtue, if the husband fail in duty, what should be the action of the wife?"

Her Majesty replied modestly, "Obedience, August One."

On hearing her melodious voice, the Son of Heaven started and gave himself up to reflection for many moments.

Once more, rousing himself, he continued;

"Undoubtedly this calamity of the silkworms is due to my lack of virtue, nor can I escape from blame. I have fasted when I should have feasted, and the Ancestors behold with anger the absence of an heir to the Dragon Throne. I have therefore received a reminder from Heaven which shall be duly heeded. But a circumstance in some respects painful connects itself with my obedience."

Again he was silent, and the Empress, prostrating herself, murmured in a trembling voice;

"Permit this insignificant one to implore mercy."

The Emperor, slightly smiling, proceeded;

"The gladsome Queen of a gladsome art having, however, condescended to manifest her radiance in your form, has made it too sacred for profanation by any man, even though he be the Son of Heaven. Doubtless this distinction was acquired by your superior merit, but a body whose similitude was assumed by the Divine Silk Goddess, and through the likeness of whose lips the Heavenly Voice spoke, has certainly become exalted even above the Dragon Couch. The Divine can exist only in the presence of the Divine. In

presenting yourself at the feet of the Lady Yuen Fi, convey to Her Supreme Delightfulness that, her message having reached me, I heard and obeyed. Your spirit tablet will be placed before the altar of the Goddess in recognition of the honour done by her to your merit."

The Empress, pale as a white lotus, remained kneeling. The Emperor clapped his hands and the matrons, approaching, received his orders that a magnificent banquet should be prepared in the Palace of a Million Smiles. And here, royally clothed, he partook with his ladies of broth perfumed with ambergris, shellfish with cassia, steamed sharks' fins with crabmeat, roast duck stuffed with young pine needles, and other such delicacies as had not passed his lips since the ascent on the Dragon of his august Step-Mother.

On the conclusion of the banquet, the Draught of Immortality was immediately prepared, and the Flower Empress, still kneeling, received it.

Her obsequies were celebrated with unusual honours.

That night the Son of Heaven passed with the Senior Fu-jin, and in the year that followed many heirs were born to him. He entered indeed upon a course of dissipation so uncontrolled that the Prince of Lu and the Empire had much reason to regret that he had emerged from retirement. The people groaned under his expenditure and the flagitious conduct of the ladies of the Forbidden Precincts and those who shared their revels. Remonstrance was essayed, and, to a Memorial presented to the Throne, the August Emperor thus replied in the words of Chou and Mu:

"Our only fear is lest, wishing to gaze Our fill at all the beauties of this life and to exhaust all the pleasures, the repletion of the belly should prevent Us from drinking what Our palate delights in, or the slackening of Our strength not allow Us to revel with pretty women. Disturb Our mind no further."

The Prince of Lu, summoning the ministers and viceroys to his yamen to consult on the Imperial Reply, read it to them.

Thereupon the Viceroy of the North said:

"He who removes the dam of a reservoir cannot predict whither the water will flow."

And the Viceroy of the East observed:

"He who is unable to rule his own wives and concubines cannot succeed in governing a kingdom."

And the Viceroy of the West remarked:

"We live and we die. In thus enjoying life who shall say the Emperor shows no wisdom? Death is a blackness and the pleasures of life like gold embroidered upon it."

But the Viceroy of the South concluded the whole matter.

“The Emperor was formerly a man dreaming he was a devotee. He is now a devotee dreaming he is a man. Which is real? Is not the whole story illusion?”

THE LOVELIEST LADY OF CHINA

AN EPISODE OF CHINESE HISTORY

IT is a strange fact that, in every country and at every time, surpassing beauty—the beauty that makes a woman *Rosa Mundi*, Rose of the World, and not only of her own narrow circle—is attended by tragedy and downfall. Swinburne makes an exquisite zodiac through which the months pass, each with its Lady of Beauty,

"Till the year
Flames from Queen Helen to Queen Guinevere,"

and almost every one of the twelve is pre-eminent in misery as in loveliness.

The mystery of Beauty would seem to be also the mystery of Sorrow. She wanders, an alien, in the stony ways of the world. Hers is an attempt, unconscious often, to communicate the incommunicable, and, in the utterance of her evangel, like the other prophets, she perishes. She knows the world's wound, but not the balm that has bound it, and it is only by the ways of suffering that Love leads her home.

China has her Helen also, most beautiful, most unhappy, yet attaining to an unearthly peace in the last strange chapter of her story. As Helen was sung by Homer, she too is crowned by song; for the greatest poets of China, and they are great indeed, have made a shrine of pure gold for the perfect face and immortal charm. There she is still seen, "a reed in motion and a rose in flame," and this she will be while language lasts.

In A.D. 712, the Emperor Ming Huang ascended the throne of China. He was a man of the mystic temperament that sets the blood beating to strange ecstasies—a poet, a man of many gifts, of winning presence, but with the fatal strand of weakness that runs through the glittering warp and woof of such a nature. He had many faults, but, at the least, he was a great lover.

He was a patron of all that was best in the art and literature of his time. In his magnificent and unforgotten capital, Ch'ang-an, triple-walled and towered, stood no less than seven royal palaces with their spreading gardens, drum-towers and bell-towers, and the mighty Yen Tower looking down upon

all. To these palaces and gardens he welcomed every man of genius that China could produce, and surrounded himself with a court so brilliant that all over the earth ran the fame of the glories and the splendour of the Celestial Ming Emperor.

One thinks how beautiful it must have been in those gardens with the royal roofs of yellow porcelain glittering in the sun, and the tree-peonies ranging from snow-drift white to the luminous purple that is black in the deep heart of the flower. So they may still be seen, massed and gorgeous, in the sad gardens of the fallen Emperor of Korea, though the gardens of Ming Huang are blotted out in the snow of the centuries.

Here he held the famous "Gatherings of Beauties." The loveliest ladies of China wandered among the flowers, and butterflies, in twisted cages of silk, were set free, that they, who know the secrets of flowers, might make choice of the most exquisite of these living blossoms. She about whom the butterflies hovered was the chosen flower, the fairest of the fair. Surely the artists of Ming Huang must have painted that scene—the beauties waiting, expectant, hopeful, disappointed, and the one fair head with the butterflies, winged and many-hued, about its sweetness. If such a picture should ever be found in the long, straight boxes where the painted scrolls lie like mummies, with their ivory pins and jade pendants, a dead loveliness, not only of a face but of a time, would be recaptured from the dust of the dead years.

Ming Huang was an artist, but Fate had set him, like Nero, too high. The artist pays in tears for the throne of the Emperor, and the Emperor pays in blood for the dreams of the artist.

And there fell upon him the shadow that dogs such natures as his. Deep melancholy seized him, a weariness of all the splendour, a sick distaste for life.

Three thousand of the beauties of China and of the surrounding kingdoms dwelt in the Imperial palaces, but neither all nor one could please him nor stir his dulled senses, and though all that the world could offer was his, happiness escaped him. So Ming Huang sat alone in the palace gardens and neither the philosophies nor the songs of the poets could charm him. He saw with the sad lucidity of the Chinese mind the skeleton beneath the flowers—a Buddhist weariness possessed him, and the world was a broken toy at his feet. But for him was no refuge in the Buddhist austerities—the artist in him clung to more passionate beauty, though it turned a darkened face upon him in his Imperial loneliness. And then came the miracle—as it must have seemed to him. A girl was brought into the palace that levied tribute on all the youth of his vast Empire—a girl so beautiful that the poets hailed her frail beauty as that of a goddess—

"Flower face and clouds of hair."

Indeed the story must almost be condensed from the poets who themselves saw and immortalized her charm; for in their words it lives. Certainly the poets are the truest historians of women. Shakespeare, better even than Plutarch, knew Cleopatra, and in the hand of Swinburne lay that heart "as clear as diamond and as hard" (so she herself wrote of it) which all the world has worshipped—the heart of Mary Stuart.

This girl's name was T'ai Chên; her title Kwei-fei, and in Japan as in China she is the symbol of all that is exquisite in the beauty of women. Cranmer Byng has beautifully translated a poem of Tu Fu, the poet speaking in the character of a lonely old man, wandering down the deserted banks of the river Kio.

"Alas," he murmured, "they are closed, the thousand palace doors mirrored in clear cool waters. The young willows and the rushes renewing with the year, for whom will they now grow green?

"Once in the Garden of the South waved the standard of the Emperor.

"All that nature yields was there, vying with the rarest hues.

"There lived she whom the love of the first of men had made first among women.

"She who rode in the imperial chariot for the pleasures of sunny days.

"Before the chariot flashed the bright escort of maidens armed with bow and arrow,

"Mounted upon white steeds which pawed the ground, champing their golden bits.

"Gaily they raised their heads, launching their arrows into the clouds.

"And, laughing, uttered joyous cries when a bird fell victim to their skill."

So, she brought two gifts to her Emperor—love and joy. That was the miracle. Life was re-created for him and it brimmed with forgotten, unknown delight. And so, as at the kiss of the enchanted Prince, the frozen springs of pleasure in the city of Ch'ang-an were thawed once more. She was a laughing beauty—a Hebe poised on rosy clouds with the wine-cup in her hand. One pictures her, winged like a butterfly—a loveliness of exquisite caprice and whim. When her light hand swept the *kin* or the *san-hien*, it seemed that all the world must dance. The heart of Ming Huang certainly did so.

To say she won him utterly is scarcely to say enough. She possessed the man, body and soul, filled his thoughts and dreams, directed his whole being

into the channels she chose. Art lived again for him, because it made beautiful her surroundings; poetry was delightful because it sang her beauty. The splendour of which his soul had sickened was dear to him once more because it charmed T'ai Chên. A sparkling stream of pleasure ran day and night through the royal palaces, and it pleased him well. It is almost impossible to imagine the luxury of such a court. None but those who in China itself have seen the glorious brocades with their dragons, phoenixes and emblematic clouds and ripples in a splendid profusion of colour, or the grape-green jade Buddhas adorned with pearls, or the clasps glittering with strange blue and rose jewels, can dream the glories that surrounded the exquisite favourite of Ming Huang. For her service were the perfect porcelains, thin as the shell of the humming-bird's egg, faintly flushed like the inmost petal of the peony, blue as the summer sky at the zenith, splendid with flying dragons in pale clouds, grotesque with crawling crabs in greenest sea-depths. For her the ivories of India journeying for years across the pitiless Gobi Desert. For her the ermines and sables of the Northern barbarians. The world had little to offer that was not laid at her feet. Every caprice of hers was law divine to the Emperor, and her caprices ran wild.

Some of them recall those of another woman—the lovely favourite of another Son of Heaven, who neglected all public cares for her sweet sake.

Of this lady it is recorded that she was "of a melancholy turn of mind and was never seen to smile. She said she loved the sound of rent silk, and to gratify her many fine rolls of silk were torn to shreds. The Emperor offered a thousand ounces of gold to any one who could make her laugh. His Chief Minister suggested that the beacon-fires should be lighted to summon the feudal nobles with their armies as though the royal House were in danger. The trick succeeded; for in the hurry that followed the impassive girl laughed outright. Later, when a real attack was made by the barbarians, there was no response from the insulted nobles. The Emperor was killed, and the favourite strangled herself."

T'ai Chên might have taken warning from many examples. But what were the great nobles to her while she held the heart of the Celestial Augustness in her hand? She had the security of perfect beauty. The jasmine skin, the long dark eyes with the silk-moth brows above them—these were the weapons that had made her first of women, and they would guard her from all ill. They have at least given her immortality. We see her for ever as Li Po saw her—

"What matter if the snow
Blot out the garden? She shall still recline
Upon the scented balustrade and glow
With spring that thrills her warm blood into wine."

The snow has blotted out the gardens of Ming Huang, but T'ai Chên recreates them and is their sunshine.

But now the Arbiters of Fate, the Three Great Stars of the Constellation of the Bear, taking counsel with the Genius of the Northern Heaven, decreed an end of all the music and laughter. A cloud was rising in the blue skies of T'ai Chên.

It was her ambition to become Empress. There was a precedent, for a former Emperor had given his favourite, Fei-yen, Imperial dignity. Why should not Ming Huang do the same for his lovelier T'ai Chên?

Meanwhile, immense honours and promotions were heaped upon her family. Nothing that was given was enough for their rapacity. Her brother was made Minister of State, and the sorrows of the exhausted Empire were attributed to him. The great nobles bitterly resented the weakness that made all subservient to the favourite's whims, and a black storm was brewing, whilst she, like a butterfly in autumn sunshine, danced to the "Feather Jacket" and "Rainbow Skirt" music, and forgot that there was an outer world with a terrible word to say in her affairs.

And still the court flitted from pleasure to pleasure, and still the palace slaves were appointed to high office, and the Emperor dreamed away the irrevocable nights and days beside T'ai Chên.

A crash!—and the storm was upon them, black as night and filled with all the levin-bolts of terror. A fierce rebellion broke out, and, utterly unprepared to meet it, the Emperor saw no resource but to fly, knowing that her life, and therefore more than his own, hung upon his speed. But swiftly as he fled, the rebels led by their general, An Lu-shan, were swifter. The wings of hate are stronger than even those of fear. And first they captured her brother, the Minister of State, and made him shorter by a head, and then, flushed with success, they sent an ultimatum, demanding the life of T'ai Chên.

There was talk of resistance, but the very imminence of the danger paralysed him. The scene is plain enough—the broken man, the trembling girl. He could protect her no more. The rod was snapped asunder in his hand. His pride gave way before his love, and then was seen the piteous and almost incredible sight of the Son of Heaven pleading to his subjects for the one thing that made life endurable to him, and pleading in vain. He set forth

her innocence and beauty, entreating for her as a mercy to himself, but nothing could save her, as nothing could have saved the Empire, had her life been spared.

Then one spark of resolution flickered up in the Emperor's broken heart, and in agony he set his face to the inevitable. Yielding at last with dignity, he himself sent her forth to death. Po Chü-i depicts her—death-white, the silken eyebrows black on the pallor of her face, as she was led forth to die.

All the Emperor could do was to hide his own eyes with his hands from those piteous eyes that sought his help in vain, as they bore her away to the strangling noose.

So the loveliest woman in China was slaughtered, and the storm stayed. In the West the story would end here, but the East, with its deeper insight, beholds life and death but as the alternate light and dark upon the links of the chain of existence. The poets continue the story. Through the eyes of Po Chü-i, the stricken Emperor is seen fleeing along the deserts, pursued by the weeping fantom of her face. Miserable, tortured, unable to rest by night or day, he is driven from place to place by the fire within him. The Greeks would have said he was pursued by the Furies—Ming Huang would not have disputed it.

At last, weary with wandering, he returned to Ch'ang-an, the desolate paradise of his joy. He moved through the chambers, cold as the empty palaces of the Moon. Life had died down into a frozen despair, and it was winter with him. The Buddhist weariness and sick distaste for life that she had charmed away, settled down upon him again, and nothing could rouse him from his brooding misery.

He might have written as did the Emperor Wu-ti when his beloved Li Fu-jen died:

> "The sound of her silk skirt has stopped,
> On the marble pavement dust grows.
> Her empty room is cold and still,
> Fallen leaves are piled against the doors.
> Longing for that lovely lady,
> How can I bring my aching heart to rest?"

Finally it reached him that a priest of Tao—of the Way Invisible—had comfort to give. The mystic in him yearns to the abysses; the mind of the poet, broken against the hard realities and brutalities of this world, turns with a dying glimmer of hope to the cloud-built palaces of the next. This priest—with his skill in divination—may he not capture some word, some breath, from the pitiless shut doors, that will assure him she has forgiven—

that she loves him still? The cry of the ages is loud on the lips of Ming Huang.

The priest does not deny him hope. He will set out upon a spirit-voyage, freeing his essential being from the trammels of the flesh. He will seek her in the strange lands of the life beyond and bring a message from her own mouth. So the priest of Tao searches all the abodes of the Eternal, that he may bear her the words of love and entreaty for pardon that are breaking the heart of the Emperor. He soars upward to the Heavens, he plunges downward beneath the Earth; but nowhere can that fair face, the bane of an Empire, be found.

At last, half-despairing, the wings of his spirit weary, he hears a tale of an Island, dim, cloudy, beautiful, drifting on blue, unchanging seas, where many lovely and mild-eyed Immortals pass their days in peace. May not this be the place where she has found rest?

This is the Island of all the dreams. It was known to Ulysses and the Lotos-eaters. King Arthur lies there, healing of his grievous wound. Oisin sought it with Niambh of Eternal Youth, Urashima, with the Daughter of the Sea. On the blue horizon of every land it lies, or in the still depth of its ocean; and in every heart is the desire of its healing.

And there among the misty towers, insubstantial as frost and dew, the messenger finds T'ai Chên. He knocks at the doors of precious jade that close the Golden House, and enters. She floats to him, lovelier than on earth, pale with the waters of death, white as a sceptral lily, and stays her floating feet beside him.

In trembling tones he does his errand and entreats her answer. She listens calmly, though the tears welling from her eyes fall like spring raindrops on the blossom of the pear. She speaks as a spirit at peace. And first, she offers her thanks to His Majesty for his words, saying how she has missed his form and voice. The time has been long, for, even among the Blessed, lonely days linger.

Then, like the Blessed Damozel, she leans and looks wistfully to the unforgotten Earth, to the beloved city of Ch'ang-an, but the dust and haze of the lower spheres cling about it, and her purified eyes cannot pierce the clouds nor see the remembered towers.

And now, what token shall she send that His Majesty may believe and have comfort? Gifts that he will recognize—a golden hair ornament, a clasp of enamel, these the priest shall take. With her dim, flower-like hands she breaks the gold in half and divides the enamel. She cannot part with all—half she must keep. Then, in the same unearthly quiet, she gives them into

his keeping: “Tell him to be firm of heart as this gold, strong as this enamel, and then, whether in this Paradise or in the rebirths of Earth, we two may meet again.”

So it ends, but before she fades away into invisible beauty, she sends yet one token of love that shall seal the truth of her message—the Emperor’s own words, spoken in the silence of the night, as he embraced her for the last time in the Hall of Immortality in the palace: “I swear that we will ever be united as the one-winged birds that singly cannot fly, or as the tree whose boughs are intertwined. And this great sorrow shall shadow the Universe and shall shine when the stars fall into ruin.”

None but the Emperor and herself heard those words of parting—he will remember.

With these words and the broken jewels the priest returns, bringing hope with him.

Of Ming Huang there is nothing more to tell. All that was real in him—all that made him a man—died with her. Life, in any true sense, was over for him. What was left he lived, and then went—whither?

Surely in the Island of the Far Horizons there is peace, even for a broken Emperor, and the long hands of T’ai Chên, pale as white jade, are cool upon Ming Huang’s brow.

In this presentment of her Po Chü-i there is surely the highest art. The poet is pitiful to her as Homer is pitiful to Helen. Her sins are forgiven her because of that immaculate loveliness that raises her above all the angers of Earth. He will not leave her body mangled and broken among the brutal soldiery, the kingfisher jewels soiled with blood and dust. No, there is more. She out-soars the shadow of their hate. Pale in Elysian beauty, melancholy grace, she will be seen again, floating like a lily upon black waters. Over perfect loveliness Death has no more dominion.

So, because of their true story and the future foreseen by a great poet, these two are the lovers that China loves. In her ancient heart, dim with many memories, their passion is still an unfading flower. The winds blow it where Ch’ang-an is dust—the returning springs breathe it.

In China, T’ai Chên is Beauty. Ming Huang is Love.

THE GHOST PLAYS OF JAPAN

I

A DAY in Kyōto—the ancient and most beautiful City-Royal; an autumn day, the splendour of the maples dying down as if the lights were extinguished one by one before the quiet coming of the night of the world; the Kamo River flowing silently through its broad banks, and a mild grey sky leaning tenderly over the great hill of Hiei: that was the day when I saw my first Nō play in Japan, and received the gift of a beauty so strange and insubstantial that it can hold words but as lightly as the cobweb holds its strung diamonds before the sun vaporizes them into nothingness.

I had accepted an invitation from a society in Kyōto which exists for the purpose of producing these austerely beautiful plays. They are one of the great arts of the world; no past dramatic experience can in the least prepare the mind for them, and there can be no place so good for initiation as Kyōto, because Kyōto is the home of faithful tradition, of dignified reverence for the noble gifts of the past. City-Royal is a precious casket wherein many jewels lie in safe-keeping; and of these, many and glorious, not the least is the ghost-play of Japan.

So I went into the quiet dark hall, where the stage was stiffly set forth with minutest attention to traditional law. In ancient times the audience surrounded it; but, since the day of the great Shōgun Ieyasu, it has faced it as in the West; and it is said that beneath it are fixed large hollow vessels of earthenware, that the movements and the singing may have a deep resonant quality.

A small bridge—the famous “Flower-path”—is placed that the actors may thus approach it; and on this are set three small pine trees in pots, the symbols of heaven, earth, and humanity. At the back of the stage is painted a pine tree—here symbolizing faithful endurance. This is all the scenery, and everything done is in full sight of the audience, which sits in the low enclosures that are the stalls of Japan, quiet, attentive, many of them studying the play in books brought from the treasured libraries of noble houses: each one an acolyte at a beloved ritual; and not only this, but a keen critic of any variation from a standard that the centuries have made immutable.

No atmosphere can be more favourable. There is nothing to distract eye or thought from the drama to be presented. Before us are only the symbols which represent the eternal verities of God and man; and the old men, spirits, and women, are all masked in the historic masks designed by great artists for the parts they fill.

I am very certain that it is impossible to comprehend the deepest meaning of these ghostly Nō plays, and therefore to enjoy them to the full, unless the spectator has a real knowledge of the spirit and literature of Buddhism; and it is my object to give a hint of this in what I write now. For I cannot recall, in anything that has been written of these plays by those Occidentals who have studied them, more than a very passing reference to what really is the soul of the play. That there is a beauty which must appeal to any who can feel deeply, I do not at all deny. There is the strangest intellectual charm also—elusive, exquisite, a faint rainbow, smiling, weeping, fading on grey skies; but there is more than this—a theory of life and death. While it is true that the inception of this unique drama was probably the god-dance of the Shintō temples, the Nō play, as it has come down to us, owes all to Buddhism; and the better the Buddhist attitude to life and death is understood, the more certainly will this be felt.

This perhaps is the reason why the Nō plays, like all Far Eastern art, appear so strange to us at first. The belief at the base of them is alien—we do not know what they are driving at. We depict life in the studio, or on the stage, in relation to ourselves. To our minds all beauty exists for man. It pleads at his judgment bar—it is his lovely slave. But to the artist influenced by Buddhist teaching, man himself is but a small part of nature—a part of it only in the same sense as a tree or a flower; animated by the same spirit, no more, no less; passing to the same goal; subordinate, subjected to Law, as is a bough waving in the wind; a mountain-peak lost in drowning vapours. This belief has, of course, made the Far Eastern artists the greatest landscape and flower artists of the world, for they have recognized that the essence of nature differs in no kind from their own, and have therefore painted as they knew.

But all this will be clearer as I describe some of the plays. I will choose some of the less-known ones, using the beautiful renderings of Professor Fenollosa, Mr. Pound, and Mr. Waley, and premising that the ghosts are not the somewhat solid spirits to be found in Elizabethan drama and elsewhere in the West: they are emanations of memory, of sorrow, of fear. They rise like a ghostly perfume, intangible, illusive; they are dead persons, but living passions, visualized for a moment before passing away into union with the

Eternal. Their influence on earth, or on men, is no more than the fall of a dead leaf in a frost.

II

Let me take first the *Nishikigi*—little known in the West. The characters are few—that is almost always the case in a Nō play, and in this they are but three: a wandering Buddhist priest and two ghosts; not armour-plated ghosts, like him who walked at Elsinore, but dim wistful voices, wandering unsatisfied in lonely air; two lives which, having never reached fruition on earth, have now become a sick craving for what life and death alike withheld. It is a story of love that never reached its earthly close.

Picture the deep, deep quiet of the listening audience, in an old hall in Kyōto, the shadows about it, the dimly lit stage, the wailing music of the orchestra, the rigid Chorus—for there is a Chorus, as in the Greek plays, but more quiescent and, at the same time, more personal, taking up the actual words of the speaker and continuing them as if thinking aloud on his behalf; becoming as it were an orchestral representation of his thought—picture that setting—and this:—

A priest is wandering about the country that lies around Mount Shinobu; and now he is not far from little Kefu near the sea, and the evening is coming down upon him. He has been travelling long—perhaps his feet are a little weary. It seems that, when the body is weary, the defenses that guard it from the unseen are weakened. The spirit-lore of all the world testifies to this. At all events, he sees a man and woman coming toward him, apparently together, but, in truth, worlds apart. They speak to each other, but he does not hear. If he did, how could he understand that melancholy music?

The man speaks:

“Tangled—we are tangled. Whose fault was it, dear? We neither wake nor sleep. In our hearts there is much, and in our bodies nothing, and we do nothing at all, and only the waters of the river of tears flow quickly.”

And now the Chorus supplies the story.

Long, long ago these two were lovers. Nightly, according to the custom of Kefu, he brought to the door of the beloved the lacquered wands with love-signs painted upon them (*nishikigi*), the love-charm which, it was believed, no woman could resist. Every night, for three years, the passionate lover brought his wand and laid it by the rest, hoping, hoping—at last, despairing. And every night the maiden sat weaving the narrow cloth known

as *hosonuno*. Her door was shut against him. Was it fear, or modesty, or the tremulous holding-back from delight? Perhaps she herself did not know.

But he died, and they buried him in a cave with all his vain love-charms about him; and as for her—her weaving was all done, and the loom set aside, and her thwarted passion also drifted out into the void.

It was so long ago that now even the old custom of Kefu is forgotten; and death stepped tacitly and blotted them out like water spilt from a broken jar. Into the sand? No—for man is desire, limitless desire; and, when the brain no longer bounds it, it flows abroad and grows stronger: a crying in the wind, a moaning in the sea.

But now they draw nearer to the priest, and he wonders to see them in these lonely ways. It bewilders the old man a little. He says:—

"It is strange, seeing these two people here. I might suppose them two married people. The lady carries what might be a piece of cloth woven from bird's feathers, and the man a wand painted red. Strange merchandise!"

Stranger than he knows, for these are the symbols of their pain, the merchandise of broken lives.

So, pausing in the dusk, they tell him their story—not as if it were their own; only a sad old tale that haunts the countryside.

"We know the funeral cave of such a man," breathes the woman; "one who watched out the thousand nights; a bright cave, for they buried him with all his wands."

The priest is interested. He would like to see that cave. It would be a tale to tell his village when he returns. Will they show it?

So they wander on together—he himself becoming somewhat changed and ghostly under their weird influence, as they go. Night is coming; the air is cold with more than frost. Oh, bitter cold of the lonely heart wandering in desolate places! The Chorus, the thought of the play, cries aloud:—

> "Autumn. Our feet are clogged
> In the dew-drenched matted leaves.
> The perpetual shadow is lonely.
> The owl cries out from the ivy
> That drags its weight on the pine.
> The hiding fox is now lord of that love-cave."

The wanderers stand at last before it—the place the two must haunt, the focus of their spiritual being. And now they have vanished. The force that materialized them for vision is very slender: it can sustain them no longer; and the priest stands bewildered and alone. The place is strange; he knows

not where to turn. He would sleep beside it, and cannot, for the cry unsatisfied is heard in his heart also—it stirs, it calls him.

> "It seems that I cannot sleep
> Under October wind, under pines, under night.
> I will do service to the Blessed One."

And rising, he performs the peace-giving ritual of the Lord Buddha.

But what is this—a cry of joy from a woman's voice, she herself invisible.

> "Aïe, honoured priest,
> Hear soothsay!
> Now there is meeting between us,
> Between us who were until now
> In life and in after-life kept apart—
> A dream-bridge over wild grass.
> O Honoured, do not awake me by force;
> I see that the Law is perfect."

Perfect. This they had not known before—the Law had seemed a thwarting, a binding. Now the cravings of broken desire are stilled; and because they are stilled, the two are united with the Whole, and therefore with each other, and melt into perfect union—according to the Great Teaching. It is a Far Eastern rendering of "In his Will is our peace."

The Law is perfect. The quiet of the Blessed One submerges them like an ocean. And now the man's voice is heard:—

> "It is a good service you have done, Sir—
> A service that spreads in two worlds
> And binds up an ancient love."

And she:—

> "The meeting comes now.
> This night has happened over and over;
> Now only comes the tryst."

But what is happening? Slowly a warm light fills the funeral cave; shadows pass before it, as they might before a household fire seen from the cold without. It seems to become a happy home in the waste.

"Strange! [cries the priest] what seemed so very old a cave
Is all glittering bright within
Like the flicker of fire.
It is like the inside of a house.
They are setting up a loom,
And heaping up charm-sticks. No!
The hangings are of old time—
Is it illusion—illusion?"

He is not able to tell. It shifts and changes, dreamlike. The spirits themselves cannot tell. The man's voice says slowly:—

"Our hearts have been in the dusk of the falling snow,
We have been astray in the flurry.
You should tell better than we
How much is illusion.
We have been in the whirl of those who are fading."

But the priest cries aloud, passionately aroused now:—

"Let it be a dream or a vision—
I care not!
Only show me the old times past and snowed under,
Now—soon—while the night lasts!"

And so he sees.

The loom is set up in the cave, as it might be by their fireside. The lover knocks with his wand upon a door whence, in the dead past, he had no answer. But now—now—the Chorus chants softly:—

"There he is carrying wands,
And she has no need to be asked.
See her within the cave,
With a cricket-like noise of weaving.
Churr, isho, like the whirr of a loom, *churr*!"

The lover, speaking through the Chorus:—

"I lie, a body unknown to any other man,
Like old wood buried in moss.
We had no meeting;
But tears have, it seems, brought out a bright blossom
Upon the dyed tree of love."

At last the priest may see into that strange secret bride-chamber of the tomb, where the joy that lies at the heart of the world's pain has conquered. And the man's voice comes again from a great distance:—

"Happy at last and well-starred,
Now comes the eve of betrothal."

And the Chorus:—

"How glorious the sleeves of the dance
That are like snow-whirls!"

And the man:—

"Tread out the dance."

And so it proceeds, with music and light and rejoicing; and suddenly—suddenly all stops. What is this? Darkness—faint light in the east; and now the Chorus, a wind shrilling in a waste place:—

"The dawn!
Come, we are out of place.
Let us go ere the light comes.
We ask you— Do not awake.
We all will wither away,
The wands and this cloth of a dream.
There is nothing here but this cave in the field's midst;
Today's wind moves in the pines;
A wild place, unlit and unfilled."

That is all. Were they happy? Did it all come right? Or was that, too, dream within dream? We cannot tell. The audience goes silently away, and the hall is left to the ghosts.

You see? For, says the Scripture of the Good Law, just as a man adds oil to a lamp and so renews the flame, so grows craving in the man who sets his heart on the things of this world. He cannot die, in the true and lovely sense. He can only live to mortal and immortal pain. But the desire relaxing its clutch, the oil emptying in the lamp—there is the peace of the Nirvana, whether in life or death.

III

In the *Kakitsubata*, the cast is even smaller—a travelling priest, the ghost of a girl, and the Chorus. This is a very beautiful and coloured play. You are to remember Narihira, a great man in the ancient Japan—noble,

splendid, a great courtier, musician, and poet, and, later, wise among the wise; the light and love of many women; beloved, indeed, by the august Empress Takago—wife of the Emperor Seiwa—a thousand years ago. He has passed through so many women's lives, carelessly, lightly, as a man may gather an iris in a stream and cast it aside.

But there is one who remembers him—whose whole being has become a fixed passionate memory. She does not remember—she *is* memory, and nothing more. How then should she pass into the Peace?

So the priest—he might be the priest of *Nishikigi*—wanders through Mikawa to see the flowers of the iris in all their glory; for it is the season. They stand in noble ranks, and he muses beside them, he too not exempt from "the old urge of sorrow" within him. And as he stands, he becomes aware of a young girl in the simple dress of the country. She asks what he is doing in that swamp—just as any girl might ask in passing. He is looking at the iris—what else? Where has he come to?

She tells him—to Yatsubashi of Mikawa, and adds: "You have the best flowers before you there, those of the deepest colour, as you would see if you had any power of feeling."

Yes, the priest can see that. He believes these are the iris of an ancient legend. Who wrote the words? She knows. She replies:—

"By Yatsubashi, by the web of crossing waters, the iris scatters its petals. It was Narihira who said: 'These flowers brought their court dress from China.' "

The priest ponders: "Then Narihira came here?" That is of interest—he was so great a man. "What place was nearest to his heart?"

"This place," the girl replies, and then:—

> "The man who bound himself to me
> Returned times out of mind in his thought
> To me and this cobweb of waters."

So you see—because he had remembered the iris and loved them a little for her sake; because she remembers nothing but that passion and loss, she is now a part of the flowers. They are the clothing of her spirit, and she can manifest herself only beside them; and this will be until she has rent the veil of illusion and is absorbed in the reality that lies behind it.

She bids the priest spend the night in her poor cottage—a very lowly place, but still a shelter. He accepts, little knowing what he is to see, and that he is stepping through the broken shell of one world into another. For the lady returns, no longer deceiving his eyes as a country maiden, but dressed

in splendour, now her true self and the greatest lady of all that Narihira had loved in the vanished days. Her dress is symbolical, as dress in the Nō is, more or less, always. She wears an over-dress of gauze, purple with golden flowers, an underdress of glaring orange, with green and gold pattern. She is now the spirit of the iris and also the love of Narihira—about her is the perfume of his memory of her.

The priest says in amazement:—

"How strange—in this tumble-down cottage, a lady in bright robes! What can this mean?"

He shall know. The spirit speaks:—

"This is the very dress brought from China
(The court dress of the iris also!)
The gown of the Empress Takago.
She was Narihira's beloved.
At eighteen she won him.
She was the light of his youth.
I come, clothed in a memory."

And the priest: "You had better put this aside. Who are you?"

"I am the spirit of the iris. The spirit of remembrance. And Narihira was the incarnation of music. Holy magic ran through his words, and even the grass and the flowers pray to him for the blessings of dew."

And then the Chorus recites the glories of Narihira, in the old days that are dead: the Emperor's favour, his pomp and splendour. They speak for the man himself:—

"The waves, the billows return,
But my glory comes not again."

They proceed:—

"He was pledged with many a lady.
The fireflies drift away,
Scattering their little lights,
And then flying, flying,
Souls of fine ladies,
Going up into heaven.
And here in the underworld
The autumn winds come blowing—blowing,
And the wild ducks cry, Kari—Kari!"

So one sees it, like an illusive Chinese landscape: whirls of ghostly snow over the white plain; ghostly torn peaks showing here and there through clouds, and a sense of loss irreparable, weeping and crying in the wind. Is it a spirit, a form impermanent, drifting, or only a flurry of rain in the night?

And now the Chorus chants a song of Narihira's own:—

"No moon!
The Spring is not the Spring of the old days,
My body
Is not my body,
But only a body grown old.
Narihira, Narihira,
My glory comes not again."

