**Across the Zodiac eBook**

**Across the Zodiac by Percy Greg**

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

**Contents**

**Table of Contents**

|  |
| --- |
| Table of Contents |
| Section | Page |
|  |
| Start of eBook | 1 |
| CHAPTER I — SHIPWRECK. | 1 |
| CHAPTER II — OUTWARD BOUND. | 12 |
| CHAPTER III — THE UNTRAVELLED DEEP. | 27 |
| CHAPTER IV — A NEW WORLD. | 42 |
| CHAPTER V — LANGUAGE, LAWS, AND LIFE. | 61 |
| CHAPTER VI — AN OFFICIAL VISIT. | 79 |
| CHAPTER VII — ESCORT DUTY. | 85 |
| CHAPTER VIII — A FAITH AND ITS FOUNDER. | 96 |
| CHAPTER IX — MANNERS AND CUSTOMS. | 105 |
| CHAPTER X — WOMAN AND WEDLOCK. | 114 |
| CHAPTER XI — A COUNTRY DRIVE. | 125 |
| CHAPTER XII — ON THE RIVER. | 139 |
| CHAPTER XIII — THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT. | 149 |
| CHAPTER XIV — BY SEA. | 162 |
| CHAPTER XV — FUR-HUNTING. | 166 |
| CHAPTER XVI — TROUBLED WATERS. | 176 |
| CHAPTER XVII — PRESENTED AT COURT. | 184 |
| CHAPTER XVIII — A PRINCE’S PRESENT. | 190 |
| CHAPTER XIX — A COMPLETE ESTABLISHMENT. | 204 |
| CHAPTER XX — LIFE, SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC. | 211 |
| CHAPTER XXI — PRIVATE AUDIENCES. | 222 |
| CHAPTER XXII — PECULIAR INSTITUTIONS. | 232 |
| CHAPTER XXIII — CHARACTERISTICS. | 242 |
| CHAPTER XXIV — WINTER. | 254 |
| CHAPTER XXV — APOSTACY. | 267 |
| CHAPTER XXVI — TWILIGHT. | 275 |
| CHAPTER XXVII — THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW. | 280 |
| CHAPTER XXVIII — DARKER YET. | 288 |
| CHAPTER XXIX — AZRAEL. | 300 |
| CHAPTER XXX — FAREWELL! | 311 |

**Page 1**

**CHAPTER I — SHIPWRECK.**

Once only, in the occasional travelling of thirty years, did I lose any important article of luggage; and that loss occurred, not under the haphazard, devil-take-the-hindmost confusion of English, or the elaborate misrule of Continental journeys, but through the absolute perfection and democratic despotism of the American system.  I had to give up a visit to the scenery of Cooper’s best Indian novels—­no slight sacrifice—­and hasten at once to New York to repair the loss.  This incident brought me, on an evening near the middle of September 1874, on board a river steamboat starting from Albany, the capital of the State, for the Empire City.  The banks of the lower Hudson are as well worth seeing as those of the Rhine itself, but even America has not yet devised means of lighting them up at night, and consequently I had no amusement but such as I could find in the conversation of my fellow-travellers.  With one of these, whose abstinence from personal questions led me to take him for an Englishman, I spoke of my visit to Niagara—­the one wonder of the world that answers its warranty—­and to Montreal.  As I spoke of the strong and general Canadian feeling of loyalty to the English Crown and connection, a Yankee bystander observed—­

“Wal, stranger, I reckon we could take ’em if we wanted tu!”

“Yes,” I replied, “if you think them worth the price.  But if you do, you rate them even more highly than they rate themselves; and English colonists are not much behind the citizens of the model Republic in honest self-esteem.”

“Wal,” he said, “how much du yew calc’late we shall hev to pay?”

“Not more, perhaps, than you can afford; only California, and every Atlantic seaport from Portland to Galveston.”

“Reckon yew may be about right, stranger,” he said, falling back with tolerable good-humour; and, to do them justice, the bystanders seemed to think the retort no worse than the provocation deserved.

“I am sorry,” said my friend, “you should have fallen in with so unpleasant a specimen of the character your countrymen ascribe with too much reason to Americans.  I have been long in England, and never met with such discourtesy from any one who recognised me as an American.”

After this our conversation became less reserved; and I found that I was conversing with one of the most renowned officers of irregular cavalry in the late Confederate service—­a service which, in the efficiency, brilliancy, and daring of that especial arm, has never been surpassed since Maharbal’s African Light Horse were recognised by friends and foes as the finest corps in the small splendid army of Hannibal.

**Page 2**

Colonel A——­ (the reader will learn why I give neither his name nor real rank) spoke with some bitterness of the inquisitiveness which rendered it impossible, he said, to trust an American with a secret, and very difficult to keep one without lying.  We were presently joined by Major B——­, who had been employed during the war in the conduct of many critical communications, and had shown great ingenuity in devising and unravelling ciphers.  On this subject a somewhat protracted discussion arose.  I inclined to the doctrine of Poe, that no cipher can be devised which cannot be detected by an experienced hand; my friends indicated simple methods of defeating the processes on which decipherers rely.

“Poe’s theory,” said the Major, “depends upon the frequent recurrence of certain letters, syllables, and brief words in any given language; for instance, of *e*’s and *t*’s, *tion* and *ed*, *a*, *and*, and *the* in English.  Now it is perfectly easy to introduce abbreviations for each of the common short words and terminations, and equally easy to baffle the decipherer’s reliance thereon by inserting meaningless symbols to separate the words; by employing two signs for a common letter, or so arranging your cipher that no one shall without extreme difficulty know which marks stand for single and which for several combined letters, where one letter ends and another begins.”

After some debate, Colonel A——­ wrote down and handed me two lines in a cipher whose character at once struck me as very remarkable.

“I grant,” said I, “that these hieroglyphics might well puzzle a more practised decipherer than myself.  Still, I can point out even here a clue which might help detection.  There occur, even in these two lines, three or four symbols which, from their size and complication, are evidently abbreviations.  Again, the distinct forms are very few, and have obviously been made to serve for different letters by some slight alterations devised upon a fixed rule.  In a word, the cipher has been constructed upon a general principle; and though it may take a long time to find out what that principle is, it affords a clue which, carefully followed out, will probably lead to detection.”

“You have perceived,” said Colonel A——­, “a fact which it took me very long to discover.  I have not deciphered all the more difficult passages of the manuscript from which I took this example; but I have ascertained the meaning of all its simple characters, and your inference is certainly correct.”

Here he stopped abruptly, as if he thought he had said too much, and the subject dropped.

We reached New York early in the morning and separated, having arranged to visit that afternoon a celebrated “spiritual” medium who was then giving *seances* in the Empire City, and of whom my friend had heard and repeated to me several more or less marvellous stories.  Our visit, however, was unsatisfactory; and as we came away Colonel A——­ said—­

**Page 3**

“Well, I suppose this experience confirms you in your disbelief?”

“No,” said I.  “My first visits have generally been failures, and I have more than once been told that my own temperament is most unfavourable to the success of a seance.  Nevertheless, I have in some cases witnessed marvels perfectly inexplicable by known natural laws; and I have heard and read of others attested by evidence I certainly cannot consider inferior to my own.”

“Why,” he said, “I thought from your conversation last night you were a complete disbeliever.”

“I believe,” answered I, “in very little of what I have seen.  But that little is quite sufficient to dispose of the theory of pure imposture.  On the other hand, there is nothing spiritual and nothing very human in the pranks played by or in the presence of the mediums.  They remind one more of the feats of traditionary goblins; mischievous, noisy, untrustworthy; insensible to ridicule, apparently delighting to make fools of men, and perfectly indifferent to having the tables turned upon themselves.”

“But do you believe in goblins?”

“No,” I replied; “no more than in table-turning ghosts, and less than in apparitions.  I am not bound to find either sceptics or spiritualists in plausible explanations.  But when they insist on an alternative to their respective theories, I suggest Puck as at least equally credible with Satan, Shakespeare, or the parrot-cry of imposture.  It is the very extravagance of illogical temper to call on me to furnish an explanation *because* I say ’we know far too little of the thing itself to guess at its causes;’ but of the current guesses, imposture seems inconsistent with the evidence, and ‘spiritual agency’ with the character of the phenomena.”

“That,” replied Colonel A——­, “sounds common sense, and sounds even more commonplace.  And yet, no one seems really to draw a strong, clear line between non-belief and disbelief.  And you are the first and only man I ever met who hesitates to affirm the impossibility of that which seems to him wildly improbable, contrary at once to received opinion and to his own experience, and contrary, moreover, to all known natural laws, and all inferences hitherto drawn from them.  Your men of science dogmatise like divines, not only on things they have not seen, but on things they refuse to see; and your divines are half of them afraid of Satan, and the other half of science.”

“The men of science have,” I replied, “like every other class, their especial bias, their peculiar professional temptation.  The anti-religious bigotry of Positivists is quite as bitter and irrational as the theological bigotry of religious fanatics.  At present the two powers countervail and balance each other.  But, as three hundred years ago I should certainly have been burnt for a heretic, so fifty or a hundred years hence, could I live so long, I should be in equal apprehension of being burnt by some successor of Mr. Congreve, Mr. Harrison, or Professor Huxley, for presuming to believe in Providential government.”

**Page 4**

“The intolerance of incredulity,” returned Colonel A——­, “is a sore subject with me.  I once witnessed a phenomenon which was to me quite as extraordinary as any of the ‘spiritual’ performances.  I have at this moment in my possession apparently irresistible evidence of the reality of what then took place; and I am sure that there exists at a point on the earth’s surface, which unluckily I cannot define, strong corroborative proof of my story.  Nevertheless, the first persons who heard it utterly ridiculed it, and were disposed to treat me either as a madman, or at best as an audacious trespasser on that privilege of lying which belonged to them as mariners.  I told it afterwards to three gentlemen of station, character, and intelligence, every one of whom had known me as soldier, and I hope as gentleman, for years; and in each case the result was a duel, which has silenced those who imputed to me an unworthy and purposeless falsehood, but has left a heavy burden on my conscience, and has prevented me ever since from repeating what I know to be true and believe to be of greater interest, and in some sense of greater importance, than any scientific discovery of the last century.  Since the last occasion on which I told it seven years have elapsed, and I never have met any one but yourself to whom I have thought it possible to disclose it.”

“I have,” I answered, “an intense interest in all occult phenomena; believing in regard to alleged magic, as the scientists say of practical science, that every one branch of such knowledge throws light on others; and if there be nothing in your story which it is personally painful to relate, you need not be silenced by any apprehension of discourteous criticism on my part.”

“I assure you,” he said, “I have no such wish now to tell the story as I had at first.  It is now associated with the most painful incident of my life, and I have lost altogether that natural desire for sympathy and human interest in a matter deeply interesting to myself, which, like every one else, I felt at first, and which is, I suppose, the motive that prompts us all to relate often and early any occurrence that has keenly affected us, in whatever manner.  But I think that I have no right to suppress so remarkable a fact, if by telling it I can place it effectually on record for the benefit of men sensible enough to believe that it may have occurred, especially since somewhere in the world there must yet exist proof that it did occur.  If you will come to my rooms in ——­ Street tomorrow, Number 999, I will not promise, but I think that I shall have made up my mind to tell you what I have to tell, and to place in your hands that portion of the evidence which is still at my command—­evidence that has a significance of its own, to which my experience is merely episodical.”

**Page 5**

I spent that evening with the family of a friend, one of several former officers of the Confederacy, whose friendship is the one permanent and valuable result of my American tour.  I mentioned the Colonel’s name, and my friend, the head of the family, having served with him through the Virginian campaigns, expressed the highest confidence in his character, the highest opinion of his honour and veracity; but spoke with bitter regret and pain of the duels in which he had been engaged, especially of one which had been fatal; remarking that the motive in each instance remained unknown even to the seconds.  “I am sure,” he said “that they were not, could not have been, fought for the one cause that would justify them and explain the secrecy of the quarrel—­some question involving female honour or reputation.  I can hardly conceive that any one of his adversaries could have called in question in any way the personal loyalty of Colonel A——­; and, as you remarked of General M——­, it is too absurd for a man who had faced over and over again the fire of a whole brigade, who had led charges against fourfold numbers, to prove his personal courage with sword or pistol, or to think that any one would have doubted either his spirit or his nerve had he refused to fight, whatever the provocation.  Moreover, in each case he was the challenger.”

“Then these duels have injured him in Southern opinion, and have probably tended to isolate him from society?”

“No,” he replied.  “Deeply as they were regretted and disapproved, his services during the war were so brilliant, and his personal character stands so high, that nothing could have induced his fellow-soldiers to put any social stigma upon him.  To me he must know that he would be most welcome.  Yet, though we have lived in the same city for five years, I have only encountered him three or four times in the street, and then he has passed with the fewest possible words, and has neither given me his address nor accepted my urgent invitations to visit us here.  I think that there is something in the story of those duels that will never be known, certainly something that has never been guessed yet.  And I think that either the circumstances in which they must have had their origin, or the duels themselves, have so weighed upon his spirits, perhaps upon his conscience, that he has chosen to avoid his former friends, most of them also the friends of his antagonists.  Though the war ruined him as utterly as any of the thousands of Southern gentlemen whom it has reduced from wealth to absolute poverty, he has refused every employment which would bring him before the public eye.”