But from the Chorus, from the priest, from the power of the memories thus evoked, the spirit of the lady has gathered power. He made these verses for the Empress. She will dance the dance he loved.

"Narihira knew me in old days.
Doubt it not, stranger.
And now I begin my dance,
Wearing the ancient bright mantle."

And the stately dance begins, holding all the past for her. She and the Chorus describe it alternately. And gradually, slowly, while you watch, the grey- and olive-robed Chorus obscures the bright dancer—the passion is dying down, the memory is fading, the essential falls out of the apparition, saying: "It is only the cracked husk of the locust." And the Chorus closes the play:—

"Day comes; the purple flower
Opens its heart of wisdom;
It fades out of sight by its thought—
The flower soul melts into Buddha."

Even the perfume of the iris dies on the air; it is absorbed into the Passionless.

IV

Of course, by no means all the Nō plays are the habitations of ghosts; but many are the haunt of strange intuitions, of fallings from us, vanishings, worlds not realized; the moving within us of spirits who have moulded our

being and whom we have never known. It is a twilight world, lit by waning moons. The ghosts who dwell there have been given over into the prison of their own Selfhood; their passions and memories have made their cage; and they have no escape, in life or death, until they accept the law of self-annihilation.

This is the Teaching. No doubt we have an echo of this in the West, where the miserable spirit lurks for ever amid the pain it inflicted or received, bound on the wheel of its own torment; but in the Orient they understand, they have unravelled cause and effect; and it is a hard task for us to learn who, as the Buddhist Scriptures say, "belong to another sect, to another faith, to another discipline, and sit at the feet of another Teacher." Yet it is surely a true teaching of the binding of the spirit, whether in life or death.

There is one very touching Nō where the brilliant Prince Genji, the Don Juan of the most famous ancient romance of Japan, adored of many women, returns, an empty ghost, to the seashore at Suma. He is there because it was to Suma that he fled from the Emperor's anger at a gross intrigue, knowing that banishment awaited him. There he had known sorrow for the first time in his shining life, and the shadow of sorrow is a sickness, an insanity that holds the soul captive, apart from the processional joy of the universe. He is dressed in poor garments, he who went so splendid in life; he manifests as a woodcutter of Suma. Suddenly, in the second scene, blooms out the old glory; the beauty of the rushing billows flows like wine in his veins; for a moment he forgets his grief and recalls the old splendour of the Court when before the Emperor he trod the measure of "The Blue Sea Waves" crowned with maple leaves, himself "a bright flower" as the ancient story of his loves describes him.

"How beautiful this sea is! When I trod the grass here I was called 'Genji the Gleaming.' I will dance the blue dance of the sea waves!"

And he dances, that the priest may see even in a vision the beauty lost in the years.

There is a strange and horrible Nō about the wife of Prince Genji, the most unhappy Lady Awoi—one of the heroines of the thousand-year-old novel which records the loves of the Prince and is a classic in Japan. With a heart for so many, he had none for his wife, and she died forsaken. Such a disease of the soul as hers could not escape the Nō, for it gives the woman chained to her misery, as Prometheus to his rock. What is very singular is that she never appears in the play. She is represented by a red-flowered kimono, folded and laid at the front of the stage. You are to consider that her

very garment is saturated and infected with the poison of jealousy that is destroying her body as she dies.

What is seen is the spirit—Princess Rokujō, whose liaison with Prince Genji is driving his wife to death; and yet,—most strange,—this is no fetch of the Princess herself: it is Awoi's jealous agony taking the shape of the woman who is killing her. That thought possesses her mind—it materializes in the loathed shape.

The scene is opened by a great Court official, the Daijin, who relates that the priest and exorcists have been called to aid the great lady and drive forth her disease; and immediately upon this appears the visible Jealousy—which yet will not speak the truth, but declares that she is the spirit of the Princess. She is splendidly costumed—the under kimono of black satin, embroidered with small, irregular, infrequent circles of flowers; the upper part of stiff gold brocade, shot through with purple, greens, and reds.

She speaks of her glories:—

"I had the moon for a mirror. I was drunk with colour and perfume."

Suddenly she sees the dying woman and rushes to attack her.

"This woman is hateful. I cannot keep back my blows." And she strikes.

It is Awoi's own jealousy wounding her; she is her own destroyer.

"The flame of jealousy," says the apparition, "will turn on one's own hand and burn."

And the exorcist advances, clashing and striking his wooden beads; and now the passion leaves the shape of the Princess and take a more horrible shape. It is a *hannya*, a demon, a terrible mask with golden eyes, clothed in scarlet and white, faced by the exorcist, who thus describes himself:—

"Then he hung about his shoulders a cloak that had swept the dew of the seven jewels in climbing the peaks of Tai Kou and of Kori in Riobu. He wore the cassock of forbearance, to keep out unholy things. He took the beads of red wood, the square beads with hard corners, and, whirling and striking, said prayer."

The hannya threatens him with worse than death. Awoi is possessed, indeed! But still he persists, he cries out the sonorous spells, the strong clashing names of the protecting spirits; and at last the horrible possession relaxes—the hannya totters, overcome.

"O terrible names of the spirits! this is my last time. I return here no more."

And now Awoi nō Uye is sinking—sinking gently into the quiet of death; and the Chorus concludes the play:—

“By hearing the Scripture, the evil spirit is melted. The Blessed One came hither; his face was full of forbearance and pity. Pity has melted her soul, and she has passed into the Buddha. Thanksgiving!”

She will not dream of Genji any more in that translucent calm. She has out-soared the shadow of her hate.

There is another fearful Nō mentioned by Professor Fenollosa and Lafcadio Hearn. It is the story of a woman who inordinately desires the love of a young priest. He rejects her, flies from her, and hides under a great bronze temple-bell, such as may be seen at the Chion-in in Kyōto. She pursues, her fierce desire sweeping the woman out of her. It expresses itself as a raging dragon, glowing and spuming fire. As a dragon, she coils about the bell, biting the metal savagely in her madness, and the bell glows incandescent from the fire that is in her; and the wretch beneath is calcined into ash. For, in the Nō, thought is a creative thing, and therefore the dragon soul animates a dragon body.

But not all the spirit Nō plays are like this. There is *Hagoromo*—pure delicate beauty, and rendered into accessible loveliness by Mr. Waley. A moon-maiden has been dancing in lonely delight, on the beach by the pine woods of Mio—scarcely less lovely than her own aërial world. Like the swan-princess of Morris’s “East of the Sun, west of the Moon,” she has a magic robe of feathers, and this she has hung on a pine tree. The fisherman Hakuryō enters and sees it—wafting immortal fragrance. He seizes it, and the moon-maiden cries for her cloak—the wings by which alone she can climb the blue heights.

> “How shall I tread
> The wing-ways of the air?”

But he hardens his heart against her pleading; and before his very eyes she droops like a dying flower. At last he softens: if she will dance for him the dance that mortal eyes have never seen, he will restore the cloak. Life radiant and shining flows in her veins again.

> “I am happy, happy!
> And for thanksgiving I bequeath
> A dance of remembrance to the world.
> Give back my cloak.”

He refuses. The bird of heaven may fly away without the longed-for dance. She rebukes him with gentle dignity,

"Doubt is for mortals.
There is no deceit in heaven"—

and he restores it. Then she begins the stately dance, and the Chorus accompanies it with a chant as lovely—recounting the ritual of the moon's changes:—

"In white dress, in black dress,
Thrice ten angels,
In two ranks divided,
Thrice five for the waning,
Thrice five for nights of the waxing moon.
One heavenly lady, on each night of the moon,
Does service and fulfills
Her ritual task assigned."

The Chorus calls on the wind to build cloud-walls about the sky, lest the vision leave the world to empty day. Can thought or words be more beautiful? I can never see the waxing or waning of the moon consciously, without recalling the gladness of these fair spirits who direct it. Every word of this Nō is exquisite music, and should be read, either in Mr. Waley's, or in Mr. Pound's and Professor Fenollosa's, translation.

"She is robed in a garment of mist, of spring mist," says the Chorus; and now she rises, rises into the blue of the air, faintly seen over the pines of Mio, past the floating islands, through the lower clouds; then higher still, over the mountain of Ashitaka, the silver peak of Fuji; and again, but very faint, her form as heaven resumes its own—the mists receive her. And now —she is a lost star. It is over.

These Japanese ghosts are the most insubstantial in all the world. They hold human shape with difficulty. Homer's ghosts, blown like dead leaves in hell, drinking the blood of beasts, are tangible in comparison. Dante's, suffering in singing flames and glacial hells, are solid beside them; for these are the tortures that conquerors inflict and the reason of man denies; but the Nō ghosts, inexpressible as an odour,—a faint dream gone with the dawn,— are to me the most real and terrible ghosts I know. For we have all felt them; we carry them, each of us, in our own bosom.

Who that has known the gnawing possession of jealousy, cruel as the grave, but must understand when the Lady Awoi's hate and agony take the visible shape of her rival, and so hunt her to death? What pangs of love denied but repeat themselves in the lonely wandering ghosts of *Nishikigi*? Is

this wretchedness to be prolonged beyond death? Yes, the Nō, replies, unless this knowledge is gained:—

> As the fiery sparks from a forge are one by one extinguished,
> And no one knows where they have gone;
> So is it with those who have attained to complete emancipation,
> Who have crossed the flood of desire,
> Who have entered upon the calm delight—
> Of these no trace remains.

Theirs is the untracked path of the bird in pure air. Otherwise—there is no fever of longing and memory and sorrow that does not confront us in the Nō, and, as we look, they are the ghosts of our own hearts that meet us. There is much to think of in the Nō I have given, and in the many more of which I might write. Some noble, ringing with gallant courage and high instinct; some wistful and strangely beautiful, the flower of a faith that has moulded great nations, and must do it to the end of time.

These plays demand as much as they give: the audience must bring its gifts of imagination, intellect, knowledge, and poetic insight, and lay them before the stage, or the actors can do nothing for them. It is not so in other parts of the world, so far as I know. I see a Western audience; the glaring obvious stage, tricked out with decoration that overpowers the story, the players, the very thought (if there should be such an irrelevance!); every shade of feeling expressed in black and white before it can be absorbed by the heads that crowd the place. What does that audience bring? It has paid its money to be amused, thought for, taken in, and done for.

But why dwell upon what all know—the theatre of a commercial civilization throned in the midst of its dying arts. It may be said that the Nō was and is the pleasure of aristocrats of birth and intellect. Possibly. Our aristocrats, at all events, seek nothing like it; and in Japan true art in any of its branches has never been the monopoly of the great.

I think it was Mr. Gladstone who once drew the pitiful comparison between what pleased an average audience of ancient Athens—the mighty Æschylean or Sophoclean drama, the clash and glitter of Aristophanic wit—and what pleases a modern audience. He made it his thesis that in the higher intellectual qualities man has degenerated since those great days; that the race then touched its high-water mark, and that ever since the tide has slowly ebbed. I should not say this myself. Knowing a little of thought that as yet is slightly considered among us,—the thought of the Orient,—I should rather say that the weeds of a gross civilization have choked the

beauty which will grow only in conditions we no longer fulfill—no longer think even desirable.

“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” It remains to be seen whether we have lost the power as well as the will to learn.

So in memory I hold a quiet hall in old Kyōto, a little stage, grave and archaic in its setting, a few strange figures, and a stilled, waiting audience, some, book in hand, following spellbound a drama of the soul of man in life and death.

The night comes, soft-footed, outside; the lamps are lit; the Kamo River ripples softly beside the palaces and temples of the mighty dead who have made Japan’s great present. She is great by reason of the faith that was in them. If the people relinquish this, and take for their god the golden idol of our market-place— But the future is unknown to us. It is only the Great Gods who see it as one with the past and the present.

THE MARVELS OF XANADU

A STORY OF THE WONDERS OF CATHAY

The principal character in this story of Marco Polo at the Court of Kubla Khan is not imaginary. Among the ruins of Shang-tu (Xanadu, for ever memorable from Coleridge's poem), the Summer Palace of the Emperor, was found a broken memorial tablet, half buried in the earth, a monument dedicated by him to the memory of a great Buddhist Abbot. The heading of the inscription, in the ancient Chinese seal characters, runs thus:

"Monument conferred by the Emperor of the August Yuen Dynasty in memory of His High Eminence Yun Hien, styled Chang-Lao, canonized as Shou Kung, Prince of Longevity."

I have depicted him as such men come down to us in earlier and contemporary writings.

GREAT Princes, Emperors and Kings, Dukes and Marquises, Counts, Knights, Burgesses and people of all degrees who desire knowledge concerning the races of mankind and the diversities of the divisions of the world, cause this tale to be read to you. For you shall find therein marvellous tidings of Cathay (China) according to the description of Messer Marco Polo, a wise and noble citizen of Venice, even as he saw them with his own eyes. For let me tell you that since our Lord God did mould our first father Adam, never has there been a man with such knowledge of the world and its wonders as Messer Marco. In his book, called by the people "Il Millione" has he set forth many things for the advancement of commerce, the pearls, jade, silk, drugs many and mighty, and the singular works of porcelain, and the substance named lac, hard and enduring for tables and cabinets that are for barter in this land of Cathay, with costly furs and other splendid matters.

He hath in this book dealt also with the manners and customs of many men in many strange lands, and of the adventures of his father Maffeo Polo and his uncle Niccolo Polo, who were the trusted servants of the great Emperor Kubla Khan. These things are for all men, but there were also private matters—concerning the Princess and Shou Kung which he thought it not meet at that time to give to the world, considering the wrath of the Italian priests should he speak his whole mind; for priests be jealous and crafty and great stirrers up of anger and malfeasance.

So before his death he laid this writing in my hand and charged me that I should act according to my discretion. And I am Messer Rusticiano of Pisa. But I write this in the year 1328.

It is known from what Messer Marco hath openly writ, that in the year 1260, Niccolo and Maffeo Polo, his father and uncle, having heard tales and rumours of the glory of the great Khan, Emperor of the Mongols and of Cathay, resolved that they would see the marvels of his court and stand before him in his city of Cambaluc (Peking). So mighty was Kubla Khan that it was openly said that in Asia and Eastern Europe scarce a dog could bark but by his leave, from the borders of Poland to the Yellow Sea.

So, for three long years and six months these hardy men travelled across the horrible deserts and ever, as each day brought them a journey nearer to Cathay, the noise of the great Khan's might grew louder until it roared in their ears like thunder and even these two brave men trembled in nearing the city of Cambaluc to think they should stand before a man so like God in power.

But lo!— A miracle, for he received them graciously, extending like the King Ahasuerus, the golden sceptre that they might touch it and live.

And the reason was this. The great Khan was ever eager for knowledge, and these Venetian merchants were men wise, discreet and noble, fit to stand before kings. Great enquiry he made of the kings of Europe, the arts, the manufactures, and then, condescending on religion, he desired particulars of the faith of Christendom.

And these men, having learned the Tartar languages in their three years' wanderings, set it forth so well that the Emperor caused letters to the Holy Father the Pope to be indited and he made the two Venetians his Ambassadors, and so commanded them to return to Europe and to journey back again to him bringing with them priests of the Christian faith, acquainted with the Seven Arts and able to argue, persuade and convince. And he gave them a tablet of pure gold, commanding all persons whatsoever in his dominions to set them on their way with service as to the Emperor himself.

So they went, and at last carrying with them store of presents and a portion of the Blessed Oil from the Holy Sepulchre, they returned, bringing also the young and gallant gentleman, Marco, son to Maffeo Polo, and thus after toils incredible, they stood once more before the great Khan, and young Marco Polo kneeling before him was accepted into his service very graciously. And how he rose therein he has told in his work called "Il Millione."

Many languages and written characters did Messer Marco commit to memory and in all ways he was discreet and prudent, and so won the favour of the Emperor, that the high barons grudged it sourly. Much wisdom and knowledge did he gather of the ways of men, and of strange lands, insomuch that the Emperor trusted to him many missions and embassages in the mighty land of Cathay, and where he went he was received with great honours.

But to my story.

It was now summer weather, exceeding hot, and the Great Khan removed his court from Cambaluc as was his custom, to his mighty summer palace of Xanadu where his Highness had decreed that stately pleasure pavilions should arise and glorious gardens and woods for hunting; fertile lands girdled about with walls, towers and pagodas comparable only to the heaped cloudy palaces of a noble sunset. So great were these.

And from the river that ran about it were rills of crystal lymph taught to wind sinuously in these gardens with great blossom-bearing trees and banks of flowers to glorify them, and this after the manner of Cathay, with delicate bridges humped like a camel above the pools where the goldfish swam and the princesses fed them; themselves more bright than the fish in the shining waters.

Now at the palace in Xanadu it was the custom of the Emperor that all persons of the court should eat together in the great hall appointed for his service.

And on a certain day he sat with his chief Queen beside him, she very glorious in a flowing robe of red silk laced with gold, and as she moved, fifteen honourable women held up the length of it. Also she wore a crested head-dress covered with great jewels and on the top of it a little castle whereon were three large and very brilliant rubies and many lesser, surmounted by a high plume. Her long black hair was braided with gold to the waist, and so great was the weight of her jewels that three attendants stood constantly behind her to support the castle lest it fall aside. Where she went, eighteen honourable women attended her always. And she and the other ladies ate with faces uncovered that all might see their beauty—they also very magnificent in silken raiment and great gems.

Now on this day Messer Marco entered the hall dutifully following his father and uncle, those two wise and venerable merchants, and they sat at a table within reach of the Emperor's, for it was his custom to speak with them sometimes in a loud voice. And Messer Marco still wore the Venetian hose that adorn a shapely leg and set forth the grace of goodly strength and form.

And it was here in this manner that he first beheld the Princess Djelma, the lady of his heart.

She was a most dainty and angelical lady, appearing as though she had fed on honey dew and rose-leaves, shaped like an ivory image and with dark and beautiful eyes,—her hair hanging to her knees and braided after the manner of the court with jewels and a gold cap set thereon. But her mouth was a loveliness fit only for great kings, being a casket of vermilion filled with precious pearls, whence issued the bird-song of her most sweet voice.

Young, gallant and wise, high of stature, light as a lance, bright of eye was Messer Marco, and how should such a lady fail to note that his eyes sought hers and dropped in very awe of her beauty and rank, for indeed she was sister's daughter to the Great Khan and his heart's delight.

Yet all this might have passed for a time but for the Khan's magicians and their wonders.

Be it known that his Highness entertained wise and great magicians from Tibet and the distant land of Kashmir and these by their strong enchantments could withhold any cloud, storm or rainburst from passing over the Emperor's Paradise: so that the rain might be seen falling furiously without the towers, and yet, within, a mild and pleasant sunshine. And it was the custom of the Emperor to command that rain should fall on certain nights to refresh the gardens and pools, and so it was done and not otherwise.

Very great warlocks are the men of Kashmir. Messer Marco hath not only seen the above, but also more. For he soberly relates that he saw iron float in the Star pool at their bidding under the eyes of the Khan, and not only so but the high Deer Rock in the garden upon which the deer come and go—he saw rise and float in the air with all the deer standing amazed upon it —and even as all looked, with their rods, the sorcerers called up a white mist from the water, and all was veiled from their eyes, and when they looked again the mist was gone and the Deer Rock in its place with the deer leaping to the heights. It is truth also that when the Khan sitting in his place at the Banquet called for his great gold cup wherefrom he drank, by the arts of these men of Kashmir, the cup, filled with wine, rose slowly in the air— none touching it, and presented itself at the right hand of the Emperor. This has Messer Marco seen not once nor twice but almost daily; and he had certainly thought these things were art diabolic but for the teachings of Shou Kung the monk, of whom more hereafter.

Now the banquet on this day being over, the lords and ladies passed forth from the hall, none touching the threshold with their feet, for this is entirely forbidden, and they marched in order into the courtyard where sat the Khan with his ladies about him, and his Chief Queen at his right hand. And at her

feet sat the young princess whom Messer Marco in open sunlight observed closely, and of such exceeding beauty was she that again his eyes were fixed upon her and on nought else.

Now the great Khan had on this day commanded the new sorcerers from Kashmir to attend him and perform for the delight of himself and his attendance. And in what follows no lie is told by Messer Marco, for what he saw hundreds saw also. And this it was.

This man of Kashmir standing before the throne—in the open courtyard, took in his hand a wooden ball with holes in it, through which were passed long thongs of leather, and taking hold of one of these, he slung it up into the air, and it went so high that it was lost, and only the end of a thong was in the man's hand. So calling to a boy with him, he commanded him to climb the thong, and he did, and disappeared in the air, and the sorcerer called him back three times angrily, but no answer,—and in a great rage he climbed the thong himself and disappeared, while all held their breath, and Messer Marco for a space forgot even the Princess Djelma. And presently did awful and dismal shrieks resound from the upper air with a dreadful wailing, and on the ground fell a foot of the boy, severed and dripping with blood, and yet again another foot dreadful to see, and a palpitating arm, and another, and last the dismembered trunk and then the severed head, with pitiable eyes not yet closed. And at that the Princess Djelma sank down swooning at the feet of the Queen like a dying swan, and Messer Marco made to aid her, but his father held him sternly back.

Then, in a moment more, the sorcerer climbed down the thong, panting and covered with blood, and kissed the ground before Kubla Khan, and spoke in the tongue of Cathay, whereat his Highness gave an order, and, most strange to see, the sorcerer laid the limbs of the lad in due order and his head where it should be, and he kicked him smartly, and lo! the limbs crept together again and the lad stood up laughing, and so bowed and turned himself about that all might see him. But the Princess was carried off swooning, being young and tender, and the eyes of Messer Marco followed her.

So the great Khan applauded, swearing by his head that he had seen no such marvel yet,—and so said all his nobles. Very great sorcerers were these men of Kashmir. But Messer Marco, his eyes being satiate with marvel departed, musing less on these wonders than on the Princess Djelma, for this is the way of a man with a maid, according to the wise King of Israel, and so it will be until the end of time. And all his thought was how he should compass to see her again, and for some days he did not see her, she being

overcome with the horror of the sorcerers. After a week however, she again entered to the banquets, and sat by the side of the Chief Queen, her aunt.

And every day Messer Marco saw her his soul desired her the more, for not only was she beauteous, but a sweet attractive kind of grace enshrined her as it were a light about her, and as a rose that expanding in the warm sunshine fills the air with odour so was she.

Now it chanced that one day Messer Marco was wandering in the gardens many bowshots from the pavilions, for he had free leave of the great Khan to go and come as he would. And the gardens that day were exceeding lovely with greenery and blossom and flowing waters, and the sunshine glorious upon all.

So he passed into a little copse of blossoming trees by a very small river, and there sat musing on the Princess Djelma, as a man might muse on a star shining in a heaven that he can never reach,—and as he watched the Asian pheasants strut about calling their golden mates, he heard a man's voice as it were reading aloud, and then a voice very sweet and low that asked a question, and so the man again continued.

Moved by curiosity, Messer Marco rose and went quietly forward and lo, among the trees by the little river a sight both strange and beautiful met his eyes; for the Princess was seated upon the grass at the feet of an aged—yet not very aged—man who read aloud to her from certain leaves of soft mulberry paper that he held in his hand. This man was habited as a Buddhist monk or Bhikkhu, and his face was one of exceeding wisdom and peace, insomuch that he resembled that great image of the God Buddha who, victorious over death and time, sits in the Temples of the idolaters.

So Messer Marco hiding in the trees listened awhile, and the matter that the monk read was good for a man's ears whosoever wrote it, for it revealed the soul upon its journey through the purgatories even as the Master Poet, Messer Dante Alighieri, hath written it for the instruction of men; and the maiden Princess listened most earnestly.

Messer Marco therefore considering with himself, and familiar with the customs of the place, advanced gently among the trees, and so disclosed himself to the two, making a very courteous reverence to the priest and the young lady—and she fell a-blushing like a white rose envious of its crimson sisters,—and suddenly Messer Marco was aware, though he knew not how, that his face was not strange to the Princess, and that if he had looked along the great table, so also had she,—and it emboldened him a little, so that he recovered face—as the Cathayan people expressed it.

And the monk, viewing him, spoke in a golden voice, grave and benignant.

"Welcome, my son, and again welcome! What would you?"

(For all knew Messer Marco, the honoured of the great Khan).

"Reverend Sir, I would not disturb you and this excelling Princess, but hearing your reading as I wandered among the trees, I fain would know if it is a matter instructive and wisdom-bearing."

The Princess looked at him timidly, yet as if she could not withhold.

"My Lord, it is the Way of the Soul—a great and marvellous story of an Ape that rises upward in a great Pilgrimage and so becomes a Buddha—invincible in wisdom. Know you not this most reverend Father?"

And Messer Marco, willing above all wisdom to hear her voice—

"Lady Princess, inform me, if it be your pleasure."

And the monk smiled upon them as men behold children at their play, lovingly yet from afar.

Then she—making a reverence with her hands and head—

"This is the most venerable Abbot, Yun Hien, who lately left the solitudes at the desire of his Majesty, bringing with him the knowledge of that monk who instructed Genghis Khan—ancestor to his Majesty. His knowledge was of this world but also much more—and this great Lord of Learning has stored it and added more and now lays it before his Majesty. Therefore this is he whom his Majesty addresses always as Shou Kung—the Prince of Longevity, for his wisdom cannot die. And the royal secretaries, as well you know, are bid to write down all the precious gems that fall from his lips, that not one be lost."

She ceased, a rosy blush on her sweet face to hear her own voice and Messer Marco looking upon the calm smiling brows of the old man remembered how he had heard of his wisdom and his power with the Emperor from afar, and how he was a very great saint according to their Law, quiet and simple in life and caring nothing for gain or power, but only for wisdom; and again he bowed and begged permission to sit also and hear the reading, and this the good monk accorded very heartily, and so continued to read.

Now this story may very aptly be compared to that vision of Messer Dante of Florence, for it is the journey through the Hells of the great and good Emperor Tai-tsung of Cathay. This is that puissant Emperor who when Korea sent tribute as vassals, commanded that the young Korean nobles should study in the Imperial Lecture halls and be wise. And this day the Monk was reading concerning the Unmasking Hell—that for using false

weights and measures, and that lowest hell where lie the souls of those impious who forget their duty to father and mother—and how the Emperor crossed "A Bridge of Sighs and of Wailing" as he passed upon his way. And finally he concluded his reading by the admonition of the Judge of Hell to the Emperor Tai-tsung:

"So when your Majesty sees again the light of day, forget not to found the Society of All Souls for the salvation of the dead and the rescue of lost and forgotten souls, for if there is hope in the hells there shall be peace on earth."

And so he laid down the leaves. And Messer Marco said very earnestly:

"Did then the Emperor Tai-tsung veritably quit his body, or was this a vision? I ask, Reverend Father, for that it resembles the teachings of my Church."

"My son, all truth is one—how can it be otherwise. And this great Emperor lay dead for three days and nights with his Empress weeping beside him, and the high Ministers at his feet,—but he returned, and, knocking on his coffin from within, was heard, and resumed the Imperial duties. But having visited the secret Hidden House, he was a changed man, inspired with the wisdom from on high."

And Messer Marco—

"Is it then possible to leave the body and return?"

"My son, what is the body? The idle work of the undying mind. Note in this book how the Imperial Messenger Huen, being in the Celestial Cloud Ferry Boat, shuddered to see a corpse drift by, not knowing that it was his own, cast off like a forgotten garment. But that High Spirit, who stood as Pilot in the bows of the boat, said smiling: 'Fear not. This is but the phantasm that was your body. Rejoice in your freedom from illusion and go forward enfranchised.' "

And Messer Marco, troubled, said—

"But all this is Catholic teaching. When my honoured father and uncle desired at his Majesty's command to bring this teaching from the West, they did not know that the Way has been taught here."

And he serenely—

"My son, the Way is open to all. If it were for only the West how should it be the Way?"

And the Princess speaking very modestly and with folded hands said—

"If this great Lord, honoured of his Majesty desire to hear of the Way, should he, reverend Father, be forbidden?"—

And he smiled and replied.

"Daughter, no. He who is able to hear, let him hear."

So Messer Marco begged that he might again be present when the Saint read aloud for the instruction of the Princess, and this permission was accorded, and rising they all went on their way to the pavilions, and as they went Messer Marco discoursed of the Kashmiri sorcerers and of his sorrow to see her swoon, and she trembled even in the remembrance, and appealing to the monk asked how such things could be, and he, pacing in the midst, said—

"These things are the beginning of wisdom, and such men have mastered the first step of the way—the knowledge that all things seen are illusion and but a mirage upon the surface of the real. For I was present in spirit—but not in body, when the men performed for the pleasure of his Majesty, and having myself attained to the knowledge of the Real I saw the sorcerer and his boy sit smiling and talking before the feet of the Emperor while all of you, deceived, believed they had ascended the leathern thong, and that the boy was cut in pieces and healed again. Very easily are the eyes and mind of men misled."

And Messer Marco amazed said—

"Venerable Teacher, if this be so, show to the Princess and to me a marvel at this moment;—can such things veritably be?"

So he stood under a great tree laden with blossoms, and speaking indulgently as a father to children, he said—

"Look in my eyes."

And they did so, and straightway a marvel befell, and for those two, time ceased for a moment as when a man swoons and again returning knows not whether an hour or a day be past.

But when they recovered the Saint was standing again under the tree and he asked of the Princess—

"Daughter, what have you seen?"

And pale and exalted she replied:

"I saw the gardens in snow—white and terrible, and upon them a Lady walking with bare feet, with a high crown, and in her hand a flagon from which fell a stream of Living Water, and in the other hand a willow spray wherewith she sprinkled those dews upon the heads of sleeping men, and they awoke. O Venerable One, let me see again."

And he—

“Daughter, that Lady is the Wisdom of God, and with her waters of baptism she awakes the dead soul to vision. And you, my Son?”

“My Father—I stood in the great Church by the lagoons of Venice my home,—and I saw a mosaic picture that I had known but utterly forgotten. Namely the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church at Jerusalem, and at the street door men listening, and one of them a man of Cathay. Why have I seen this in the gardens of the Great Khan?”

For the soul of Messer Marco was troubled.

And the venerable man said—

“Son and daughter, each of you has seen the same thing, for all truth is one. Namely that the Spirit of God walks among men. And this is taught here as in the West. But what you have seen is truth, for the art of the sorcerers is illusion upon illusion,—and our knowledge is verity—opening the eyes to the real world that circles us.”

So they parted.

That day, Messer Marco, attending the great Khan in his private cabinet on state matters, observed a small image of the Lady seen by the Princess Djelma in her vision, but now she bore in her hand an osier basket with a Sacred Fish, and he was greatly amazed, knowing the Symbol of the Christ to be the Fish, which indeed forms the anagram of his Holy name, and the Emperor seeing his amazement condescended to ask the reason, therefore Messer Marco concealing nothing told him of all that had befallen.

The Emperor, himself a venerable man, for he was now nearing his eightieth year, listened to the young man with kindness, replying—

“Thou art wise who seek instruction, and this monk Shou Kung is all but divine in learning and wisdom. I am well content that you should learn of him. I recall to your memory that I demanded by your father and uncle that priests should be sent to me from that wise man who in the West is called His Holiness. But they could not come. And when I was sorrowful this Shou Kung comforted me—saying the truth is here also, expressed in symbols as in the West,—and even the symbols scarcely differ,—much less the truth itself. The differences of men are illusion. Their unity is real. But as for the Princess Djelma—the Brilliant Lady—her whole content is to sit at the feet of the wise, and it is her design to pass into the quiet life.”

And Messer Marco cried passionately:

“A nun. O great Khan—so beautiful and young!”

And he:

“Even so. But yet it is a loss and waste that a maid so beautiful should die and leave no copy of her graces. If you, my son, could make this child

think otherwise, the Emperor you serve knows how to reward service. And there are many royal princesses to be given as a gift to the wise and valiant."

And he returned smiling to his work and no more was said, but Messer Marco who knew that the Emperor loved him took great hope and courage.

And there were not many days when the young man did not seek the blossoming copse where Chou Kung imparted his wisdom to the Princess; and both rejoiced thereat for he was a willing learner both in the Art of Love, and in the School of Wisdom, and his teachers of both were full fain, and they knew he held the permission of the grand Sire.

And there were times when gazing on the calm face of Shou Kung, yellow as old ivory and bearing all the lines and wrinkles of wisdom, Messer Marco found it in his heart to doubt whether the love of man for maid were not also an illusion, resembling only a transient cloud upon the unchanging blue of the sky. He put this matter before the Teacher, the Princess Djelma listening intently.

But he, in reply—

"My Son, no—for this is an excellent symbol, and a symbol is no illusion for it is the very body of truth. The man excels the woman in strength and wisdom—she him in pure love, and the union of the two symbolizes the union of the Divine made man and the man made divine. For this reason the Buddha of the West accorded the grace of his Presence to a marriage, and turned their pure water into the nectar of Immortality."

"My Father, how is this marvel known to you?"

For Messer Marco heard him almost with fear, such knowledge seeming superhuman in one whom he might most ignorantly have named an Idolator.

"My Son, am I not a servant of truth, though but a door-keeper in her halls? Remember also that for long years the Christians who call themselves Nestorian have dwelt in Cathay. Has no man told you of their great inscribed stone by Singanfu now five centuries old? And when these men came they brought certain truths which we already knew well and had cherished here. Therefore they were welcomed."

And Messer Marco—

"In the West men persecute and slay those who will not believe with them. Is this a holy zeal or is it folly?"

And he, musing, replied:

"How can such things be! Folly—folly unspeakable. It is taking the bread of truth and flinging it to the dogs. A truth so taught is blackest error. Learn better, my son."

And Messer Marco learnt, sitting beside him, and the reason why this story could not in his life-time be told is that thus he beheld the pride of priests which darkens the truth with cruelty and ignorance.

But between him and the Princess love grew like a flower that waxes night and day and you may see it grow. How could it be otherwise?—Both young and beautiful and she so gentle and wise. Marco, remembering the proud ladies of Venice cauled with jewels and robed in sendal and cramoisie; haughty as Queens, bold and sumptuous of mien, accounted them as nothing beside the white grace of this lily of women.

"Madonna!"—he called her, and she would flush like a faint rose to hear him.

Much wisdom they learnt at the feet of Shou Kung and also the wielding of the mystery of illusion, for this was taught by Shou Kung even as a sport for children, carelessly, as rich men shake the crumbs from their laps. And Messer Marco learned this laughing, so that I record only truth in saying that with mine eyes, sitting beside him at his window in Venice, I have beheld the appearance of a mighty argosy laden with merchandise, and monkeys and peacocks sitting in the masts, come sailing up the great Canal. And even as I looked, it melted in the sun and sank in golden ripples in the water, he laughing to see my amaze. And this was of service to him after, as shall be said in due place, as doubtless Shou Kung who knew all foresaw.

Very great was the influence of this Prince of Longevity upon the Grand Sire, for he, who as a Mongol King, was used to despise the poor, was now by the teaching of Shou Kung become first of the charitable, providing daily throughout the year 30,000 poor persons each with a new loaf, and with clothes supplied by a tithe laid upon silk and wool, and giving to each also a leaf of the mulberry-paper money which he had made current in Cathay.

Not only so, but it is the bare truth that each artisan in his kingdom bestowed, and that freely, a day's labour weekly for the cause of charity—the produce of their labour being given to the poor. When shall such things be seen in Christendom? But this must be told namelessly because of the danger from our proud priests who spurn the poor.

And when Shou Kung spoke of that compassion of God who in Cathay is called Kwan Yin, she who with the Living Water-drops sprinkling from her willow spray makes beast-like natures divine, how could Messer Marco but bethink him of the Baptismal Waters? For, as Messer Dante saith in his Purgatorio, writing of the growth upwards of a soul from the dull life of a plant:

"But how from animal it becomes man as yet we know not"—

So Shou Kung taught him that by the asperging of sweet dew from Heaven the soul is purified and re-created. Much he learnt. Much was yet to learn.

But you shall not think that Messer Marco was a dreamer only, though a dreamer he was. To and fro he journeyed through Cathay on the errands of the Emperor, building justice everywhere as he went. For certainly this Emperor was a just man,—and desired the good of his people, and he, taking counsel with these great Venetians and with Shou Kung, made many and wise laws and was not only terrible in strength, but beneficent as summer sunshine.

Now on a certain day, Messer Marco returning from that journey to Pianfu and the river Caramoran whereof he hath written in "Il Millione," came on the following day into the noble gardens of Xanadu, and going to the wonted spot he found the Princess Djelma sitting alone by the runnel, holding in her hand a blue lotus bloom and looking upon it, but the venerable Shou Kung was absent. She rose to meet him timidly and with the grace of a bowing willow, and the joy in her eyes, warmed him like sunshine, and they sat together by the water. And he spoke:

"Lady, where is the Venerable One? I have thirsted for his instruction on my long journey. The noise of men was about me but I missed the voice of truth."

And she—

"Lord, he cannot today instruct us. He is away in spirit to the Lo-Shan Monastery where he was needed for the instruction of a great Lord of Tibet who is a truth seeker. His venerable body lies in the chamber of polished woods that the Grand Sire made for him, as if it were dead, but at evening he will return."

And Marco understood this, he knowing well by now that the soul is detached from the body of the wise as lightly as the petal from a rose,—nay, it is truth that Shou Kung had taught him in dreams (but that only as yet) to detach his own spirit so that it might walk free and gather knowledge.

So, finding himself alone with the Princess Djelma he took heart and spoke of love as follows:

"Lady most beautiful and beloved, you have known, as I well believed, that in sitting at the feet of the Master I have learnt another lesson also. I love you with a love that is honourable in will and deed, and though you be a princess and I but a merchant, yet as you know, I have the favour of his Majesty and am constantly about his person. And I am not without reason in saying that I believe my presumption would not displease him. If therefore

you can so think of a simple man instead of a Khan or a great baron, I will be answerable to your trust, and if not I will still kiss your feet."

So, he ceased and the Princess coloured like a maid, and thus replied:

"My Lord, I have no cunning but to speak the truth, and this it is. While we have sat at the feet of the Saint I have put my heart in your hand and in you is all my hope. What is any Khan to me who desire only to tread the Way in love and peace. And it is in my mind that you and I shall tread that way together."

So he kissed her hands and then her face, and they took great joy the one in the other until the sun began to descend in a quiet of golden glory.

Then she rose and taking Messer Marco they went together to the chamber of scented woods where the Venerable One lay as though dead—in a quiet sleep for neither his breath nor his heart stirred at all. And as Messer Marco looked at him the water stood in his eyes for he loved the old man as a son should love a father,—but the Princess smiled, resting absolutely upon his word that he would return at eventide.

So they knelt by him, hand in hand, as watchers, yet speaking softly of the nobility and worth that was in him, and his sight clear as a precious diamond to follow the truth. And Messer Marco said:

"Beloved, he will bless our marriage and we shall learn of him the way to become divine, for this, I perceive, is the inmost meaning of his faith as in that wherein I was born. But, as it seems to me, he lives even more immediately in the Presence and the marvels are ever about him."

So, as the sun sank, they saw a trembling pass over the old man's body, beginning at his feet, and it passed over him like a rippling when the tide rises, until it reached his eyes, and the lids fluttered awhile and presently he looked at them as he lay, but as yet had not breathed, nor his heart stirred.

And now, behold a very great marvel, for suddenly the breath issued visibly from his nostrils like a little cloud, and in the cloud were seen the appearance of the Three Buddhas that yet are One. And even as they looked the appearance passed and he sat up, and said smiling:

"I am returned, and the man for whom I went has entered the Way,—and now what tidings of my son and royal daughter."

Still kneeling they told him all, and he looked upon them wistfully saying—

"In this life it cannot be, nor could it in lives past, for looking back into the former births I see two lives that touched and severed. Most surely they will one day draw together and be one, but not yet."

And the Princess with the tears flowing from her eyes, said—

"Venerable One, when?"

And he—

"This, as yet I have not seen. It shall be told."

But Messer Marco, grieved to the very heart's core of him, yet hoping, rose and went forth and sought the presence of the Great Khan.

And he sat on his throne of gold and jade, robed in purple, with suns and eyes and gold dragons with emerald scales wrought upon the purple, and a tire with hanging pearls bound about his brows, and his white beard combed and tied with gold lying upon his breast, for he was fresh from receiving the Barons of outermost Cathay that had come on an embassage. And the great Hall was of beaten gold.

Very awful in majesty was the Grand Sire, with the carved sceptre of grey jade across his knees,—yet, seeing Messer Marco, he called to him kindly and bade him sit beneath the throne and all others draw out of earshot that he might hear of his journey. So Messer Marco, relying on his Majesty's favour first besought hearing, and laid before him all that had befallen with the Brilliant Lady, and then bowing his head awaited what might befall, fearing the thunders, for who shall judge the temper of Kings? And instead came a smiling sunshine, for the Grand Khan laid the jade sceptre on his shoulder and spoke:

"My son, it is now seventeen years since you served me first, and in that time have I found no spot nor blemish in your service. The truth have you spoken and my true liegeman have you been by night and day, and of this I am not unmindful. Now the Brilliant Lady is near kin to me through the Queen my wife,—yet that shall be no let. A great and rich dowry shall she have and you shall dwell in the Autumn pavilion beside me, and continue to be my eyes and my ears in the uttermost parts of my dominions."

Who but Messer Marco rejoiced and praised the bounty of the Emperor, seeing this future of his love assured. Well content was he, for he had left his native land when but a lad of seventeen years, so that all his heart and hopes were in the land of Cathay, nor did he desire return to Europe.

And thanking and blessing the great Emperor, he told these tidings next day to his father Messer Niccolo.

Now Messer Niccolo and Messer Maffeo had long had it in their minds to return to Venice. They were old men, and their hearts were with their own people and not only this, but they had fear when his Majesty, now fallen heavily in years, should pass to his reward, another Emperor might arise

who knew them not, who indeed might bear them enmity for the favour that Kubla Khan had borne them. Also, looking to the long and terrible journey, they knew well that very soon their failing limbs would forbid it, and they must lay their bones in Cathay afar from their own people.

So all this, with weeping tears, they set before Messer Marco, entreating him not to forsake them, who should be the staff of their age, but for all they said they could not move him, for the Brilliant Lady and none other filled his thoughts, and very certainly he knew that the Great Khan would never give permission for his going. And this discourse was between father and son for a week and more, and still each held by his own. So Messer Marco, tossed in mind like a thistledown in the wind, sought the Scented Chamber where the Brilliant Lady sat with Shou Kung, she robed in green of the colour of jade exceeding rich with seed pearls, and herself lustrous and white as a Queen-pearl in the greenest deeps of ocean; and to them Messer Marco opened his heart, protesting strongly his will to stay.

So the Lady looked up in the face of the Teacher, expectant of instruction, and he spoke:

"My son, who can strive against what is decreed? Very certainly you will go with your father and uncle, and how should it be otherwise, for you have been a son perfect in duty; it is in the day of difficulty that love and obedience are tried."

"Father, if I go I will return."

"My son, you will return no more. Not here is your work nor here unification with the Divine. The knowledge which in India is called Yoga—signifying union with the Supreme, gives lucidity to my sight, and I know (for I have seen) that your life lies elsewhere. Therefore rebel not, but with painful hands gather up your will and offer it to the great Will, nobly agreeing with necessity."

And the Princess was silent, scarcely breathing, and Messer Marco said:

"I cannot."

And the Saint:

"This is the secret of Yoga, and the Way of Peace. But take this for truth. By a happening that is yet to come this Lady shall go with you. For her work lies also across the sea in a strange land—though not yours."

And even while they looked, he was no longer with them for he could come and go most strangely beyond all man's knowledge.

For a time they could not comfort one another, but at last the Princess weeping, said:

“Beloved, obedience is the luminous pearl held in the hand of the Buddha of Boundless light.”

Now very shortly after these things, a mighty embassage came from the Khan of Persia, great nephew to his Majesty; and the Chief Baron bore a sealed letter of which none knew the secret, but when the Emperor had opened it he sent for Messer Marco who came unafraid because it was the custom of the Emperor to ask his counsel, whereof some of the Barons were very jealous. And now he was alone, and on a chair at his feet was seated the Saint, Shou Kung, looking very gravely upon the ground.

So the Emperor, having received Messer Marco with kindness, said this:

“My son, prepare for a pang which if I could I would willingly spare you. Nor blame me, for I can no other—nor could if you were the very son of my body. Thus it is,—the Khan of Persia has lost his Queen who, being an excelling Princess, has departed to the Western Heaven, and this Lady as not wishing her husband to dwell in loneliness desired him straightly to seek one of her kin at our court in marriage.—”

And Messer Marco, seeing what was to come, said, “No—” and put out his hands like one that wards a blow, but the Great Khan continued:

“Of this Queen’s kin the sole one left is the Brilliant Princess; there is no other, and she is noble and beautiful, and the very likeness of the Queen that is gone. Furthermore it is my thought that this Lady may carry with her the mysteries taught by The Immortal (for so he called Shou Kung) and the whole Kingdom be blessed in her coming. Now, learn, my son, that a king’s promise once given is a bond of iron. And the matter is in your hands, to grant or refuse.”

And Messer Marco, kneeling, hid his face, and there was silence, for it pierced his heart that the Emperor who could command, should thus entreat. But still more it pierced his heart to lose his Love. How could he think? He could but feel that the dearer half of him was torn away in his very blood and fibre.

But the Great Khan was silent, watching his bowed head with pitying eyes, and remembering that Princess named the Lustrous Lady who had first won his own soul and had given him his first born son.

Then in the silence of the chamber rose the voice of Shou Kung as from the very heart of quiet:

“My son— You see before you a mountain of Difficulties, and your spirit fails you. Let not your heart be saddened—for so long as it is one with the Divine, no mountain is high—no path is hard. Therefore see—what I see.”

And suddenly again the cloud of Vision enwrapped Messer Marco, and he beheld the Princess in the Persian Palace even as Queen Esther in the Palace of Lilies in Persia in bygone days. Grace and Power shone from her. It was the Khan who held the Sceptre, but she that guided it. The Law of truth was in her lips—the knowledge that should inspire a people. As the Queen whose name was a star, so she—a new star risen in the West—shone upon the palace and the happy land.

And the vision passed, and again the great Monk spoke:

"My son—having seen, would you take this star from the sky to kindle a household fire? Be content, for there are lives many to come,—and I have seen in the white silence of truth, in which time is as nothing, a city sitting upon the sea like a swan, and there one day are you and the Brilliant Lady made one. And yet lives beyond to which that union is as nothing because of the more perfect that is to come." He paused and continued:

"And have I not taught you to come and go in dream, and this lady also, so that no seas, no time shall sever her soul from yours? And she shall be content."

Then Messer Marco rose and stood before the Great Khan with bowed head, saying:

"Majesty, I give back the bond and the promise. Who am I that I should let the purposes of the Supreme! Only this I pray. Since my father and my uncle would return to their home in Venice, let me go also, and let us guard the Princess on her way to her husband. True man have I been; true man I will be,—and who shall guard her like me—who for love's sake give her to another."

And Messer Marco hath told me that the water stood in the Great Khan's eyes as he looked upon him, and he took his hands between his, accepting his fealty and his promise. So they departed later with mighty gifts and tablets of gold from Kubla Khan commanding service and obedience for them wherever they might go. And Marco's father and uncle, rejoicing very greatly, for they knew that otherwise the Khan would never permit them to depart, accepted the trust of the Princess and her women, and they took their leave of the Great Khan who was exceedingly moved upon their departure as knowing he should see their faces no more. Jewels of uttermost price he gave them—such jewels as were not known in the West, priceless in size and colour; and specially he bestowed diamonds, gained in the Kingdom of Mutfili in the mountain valleys. And the stones in the West are but the refuse of these great stones brought to Kubla Khan.

It is hard to write of the parting between the Princess and Shou Kung for she loved him better than any fleshly father, and he her as the child of his spirit. Kneeling before him she hid her face, beseeching that in the watches of the night and toils of the day his presence might be about her as a light to guide her way, and this he promised, and would not leave her, no, not until she with Messer Marco stood on the shore and the ship straining like a hound at her leash to go.

Then, standing apart with them, he said this—

"Son and Daughter, in the sorrows and parting and turmoils to come, remember this, that though you are the children of earth yet the starry sky was your father and therefore your thirst for immortality is its assurance. But not in such ways as have been supposed. Fear nothing therefore unless it be to dim the Divinity in you. And now depart in peace, for you have learnt many glorious secrets and many still remain that shall open to you like the heart of a rose."

So he blessed them, and they embarked, and boarding the ship stood together as the men with rowing steady and strenuous, broke up the quiet surface of the bay.

And as the shore faded still they saw Shou Kung standing alone and looking after them. And so it was until the evening enfolded all and they saw neither him nor the dear land of Cathay any more.

Of the journey little need to write, nor would Messer Marco speak much concerning it. The Princess, secluded among her women, saw him but in the presence of his father and uncle, those two venerable men, and when she saw him she dealt with him as might a beloved sister, kind and sweet. It is true that in her own heart she had been a dedicated recluse until she loved Messer Marco. And now she was a dedicated Queen, and this she accepted as her destiny, and what more was in her heart she hid.

He also, for often across the widening sea came the image and the words of Shou Kung, for his inspiring, and courage and strength were the life blood of his heart—and sore he needed them, for there were perils many and great whereof I may not now tell,—and in all these he bore himself right manly, and as a true soldier of God.

So at the last, after many and strange wanderings they came to the court of Persia, and there found that the Khan of Persia was dead and Kaikhatu reigned in his stead. But his son Ghazan earnestly desiring to wed the Brilliant Princess, and being a man of a clean spirit and worthy, she consented,—and on a certain day the wedding was made, and she parted, weeping very bitterly from those three noble Venetians who had been her

strength and consolation during the years of their pilgrimage. And to each she gave gifts, but in the hand of Messer Marco she laid a scroll picture of the Wisdom of God that in Cathay is called Kwan Yin, which Holy Spirit looking down upon a ship and breathing as the wind upon her sails, wafts the ship to the Heaven of Peace.

And this picture, drawn out very nobly upon silk, have I often seen.

And she spoke these words, smiling angelical through tears:

"Farewell in the Unity of the Divine, until in that Unity we meet again."

So she departed into the inner Palace and they saw her no more.

And with one more marvel, I who have written of many, conclude.

Many years had gone by. The tumults of his life were over, and Messer Marco lay dying—and I who loved him had often the privilege to be by his bedside and to hear his memories of the days long past. It was many years since the news had reached him of the death of the Brilliant Princess in Persia—and he had had no word from her since they parted, nor, as I think, expected any. For she was a great Queen.

Now, on a certain evening, he was left alone, very low in body with the near approach of death, but clear in mind as I can surely testify. The sun had set and a soft twilight filled the room and we were alone. Yet—most strangely not alone, for suddenly I beheld a lady standing by him, not habited in the manner of our Venetian ladies who go very splendid like the wives of kings, for this had a robe falling to her feet in such lines as painters use for the Madonna. Her face was calm as twilight and her hair I could not see because a grey drapery was thrown about her head. So she stood by him not speaking, and presently I was aware that a man in a yellow robe stood at the other side, steadfastly regarding Messer Marco, whose head silvered with age was upon the pillow; and, stooping, the lady laid her hand upon his brow and he opened his eyes, and looking up he smiled at her, saying:

"In the Unity we parted, in the Unity we meet, and it has not been absence, for what dream have I had that has not set me at your feet."

And she, very tenderly, spoke in a tongue that I knew not.

But he knew.

And lo! a star shone in the air and filled the room with brightness and Messer Marco said in a low voice, but clearly:

"I have seen His Star in the East," but what he meant I knew not, nor if these were Our Blessed Lady and San Marco, which is to be hoped, or the Princess of his youth and that great Teacher whose presence was most certainly about him all his life.

But I knelt, being in the presence of the Mighty, and when again I raised my head, they had departed, and Messer Marco slept, but the sleep was death.

Nor do I fear because he departed suddenly and unassoiled, for I had known many things from him and this in especial, that death is not as we have thought but far other and . . .

(Here the MS. ends abruptly.)

FROM THE APE TO THE BUDDHA

AN OLD CHINESE STORY OF THE MIND OF MAN

I HAVE AMONG my possessions a book most wise and wonderful. It is Chinese, but my copy is the first edition of an old Japanese translation, enriched with quaint wood-cuts of the Ape hero as he climbs from the beast to the Buddha, in other words, from the lower to the higher mind, in a fashion which most singularly anticipates the science of the present day. It presents a Buddhist and Taoist theory of life and in the western world is scarcely known except to a few scholars. When was it written? That is a most interesting point. I have made searching inquiries in China and Japan, and the following is what I have learnt.

The reputed author was a saintly monk, named Ch'iu Ch'u Chi. The mighty conqueror Genghis Khan, lord of nearly half the human race, heard of his virtues and wisdom and summoned him from his seclusion to a conference at the Snow Mountain in the year 1221 A.D. The old man, who had already refused the invitation of an Emperor, made a long and perilous journey to the meeting-place, attended by disciples. Fearless of the sovereign before whom the world trembled, he preached a doctrine so noble that, though it utterly condemned his life of conquest and slaughter, the fierce Mongol listened in wonder and delight. He conferred upon the Teacher the title of "The Perfect Man."

This is historical. It is reputed that after the return from this meeting his disciple, Li Chih Chang, wrote this book. There are certainly points in the Ape's history which may well have been suggested by the terrible Genghis Khan.

Some Japanese scholars, however, assert that it was written by one or other of two famous Chinese writers of romances who flourished between the years 1280 and 1367 A.D. In either case, a very respectable antiquity.

In Japan and Korea this book is a classic throughout the length and breadth of the land; so more than one Japanese scholar has assured me. It was first translated into Japanese in the year 1806, and three times afterwards, and a Japanese Professor in one of the Universities writes to me: "You may hear the name of the hero from any schoolboy or girl in this country." Should not such a book be known in the West? It is a vast

storehouse for story and drama; it has furnished subjects for countless pictures. The Hon. Mrs. Gordon discovered valuable frescoes from it in the Diamond Facing-South Temple in Korea. Pictures of the same subjects abound in Japan. At Pong-len-ssa in Korea parts of it have been acted as a Mystery Play for the last five hundred years. In Japan and Korea it is believed to embody the highest spiritual truth, in spite of interludes of comedy and broad humour running into farce as in the Christian Mystery Plays of medieval times. Singularly enough the book is not esteemed by Chinese scholars. The Hsi Yu Chi (its Chinese name) is an allegory founded on the actual and wonderful pilgrimage of a famous monk, Hiuen Tsang, from China to India in the year 629 A.D. in search of the true teaching of the Buddha in his native land. This motif is used in the later book as a parable of the spiritual pilgrimage. It may be that the Chinese mind, highly practical and in some ways matter of fact, does not take very kindly to allegory. It may be that having the actual travels of the great monk Hiuen Tsang, it stigmatizes this wonderful divertissement on his adventures as a mere fairy tale and burlesque to be dismissed as unworthy the attention of scholars. There is even a saying in China to the effect that

> "Reading in the Hsi Yu Chi
> Never will make a man of thee."

Such certainly was also the opinion of the learned in England when Bunyan produced the Pilgrim's Progress beside which I should set this strange Chinese book, and I would say as Bunyan says in his rhymed preface to his immortal Allegory:

> "This book will make a traveller of thee,
> If by its counsels thou wilt ruled be;
> It will direct thee to the Holy Land,
> If thou wilt its directions understand.
> Art thou for something rare and profitable;
> Or wouldst thou see a truth within a fable?
> Then read my fancies; they will stick like burrs,
> And may be, to the helpless, comforters."

I work from the translation which Dr. Timothy Richard, the well-known missionary to China, made of a part of it, the part concerned with the adventures of the Ape. His scholarship was highly esteemed by the Chinese Government, and he held an important post in one of their Universities. He was rewarded with a mandarinate with the Red Button of the highest class, and (posthumously) the Order of the Double Dragon.

The length of the book obliges me to keep to the thread of the story of the ascent of the Mind of Man from Apehood to Buddhahood. By the author of this book the history of man is not regarded as a fall from some original perfection and obedience, but as a long and toilsome upward climb from the chaotic and primeval, from the Ape to the Man, from the Man to the Divine.

The conception and execution of this idea I find of absorbing interest. But let others judge of what is set forth, remembering the approximate date of its authorship.

The first scene of the story concerns itself with Creation. Chaos and darkness reign supreme. Light follows; the solids combine into water, fire, and earth. Law is established in place of confusion. In the sea is a great mountain, and on its summit a "Living Stone," animated by the highest forces of nature, of earth, and heaven. This on a predestined day splits asunder and produces a stone egg, and, after exposure to the air, this becomes a Stone Ape, able to creep and run. Gradually becoming conscious, he turns and bows to the four points of the compass, his eyes glowing with light, the rays of which penetrate even to the seat of God in His heavenly palace. God takes pity on the grotesque creature and says: "That far object below is the living principle of life in the Universe." And this is the Mind of Man!

Time went by and the strange light of the Ape's eyes was dimmed. He lived the ordinary life of an ape, feeding on fruits and playing in the wood with troops of other apes. Sometimes, drawing apart, he would sit and watch the rush of the mountain stream, until on a certain day all the apes cried out: "Where does this stream come from? Let us find the source."

They sought long and with ape-like curiosity, and found at last a waterfall issuing from a great cave which none dared enter, until at last the Stone Ape volunteered, and, leaping through the waterfall and the cave, discovered "The Happy Fruit and Flower Garden." The apes, following, took possession, and the Stone Ape became the Beautiful Ape King, and the whole troop entered upon an era of animal plenty and enjoyment.

There seemed no reason why this state of things should not last for ever, but let it be remembered that the Ape King was the child of heaven as well as of earth, and that one keen drop was spilt into the cup which marred its sweetness. One day, when feasting with all his people, the Ape King wept, and, seeing, the astonished apes asked the cause of his grief.

"Although I have been happy, now I dread the future," was all he could say.

But this looking before and after was more than his careless people could understand. There was food, there was sunshine, there was freedom from all restraint—what more could any ape desire? What was there to fear?

"Old age and Death," replied the King.

And at these terrible unknown words all the apes covered their faces and wept. And at last a strong ape leaped forth and cried in a great voice: "This sorrow is the beginning of life. Of all wonders in the world, three are the strongest—the Buddhas—the Enlightened; the Immortals; and the Confucian deities; for these do not die."

And the Ape King demanded: "Where do these live?" and the ape replied: "In the world after death. In the ancient depths of the Eternal Mountain."

So the next day the Ape King, laying down his careless joy, went forth in a far search for the Unknown.

In the course of long years he learnt the manners and language of a man, but his heart was the ape's heart as he still wandered in search of an immortality of ape-like bliss. Very fierce, very sensuous was he, with all the instincts of the brute strong upon him, yet with a gleam of something responsive, something of the very far-off Divine which he himself understood not at all. What teacher could he find?

At last, after long years' journeying, he reached the Cave of the Slanting Moon and Three Stars, and heard that a great teacher known as Wisdom dwelt there and was awaiting a student known as the Truth-Seeker. He was permitted to enter.

Here also Wisdom hath builded her palaces, for the Ape was guided through corridor after corridor, between high places of rose marble and towering gates of splendour—a strange figure in such a school!—to where Wisdom sat enthroned and below him his thirty disciples ranged in order. And here the author pauses to describe that Wisdom:

> "His years are eternal as the heavens,
> All-glorious is his form.
> Wisdom endureth through all the ages,
> For he is the Teacher of Law."

And, seeing that fear is the beginning of wisdom, before that glory the brutish figure prostrated himself and, knocking his head upon the earth, besought instruction, while the Master considered his unlikely pupil. Questions were asked, and in great anxiety the Ape reported his strange birth, and again the Master considered. At last the decision was made.

“You are certainly a child of the Divine Power which is above nature. As yet you have no name. I will give you a name.”

And the Ape King, laughing for joy, was received as a pupil, and received also the name that was to mark his place in the world. Henceforth he is Sun, the Searcher of Secrets.

The Ape had now become the Thinker, but to what use should his new powers be applied? He himself was clear on that point. To the avoidance of the hateful victory of old age and death—to the securing of an ape’s immortality of pleasure. Various sciences were proposed to him by the Master, but the Searcher only replied: “Will these teach me how to avoid old age?” and when the Master replied: “This they cannot do,” the Searcher declined them all. At last, after long beseeching, Wisdom revealed the way.

There are three primal forces—Sex, Mind, and Spirit. The right understanding of these three is the road to immortal life, but it is beset by the three perils which only the wisest can escape. The Ape, lusting for immortality, proud of his knowledge, essayed them, and by the greatest he fell, and was condemned to return to his people once more, but carrying with him the tidings of this strange knowledge which as yet he knew not how to use. They hailed his return with delight, for in his rise they all had risen. All claimed the right he had won for them. They were now of the tribe of the Seekers.

> “One family are we now (they cried):
> We are all adopted into the House of Heaven.”

Let me pause and ask if this parable can be excelled as a picture of the clod instinct with the spark which is the Mind of Man? Is there such an allegory elsewhere? The other great teachers have taken man where they found him in his pride of place. This writer dives into the dim beginnings of reason and spirit.

The task was but begun. The Searcher, having now perceived the power of knowledge, armed himself with weapons of terrible force. He dived beneath the sea and conquered the ancient Rulers, wresting their wealth from them. He soared to the clouds. He dreamed that he entered the Infernal Regions and was victorious over the Lords of Death and Hell; and though this last was but an empty dream, it was real to his pride. But mighty as were now his weapons, his nature was still unchanged. Riotously, cruelly, brutally, he used his strength, and it became clear that the downfall of the world was at hand unless the Searcher of Secrets, gifted with knowledge but far from the paths of wisdom, could be subjected to the Law.

Then to the Supreme, seated in the Golden Palace of Clouds in a strange Chinese heaven with His Ministers, His Princes, and Rulers of Departments about Him (a heaven modelled on the Court of the Emperors in China) came the bitter cry of the oppressed earth and sea, and a memorial was presented by the Dragon Ruler of the Sea. It is couched in exactly the same terms as a subject prince, prostrate before the Throne, would have used in addressing the Son of Heaven: "Your humble Dragon-Master memorializes the Sacred Sovereign of High Heaven"—and then followed the recital of the Searcher's violence, and the appeal for redress. Redress was instantly promised, and the Dragon King (dragons in China are always associated with water) kowtowed and departed. Complaints from the Prince of Hades and many more succeeded to this. Clearly the Searcher was a dangerous, blusterous being whom none could restrain. All desired vengeance and punishment. What should be done? But the ways of the Supreme are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. No flash of lightning struck the rebel; he was bidden to an audience in heaven. It was then thought by the Ministers that the mere sight of the Divine might strike terror to his turbulent soul, and all might end well. The Divine meditated but kept His own counsel, and the Searcher was invited, the message being prepared by the Angel of the Literary Star.

Now follows a description of the Heavenly Courts, burning in splendours. The Searcher, haughty and unquelled, marched after the guiding Angel through glorious light in myriad rays, forms of iridescent cloud, and a golden city of radiance. Whether it were that something cried in his soul that he was native to these pomps, whether he regarded them as trappings hiding the Essential, he did not disclose, but he strode like a king into the Presence and stood proudly erect while all else fell upon their faces. "Why," cried all the Heavenly Ministers, "does not the wild Ape do obeisance? Why does he roughly answer, 'It is I, old Sun the Searcher'? Why should he not be killed?"

His august Majesty replied: "The Searcher is but newly a man. How can he understand Court etiquette?" It appeared indeed that the Deity did not take so much account as his Ministers of form and ceremony, for He continued: "We forgive him. He shall have a post in the Heavenly Court. See which is vacant, for this man must serve us."

And behold! the only vacant position was that of Master of the Wild Horses—the lowest position of all. He was simply and solely to look after the wild animals. After a brief trial the Searcher rushed from the Heavenly Courts in a furious anger. What!—be a herder of animals, he who had dreamed of Deity? Better be a King among apes than a servitor in heaven.

So he returned to his apes and their sympathy. “A King become a stable boy? Let us drink and forget the insult!” they cried. And in wrath and now open rebellion he assumed the title, “The Great Holy One, The Equal of Heaven.” In other words, he was now Swinburne’s “Great God Man, which is God.” So old is the cry of defiance!

And now the Great Victorious Spirit was sent to arrest the rebel, and was not victorious. He was received with threats, curses, and battle. Apparently the Mind of Man is unconquerable by warfare. The Celestial Ministers were confounded. Again the Supreme meditated, and an ambassador was sent to the Searcher with the tidings that his rights were recognized. He should enter upon the position of “The Holy One, The Equal of Heaven,” at once. He shall try his strength in the manner he himself has chosen. Nothing daunted, the Ape King faced the Supreme with unbroken pride, conscious of victory. Replying only, “I thank you,” he entered upon his great position with perfect self-confidence.

Needless to say, ruinous failure followed. Wild with power, he gorged the Peaches of Immortality, he drank himself drunk with the Wine of Heaven, he outraged all the sacred customs which have stood from eternity. And the end of it was that utter terror of himself and all his doings seized him.

“If the Celestial Ruler is disturbed, I fear for my life. Let me go, Go, GO! It is better for me to be a King on earth.”

And once more he returned to his apes. Clearly the Searcher was fit neither for the lower nor the higher power, nor did he find heaven at all a congenial abode. Was he then to have the ape’s heart all his days, armed with the terrors of knowledge, omnipotent for all but that Achilles’ heel of old age and death?

War great and furious ensued, but the knowledge of the Ape was a match apparently for the heavenly host. Or so it was believed on earth.

And then a mystic figure emerged—Kwanyin (in Japanese, Kwannon), the Merciful Spirit of God. With her waters of baptism, with her asperging willow spray, she averred that she could tame the wild nature, and make the Ape surrender himself to the influences of the Spirit.

Yes, but not yet. The Baptism with fire must precede the Baptism with water. The catechumen is ready for the first, but not for the second. And the Holy Spirit, abiding her time, stood aside.

For now was brought a very terrible weapon—the Diamond Circle, or Ring, with which “the Huns have been civilized into Buddhas”—a frightful calamity of blood and ruin. It was flung upon the Ape King, and he fell

conquered, raging, unconquered in soul, and was flung into the Fiery Crucible, broken by the energizing power of God at last, but still utterly defiant. And here the author pauses and comments:

> "This history of the Ape is a deep parable.
> Man is the Great Holy One and Heaven's peer,
> But for this the Horse and the Ape, the heart and mind, must
> be subdued.
> For true life there is but one Law,
> Even that Man should become One with his True Example."

The Example? That is God made Flesh. The Buddha, the Christ of Asia, who in his Divinity has lived and suffered as Man amongst men. The Ape had tried conclusions with Power. He was now to try conclusions with Love.

So, having broken his way out of the crucible, he was brought before the Incarnate by the Thunder Generals, raging and blaspheming. He shouted aloud: "Who are you?"—and the Buddha, smiling from his impenetrable peace, replied that he had come from the Paradise of that God in whom is Boundless Light—Praise be to Him!

But for this the Ape had no ear. He broke into the recital of his own power:

> "I practised all arts to be immortal;
> Hating the poor span of human life
> I fixed my heart on joining the divine Gods.
> If others have succeeded, why not I?"

And still the untroubled Buddha listened to the tirade of raging pride: "If you are so great, O Searcher—if all power is yours—stand on the palm of my Hand and leap out of it. If you succeed, sit on the throne of Heaven and rule. If you fail, go humbly away and learn the Truths."

So it was agreed. The Searcher could not doubt the result—he who had stormed the sea and sky—how should he fail? Therefore he took his station on the Hand and leaped.

Now he is rushing through the clouds, away—away! The Buddha is a small and lessening figure. Who is he to control the Equal of Heaven? What shall bound the glory of the pride of Man? The abysses open before him, and still he roars through a subject Universe. Arrogance is loud in his heart. And now the task is accomplished—he has reached the limits of Light and the Eternal Dark, and before him are the Five Pillars that separate them. The Buddha shall know he is conquered, and upon one Pillar he writes his name in token of Victory—"The great Holy One, The Equal of Heaven," and upon

another, in sign of his contempt, he leaves a hateful mark of his presence, and so returns shouting with triumph to the Hand.

And still with his impenetrable smile the All-Wise replied: “You have never left my Hand.”

And on the base on one finger was found written the Ape’s boast, and on the other the hateful mark of his apish contempt. Man may rush through space; he may affront the Dawn and the Sunset, but he is still within the circumference of God.

Beaten, baffled, at last humbled, he was now condemned to lie crushed beneath the weight of the hand of Incarnate Love. He was laid beneath the great mountain of the Five Fingers, and there he lay suffering until the Day of Deliverance.

Meanwhile the Holy Spirit had inspired the Emperor of China, T’ai-Tsung (a real historical figure, and greatest of the T’ang dynasty), by means of a journey through Heaven and Hell, to despatch a mission to Heaven in search of the Scriptures which should illuminate mankind. This incident is founded on the fact I have already mentioned that in the reign of this Emperor, the famous Buddhist priest Hiuen Tsang (modern spelling Yuen Chang) had made his pilgrimage to India across the frightful deserts and mountains, in search of the Buddhist Scriptures for the teaching of China, and our author thus allegorizes the true story. A pilgrim, named from this great man, Yuen Chang, is chosen to set forth on the tremendous quest. But he will need servitors, humble, loyal and strong, to aid him through the dangers, natural and supernatural. Who should they be?

The Spirit of God knew what was determined. She hastened to the mountain, knowing what strength must be harnessed for the salvation of mankind. The Ape could not move, for the weight of the Hand upon him; but he could speak, and his voice was a cry: “O merciful Kwanyin, a day in this place is as a year. I have lain alone five hundred years. Pity me and I will lead a new life.”

So he was told that if he would engage, not as a King, not as a Prince of Heaven, but as the servant of the Pilgrim, the servant of man, there was hope, and to this he thankfully pledged himself.