“Is there,” I asked, “any point of honour on which you could suppose him to be so exceptionally sensitive that he would think it necessary to take the life of a man who touched him on that point, though afterwards his regret, if not repentance, might be keen enough to crush his spirit or break his heart?”

**Page 6**

The General paused for a moment, and his son then interposed—­

“I have heard it said that Colonel A——­ was in general the least quarrelsome of Confederate officers; but that on more than one occasion, where his statement upon some point of fact had been challenged by a comrade, who did not intend to question his veracity but simply the accuracy of his observation, their brother officers had much trouble in preventing a serious difficulty.”

The next day I called as agreed upon my new-found friend, and with some reluctance he commenced his story.

“During the last campaign, in February 1865, I was sent by General Lee with despatches for Kirby Smith, then commanding beyond the Mississippi.  I was unable to return before the surrender, and, for reasons into which I need not enter, I believed myself to be marked out by the Federal Government for vengeance.  If I had remained within their reach, I might have shared the fate of Wirz and other victims of calumnies which, once put in circulation during the war, their official authors dared not retract at its close.  Now I and others, who, if captured in 1865, might probably have been hanged, are neither molested nor even suspected of any other offence than that of fighting, as our opponents fought, for the State to which our allegiance was due.  However, I thought it necessary to escape before the final surrender of our forces beyond the Mississippi.  I made my way to Mexico, and, like one or two Southern officers of greater distinction than myself, entered the service of the Emperor Maximilian, not as mere soldiers of fortune, but because, knowing better than any but her Southern neighbours knew it the miserable anarchy of Mexico under the Republic, we regarded conquest as the one chance of regeneration for that country, and the Emperor Maximilian as a hero who had devoted himself to a task heroic at once in its danger and difficulty—­the restoration of a people with whom his house had a certain historical connection to a place among the nations of the civilised world.  After his fall, I should certainly have been shot had I been caught by the Juarists in pursuit of me.  I gained the Pacific coast, and got on board an English vessel, whose captain—­loading for San Francisco—­generously weighed anchor and sailed with but half a cargo to give me a chance of safety.  He transferred me a few days afterwards to a Dutch vessel bound for Brisbane, for at that time I thought of settling in Queensland.  The crew was weak-handed, and consisted chiefly of Lascars, Malays, and two or three European desperadoes of all languages and of no country.  Her master was barely competent to the ordinary duties of his command; and it was no surprise to me when the first storm that we encountered drove us completely out of our course, nor was I much astonished that the captain was for some days, partly from fright and partly from drink, incapable of using his sextant to ascertain the position of the ship.  One night we were awakened

**Page 7**

by a tremendous shock; and, to spare you the details of a shipwreck, which have nothing to do with my story, we found ourselves when day broke fast on a coral reef, about a mile from an island of no great size, and out of sight of all other land.  The sextant having been broken to pieces, I had no means of ascertaining the position of this island, nor do I now know anything of it except that it lay, in the month of August, within the region of the southeast trade winds.  We pulled on shore, but, after exploring the island, it was found to yield nothing attractive to seamen except cocoa-nuts, with which our crew had soon supplied themselves as largely as they wished, and fish, which were abundant and easily caught, and of which they were soon tired.  The captain, therefore, when he had recovered his sobriety and his courage, had no great difficulty in inducing them to return to the ship, and endeavour either to get her off or construct from her timbers a raft which, following the course of the winds, might, it was thought, bring them into the track of vessels.  This would take some time, and I meanwhile was allowed to remain (my own wish) on *terra firma*; the noise, dirt, and foul smells of the vessel being, especially in that climate, intolerable.

“About ten o’clock in the morning of the 25th August 1867, I was lying towards the southern end of the island, on a little hillock tolerably clear of trees, and facing a sort of glade or avenue, covered only with brush and young trees, which allowed me to see the sky within perhaps twenty degrees of the horizon.  Suddenly, looking up, I saw what appeared at first like a brilliant star considerably higher than the sun.  It increased in size with amazing rapidity, till, in a very few seconds after its first appearance, it had a very perceptible disc.  For an instant it obscured the sun.  In another moment a tremendous shock temporarily deprived me of my senses, and I think that more than an hour had elapsed before I recovered them.  Sitting up, somewhat confused, and looking around me, I became aware that some strange accident had occurred.  In every direction I saw such traces of havoc as I had witnessed more than once when a Confederate force holding an impenetrable woodland had been shelled at random for some hours with the largest guns that the enemy could bring into the field.  Trees were torn and broken, branches scattered in all directions, fragments of stone, earth, and coral rock flung all around.  Particularly I remember that a piece of metal of considerable size had cut off the tops of two or three trees, and fixed itself at last on what was now the summit of one about a third of whose length had been broken off and lay on the ground.  I soon perceived that this miraculous bombardment had proceeded from a point to the north-eastward, the direction in which at that season and hour the sun was visible.  Proceeding thitherward, the evidences of destruction became every minute more

**Page 8**

marked, I might say more universal.  Trees had been thrown down, torn up by the roots, hurled against one another; rocks broken and flung to great distances, some even thrown up in the air, and so reversed in falling that, while again half buried in the soil, they exposed what had been their undermost surface.  In a word, before I had gone two miles I saw that the island had sustained a shock which might have been that of an earthquake, which certainly equalled that of the most violent Central American earthquakes in severity, but which had none of the special peculiarities of that kind of natural convulsion.  Presently I came upon fragments of a shining pale yellow metal, generally small, but in one or two cases of remarkable size and shape, apparently torn from some sheet of great thickness.  In one case I found embedded between two such jagged fragments a piece of remarkably hard impenetrable cement.  At last I came to a point from which through the destruction of the trees the sea was visible in the direction in which the ship had lain; but the ship, as in a few moments I satisfied myself, had utterly disappeared.  Reaching the beach, I found that the shock had driven the sea far up upon the land; fishes lying fifty yards inland, and everything drenched in salt water.  At last, guided by the signs of ever-increasing devastation, I reached the point whence the mischief had proceeded.  I can give no idea in words of what I there found.  The earth had been torn open, rooted up as if by a gigantic explosion.  In some places sharp-pointed fragments of the coral rock, which at a depth of several feet formed the bed of the island, were discernible far below the actual surface.  At others, the surface itself was raised several feet by *debris* of every kind.  What I may call the crater—­though it was no actual hole, but rather a cavity torn and then filled up by falling fragments—­was two or three hundred feet in circumference; and in this space I found considerable masses of the same metallic substance, attached generally to pieces of the cement.  After examining and puzzling myself over this strange scene for some time, my next care was to seek traces of the ship and of her crew; and before long I saw just outside the coral reef what had been her bowsprit, and presently, floating on the sea, one of her masts, with the sail attached.  There could be little doubt that the shock had extended to her, had driven her off the reef where she had been fixed into the deep water outside, where she must have sunk immediately, and had broken her spars.  No traces of her crew were to be seen.  They had probably been stunned at the same time that they were thrown into deep water; and before I came in sight of the point where she had perished, whatever animal bodies were to be found must have been devoured by the sharks, which abounded in that neighbourhood.  Dismay, perplexity, and horror prevented my doing anything to solve my doubts or relieve my astonishment

**Page 9**

before the sun went down; and during the night my sleep was broken by snatches of horrible dreams and intervals of waking, during which I marvelled over what I had seen, scarcely crediting my memory or my senses.  In the morning, I went back to the crater, and with some tools that had been left on shore contrived to dig somewhat deeply among the *debris* with which it was filled.  I found very little that could enlighten me except pieces of glass, of various metals, of wood, some of which seemed apparently to have been portions of furniture; and one damaged but still entire relic, which I preserved and brought away with me.”

Here the Colonel removed a newspaper which had covered a portion of his table, and showed me a metallic case beaten out of all shape, but apparently of what had been a silvery colour, very little rusted, though much soiled.  This he opened, and I saw at once that it was of enormous thickness and solidity, to which and to favouring circumstances it owed its preservation in the general ruin he described.  That it had undergone some severe and violent shock there could be no question.  Beside the box lay a less damaged though still seriously injured object, in which I recognised the resemblance of a book of considerable thickness, and bound in metal like that of the case.  This I afterwards ascertained beyond doubt to be a metalloid alloy whereof the principal ingredient was aluminium, or some substance so closely resembling it as not to be distinguishable from it by simple chemical tests.  A friend to whom I submitted a small portion broken off from the rest expressed no doubt that it was a kind of aluminium bronze, but inclined to believe that it contained no inconsiderable proportion of a metal with which chemists are as yet imperfectly acquainted; perhaps, he said, silicon; certainly something which had given to the alloy a hardness and tenacity unknown to any familiar metallurgical compound.

“This,” said my friend, opening the volume, “is a manuscript which was contained in this case when I took it from among the debris of the crater.  I should have told you that I found there what I believed to be fragments of human flesh and bone, but so crushed and mangled that I could form no positive conclusion.  My next care was to escape from the island, which I felt sure lay far from the ordinary course of merchant vessels.  A boat which had brought me ashore—­the smaller of the two belonging to the ship—­had fortunately been left on the end of the island furthest from that on which the vessel had been driven, and had, owing to its remoteness, though damaged, not been fatally injured by the shock.  I repaired this, made and fixed a mast, and with no little difficulty contrived to manufacture a sort of sail from strips of bark woven together.  Knowing that, even if I could sustain life on the island, life under such circumstances would not be worth having, I was perfectly willing to embark upon a voyage in which I was well

**Page 10**

aware the chances of death were at least as five to one.  I caught and contrived to smoke a quantity of fish sufficient to last me for a fortnight, and filled a small cask with brackish but still drinkable water.  In this vessel, thus stored, I embarked about a fortnight after the day of the mysterious shock.  On the second evening of my voyage I was caught by a gale which compelled me to lower the sail, and before which I was driven for three days and nights, in what direction I can hardly guess.  On the fourth morning the wind had fallen, and by noon it was a perfect calm.  I need not describe what has been described by so many shipwrecked sailors,—­the sufferings of a solitary voyager in an open boat under a tropical sun.  The storm had supplied me with water more than enough; so that I was spared that arch-torture of thirst which seems, in the memory of such sufferers, to absorb all others.  Towards evening a slight breeze sprang up, and by morning I came in sight of a vessel, which I contrived to board.  Her crew, however, and even her captain, utterly discredited such part of my strange story as I told them.  On that point, however, I will say no more than this:  I will place this manuscript in your hands.  I will give you the key to such of its ciphers as I have been able to make out.  The language, I believe, for I am no scholar, is Latin of a mediaeval type; but there are words which, if I rightly decipher them, are not Latin, and hardly seem to belong to any known language; most of them, I fancy, quasi-scientific terms, invented to describe various technical devices unknown to the world when the manuscript was written.  I only make it a condition that you shall not publish the story during my life; that if you show the manuscript or mention the tale in confidence to any one, you will strictly keep my secret; and that if after my death, of which you shall be advised, you do publish it, you will afford no clue by which the donor could be confidently identified.”

“I promise,” said I.  “But I should like to ask you one question.  What do you conceive to have been the cause of the extraordinary shock you felt and of the havoc you witnessed?  What, in short, the nature of the occurrence and the origin of the manuscript you entrust to my care?”

“Why need you ask me?” he returned.  “You are as capable as myself of drawing a deduction from what I have told you, and I have told you everything, I believe, that could assist you.  The manuscript will tell the rest.”

“But,” said I, “an actual eye-witness often receives from a number of little facts which he cannot remember, which are perhaps too minute to have been actually and individually noted by him, an impression which is more likely to be correct than any that could be formed by a stranger on the fullest cross-questioning, on the closest examination of what remains in the witness’s memory.  I should like to hear, before opening the manuscript, what you believe to have been its origin.

**Page 11**

“I can only say,” he answered, “that what must be inferred from the manuscript is what I had inferred before I opened it.  That same explanation was the only one that ever occurred to me, even in the first night.  It then seemed to me utterly incredible, but it is still the only conceivable explanation that my mind can suggest.”

“Did you,” asked I, “connect the shock and the relics, which I presume you know were not on the island before the shock, with the meteor and the strange obscuration of the sun?”

“I certainly did,” he said.  “Having done so, there could be but one conclusion as to the quarter from which the shock was received.”

The examination and transcription of the manuscript, with all the help afforded me by my friend’s previous efforts, was the work of several years.  There is, as the reader will see, more than one *hiatus valde deflendus*, as the scholiasts have it, and there are passages in which, whether from the illegibility of the manuscript or the employment of technical terms unknown to me, I cannot be certain of the correctness of my translation.  Such, however, as it is, I give it to the world, having fulfilled, I believe, every one of the conditions imposed upon me by my late and deeply regretted friend.

The character of the manuscript is very curious, and its translation was exceedingly difficult.  The material on which it is written resembles nothing used for such purposes on Earth.  It is more like a very fine linen or silken web, but it is far closer in texture, and has never been woven in any kind of loom at all like those employed in any manufacture known to history or archaeology.  The letters, or more properly symbols, are minute, but executed with extraordinary clearness.  I should fancy that something more like a pencil than a pen, but with a finer point than that of the finest pencil, was employed in the writing.  Contractions and combinations are not merely frequent, but almost universal.  There is scarcely an instance in which five consecutive letters are separately written, and there is no single line in which half a dozen contractions, often including from four to ten letters, do not occur.  The pages are of the size of an ordinary duodecimo, but contain some fifty lines per page, and perhaps one hundred and fifty letters in each line.  What were probably the first half dozen pages have been utterly destroyed, and the next half dozen are so mashed, tattered, and defaced, that only a few sentences here and there are legible.  I have contrived, however, to combine these into what I believe to be a substantially correct representation of the author’s meaning.  The Latin is of a monastic—­sometimes almost canine—­quality, with many words which are not Latin at all.  For the rest, though here and there pages are illegible, and though some symbols, especially those representing numbers or chemical compounds, are absolutely undecipherable, it has been possible to effect what I hope will be found a clear and coherent translation.  I have condensed the narrative but have not altered or suppressed a line for fear of offending those who must be unreasonable, indeed, if they lay the offence to my charge.