I wish I might tell the Vision of the Emperor, but this deserves separate treatment. Made wise by his dreadful experience, the Emperor sent forth the Pilgrim, and the mission proceeded on its way. This section is introduced by these remarkable lines:

"The spark of life within and without is ever the same.
In an atom is the whole Kingdom of God.
In one grain are numberless worlds.
There is but one principle in soul and body.
He who knows this must follow the mystery of nature."

The Pilgrim, Yuen Chang, now approached the Mount of Purgatory, where the Ape lay groaning. The cry of his torment filled the air like thunder: "O my Master, you have come, you have come!"

My Master! It was a new cry for the Ape King, the Equal of Heaven! The Pilgrim, having authority, opened his prison; he was released, and once more he stood in the sunlight—no more the Equal of Heaven, no more the Searcher of Secrets: all that vainglory had gone by. For the Quest he received a new name and a humble one. Henceforth he is Sun, the Practical One, and all the intellectualism which swept the earth and sky was to be harnessed to the lowliest uses of the service of man.

They met a tiger, and Sun slew it and made a robe of the skin to keep his Master warm. After the tiger they met with six thieves—Mr. Eye, who loved change; Mr. Ear, who was swift to anger; Mr. Nose, who smelt love; Mr. Tongue, the glutton; Mr. Thought, the covetous; and Mr. Sad, the malcontent; and all these fell on Sun and beat him cruelly. He worsted them in the end, but appealed to his Master: "If you cannot beat these off, how do you expect to see God?"

And the Pilgrim thought awhile, and then replied:

"O disciple, when shall we see the Incarnate face to face!"—the heart's cry of many men and ages! But the Ape also has his dream of God, as we now observe. The Beatific Vision is his quest, and the life lost for the saving of others his road.

For again, when the way was dark and troubles increased and multiplied, the Master cried out:

"There is a mountain of difficulties ahead. We must be careful." And it was Sun the Practical who replied: "Master, do not be over-anxious. So long as our hearts are right with God there cannot be any serious trouble." Can this be the Ape of the rebellious pride? No, it is Sun the Practical, the clear-eyed, who at last perceives the Essential. Not perfect by any means, but with his foot set on the Mount of Vision. One cannot achieve instant perfection—no, not though one has lain in the hand of God. In his very zeal for the Quest he is sometimes merciless and mistaken; and at last, in his despair at this turbulent servant who is yet so full of love and valour, the Pilgrim appeals to the Holy Kwanyin, and she provides a Hat of Spikes for Sun—a sort of

Crown of Thorns, which will pierce him to the brain when he transgresses. And so, armed with the pangs of Conscience, they go on their way.

It is impossible I should tell the story of the Quest, for the book is twice as long as the New Testament and enriched with many marvels and digressions. One must be well acquainted with Buddhist and Far Eastern thought to follow many parts of it. Nor can I deal with the two lesser servitors. The terrible dangers; the passionate loyalty of Sun, who could do nothing by halves; the rage and zeal which, overstepping all bounds, were followed often by the Crown of Thorns—all these I must pass by.

At last Sun has learnt his lesson. Humble, faithful, devoted, influenced in all things by the Holy Spirit, Kwanyin, he attends the Pilgrim until they reach the Beautiful Land, and before them stands a great House, and above this the Spiritual Mountain, crowned with the Light of the presence of the Incarnate. A voice greets them: "Is not this the Royal Ambassador from the East in search of the Holy Writings?"—and they behold an Immortal of heavenly beauty who awaits them at the Gate. Many years he has waited their coming. Tea and food are ordered for the weary ones, and grateful thanks are offered. A fragrant bath is prepared that they may sleep in peace and recover their vigour for the steep ascent of the Holy Hill. Great is their joy, for they believe that all the trials are ended. But there is one more. Suddenly, as they climb, is seen before them a great and terrible river—a stream of living water indeed, but three miles wide, and roaring down in flood; and how to pass it they know not. In this high allegory it will be seen that the river of Death is also that living water which flows from the Paradise—a strangely beautiful conception.

Even the Pilgrim's high courage is daunted, but Sun fears nothing. There is a bridge—a dangerous bridge of rotting trees, and, though the Pilgrim holds back, Sun runs across laughing. The ape-nature, surviving in him in its higher aspect—its hold on natural things—sends him rejoicing along the breaking Bridge of Dread. "My father was Heaven and my mother was Earth," he says of himself. How then, should he fear? But the Pilgrim dares not to follow; he lingers trembling on the brink and Sun returns to him. And, as they dispute, they see a Pilot on a broken raft, drifting down stream. It is the Founder of Buddhism, but this they cannot tell. He invites them to enter that they may cross the terrible river, but the Master fears very greatly. The broken raft—the perilous flood—how can this be possible to human flesh and blood? But Sun steadfastly encourages him—(the Mind of Man unconquerable and purified in Death) and the Pilot cries aloud:

"Safe is my raft.
Though it is weak it can cross an ocean.
Many are the souls it has ferried."

Sun the Practical is at last content. He urges his Master forward, and, in so doing, pushes him into the River whence the Pilot, stretching a strong hand, rescues him. They take their seats on the crazy planks and the Angelic Boat gently moves forward into the great deeps, and the earth they know is left behind.

And now a very beautiful episode. A dead body drifts by them, and the Master looks upon it in awe and fear, for surely he knows his own worn features? And Sun, always before him now in apprehension, says "Yes, Master do not fear. That body is none other than your own." And the Pilot says also, "Joy is yours. That is your body." Thus mercifully, unconsciously, had the knot been loosed in the waters of the River, and when the Master lands on the farther shore, it is as one set free from the fetters of the flesh.

So rejoicing they gain the shore which seemed so distant, and the Pilot and the raft are seen no more, and in quiet they go their way to meet the welcome of the Great Cherubim, and the author comments:

"Now is the work finished and the Soul become divine.
To reach the shore of Eternity is the highest wisdom."

And now, at last, they enter the Great Hero Hall and are presented before the seat of the Incarnate, and falling on their faces do worship; and Kwanyin, the Holy Spirit, who has guided them through all their perils, rejoices in their joy, and their eyes have beheld the King in his beauty and have seen the Land that is very far off.

To their custody is given the great Scripture for the salvation of mankind. This is the great reward of all their anguish. And to each is given a new name—the last of the names that have marked the falls and struggles of the Ape King. The Pilgrim is sanctified as The Buddha of Sweet Incense. The Hat of Spikes is removed from the servitor, and he becomes the Strong Man of the Kingdom—The Buddha Victorious in War. Also (delightful touch) the white horse who has borne the baggage throughout the weary journey is not forgotten—how should he be in the Land where all find their true home?—and he is canonized as Chief over the Eight Boards of the Dragons of Heaven. There is room for him too in the Many Mansions.

And the book ends thus—with a great anthem in heaven. For all the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas (the Lovers and Helpers of mankind), the saints, the deities, the spirits and angels, folding their hands, united their voices and sang these words—which indeed are well worthy of study, for in their

magnificent catholicity they prefigure that great Church, that mighty Communion of Saints, of which the faint dawn now pierces the night:

> "We take refuge
> In the Ancient God who created Light,
> In the God of Pure Joy,
> In Him who hath no darkness,
> In Varuna (the Heaven-God of the Vedas),
> In Brahma the Creator,
> In Him who is boundless mercy,
> In the Messiah,
> In Him who goes about doing good,
> In Him who is the Lamp of the World,
> In Kwanyin,
> In Mohammed of the great Sea,
> In all the saints of Paradise,
> In all the Angels who serve the sacred Altar,
> In all the mighty Powers throughout the universe."

I give only a part of the New Song—a song so new that we have not as yet gained even a little knowledge of the harmony it proclaims. But that it prefigures a spheral music none may doubt.

This is a book which raises questions of the deepest interest. There are many wonderful coincidences between Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity which cannot be lightly set aside. If these two from the year 100 A.D. and onward coalesce at so many points, if they can be traced in important teachings to a common source, may it not be that in some future not utterly to be despaired of, the world may see mighty truths emerge from a union of the greatest faiths and philosophies of all time? To men of goodwill the bridge is less difficult to cross than that broken trunk which Sun, the Enlightened mind of Man, risked so fearlessly, and the reward of such an understanding greater than thought can at present conceive.

It is a curious fact that in the ruins of Shang-tu (the Xanadu of Coleridge's great poem) was found the remains of a monument erected by Kublai Khan the famous grandson of Genghis Khan to a great Buddhist abbot. The inscription on it runs thus:

"Monument conferred by the Emperor of the August Yuen Dynasty in memory of his High Eminence Yun Hien, styled Chang-Lao, canonized as Shou Kung, the Prince of Longevity."

Thus he followed the example of his ancestor in the respect he paid to a Teacher of a faith not his own. I have used this interesting fact in a story,

“The Marvels of Xanadu,” in this volume.

Here at all events is a Far Eastern rendering of the great adventure of the upward struggle of man. It accepts, as does the Egyptian myth of the Orphic Mysteries the double parentage of man:

> “Lord, though I lived on earth, the child of earth,
> Yet was I fathered by the starry sky.”

The seed of immortality is in the very stone; it is the egg whence is produced the winged thing that yet shall outsoar the stars. But he shall not forget his lowly origin. He shall wear and endure his scars. Thus, in the Orphic Mysteries, the soul is forbidden to drink of the Well of Oblivion, for nothing of the long pilgrimage shall be forgotten. It shall stand by the Lake of Memory, appealing to its divine ancestry: “My race is of heaven; this you know,” and its thirst shall be slaked with the cold water flowing from that divine source.

I find this allegory in some respects even more interesting than Bunyan’s, because its outlook is higher and deeper. It is more philosophic, if a little less human. It is the work of a scholar and a poet, a man who had surveyed the world with keen eyes and according to great opportunities. It is unfettered by the narrow implications and individualism of Calvinistic teaching. The Pilgrimage of the Ape is not for his own personal salvation though that is a consequence. It is the example of the life laid down and the immortal gain. It presents an answer to some of the negations of modern thought. It is also not the least of the great gifts which the ancient wisdom of China has yet to offer to the Western World.

THE SORROW OF THE QUEEN

A STORY IN BURMA

WE had done many delightful things together in Burma—Maung Hkin and I. He was a Burmese student, gay as a dragon-fly, in a beautiful, rose silk skirt wrapped tightly about a slender, athletic body, a snow-white cotton jacket, and a brilliant rose-pink *yaung-baung* (handkerchief) knotted round his black hair. His face was ardent, glad, yet with a haunting shade of melancholy in repose. He spoke English well, though he had never left Burma, and our friendship had begun in my seeing a volume of Swinburne's poems in his hand as he struggled earnestly to assimilate the neo-paganism of that astonishing genius. I felt that an intimacy with Dolores and Faustina could scarcely lead to a better understanding with Ma San Yun and the other charming little *meinkales* among whom his life would be spent, and that Miss Scented Needle would probably have a happier home with one whose studies had been arrested on the threshold of these discoveries. So I suggested books of a milder vintage, and that opening led to much that was of interest to us both and to a most illuminating companionship for me.

Together we visited the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, springing like a golden flame to the height of 368 feet among its flame-bright trees. Holy and most holy, to it come all the Buddhist pilgrims of the world, for in its inmost heart lie hidden relics of the four earthly Buddhas—the staff of Kawkathan, the water filter of Gawnagong, the robe of Kathapa and eight hairs of the Gautama Buddha. Surely the most gorgeous shrine of all the earth, covered with thin plates of gold up to the jewelled *htee* swimming in the blue air aloft! The original shrine is said to have been built in 585 B.C., but who can think of anything so cold as chronology amid such colour and glory? We stood upon the noble platform before the towering golden pinnacles of the many shrines, each holding its calm image of the Blessed One—images from China, from Tibet, from all the countries of the faithful, and the ardent green of the trees framed them with waving grace, and the happy people came and went and made their homage about us, and they and all the day overflowed with sunshine and joy.

"And now," said Maung Hkin, "it is fitting that we make an offering to the Lord Buddha. Thus is merit acquired and blessing gained. You think?"

I did not doubt, and we proceeded to buy our flowers from the heaped masses of fragrance sold on the steps ascending in flights and pauses from where the great leogryphs sixty feet in height guard the portals with their noble grotesque. We bought also a bunch of tiny tapers and little green and gold sticks with which to light them, and with all these we approached the central Buddha, majestic in peace. The attendant lit the tapers from the burning rows with out sticks and set them on the iron grille, white with the dripping of myriad candles. He took both my hands in his and softly repeated the invocation, and we laid down our flowers among the many that made the shrine glorious. And then, taking each of our right hands, he touched them with gold-leaf on the back, and that was all. We had paid our homage. Gold-leaf is always sold at the entrance, that merit may be acquired by touching with it the images or any gilded part of the shrine. Buddhism is a golden and jewelled faith in Burma—many villages have their golden pagoda—flames lit, as it were, from the central fire of the Shwe Dagon.

From the carvings of the shrines, strange little laughing Beloos, devils and spirits look out upon you. Their small, impish faces grin like gnomes. Indeed they are gnomes—wild little Nats or spirits of the woods, rivers and trees. It is difficult to say how they come into the peace of the Lord Buddha, but they are survivals from an older Nature faith, and have made themselves very much at home with the later. They are delightful. Sometimes they wear a pointed cap, half jester, half fairy, with garments tossing in wings of wild movement and hands flung up like the spray of a wave as they dance. It is the grotesque side of nature escaping into life and gaiety. At Thayetmyo I bought the favour of the Beloos with silver on my first visit to Burma—gay, dancing spirits of the lonely places. But impish too—even terrible. They must be propitiated if you would keep their good will.

We passed from the Shwe Dagon to the dusk of the Sulay Pagoda, and all the rows of tapers were burning like stars in the scented gloom of the shrine—the melted pink and white wax running down in streams. The flowers we bought here were like white orange-blossom with a wonderful corolla of golden stamens in the heart of each and the aromatic smell that breathes full East. The woman who sold them added a green flower as a gift —with long green petals like an orchid and a scent of orris root—it would have made an illumination for some medieval poem of mouldering arras and sad, forsaken ladies.

I must pass over many of our excursions in search of the strange and beautiful—never far to seek in Burma—the wonderful pwe at the Shwe

Tsan-daw at Prome on the noble reaches of the river that is the true Burma, for we were on our way to Bhamo on the Chinese frontier. But I cannot pass over a visit to a monastery school, for the monastery is the very soul of Burma, and those who do not know it and its work know nothing of the country nor can ever know. Not only is all the teaching done there, but every boy in the land enters as a novice and wears the yellow robe, be it for weeks or months, for thus and only thus he attains humanity. His head is shaven and, like all the monks, he becomes for a time a mendicant that he may know the humility of the Buddha. How can such influences be estimated? They have made Burma what she is and when they die the Burma we have known will be dead with them.

So we visited a monastery not far from the banks of the great river. It was built of dark wood with flying multiple roofs, most beautiful, frilled and pinnacled, carven with ornament of bewildering richness and touched with gold like the pictures of the Italian Primitives on their golden backgrounds. Fra Angelico would have loved the pure gold and lovely broken outlines among the sculptured palms, and the verandas and broad eaves and roofs all lit with gold and melting into dragons and Nats and wreathing figures in rich brown wood. A fairy land of legend and faith.

But the evening was gliding down the river and it was time for vespers. The day's work was done, and, in one great room, dim and splendid like a jewel-casket, the boys were sitting on the floor with an altar and image of the Perfect One before them, for lessons were laid aside and in the stillness of evening prayers would be said before all separated in peace for the night.

Behind the monks was a space and then all the lines of little worshipping figures in the smoky light of a lamp. The monks led the lauds with strong, Gregorian chanting in Pali—the ancient sacred tongue. The boys followed: "How great a favour has the Lord Buddha bestowed upon me in manifesting to me His Law, through the observance of which I may escape Hell and insure my salvation!"

So it ran, and a Scripture in Pali was recited and all the little figures *shikoed* (prostrated themselves) three times before the Buddha and three before their Head, and all passed quietly away and the Thathanahlyauk was ended.

And outside, the night, splendid with stars, absorbed all joy and sorrow, every emotion of day-wearied humanity into the great peace which is the foretaste of the Greatest.

We were to embark for Bhamo on the Chinese frontier next day, a long and wonderful voyage. It is almost dreamlike, for the pageant of village and rock and river glides past incessant in change and sameness. Now a group of

little houses standing on tall posts above the water, guarded from ill by their golden or white pagodas, now a sheer cliff hollowed into cells and arches where placid images of the Perfect One look down upon the mighty river which might be the stream of Time running for ever into the eternity of the ocean. So life itself passes one by, a phantasmagoria, and the hold on reality is so slender that the very foundations of the earth are the vanishing piers and arches of illusion.

The night was dark with a tropic darkness, vast, unfathomable, and the moon, a little silver leaf floating on enormous deeps, gave no light as the great boat steadily breasted her way up the river. We lit our path with a keener ray which stabbed the night with its steel-blue edge. Very strange was this search-light as it swept round, illumining the majestic breadth of the flood and the hidden banks. Into the arc of light glided suddenly a boat curved high at the stern of a carved stern-post, where sat aloft the steersman, still and vigilant. His face gleamed upon us for a second, and the boat passed on into the heart of the night.

In the ray floated many winged insects, moths and grey night butterflies. The dark could not hold them—they fled ecstatic to the light, and each, as he bathed in it, became glowing silver as if he burned in a pure flame. The air was full of these glittering, quivering, winged things—most wonderful to see. Each

> "Folded his wings within till he became
> One colour and one splendour with the flame.
> He only knew the flame who in it burned,
> And only he could tell who ne'er to tell returned."

"That is the story of life," said the soft Burmese voice of Maung Hkin. He had sat silently beside me while we watched the miracle of the sunset on the Irawadi. Who could speak then? For it flooded the water with deep rose, burning in the long reaches while the sky above merged solemnly into gold and sombre purple and lastly mingled into a colour that cannot be told in words—a sea of light with fire, and so the day died and night came gliding upon the river, hooded and still.

"It is the story of the inner life," he repeated. "Who can escape the lure of the light? If not in this life, in others. Most surely the light draws all within its sphere."

As he spoke, the ray swept over a boat. Some of the men in it were playing upon strange, uncouth instruments, while another recited a song of the jungle and its tropic passions and amours—a song that might have been

sung in fierce nights before the gods had walked at all on earth. A huddled woman lay in the boat before their feet.

Thus flung for an instant on the dark, the scene represented capture, lust, rapine, the fierce passions hidden so thinly by our civilization.

I could see the rows of silent faces along our decks, listening, listening. They knew—those Burmese and Shans—they understood. And the ray glided from the boat and the ancient night resumed it, and only the crying and throbbing of the music were left like a dying passion.

"It is life," I said, "this voyage in the dark, the vignettes of life and colour flashing out for a moment and in a moment dead. Tell me, Maung Hkin, a story of the heart of your country."

He composed himself to speak. I think I had expected a story of the people. He told instead a *Zat*, an old, old story which relates how the Light drew a King until he also became "One colour and one splendour with the flame." I tell it not in his imperfect English, but as I heard the soft voice and the ripple of the moving water in the silences, remembering that the Lord Buddha himself told this story in the monastery of Zetawun, built by the rich man Anatabein in the country of Thawatti, that men might know that the fashion of this world passeth away like a bright picture seen in a flash and in a flash swallowed up of the night. Praise to him, the Perfect One!

The King of Mithila was near his end. Life lay behind him as a dream—he was at the point where reality emerges from illusion as the mountains from the clouds. Only one earthly thought remained and that was fading fast. It was his daughter, the Princess Thiwali, his one child. So, holding himself back from the gulf of Impermanence, that he might speak once more, he called for his ministers and they came to where he lay, a king still, though passing into That where the king is as one with the beggar. And as they knelt, calm and attentive, he said these words painfully: "Wise and good, hearken to the last words of the King. The Princess—she cannot reign, being but a woman. Find her a lord, brave and wise, and he shall rule for her."

And Kyanyit-tha replied: "Golden Lord, Ruler of the White Elephant, where shall we choose? And how?" And they fanned the King with cool air that he might have strength to speak in the wisdom that comes where life and death touch hands.

"Make tests," he said faintly. "Tests are the dice of the Gods. If he can string and bend the great bow, he is strong; let him be king. If he can find the hidden golden cups, he is wise; let him be king."

And after this the King spoke no more and even the Princess passed from his mind like breath from the untroubled surface of a mirror, and he sank into the calm as into deep waters. They watched in awe, for by this way must all go and on the other side their deeds await them.

Many and great were the funeral ceremonies. They swathed the King in royal robes. They bound the thumbs and great toes with black and silken locks from the hair of the Princess Thiwali. In his mouth they placed the *kado-ka*—the money for the ferry of the dead—that his spirit might not sit weeping by the great water, and they laid him in the coffin of *letpan* wood and set above it a many-tiered spire of gold, and beside the sleep of the King they recited the Teaching of Evanescence. And they called then upon the *leipbya*, the butterfly-spirit of the dead to come away, and caught it in a web of silk and held it for seven days and then freed it to flit on slender wings into the Immensities. And so they burned the King and made a golden pagoda above him, and his life was an ended story.

But the Princess wept among her women, for who could tell her fate? What is a woman but a flower drifting on the flood of the river—to what heaven or ruin, who shall say? So she awaited her doom.

And the ministers assembled and set forth the tests, and many young men, fair and strong, essayed them, flaming with passion for the beauty of Thiwali, and with lust of power and kingship. But all failed, and the wisest of the ministers said: “We are in the hands of the Gods. Great is their wisdom and ours is folly. Send out an empty chariot and unguided horses, and what the Gods give us, that we accept.”

So it was done. The empty golden chariot set forth, the courtiers following at a due distance and in a deep silence.

Now there was a grove of mangoes far from the city, a grove of coolness and pleasant fruitage, where the *daung-kula*—the silver pheasant—loved to haunt and the grove was full of birds exceeding lovely, with blood-red crests and silver plumage, and they stood on all the trees. And the horses paced on quietly into the heart of the grove.

In the deeps of the trees was there a great rock covered with green and waving ferns, and beside it a little, bright spring, and upon this rock stood two peacocks with outspread trains like unto the fans that are held before thrones, and they were motionless as birds in a picture.

Then the courtiers, stealing forward like men who will not disturb the sleep of a king, looked down and saw a young man asleep. Very beautiful he lay there, naked and golden, strong and slender, like a wood-spirit. And silently they beckoned the priests to come forward also, and, kneeling, they

inspected the soles and the palms of the sleeping stranger. And lo, a marvel! For on the sole of each slender foot was stamped a rayed Wheel—the token of consecration—and so also in either palm. And he awoke and regarded them gently with clear eyes.

So in deep surprise and joy they besought him to enter the chariot and clothed him in the royal robes and returned, rejoicing, to the city, and the people poured forth to meet them. Hearing the shouting, the heart of the Princess said, trembling: "He is come. My Lord is come."

(The great ray sweeping the left bank caught a village and it flashed out clear-cut on the dark. The little houses were on high piles, like cranes standing long-legged in the water. The people in groups stood watching with a still intentness to see us pass. The golden pagoda glittered above them. The ray swept on and the dark took them as the past had taken the story of the Princess.)

So he bent the bow like a king, and the warriors marvelled. And the hidden gold cups he found like a sage, and the wise men were silent. And he stood majestic before the throne and commanded that the bride be adorned for her husband.

Then the women spread the thanaka paste upon her smooth cheeks and wrapped a cloth of woven gold about her slender body until she looked like the spathed bud of a lily, and upon her neck they hung the blood-red rubies of Mogok, and the midnight masses of her hair they supported with strings of pearls, and so she awaited the King.

And into the bridal chamber he came, and he called her by her name —"Thiwali," and, trembling for joy, she answered, "O King, here am I!" So in the moonlight and the great peace he took her to his arms.

And great joy had they in one another and the land had rest from all fear. It was an age of gold. The hungry he fed, the poor he protected and to all he did equal justice, and, when the birth-charms were said, Thiwali, the Queen bore his son, radiant as a tree-spirit, beautiful as *pan-bwin-sok*, the sun-bird, and the cup of joy ran over. And the wine was spilt.

(The ray swept to the left bank and disclosed in its hard light a pitiful sight, for on the sandy bank lay a corpse, cold, stiff, cast up like driftweed from the cruel river, and a woman crouched beside him, marble in the rigidity of her sorrow. I sprang to my feet with the impulse of help, but the quiet voice beside me continued its passionless music, and the light went before us like a flung spear and left them in the dark.)

For one day the King, seated on his elephant, rode forth and beheld a mango-tree loaded with luscious fruit. And he plucked one, but those with

him plucked also, and, when he returned that way, the tree was bare.

Then into the eyes of the King came the strange Light of the Buddhas, the Light that pierces through all external shows to the naked Truth, and he beheld the parable and he said: "What are riches—what is honour, save to call the spoiler and to draw down misfortune? This tree—had it been barren, we had passed it by. What is life but illusion? What is worth a wish save only wisdom? I will free myself from fetters; I will enter the Quiet Life."

So, returning, he laid down his golden fetters. In his seat of power, he placed the wisest of his ministers and he entered his halls and placed a guard upon the door, for he feared the love and sorrow of Thiwali.

And in his solitude he made a song of the joys of Quietness. And on the one side he set the glories of the palace with its golden spires mirrored in the lotus-pools of the gardens; the glory of the people crowding to the protection of the King; the rejoicing of the mighty elephants canopied and draped with gold.

And he said: "How shall I leave them—how forsake these things for the Peace that passes thought?"

And he longed in vain for strength to depart.

And again he said: "O my nobles—the ardent faces, the jewelled bodies, the splendour and the grace that bowed at my feet! O the wisdom of my counsellors—their venerable faces—their dignity and care for my people! How shall I forsake them for the Peace that cannot be broken!"

And again: "O my lovely ladies—the gentle, the sweet, the delicate—those who have given me love, who have broken the vials of passion before my feet like a fragrance! How shall I forsake them for the austerities of the Peace!"

And yet again: "O my wife—O royal, O dear and utterly desirable, heart of my heart, flesh of my flesh, mother of my son, how shall I forsake myself in forsaking you? And can there be any peace except in your presence?"

So for four months he meditated in anguish, and the Queen trembled without, and at the last he procured the yellow robe of a monk, and with his own hand he cut his long black hair and put off royalty and put on humility, and with the begging bowl in his hand and dropped eyes he passed forth unnoticed, walking with the majesty of those who, having lost all, fear nothing—and so was gone.

(A clear, resonant voice came through the darkness—the voice of a man rejoicing as at the dawn. The ray swept upon him and I saw a man standing upon the rock that is sculptured into the many Buddhas who have attained.

Alone in the fierce light he stood there and triumphed. The light swept on and the darkness took him. But it was long before the music died.)

Meanwhile the Queen took counsel of her heart, and she summoned the women of the inner palace about her and said this, weeping: “Beautiful sisters, our Lord has forsaken us. No more are we pleasing in his sight. O arm yourselves with jewels and robes of price. Darken your sweet eyes; perfume the forests of your hair; snatch every beauty. What care I for myself? O be strong and hold him, that so the light of his presence may be about us.”

So, hurriedly dispersing, the princesses and ladies added beauty to beauty, and weeping, they stood, a band of perfect loveliness, with the Queen, glorious as the moon among the meaner beauties of the night, at their head. And she said in a voice of broken music: “O sisters, to her who wins him do I give my jewels, and I will be her handmaid, for if he pass from us, what is all the world?”

So they moved like deer along the palace ways, and—O woe!—they passed the King himself, robed as a monk. And they knew him not. They knew him not! But Thiwali, going first, entered his chamber, and lo, on the floor the long black locks and the robe royal!

Then, running swiftly, the Queen fled down the palace ways, and the trembling princesses ran with her. Their jewels scattered as they ran, their long hair broke from the strings of pearl and fell about them like mourning garments, but they never heeded. Through the streets they ran, sobbing, and the harsh ways wounded their tender feet, and the people paused in terror from their daily tasks and stared at them, and the baser sort ran with them. At the western gate they overtook the King, and Thiwali fell at his feet and laid her head on them.

O grief that cannot be told! O beauty that pleaded, that broke itself as a wave against a rock, and in vain! Beside them, a world away, stood the King, and, if he would have wavered, there stood by him two holy men, austerely pure, and strengthened him, and to each cry of the Queen they opposed the Law and the Peace and the Conquest. And gently unclasping her hands, he passed on, and the Queen and princesses toiled after him.

And as the days went by, the suffering of these tender ones touched his soul—though he made as if he saw it not—and it rent his heart. And at night he lay beneath a tree, but slept not, and they apart, a flock of moaning doves.

And after a while they reached the little town of Nyaung-gyat, and in the streets he begged his food, and he beheld an arrow-maker, looking along the stem of his arrow with one eye to see if it were straight, and closing the

other. And courteously saluting him, the King said: “Honourable craftsman, why is this? Surely two eyes are better than one?”

And thus the man replied: “Great Glory of the Law, not always! For with the single eye can I see the least variation from the straight, but with two the sight is deflected. Do I not see this in yourself also? For doubtless you have forsaken the world, yet are you followed by a crowd of beautiful women, who mark your every footstep and you theirs. Is this the single eye?”

And the King sadly went his way. The children were playing in the street, and one little maiden, dark and sweet, ran against him like a mouse-deer. On one arm she had a silver bangle and on the other two, and, as she ran, they jangled. And the King, loving all children, stopped and said, “Little maiden, why is one arm silent and the other tinkling?”—to see what her wit would answer.

And she, looking up gravely, said: “Holy sir, how could it be otherwise, for on the one arm is only one, and quiet with it, and on the other, two, and they jangle? And so it is with the life of Peace, and how can it be that you, who have forsaken the world, should have following you these beautiful princesses? Till this day never have I seen a monk do thus.”

And the King, abashed and humbled by this wisdom from the lips of a child, hastened away and entered the jungle, and stood until Thiwali with the princesses approached, pale and wearied with grief and hunger, and his heart yearned upon her. Yet he broke a branch from a tree and held it out, saying this, standing apart and beyond the touch of her hand: “Lady, I have broken my life from yours as I have broken this branch from the tree. The sap runs in it no more. No longer will it bear leaf, blossom or fruit. So now is our wedlock ended, for I have seen the Love in which all loves are one, and free and alone I go to attain Deliverance. Comfort yourself, for in me is nothing more.”

And he passed out from among them.

But Thiwali stood death-white, with withered lips and her arms spread to emptiness, and they said, “It is death.” And, even as they said it, the blood crept up her pale cheek and the light to her eyes, and there standing, she received Enlightenment, and learned the secret of the Transitory and tasted the beginnings of Peace.

(The young moon threw a faint and trembling silver on the black and terrible river. Faint and doubtful, yet holding the promise of her great glory when she should orb into splendour. Maung Hkin paused a moment to see her frail beauty, and then his low voice resumed the tale.)

And the Queen Thiwali returned to her empty home, the princesses, pondering very deeply, with her. But the King pursued his way to the Perfections.

So, when he had finished this story, the Blessed One summed it up and made the connection and said: “Harken, O monks! In this life the Wheel has come full circle; for that arrow-maker was Ananda, my beloved disciple, and the little wise maiden is my fair disciple of the right—Kema, the wise and true. And Thiwali is my wife, the Princess Yathawdaya, who has attained, and the King who forsook all, O monks, is myself, who say these words.

“Glory to the Enlightened and Enlightening—the Lord Buddha, who in many lives attained unto the Perfections!”

So the voice of Maung Hkin ceased and the tale was told, and we sat in the darkness and heard the soft sibilance of the water at the bows that touched us and passed onward to the sea, and before us went the questing ray of light, diamond-clear, searching out all.

And I said: “Maung Hkin, this is a great renunciation, but to break the tender heart—to trample Love—how is this?”

And he answered: “Love we love best because we see is clearest; Wisdom, with bodily eyes we cannot see; but, being beheld in the spirit, terrible are the loves she inspires. Thus only is the world borne upward.”

I sat in silence: the greatest of the Greeks had also said this thing.

And the river flowed on, and whether it were the ancient river that told the tale, or the voice of Maung Hkin or my own heart, hard is it to say, for the Kingdom of God is within us and about us.

THE PERFECT ONE

A VERY ANCIENT STORY

(What follows is put into the mouth of a real character of the Buddhist Scriptures. The incidents, the teaching, and in many cases the actual words follow translations of the ancient Buddhist Scriptures by such scholars as Max Müller, Fausböll, Rhys Davids etc. The date of the Gotama Buddha's birth is roughly 450 B.C. Great Buddhist scholars declare that the Canon of the Scriptures was settled at the First Council immediately after the death of the Buddha. Max Müller fixes its latest date at 377 B.C.)

NOW as I, Yasas, the aged Bhikkhu (monk) born of a Brahman family, sat meditating in the Bamboo Grove of the monastery, the warmth of the sun was sweet to me and sweet the leaves of the bamboo floating as upon water in the limpid air, for the time was late afternoon when the shadows lengthen, and men, beginning to lay down the implements of their toil, prepare for the evening that brings all home—the bird to its nest, the child to its mother's bosom. And musing on the Three Jewels, the Lord, the Law, and the Communion of Saints, I thought thus, "Whence comes this serenity wherein my soul floats as a fish in clear water?" and these words occurred to me—When he who has attained knowledge, leaving ignorance behind him, climbs the Mount of Vision, he looks down upon the care-worn tossing crowds, even as a man in the safe womb of a boat beholds the aimless breaking of the waves about him, he passing in peace to the appointed shore. And even as I thought this, I beheld two Bhikkhus approaching whom I knew not, men in middle life with grave eyes, calm of presence as becomes the Brethren of the Lord, and as they passed through shade and sunshine of the feathering bamboos, I said in my heart:

"Full of hindrances is the household life, full of passion and desire. Free as air is the life of him who has renounced it. See how these men move like Kings in the bright perfection of peace!"

So, robed in the yellow robe of the Lord, begging bowl in hand, they drew near and made salutation, and this I returned and they spoke:

"Venerable Yasas, from the monastery of the Mango Grove are we come, bearing a message and a request from the Brethren. For you have seen the Lord and have dwelt in the light of his presence, and in seeing you surely we see the reflection of that Glory. And our names are Kassapa and Vasettha."

So they seated themselves respectfully beside me, and the elder spoke this message which had been committed to memory.

"To the venerable Brother Yasas, the greeting of peace. Behold all things are transitory, and such is the teaching of the Tathāgata, the Perfect One; nor can the day be far distant when following him you also shall pass into the Silence. And since it is now many years since he departed, it is our request, O venerable Yasas, that you who with fleshly eyes have seen the Blessed One and in his journeyings have gone beside him, do record these memories that are as grains of pure gold. For you, entering the Silence, shall return no more to birth and death, but we, bound upon the Wheel of Change, do seek very pitifully for deliverance. And these two Bhikkhus of virtuous life shall commit your words to memory, and they shall be our heritage for ever."

So they waited in quiet and I considered the matter. And if because of my age this was not easy for me, yet I remembered the words of Bhagavat (the Blessed One) how he said: "The men of high resolve dig in the very sand till in its depths they find pure water," and, knowing the request was just, I agreed. And not only that day but many others did Kassapa and Vasettha, the two Bhikkhus sit beside me in the shade and repeated my words, adding and subtracting nothing and comparing each with other that the Truth might be flawless. With these words I began:

Hear, O Bhikkhus, thus have I seen. I was yet but a very young man when I forsook all and followed the Lord. For I was a young man having great possessions, an almsgiver according to due proportion, one who regarded virtue, but hearing that a great Teacher was come to Rajagaha I came from far to hear him, for though I did these things there was a voice in my heart that would not be silenced and I had not peace. So I came, and he looked upon me and I said this:

"O Venerable Gotama, I am a liberal giver; justly I seek riches, bountifully I bestow them. Is this well?"

And the Master answered "Well. But there is yet a more excellent way." And I said:

"Instruct me." So he opened unto me the Law, and seated beside him I learned the Four Noble Truths, the Truth of Suffering, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the Truth of the Way that leads to the Extinction of Suffering. And immediately there arose within me forgetfulness of my riches, and sight and wisdom came upon me, and I said:

“Lord, most excellent are the words of thy mouth. May the Venerable Gotama receive me as a disciple from this day forth!” and forsaking all else I followed. But of this I say little, for at this gate have we all entered, and ye know.

Now of the bodily presence of Bhagavat will I say this. Age had come upon him with beauty so that my heart fell at his feet and embraced his knees because he was as one to whom all evil things must flee for refuge that, being delivered from themselves, they might be made even as he. For none could see him without this desire. And in his presence virtue was not remembered, for he was virtue’s self, made manifest in love, and in the ocean of love were all submerged who saw him.

His face was worn and calm, as in an image of mellowed ivory, his nose prominent and delicate, bespeaking his Aryan birth, his eyes of a blue darkness, and though a little bowed, he carried himself as one of the princes. But, O Bhikkhus, these might be said of another, and there was none like him—none! For Wisdom walked on his right hand and Power on his left, and Love went before him for a messenger.

Remember, O Bhikkhus, what said the King Bimbisara, seeing the Lord in his golden youth, when he approached the King bearing his begging bowl: “Be serviceable, nobles, to this man, beautiful is he, great and pure. Guarding his senses he comes. Surely such a one is of no low caste!”—and the King said again to him: “Young you are and delicate, a lad in his youth, fine and fair in colour as one of the Aryan people. Surely are you the Glory of the Vanguard of an army!”

So said the King; and remember also the noble virgin Kisa Gotami, when seeing him, a young lord, proceeding through the city, she cried aloud, nor could withhold:

“Blessed indeed that mother,
Blessed indeed that father,
Blessed indeed that wife,—
Who own this Lord so glorious!”

So was it in his youth, but every year that passed laid beauty at his feet, and I beheld in him the perfection of grace and truth.

And again, O Bhikkhus, you would know the manner of his daily life. Thus it was. For nine months of the year we wandered from place to place in the valley of holy Ganges, he teaching and all crowding to hear. Nor were any repelled. And at first, I, a Brahman, marvelled at this thing, and it was a stumbling block to many, for I saw the outcaste, the man whose touch, nay, whose sight was pollution, come even with the noble to learn of the Way.

And not only men, but women, the weak, the despised, they came also like homing doves, and he cast them not away. For to that Reason which had weighed power and pride and found them nothing, what were caste or sex that he should regard them? So crowds followed and he had little rest.

But when the great rains came, then he would stay from wandering and for those three months we rested at some spot where still he could teach, and the people come in peace to hear. And the manner of his day was this. Early would the Blessed One rise, and he would wash and robe himself and did not ask assistance though so aged. And then, O Bhikkhus, retiring within his own heart, he would meditate on the Truth, until it was time to seek alms and many marvelled that he the son of a great family should do this thing. And since I speak of alms, once in Magadha thus have I heard and seen. Mark it well!

For Bhagavat approached with his begging bowl the ploughing fields of a rich Brahman and stood apart gravely, and the man said this:

"Having ploughed and sown I eat. You also should plough and sow, for the idle shall not eat."

"I also, O Brahmana, both plough and sow." So said Bhagavat.

"Yet we do not see the plough of the venerable Gotama!" so said he, mocking. And Bhagavat answered:

"Faith is the seed, understanding my yoke and plough, tenderness my deliverance. So is this ploughed. It bears the fruit of immortality, and having thus ploughed a man is freed from all ill."

And the Brahman poured rice milk into a bowl and offered it to Bhagavat, saying:

"Let the Blessed One eat of the rice milk, for he also is a ploughman, who makes to grow the fruit of immortality."

And, O Bhikkhus, this man who mocked entered the Way and became a great Arhat, having heard the Noble Truths from the lips of the Lord.

So we would go forth for an alms, and sometimes alone, sometimes attended, he would enter a village or a town, and where he went the birds and beasts would give forth a sweet and gentle sound in welcome, and the sons of men could know— "Today it is the Blessed One who comes for alms." Then, clad in their best and brightest, they would come forth, offering flowers and saying: "Today, Lord, take your meal with us. We will make provision."

And they would take his bowl and spreading mats would await the moment when the meal was over. Then would the Blessed One discourse to them with due regard to their capacity, and some would take the

householders' vow, and some the vow of the Bhikkhu, and so they would enter the Way. And when he had thus had mercy on the multitude, he would arise and wait for those of us who had not yet finished our meal, departing later.

And at evening when the sun was set, the people would gather at the place where he dwelt, bringing flowers, and to them would the Tathāgata, calm and self-possessed, discourse of the Truth, and at the appointed time he would say, "Depart now, in peace, O Householders, each upon his own occasions," and respectfully saluting the Lord this they would do. And a part of the night he spent in meditation, walking up and down outside his chamber, and a part he would rest within. And as the day began to dawn he seated himself, and calling up before his mind the multitudes of people, he considered their case, and the means whereby he could aid them. Such were the days of the Perfect One.

And because, O Bhikkhus, the Lord talked with men and women of all ranks and affairs, therefore the mind of none was hidden from him, and as they felt he knew, and their hopes and fears were not far from him. Fathomless were the wisdom and compassion of Bhagavat.

So also with women—they feared not to tell him their hearts, not to implore his mercy. Very patiently and according to the measure of their weakness he instructed them, and they grew like bamboos in a night, shooting up to the sun with glorious leaf and stem. And surely in these feeble ones, the Lord beheld the likeness of his mother, that noble Lady Maya of whom it is said: "Joyously reverenced of all even as the young Moon, strong and calm of purpose as the Earth, pure of heart as the Lotus was Maya the great Lady." And of these women many became wise and Teachers, and not a few attained unto the Perfect Enlightenment and were great Arhats, passing into that Nirvana where are no more birth and death.

But even the light women sought him, and he drove them not away. Mark this well, O Bhikkhus, for who is like unto the Lord?

Thus have I seen. For when the light woman Ambapali who dwelt in Vesali heard that the Blessed One was come and had halted in her mango grove, she put off her robes of splendour and the jewels that many had bestowed upon her, and with circumspection she clothed herself, discarding all ornaments of perfumes and flowers. And she made ready her vehicle and proceeded to the grove, and I, standing there, bade her return for there were many that would speak with the Lord, and who was she to desire it? So she alighted from her bullock cart and stood looking upon me with humility, beautiful as a night of moon and stars, and suddenly she passed me by, and I was silent nor could I restrain her. And she went swiftly on foot to where the

Blessed One sat wholly lost in thought, and I looked that he should bid her depart, for how could it be that such as she should disturb him? Hear now, O Bhikkhus, the mercy of the Lord. For she bowed her head at his feet, and greeting her as "Lady," he commanded her to sit beside him, and her heart rejoiced and cast aside fear, and he instructed, incited and gladdened her with high discourse, while all marvelled to see her that had been filled with world's delight, filled now with the joy of wisdom. And the Perfect One, after instructing and gladdening the woman with high discourse, rose and went his way and we followed.

Yet, think not, O Bhikkhus, because of this compassion that at any moment the Lord relaxed his watchfulness, knowing well that women may be of all snares the very worst. Stern were the rules he made for those men who live on the difficult heights of contemplation—strait and high the fences about the way. For the householders, purity, kindness, reverence to mother, sister, wife, daughter in their daily duties. For all, watchfulness lest the foot slip in the mire. And one day when we sat in the shade on a journeying the Venerable Ananda, the Friend of the Lord, the beloved disciple, asked an instruction concerning this thing.

"Lord, how should we who are Bhikkhus conduct ourselves with regard to woman-kind, for this is a hard matter."

And the Excellent One said:

"See them not, Ananda."

"Even so, Lord. But if we should see them what are we then to do?"

"Abstain from speech, Ananda."

"Even so, Lord. But if they should speak to us what are we to do?"

"Keep wide awake, Ananda."

And we looked upon one another. And, O Kassapa and Vasettha, would that I could tell you the laughter of the Lord and the sweet converse when he related to us the Birth Stories, the Jātakas, of his former lives, and whether parable or truth how should I, the bondman of the Excellent One, say? But wise they were and sweet and full of teaching for the little ones, and the very babes might run to hear and laugh, and yet again the wisest pause and ponder the noble truths that were hidden in these.

Hear now, O Bhikkhus, a Jātaka of the Lord: For this is called The Holy Quail, and the Blessed One told it as we went through a jungle of Magadha. And there a great jungle fire arose, and roared towards us very terribly and some of us would have made a counter fire and burnt the ground before it that it should cease, but yet others cried aloud:

“Bhikkhus, what is this ye do? Surely it is like failing to see the sun when he shines in strength, for we journey with the Master who can do all. And yet, making a counter fire you forget the power of the Buddhas. Come, let us go to the master.”

So we went, and the fire came roaring on to the place where we stood, and when it came within fifteen rods it went out like a torch plunged into water, and we magnified the Perfect One, but he said:

“This, O Bhikkhus, was not through my power, but it is due to the faith of a Quail. Hear now a Jātaka!”

And the beloved Ananda folded a robe in four, and spread it as a seat for Bhagavat, and he seated himself and we about him and he told this tale. “In this very spot long, long ago, was a young Quail, and he lay in the nest and his parents fed him, and he was too young to fly or walk. And with a mighty roar there came a fire and all the flocks of birds fled shrieking away, and his parents, being terrified, fled also.

“So the young Quail lay there deserted, and he thought this:

“Could I fly, could I walk, I might be saved, but this I cannot. No help have I from others and in myself is none. What then shall I do?”

And he reflected thus:

“In this world there is Truth. There are also the Buddhas who have gained salvation by the power of the Truth and have shown it to others, and in these is love for all that lives. In me also is the Truth (though I am but a Quail) and the Faith that is true and eternal. Therefore it behoves me, relying on the faith that is in me to make an Act of Faith and thus to drive back the fire and find safety for myself and the other young birds.” So the Quail called to mind the power of all the Buddhas, and making a solemn asseveration of faith existing in himself, he uttered this:

“Wings I have that cannot fly,
Feet I have that cannot walk.
My parents have forsaken me.
O all-embracing fire, go back!”

“And before this Act of Faith the fire went back and died like a torch plunged into water. And the Quail lived his life and passed away according to his deeds. And because of this strength the fire dies when it touches this spot.”

So said the Master, and when he had finished this discourse, he made the connection and summed up the Jātaka, saying:

“My parents at that time were my present parents, but the Quail was I myself.”

And we marvelled and were instructed. And yet again when two of the Brethren were angered with one another and ate their hearts with bitterness, they laid it before the Master, and he said this:

“He abused me, he beat me! In those who harbour such thoughts how should hatred die? For hatred ceases not at any time by hatred, but only by love. This is an old rule.”

An old rule, O Bhikkhus, yet when the Lord spoke it from the heart of his peace it became a new commandment and his own. So those two saluted one another in love before the face of the Perfect One.

And again when a very young Bhikkhu was led away by the transient smile of a woman to his undoing, Bhagavat said this:

“Even the Divine Beings may envy him whose senses like horses well tamed are utterly subdued. Him whom no desires can lead captive any more by what temptation shall ye draw him—the Awakened, the Omniscient, the Desireless?” O Bhikkhus, I speak and ye hear, but who can declare his wisdom? For as the mists ascend at dawn so illusion dispersed before him and the Sun shone upon us and in the fulness of his day we beheld the Glory of the Buddha. Yet another thing, and heed it well for it was a day precious as clean gold. Lo, as we went we came to the fields by the river of Dhaniya the herdsman, a rich man who trusted in his goods, but a kindly soul and simple such as the Blessed One loved. And he stayed his feet, smiling a little, and we stood about him and he said this:

“Here be great riches of beasts and pasture. Surely the man owning these is well content.”

And Dhaniya, seeing the Holy One, drew near in his pride and addressed him.

“I have boiled my rice, I have milked my cows,” so said the herdsman Dhaniya. “I am dwelling near the banks of the Mahi; my house is covered, my fire kindled. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

(For in his riches he feared nothing believing them a strong shield.)

“I am free from anger, free from stubbornness,” so said Bhagavat. “For one night I abide by the Mahi. My house is uncovered, the fire of passion is extinguished. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“Gadflies are not found with me,” so said the herdsman Dhaniya, “In meadows abounding with grass my cows are roaming, and they can endure rain when it comes. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“I have made a raft, I have passed over to the Nirvana, having overcome the torrent of passion,” so said Bhagavat. “Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“My wife is obedient,” so said the herdsman Dhaniya. “Winning she is and I hear nothing ill of her. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“My mind is obedient, delivered from all worldly things,” so said Bhagavat, “There is no longer wickedness in me. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“I support myself by my own riches,” so said the herdsman Dhaniya, “And my children are healthy about me. I hear nothing wicked of them. Therefore if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“I am no one’s servant,” so said Bhagavat, “With what I have gained I wander through the world. There is no need for me to serve. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“I have cows, I have calves,” so said the herdsman Dhaniya. “I have also a bull as lord over the herd. Therefore if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“I have no cows, I have no calves,” so said Bhagavat. “And I have no bull as lord over the herds. Therefore if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“The stakes are driven in and cannot be shaken,” so said the herdsman Dhaniya. “The ropes are new and well made; the cows will not be able to break them. Therefore, if thou wilt, rain, O sky!”

“Having like a bull rent the bonds, having like an elephant broken through the creeper,” so said Bhagavat, “I shall be born no more. Therefore if thou wilt, rain, O sky!” And he smiled, enthroned above pain or change.

Then all at once a shower poured down, filling both sea and land. And the eyes of Dhaniya were enlightened, and, seeing the true riches of the empty hand, the herdsman spoke thus, bowing to the feet of the Perfect One:

“No small gain indeed has accrued to us since we have seen Bhagavat. We take refuge in thee, O Wisest. Be thou our Master.”

“He who has cows has care with his cows,” so said Bhagavat. “But he who has not these things has not care.” So Dhaniya entered the Way of Peace.

And now, O Bhikkhus, there is a thing in this to be much pondered. For it is observable that the Holy One said unto Dhaniya these words: “I have passed over to the Nirvana.” How could this be and he yet living in this world? What then is the Nirvana? For, since the departing of the Perfect One, the ignorant have taught that it is an extinction of all that was man. Not so, O Bhikkhus. And yet again not so. It is an extinction—most true, but this only—an extinction of the threefold lust and craving—the lust of the flesh,

the lust of life, and the pride of life. And when the inward fires of lust, hatred, and illusion are extinguished once and for ever, then man has entered the Nirvana whether here or there. And surely, O Bhikkhus, this was the Lesson of Lessons, and many a parable, many a teaching had we of the Blessed One, that we might know it is the Self, the individual Self that lurks in a man that is the cause of all evil, and sorrow, and that this Self is no real thing, but an illusion and Nothing. And when this teaching is mastered, behold, we lift unblinded eyes, and about us the world is wholly fair. Cling fast to this Truth, O Bhikkhus, for it is the very kernel of the nut. This is the Way of Peace, this is the gate of the Ten Perfections, this is the Nirvana, and it is absolute in joy and rest Immortal.

And now, O Bhikkhus, will I tell of what my heart can as yet scarce bear nor my tongue utter—the Departing of the Lord.

For on a certain day he spoke to Pisuna, saying;

"The time of my deliverance is at hand. Let but three months pass by and I depart." And hearing this all wept, but most of all Ananda. For he loved the Lord with a perfect love and service. It may be that Sariputta the elder was wiser, that Mogallana had a more burning zeal, but none loved like the Venerable Ananda, and on his love the Lord leaned as on no other. Be this remembered and set down, for this man was the friend of the Lord.

And Ananda went out alone and he wept.

Now when the Blessed One had entered upon the rainy season, there fell upon him a dire sickness and sharp pains, even unto death. But Bhagavat, mindful and self-possessed, bore them without complaint. Then this thought occurred to him. "It would not be right that I should pass away without addressing the disciples and taking leave of the Order. Let me now keep my hold on life till this be done."

So he went out from the Wihara, and sat down behind the Wihara on a seat and the Venerable Ananda went and saluted the Blessed One and took a seat reverently on one side and said:

"I have beheld, Lord, how the Blessed One had to suffer, and though at the sight of the sufferings of the Blessed One my body became as weak as a creeper, yet I took some little comfort in thinking that the Lord would not pass away until at least he had left some instructions as touching the Order."

And the Lord replied thus:

"I now, Ananda, am grown old and full of years; my journey is drawing to its close; I have reached my sum of days, I am turning eighty years of age. And just as a worn-out cart, Ananda, can only be made to move with much additional care, so I think the body of the Tathāgata can only be kept going.

Only when lost in meditation can the body of the Tathāgata be now at peace. Therefore be strong—be lamps to yourselves. Hold fast to the Truth. Look not to any for refuge besides yourselves."

And again he said;

"How pleasant is the Vulture's Peak, Ananda; how pleasant the Banyan Tree of Gotama; how pleasant the Squirrels' Feeding Ground; how pleasant the Deer Forest!"

And the Blessed One exhorted the Brethren, saying; "Behold, O Brethren, all component things grow old. Work out your own salvation with diligence. My age is now full ripe, my life draws to its close. Be earnest; be steadfast in resolve. Keep watch over your own heart. Who wearies not, but holds fast to this Truth and the Law, shall cross the Sea of Life, shall make an end of grief."

And he said;

"Come, Ananda, let us go to Pava."

"Even so, Lord," said the Venerable Ananda, and the Blessed One proceeded with us to Pava, to the mango grove of Chunda who was by family a smith. Now Chunda, in the reverence and love of his heart, for all loved the Lord, prepared a meal for the Lord and his Brethren, and after the Blessed One had eaten, dire sickness fell upon him, and mindful and self-possessed he bore it without complaint, and he said:

"Come, Ananda, let us go to Kusinara."

And he addressed the Venerable Ananda and said;

"Fold, I pray you, the robe, and spread it out for me, for I am very weary and would rest."

"Even so, Lord." And the Venerable Ananda folded the robe in four, kneeling. And the Blessed One seated himself, but the Venerable Ananda went into the Wihara and stood leaning against the lintel of the door, weeping sorely, for he thought this:

"Alas, I still remain but a learner, and the Master is about to pass away from me—he who is so kind."

And the Blessed One said unto us:

"Where, Brethren, is Ananda? Go and say to him—Brother Ananda, the Master calls for you."

So he came, weeping, and the Holy One said:

"Enough, Ananda, do not be troubled. Do not weep. Have I not told you it is in the very nature of things dear to us that we must depart from them? For a long time, Ananda, you have been very near to me by acts of love,

kind and good that did not vary and were beyond all measure. You have done well. Be steadfast, and you too soon shall be free of the great Evils." And to us he said, looking upon Ananda,

"He is a wise man, is Ananda. In him are four wonderful qualities. The company of Brethren is ill at ease when Ananda is silent."

And, O Bhikkhus, when the Lord said this, was not my heart sore within me that I had not loved him even as Ananda, and yet I loved him—I loved him. Surely he who knew all was not ignorant of the heart of the least of all the Brethren. And I wept, hiding my face in my robe.

And Ananda said to the Blessed One:

"How wonderful a thing it is, Lord, that the face and body of the Blessed One should now be so exceeding bright!"

For indeed, O Bhikkhus, in the sight of us all a great light shined from the body of the Lord, and his face so shone that it was hard to look upon it. This is truth. I say who have seen. And the Lord said:

"It is even so, Ananda. There are two occasions on which the body of a Buddha becomes exceeding bright. On the night when he attains to the supreme and perfect insight, and on the night when he passes finally away. These are the two occasions."

And we marvelled. So we passed on to the Sala Grove that is a holy place for ever, and Ananda spread a couch between the twin Sala trees, and the Blessed One laid himself down. And he was very weary, so that we looked not for further speech from him, or it might be a word or two of the Law, holy and never to be forgot. But, O Bhikkhus, mark well what follows and the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord. Mark it well. For the Blessed One, now clean forspent, said this, and scarce could speak.

"It may happen, Ananda, that some may stir up remorse in Chunda the smith, saying: 'This is evil to thee, Chunda, and loss to thee, in that when Bhagavat had eaten his last meal from thy provision then he died.' Any such remorse in Chunda should be checked by saying: 'This is good to thee, Chunda, and gain to thee.' For the very mouth of the Blessed One has said —'There is laid up by Chunda the smith a karma redounding to length of life, to good fame, to the inheritance of heaven and to sovereign power.' In this way, Ananda, should be checked any remorse in Chunda the smith."

So in dying the Lord remembered the sorrow of the humble and left peace as his gift. And he said again:

"It may be that there is doubt and misgiving in some of the Brothers. Enquire freely. Do not after reproach yourselves with the thought— Our Lord was yet with us and we did not ask."

And three times he said this, and even the third time the Brethren were silent. And the Venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One:

"How wonderful a thing, Lord, and how marvellous! Verily I believe that in this whole Assembly there is not one who has any doubt or misgiving as to the Buddha or the Truth."

And the Lord:

"You have spoken from the fulness of faith, Ananda, and true it is, and the Tathāgata knows there is not here one Brother who doubts or fears, for all have entered into the Truth."

Then the Blessed One addressed us, saying:

"Behold now, Brethren, I exhort you; Transient are all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence."

This was the last word of the Perfect One. So while we stood round him in awe that cannot be told, the Lord passed into deep meditation like unto death, and Ananda cried unto Anuruddha,—"O my Lord—O Anuruddha, the Blessed One is dead!"

And he, leaning above That Peace, said with calm:

"Nay, Brother. He has entered that state in which sensation and ideas have ceased to be." And we veiled our faces.

And passing out of the last stage of meditation, the Blessed One immediately expired.

And there arose at that moment an earthquake terrible and great, and the hair rose on the heads of us all, and the Venerable Ananda said this: "Then there was terror and the hair rose on the head, when he who possessed all grace—the Supreme Buddha died."

And those of us not wholly yet freed from the passions wept and said: "Too soon has the Happy One died. Too soon is the Light of the World darkened." But the great Arhats bore their sorrow calm and self-possessed, saying: "Impermanent are all earthly things. How is it possible they should not be dissolved?" And all that night did the Venerable Sariputta and Anuruddha spend in high discourse, but we wept nor could be comforted.

And now, O Bhikkhus, wherefore should I tell of that fire where the Body of the Lord passed from us into grey ash, fulfilling all even unto the uttermost.

"Bow down with clasped hands!
Hard, hard is it to meet with a Buddha through hundreds of ages."

We knew in whose Presence we had stood.

And with one thing more I end as at this time, O Bhikkhus, though my heart that then was all ear and eye is now all memory. Hear what befell!

For I sat with Pingiya the aged Brahman, and he spoke of the Lord; he saying: "As he saw the Way so he taught it, he, the very wise, the passionless, the desireless Lord. I will praise the voice of him that was without folly, who had left arrogance far behind. For he has come nigh to me —to me! It is he only, the Dispeller of Darkness, the High Deliverer, who giveth light!"

And seeing his love, I said:

"How then can you stay away from him even one instant, O Pingiya?"

And the old man replied:

"Not even for one instant do I stay away from him, O Brother. Vigilant day and night I see him in my mind. In reverencing him do I spend the night and surely I think I am not far from him."

And he mused a while and added this:

"I am worn out and feeble, but my heart, O Venerable Brother, is joined to him for ever."

And lo, as Pingiya sat and said this word, there shone about us a great light and a vision appeared before us, and Pingiya with his fleshly eyes beheld the Blessed One stand there in majesty. And he said these words:

"Strong is thy faith, O Pingiya, and thou shalt make is bright. Fear not. Thou shalt reach that farther shore, the haven of the realm of death."

And when I had said these things and made an end, Kassapa and Vasettha sat in silence and I also.

So with lips of clay I told that which cannot be told, and with mortal thought I set forth the Highest. And well I knew this thing could not be, for it is above the flesh and the heart cannot utter it.

So those two Bhikkhus made reverence and departed and I saw them no more.

Glory to the Blessed One, the Holy, the Perfect in Enlightenment!

THE WAY OF ATTAINMENT

A TALK IN JAPAN

THERE stands in a cleft of the great range of the Yoshino Mountains of Japan an old, old temple. Built of the wood of the surrounding forests it stands as much a part of nature as the trees themselves. It clings to a crag, reached by tracks suitable only to mountain-born feet, with dizzy drops of precipice before it and the soaring of the eternal hills behind. Music sweeps about it—the wind striking its harp of pines, the steady diapason of the torrent plunging into the rocky basin far below. The sun rises upon it and daily ages a little more its worn timbers and wide-curved roof; the moon moves solemnly before it, illustrating the Moon of Buddhahood to the old priests, who, succeeding one another as guardians of the altar, pass from the mountain peace to the peace of that country whence the shadows fall.

One day I climbed the track. A golden afternoon was declining and all things were reviving from the great heat. Far below us lay little Shitabuchi, to be reached only by toilsome travel down and over the mountain passes to the Tatsu river very far below. There life is busy with its small cares, but so far off and downward that it seemed like leaning on the walls of heaven and looking out and down with an almost unhuman pity and detachment.

When I reached the temple, the priest, very old and wise, incredibly wrinkled, but with bright brown eyes smiling unconquered from the citadel of the soul, was sitting beside the pines, resting from worship, basking like a lizard on the sun-warmed rocks. Behind, the steadfast blue-green of the pines; in front, the radiant sights and sounds of a great and glorious afternoon of summer. So I had found him often.

He met me with a smile and gave me courteous greeting and a little cup of the pale straw-coloured tea of Japan—very grateful in the heat; then resumed his musing. I, also musing, sat below him looking down into the world. It was a time for silence, for Nature was singing beside us in the voice of torrent and sunshine and of all her happy living creatures. A subdued but ceaseless hum of being filled the air.

After a while he spoke, though in the conversation that followed were many silences.

“Far away there over the passes is the track that goes down to Shitabuchi. Saintly feet have trodden it, and many sinners’ feet also. It is five-and-forty years since I passed that way myself. I have sometimes wondered what aspect the great world would wear for me now.”

The great world!—little Shitabuchi of the hills! I smiled, knowing that his youth had begun in a wealthy home in the Capital. He caught my expression and smiled also.

“It is in the human heart that the world reigns, and there are many hearts in Shitabuchi. Their tragedies and romances mount up here sometimes like the thin crying of bats in a dream. But if the feet be tangled in illusion the peace of the hills is no more peace than the noises of the city.”

“But may one not drink a moment at the Wells of Quiet and be refreshed, honourable one?” I asked.

“The thirst so quenched returns,” he answered. “There is no coolness but the extinction of the fever of desire; no cessation of toil but by the attainment of Vision. This is an old knowledge.”

Again a silence; then he spoke again.

“I have not travelled beyond our own shores, but I have heard that in your country this is not taught. It is there believed that desire may be tamed or yoked to heavenly things.”

“So it is.”

“Yet desire is always pain, be it even the desire of Paradise. Toil is the child of illusion and desire, therefore to attain peace desire must needs die. Have any of your wise men known that life is wholly illusion?”

I did not answer directly.

“May I tell you, honourable one, a story?”

Having received permission, I recited, for I knew it by heart, this parable.

“There is no chance and no anarchy in the universe. Every god is there, sitting in his place. The young mortal enters the hall of the firmament; there is he alone, with them alone, they pouring on him benedictions and beckoning him up to their thrones. On the instant, and incessantly, fall snowstorms of illusions. He fancies himself in a vast crowd, which sways this way and that and whose movement and doings he must obey; he fancies himself poor, orphaned, insignificant. The mad crowd drives hither and thither, now furiously commanding this thing to be done, now that. What is he that he should resist their will and think or act for himself? Every moment new changes, new showers of deceptions, to baffle and distract him. And when by and by for an instant the air clears and the clouds lift for a

little, there are the gods still sitting around him on their thrones—they alone with him alone."

"The man was wise who told this story," he said. "He was worthy to have washed the feet of the Blessed One. He had received understanding. I well suppose that he wrote this in some fastness of the Himalaya Mountains, where in the silence he received enlightenment. He was doubtless an Indian sage."

"He was an American, trained in cities, skilled in dialectic," I answered. "Has not the honoured one heard of the writings of Emerson?" He shook his head, smiling.

"This is a rebuke to presumption. I have thought that no good thing can come out of that market of the world, where all is bought and sold. But this man has beheld the Peace, if but for a moment. He has sat with the Immortals in their hall."

He recited a brief Chinese poem, which ran somewhat as follows:

"The clouds drift in the wind-ways of the world.
For a moment they have obscured the moon;
But she emerges in clear light and the clouds were vapour and
nothingness."

"Yet," he added, "I do not think it possible that the Western peoples should accept the Law for ages to come. It is the denial of all you have prized. Your most urgent realities it knows as mirage—mirage that has led one great people to ruin and steeped the West in blood and tears. Have your priests and wise men declared that this was and ever must be the fruitage of desire and illusion? If this lesson has not taught you, what should?"

"Has the East had greater deliverance?" I asked. "You who have sat at the Blessed Feet, you have crushed China, you have broken Russia. Your dead lie like the leaves of autumn in lands not yours. And is your future peace?"

"Have I said that we were faithful?" he replied, with sadness in his tone. "This too was the fruit of desire. There is but one end appointed for all whose eyes are filled with illusion. That path leads always to the precipice."

"And is that the end of all?"

"Not so; the beginning, always the beginning. Behold that torrent plunging into the abyss. The stream re-makes itself after the torture of the rocks and goes singing on its way. The Law is merciless and merciful."

I quoted Browning:

"Other heights in other lives, God willing."

He nodded his old head, smiling:

"Such is the Law."

The cicadas filled the silence with their shrill chirping in the bushes. Infinity was golden around us.

"Shall this world ever see the fruition of the Law?" I asked.

"It will come. The Blessed One's words are unheeded by the many, yet not in vain was he manifested. The Life was lived. And he himself bore witness unto that Greater who in unfathomable Light abideth; before whom are offered the deeds of all the righteous like an incense that continually ascendeth. Before whom the Blessed One himself uttered his lauds and for very bliss was silent. How shall the Eternal fail?—to whom be praise and honour!"

"May I speak and give no offence?"

"Speak, my friend."

"In the West it is said that in the Law is thought only for self, that right-doing is but the means whereby a man escapes the hells of consciousness; that if a man achieve his own manumission the world may perish and he not regard it, having entered into peace."

His smile was an abstracted sweetness, full of compassion.

"This comes of a little knowledge. How should this be so? Are not the brethren one, even as the Law and the Eternal are one with them? What says the *Bodhicharyāvatāra*? Hearken."

He murmured softly as one who considers the Beautiful in an ecstasy and with closed eyes:

"That which is myself, my joys, my righteousness that was, that is, that shall be, all these do I offer, that all having life may attain unto their goal. In the rendering up of all is Peace, and for Peace is my soul athirst. I would be a guard to them that have no protection, a guide unto the traveller; a ship, a well-spring, a bridge for the seekers of that Shore. I would be a lamp to such as need a lamp, a bed for the weary that need a bed, the very slave of such as need service."

He paused and continued:

"What else should be the teaching of the Law? Self is forgotten. It is not. The star fades when the sun rises. In the Law is no remembrance of self."

"I am answered. But if enlightenment should not come—how shall the Light be found?"

"The Light cannot be missed. On all it shines who will open their eyes. The path is straight. Obey first the negative commands—Thou shalt not.

These are for the little children of the Law. Treading on these as stepping-stones, press onward to the affirmative commands, and then already the Light dawns and illumination has begun, for he who obeys shall learn of the doctrine. Beyond this is the steadfast ascent through Right Rapture unto the higher heights and the Four Stages, and here cease the divisions of good and evil and no more are we deceived by names. And beyond this, the tongue is silent but the heart hath known. To this all the Buddhas bear witness."

"Do you look for yet another Enlightened One?"

"Very certainly, as I believe. The day should be at hand when the Voice speaks again. It is long since it spoke in India and in Judea, and even divine words pass away. All passes but the Eternal."

"What will be its teaching?"

For answer he again recited a Chinese poem, in the strange sing-song of the cultivated Japanese:

"How shall I, poor and unlettered, speak with the voice of the Duke of Chow?
He instructs sages and the Yellow Emperor might obey his counsel.
I await in respectful silence his time for speech."

"But," he added, "it may be in silence that the next Light comes. This also was the thought of the Blessed One. Have you remembered this?"

I knew the wonderful passage that followed—a passage from a very well-known Scripture.

"The Blessed One sat high among His own
Upon the Peak of Vultures, and there came
Before his quiet feet the Heavenly King,
And laid before those feet a heavenly flower
Golden of hue, praying that he would speak
And in sweet speech instruct them in the Law.
The Blessed One received the golden flower
Within His hand, and sat in utter calm,
But spake no word. And all the Assembly mused
What this might mean, and, musing, could not know.
But Mahakasyapa mused and smiled—
He only, being wise and venerable.
Then softly spake the Blessed One to him
Who only knew: 'I hold within my heart
The Essence of the Law, the wondrous thought
That is Nirvana. This I gave to thee
Wordless, and wordless thou hast seen and known.'
Thus the great teaching moves from heart to heart
Nor needs it words for wings."

"It may come like the scent of the plum-blossom wafted from one to another, speaking of the spring, but with no words. Or like the beauty of the cherry-blossom that fills the air with love, yet is silent. It may be that living so long in the solitude I have too little care for words, but the clamour of doctrine is less sweet to me than the noiseless rising and setting of the august one, the sun; and the pale glory of the moon is better than all speech. These set forth the Absolute Law. But words break it into the common coin of the market-place wherewith men buy and cheat."

I looked up to the sinking sun.

" 'There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone forth into all lands and their words unto the ends of the earth.' "

He did not recognize the quotation, but it pleased him and he smiled his wise wrinkled smile.

"So it will be and is," he said. "What are words? Even in the pure mirror is the light distorted. Look up therefore to the sun. Better be blinded with excess of light than follow the marsh-light. There is no word shaped by the breath of man that is not falsehood and error, and of this disease must each faith perish late or soon. The Law would be no Law could it be told in words. It is above all evil and likewise above all good; but who shall comprehend this when it is told? In its eyes the two are one, and both

nothing. Who shall receive this? But the universe is its syllabary. Seek if you would find. The humblest need not be ignorant; for the wisest it is too high; but within and without is the Great Law written. The wise know that the Law itself is not. There is silence beyond knowledge. Yet is it daily set forth from East to West, and only in the Law is there peace, and only in peace the Nirvana."