**Page 12**

One word more.  It is possible, if not likely, that some of those friends of the narrator, for whom the account was evidently written, may still be living, and that these pages may meet their eyes.  If so, they may be able to solve the few problems that have entirely baffled me, and to explain, if they so choose, the secrets to which, intentionally or through the destruction of its introductory portion, the manuscript affords no clue.

I must add that these volumes contain only the first section of the MS. record.  The rest, relating the incidents of a second voyage and describing another world, remains in my hands; and, should this part of the work excite general attention, the conclusion will, by myself or by my executors, be given to the public.  Otherwise, on my death, it will be placed in the library of some national or scientific institution.

**CHAPTER II — OUTWARD BOUND.**

...  For obvious reasons, those who possessed the secret of the Apergy [1] had never dreamed of applying it in the manner I proposed.  It had seemed to them little more than a curious secret of nature, perhaps hardly so much, since the existence of a repulsive force in the atomic sphere had been long suspected and of late certainly ascertained, and its preponderance is held to be the characteristic of the gaseous as distinguished from the liquid or solid state of matter.  Till lately, no means of generating or collecting this force in large quantity had been found.  The progress of electrical science had solved this difficulty; and when the secret was communicated to me, it possessed a value which had never before belonged to it.

Ever since, in childhood, I learnt that the planets were worlds, a visit to one or more of the nearest of them had been my favourite day-dream.  Treasuring every hint afforded by science or fancy that bore upon the subject, I felt confident that such a voyage would be one day achieved.  Helped by one or two really ingenious romances on this theme, I had dreamed out my dream, realised every difficulty, ascertained every factor in the problem.  I had satisfied myself that only one thing needful was as yet wholly beyond the reach and even the proximate hopes of science.  Human invention could furnish as yet no motive power that could fulfil the main requirement of the problem—­uniform or constantly increasing motion *in vacuo*—­motion through a region affording no resisting medium.  This must be a *repulsive* energy capable of acting through an utter void.  Man, animals, birds, fishes move by repulsion applied at every moment.  In air or water, paddles, oars, sails, fins, wings act by repulsion exerted on the fluid element in which they work.  But in space there is no such resisting element on which repulsion can operate.  I needed a repulsion which would act like gravitation through an indefinite distance and in a void—­act upon a remote fulcrum, such as might be the Earth

**Page 13**

in a voyage to the Moon, or the Sun in a more distant journey.  As soon, then, as the character of the apergic force was made known to me, its application to this purpose seized on my mind.  Experiment had proved it possible, by the method described at the commencement of this record, to generate and collect it in amounts practically unlimited.  The other hindrances to a voyage through space were trivial in comparison with that thus overcome; there were difficulties to be surmounted, not absent or deficient powers in nature to be discovered.  The chief of these, of course, concerned the conveyance of air sufficient for the needs of the traveller during the period of his journey.  The construction of an air-tight vessel was easy enough; but however large the body of air conveyed, even though its oxygen should not be exhausted, the carbonic acid given out by breathing would very soon so contaminate the whole that life would be impossible.  To eliminate this element it would only be necessary to carry a certain quantity of lime-water, easily calculated, and by means of a fan or similar instrument to drive the whole of the air periodically through the vessel containing it.  The lime in solution combining with the noxious gas would show by the turbid whiteness of the water the absorption of the carbonic acid and formation of carbonate of lime.  But if the carbonic acid gas were merely to be removed, it is obvious that the oxygen of the air, which forms a part of that gas, would be constantly diminished and ultimately exhausted; and the effect of highly oxygenated air upon the circulation is notoriously too great to allow of any considerable increase at the outset in the proportion of this element.  I might carry a fresh supply of oxygen, available at need, in some solid combination like chlorate of potash; but the electricity employed for the generation of the apergy might be also applied to the decomposition of carbonic acid and the restoration of its oxygen to the atmosphere.

But the vessel had to be steered as well as propelled; and in order to accomplish this it would be necessary to command the direction of the apergy at pleasure.  My means of doing this depended on two of the best-established peculiarities of this strange force:  its rectilinear direction and its conductibility.  We found that it acts through air or in a vacuum in a single straight line, without deflection, and seemingly without diminution.  Most solids, and especially metals, according to their electric condition, are more or less impervious to it—­antapergic.  Its power of penetration diminishes under a very obscure law, but so rapidly that no conceivable strength of current would affect an object protected by an intervening sheet half an inch in thickness.  On the other hand, it prefers to all other lines the axis of a conductive bar, such as may be formed of [undecipherable] in an antapergic sheath.  However such bar may be curved, bent, or divided, the current will fill and follow it, and

**Page 14**

pursue indefinitely, without divergence, diffusion, or loss, the direction in which it emerges.  Therefore, by collecting the current from the generator in a vessel cased with antapergic material, and leaving no other aperture, its entire volume might be sent into a conductor.  By cutting across this conductor, and causing the further part to rotate upon the nearer, I could divert the current through any required angle.  Thus I could turn the repulsion upon the resistant body (sun or planet), and so propel the vessel in any direction I pleased.

I had determined that my first attempt should be a visit to Mars.  The Moon is a far less interesting body, since, on the hemisphere turned towards the Earth, the absence of an atmosphere and of water ensures the absence of any such life as is known to us—­probably of any life that could be discerned by our senses—­and would prevent landing; while nearly all the soundest astronomers agree in believing, on apparently sufficient grounds, that even the opposite hemisphere [of which small portions are from time to time rendered visible by the libration, though greatly foreshortened and consequently somewhat imperfectly seen] is equally devoid of the two primary necessaries of animal and vegetable life.  That Mars has seas, clouds, and an atmosphere was generally admitted, and I held it to be beyond question.  Of Venus, owing to her extraordinary brilliancy, to the fact that when nearest to the Earth a very small portion of her lighted surface is visible to us, and above all to her dense cloud-envelope, very little was known; and though I cherished the intention to visit her even more earnestly than my resolve to reach the probably less attractive planet Mars, I determined to begin with that voyage of which the conditions and the probable result were most obvious and certain.  I preferred, moreover, in the first instance, to employ the apergy as a propelling rather than as a resisting force.  Now, after passing beyond the immediate sphere of the Earth’s attraction, it is plain that in going towards Mars I should be departing from the Sun, relying upon the apergy to overcome his attraction; whereas in seeking to attain Venus I should be approaching the Sun, relying for my main motive power upon that tremendous attraction, and employing the apergy only to moderate the rate of movement and control its direction.  The latter appeared to me the more delicate, difficult, and perhaps dangerous task of the two; and I resolved to defer it until after I had acquired some practical experience and dexterity in the control of my machinery.

It was expedient, of course, to make my vessel as light as possible, and, at the same time, as large as considerations of weight would admit.  But it was of paramount importance to have walls of great thickness, in order to prevent the penetration of the outer cold of space, or rather the outward passage into that intense cold of the heat generated within the vessel itself, as well as to resist the tremendous

**Page 15**

outward pressure of the air inside.  Partly for these reasons, and partly because its electric character makes it especially capable of being rendered at will pervious or impervious to the apergic current, I resolved to make the outer and inner walls of an alloy of ..., while the space between should be filled up with a mass of concrete or cement, in its nature less penetrable to heat than any other substance which Nature has furnished or the wit of man constructed from her materials.  The materials of this cement and their proportions were as follows. [2]

\* \* \* \* \*

Briefly, having determined to take advantage of the approaching opposition of Mars in MDCCCXX ... [3], I had my vessel constructed with walls three feet thick, of which the outer six and the inner three inches were formed of the metalloid.  In shape my Astronaut somewhat resembled the form of an antique Dutch East-Indiaman, being widest and longest in a plane equidistant from floor and ceiling, the sides and ends sloping outwards from the floor and again inwards towards the roof.  The deck and keel, however, were absolutely flat, and each one hundred feet in length and fifty in breadth, the height of the vessel being about twenty feet.  In the centre of the floor and in that of the roof respectively I placed a large lens of crystal, intended to act as a window in the first instance, the lower to admit the rays of the Sun, while through the upper I should discern the star towards which I was steering.  The floor, being much heavier than the rest of the vessel, would naturally be turned downwards; that is, during the greater part of the voyage towards the Sun.  I placed a similar lens in the centre of each of the four sides, with two plane windows of the same material, one in the upper, the other in the lower half of the wall, to enable me to discern any object in whatever direction.  The crystal in question consisted of ..., which, as those who manufactured it for me are aware, admits of being cast with a perfection and equality of structure throughout unattainable with ordinary glass, and wrought to a certainty and accuracy of curvature which the most patient and laborious polishing can hardly give to the lenses even of moderate-sized telescopes, whether made of glass or metal, and is singularly impervious to heat.  I had so calculated the curvature that several eye-pieces of different magnifying powers which I carried with me might be adapted equally to any of the window lenses, and throw a perfect image, magnified by 100, 1000, or 5000, upon mirrors properly placed.

I carpeted the floor with several alternate layers of cork and cloth.  At one end I placed my couch, table, bookshelves, and other necessary furniture, with all the stores needed for my voyage, and with a further weight sufficient to preserve equilibrium.  At the other I made a garden with soil three feet deep and five feet in width, divided into two parts so as to permit access to the windows.  I filled

**Page 16**

each garden closely with shrubs and flowering plants of the greatest possible variety, partly to absorb animal waste, partly in the hope of naturalising them elsewhere.  Covering both with wire netting extending from the roof to the floor, I filled the cages thus formed with a variety of birds.  In the centre of the vessel was the machinery, occupying altogether a space of about thirty feet by twenty.  The larger portion of this area was, of course, taken up by the generator, above which was the receptacle of the apergy.  From this descended right through the floor a conducting bar in an antapergic sheath, so divided that without separating it from the upper portion the lower might revolve in any direction through an angle of twenty minutes (20’).  This, of course, was intended to direct the stream of the repulsive force against the Sun.  The angle might have been extended to thirty minutes, but that I deemed it inexpedient to rely upon a force, directed against the outer portions of the Sun’s disc, believing that these are occupied by matter of density so small that it might afford no sufficient base, so to speak, for the repulsive action.  It was obviously necessary also to repel or counteract the attraction of any body which might come near me during the voyage.  Again, in getting free from the Earth’s influence, I must be able to steer in any direction and at any angle to the surface.  For this purpose I placed five smaller bars, passing through the roof and four sides, connected, like the main conductor, with the receptacle or apergion, but so that they could revolve through a much larger angle, and could at any moment be detached and insulated.  My steering apparatus consisted of a table in which were three large circles.  The midmost and left hand of these were occupied by accurately polished plane mirrors.  The central circle, or metacompass, was divided by three hundred and sixty fine lines, radiating from the centre to the circumference, marking as many different directions, each deviating by one degree of arc from the next.  This mirror was to receive through the lens in the roof the image of the star towards which I was steering.  While this remained stationary in the centre all was well.  When it moved along any one of the lines, the vessel was obviously deviating from her course in the opposite direction; and, to recover the right course, the repellent force must be caused to drive her in the direction in which the image had moved.  To accomplish this, a helm was attached to the lower division of the main conductor, by which the latter could be made to move at will in any direction within the limit of its rotation.  Controlling this helm was, in the open or steering circle on the right hand, a small knob to be moved exactly parallel to the deviation of the star in the mirror of the metacompass.  The left-hand circle, or discometer, was divided by nineteen hundred and twenty concentric circles, equidistant from each other.  The outermost, about twice as far from the centre

**Page 17**

as from the external edge of the mirror, was exactly equal to the Sun’s circumference when presenting the largest disc he ever shows to an observer on Earth.  Each inner circle corresponded to a diameter reduced by one second.  By means of a vernier or eye-piece, the diameter of the Sun could be read off the discometer, and from his diameter my distance could be accurately calculated.  On the further side of the machinery was a chamber for the decomposition of the carbonic acid, through which the air was driven by a fan.  This fan itself was worked by a horizontal wheel with two projecting squares of antapergic metal, against each of which, as it reached a certain point, a very small stream of repulsive force was directed from the apergion, keeping the wheel in constant and rapid motion.  I had, of course, supplied myself with an ample store of compressed vegetables, preserved meats, milk, tea, coffee, &c., and a supply of water sufficient to last for double the period which the voyage was expected to occupy; also a well-furnished tool-chest (with wires, tubes, &c.).  One of the lower windows was made just large enough to admit my person, and after entering I had to close it and fix it in its place firmly with cement, which, when I wished to quit the vessel, would have again to be removed.