I knew the strange paradox of the Two Spheres of Truth, in which all contradiction is reconciled—the Two Spheres of Reality: the relative truth for the many, and the Absolute Truth that baffles the reason for ever—the "Void."

"And what is the Nirvana?"

Once more I put the unanswerable question. For a few moments there was no answer. The old eyes were following the great shadow of the mountains where it purpled the plain beneath with dusk, although for us in the height the sun was still shining. He sighed, recalled to earth.

"Of this neither the Blessed One nor the glorious Company of the Buddhas have plainly instructed us, nor could they. Therefore can this mystery least of all be spoken. Yet consider the ray of the sun, the wave of the sea, the same for ever, yet never the same;—the ripple of the river. Could we apprehend it if it were not. Music is but a stammerer, but it best shows forth the mystery. Many notes, but one harmony; many parts yet one melody; in one string all sound; the single note nothing, yet all; apparent silence yet the once-stirred vibration rolling on to eternity; the bird's cry, the thunder of the universal march. There is no beginning and no end. It is the Stillness; what more can be told. The universal life can never cease. The dewdrop is drunk up by the sun and is not, yet is. And this not only in the future but here and now."

"Then the Nirvana, the Peace, does not lie beyond death, as the western world has believed?"

"My friend, no. How should not the lotus bear its blossom in the appointed season? Here, in this world of phantom and dream does the man whose eyes are clear attain. And attaining, he possesses freedom from grief and danger and from bodily ills, and instead he receives calm, bliss, confidence, and a great sweetness, purity and coolness that cannot in any words be told. This is the Nirvana.

"Say yet more, honourable one. I learn. Tell me the Way of Attainment."

His face glowed with a still radiance;

"Hear rather the words of the Blessed One when he taught at Isipatana. For thus he said; 'This deep knowledge have I made my own, difficult to

perceive, peace-bestowing, and which cannot be gained by mere reason; accessible only to the wise disciple. Yet there are some whose eyes are only a little darkened with dust; they will perceive the truth.'

"If, Brothers, by the dwelling upon a certain idea, there arise evil and unwholesome thoughts, then the disciple out of this idea should gain another and a wholesome idea. He should say 'Here they are, these unwholesome, pernicious, pain-producing thoughts.' Or he should pay no attention to them, or with teeth clenched and tongue pressed against the gums, he should suppress these thoughts, and in so doing these evil and unwholesome thoughts will dissolve and disappear, and the mind will become settled and quiet, concentrated and strong. This, Brothers, is called The Effort to Overcome!"

I listened in amazement. Is Coué also a Buddhist? Is there any modern thought and attainment which cannot be traced back to the Light of Asia? The old man proceeded serenely, speaking in the words of the Perfect One.

"The disciple, Brothers, thus begets in himself the will to maintain wholesome things that have arisen and the will to bring them to perfection. And summoning all his strength, he strives and incites his mind. And he is filled with the thought; May bone, flesh, and blood, dry up rather than I should abandon my efforts while as yet I have not attained whatsoever is attainable by human perseverance, energy, and endeavour! This is Right Effort."

I entreated him to speak further, and he complied, with the patient courtesy of his race and training.

"Thus he contemplates internal phenomena. He knows how Lust arises, how it is overcome; 'In me is no Lust.' He knows how Anger arises; 'In me is no Anger.' He knows when there are Excitement and Restlessness. 'In me are no such things.' And thus are worldly desire and grief overcome. Thus are put aside the Five Hindrances. And this, O Brothers, is the highest, the holiest wisdom, namely, to know that all Suffering has vanished away. He has found the true deliverance that lies beyond the reach of any change. And those who in the past were Perfectly Enlightened Ones, these also have pointed out the same goal, and those who in the future shall become Perfectly Enlightened Ones shall point out the same goal."

He paused and added;

"These are the Noble Truths, and high above them soar the silver peaks of Attainment, for this is the Way. And well did the Perfect One say that in himself lies a man's deliverance and that neither God nor any divine being

can save him, but only himself. 'Be unto yourselves a Lamp and a Light. Work out your own salvation with diligence.' "

I listened with profound astonishment, and yet more, for in an instant's flash had came to me the certainty that this was absolute Truth, one with all truth ancient and modern, with the teachings of all the Teachers, with science in her lower grasp, with wisdom in her heavenly flight, with all the harvesting of experience. And I knew that whole worlds of thought and knowledge lay beyond the narrow gate he indicated. Yet again he spoke—now in the words of a Buddhist saint:

"Enter this glorious City, ageless, deathless, which cannot in all the world be found and yet is ever about us. There is no spot where it is situate and yet it is, and he who lives wisely is its citizen whether he dwell in one land or another. And in that city all are freed men—freed from the bondage of their Selves, and not one is a slave. This is the Norm."

"And this?" I asked, pointing to the little temple, set like a visible holiness among the pines.

"Useless," he answered, "unless a man see beyond and through it, and when he does this he loves, but needs it no more. Who heeds the alphabet when he can read the classics?"

"And your own office, honourable one?" I ventured.

"An old man's experience may help the very little ones, the children of the Law. What else? Outside this what should I teach? Did not the Perfect One discourage those seekers who will not learn unless they be told first whether the world is temporal or eternal, whether the personality exists after death, saying that such a one would die in his evils ere these secret things could be made clear to him. It is as though a man pierced by an arrow should refuse to have the wound salved until the surgeon told him who had shot it and of what wood it was made, standing vainly by him with the cure in his hand. Therefore of heaven and hell and immortality the Blessed One did not teach, showing only the Way that leads to all knowledge and to all peace. Was not your Buddha of Nazareth also thus silent in his wisdom? But this difference I discern—that your Buddha taught the acceptance of suffering and ours its conquest and destruction. For in suffering is all evil."

There was a long silence. I sat in meditation, remembering that the Greeks also had spoken of Music or Rhythm, the heavenly stammerer, in much the same thought, and that in the western world now is to be felt the stirring of the wind of the Spirit, the conviction that suffering whether of mind or body is an ill thing, that all ills are born in false belief, and that the conquest is to the man who faces these spectres of the mind and exorcises

them according to the teaching of the Norm. Did not the wise sage, Epictetus, say: “If a man is unhappy, remember that it is his own fault, for God made all men to be happy,”—and the wise Emperor confirm his wisdom thus: “Look inward, for you have a lasting fountain of happiness at home that will always bubble up if you will but dig.” And again: “A man is very devout to prevent the loss of his son, but I would have you pray rather against the fear of losing him.” Substitute self-discipline for the word “Pray” and it is a Buddhist utterance. Is all truth indeed one, separated only by words, all beauty the smile of the Universal, all love its light? What are creeds? Words; the veils of truth, clouds which obscure the sun.

In the discipline, the self-reliance, the creedlessness of the Buddha are his strength. He knows the world’s wound and the balm that has bound it. Annihilation? Yes, but only of the Hindrances, and therefore a great peace and gladness are the heritage of the nations who have sat at his feet and learned, though it is but a little, of his high wisdom.

And as I thought in silence the old priest said; “We have spoken of great things, my friend. We have tried in vain to ascend the heights. Let us now be silent awhile and watch the setting of the sun.”

The voice trembled and stopped; the bright old eyes were dimmed. We watched the majestic Nirvana of the sun. Very slowly and in a great glory he sank behind the shoulder of a mountain; the mighty pomp of rippling oceans of gold and fire beat at the bars of heaven and faded at length into grey twilight, and over all—

“the evening drew
Her gradual dewy veil.”

The temple could now no more be seen in the deep shadow of the pines; but still before the shrine burnt the starry glimmer of an inextinguishable light—earthly indeed, but Light of Light notwithstanding.

“It is evening. Let us go in and worship,” he said, and led the way.

THE DAY BOOK OF A COURT LADY OF OLD JAPAN

HER OWN STORY

HIDDEN in the secrecy of exquisite brush characters is a book that will delight the world when the light of an alien day shall shine upon it—a book so enchanting that those would not willingly wait who have tasted its charm in the very few excerpts translated by those accomplished Japanese scholars, Mr. Aston and Mr. Sansom. Others may have given a passage here and there but these small treasures lie buried in the transactions of learned societies. With Nobuko Kobayashi I am engaged on a rendering of the whole book, which will certainly awake fresh interest in the wonderful art and literature of the Far East. It will also give back to the day a girl who died nearly a thousand years ago, yet achieved immortality in her own country. Very strange it is to hear a voice falling crystal-clear across the dead centuries which sever us from the Heian period in old Kyōto, and the more so because this voice is singularly modern in many ways, in its owner's love of natural beauty, of mountain scenery, of the dying fires of sunset, the flight of the crying wild geese across the grey sky, and yet more so in her critical scrutiny of the hearts of men and women, their motives and the means they used to their ends.

Those bright untired eyes watched in the Court of Kyōto and noted what they saw, little thinking that more than nine hundred years later their observation would enlighten barbarian lands, would re-light dead suns and set dead moons shining upon rivers that still sing their wordless music. Of all the literature of that long-ago time in Japan I think this book is the most living. Even in translation some faint perfume of a charming individuality escapes the drowning flood of time, and in reading you may believe you see a girl with the black river of silken hair of a great lady of the age. Her garments, robe within robe, like the labyrinthine petals of some gorgeous flower, are splendidly brocaded with flying birds and blossom. Her eyes, sweetly curved, are alight with humour, more ready to laughter than to tears; her manner, sublimely decorous, is yet the screen of a subtle coquetry. The rose of the full lips a little betrays her. Does a heart beat beneath those garments folded so demurely over the slight bosom? I have not found it in

her writing. Yet a great Japanese lady may cover a death wound with a smile, so how shall we be so sure?

She loves beauty; her feelings are vivid and swift. She sees life in Pre-Rafaelite detail, but of the deeper things of the soul she tells us nothing. Is it pride or indifference? Again we cannot tell. Let us be thankful for what she gives. No others give it, excepting one woman who was her contemporary and wrote an immortal novel. This girl touches the people of her time with her wand and they laugh and talk and live and die. She lays it aside and the curtain falls, and it is more than nine hundred years ago and there is a death chill in the air.

In a country like Japan, where change terrible in its swiftness is sweeping the old landmarks away, those who love the past will cling the more tenderly to what time has spared. It is an exquisite delight to find some written word that breathes life into the delicately faded screens and the old, old silken pictures perpetuating the days that gave birth to such beauty of life and manners, and are now but a memory. Nearly a thousand years ago in the Heian period, the Japanese Emperor Ichijō held his court in City-Royal (Kyōto), surrounded by women and Buddhist priests, the slave of ritual and of court intrigue, a gorgeous shadow of power. In the outer world the famous Minamoto and Taira feuds were raging, but in the seclusion of the palace of City-Royal, all was peace. For men a poem was more important than a protocol, and to be lovely and gracious was the whole duty of woman. Loveliness, however, included more than mere beauty of face; the *précieuses* of France were outmatched by those of the court of Kyōto. These ladies were many of them of very high accomplishment in literature; and an intimate knowledge of the Chinese and native classics was the least that was expected of them. Accordingly, the firmament of the "dwellers above the clouds," as court circles were called in Japan, was brilliant with many stars of varying magnitude, all revolving about the Emperor and his consort. It was at this time that the Lady Murasaki no Shikibu wrote her famous novel concerning the amours of Prince Genji, the Don Juan of Japan: and if a few savants have dismissed it as tedious because it is long, that will not be the verdict of those who value a record that no other hand could have given of the rites and ceremonies of ancient Japan, combined with a picture of manners and a dissection of the hearts of men and women that can never lose its interest while sex is a factor in human life. This novel should certainly be translated as a whole, for of the *Genji Monogatari*, as it is called, only a few chapters have been given to the western world.

The Lady Murasaki was a poet, too, of no mean order. She was celebrated for her impromptus, especially those which touched a delicate

situation delicately. I venture to translate one of these *vers de société* written on the occasion of meeting her lover at night.

"I met him in the night,
But did I? Could I say
If it were he or no?
How could I see aright?
For the moon hid her light
Behind the clouds ere I could see her go."

Such elegant trifles were handed about amidst immense applause, and more than one important office at court was the reward of this light fencing. A note of more real feeling is touched by a rival poet, the Lady Tzumi Shikibu. This, too, I translate, though there is a sharper pang in the original than I am able to retain.

"Soon I must die, but oh, shall there not be
One hour of radiant meeting ere I part?
That, where I go so far, I take with me
Our passion's memory within my heart."

But among these and many more names, one stands supreme—that of the Lady Sei Shōnagon, as she was called at court, from the titulary office she held. She was maid of honour to the Empress, and she amused herself and others by keeping a sort of diary, or record, which has become a classic. It is known as *The Pillow Sketchbook*, from its having been written on the sheets of white paper that cover a wooden sleeping-pillow in Japan. A very human document it is, a light-hearted diurnal of the happenings of many days in the sunshine of the Emperor's tremendous presence and under the protection of the very gracious Empress. The book, so lightly undertaken, has become of extremest value as an authority on the lost and lovely culture of the Fujiwara period.

Those qualified to judge commend the literary perfection of her style and her sure command of the resources of the Japanese language, but what all will value is the humour that shines through all she writes. It makes the book as modern as if it had been written yesterday, instead of during a reign that lasted from A.D. 987 to 1011.

In the elegant brush characters of China she wrote her impressions of the life round her—of the magnificent daimyō whose notice was distinction, as they stalked by in trailing trousers and stiff-winged sleeves, and of the court ladies who were her friends and rivals. Like a faint but very clear echo her voice comes across the centuries and revives a life of grace such as the world will probably never see again.

There was no Tokyo then—its time had not yet come—and Kyōto was the capital, lovely in its well-watered plain with the sacred mountain, Hiei-zan, rising above it and the Kamo River, good for evening fêtes and lute-playing, and full-reflected moons in the waters rippling by the palaces.

There is no place more beautiful than City-Royal—no place where the delicate, faded aroma of the past clings more spiritually to temple and shrine. The golden notes of the great Buddhist bell, announcing the transience of life, float solemnly over the small, clustering houses and through the woods; and memories drift in them like motes in the sunbeam.

> "All things are transient.
> They, being born, must die,
> And being born are dead,
> And being dead are glad to be at rest."

So it tolls; and Sei Shōnagon's story does but give the memories of City-Royal a moment's life before they pass away into silence.

The Imperial Palace was a marvel of refined beauty. The rooms were like jewels, decorated according to the perfect taste of China, then all-powerful in Japan. The screens that closed one august apartment from the other were each a gateway into the land of romance, painted by artists whose religion as well as joy it was to beautify the dwelling of the Son of Heaven. In the palace everything was symbolic; for art was a symbol to which the educated held the key. The great pines of longevity stretched snowladen arms across the sliding walls and spoke of courage and honoured old age. The very gardens were Chinese poems that the initiated could read, with strange perspective of rock and tree and slender, high arched bridges above the pools where the six-tailed goldfish crowded for the crumbs that the little hands of the ladies let fall.

Here is a picture of it all from the hand of Sei Shōnagon. I give it in Mr. Aston's beautiful translation.

"On the northern side of the Emperor's pavilion, where he is wont to take his exercise, the sliding doors have fearful pictures painted on them. These hideous monsters, all arms and legs, may be seen from the upper windows of the ladies' quarters when the pavilion doors are open. It chanced one day that, while sitting on the veranda and talking of these dreadful creatures, the Dainagon, the brother of the Empress, came towards our room. He had on a cherry-coloured outer garment, just old enough to have lost its stiffness and fit him easily. Loose trousers of thickest purple silk and white silk underclothing showing at the neck completed his attire. As the Empress was engaged with the Emperor at the time, he sat himself on the

narrow veranda outside their door, and talked with the Emperor. We saw them plainly through the half-transparent curtains which were hung all round the room. What a pretty picture it was, and how lively! The gay dresses of the waiting-women adorned with wistaria, the yellow kerria and flowers of other kinds; the sound of the attendants bringing the Emperor's midday meal and the officials calling to them to make less noise, and, last of all, the Chamberlain himself coming to announce dinner served and then retiring to his own apartments. The Dainagon accompanied the Emperor to his dining-room and then, returning to our quarters, stood beneath a huge blue porcelain vase in which were placed some branches of the wild cherry, full five feet long and loaded with blossom. The Empress, seeing him, emerged from behind the curtain, and gave him greeting, to which he courteously replied by descanting on the beauty of the palace, the fineness of the day and the good deportment of the servants, alluding in conclusion to the verse which says:

'The days and months roll on
But the Mount of Mimoru remains eternal.'

The whole scene impressed me deeply and I wished it might continue for ever."

It seems, indeed, that it may be immortal, since it has already lived for nearly a thousand years in the minds of men!

Here (translated by Mr. Sansom) is an afternoon with the Empress and her ladies. Poetry was a fashionable amusement; every educated person was more or less of a poet—or pretended to be (which did not always answer the purpose so well). And this tradition still survives in Japan, together with the poems of which the Lady Sei speaks.

"Then Her Majesty placed before her a volume of the *Ancient and Modern Collection*, and reading out the beginning of the verses, she said: 'Now, what comes after that?'

"It was amusing to see our distress as we said among ourselves: 'Some of these we have learned by keeping them in our heads night and day, and now we can't remember them properly. The Lady Saisho remembers ten—if that can be called remembering!—while as for five or six—that's not remembering at all! We are bound to say so to Her Majesty, but how can we let her proposal fall flat in such a dreadful way?'

"However, Her Majesty was graciously pleased presently to read out the endings, and then we all exclaimed: 'Oh, but we know these quite well! How could we be so stupid?'

“Then Her Majesty said: ‘Every one must have heard of the Lady Sennyo-den in the time of the Emperor Murakami. She was the daughter of the Lord Minister of the Left. While she was still a maiden, her father gave her these instructions: “This must be your course of study: First, you must learn calligraphy. Then learn to surpass all others in playing the harp. And lastly learn by heart all the twenty volumes of *Ancient and Modern Verse*!”

“ ‘His Majesty heard of this, and one day he took with him the *Ancient and Modern Verse* and, contrary to custom, ordered the screen to be set up, much to the surprise of the ladies.

“ ‘Then, spreading out before him a volume of verse, he asked her: “What poem was written by such and such a person, in such and such a month of such a year on such an occasion?”

“ ‘She must have felt confused beyond measure! His Majesty called out two of the ladies who knew the verses well, and ordered them to keep count with checker stones. Well, His Majesty pressed her with questions and though he did not go to the end, such was her skill that she did not make the slightest mistake. His Majesty was a little put out by this and he felt he must go on until he found her out in some mistake or something forgotten, however small. So he read to the tenth volume. Then he graciously said: “It is of no use!” put the marker in the book and was pleased to retire to the imperial bed-chamber.

“ ‘That was very admirable. But after some time he was pleased to rise again and say: “It would be very bad to stop without first settling this matter one way or another, and if I put off the second ten volumes until tomorrow she may look them up meanwhile. So we must finish it tonight.” Lamps were then placed near His Majesty, and he read on far into the night. Nevertheless the Lady Sennyo-den finished by not once being defeated by His Majesty’s questions.’ ”

And Sei Shōnagon adds: “The Emperor listened while the Empress told us this story and praised it, saying:

“ ‘How could he have read so much? I myself could not have even read three or four volumes through.’

“ ‘In olden times,’ said one of Her Majesty’s ladies, ‘even the common people had elegant tastes. You never hear of such things nowadays.’ ”

Olden times! And it was all nine hundred years ago! Perhaps it is as well for the peace of all concerned that tastes are not so elegant nowadays. It is difficult to know which deserves most sympathy—the exasperated Emperor or the tortured paragon. But it must be acknowledged that the Empress told her story very prettily!

Nine hundred years past, in old Kyōto, the court ladies were not cruel to their lovers. The manners of the time did not demand that they should be so, provided certain etiquettes were preserved. The Lady Sei has a vivid description of one of the daimyō whom she spied walking home after a night spent in the palace chamber of the lady of his heart. He is gay as a dragon-fly in magnificent purple trousers, a transparent robe over his white tunic and a fine red over-dress wet with the heavy dew. He swings along, humming scraps of verse from the *Collection of a Myriad Leaves*. Suddenly he perceives an open lattice and, peeping in, he sees a pretty woman whose lover has just left her (Can it have been the Lady Sei herself?). They exchange jests. It grows too late for lovers to be abroad; voices are heard and he runs off. It is a strange little vignette of things as old as love itself. A Japanese poem sums it up well:

"What does never change
Since the days of the gods,
Is the way a river runs.
What does never change
Since the days of the gods,
Is the way love flows."

If length be the criterion, the poems of Japan should not be difficult to remember. They have the art of comprising more beauty in fewer words than any other poems in the world, only excepting those of the Greek Anthology, which they sometimes resemble. What other people could sum up a whole tragedy in eight words?—

"Two butterflies. Last year my dear love died."

The interpretation of that brevity might almost be made a test of poetic vision.

There is an enchanting story told by the Lady Sei of the Emperor's favourite cat—a spoilt beauty. She had received a cap of honour and had been raised to the third rank of nobility, with the title of *Miyobu-no-Ototo*, or "Chief of the Female Attendants," and was a cat of many graces. Unfortunately, on a day of disobedience, her lady-in-waiting summoned the Emperor's dog, Okinamaru, to startle her into good behaviour. He barked obediently, and the cat dashed madly behind the screen, where His Majesty sat at breakfast, and sought refuge in his arms. The Emperor, much shocked, sent for the Lord High Chamberlain, and pronounced sentence on poor Okinamaru. A thrashing and exile! The Lady Sei describes him as hitherto a happy dog and much esteemed. But a short time before he had been carried in procession in a willow litter, with peach-blossoms and hollyhocks on his

head! He was now an outcast on Dog Island, “and none so poor to do him reverence.” He may possibly have found life easier without the hollyhocks, but it is interesting to see that the Eternal Cat is victorious as ever. The dog is vanquished; the lady-in-waiting ruined, and the cat lies in the Emperor’s lap and purrs. So was it always; so will it ever be.

The Lady Sei has a charming way of classifying the things that please or displease her fastidiousness. Here is a little list (given by Mr. Sansom) in which she tabulates “things hateful.”

“Bad writing on pink-tinted paper.

“A quite ordinary person talking in a boastful way.

“A baby that cries when you want to listen to something.

“A dog who barks in recognition of your lover when he comes to pay you a clandestine visit.

“And rats running about are also very hateful.”

Here are a few of the “things that make your heart beat.” They do so still!

“When your lover takes out a letter and hands it to you.”

“Watching horse races.”

And among “things that do not look promising” figures “A flighty and fickle husband who takes to staying out all night.” That figure is evidently ancient as well as modern!

She has a very human list of “things enviable.”

“People who learn their prayers without trouble, while you have to repeat the same passage over and over again, and still forget it.”

“People who overtake you without effort while you are panting uphill to a shrine.”

Every one who knows the ascent to the Temple of Miidera near Kyōto, will sympathize with this remark. It was evidently, then as now, a point of religion to set the shrines where the pilgrim’s legs should take fullest part in his devotions.

She writes, as a Japanese lady should, of the loveliness of blossoming trees and flowers. Speaking of the *Paulownia* she says: “Broad and thick are its leaves. It should not be lightly talked of. It is not as other trees. People hold it a thing apart. And the reason is this, that in the boughs dwells that bird which in the Foreign Court (China) is held in awe. Also this tree is the parent of harps and therefore of all beautiful melody. Thus common words should not be used for it, as for a tree that is commonly lovely, for this is a tree of great preciousness.”

There is a mystic touch in this passage which is not usual in the bright ripple of the Lady Sei's thoughts. But the Paulownia is still an honoured tree in Japan. It is one of the crests of the Imperial Household, for one thing. I have bought it in a most beautiful piece of ancient gold lacquer, with the bold leaves and berries rendered in powdery gold on a deep red background.

One of her most charming anecdotes I must give in Mr. Sansom's translation. One might surely think one heard her own words. It is a country picnic when the court ladies for once threw off the restraint of grandeur and played at being natural. From the latter point of view it was not perhaps wholly successful, for etiquette was the real life and all else the pretence. So the story has the same air of delightful unreality as the delicately rustic proceedings of Marie Antoinette at the Trianon, though indeed the thing is as pretty as a Chinese screen where they fleet the hours in an Arcadia of unheard-of blossoms amid a perspective which suggests some unearthly Paradise of the fourth dimension.

It had been raining since the beginning of the month, and every day was cloudy and overcast, so, to while away the tedium I said:

"I should like to make an excursion to hear the nightingale."

Hearing this they all came forward and said:

"So should I." and "So should I."

Some one said:

"At the back of Kamo there is a bridge—I can't remember its name, but it is an ugly one,—and near there the nightingale sings every day."

So we decided to go there and on the morning of the fifth the Stewards ordered a carriage. It was brought round to the north Guard House, an exception being made because of the rainy weather, and four of us got in. The others were envious and said:

"Why can't we have another carriage?"

But her Majesty stopped them and said "No." So we took no notice, and though it seemed very unkind we drove off.

When we came to a place called Umaba there was a great crowd of people and when we asked what it was about they said:

"It's an archery match. Won't you stop and watch?"

They told us some officers of the guards were there but we could see no such people. There were only a great number of persons of the sixth grade strolling about, so we said:

“This is not interesting. Let us get on quickly.”

Hereabouts was the house of the Ason Akinobu.

“Let us go and see it,” we said, and drove the carriage up and alighted.

It was a simple rustic-looking place, the walls had an old-fashioned pattern on them and the screens of split bamboo and rush blinds gave it an old-world appearance. The song of the nightingale greeted us so as to be almost noisy. I thought what a pity it was her Majesty should not hear it, and felt very sorry for those who had been anxious to come with us.

Then our host said we must see some of the sights of the place and brought several nice-looking girls, the daughters of people living near, who showed us how the rice is threshed. He made two of them work a sort of loom we had never seen, and dance and do other things which were strange to us and made us laugh, so that we forgot to compose the poems about the nightingale as we had intended.

Then they set things to eat before us, served on tables like those in the Chinese pictures, and, as nobody paid any attention to them, the master of the house said:

“It is very rustic fare. Here in the country people who come sometimes ask for another helping, but you are quite the opposite.”

So he entertained us, saying:

“These are fern-shoots I picked myself.”

(These shoots when carefully boiled taste something like asparagus.)

And when I remarked:

“Look how we’re all sitting in a row like court ladies!” he said:

“You are used to taking your meals in a more comfortable way,” and took the dishes and set them down before us. And as we feasted merrily some one exclaimed:

“It’s going to rain!” So we hurried to get into the carriage.

“Let us write the poems here,” said one.

“Why not do it on the road?” said I. Then we broke off long branches of beautifully blossoming hare-flowers and stuck long branches of it all over the sides and blinds of the carriage so that it looked as if it were covered with a garment of flowers. The footmen laughed heartily and thrust bits into the wickerwork, crying: “Another bit here! another bit here!” as they gathered them.

When we got near home we thought: “O, but we cannot finish like this!

“Before we have done we must make people talk about us somehow.”

(Little coquettes!)

So we stopped near the Ichi-jo-in and sent in to say:

"Is the Lord Chamberlain at home? We have been to hear the nightingale and have just returned."

The messenger said:

"His Lordship says he will come directly, your Ladyships. He has told the servants to make a room ready and is putting on his trousers."

This remarkable message does not by any means suggest that his Lordship was devoid of these useful articles. He was simply doing honour to his visitors by putting on the ceremonial trousers known as *sashinuki*.

"We can't wait!" I said, and we made the carriage drive off fast to the Tsuchi Mikado Gate, when behold! his Lordship who had somehow got his clothes on and was tying his girdle as he came along, came hurrying after us, and his footmen and guards ran along without having put on their boots. "Quickly!" we said to our driver, but they hurried so that they reached the gate as we drove up, and the Chamberlain, quite out of breath, laughed heartily at the appearance of our carriage.

"Can the people be in their right minds who drive in such a carriage?

"Get down and let us see," said he.

Whereat all his company laughed too.

"But what about your poems?" he asked. "I should like to see them."

"We must show the Empress first," said I. (This was to hide the appalling fact that the poems had been forgotten in the fun.) And while we were talking, the rain began to fall.

Of course the Empress was horrified to hear of such an oversight and they all set seriously to work upon impromptus until a thunder storm so alarmed the whole party by breaking immediately over the Palace that the verses were forgotten.

This girl can write of what she loves; I give my version.

"In summer surely the night is loveliest. The moon—how dare I speak of her? But the darkness is made exquisite by the quick glitter of fireflies weaving their dance in the air. Even the summer rain is beautiful. But in autumn I love the evening. So near do the mountains look, and the birds are flying to their nests in little crowds against the radiant sunset. How lovely it is, and, above all, how fascinating to watch the string of wild geese, far, far away. And then the sun sinks and the soul is lulled by the sighing of the

breezes and the thin singing of the cicada. And winter! the glorious early dawn in the purity of the snow. How white and exquisite the hoar frost. It is cheerful and comfortable to send for the shovel-full of fire and kindle the glowing charcoal, even if during the pallid sunshine of the day we let it dwindle down into white ash and all becomes cold and lonely."

I must not omit (in my own version) the stately visit of the Empress to the Daijin (a high official) Narimasa. There is a good deal to be read beneath the surface of the life the maids of honour led some of the dignitaries who had the misfortune to displease them.

When the Empress went to visit the Daijin Narimasa, her carriage entered at the West Gate and ours at the North. We ladies of course expected that our carriage would pass through the gate right up to the veranda in the usual way and therefore we had not troubled much about dressing either our hair or ourselves elaborately. Unluckily the gate was not wide enough for the carriage to pass and there it stuck, the path to the house being covered with straw mats for us to walk upon. It was positively hateful, for near the gate many people of high and low degree had collected to watch us, but there was no help for it and all was as detestable as it could be.

When we met the Empress and told her of our misfortunes she only laughed at us and said:

"But you knew very well that even in here people would see you, so why were you all so careless of how you looked?"

"Yes," I returned. "But people here are accustomed to take us in ordinary dress. Just imagine a great Minister of State having a miserable gateway that a carriage cannot pass! I shall certainly let him know what I think when we meet."

I had not long uttered these words when in came the Daijin with the Empress's ink-slab which he asked me to give her. I began at once:

"This is really a little too bad of you," I said. "Why on earth do you live in a house with such a miserable gate?"

"Because it suits my position," he said, laughing.

"Really?" said I. "Then what about the sage who built a gate much too large for himself, but with an eye to posterity?"

"Wonderful learning!" he exclaimed. "Why that is an allusion to the country of Utei. I thought only musty old scholars knew that historical incident. Luckily I myself have studied and so I can follow the allusion."

But I would not let him off.

“And as for your path, it annoyed me dreadfully, for though it was covered with mats, some of us put our feet in a perfect quagmire as we came along.”

“Ah, I am truly sorry. But then you see it had been raining and the road was wet. And now will you forgive me if I run away, lest the talk should become even more terrifying?”

And so he made his escape. Later the Empress asked me;

“What can have ruffled Narimasa?”

“O, how can I tell,” said I. “I only said a word about the carriage and the gate.”

One can see the expression. Only! Poor man! But there is much more to be told about Narimasa which I hope to tell one day. He seems to have lost his heart to his tormentor—even to the loss of that decorum which should ever invest a high Minister of State. It is an amusing story. It was confided to the Empress, who confirms my opinion. Her Majesty was even good enough to pity the victim, saying;

“No, no. Don’t tease him as you might another, for he is a very honest sort of man, and I really am rather sorry for him.”

The only comment on this was;

“It was immensely amusing.”

So the charming story goes on with all the gaiety and grace of a girl and yet with that strange touch of pathos that comes from our knowledge that all the laughter is silent now, all the grace in the dust. A bright picture thrown upon the eternal dark, no more. We look and the dead leaves are drifting and the birds’ song is done, and winter is come.

So life itself drifted on, as she herself says, like a boat under sail, and doubtless the evening brought all home. It did so, indeed; for in a few years the lovely Empress was dead, and the Lady Sei, who had received high marks of court favour, abandoned them all, and sought peace in a Buddhist convent. Did she find it? Did all that gaiety and grace still its pulse for ever in the cloister?

I have a little tea-set made for the common people in City-Royal, but made by an artist whose family for seventeen generations has done this work, creating beauty for those who loved it but could pay little for its possession. The design is a fishing-boat drifting home along the Yang-tze River in the dying evening light, and the Chinese characters convey the underlying thought that so it is with life also—that, whether in court or camp

or cottage, all drift home alike when the long shadows are falling. Sappho said the same thing in an age yet more distant than that of Sei Shōnagon —"The evening brings all home." Where has the Lady Sei's silken shallop found its port? Was the life she knew anything more than an exquisite convention; was it any other than a vain effort to catch the world in its "strong toil of grace" and hold it there petrified, beautiful as a glittering enamel—the world that will not be held, but swings for ever down the ringing of change?

We cannot tell—it is all so long ago. Even in Japan they have lost the answer to the riddle. But there is nothing macabre, nothing of the grim and sorrowful in the feeling with which we see Sei Shōnagon and her world draw back into the fathomless distance and the curtain fall upon the charming drama. One would never say of them

> "Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
> Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun."

No, that is far too grave. It is the wrong note. Theirs was the play of delightful children in the childhood of a world. One pictures the court she loved translated to some still Buddhist Paradise of figures loitering in quiet gardens where the eternal sunshine falls on peonies and peacocks in the languid afternoons and the soft subdued talk and laughter is of beautiful things in their lower essence that appeals to the eye and the mind, but never to the spirit of man.

Japan has since trodden the way that leads to mighty things and to awful realities and chivalries, and Sei Shōnagon's little clear voice grows fainter across the vast centuries, but the fragrance of her presence is left, as in the dead heart of a rose.

THE COURTESAN PRINCESS

A STORY IN JAVA

TO voyage from Singapore to velvet darks sown with diamond-dust of stars and to strange perfumes breathed from tropic islands afloat on sleeping seas; to cross the mysterious line of the equator and see new constellations rise by Orion, the Hunter of the Heavens; to see a fresh aspect of the beauty that makes the East the spiritual home of all the earth—that was my dream. It is strange, and very strange that, of the many who visit the East, so few go in search of the spirit that informs it. They recognize the beauty, the torrent of light and colour, the setting of the marvellous drama, the mental, social and political problems—all, all save the one thing that is life, and that in its dying, if it dies, will take the world's hope with it. For the East is the barrier set against the materialism of the West. She still believes; she lays her hope and her life at the foot of her altars. With the Gods she is at home—not in fear, but at ease—a child who laughs and plays in his father's house. We call the East old. It is her eternal youth that is the well-spring of hope for the world. It is we who are old, weary, disillusioned, who have drunk the cup to the dregs and found it bitter—our women grow as hard as our men; our very children are cynics. But the East is gay and glad and young. Life has its sorrows, but she knows the wisdom of sorrow. She does not speak of Death—his truer name is "Onward." Sin is but a phase in the march of development. And for dogma—the East is lenient. She says with Bahram Mirza: "Truth is a bird that flies so fast that the eye of man cannot follow it, and so high that it is lost to sight in the skies. But now and then one of its feathers falls, and, when it touches the earth, it becomes such a prophet as Mahomet or Moses. No man on earth has heard the voice of that bird, nor shall he hear it before he sits down beneath the lote-tree in Paradise."

But all this is mystery to the many who travel to see the beauty of the East, and very often will you hear the Three Laughters of the Fool from those who come from far to visit her. For the fool laughs at a thing because it is good, and he laughs at a thing because it is bad. And he laughs at a thing he cannot understand.

One should start on a pilgrimage with the gay detachment of the pilgrims of Japan, the gladdest pilgrims I know. It is to be a feast for body as well as spirit—there is to be no sour gloom or contrition about it. Humour, kindliness and curiosity are its companions. The Little Gods of the Outgoing and Journeying, with Domiduca, Goddess of Home-coming, all these must be our fellows, and the God who inspires delight and sympathy in everything that is human must be perpetually invoked. He will not fail to answer. So I began my journey in the honest little Dutch boat that goes leisurely down to Tanjong Priok—

But I could not feel at home in Batavia and I am very sure the people of the land cannot either, for, despite the wild vines and flame-trees, it is Dutch to the last drop in every canal. Large Dutch ladies lounge in sarong and slippers on Dutch *stoeps* in the lovely bungalows in the Meester Cornelis district and the other healthy parts. Large Dutch gentlemen in pajamas lounge beside them. And the sarong was never made to contain Dutch charms and is too patriotic to flatter them. To speak with reticence, it is indiscreet. Where it beautifully girds the golden girls of Java and clings in chastest drapery to bosom and slim loins, mysteriously sustained without pin or tie, it utterly disowns the invader, and the revenge it takes is so malicious that one can but repeat Dante, "Reason not on this, but pass in haste with eyes averted."

But the country called aloud—the cultivated wilds, covered with the ardent green of rice and the pampas-bloom of the sugar-cane waving its feathery sea over the blossomed land. I could bear it no longer. I cast Batavia and its lax civilization behind me, and went up glad-hearted to Buitenzorg, which, being interpreted, is "Carefree," and there and in many other places did and saw things which are not in this story. But when in my wanderings, purposeless and happy as the dartings of a swallow, I came to Djokjakarta, I stayed my steps with a glad certainty of spirit, for Djokja, though the Dutch have done their best and worst, remains native, and when I saw the *passar* (bazar), I knew I was at home, and over many seas and lands my heart fled on the wings of memory to Jaipur, Ajmere, for this was their little sister.

How I knew it! The piles of fruit, sun-flecked in the umber shadows of the queer sun-shields, the strange delightful commodities, radiant with colour, that eastern folk want wherever one meets them—

> "I sometimes wonder what the merchants buy
> One half so precious as the stuff they sell!"

—all were here, and I bought and my soul was satisfied.

Nor could I refrain from a visit to the deserted pleasure palace of a bygone sultan, for a passion for eastern potentates is a thing that grows upon one and cannot be assuaged. Have I not seen them at the great Durbar at Delhi—glittering maharajas in stiff gold coats brocaded in colours that cannot be told in anything so sober as words, with rose turbans aigretted with diamonds, and multiple necklaces of fiery splendour, rippling with the radiance of jewels drawn from age-old treasuries? Wherever such have been, they leave the fragrance of their magnificent presence. So I went. There was no disappointment—there never is. The place was incredibly beautiful—old red brick walls plumed with antlered moss and waving with dank, luxuriant ferns, fantastic arches with widely carved gates and toppling pinnacles, and everything settling down in a shining peace into the loveliest ruin. Over it were the palm-trees, feathering and glittering against the heavenly blue. I leaned above the old tanks with brilliant fish gliding in orange gold through the broken orange of the ripples they made—the blue and rose lotus floating above them. Surely an artist who felt the spiritual mysteries of colour, which we do but begin to guess, would almost die of the joy of it! How could he survive to attempt such unattainable glory? One looks at these things and despairs of assimilating their loveliness—with a despair that is pure joy.

One cool, green grotto was once a sleeping-room—a water sleeping-room! Only a true sultan could have imagined that. It proves him royal. He lay within, lost in a dream of languorous delight, and before the openings fell a curtain of living water. Think of it! Think of looking out through that silver translucence to the glory of the sun-steeped gardens, breathe the cool breath of its falling, hear the ceaseless murmur and spray of music and say what sense was left unsatisfied as he lay there, with an eastern girl, serene with argent-lidded eyes, to fan him into a perfect repose? There should always be sultans and maharajas—model dwelling-houses, municipal authorities, are well, but maharajas are greatly better.

And not far from this paradise I found an old tombstone with a blurred inscription of which only the one word "*Infelicis*" entreats for pity in a strange land. What story underlies that cry of a soul imprisoned in the illusion that joy, not sorrow, is the phantom? It is well to die and be set free from such a nightmare; well that the moss should blot out the name of the uneasy dreamer who has awakened. When the Greeks named Death the "Breaker of Bonds," they taught a Buddhist truth that the world shouts aloud to those who have ears to hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. But why should death be needed to teach what is the very song of life?

The Palace—or *Kraton*—of the living Sultan must also be seen, and the humour of the Kraton is a memory I would not part with for much fine gold.

It is a veritable town of about fifteen thousand inhabitants, and Europeans may not enter save under certain conditions and on certain days. And here dwells his Majesty clothed in a sarong striped like the tawny hide of the tiger, king of beasts, surrounded by a royal family clothed in lesser feline stripes according to rank.

A large royal family, for my Sultan (who may or may not be living still) had sixty-five living children, the eldest fifty-four years old, the youngest eleven months. It is true that his Majesty is limited to nine wives, but this niggard frugality is tempered by the understanding that he may change them at pleasure, and as the gift of a wife to the man whom the King delights to honour is a distinction beyond price, there are no difficulties in the way. Naturally there are also many ladies of the lesser ranks of wifehood, but these scarcely count. The Palace was *en fête* at the time I came, because the Sultan had just purchased a lovely Chinese wife for the sum of one thousand pounds. I should have liked to see this costly toy, but it was not possible, and indeed this zenana has a much more efficient guard than is usual even in the East, for it is composed of old women, said to be the superannuated beauties of the harem, and it is added that they form a defence of sleepless eyes and open ears that nothing can penetrate.

The *aloon-aloon*, the courtyard of the Palace was curious, with trees primly clipped into huge *pajongs*, or umbrellas, to represent the canopies of royalty. But the stuffy gorgeousness of the Palace itself left me cold, all but one treasure so wonderful that I looked and longed. A living bird of paradise! We have all seen them skewered to ladies' hats, and even then they are beautiful, whatever one may think of the taste that crucifies them. But the Sultan's treasure—far more lovely, I am convinced, than the new Chinese wife—how can I with feeble words describe it? The body was a rich red-brown, and from each exquisite wing sprang a cascade of pale, ethereal, orange plumes fine as mist and shading into faintest straw-colour. And the throat was burning emerald overlaid with sheening gold. It must be sheer glory to see it fly, but even to see it moving about its cage, pecking daintily at the papayas and other fruits, was to fall down in spirit and worship Nature, the incredible, the divine. Those who have seen the dead bird impaled as a millinery ornament have never seen it, for the radiance flits away in death with the little flower-spirit of the bird. Scarcely less lovely is the crested Java pigeon, a harmony of glorious blues, crowned with a diadem of blue feathers—jewels quivering on long stems as it moves.

That night I attended a Javanese dance. Many people decline to call this dancing—they name it posturing, but to me it is the very poetry of motion. It breathes full East and has almost a religious significance, recalling strange

rites and the worship of old, old Nature Gods, to whom none of the natural wants and impulses of humanity were alien or unclean. These girls were clothed in stiff red velvet bodices seamed with gold, wound tightly round the slim bosom—the arms and shoulders bare, the beautiful skin wheat-colour tinged with gold and gleaming satin-smooth. The little feet and hands were small as those of a child, and the face and eyes cold and expressionless as masks under the strange head-dresses, something like pinnacled mitres of jewelled gold. They moved slowly and languidly, singing sometimes in a monotone, every line of grace flowing into another without pause or seeming change, subtle, melting, as the movement of a snake. The thing was strangely alluring, the woven paces and waving hands drew and repelled alternately. The watcher waits for the flash of passion—the swift-darting eyes, the wooing lips. It is all there—a very little way beneath the surface, but it never comes. The girl is passive as a gold butterfly transfixed and set in some dim golden shrine.

And now I have spoken of kings and dancing-girls it is time to tell a story of Java which embodies much of its spirit—its grotesquerie, its Buddhist faith that what is unclean can and must rise up into the sunlight, its belief in beauty in dark places. Shall I call it "The Courtesan Princess"?

But first I must tell where I heard it—at night and in a place sacred to the faith in which the story had small part, before the three noble temples of Prambanan dedicated to the Indian Trinity, strange relics of the long-ago Indian dominance in Java. Here is enthroned the Moon-Crested God, so called because the crescent moon adorns his head as when it is seen fluttering like a feather over his far-away mountains, the Blue-Throated, because he drank the poison that otherwise must have slain the world, and bears its indelible stain. Before his temple is a green lawn where crouches in eternal worship, Nandi the Bull, his faithful attendant, and on either side are the temples of Brahma the Creator and Vishnu the Preserver, who, with the Destroyer Shiva, complete that Trinity which is Three in One and where none is afore or after other.

Above them shone the stars which saw them built, and ruined—those Watchers to whom time is nothing, and looking up at their wonder I recalled the Orphic Hymn which should be always repeated on the Night of No Moon, for then the starry influences are unbound. And if it be objected that a Greek Hymn is out of place before an Indian temple, I deny it, for in this there is no word that will cause a frown to gather on the brows of the Threefold, the Terrible.

"Heavenly Stars, beloved children of black Night, circling in whirling orbits, light-giving, fiery, eternal ancestors of all things, ye who are the

destined symbols of Fate, ordering the divine straight way for men—; Sevenfold shining cincture, seeing everything and moving in high air, heavenly and earthly, running flaming and for ever unwearied, glittering eternally upon the dusky robe of night, swift-sparkling, shining, joyous in every darkness,—Come, O wise rewarders of holy mystery, fulfilling graciously your course with shining labours." And when I had repeated this, a Buddhist who stood beside me, fresh from the marvels of the sculptured Bible of the Buddhist faith, the Borobodoer, said this;

"I have a story of my own faith—a story of Java, for we too once ruled the souls of men here, though Java sits no more at the feet of the Blessed One. Will you hear it beneath these stars which have seen all these things pass? for though they pass they do not end, but return in the Completion."

And he told this story, with the image of Maheshwara the Great God looking down upon us in ageless quiet.

Long, long ago, there was a great King who lived with his Queens in the mighty Kraton beneath Papandayan, the fiery volcano. He had had so many Queens that he really could scarcely tell one from the other, though each was lovely as Loro Jonggran, the Beautiful Virgin of the temples at Prambanan. It followed as an inevitable consequence that he had many children, and thereby hangs the tale.

One day the Prince of Mendoet came to visit the King, and in honour of the visit a great dance was prepared and the royal persons sat together and rejoiced in the beauty of the dancing women, like waving snakes in their slim gold sarongs, splendid in the light of the bursting flames from the great crater above them. And so overwhelmed with beauty was the Prince that, clasping his hands, he exclaimed: "Great and most Great! surely to all your titles should be added the title 'King of the Heavenly Dancers,' and certainly each one of these pearls of loveliness cannot be less than royal and your own daughter. Favoured are the eyes that have seen!"

And the King frowned like the storms on Goenoeng Goentoer (Thunder Mountain) and he shouted: "These my daughters? Is it supposed that my Princesses dance like light women before my guests? And if you call these beautiful, you are unworthy to see the delectable beauty of the royal line."

But the Prince of Mendoet implored forgiveness with such humility and entreated so earnestly to be made aware of that in which real loveliness consists, that the King finally relented and, commanding all the rest of the company to prostate themselves with their faces to the earth, he cried with a mighty voice like the roar of the hurricane in the jungle, "Rose Pearl! Heart-

Devourer! Love's Sting!" and so many more names that at last the Prince lost count and they became indistinguishable as the pattering of raindrops, and he sat breathless with astonishment.

And now there ran and fluttered from the Palace a multitude of maidens flocking together, radiant as birds and blossoms. Some resembled that pigeon that bears the diadem of blue jewels, some floated in gold like the paradise bird, some glowed like the blossoms of the flame-tree; and, forming themselves into glorious companies, they danced in lines, in groups, in swaying, linked circles, sometimes approaching the King, sometimes retreating, sometimes darting and wheeling away. And the Prince, pale with astonishment at their numbers, for indeed they were as an army with banners, said at last: "Surely, O Axis of the Universe, these are not *all* your daughters?"

And the King, much incensed, replied: "All? Most certainly not! And I consider the question as an insult, inasmuch as no King should be suspected of having a family so restricted in number. All? The little young maidens are not here, nor the elder Princesses, who are married or matrons. Nor those who are betrothed to Princes of Malaya, India and Cathay. And not only so, but one of my Queens is expected this very night to present me with another. Therefore, ungrateful one, get you gone, and learn that riches of a host should least of all be underestimated by a guest." And, as he roared this rebuke, the Princesses fled screaming in every direction, like leaves torn off and carried on a great wind.

But the Prince of Mendoet rose and said firmly: "Know, most ungenerous King, who would not delay for an explanation, thus wronging a guest who did but marvel at your affluence in daughters, that the Princess to be born tonight shall, as a reward for your evil temper, be in the future a *bed o ya* (dancing-girl) and a courtesan. And this shall continue unless she is able to answer a hard question that I shall put to her on her sixteenth birthday. And it is in truth highly improbable that she will be able to do so."

The King swooned and the Prince departed in anger.

So the little Princess, gay and glad and beautiful as a scarlet minivet, grew in ever greater beauty until she neared the age of fifteen, and then, persecuted by her sisters because of her evil destiny, forsaken and despised by all (which, if they had but considered it, was the very way to bring about what they feared), she fled away from Papandayan to the great city of the Dieng. And there, from want of food and from other miseries, she became a dancer and courtesan, as had been predicted, thus fulfilling her destiny. But it is to be observed that in this life of wretchedness she retained that

courtesy, almsgiving, and simplicity of nature which are the birthright of Princesses. And for a year she pursued this course of conduct.

Now, on her sixteenth birthday, she was summoned to the great hall of the Kraton to dance before the King of the Dieng, who had heard the rumour of her graces, and she entered, the musicians with their *alang-alangs* preceding her. Very beautiful were these instruments, being pipes of bamboo of varying length, richly gilded and set in a frame. And men followed, bearing *gamelans* with their circles of tiny gongs, for it was to be a very great music indeed, and beside the King of the Dieng sat the Prince of Mendoet, for he knew the testing-time was come. So the Princess, slim as a golden mermaid, swayed into the hall with outstretched arms and dropped palms and head thrown back, while her ambushed eyes gleamed under the cloud of black lashes upon the Princes, her lips apart in a dream of sensuous sweetness. How she danced!—light as a soap-bubble swaying at the end of the tube ere it floats away; sweeping to the floor like an alighting bird, rising on little feet with arms outspread like wings until it seemed she would flit upward like a Celestial Dancer, and the music followed her like her thought. All gasped for wonder to behold such a bedoya, and most of all the King of the Dieng, who leaned forward, saying half aloud:

"Why have I not seen this precious Blossom, blown from her slender stem in a dancing wind? Oh, would of all heart's desires, that she were pure and my Queen!"

And at the very instant that he said this and the dance ended, the Princess reached the age of sixteen.

And the Prince of Mendoet, rising to his feet, spoke thus: "Lovely bedoya, it has been shown to me that your wit is as nimble as are your little golden feet. Therefore, for the pleasure of the King and company, I ask you a hard question that we may test you. Now hear me."

And she crouched humbly before the attentive noble persons and made a gesture of obedience.

And the Prince proceeded: "Once, a very long time gone by, when the great King of India, Asoka, stood by the holy Ganges, marvelling at its rolling flood, he said this: 'Is there any among Gods or men who could turn this proud river backward, rolling again to her source?' And all said, 'None, O King.' But it chanced that a lovely courtesan, Bindumati by name, was in the crowd about the King, and she said to herself: 'Here am I, who follow the lowest and meanest of callings in this city of Pataliputra. Yet I can do this thing—I know it!' So she put forth power, and that very moment the roaring, raging Ganges rolled back upon herself in the sight of all. And, seeing her form dilate with the passion of her power; the King commanded

and she was dragged before him and he said ‘O woman of evil life, is it possible that by your power the deified stream is turned backward upon herself?’ And she said, ‘So it is.’ Now, Princess, declare if you can, whence came her power.”

And the Princess replied with humility: “The reason was this: truly she was a woman of loose and evil life, but in the strength of the Blessed Lord Buddha she made an Act of Truth, and so great is the power of this that it can turn the whole world of Gods and men upside down.”

And the Prince of Mendoet smiled, saying, “What then was the Act of Truth made by Bindumati the courtesan?”

And the Princess proceeded: “Thus have I read in the ancient Scripture: Whosoever gave her gold, were he a noble, a Brahman, a tradesman or a servant, she regarded them all alike. If she saw a noble, she made no distinction in his favour, if a slave, she despised him not. Free alike from fawning and dislike, she did perfect service to him with whom she had contracted. Her life was ill but she lived it with truth and with entire justice. Therefore, when she collected her will, the Justice on which the Three Worlds sit throned responded, and with this she drove the river back as she could have driven the Gods. For in all things, small and great, human or divine, Justice is one and its own Law it cannot dispute, no, not though the Heavens and the Hells fall in ruin.”

So the Princess ceased, with tears in her eyes, and beneath her breath she added, “This have I also done.”

And the Prince of Mendoet replied: “If this be so, make then before us all an Act of Truth, and if the gilded alang-alang lying at your feet put forth the blossoms of the sacred *sumboja*, it shall be a sign that the hand of the Lord Buddha has washed clean this shameful year and you shall stand before us pure virgin, forgetting the soil and stain.”

So, rising doubtfully to her feet while all gazed in silence, she fixed her eyes on the image of the Blessed One that sat in golden peace in the shadows of the hall, and, gathering herself together, she raised her hands before her and made an Act of Truth, uniting her justice with the Justice of the Eternal, and the spirit rose in her like a wind of fire. And even as she did this, a great music broke from the alang-alang and the hard wood, gilded and splendidly dead, broke forth living into the sacred flowers of the white sumboja with its heart of gold, and the fragrance filled the air.

And all were silent, trembling.

So the Princess, paling with fear to find herself in the presence of men, the evil past forgotten utterly as though it had not been, fell on her knees and

hid a child's face in her arms—pure maid again—and from all minds that year had vanished like a dream of the night. And she became a great Queen, in all things obedient to the Law, and the Prince of Mendoet went smiling away, meditating upon the power of the Truth.

So the story ended, and surely upon the stony face of the Great God Maheshwara there was a smile also, for to every God the servants of Justice are dear. And this is the true tale of the Courtesan Princess, and, as I think, a beautiful one, though it would have been more beautiful if I could have told it as I heard it and not in my own words. It could not be true in Java today for she has left the Jewel in the Lotus and has taken Islam for her guide. May it lead her into peace!

But still the great and glorious temples of the Blessed One survive and nowhere greater and more glorious than here. Also there is in Java possibly the most beautiful image in the world of the Lord that looketh down upon the sound of prayer. Those who have seen that embodied Compassion will need no gloss on the story of the Princess; they will know it could have been no otherwise and that, whether it happened or did not happen, it is an absolute truth and an eternal one. I knew the spirit of Java in knowing that.

That night, as often happens in Java, the stars were dimmed in storm. Thunder broke loose from the mountains, terrific thunder, the blue blaze of the lightning, the awful roar together, one and indivisible. I took it as an invitation to climb into that upper world of the volcanoes, where the undying fires are smithying the world that shall be when we have passed on to new lives and experiences carrying the harvest of this life with us. And high in the heights I found what I had hoped and very much else.

But that is another story of the wonder and joy of this happy world. One cannot wander amiss. I am certain of this thing, that, if the mind of man once touches the point of passionate and comprehensive sympathy, he will open his eyes and find about him here and elsewhere the Paradise he dreams that he has lost.

THE HAPPY SOLITUDES

WHAT will be left in the world when steam and electricity have done their cruel worst and discharged the tourists in hordes as yet unknown upon its ancient kingdoms; when the lonely ruins of Angkor Wat are the scene of picnic-parties and the Wild Was of Burma targets for the daily camera; when all men and women are stamped with our image and clothed in our garments and refuse to be beautiful and surprising any more? It is coming—in many places it has come. It is possible to despair in looking on Egypt, Tokyo, Shanghai—it is also possible to wish that some despot of the type of Genghis Khan or Tamerlane might arise with a thundering veto and forbid all entry into his savage and mysterious domains. It would then be left for an explorer of the gallant old sort to creep through his boundaries and report to a world hungry for the unknown, and mystery and delight come back once more to make their home with men. Otherwise, we shall ask very soon with Petronius, "What can we find worth doing when the worst we can do has been done—" to spoil and devastate.

Ah, but we can never wholly spoil! Remember that the mind of man, that true world of all romance, is still illimitable, that its continents can never be explored in spite of all the argosies that have been launched to sail those purple seas; that a greater than Tamerlane has said "Thus far and no farther" in those strange realms of the soul whence all the stories come, where the dragons haunt and the sworded knights ride to the Quest. No geographer has ever charted, will ever chart, the land of imagination past, present, and to come, where still the Moghul Emperors watch their fair slaves by gliding Jumna and dead Fathpur Sikri. Still will a word from the seer transfigure the Kyōto of the street car into the lost Heian—the City of Peace. For dreams are more real than any facts, they are stronger than all realities.

Yet still there are haunts where Beauty walks visible in her many guises, —she the Many-Named, the worshipped of all the Gods. Once she went silver-shod through the ways of men; now she is grown shyer and must be sought in lonelier places, unless indeed your own heart be her temple and then— But this cannot be told except to the initiates and they know it already.

I found myself one day at Shimonoseki with a rain falling like crystal rods—the very rain Hokusai loved to draw in his undying impressions of the life of Japan. It splashed on the broad hats of the coolies wending their cheerful way along the wharves, and a disgruntled tourist beneath a shining umbrella discharging a cataract from every spoke, mourned to the universe and a companion: "Beastly hole this!—built yesterday—nothing on earth to see. Let's clear as soon as we can."

Was it worth while to tell him that here—hard by on the swirling waters of Dan-no-ura—was fought the last desperate fight between the Minamoto and Taira clans, which lost Japan an emperor and changed her history. Would he have cared to hear a Japanese poet of the twelfth century who thus told the story of a brave woman's deed when she saw that the Taira were defeated and the Emperor's cause lost. He was but eight years old.

Niiodono was prepared. Throwing over her head her double garment of sombre hue, and girding up high her trousers of straw-coloured silk, she placed under her arm the Sacred Seal and girt on her loins the Sacred Sword. Then, taking the Sovereign to her bosom, she said:

"Although a woman I will not allow the enemy to lay hands on me. I will accompany my Sovereign."

So saying, she calmly placed her foot on the ship's side. The Sovereign had this year reached the age of eight, but looked much older. His august countenance was so beautiful that it cast a lustre round about him. His black locks hung loosely down his back. With an astonished expression he inquired: "Now where do you propose to take me?" Niiodono turned her face to her child-Lord and with tears that fell *bara-bara*, "Do you not know, my Lord," said she, "that although by virtue of your keeping the Commands in a former life you have been born the ruler of ten thousand chariots, yet, by an evil destiny your good fortune is now at an end. Be pleased therefore to turn first to the East and bid adieu to the Shrine of the Great God of Ise. Then turn to the West and call upon the name of the Buddha, solemnly committing yourself to the charge of Those who will come to meet you from the Paradise of the West. This world is the region of sorrow, a remote spot small as a grain of millet, but beneath the waves is a fair City called the Pure Land of Perfect Joy. Thither is it that I take you."

The child then tied his top-knot to the Imperial robe the colour of a mountain dove, and tearfully joined together his little lovely hands. First he turned to the East and bade adieu to the Shrine of the Great God of Ise. Next he turned to the West and called upon the name of the Buddha. When he had

done this Niiodono made bold to take him in her arms and soothing him with the words: “There is a City below the waves,” sank down to the bottom one thousand fathoms deep. Alas, the pity of it!—the changeful winds swiftly scattered the flowery august form; the rude billows of severance buried the jewel-person. His palace had been called Chosei to denote that it was established as a long abode, and the gate inscribed Furo—the portal through which old age passes not. But ere ten years had passed he became the drift of the deep sea.

So she saved the honour of the Emperor and the Sacred Treasures of the Empire. And there is not a gull along these sad shores of Dan-no-ura but wails today for the royal child, and even the sea-crabs bear each on his shell the grim face, distorted with the death-scorn and hate of a Taira warrior. Yes, there is romance in Shimonoseki for those who can recognize the swift fragrance of her passing.

Here too was the destiny of Japan again decided when the allied fleet of the United States, England, France and Holland in 1864 thrust the civilization of the West in the face of her repulsion. A relative of my own, still living, was present, and saw later the display of the feudal army of Japan—the two-handed swords, the *daimyō* with the steel blades soaring from their helmets and the bows and arrows as sure and formidable as those which loosed the grey-goose shaft at Crécy and Agincourt. “There was a charge,” he writes, “which I can never forget, armour clashing, swords glittering, archers with bent bows and arrows on string. Our men loudly cheered it and the applause was received with bent heads and profound respect. How unimaginable would have been the suggestion that we were beholding the fathers of the men by whom the mighty Russian Empire was to be abased! The irony of fate strikes one with awe.” I stood by the swirling, dangerous currents of Shimonoseki and marvelled, remembering that to the hand of this man who still lives was given the first breech-loading Winchester rifle turned out by Japanese workmen, with the request, proudly made, that he would show it to the British Admiralty. He did this and adds: “But I do not recall that any interest was taken in the circumstance.” Admiralties are not intuitive; yet one would think that rifle might have interested them a little.

I crossed the narrow strait to Moji in the southern island of Kyushu for I was for the Yabakei and holy Hikosan, and incidentally for the delightful grotesquerie of little Beppu which our Japanese comrade was resolved we should by no means miss. Lovely indeed is the country from Moji to Beppu;

the farm houses beautiful with their high ridges and the deep thatch-rooted flowers flourishing on the roof exactly as they do in far away Kashmir. But that journey was for the railroad and I am never for that when foot or horse or some queer vehicle of the country will serve.

Beppu received us in a smur of rain that veiled the sea in clouds of grey softness and folded the extinct volcanoes in league-deep mists. The little streams sang full-throated and every branch dripped diamonds as we passed through a lovely garden to the small, high-standing hotel with the moors about it and its enclosure of wild bushes and rocks. That hotel was one for sensible people and not for your weaklings who demand plush and marble wherever they go and know nothing of the delicate austerities which make beauty in Japan. But a gayer little place could not be. The dining-room was whitewashed pure and clean, and all about it stood real trees—tall trees in great tubs, and they were covered with artificial cherry-blossoms so beautifully made that you might think a whole flight of fairy butterflies had sailed in through the windows and alighted with flushed sweet-pea wings upon them. They shed a pink shade on the little tables and all the world was a bower.

But there was more—there was luxury, for the friendly giants of the underground have by no means gone out of business in Beppu because the volcanoes are taking a holiday which I doubt not will be a short one. They pump great streams of water through the hotel at exactly the perfect temperature, and accordingly there are deep baths that invite repose, and while the rain is sounding its little gongs outside, it is a very wise move to send for the blind masseur and then betake oneself to the profound warmth and healing of the chin-deep naturally medicated bath; for this is the real fountain of youth and very far beyond that which old Ponce de Leon described long, long ago in the dream-world of the Incas and the sun-descended peoples. A very good preparation, too, for the long tramp down the Yabakei Valley and the climb up lonely Hikosan.

But all Beppu is hot springs. It is a wonderful place—lovely as Italy, with a whispering summer sea upon its beaches and glorious woods and mountains, and wild, rejoicing streams which flash down the heights and warble in the little gardens where the flowers grow so thickly. And next day dawned in splendour with tear-bright eyes—a glorious sunshine and sky of unfathomable blue. I walked down through the garden, rain-washed and glittering, where the swollen stream leaped at the little bridges and swayed the delicately haughty white iris in its pools. The quaintest little town!—proud as all these places are of its natural industries and products which tempt the passer-by exactly as the shells and seaweeds of the shore tempt

children. You buy them and cannot help it and an hour later wonder why you did, except that they are a part of the charming illusion that softens all outlines of reality in this dear land.

I might write of wild, sedgy walks in the hills, on the hunt for waterfalls, which indeed is very good sport. There was a special one that sprang like a dryad from a bower of the sweet honeysuckle, breathing perfume from its creamy horns dashed with crimson until it seemed the very water must be sweet as queens' orris and nard. There are those who say the flowers of Japan have no scent—may they end their miserable lives in the Hell of Great Wailing, which I had lately quitted! About us were the little white clustered roses, the darlings of these shy brakes, and what I took to be wild orange-blossom, and in the rich moistness, white cyclamen, and *deutzia*, sometimes called hare-flower. No, there was no lack of these and many more to delight the eye and perfume the wild sweet air.

We left Beppu with regret when we set our faces to the Yabakei Valley, staying on the way at inns unknown to the ordinary traveller, but known very well to our Japanese companion, who could tell to a nicety what might be hoped in the way of *tori-nabe*, *miso-shiru*, *renkon*, and other good things at each. And here let me say that Japanese food is very much underrated and little understood by those who cling to westernized hotels. So also in China, and I would add my voice to that of Professor Headland when he commiserates the ignorance of those who turn up their noses at some of the good things set before a guest in the Far East. Tenderly as Charles Lamb writes of the succulence of roast pork, he is scarcely so heart-moving as the professor when he dwells on the charms of *tsuan yang-jou-wan* (balls of mutton with a sausage flavour swimming in cabbage broth) and *chu po-po* (steamed dumplings enclosing savoury hash). Personally I am a Buddhist in my tastes as regards food, but when he declares that egg-soup, lotus-seed broth, cubes of fruit jelly, bean-curd and other such delicacies are "like gentle breezes that would carry you into the regions of celestial bliss," I am inclined to agree, especially if I might add stewed beans seasoned savoury sweet, porous lotus-root, cold egg-custard and several soups, with, say, a pickled plum—*umeboshi*—and a touch of *shoyu*. I do not think remote little inns in our own countries provide so well for the unexpected guest as those of China and Japan.

And so we reached Hiida amid the green and golden crops. It recalled to me a passage in a wonderful book, the collection of many centuries, which I have translated with one of the priests of the temple that has preserved its treasures. Thus Ichi-nyo Shonin wrote hundreds of years ago and thus I saw myself:

"Early in the dawn-hour I set forth from the temple,
For, it may be, five miles I walk and sing as I go.
The differing views of the river sway the moods of the stranger,
And oft-times my 'norimono' [palanquin] pauses.
Thousands of mountain peaks dwell in the clear sky,
And the people of the many villages are gay and glad.
I marvel, having looked around me,
Where is the end of this wide and lovely view."

It was a perfect day and the river danced and glittered over its rocks. And at last we came to Ao, a happy little village, and the twilight was closing soft wings about it and hushing it to rest. What might be expected of a western inn amid such primitive surroundings? I will tell what we found here. Delicate purity and cleanliness, rooms large or small, as the fancy took us to push back the sliding *shoji*; no paint-work—only wood treated with perfect simplicity and, thus becoming a beautiful ornament. Pale, unpainted wood, framed in slips of darker, and above this a trellis about five feet high lined with creamy paper and sliding in grooves for the partition. And yet higher an open-work trellis of the paler wood and then the ceiling—warm brown boards with longitudinal bars across to break the monotony. For decoration a recess of a dark wood and a faintly hued *kakemono* hanging within it and at its top a little cabinet with sliding doors of dull gold with daisies and a spear or two of grass raised on each. Outside, the balcony and the glory of the great night. I would rather live in such a room than in many of the world-famed palaces I have seen, and it is typical of those I know in the wayside inns of Japan. When shall we learn what this people has known instinctively, that in art, in decoration, in poetry—yes, even in poetry, the half is greater than the whole? In their great age, the Greeks told us this—it is the secret of their wonders, but we have not listened.

Here we discoursed on the mystery of rebirth and the passion and pain and unsatisfied desire which create and perpetuate a new *karma*. We talked until the moon rounded queenly above the pines of the hill where the great Rakanji temple is throned, and I asked if my Japanese comrade believed in cases where reincarnation has bound an oriental past to a western present, for such a one I myself have known. He answered that very certainly this might be, speaking from his own knowledge also. And when the night settled down on Ao, visions rose about me thick as motes in the sunbeam, and I made these lines of "The Twice-born Beauty" who is as old as the Orient, who, reborn into a western world, wears its semblance but is not of it for all the gold hair and azure eyes that disguise the truth. And this is a part:

"Strange centuries have dropped asleep
Since first she smiled upon the May.
But still her alien graces keep
The memory of a vanished day.
She moves her little sliding feet,
Her fleeting blushes come and go
As when she paced Kyōto street
What time she wore the kimono.

"Her eyes were dark as midnight skies,
The satin sweeps of ebon hair
Were looped in shining butterflies,
And stately daimyō found her fair.
The down-dropped glance that will not see,
The grace that wafts her fluttered fan—
These are the perfumed memory
Of those dead days in old Japan.

"O do not woo! She moves in dream.
The years fall round her like a veil.
She cannot love. She does but seem
A living lady—spirit-pale.
Your heart and hers can never meet,
Although you wept, she would not know.
She paces still Kyōto street,
Demure in golden kimono."

And this has since been made into most melodious Japanese under the name of "*Saisei no Bijin*," and those who read it in that tongue know it tells a truth which explains many of the riddles of that subconscious self which is the problem of modern psychologists. It was no problem to the Lord Buddha, as he who runs may read in the ancient Scriptures.

Next day was rememberable. We climbed the hill deep in pine and maple and solemn cryptomeria. The majesty of the huge red columnar stems uplifting their dense clouds of sombre shade, sun-shot here and there like the opening of sky-windows, made the approach to the Rakanji temple the aisle of a great church. We climbed the steep and manifold steps, aged, broken and feathered with fern, the little streams and springs breaking diamond-clear beside them, and all the way shadowy and sweet, a green thought in a green shade, as Marvel wrote long ago. Here and there are *sotoba* with Chinese characters upon them; for this temple is a very holy place, said to

have been founded twelve hundred years ago as one of the first Buddhist temples in Japan. The gravestones climbed with us up the heights. Great heights, which recalled the words of my beloved Lady Sei Shōnagon when she wrote of the enviable people who "overtake you without effort while you are panting uphill on the way to a shrine." Several, skilled by long practice, augustly overtook us now, especially at points where the steps were broken away and my hands had to help my feet, but all was charming courtesy and smiling apologies for taking the lead. It was worth it a thousand times over when the top was reached and there was the shrine, built under the penthouse of a great overhanging crag with a shining pool of iris to catch the crystal drops that fell from the rocks above. For here the Lord Buddha sat in the midst, looking out over the wonderful landscape below in its hills and blue distances, holding his court of *Bodhisattvas* and sages as he did long ago on his own Peak of Vultures. What is the peace that broods almost visibly on these temples, radiating from the calm of the Excellent One? It deepens like a rising tide, unhurried but unlet, and submerges all within its tranquil deeps. To me it is no marvel that so many have sought the life of meditation that he offers and have left the loud world beating like stormy waves upon the rocks of the passions and desires. Many of his recluses have been poets. To them a spirit one with their own dwelt in the deep woods, for they knew that in every tree, in every stream was the germ that will one day break into the blossom of perfect attainment. For is it not written—"Grass, trees, countries, the earth itself, all these shall wholly enter into Buddhahood."