Of course some months were occupied in the manufacture of the different portions of the vessel and her machinery, and sometime more in their combination; so that when, at the end of July, I was ready to start, the opposition was rapidly approaching.  In the course of some fifty days the Earth, moving in her orbit at a rate of about eleven hundred miles [4] per minute, would overtake Mars; that is to say, would pass between him and the Sun.  In starting from the Earth I should share this motion; I too should go eleven hundred miles a minute in the same direction; but as I should travel along an orbit constantly widening, the Earth would leave me behind.  The apergy had to make up for this, as well as to carry me some forty millions of miles in a direction at right angles to the former—­right outward towards the orbit of Mars.  Again, I should share the motion of that particular spot of the Earth’s surface from which I rose around her axis, a motion varying with the latitude, greatest at the equator, nothing at the pole.  This would whirl me round and round the Earth at the rate of a thousand miles an hour; of this I must, of course, get rid as soon as possible.  And when I should be rid of it, I meant to start at first right upward; that is, straight away from the Sun and in the plane of the ecliptic, which is not very different from that in which Mars also moves.  Therefore I should begin my effective ascent from a point of the Earth as far as possible from the Sun; that is, on the midnight meridian.

**Page 18**

For the same reason which led me to start so long before the date of the opposition, I resolved, having regard to the action of the Earth’s rotation on her axis, to start some hours before midnight.  Taking leave, then, of the two friends who had thus far assisted me, I entered the Astronaut on the 1st August, about 4.30 P.M.  After sealing up the entrance-window, and ascertaining carefully that everything was in order—­a task which occupied me about an hour—­I set the generator to work; and when I had ascertained that the apergion was full, and that the force was supplied at the required rate, I directed the whole at first into the main conductor.  After doing this I turned towards the lower window on the west—­or, as it was then, the right-hand side—­and was in time to catch sight of the trees on the hills, some half mile off and about two hundred feet above the level of my starting-point.  I should have said that I had considerably compressed my atmosphere and increased the proportion of oxygen by about ten per cent., and also carried with me the means of reproducing the whole amount of the latter in case of need.  Among my instruments was a pressure-gauge, so minutely divided that, with a movable vernier of the same power as the fixed ones employed to read the glass circles, I could discover the slightest escape of air in a very few seconds.  The pressure-gauge, however, remained immovable.  Going close to the window and looking out, I saw the Earth falling from me so fast that, within five minutes after my departure, objects like trees and even houses had become almost indistinguishable to the naked eye.  I had half expected to hear the whistling of the air as the vessel rushed upward, but nothing of the kind was perceptible through her dense walls.  It was strange to observe the rapid rise of the sun from the westward.  Still more remarkable, on turning to the upper window, was the rapidly blackening aspect of the sky.  Suddenly everything disappeared except a brilliant rainbow at some little distance—­or perhaps I should rather have said a halo of more than ordinary rainbow brilliancy, since it occupied, not like the rainbows seen from below, something less than half, but nearly two-thirds of a circle.  I was, of course, aware that I was passing through a cloud, and one of very unusual thickness.  In a few seconds, however, I was looking down upon its upper surface, reflecting from a thousand broken masses of vapour at different levels, from cavities and hillocks of mist, the light of the sun; white beams mixed with innumerable rays of all colours in a confusion, of indescribable brilliancy.  I presume that the total obscuration of everything outside the cloud during my passage through it was due to its extent and not to its density, since at that height it could not have been otherwise than exceedingly light and diffuse.  Looking upward through the eastern window, I could now discern a number of brighter stars, and at nearly every moment fresh ones came into view on a constantly

**Page 19**

darkening background.  Looking downward to the west, where alone the entire landscape lay in daylight, I presently discerned the outline of shore and sea extending over a semicircle whose radius much exceeded five hundred miles, implying that I was about thirty-five miles from the sea-level.  Even at this height the extent of my survey was so great in comparison to my elevation, that a line drawn from the vessel to the horizon was, though very roughly, almost parallel to the surface; and the horizon therefore seemed to be not very far from my own level, while the point below me, of course, appeared at a vast distance.  The appearance of the surface, therefore, was as if the horizon had been, say, some thirty miles higher than the centre of the semicircle bounding my view, and the area included in my prospect had the form of a saucer or shallow bowl.  But since the diameter of the visible surface increases only as the square root of the height, this appearance became less and less perceptible as I rose higher.  It had taken me twenty minutes to attain the elevation of thirty-five miles; but my speed was, of course, constantly increasing, very much as the speed of an object falling to the Earth from a great height increases; and before ten more minutes had elapsed, I found myself surrounded by a blackness nearly absolute, except in the direction of the Sun,—­which was still well above the sea—­and immediately round the terrestrial horizon, on which rested a ring of sunlit azure sky, broken here and there by clouds.  In every other direction I seemed to be looking not merely upon a black or almost black sky, but into close surrounding darkness.  Amid this darkness, however, were visible innumerable points of light, more or less brilliant—­the stars—­which no longer seemed to be spangled over the surface of a distant vault, but rather scattered immediately about me, nearer or farther to the instinctive apprehension of the eye as they were brighter or fainter.  Scintillation there was none, except in the immediate vicinity of the eastern horizon, where I still saw them through a dense atmosphere.  In short, before thirty minutes had elapsed since the start, I was satisfied that I had passed entirely out of the atmosphere, and had entered into the vacancy of space—­if such a thing as vacant space there be.

At this point I had to cut off the greater part of the apergy and check my speed, for reasons that will be presently apparent.  I had started in daylight in order that during the first hundred miles of my ascent I might have a clear view of the Earth’s surface.  Not only did I wish to enjoy the spectacle, but as I had to direct my course by terrestrial landmarks, it was necessary that I should be able to see these so as to determine the rate and direction of the Astronaut’s motion, and discern the first symptoms of any possible danger.  But obviously, since my course lay generally in the plane of the ecliptic, and for the present at least nearly in the line joining the centres of

**Page 20**

the Earth and Sun, it was desirable that my real journey into space should commence in the plane of the midnight meridian; that is, from above the part of the Earth’s surface immediately opposite the Sun.  I had to reach this line, and having reached it, to remain for some time above it.  To do both, I must attain it, if possible, at the same moment at which I secured a westward impulse just sufficient to counterbalance the eastward impulse derived from the rotation of the Earth;—­that is, in the latitude from which I started, a thousand miles an hour.  I had calculated that while directing through the main bar a current of apergy sufficient to keep the Astronaut at a fixed elevation, I could easily spare for the eastward conductor sufficient force to create in the space of one hour the impulse required, but that in the course of that hour the gradually increasing apergic force would drive me 500 miles westward.  Now in six hours the Earth’s rotation would carry an object close to its surface through an angle of 90 deg.; that is, from the sunset to the midnight meridian.  But the greater the elevation of the object the wider its orbit round the Earth’s centre, and the longer each degree; so that moving eastward only a thousand miles an hour, I should constantly lag behind a point on the Earth’s surface, and should not reach the midnight meridian till somewhat later.  I had, moreover, to lose 500 miles of the eastward drift during the last hour in which I should be subject to it, through the action of the apergic force above-mentioned.  Now, an elevation of 330 miles would give the Astronaut an orbit on which 90 deg. would represent 6500 miles.  In seven hours I should be carried along that orbit 7000 miles eastward by the impulse my Astronaut had received from the Earth, and driven back 500 miles by the apergy; so that at 1 A.M. by my chronometer I should be exactly in the plane of the midnight meridian, or 6500 miles east of my starting-point in space, provided that I put the eastward apergic current in action exactly at 12 P.M. by the chronometer.  At 1 A.M. also I should have generated a westward impulse of 1000 miles an hour.  This, once created, would continue to exist though the force that created it were cut off, and would exactly counterbalance the opposite rotation impulse derived from the Earth; so that thenceforward I should be entirely free from the influence of the latter, though still sharing that motion of the Earth through space at the rate of nearly nineteen miles per second, which would carry me towards the line joining at the moment of opposition her centre with that of Mars.

**Page 21**

All went as I had calculated.  I contrived to arrest the Astronaut’s motion at the required elevation just about the moment of sunset on the region of the Earth immediately underneath.  At 12 P.M., or 24h by the chronometer, I directed a current of the requisite strength into the eastward conductor, which I had previously pointed to the Earth’s surface, but a little short of the extreme terrestrial horizon, as I calculated it.  At 1 A.M.  I found myself, judging by the stars, exactly where I wished to be, and nearly stationary as regarded the Earth.  I instantly arrested the eastward current, detaching that conductor from the apergion; and, directing the whole force of the current into the downward conductor, I had the pleasure of seeing that, after a very little adjustment of the helm, the stars remained stationary in the mirror of the metacompass, showing that I had escaped from the influence of the Earth’s rotation.  It was of course impossible to measure the distance traversed during the invisibility of the Earth, but I reckoned that I had made above 500 miles between 1h. and 2h.  A.M., and that at 4h.  I was not less than 4800 miles from the surface.  With this inference the indication of my barycrite substantially agreed.  The latter instrument consisted of a spring whose deflection by a given weight upon the equator had been very carefully tested.  Gravity diminishing as the square of the distance from the centre, it was obvious that at about 8000 miles—­or 4000 above the Earth’s surface—­this spring would be deflected only one quarter as much by a given weight as on Earth:  at 16,000 miles from the surface, or 20,000 from the centre, one-twenty-fifth as much, and so on.  I had graduated the scale accordingly, and it indicated at present a distance somewhat less than 9000 miles from the centre.  Having adjusted the helm and set the alarum to wake me in six hours, I lay down upon my bed.

The anxiety and peril of my position had disturbed me very little whilst I was actively engaged either in steering and manipulating my machinery, or in looking upon the marvellous and novel spectacles presented to my eyes; but it now oppressed me in my sleep, and caused me frequently to wake from dreams of a hideous character.  Two or three times, on such awaking, I went to examine the metacompass, and on one occasion found it necessary slightly to readjust the helm; the stars by which I steered having moved some second or two to the right of their proper position.

On rising, I completed the circuit which filled my vessel with brilliant light emitted from an electric lamp at the upper part of the stern, and reflected by the polished metallic walls.  I then proceeded to get my breakfast, for which, as I had tasted nothing since some hours before the start, I had a hearty appetite.  I had anticipated some trouble from the diminished action of gravity, doubting whether the boiling-point at this immense height above the Earth might not be affected; but I found that this

**Page 22**

depends upon the pressure of the atmosphere alone, and that this pressure was in nowise affected by the absence of gravity.  My atmosphere being somewhat denser than that of the Earth, the boiling-point was not 100 deg., but 101 deg.  Cent.  The temperature of the interior of the vessel, taken at a point equidistant from the stove and from the walls, was about 5 deg.  C.; unpleasantly cool, but still, with the help of a greatcoat, not inconveniently so.  I found it absolutely impossible to measure by means of the thermometers I had placed outside the windows the cold of space; but that it falls far short of the extreme supposed by some writers, I confidently believe.  It is, however, cold enough to freeze mercury, and to reduce every other substance employed as a test of atmospheric or laboratory temperatures to a solidity which admits of no further contraction.  I had filled one outside thermometer with spirit, but this was broken before I looked at it; and in another, whose bulb unfortunately was blackened, and which was filled with carbonic acid gas, an apparent vacuum had been created.  Was it that the gas had been frozen, and had sunk into the lower part of the bulb, where it would, of course, be invisible?  When I had completed my meal and smoked the very small cigar which alone a prudent consideration for the state of the atmosphere would allow me, the chronometer showed 10 A.M.  It was not surprising that by this time weight had become almost non-existent.  My twelve stone had dwindled to the weight of a small fowl, and hooking my little finger into the loop of a string hung from a peg fixed near the top of the stern wall, I found myself able thus to support my weight without any sense of fatigue for a quarter of an hour or more; in fact, I felt during that time absolutely no sense of muscular weariness.  This state of things entailed only one inconvenience.  Nothing had any stability; so that the slightest push or jerk would upset everything that was not fixed.  However, I had so far anticipated this that nothing of any material consequence was unfixed, and except that a touch with my spoon upset the egg-cup and egg on which I was about to breakfast, and that this, falling against a breakfast cup full of coffee, overturned that, I was not incommoded.  I managed to save the greater part of the beverage, since, the atmospheric pressure being the same though the weight was so changed, lead, and still more china or liquid, fell in the Astronaut as slowly as feathers in the immediate vicinity of the Earth.  Still it was a novel experience to find myself able to lean in any direction, and rest in almost any posture, with but the slightest support for the body’s centre of gravity; and further to find on experiment that it was possible to remain for a couple of hours with my heels above my head, in the favourite position of a Yankee’s lower limbs, without any perceptible congestion of blood or confusion of brain.

**Page 23**

I was occupied all day with abstract calculations; and knowing that for some time I could see nothing of the Earth—­her dark side being opposite me and wholly obscuring the Sun, while I was as yet far from having entered within the sphere where any novel celestial phenomena might be expected—­I only gave an occasional glance at the discometer and metacompass, suppressing of course the electric glare within my vessel, till I awoke from a short siesta about 19h. (7 P.M.) The Earth at this time occupied on the sphere of view a space—­defined at first only by the absence of stars—­about thirty times greater than the disc of the Moon as seen through a tube; but, being dark, scarcely seemed larger to the eye than the full Moon when on the horizon.  But a new method of defining its disc was presently afforded me.  I was, in fact, when looking through the lower window, in the same position as regards the Earth as would be an inhabitant of the lunar hemisphere turned towards her, having no external atmosphere interposed between us, but being at about two-thirds of the lunar distance.  And as, during an eclipse, the Lunarian would see round the Earth a halo created by the refraction of the Sun’s rays in the terrestrial atmosphere—­a halo bright enough on most occasions so to illuminate the Moon as to render her visible to us—­so to my eyes the Earth was surrounded by a halo somewhat resembling the solar corona as seen in eclipses, if not nearly so brilliant, but, unlike the solar corona, coloured, with a preponderance of red so decided as fully to account for the peculiar hue of the eclipsed Moon.  To paint this, unless means of painting light—­the one great deficiency which is still the opprobrium of human art—­were discovered, would task to the uttermost the powers of the ablest artist, and at best he could give but a very imperfect notion of it.  To describe it so that its beauty, brilliancy, and wondrous nature shall be in the slightest degree appreciated by my readers would require a command of words such as no poet since Homer—­nay, not Homer himself—­possessed.  What was strange, and can perhaps be rendered intelligible, was the variation, or, to use a phrase more suggestive and more natural, if not more accurate, the extreme mobility of the hues of this earthly corona.  There were none of the efflorescences, if one may so term them, which are so generally visible at four cardinal points of its solar prototype.  The outer portion of the band faded very rapidly into the darkness of space; but the edge, though absolutely undefined, was perfectly even.  But on the generally rainbow-tinted ground suffused with red—­which perhaps might best be described by calling it a rainbow seen on a background of brilliant crimson—­there were here and there blotches of black or of lighter or darker grey, caused apparently by vast expanses of cloud, more or less dense.  Round the edges of each of these were little irregular rainbow-coloured halos of their own interrupting and variegating the

**Page 24**

continuous bands of the corona; while throughout all was discernible a perpetual variability, like the flashing or shooting of colour in the opal, the mother-of-pearl, or similarly tinted translucent substances when exposed to the irregular play of bright light—­only that in this case the tints were incomparably more brilliant, the change more striking, if not more rapid.  I could not say that at any particular moment any point or part of the surface presented this or that definite hue; and yet the general character of the rainbow, suffused with or backed by crimson, was constant and unmistakable.  The light sent through the window was too dim and too imperfectly diffused within my vessel to be serviceable, but for some time I put out the electric lamp in order that its diffused light should not impair my view of this exquisite spectacle.  As thrown, after several reflections, upon the mirror destined afterwards to measure the image of the solar disc, the apparition of the halo was of course much less bright, and its outer boundary ill defined for accurate measurement.  The inner edge, where the light was bounded by the black disc of the Earth, shaded off much more quickly from dark reddish purple into absolute blackness.

And now a surprise, the first I had encountered, awaited me.  I registered the gravity as shown by the barycrite; and, extinguishing the electric lamp, measured repeatedly the semi-diameter of the Earth and of the halo around her upon the discometer, the inner edge of the latter affording the measurement of the black disc, which of itself, of course, cast no reflection.  I saw at once that there was a signal difference in the two indications, and proceeded carefully to revise the earth-measurements.  On the average of thirteen measures the halo was about 87”, or nearly 1-1/2’ in breadth, the disc, allowing for the twilight round its edge or limb, about 2 deg. 50’.  If the refracting atmosphere were some 65 miles in depth, these proportions were correct.  Relighting the lamp, I worked out severally on paper the results indicated by the two instruments.  The discometer gave a distance, roughly speaking, of 40 terrestrial radii, or 160,000 miles.  The barycrite should have shown a gravity, due to the Earth’s attraction, not 40 but 1600 times less than that prevailing on the Earth’s surface; or, to put it in a less accurate form, a weight of 100 lbs. should have weighed an ounce.  It did weigh two ounces, the gravity being not one 1600th but one 800th of terrestrial gravity, or just double what, I expected.  I puzzled myself over this matter longer, probably, than the intelligent reader will do:  the explanation being obvious, like that of many puzzles that bewilder our minds intensely, only to humiliate us proportionately when the solution is found—­a solution as simple as that of Columbus’s egg-riddle.  At length, finding that the lunar angle—­the apparent position of the Moon—­confirmed the reading of the discometer, giving the same apogaic distance or elevation, I supposed that the barycrite must be out of order or subject to some unsuspected law of which future observations might afford evidence and explanation, and turned to other subjects of interest.

**Page 25**

Looking through the upper window on the left, I was struck by the rapid enlargement of a star which, when I first noticed it, might be of the third magnitude, but which in less than a minute attained the first, and in a minute more was as large as the planet Jupiter when seen with a magnifying power of one hundred diameters.

Its disc, however, had no continuous outline; and as it approached I perceived that it was an irregular mass of whose size I could form not even a conjectural estimate, since its distance must be absolutely uncertain.  Its brilliancy grew fainter in proportion to the enlargement as it approached, proving that its light was reflected; and as it passed me, apparently in the direction of the earth, I had a sufficiently distinct view of it to know that it was a mainly metallic mass, certainly of some size, perhaps four, perhaps twenty feet in diameter, and apparently composed chiefly of iron; showing a more or less blistered surface, but with angles sharper and faces more regularly defined than most of those which have been found upon the earth’s surface—­as if the shape of the latter might be due in part to the conflagration they undergo in passing at such tremendous speed through the atmosphere, or, in an opposite sense, to the fractures caused by the shock of their falling.  Though I made no attempt to count the innumerable stars in the midst of which I appeared to float, I was convinced that their number was infinitely greater than that visible to the naked eye on the brightest night.  I remembered how greatly the inexperienced eye exaggerates the number of stars visible from the Earth, since poets, and even olden observers, liken their number to that of the sands on the seashore; whereas the patient work of map and catalogue makers has shown that there are but a few thousands visible in the whole heavens to the keenest unaided sight.  I suppose that I saw a hundred times that number.  In one word, the sphere of darkness in which I floated seemed to be filled with points of light, while the absolute blackness that surrounded them, the absence of the slightest radiation, or illumination of space at large, was strange beyond expression to an eye accustomed to that diffusion of light which is produced by the atmosphere.  I may mention here that the recognition of the constellations was at first exceedingly difficult.  On Earth we see so few stars in any given portion of the heavens, that one recognises without an effort the figure marked out by a small number of the brightest amongst them; while in my position the multitude was so great that only patient and repeated effort enabled me to separate from the rest those peculiarly brilliant luminaries by which we are accustomed to define such constellations as Orion or the Bear, to say nothing of those minor or more arbitrarily drawn figures which contain few stars of the second magnitude.  The eye had no instinctive sense of distance; any star might have been within a stone’s throw.  I need hardly

**Page 26**

observe that, while on one hand the motion of the vessel was absolutely imperceptible, there was, on the other, no change of position among the stars which could enable me to verify the fact that I was moving, much less suggest it to the senses.  The direction of every recognisable star was the same as on Earth, as it appears the same from the two extremities of the Earth’s orbit, 19 millions of miles apart.  Looking from any one window, I could see no greater space of the heavens than in looking through a similar aperture on Earth.  What was novel and interesting in my stellar prospect was, not merely that I could see those stars north and south which are never visible from the same point on Earth, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the Equator; but that, save on the small space concealed by the Earth’s disc, I could, by moving from window to window, survey the entire heavens, looking at one minute upon the stars surrounding the vernal, and at another, by changing my position, upon those in the neighbourhood of the autumnal equinox.  By little more than a turn of my head I could see in one direction Polaris (*alpha* Ursae Minoris) with the Great Bear, and in another the Southern Cross, the Ship, and the Centaur.

About 23h. 30m., near the close of the first day, I again inspected the barycrite.  It showed 1/1100 of terrestrial gravity, an incredibly small change from the 1/800 recorded at 19h., since it implied a progress proportionate only to the square root of the difference.  The observation indicated, if the instrument could be trusted, an advance of only 18,000 miles.  It was impossible that the Astronaut had not by this time attained a very much greater speed than 4000 miles an hour, and a greater distance from the Earth than 33 terrestrial radii, or 132,000 miles.  Moreover, the barycrite itself had given at 19h. a distance of 28-1/2 radii, and a speed far greater than that which upon its showing had since been maintained.  Extinguishing the lamp, I found that the Earth’s diameter on the discometer measured 2 deg. 3’ 52” (?).  This represented a gain of some 90,000 miles; much more approximate to that which, judging by calculation, I ought to have accomplished during the last four hours and a half, if my speed approached to that I had estimated.  I inspected the cratometer, which indicated a force as great as that with which I had started,—­a force which should by this time have given me a speed of at least 22,000 miles an hour.  At last the solution of the problem flashed upon me, suggested by the very extravagance of the contradictions.  Not only did the barycrite contradict the discometer and the reckoning but it contradicted itself; since it was impossible that under one continuous impulsation I should have traversed 28-1/2 radii of the Earth in the first eighteen hours and no more than 4-1/2 in the next four and a half hours.  In truth, the barycrite was effected by two separate attractions,—­that of the Earth and that of the Sun, as yet operating almost

**Page 27**

exactly in the same direction.  At first the attraction of the former was so great that that of the Sun was no more perceived than upon the Earth’s surface.  But as I rose, and the Earth’s attraction diminished in proportion to the square of the distance from her centre—­which was doubled at 8000 miles, quadrupled at 16,000, and so on—­the Sun’s attraction, which was not perceptibly affected by differences so small in proportion to his vast distance of 95,000,000 miles, became a more and more important element in the total gravity.  If, as I calculated, I had by 19h. attained a distance from the earth of 160,000 miles, the attractions of Earth and Sun were by that time pretty nearly equal; and hence the phenomenon which had so puzzled me, that the gravitation, as indicated by the barycrite, was exactly double that which, bearing in mind the Earth’s attraction alone, I had calculated.  From this point forward the Sun’s attraction was the factor which mainly caused such weight as still existed; a change of position which, doubling my distance from the Earth, reduced her influence to one-fourth, not perceptibly affecting that of a body four hundred times more remote.  A short calculation showed that, this fact borne in mind, the indication of the barycrite substantially agreed with that of the discometer, and that I was in fact very nearly where I supposed, that is, a little farther than the Moon’s farthest distance from the Earth.  It did not follow that I had crossed the orbit of the Moon; and if I had, she was at that time too far off to exercise a serious influence on my course.  I adjusted the helm and betook myself to rest, the second day of my journey having already commenced.

**CHAPTER III — THE UNTRAVELLED DEEP.**

Rising at 5h., I observed a drooping in the leaves of my garden, and especially of the larger shrubs and plants, for which I was not wholly unprepared, but which might entail some inconvenience if, failing altogether, they should cease to absorb the gases generated from buried waste, to consume which they had been planted.  Besides this, I should, of course, lose the opportunity of transplanting them to Mars, though I had more hope of acclimatising seedlings raised from the seed I carried with me than plants which had actually begun their life on the surface of the Earth.  The failure I ascribed naturally to the known connection between the action of gravity and the circulation of the sap; though, as I had experienced no analogous inconvenience in my own person, I had hoped that this would not seriously affect vegetation.  I was afraid to try the effect of more liberal watering, the more so that already the congelation of moisture upon the glasses from the internal air, dry as the latter had been kept, was a sensible annoyance—­an annoyance which would have become an insuperable trouble had I not taken so much pains, by directing the thermic currents upon the walls, to keep the internal temperature,

**Page 28**

in so far as comfort would permit—­it had now fallen to 4 deg.  C.—­as near as possible to that of the inner surface of the walls and windows.  A careful use of the thermometer indicated that the metallic surface of the former was now nearly zero C., or 32 deg.  F. The inner surface of the windows was somewhat colder, showing that the crystal was more pervious to heat than the walls, with their greater thickness, their outer and inner lining of metal, and massive interior of concrete.  I directed a current from the thermogene upon either division of the garden, hoping thus to protect the plants from whatever injury they might receive from the cold.  Somewhat later, perceiving that the drooping still continued, I resolved upon another experiment, and arranging an apparatus of copper wire beneath the soil, so as to bring the extremities in immediate contact with their roots, I directed through these wires a prolonged feeble current of electricity; by which, as I had hoped rather than expected, the plants were after a time materially benefited, and to which I believe I owed it that they had not all perished long before the termination of my voyage.

It would be mere waste of space and time were I to attempt anything like a journal of the weeks I spent in the solitude of this artificial planet.  As matter of course, the monotony of a voyage through space is in general greater than that of a voyage across an ocean like the Atlantic, where no islands and few ships are to be encountered.  It was necessary to be very frequently, if not constantly, on the look-out for possible incidents of interest in a journey so utterly novel through regions which the telescope can but imperfectly explore.  It was difficult, therefore, to sit down to a book, or even to pursue any necessary occupation unconnected with the actual conduct of the vessel, with uninterrupted attention.  My eyes, the only sense organs I could employ, were constantly on the alert; but, of course, by far the greater portion of my time passed without a single new object or occasion of remark.  That a journey so utterly without precedent or parallel, in which so little could be anticipated or provided for, through regions absolutely untraversed and very nearly unknown, should be monotonous, may seem strange.  But in truth the novelties of the situation, such as they were, though intensely striking and interesting, were each in turn speedily examined, realised, and, so to speak, exhausted; and this once done, there was no greater occupation to the mind in the continuance of strange than in that of familiar scenery.  The infinitude of surrounding blackness, filled as it were with points of light more or less brilliant, when once its effects had been scrutinised, and when nothing more remained to be noted, afforded certainly a more agreeable, but scarcely a more interesting or absorbing, outlook than the dead grey circle of sea, the dead grey hemisphere of cloud, which form the prospect from the deck of a packet in mid-Atlantic;

**Page 29**

while of change without or incident in the vessel herself there was, of course, infinitely less than is afforded in an ocean voyage by the variations of weather, not to mention the solace of human society.  Everything around me, except in the one direction in which the Earth’s disc still obscured the Sun, remained unchanged for hours and days; and the management of my machinery required no more than an occasional observation of my instruments and a change in the position of the helm, which occupied but a few minutes some half-dozen times in the twenty-four hours.  There was not even the change of night and day, of sun and stars, of cloud or clear sky.  Were I to describe the manner in which each day’s leisure was spent, I should bore my readers even more than—­they will perhaps be surprised by the confession—­I was bored myself.