How Wordsworth would have loved that doctrine! Surely he knew it in the innermost. Hear how a Japanese saint writes of his beloved solitudes.

He lived his life in the wild days when the Armada of Kubla Khan swooped down upon Kyushu, and knew the deeps and heights of it all.

He had submitted his neck to the headsman's ax and had been saved by an interposition which is still thought miraculous. And at last, at peace in the quiet life, he writes this:

"When the solitary autumn draws on the surroundings of the little thatched hermitage are bedewed and the cobwebs hanging from the eaves are transfigured into garlands of jewels, noiselessly the deeply dyed maple leaves come floating on the water that flows from the bamboo pipes, and the water, thus tinged with rose, seems to stream from the fountain of Tatsuta where the Brocade-weaving Princess is said to abide (she who clothes the woods with crimson). Behind the hermitage the steep peaks rear their heads and the singing crickets are heard among the branches. In front, flow the rivulets making a little music like drums and flutes, and the pools reflect the

moonlight of reality as it is. When the moon shines in a cloudless sky it is as though the darkness of the shrouding illusion were dissipated for ever. We go down to gather wood in the forest, or through the dewy bushes to pick parsley leaves. I often think so must it have been with the Lord Buddha when he was in search of truth. And thus I sit on the mat of meditation and in vision I see every truth present to the mind, so that even the call of a deer to its mate helps me to utter the innermost voice of my heart."

Is there no charm in these quiet voices calling from the very heart of solitude? Is this the better way as the shadows of life lengthen, or ours?—we who grow old in cares and strife and the loud crying of the world in our ears, until at last life spurns us, and we—not so much lay it down,—as are flung violently from it, worn out and emptied.

We sought another part of the temple, all gold and gleaming old brocade about the altars, and richness of bronze bells and gongs and beautiful burners for incense and many symbols of worship. The wonderful old pictures did not recall India, the cradle of the Faith, but Mongolia, China, Korea, those daughters of the Lord.

The good abbot took us into his own little house, poised on a crag sheer over the lovely valley. Such a quiet room—its only furniture a cushion, a little low table and a fine old screen of blurred gold with rich ancestral figures; its only ornament the name of the house written in black upon a soft background. And the name—"The House built on Clouds." No one can know how beautiful that name was, how like the receding notes of an aërial music, who has not stood there, looking down the sheer height and the swaying tops of the trees and the mountains blue and faint on the horizon; for indeed the house overhung it all like a martin's nest in the eaves of heaven. It was a place for recollection and meditation and the peace that comes with pensive evenings and a calmly rising moon. I shall not forget the Rakanji temple and the gift it gave me of its own quiet. Many temples of many faiths do I know, and each has its own note in the great chord of faith, but that of the Buddhist temples at their best is that of an utter serenity—the soul resigns itself to the Immeasurable and asks no more.

I remember another—very far from Rakanji—in the heart of an ancient garden; great masses of dahlia, phlox and marigold. The entrance is through an eaved gateway with corners curved upward like horns. It is said this form is derived from the old Mongolian nomad tent and that the corners are tilted to send the demons spinning up into the air when they attempt to perch. But the demons are long forgotten and the eaves are lovely with tender little plants that nestle in the tiles. In this gateway swings a huge old bell of embossed bronze sheened with a green patina like fine moss. The garden is

vocal with the bird-voices of streams, and everywhere are flat, sunk stepping-stones for treading. Little dwarf pines overhang the carp-ponds where the golden fish waver like watery flames through the reflections of the milk-white phlox. The flowers grow in wild masses and the butterflies like unmoored flowers flit about them. Indeed it was a haunt of peace with the old sweet scent of worship that clung about it like ashes of roses.

In the midst of the dreaming sunshine stood the small temple with its background of marshalled pines, and beside it the priest's house, open to the sweet wind—the screens all flung back and the breeze fluttering through it like a more aërial butterfly. I saw him going down the path among the flowers in his white robe. He had the soft, abstracted air of the mystic and spoke very little—how could it be otherwise in such a place? But the purity of the house—the creamy glistening of the mats, the little screens pushed back and the vista of other little shining rooms beyond like the labyrinthine petals of a flower! One beautiful kakemono hung on the wall beside me—a Kwannon, the embodied Compassion of the Lord, and there was a little screen with grey wild geese in reeds. That was all. It was a very poor little temple, conforming to the older, primitive Buddhism, and had few adherents—so poor that the priest was glad to take guests for some of the rooms looking out on the enchanted garden and the great woods, to make a little money for its support. He ate only once a day, before noon, according to the old, austere rule, and only of rice, fruit and vegetables. He grew all he needed, even a few tea-bushes, and I was permitted to buy a little of the tea—a pale green liquid in tiny cups. I cannot drink it and forget the golden Buddha with his mysterious smile. A great Tokugawa *Shōgun* had presented long ago a beautiful curtain of bamboo with brass ornaments and the princely cognizance of the trefoil—a touch of pomp very strange in the gentleness of the little shrine. I used to see the acolyte—a very young man with a white, worn face, so worn that every little bone showed through the waxen skin, and great dark eyes, shadowed wells of dream. I am sure that he has since known the mysteries that lie behind a darker curtain than that of the Shōgun. I would willingly grow old in such a place. Surely the values would adjust themselves—small things becoming great and the things that mattered mattering no longer; and much might be forgotten only worth forgetting, until Death came, stepping softly as the white-robed priest through the flowers.

Next day we went up the valley with the companionable river beside us all the way. It is a lovely road. There are mountains on either hand with fretted peaks like the castles that used to cling to them, wild as the peaks of an old Chinese picture. Sometimes we passed a monument to some soldier

who had left his village to lose his life in the fight with the Russian—the great game played so far away. I thought of those dusty wastes I knew in Manchuria and then of this sweet home by the river, and the sacrifice seemed piteous. But yet— No; their names blaze rememberable in gold over the small homes they died for, and the people do homage to them as deified spirits and that is much—

> "The frontier grave is far away—
> Qui ante diem periit,
> Sed miles, sed pro patria."

One night when we reached the village where we meant to sleep, the inn was a very poor one—the people themselves kindly dubious whether they could give us the comforts they thought we should have. Without our knowing, they sent word to the chief resident of the place. And so, with the most exquisite kindness, he and his family welcomed us and did their utmost to make us happy. We were taken to a spacious room—its decorations beautiful woodwork, a Chinese poem of fine calligraphy handsomely framed, a delicate porcelain vase, a hanging picture of toppling crags and river—that was all, but enough. A screen curtained off the sleeping part of the room—one that had been long in the family—a pale gold background with snowy cherry-trees and among them boys flying kites in a bright breeze—a jewel in its own way. And in a recess, a shrine to Inari, the rice-goddess of the Shintō faith, with her two little foxes sitting prick-eared and bolt upright before her, and a small lamp, which the master of the house lighted every evening. He did it naturally and simply, as becomes the fine old rite. When the *futons* for our beds were brought in, they were of the richest silk with brocaded designs. All of the best was given us—the guest-right acknowledged and honoured to the full; and we slept to the music of the river running beneath the windows.

We set out for Hikosan on rough, country ponies, a wonderful ride by the river through the lovely valley shaded with pines and maples and the wild crags overhanging it above. Never again can I disbelieve in the Chinese artists whose peaks and rocks outdo the very clouds in torn and rifted beauty, for these were sometimes so incredible that it seemed a wind might dissolve them into flying wraiths. We camped for luncheon among the mossy rocks by the river with the camellia-bushes in blossom about us and the rippling water at our feet. The ride up the mountain pass was glorious and very rough going by the steep ways, and the horses by no means so sure-footed as the Himalayan ponies, but it was all pure joy from beginning to end; for the scenery is glorious and Hikosan, though only 3,800 feet high, is quite in the grand manner. This was an old and famous haunt of the

yamabushi, the wild mountain priests, many of whom were the great diviners and exorcists of ancient Japan and as ready with the sword of steel as the sword of the spirit.

It could scarcely have been a solitary life for thousands of these men are said to have lived on the mountain, but it is very lonely now, and all the shrines are dismantled, even that at the top of the pass, dedicated to the Sun ancestors of the Emperor. Riding past this we climbed up a perfect ladder of steps to an enchanting shrine sheltering beneath a great crag. This is still venerated and is sacred to Buzembo, the good goblin, the protector of cattle. Before the stone trellis, ornamented with quaint figures, lay an almost life-sized cow in green porcelain, a delightful sight among the banks of dankly luxuriant fern. It was a wonderful scene on that highest peak—a maple-leaf brilliant here and there against the velvet blues and greens of the pine-wood, the ground carpeted with rose-red azalias or a dwarf iris exactly like an orchid—pale mauve with cloudings and pencillings of gold—an exquisite creature, the princess of the hills. I felt, though I did not utter, the invocation of Jo-nyo Shonin to the flowers: "O that your five purities be not tarnished by the wind and sun!" They should have been eternal.

And so we rode down the stony ways into the village of Hikosan, remote on the mountain and lying on either side of a flight of ancient steps many miles in length. These steps mount from far below to a famous shrine and then to the top of a great hill where the view is as broad and blue as it might be from the ramparts of heaven. Beautiful as the dream of some strange Buddhist paradise—how can words describe it and the ascent toward the mysterious blue of a sky not very far away? A bell sounded from above. Surely it was the voice of the Presences that haunt this place! They cannot be seen—no—for

> "Their clear bodies are all through
> Made of shadow mixed with dew,"

but they glide with noiseless feet upon the way that can weary them no more. Do they remember us as we remember them?

The little hostelry was a safe harbourage for tired travellers and so clean and sweet that a flower-fairy might have been at home there. I picked up an interesting old picture—an interior with two delightful elderly Japanese gentlemen playing at *go*, one in gravest horn spectacles; the lamp and appointments of the room giving a scene of about eighty years ago.

This is only half of my story but I end here, for it might ripple on as endlessly as the streams that flow down Hikosan beside the immemorial steps, with this difference only, that they weary none and have a music that

cannot pall. Do people who flash through the famous places of Japan know these larger days of sunshine and rain, the sweet air, the glad fatigue, the true kindness of the village folk, the scent and flavour of the old Japan that as yet we have not touched with our cruel civilization? Superstitious? It is better to worship the sun-goddess than the Golden Calf. She is at least nearer heaven. The peace of the Lord Buddha disowns the market-place. What has life better than happy toil, happy laughter, sweet courtesy and—the Vision? Yet one word more. There is a something intangible that must be brought as well as received—some sensitiveness, some knowledge, some love of beauty, some deep human sympathy. Without these the rivers do not sing, the way is rough. The Gates of Wonder are barred.

THE DESOLATE CITY

A STORY IN MAHABALIPURAM

MY wanderings had led me to Madras, the city that flared into splendour with Clive—Clive who gave India to England—that now lies dreaming of the past beside blue summer seas.

> "Clive kissed me on the eyes and mouth and brow,
> Wonderful kisses, so that I became
> Crowned above Queens."

But a stranger, older past than his broods like thin mirage over all this South India. Only the Gods remember what is done, and my quest was for them and for the men of the great heroic days, who abide while the generations come and go like a ruffle of wind on the ocean. I was seeking now for a city of dead kings, stony and deserted as the ruins of Angkor Wat, where few tourists go; for there is little to tempt those who care nothing for the soul of India:—a mysterious city half swallowed by the sea. There are other dead cities, and sight-seers flock to Fathpur Sikri, where the palaces of Akbar stand as though he had but ridden out upon a royal progress and would re-enter in an hour with Abu-l Fazl and Raja Birbal riding at his bridle-rein, or to Amber, which is the shadow of rose-hued Jaipur. But these places are not in truth dead; for they live in the warm hearts of men where their kings are still kings. My city is lonely as the stars. Great stories cling about it; gods and deific heroes haunt it; noble romances are woven in the gold of its vesture. But they are not the tales of the history books—you cannot know them until you love them. It is Mahabalipuram, the City of Great Bali, and learned men will, if they can, banish the very name of Great Bali from it now and call it Mamallapuram. But they cannot. The people know, and with the people I believe.

Yet I lingered in Madras because it has certain things which are very beautiful. Delightful, too, for it is the Indian city we all dreamed before we saw the manifold wonder which is India. Stiff green palm-trees with symmetrical, toy-shop stems along trim yellow roads, white bungalows in neat compounds, dark faces in turbans and queer round hats, slim bodies girt with the very *cummerbunds* we saw in pictures, elephants marching in

scarlet draperies; one and all of the sultry, sandal-smelling things made familiar to us by travelled forefathers. How we know it all! Somehow it is not the India of the empire—no, we have gone back; it is the India of the old East India Company, of rich nabobs and their languid wives, of Jos Sedley and Colonel Newcome, where people shook the pagoda-tree to some purpose and came home with deplorable livers, irascible tempers and a cultivated taste in curries, or else remained for ever under the most pompous monuments ever invented by the pride of man as a habitation for rat and snake. From Madras must have come the set of rose and white ivory chessmen which Colonel Newcome sent to good Miss Honeyman—a set which ignored queens and bishops but was strong in turreted elephants and camels.

The people are a little servile; they have not the free air of the Rajput or Pathan. I doubt if a sword-brotherhood could be made with them as has been made with many and many a man from Central India and the North. In Madras I felt that I walked the yellow roads in the shadow of a board of directors.

But it has a museum where passionate young Indian artists are binding the past and the present together with shining bands of beauty. I made great plunder there of exquisite things shaped by delicate, deft fingers—things of which the East India Company never dreamed, for boards and companies do not dream even in India. It takes an empire to do that.

And Madras has a garden of fishes—surely the most wonderful garden of living flowers in the world. They swim in their glass tanks, splendours indescribable, wonders of shape and colour. One glorious creature was gold—pure, hammered gold banded with turquoise-blue. Another, rose-pink with ruddy chestnut-brown bands and fins, and yet another, opal, quivering silver and pearl shot with all the colours of the prism as he turned and wavered in the water—a living transparence almost spiritually lovely. If there be any sea in the country whence the shadows and reflections fall into our lower air, surely these must be its angel-fish. They shine like humming-birds; yet in the deeps no eye can see them. It is not for us—we are not the kings for whom the *nautch* of beauty is danced. Who and what is it that glories in their glory? I knew—I had seen the Great God in the noble bronze of the museum dancing the cosmic dance that symbolizes the passion of gladness of the Creator, who sees his work is good. There were frightful shapes too—of a grotesque horror known only to the ocean or the hideous fantasies of the insect world. Awful creatures with stony eyes protruded on seeking feelers, finny jaws and distorted back-ridges with rocky spines. Shifting shapes expanding and contracting like a horror in a dream; some lumped and

humped, some boneless and collapsed. Many of these are so poisonous that to eat them is death; and writhing in and out among them were sea-snakes more deadly than the cobra.

It was not many days before I set out on my pilgrimage to Mahabalipuram, which, being interpreted, is the City of Great Bali. Great indeed was Bali, says the story; overlord of all India, for by the accumulated merit of fast and meditation, which in India are often strangely divorced from piety, he had made himself equal in power with the trembling Gods of the lower heavens, and the completion of the *Asvamedha*, or great horse sacrifice, would make him their conqueror.

So as he sat in his exultant pride in this dead city, a dwarf came before him and asked a boon—a boon small as his own withered person. As much territory as his three feeble steps could cover. No more. And Great Bali gave "as wealthy men who care not what they give." And suddenly the orbed omnipotence of deity broke through the dwarfed humanity: in one giant stride the dwarf covered the earth, in another the sky and in a third the hells, thrusting Great Bali down into everlasting slavery. For, sheathed in the dwarf was the divinity of Vishnu, the Preserver, who with Brahma and Siva, the Three in One, is also Destroyer and Creator. And the sea flowed in upon the city of that ruined pride, and what is left suffices only to testify to the grandeur that terrified even the lower gods. Such is the legend. Part of the pilgrimage a train transacted—a little sauntering train worthy of the Ages of Faith, with unexpected waits in palm groves and by richly carved temples—at peace with itself and all the world as western trains can never be. And then a very long wait and the train sauntered away into the palms and dream settled down upon the little wayside place and it seemed a matter of no moment whether one ever got any farther at all. Finally a *jutka* appeared from the void and a twenty-mile drive was the next stage.

Now a jutka is the most uncomfortable vehicle, I do suppose, in all the universe. It is a little flat country cart with a canvas roof and no seats, and the pilgrim lies upon the floor because he cannot sit, and when that has become unbearable, he crouches, and is thus driven along a road so evil that it beggars description, bumping and thumping and painfully conscious that he is mostly bone.

But I remembered no more the anguish when we stopped at Rudrakoti, the village of Shiva, for Rudrakoti is enchanting. It is a village in the perfect southern setting of brilliant light and colour. Clear and bright, painted like a picture on crystal in shining transparence, it was like stepping back many centuries into a place of forgotten beauty that is, and must be eternal, set

apart from all change, to be preserved as a living memory of things that will not be again.

It is a village, but over it tower the *gopurams* of South India, great temples shaped like a truncated pyramid, rich and rough with carvings of gods and goddesses, battles and adorations, wild symbolisms sensuous and splendid, rising in tapering lines and recessions to the perfect sky. Some of the figures are tinted, and the effect of the carvings recalls a gorgeous Renaissance majolica bathed in an air more pure and warm than even Italy ever knew. In the street, if street it can be called, were standing four or five of the mighty cars of Jagannath (Juggernaut) roofed with palm-fibre—cars that on the great day of festival are each drawn by a thousand panting, straining men, passionate worshippers, through impassioned crowds of dark, fanatic faces. For Jagannath is Lord of the World—manifestation of a stern and threatening aspect of the divine, and when he rides abroad, he rides in terrible state, though not over the bodies of his adorers as once we believed—whatever may have been in the wild past which is the home of legend. There was a great tank, or lake, in the midst of the village, reflecting the hyacinth sky. A graceful little temple floated above its double in the water with feathering palms about it. In a quiet corner near the temples dwelt the *deva-dasis*—the girl servants of the God. They are the temple dancing-girls, swaying to mystic measures for his delight, and are of the oldest profession in the world, a profession which has in this connection a strange religious symbolism known aforetime in Egypt and Assyria, as in India, and older than the ages. They looked out with smooth, painted brows and banded midnight hair, jewelled and perfumed, and as I met their calm, untroubled eyes, again the wave of wonder submerged me at the marvel of belief and the many tongues of symbolism in which it breathes the eternal secret of union to the many minds of men.

Rudrakoti is the very dreamland of legends of Mahadeva, the Great God, such as are seldom found so fully or in such an atmosphere of faith. It compelled me to a halt on my way to the City of Great Bali, the more especially as a Brahman friend, a deep believer in the mystic Siva, was ready to instruct me in the teachings of the place. And indeed I have seldom been so happy in my life, so I gladly stayed.

"All appeared to me new and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. I was a stranger which at my entrance was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys. The corn was orient and immortal wheat which should never be reaped nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were precious as gold; the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees,

when I saw them first, transported and ravished me. Their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap. The men! O what noble and reverend creatures did the aged seem. Boys and girls tumbling in the street were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born and should die, for all things abided eternally in their proper places."

So it abides in its heavenly sunshine—a clear, shining picture of light and colour in my mind, where no rain or storm can ever cloud it. Above the village rose a steep hill crowned with another temple and known as the "Hill of the Three Eagles." With my Brahman I climbed the hill by endless and broken steps worn by many ardent feet, under trees with ferns growing luxuriantly beside them, and from the top looked down upon the village, sheltering beneath its gopurams and its lake like a jewel among the palms.

This hill is sacred because long, long ago two saints implored the Great God that they might instantly enter his paradise. But he, seeing them peremptory, passionate, over-eager, very far from the calm which alone can merge into the calm of paradise, denied their prayer until they should be at one with what they besought, and the penance was laid upon them of waiting for a whole *yuga* of ages in the shape of white eagles, that they might learn the patience of the gods, and thus their prayer expects its patient period until, being made perfect, they enter into peace.

"And here," said the Brahman, dignified and noble in the sacred thread which denotes his high rank, "they come each day an hour before noon, and we feed them and pray for them. And when this is done, they fly to Rameswaram, the God-king's temple on the shore looking to Ceylon, and there again they are fed and they then fly north and sleep by the holy Ganges, and this they do every day."

So we waited, and despite these assurances I could scarcely believe they would appear. During the waiting the Brahman told me much of the place and its legends and indeed was kind enough to record some of them for me in a small paper book which I treasure now—it lies before me as I write, with its quaint English and laboured penmanship.

"This village is a place of health," it begins. "No frogs dare come at the tank. When a twelve years comes a thunder-bolt falls. The air of this place is highly pure. It has cured leprasy, blindnes, despepsya, dropsi. Here comes the Gods to pray. One day all the Vedas [the ancient Scriptures] went to Siva and told him they suffer much sin by remaining in the world and that the people do not any more pronounce them. So they told that they might be given permission to lie at his feet. Then Siva directed the four Vedas to be four little hills and he would seat upon them and shine. Sin does not come within its limits and deseases fly away like anything from this place."

Is it any wonder I wanted to linger here? Health of spirit and body—what more has heaven itself to offer? But is not the personification of the Scriptures strange? It is often thus found in India.

And now it was nearing the hour before noon, and a few pilgrims and villagers had gathered very devoutly, and we held talk concerning the wonders of the place and the blessings to be hoped from the pilgrimage, and together we all made the sunwise circuit three times of the stone image of Mahadeva, which in itself insures a benediction, and we then composed our minds, looking out over the glorious view of temples and palms and fair blue distances all bathed in the warm, pellucid air of the southern winter. And all my heart and soul are at one with the men of old who set their holy places high in the air, that they might worship with the sunrise and the sunsetting and the myriad march of the stars that call the spirit of man skyward as God calls the sun!

And then came a winnowing of wings, nearer and nearer. I looked up and two great white birds were making steadily for the hill, straight as homing doves. They alighted on a rocky ridge close at hand—huge white kites, as I imagined, the colour of mellowed ivory, seemingly as old as the story and dignified beyond belief. The officiating Brahman prostrated himself before the holy birds, and a murmur of adoration rose about me as the brass vessel of food was brought forward and the birds fed with perfect confidence from his hands. We all watched in reverent silence; for, having each contributed our mite to the feast, we also were spiritual guests. And when they had fed, they preened their plumes and lingered a little and then, rising into the air and beating it with wide white wings, they fled away to the south, to holy Rameswaram. A stranger ceremony could hardly be, with the touching faith of the pilgrims, the brotherhood of the birds and the loveliness of the earth and sky about it. Heathendom at its worst, so say some, but to me the only true heathendom is the absence of belief in the unseen that is also the highest. These people believe, and we of the western world who have lost our faith, who wander between a dead world and one as yet unborn, should consider very deeply and anxiously before we rob any peoples of the faiths which are the foundation of their spiritual life, lest in exchange we give them our own arid scepticism and the curse of a cruel materialism in place of the benediction of their own ancient gods.

All down the lovely, broken steps sat mendicants with their bowls, one blowing a conch, like a Triton, and through it all crept from below that weird temple music of pipe and drum to which the deva-dasis tune their feet. It trickles through the veins and nerves, stupefying yet passioning like the

hashish of a dream. And as the Brahman paced beside me, he discoursed of the gods.

"They have many names but they are One. Vishnu, Siva, Brahma, Buddha—and I think your Christ. They are names, but behind them is the One."

Surely this is truth; yet I am sure that they themselves, like all humanity, are often swept away on the passion of the old legends. It is not every mind that can live in the rarefied air of the Unity. The Christian faith too has tangled trinities. Does it very greatly matter? Had not the old divine the root of the matter who said: "God has washed our hearts here. Doubt not he will wash our brains hereafter."

It was hard to leave Rudrakoti—the air was pure and thin and sweet, and the people kind and devout. It was one of the many happy places where I would have lingered, but the way of the pilgrim lies ever onward. On parting, with much kindness, I begged my friend to say whether there was any English book he would like to possess; for he was a broad-minded and earnest student of "that monastery which is called the world." He said, after reflection, that he had heard there was a book called *Kenilworth* which afforded a very true and wonderful picture of our western courts and customs—would I send that? I promised, wondering what intellectual sustenance he would draw from those fascinating pages and how Queen Elizabeth and her spacious times would fit into the palms and dreams of Rudrakoti. He walked with me to my jutka and stood there with pensive eyes and bowed head. I saw him no more, and he and Rudrakoti relapsed into bright memory.

Before I had reached my journey's end, the night came quietly down. We drove into the heart of it and all the ways faded about us and the low stars blossomed forth, wondrous in the heavens. And finally the jutka halted and could go no farther, and there remained a walk along rough tracks and between the little arid bushes and there came a salt smell of the sea. There were snaky rustlings beside our path, and a stick was held ready for the snake-people who move at night, and so, walking steadily through the dark with my guide, I reached the water and the boat. And lo! a wonder! For the water was brightly phosphorescent. If anything stirred, it broke into milky flame. It was alive with myriad fish—each swam a pale moon in a sea of white fire. I could see the very shape and size of them, and sometimes they leaped, all quivering with harmless flame, and broke the glory into rippling fire as they fell. The passage of the boat, the dip of the oar were splendour—a sea of glass mingled with fire and the starry dark above it. I shall never forget that wonder.

There was another long walk through sands to the rest-house, and a rest-house indeed it proved; for the sleep of the pilgrim is deep and soul-satisfying as he journeys towards the Delectable Mountains.

I spent some days in this marvellous dead place and they were not enough. Sometimes I ask myself why one ever returns to the haste and noise of a civilization which I am convinced is leading us ever and ever more swiftly down the track of a gross materialism that must sound some nethermost pit before it reascends to seek the light. That thought was my companion in the City of Great Bali, where so much glory has become the prey of a devouring ocean that rings the eternal knell of pride.

How shall I describe it? What is left stands by a lonely seashore, as it were the monument of what is gone. The lone and level sands stretch far away and must be traversed before one reaches the small monolithic temples, which stand in the solitude once filled with the multitudinous murmur of men, now hearing only the chime of the breaking wave. Five ancient temples rise together, each a mighty rock carved with story.

These are the temples of the five Pandava princes and of their Queen, that loveliest Draupadi whose name is loved and honoured to this day throughout India. Let me briefly tell a part of her story as it is told in the epic and bible of the Indian world, the *Mahabharata*.

Many ages ago the Pandava princes were opposed in their struggle for their rightful kingdom by their cousins, the evil Kuru princes. It is an allegory of the age-long battle between good and evil. Now on a certain day the King of Panchala proclaimed that his daughter Draupadi should be the prize of that prince who could shoot five arrows through a revolving ring into the target beyond. All the kings of India assembled, and Draupadi, "lovely as though she had descended from the City of the Gods," entered the concourse and the contest began. All did valiantly and all failed until Arjuna, a Pandava prince, seizing the mighty bow, sent the arrow singing to its goal —a goal that was also the heart of Draupadi. Then, on the fury of the defeated suitors, followed a terrible battle, in which the five princes, holding together and defending their prize, vanquished all and stood triumphant on the field. But now a strange happening. For the five brothers returned in glory to the house of their mother with the Princess Draupadi, and, entering, they shouted that they had won a great and noble prize. "Share it as brothers should!" cried the Queen, and then, seeing Draupadi, she trembled but could not recall the words the gods had sent, and the Princess became the queen of the five brothers.

The strange fate is explained by the fact that, since the princes were of divine parentage, the pure essence in them made them one, and it is certain

also that this is a parable of the soul amid the five senses, apart and inviolate though bound to each and all.

Therefore she remains ever virgin, and the sages and the kings alike approve the deed.

Yet strange sorrows were before her. The eldest Prince, Yudhishthira, seized with a gambling madness, gambles away all his possessions to the enemy princes, himself, his brothers, and at last even his wife, Draupadi. All are lost.

The most famous scene in Indian story is that where she is dragged by her long black locks into the presence of the gathered kings and grossly unveiled before them by the Kuru prince who has won her, while the Pandava princes stand by in bitter shame, unable to protect her. "Yet were the Gods good to the slender-waisted one," for ever as he tears the veil away a fresh one falls about her like snow and none may see her mystic beauty. "And at the sight arose a deep uproar of many voices."

I must not stay to tell of the frightful revenge of the Pandava princes. The long wars end in victory, and the eldest prince is enthroned in Hastinapur by Delhi with the loyal four about him and the Queen beside him, and then, as it could happen in no western story, their hearts aspire to the greater victory, and leaving the hard-won kingdom amid the grief of all their people, the six put off their royalty and set forth to find that City of the Gods that shines like a star on the horizon of all the faiths.

So they journey across the frightful deserts, the King leading and Draupadi with the four brothers and a faithful dog toiling after him. And her strength fails and she falls and dies, and with tears Prince Bhima asks of the King, "Why does our sweet lady fail who never in all her life did one ill deed?"

And he, striding steadily onward with anguish in his heart, answers: "For that she loved our brother Arjuna better than all else, better than heaven itself, she fails. For that fault of a faultless soul she suffers." Then one by one the princes fall and die, each for some high and generous fault, which, since it clouded the mirror of absolute purity, is now an impenetrable barrier between them and the haven where they would be. And now the King only was left—and the dog. And he attained, and the God came forth to meet and honour him who still in worn human body had passed into pure light, and he bade him ascend the self-moving chariot that should bear him to the peace. But the king paused:

"O Thousand-Eyed, where are my brothers? She, too, the dear and kind and queenly, where is she? Without these I will enter no paradise. Better the

hells with them than paradise without them."

In the music of heaven he is assured that these, being purified, shall also attain, and still he pauses. "This dog that has loved me? I will not leave him."

With horror the God refuses. What is a dog but unclean—the very thought is profanation. So, in a newer Scripture, also, "Without are dogs." Let the King put aside these earth-bound thoughts and ascend, rejoicing, to paradise, for he himself is now even as a god. The dog is nothing.

But no. The King is immovable. The dog has loved him, has served him, has trusted him, has followed with perfect faithfulness through the deserts. His claim is based on all the love and justice of the universe. Heaven cannot be heaven if it fails here. Again comes the heavenly injunction—the dog trembling between the human and the divine—and again the King's steadfast refusal as he turns his face from paradise and sets it to the desert.

And then a glory fills the air—the little trembling figure of the dog has melted away, exhaled into radiance, and in its place stands the Lord of Justice. "True King, I have tried you to the uttermost. In this shape of lowly earth have I myself followed you. Because you have not failed even a poor dog who looked to you, enter now into the eternal joy."

In paradise, after one last test, the great story closes. Could any western story of fighting men end thus? I think not. The West sees neither defeat nor victory with the sun-filled eyes of the East.

But here stand the temples of the five royal brothers and their lady, richly carved with their stories and the story of the divine Krishna, who became incarnate that he might aid them. It was while he was acting as the charioteer of Arjuna at a mighty battle that Krishna uttered the *Bhagavadgita*, which is perhaps the highest expression of eastern spirituality. I give a few words of it: "I am the eternal seed of nature. Those who know me know Brahma, the supreme and incorruptible. He who thinks on me shall find me. He who finds me returns not again to mortal birth. I am the Sacrifice, the Worship, the Fire, the Victim. They who serve other gods with a firm belief involuntarily worship me. They who with adoration serve me are in me."

Are we reading a passage from the Gospel of St. John or the *Mahabharata*?

The temples stand lonely as sea-washed rocks. Huge monolithic animals are about them, lifelike and gigantic—a mighty elephant; Nandi, the divine bull of Siva. All about, for miles, lie relics of a dead glory, of a living faith. In one place these craftsmen have taken the side of a great rock and carved it

into a story—the penance of Arjuna and his suffering to gain the supernatural weapons that shall speed the cause. He stands in the midst of great grouping figures, himself lean, worn, with upraised arms, indomitably proud, and Siva, proving him, confronts him with threatening brows. Men, birds, animals, gods hasten to see the awful contest. A snake-king, crowned with cobras and ending in fantastic coils, looks on with his snaky queen. Elephants crowd in, detached in high relief from the cliff beneath. Monkeys perch in a tree above. A thronged, hurrying scene, all the figures converging to a central one, the Prince, and fantastic as a dream. The wonders of the place! Its dead loneliness by its lonely sea, the perished greatness, the great survivals!

One mighty bas-relief cut in rock shows Vishnu, the inherent Preserver of the universe, as he upholds the heavens with the earth as his footstool. It is the transit of the Sun in his three strides of dawn, zenith and sinking, across the skies, a figure terrible in grandeur. The symbolism of the whole noble composition is so great, so far beyond the knowledge of those who have not studied the thought of India in her art, that it would need a volume for an adequate description. There is also in bas-relief an exquisite Lakshmi, chaste goddess of love and beauty, risen like Aphrodite from the sea. She is throned on her open lotus-blossom, and the elephants of Indra, the cloud-god, bring perfumed waters in rich vessels and pour them in adoration over the Lady of Beauty while her maidens bow towards her in reverence. The feeling of this work could not be surpassed. It has the tender veneration of the Italian Primitives, and to see it in the wilderness, a solitary jewel, is to experience the shock of joy given only by a true art.

So I went from marvel to marvel in the setting that best suits them—the great sea and sky spaces. Yet I think the strangest moment came one evening when, after a long day of thought and wonder, I walked down to an old Dravidian temple which the sea is slowly and surely devouring. The surf breaks now among its tumbled blocks, but what is left stands a little still above its inevitable doom, guarded by great walls and a rank of stone bulls crouching in dead majesty about them.

It was growing dusk. A melancholy sunset burned in the west like a dying lamp and the surf made a desolate thunder below. I sat in a broken arch above the ocean and looked, and lo! I could see the pillars of a ruined palace standing in the wash of the waves, and breakers white over halls that are lost for ever to mortal sight. It would be strange to wander in those wild sea palaces inhabited now only by darting fish—and memories, memories that surely take shape in some form beyond all knowing, their only glimmer the green light of the abysses, the light and sound and darkness of the sea.

On a fallen pillar below me lay a little deadly snake, banded with gold and dull brown—the terrible symbol of eternity.

So I left the shore in the wild, low sunset with a chill wind blowing over it and all darkening into forgetfulness. It seemed as lonely and lost as interstellar space.

That lingers with me, that and beauty, beauty heart-piercing and unspeakable. Something Egyptian also—a great voice that cries from deserts by the Nile:

> "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings.
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Despair! Ah, in a grief beyond any challenge of pride; for the answer comes from the ruinous sands drifting over the dreams of a lost people as the night draws solemnly on in which none may toil.

The gods alone remember what is done.

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.

[The end of *The Perfume of the Rainbow and Other Stories* by Elizabeth Louisa Moresby (as L. Adams Beck)]