My sleep was of necessity more or less broken.  I wished to have eight hours of rest, since, though seven of continuous sleep might well have sufficed me, even if my brain had been less quiet and unexcited during the rest of the twenty-four, it was impossible for me to enjoy that term of unbroken slumber.  I therefore decided to divide my sleep into two portions of rather more than four hours each, to be taken as a rule after noon and after midnight; or rather, since noon and midnight had no meaning for me, from 12h. to 16h. and from 24h. to 4.h.  But of course sleep and everything else, except the necessary management of the machine, must give way to the chances of observation; it would be better to remain awake for forty-eight hours at a stretch than to miss any important phenomenon the period of whose occurrence could be even remotely calculated.

At 8h., I employed for the first time the apparatus which I may call my window telescope, to observe, from a position free from the difficulties inflicted on terrestrial astronomers by the atmosphere, all the celestial objects within my survey.  As I had anticipated, the absence of atmospheric disturbance and diffusion of light was of extreme advantage.  In the first place, I ascertained by the barycrite and the discometer my distance from the Earth, which appeared to be about 120 terrestrial radii.  The light of the halo was of course very much narrower than when I first observed it, and its scintillations or coruscations no longer distinctly visible.  The Moon presented an exquisitely fine thread of light, but no new object of interest on the very small portion of her daylight hemisphere turned towards me.  Mars was somewhat difficult to observe, being too near what may be called my zenith.  But the markings were far more distinct than they appear, with greater magnifying powers than I employed, upon the Earth.  In truth, I should say that the various disadvantages due to the atmosphere deprive the astronomer of at least one-half of the available light-collecting power of his telescope, and consequently of the defining power of the eye-piece; that with a 200 glass he sees

**Page 30**

less than a power of 100 reveals to an eye situated in space; though, from the nature of the lens through which I looked, I cannot speak with certainty upon this point.  With a magnifying power of 300 the polar spots of Mars were distinctly visible and perfectly defined.  They were, I thought, less white than they appeared from the Earth, but their colour was notably different from that of the planet’s general surface, differing almost as widely from the orange hue of what I supposed to be land as from the greyish blue of the water.  The orange was, I thought, deeper than it appears through a telescope of similar power on Earth.  The seas were distinctly grey rather than blue, especially when, by covering the greater part of the field, I contrived for a moment to observe a sea alone, thus eliminating the effect of contrast.  The bands of Jupiter in their turn were more notably distinct; their variety of colour as well as the contrast of light and shade much more definite, and their irregularities more unmistakable.  A satellite was approaching the disc, and this afforded me an opportunity of realising with especial clearness the difference between observation through seventy or a hundred miles of terrestrial atmosphere outside the object glass and observation in space.  The two discs were perfectly rounded and separately discernible until they touched.  Moreover, I was able to distinguish upon one of the darker bands the disc of the satellite itself, while upon a lighter band its round black shadow was at the same time perfectly defined.  This wonderfully clear presentation of one of the most interesting of astronomical phenomena so absorbed my attention that I watched the satellite and shadow during their whole course, though the former, passing after a time on to a light band, became comparatively indistinct.  The moment, however, that the outer edge passed off the disc of Jupiter, its outline became perfectly visible against the black background of sky.  What was still more novel was the occultation for some little time of a star, apparently of the tenth magnitude, not by the planet but by the satellite, almost immediately after it passed off the disc of the former.  Whether the star actually disappeared at once, as if instantaneously extinguished, or whether, as I thought at the moment, it remained for some tenth of a second partially visible, as if refracted by an atmosphere belonging to the satellite, I will not venture to say.  The bands and rings of Saturn, the division between the two latter, and the seven satellites, were also perfectly visible, with a distinctness that a much greater magnifying power would hardly have attained under terrestrial conditions.  I was perplexed by two peculiarities, not, so far as I know, hitherto [5] mentioned by astronomers.  The circumference did not appear to present an even curvature.

**Page 31**

I mean that, apart from the polar compression, the shape seemed as if the spheroid were irregularly squeezed; so that though not broken by projection or indentation, the limb did not present the regular quasi-circular curvature exhibited in the focus of our telescopes.  Also, between the inner ring and the planet, with a power of 500, I discerned what appeared to be a dark purplish ring, semi-transparent, so that through it the bright surface of Saturn might be discerned as through a veil.  Mercury shone brightly several degrees outside the halo surrounding the Earth’s black disc; and Venus was also visible; but in neither case did my observations allow me to ascertain anything that has not been already noted by astronomers.  The dim form of Uranus was better defined than I had previously seen it, but no marking of any kind was perceptible.

Rising from my second, or, so to speak, midday rest, and having busied myself for some little time with what I may call my household and garden duties, I observed the discometer at 1h. (or 5 P.M.).  It indicated about two hundred terrestrial radii of elevation.  I had, of course, from the first been falling slightly behind the Earth in her orbital motion, and was no longer exactly in opposition; that is to say, a line drawn from the Astronaut to the Earth’s centre was no longer a prolongation of that joining the centres of the Earth and Sun.  The effect of this divergence was now perceptible.  The earthly corona was unequal in width, and to the westward was very distinctly brightened, while on the other side it was narrow and comparatively faint.  While watching this phenomenon through the lower lens, I thought that I could perceive behind or through the widest portion of the halo a white light, which at first I mistook for one of those scintillations that had of late become scarcely discernible.  But after a time it extended visibly beyond the boundary of the halo itself, and I perceived that the edge of the Sun’s disc had come at last into view.  It was but a minute and narrow crescent, but was well worth watching.  The brightening and broadening of the halo at this point I perceived to be due, not to the Sun’s effect upon the atmosphere that produced it, but chiefly to the twilight now brightening on that limb of the Earth’s disc; or rather to the fact that a small portion of that part of the Earth’s surface, where, if the Sun were not visible, he was but a very little below the horizon, had been turned towards me.  I saw through the telescope first a tiny solar crescent of intense brightness, then the halo proper, now exceedingly narrow, and then what looked like a silver terrestrial crescent, but a mere thread, finer and shorter than any that the Moon ever displays even to telescopic observers on Earth; since, when such a minute portion of her illuminated surface is turned towards the Earth, it is utterly extinguished to our eyes by the immediate vicinity of the Sun, as was soon the case with the terrestrial

**Page 32**

crescent in question.  I watched long and with intense interest the gradual change, but I was called away from it by a consideration of no little practical moment.  I must now be moving at a rate of nearly, if not quite, 40,000 miles an hour, or about a million miles per diem.  It was not my intention, for reasons I shall presently explain, ever greatly to exceed this rate; and if I meant to limit myself to a fixed rate of speed, it was time to diminish the force of the apergic current, as otherwise before its reduction could take effect I should have attained an impulse greater than I desired, and which could not be conveniently or easily diminished when once reached.  Quitting, therefore, though reluctantly, my observation of the phenomena below me, I turned to the apergion, and was occupied for some two or three hours in gradually reducing the force as measured by the cratometer attached to the downward conductor, and measuring with extreme care the very minute effect produced upon the barycrite and the discometer.  Even the difference between 200 and 201 radii of elevation or apogaic distance was not easily perceptible on either.  It took, of course, much more minute observation and a much longer time to test the effect produced by the regulation of the movement, since whether I traveller forty, forty-five, or forty-two thousand miles in the course of one hour made scarcely any difference in the diameter of the Earth’s disc, still less, for reasons above given, in the gravity.  By midnight, however, I was satisfied that I had not attained quite 1,000,000 miles, or 275 terrestrial radii; also that my speed was not greater than 45,000 miles (11-1\4 radii) per hour, and was not, I thought, increasing.  Of this last point, however, I could better satisfy myself at the end of my four hours’ rest, to which I now betook myself.

I woke about 4h. 30m., and on a scrutiny of the instruments, felt satisfied that I was not far out in my calculations.  A later hour, however, would afford a more absolute certainty.  I was about to turn again to the interesting work of observation through the lens in the floor, when my attention was diverted by the sight of something like a whitish cloud visible through the upper window on my left hand.  Examined by the telescope, its widest diameter might be at most ten degrees.  It was faintly luminous, presenting an appearance very closely resembling that of a star cluster or nebula just beyond the power of resolution.  As in many nebulae, there was a visible concentration in one part; but this did not occupy the centre, but a position more resembling that of the nucleus of a small tailless comet.  The cloudlet might be a distant comet, it might be a less distant body of meteors clustering densely in some particular part of their orbit; and, unfortunately, I was not likely to solve the problem.  Gradually the nebula changed its position, but not its form, seeming to move downwards and towards the stern of my vessel, as if I were passing it without

**Page 33**

approaching nearer.  By the time that I was satisfied of this, hunger and even faintness warned me that I must not delay preparing my breakfast.  When I had finished this meal and fulfilled some necessary tasks, practical and arithmetical, the hand of the chronometer indicated the eighth hour of my third day.  I turned again somewhat eagerly to the discometer, which showed an apparent distance of 360 terrestrial radii, and consequently a movement which had not materially varied from the rate of 11-1/4 radii per hour.  By this time the diameter of the Earth was not larger in appearance than about 19’, less than two-thirds that of the Sun; and she consequently appeared as a black disc covering somewhat more than one-third of his entire surface, but by no means concentrical.  The halo had of course completely disappeared; but with the vernier it was possible to discern a narrow band or line of hazy grey around the black limb of the planet.  She was moving, as seen from the Astronaut, very slightly to the north, and more decidedly, though very slowly, to the eastward; the one motion due to my deliberately chosen direction in space, the other to the fact that as my orbit enlarged I was falling, though as yet slowly, behind her.  The sun now shone through, the various windows, and, reflected from the walls, maintained a continuous daylight within the Astronaut, as well diffused as by the atmosphere of Earth, strangely contrasting the star-spangled darkness outside.

At the beginning as at the end of my voyage, I steered a distinct course, governed by considerations quite different from those which controlled the main direction of my voyage.  Thus far I had simply risen straight from the Earth in a direction somewhat to the southward, but on the whole “in opposition,” or right away from the Sun.  So, at the conclusion of my journey, I should have to devote some days to a gradual descent upon Mars, exactly reversing the process of my ascent from the Earth.  But between these two periods I had comparatively little to do with either planet, my course being governed by the Sun, and its direction and rate being uniform.  I wished to reach Mars at the moment of opposition, and during the whole of the journey to keep the Earth between myself and the Sun, for a reason which may not at first be obvious.  The moment of opposition is not necessarily that at which Mars is nearest to the Earth, but is sufficiently so for practical calculation.  At that moment, according to the received measurement of planetary distances, the two would be more than 40 millions of miles apart.  In the meantime the Earth, travelling on an interior or smaller orbit, and also at a greater absolute speed, was gaining on Mars.  The Astronaut, moving at the Earth’s rate under an impulse derived from the Earth’s revolution round the Sun (that due to her rotation on her own axis having been got rid of, as aforesaid), traveller in an orbit constantly widening, so that, while gaining on Mars, I gained on him less than did

**Page 34**

the Earth, and was falling behind her.  Had I used the apergy only to drive me directly outward from the Sun, I should move under the impulse derived from the Earth about 1,600,000 miles a day, or 72 millions of miles in forty-five days, in the direction common to the two planets.  The effect of the constantly widening orbit would be much as if the whole motion took place on one midway between those of the Earth and Mars, say 120 millions of miles from the Sun.  The arc described on this orbit would be equivalent to 86 millions of miles on that of Mars.  The entire arc of his orbit between the point opposite to that occupied by the Earth when I started and the point of opposition—­the entire distance I had to gain as measured along his path—­was about 116 millions of miles; so that, trusting to the terrestrial impulse alone, I should be some 30 millions behindhand at the critical moment.  The apergic force must make up for this loss of ground, while driving me in a direction, so to speak, at right angles with that of the orbit, or along its radius, straight outward from the Sun, forty odd millions of miles in the same time.  If I succeeded in this, I should reach the orbit of Mars at the point and at the moment of opposition, and should attain Mars himself.  But in this I might fail, and I should then find myself under the sole influence of the Sun’s attraction; able indeed to resist it, able gradually to steer in any direction away from it, but hardly able to overtake a planet that should lie far out of my line of advance or retreat, while moving at full speed away from me.  In order to secure a chance of retreat, it was desirable as long as possible to keep the Earth between the Astronaut and the Sun; while steering for that point in space where Mars would lie at the moment when, as seen from the centre of the Earth, he would be most nearly opposite the Sun,—­would cross the meridian at midnight.  It was by these considerations that the course I henceforward steered was determined.  By a very simple calculation, based on the familiar principle of the parallelogram of forces, I gave to the apergic current a force and direction equivalent to a daily motion of about 750,000 miles in the orbital, and rather more than a million in the radial line.  I need hardly observe that it would not be to the apergic current alone, but to a combination of that current with the orbital impulse received at first from the Earth, that my progress and course would be due.  The latter was the stronger influence; the former only was under my control, but it would suffice to determine, as I might from time to time desire, the resultant of the combination.  The only obvious risk of failure lay in the chance that, my calculations failing or being upset, I might reach the desired point too soon or too late.  In either case, I should be dangerously far from Mars, beyond his orbit or within it, at the time when I should come into a line with him and the Sun; or, again, putting the same mischance in another form, behind him or before him when I attained his orbit.  But I trusted to daily observation of his position, and verification of my “dead reckoning” thereby, to find out any such danger in time to avert it.

**Page 35**

The displacement of the Earth on the Sun’s face proved it to be necessary that the apergic current should be directed against the latter in order to govern my course as I desired, and to recover the ground I had lost in respect to the orbital motion.  I hoped for a moment that this change in the action of the force would settle a problem we had never been able to determine.  Our experiments proved that apergy acts in a straight line when once collected in and directed along a conductor, and does not radiate, like other forces, from a centre in all directions.  It is of course this radiation—­ diffusing the effect of light, heat, or gravity over the surface of a sphere, which surface is proportionate to the square of the radius—­that causes these forces to operate with an energy inversely proportionate, not to the distance, but to its square.  We had no reason to think that apergy, exempt as it is from this law, would be at all diminished by distance; and this view the rate of acceleration as I rose from the Earth had confirmed, and my entire experience has satisfied me that it is correct.  None of our experiments, however, had indicated, or could well indicate, at what rate this force can travel through space; nor had I yet obtained any light upon this point.  From the very first the current had been continuous, the only interruption taking place when I was not five hundred miles from the Earth’s surface.  Over so small a distance as that, the force would move so instantaneously that no trace of the interruption would be perceptible in the motion of the Astronaut.  Even now the total interruption of the action of apergy for a considerable time would not affect the rate at which I was already moving.  It was possible, however, that if the current had been hitherto wholly intercepted by the Earth, it might take so long a time in reaching the Sun that the interval between the movement of the helm and the response of the Astronaut’s course thereto might afford some indication of the time occupied by the current in traversing the 96-1/2 millions of miles which parted me from the Sun.  My hope, however, was wholly disappointed.  I could neither be sure that the action was instantaneous, nor that it was otherwise.

At the close of the third day I had gained, as was indicated by the instruments, something more than two millions of miles in a direct line from the Sun; and for the future I might, and did, reckon on a steady progress of about one and a quarter million miles daily under the apergic force alone—­a gain in a line directly outward from the Sun of about one million.  Henceforward I shall not record my observations, except where they implied an unexpected or altered result.

**Page 36**

On the sixth day, I perceived another nebula, and on this occasion in a more promising direction.  It appeared, from its gradual movement, to lie almost exactly in my course, so that if it were what I suspected, and were not at any great distance from me, I must pass either near or through it, and it would surely explain what had perplexed and baffled me in the case of the former nebula.  At this distance the nature of the cloudlet was imperceptible to the naked eye.  The window telescope was not adjustable to an object which I could not bring conveniently within the field of view of the lenses.  In a few hours the nebula so changed its form and position, that, being immediately over the portion of the roof between the front or bow lens and that in the centre of the roof, its central section was invisible; but the extremities of that part which I had seen in the first instance through the upper plane window of the bow were now clearly visible from the upper windows of either side.  What had at first been a mere greatly elongated oval, with a species of rapidly diminishing tail at each extremity, had now become an arc spanning no inconsiderable part of the space above me, narrowing rapidly as it extended downwards and sternwards.  Presently it came in view through the upper lens, but did not obscure in the least the image of the stars which were then visible in the metacompass.  I very soon ascertained that the cloudlet consisted, as I had supposed in the former case, of a multitude of points of light less brilliant than the stars, the distance between which became constantly wider, but which for some time were separately so small as to present no disc that any magnifying power at my command could render measurable.  In the meantime, the extremities visible through the other windows were constantly widening out till lost in the spangled darkness.  By and by, it became impossible with the naked eye to distinguish the individual points from the smaller stars; and shortly after this the nearest began to present discs of appreciable size but somewhat irregular shape.  I had now no doubt that I was about to pass through one of those meteoric rings which our most advanced astronomers believe to exist in immense numbers throughout space, and to the Earth’s contact with or approach to which they ascribe the showers of falling, stars visible in August and November.  Ere long, one after another of these bodies passed rapidly before my sight, at distances varying probably from five yards to five thousand miles.  Where to test the distance was impossible, anything like accurate measurement was equally out of the question; but my opinion is, that the diameters of the nearest ranged from ten inches to two hundred feet.  One only passed so near that its absolute size could be judged by the marks upon its face.  This was a rock-like mass, presenting at many places on the surface distinct traces of metallic veins or blotches, rudely ovoid in form, but with a number of broken surfaces,

**Page 37**

one or two of which reflected the light much more brilliantly than others.  The weight of this one meteoroid was too insignificant as compared with that of the Astronaut seriously to disturb my course.  Fortunately for me, I passed so nearly through the centre of the aggregation that its attraction as a whole was nearly inoperative.  So far as I could judge, the meteors in that part of the ring through which I passed were pretty evenly distributed; and as from the appearance of the first which passed my window to the disappearance of the last four hours elapsed, I conceived that the diameter of the congeries, measured in the direction of my path, which seemed to be nearly in the diameter of their orbit, was about 180,000 miles, and probably the perpendicular depth was about the same.

I may mention here, though somewhat out of place, to avoid interrupting the narrative of my descent upon Mars, the only interesting incident that occurred during the latter days of my journey—­the gradual passage of the Earth off the face of the Sun.  For some little time after this the Earth was entirely invisible; but later, looking through the telescope adjusted to the lens on that side, I discerned two very minute and bright crescents, which, from their direction and position, were certainly those of the Earth and Moon, indeed could hardly be anything else.

Towards the thirtieth day of my voyage I was disturbed by the conflicting indications obtained from different instruments and separate observations.  The general result came to this, that the discometer, where it should have indicated a distance of 333, actually gave 347.  But if my speed had increased, or I had overestimated the loss by changes of direction, Mars should have been larger in equal proportion.  This, however, was not the case.  Supposing my reckoning to be right, and I had no reason to think it otherwise, except the indication of the discometer, the Sun’s disc ought to have diminished in the proportion of 95 to 15, whereas the diminution was in the proportion of 9 to 1.  So far as the barycrite could be trusted, its very minute indications confirmed those of the discometer; and the only conclusion I could draw, after much thought and many intricate calculations, was that the distance of 95 millions of miles between the Earth and the Sun, accepted, though not very confidently, by all terrestrial astronomers, is an over-estimate; and that, consequently, all the other distances of the solar system have been equally overrated.  Mars consequently would be smaller, but also his distance considerably less, than I had supposed.  I finally concluded that the solar distance of the Earth was less than 9 millions of miles, instead of more than 95.  This would involve, of course, a proportionate diminution in the distance I had to traverse, while it did not imply an equal error in the reckoning of my speed, which had at first been calculated from the Earth’s disc, and not from that of the Sun.  Hence, continuing my course

**Page 38**

unchanged, I should arrive at the orbit of Mars some days earlier than intended, and at a point behind that occupied by the planet, and yet farther behind the one I aimed at.  Prolonged observation and careful calculation had so fully satisfied me of the necessity of the corrections in question, that I did not hesitate to alter my course accordingly, and to prepare for a descent on the thirty-ninth instead of the forty-first day.  I had, of course, to prepare for the descent very long before I should come within the direct influence of the attraction of Mars.  This would not prevail over the Sun’s attraction till I had come within a little more than 100,000 miles of the surface, and this distance would not allow for material reduction of my speed, even were I at once to direct the whole force of the apergic current against the planet.  I estimated that arriving within some two millions of miles of him, with a speed of 45,000 miles per hour, and then directing the whole force of the current in his direction, I should arrive at his surface at a speed nearly equal to that at which I had ascended from the Earth.  I knew that I could spare force enough to make up for any miscalculation possible, or at least probable.  Of course any serious error might be fatal.  I was exposed to two dangers; perhaps to three:  but to none which I had not fully estimated before even preparing for my voyage.  If I should fail to come near enough to the goal of my journey, and yet should go on into space, or if, on the other hand, I should stop short, the Astronaut might become an independent planet, pursuing an orbit nearly parallel to that of the Earth; in which case I should perish of starvation.  It was conceivable that I might, in attempting to avert this fate, fall upon the Sun, though this seemed exceedingly improbable, requiring a combination of accidents very unlikely to occur.  On the other hand, I might by possibility attain my point, and yet, failing properly to calculate the rate of descent, be dashed to pieces upon the surface of Mars.  Of this, however, I had very little fear, the tremendous power of the apergy having been so fully proved that I believed that nothing but some disabling accident to myself—­such as was hardly to be feared in the absence of gravitation, and with the extreme simplicity of the machinery I employed—­could prevent my being able, when I became aware of the danger, to employ in time a sufficient force to avert it.  The first of these perils, then, was the graver one, perhaps the only grave one, and certainly to my imagination it was much the most terrible.  The idea of perishing of want in the infinite solitude of space, and being whirled round for ever the dead denizen of a planet one hundred feet in diameter, had in it something even more awful than grotesque.

**Page 39**

On the thirty-ninth morning of my voyage, so far as I could calculate by the respective direction and size of the Sun and of Mars, I was within about 1,900,000 miles from the latter.  I proceeded without hesitation to direct the whole force of the current permitted to emerge from the apergion directly against the centre of the planet.  His diameter increased with great rapidity, till at the end of the first day I found myself within one million of miles of his surface.  His diameter subtended about 15’, and his disc appeared about one-fourth the size of the Moon.  Examined through the telescope, it presented a very different appearance from that either of the Earth or of her satellite.  It resembled the former in having unmistakably air and water.  But, unlike the Earth, the greater portion of its surface seemed to be land; and, instead of continents surrounded by water, it presented a number of separate seas, nearly all of them land-locked.  Around the snow-cap of each pole was a belt of water; around this, again, a broader belt of continuous land; and outside this, forming the northern and southern boundary between the arctic and temperate zones, was another broader band of water, connected apparently in one or two places with the central, or, if one may so call it, equatorial sea.  South of the latter is the one great Martial ocean.  The most striking feature of this new world, as seen from this point, was the existence of three enormous gulfs, from three to five thousand miles in length, and apparently varying in breadth from one hundred to seven hundred miles.  In the midst of the principal ocean, but somewhat to the southward, is an island of unique appearance.  It is roughly circular, and, as I perceived in descending, stands very high, its table-like summit being some 4000 feet, as I subsequently ascertained, above the sea-level.  Its surface, however, was perfectly white—­scarcely less brilliant, consequently, than an equal area of the polar icefields.  The globe, of course, revolved in some 4-1/ hours of earthly time, and, as I descended, presented successively every part of its surface to my view.  I speak of descent, but, of course, I was as yet ascending just as truly as ever, the Sun being visible through the lens in the floor, and reflected upon the mirror of the discometer, while Mars was now seen through the upper lens, and his image received in the mirror of the metacompass.  A noteworthy feature in the meteorology of the planet became apparent during the second day of the descent.  As magnified by the telescope adjusted to the upper lens, the distinctions of sea and land disappeared from the eastern and western limbs of the planet; indeed, within 15 deg. or an hour of time from either.  It was plain, therefore, that those regions in which it was late evening or early morning were hidden from view; and, independently of the whitish light reflected from them, there could be little doubt that the obscuration was due to clouds or mists.  Had the whitish light

**Page 40**

covered the land alone, it might have been attributed to a snowfall, or, perhaps, even to a very severe hoar frost congealing a dense moisture.  But this last seemed highly improbable; and that mist or cloud was the true explanation became more and more apparent as, with a nearer approach, it became possible to discern dimly a broad expanse of water contrasting the orange tinge of the land through this annular veil.  At 4h. on the second day of the descent, I was about 500,000 miles from Mars, the micrometer verifying, by the increased angle subtended by the diameter, my calculated rate of approach.  On the next day I was able to sleep in security, and to devote my attention to the observation of the planet’s surface, for at its close I should be still 15,000 miles from Mars, and consequently beyond the distance at which his attraction would predominate over that of the Sun.  To my great surprise, in the course of this day I discerned two small discs, one on each side of the planet, moving at a rate which rendered measurement impossible, but evidently very much smaller than any satellite with which astronomers are acquainted, and so small that their non-discovery by terrestrial telescopes was not extraordinary.  They were evidently very minute, whether ten, twenty, or fifty miles in diameter I could not say; neither of them being likely, so far as I could calculate, to come at any part of my descent very near the Astronaut, and the rapidity of their movement carrying them across the field, even with the lowest power of my telescopes, too fast for measurement.  That they were Martial moons, however, there could be no doubt.

About 10h. on the last day of the descent, the effect of Mars’ attraction, which had for some time so disturbed the position of the Astronaut as to take his disc completely out of the field of the meta-compass, became decidedly predominant over that of the Sun.  I had to change the direction of the apergic current first to the left-hand conductor, and afterwards, as the greater weight of the floor turned the Astronaut completely over, bringing the planet immediately below it, to the downward one.  I was, of course, approaching Mars on the daylight side, and nearly in the centre.  This, however, did not exactly suit me.  During the whole of this day it was impossible that I should sleep for a minute; since if at any point I should find that I had miscalculated my rate of descent, or if any other unforeseen accident should occur, immediate action would be necessary to prevent a shipwreck, which must without doubt be fatal.  It was very likely that I should be equally unable to sleep during the first twenty-four hours of my sojourn upon Mars, more especially should he be inhabited, and should my descent be observed.  It was, therefore, my policy to land at some point where the Sun was setting, and to enjoy rest during such part of the twelve hours of the Martial night as should not be employed in setting my vessel in order and preparing to evacuate

**Page 41**

it.  I should have to ascertain exactly the pressure of the Martial atmosphere, so as not to step too suddenly from a dense into what was probably a very light one.  If possible, I intended to land upon the summit of a mountain, so high as to be untenanted and of difficult access.  At the same time it would not do to choose the highest point of a very lofty range, since both the cold and the thinness of the air might in such a place be fatal.  I wished, of course, to leave the Astronaut secure, and, if not out of reach, yet not within easy reach; otherwise it would have been a simple matter to watch my opportunity and descend in the dark from my first landing-place by the same means by which I had made the rest of my voyage.

At 18h.  I was within 8000 miles of the surface, and could observe Mars distinctly as a world, and no longer as a star.  The colour, so remarkable a feature in his celestial appearance, was almost equally perceptible at this moderate elevation.  The seas are not so much blue as grey.  Masses of land reflected a light between yellow and orange, indicating, as I thought, that orange must be as much the predominant colour of vegetation as green upon Earth.  As I came still lower, and only parts of the disc were visible at once, and these through the side and end windows, this conviction was more and more strongly impressed upon my mind.  What, however, was beyond denial was, that if the polar ice and snow were not so purely and distinctly white as they appear at a distance upon Earth, they were yet to a great extent devoid of the yellow tinge that preponderated everywhere else.  The most that could be said was, that whereas on Earth the snow is of that white which we consider absolute, and call, as such, snow-white, but which really has in it a very slight preponderance of blue, upon Mars the polar caps are rather cream-white, or of that white, so common in our flowers, which has in it an equally slight tinge of yellow.  On the shore, or about twenty miles from the shore of the principal sea to the southward of the equator, and but a few degrees from the equator itself, I perceived at last a point which appeared peculiarly suitable for my descent.  A very long range of mountains, apparently having an average height of about 14,000 feet, with some peaks of probably twice or three times that altitude, stretched for several hundred miles along the coast, leaving, however, between it and the actual shore-line an alluvial plain of some twenty to fifty miles across.  At the extremity of this range, and quite detached from it, stood an isolated mountain of peculiar form, which, as I examined it through the telescope, appeared to present a surface sufficiently broken and sloped to permit of descent; while, at the same time, its height and the character of its summit satisfied me that no one was likely to inhabit it, and that though I might descend-it in a few hours, to ascend it on foot from the plain would be a day’s journey.  Towards this I directed

**Page 42**

my course, looking out from time to time carefully for any symptoms of human habitation or animal life.  I made out by degrees the lines of rivers, mountain slopes covered by great forests, extensive valleys and plains, seemingly carpeted by a low, dense, rich vegetation.  But my view being essentially of a bird’s-eye character, it was only in those parts that lay upon my horizon that I could discern clearly the height of any object above the general level; and as yet, therefore, there might well be houses and buildings, cultivated fields and divisions, which I could not see.

Before I had satisfied myself whether the planet was or was not inhabited, I found myself in a position from which its general surface was veiled by the evening mist, and directly over the mountain in question, within some twelve miles of its summit.  This distance I descended in the course of a quarter of an hour, and landed without a shock about half an hour, so far as I could judge, after the Sun had disappeared below the horizon.  The sunset, however, by reason of the mists, was totally invisible.

**CHAPTER IV — A NEW WORLD.**

I will not attempt to express the intensity of the mingled emotions which overcame me as I realised the complete success of the most stupendous adventure ever proposed or even dreamed by man.  I don’t think that any personal vanity, unworthy of the highest lessons I had received, had much share in my passionate exultation.  The conception was not original; the means were furnished by others; the execution depended less on a daring and skill, in which any courageous traveller or man of science knowing what I knew might well have excelled me, than on the direct and manifest favour of Providence.  But this enterprise, the greatest that man had ever attempted, had in itself a charm, a sanctity in my eyes that made its accomplishment an unspeakable satisfaction.  I would have laid down life a dozen times not only to achieve it myself, but even to know that it had been achieved by others.  All that Columbus can have felt when he first set foot on a new hemisphere I felt in tenfold force as I assured myself that not, as often before, in dreams, but in very truth and fact, I had traversed forty million miles of space, and landed in a new world.  Of the perils that might await me I could hardly care to think.  They might be greater in degree.

They could hardly be other in kind, than those which a traveller might incur in Papua, or Central Africa, or in the North-West Passage.  They could have none of that wholly novel, strange, incalculable character which sometimes had given to the chances of my etherial voyage a vague horror and mystery that appalled imagination.  For the first time during my journey I could neither eat nor sleep; yet I must do both.  I might soon meet with difficulties and dangers that would demand all the resources of perfect physical and mental condition,

**Page 43**

with heavy calls on the utmost powers of nerve and muscle.  I forced myself, therefore, to sup and to slumber, resorting for the first time in many years to the stimulus of brandy for the one purpose, and to the aid of authypnotism for the other.  When I woke it was 8h. by my chronometer, and, as I inferred, about 5h. after midnight of the Martial meridian on which I lay.  Sleep had given me an appetite for breakfast, and necessary practical employment calmed the excitement natural to my situation.  My first care, after making ready to quit the Astronaut as soon as the light around should render it safe to venture into scenes so much more utterly strange, unfamiliar, and unknown than the wildest of the yet unexplored deserts of the Earth, was to ascertain the character of the atmosphere which I was presently to breathe.  Did it contain the oxygen essential to Tellurian lungs?  Was it, if capable of respiration, dense enough to sustain life like mine?  I extracted the plug from the tubular aperture through which I had pumped in the extra quantity of air that the Astronaut contained; and substituted the sliding valve I had arranged for the purpose, with a small hole which, by adjustment to the tube, would give the means of regulating the air-passage at pleasure.  The difficulty of this simple work, and the tremendous outward pressure of the air, showed that the external atmosphere was very thin indeed.  This I had anticipated.  Gravity on the surface of Mars is less than half what it is on Earth; the total mass of the planet is as two to fifteen.  It was consequently to be expected that the extent of the Martial atmosphere, and its density even at the sea-level, would be far less than on the heavier planet.  Rigging the air-pump securely round the aperture, exhausting its chamber, and permitting the Martial air to fill it, I was glad to find a pressure equal to that which prevails at a height of 16,000 feet on Earth.  Chemical tests showed the presence of oxygen in somewhat greater proportion than in the purest air of terrestrial mountains.  It would sustain life, therefore, and without serious injury, if the change from a dense to a light atmosphere were not too suddenly made.  I determined then gradually to diminish the density of the internal atmosphere to something not very much greater than that outside.  For this purpose I unrigged the air-pump apparatus, and almost, but not quite, closed the valve, leaving an aperture about the twentieth part of an inch in diameter.  The silence was instantly broken by a whistle the shrillest and loudest I had ever heard; the dense compressed atmosphere of the Astronaut rushing out with a force which actually created a draught through the whole vessel, to the great discomfiture of the birds, which roughed their feathers and fluttered about in dismay.  The pressure gauge fell with astonishing rapidity, despite the minuteness of the aperture; and in a few minutes indicated about 24 barometrical inches.  I then checked the exit of

**Page 44**

the air for a time, while I proceeded to loosen the cement around the window by which I had entered, and prepared for my exit.  Over a very light flannel under-vesture I put on a mail-shirt of fine close-woven wire, which had turned the edge of Mahratta tulwars, repelled the thrust of a Calabrian stiletto, and showed no mark of three carbine bullets fired point-blank.  Over this I wore a suit of grey broadcloth, and a pair of strong boots over woollen socks, prepared for cold and damp as well as for the heat of a sun shining perpendicularly through an Alpine atmosphere.  I had nearly equalised the atmospheric pressure within and without, at about 17 inches, before the first beams of dawn shone upward on the ceiling of the Astronaut.  A few minutes later I stepped forth on the platform, some two hundred yards in circumference, whereon the vessel rested.  The mist immediately around me was fast dispersing; five hundred feet below it still concealed everything.  On three sides descent was barred by sheer precipices; on the fourth a steep slope promised a practicable path, at least as far as my eye could reach.  I placed the weaker and smaller of my birds in portable cages, and then commenced my experiment by taking out a strong-winged cuckoo and throwing him downwards over the precipice.  He fell at first almost like a stone; but before he was quite lost to sight in the mist, I had the pleasure of seeing that he had spread his wings, and was able to sustain himself.  As the mist was gradually dissolving, I now ventured to begin my descent, carrying my bird-cages, and dismissing the larger birds, several of which, however, persistently clung about me.  I had secured on my back an air-gun, arranged to fire sixteen balls in succession without reloading, while in my belt, scabbarded in a leathern sheath, I had placed a well and often tried two-edged sword.  I found the way practicable, though not easy, till I reached a point about 1000 feet below the summit, where farther progress in the same direction was barred by an abrupt and impassable cleft some hundred feet deep.  To the right, however, the mountain side seemed to present a safe and sufficiently direct descent.  The sun was a full hour above the horizon, and the mist was almost gone.  Still I had seen no signs of animal life, save, at some distance and in rapid motion, two or three swarms of flying insects, not much resembling any with which I was acquainted.  The vegetation, mostly small, was of a yellowish colour, the flowers generally red, varied by occasional examples of dull green and white; the latter, however, presenting that sort of creamy tinge which I had remarked in the snow.  Here I released and dismissed my birds one by one.  The stronger and more courageous flew away downwards, and soon disappeared; the weakest, trembling and shivering, evidently suffering from the thinness of the atmosphere, hung about me or perched upon the cages.

The scene I now contemplated was exceedingly novel and striking.  The sky, instead of the brilliant azure of a similar latitude on earth, presented to my eye a vault of pale green, closely analogous to that olive tint which the effect of contrast often throws over a small portion of clear sky distinguished among the golden and rose-coloured clouds of a sunset in our temperate zones.

**Page 45**

The vapours which still hung around the north-eastern and south-eastern horizon, though dispelled from the immediate vicinity of the Sun, were tinged with crimson and gold much deeper than the tints peculiar to an earthly twilight.  The Sun himself, when seen by the naked eye, was as distinctly golden as our harvest moon; and the whole landscape, terrestrial, aerial, and celestial, appeared as if bathed in a golden light, wearing generally that warm summer aspect peculiar to Tellurian landscapes when seen through glass of a rich yellow tint.  It was a natural inference from all I saw that there takes place in the Martial atmosphere an absorption of the blue rays which gives to the sunlight a predominant tinge of yellow or orange.  The small rocky plateau on which I stood, like the whole of the mountainside I had descended, faced the extremity of the range of which this mountain was an outpost; and the valley which separated them was not from my present position visible.  I saw that I should have to turn my back upon this part of the landscape as I descended farther, and therefore took note at this point of the aspect it presented.  The most prominent object was a white peak in the distant sky, rising to a height above my actual level, which I estimated conjecturally at 25,000 feet, guessing the distance at fifty miles.  The summit was decidedly more angular and pointed, less softened in outline by atmospheric influences, than those of mountains on Earth.  Beyond this in the farthest distance appeared two or three peaks still higher, but of which, of course, only the summits were visible to me.  On this side of the central peak an apparently continuous double ridge extended to within three miles of my station, exceedingly irregular in level, the highest elevations being perhaps 20,000, the lowest visible depressions 3000 feet above me.  There appeared to be a line of perpetual snow, though in many places above, this line patches of yellow appeared, the nearer of which were certainly and the more distant must be inferred to be covered with a low, close herbaceous vegetation.  The lower slopes were entirely clothed with yellow or reddish foliage.  Between the woods and snow-line lay extensive pastures or meadows, if they might be so called, though I saw nothing whatever that at all resembled the grass of similar regions on Earth.  Whatever foliage I saw—­as yet I had not passed near anything that could be called a tree, and very few shrubs—­consisted distinctly of leaves analogous to those of our deciduous trees, chiefly of three shapes:  a sort of square rounded at the angles, with short projecting fingers; an oval, slightly pointed where it joined the stalk; and lanceolate or sword-like blades of every size, from two inches to four feet in length.  Nearly all were of a dull yellow or copper-red tinge.  None were as fine as the beech-leaf, none succulent or fleshy; nothing resembling the blades of grass or the bristles of the pine and cedar tribes was visible.

**Page 46**

My path now wound steadily downward at a slope of perhaps one in eight along the hillside, obliging me to turn my back to the mountains, while my view in front was cut off by a sharp cross-jutting ridge immediately, before me.  By the time I turned this, all my birds had deserted me, and I was not, I think, more than 2000 feet from the valley below.  Just before reaching this point I first caught sight of a Martial animal.  A little creature, not much bigger than a rabbit, itself of a sort of sandy-yellow colour, bounded from among some yellow herbage by my feet, and hopped or sprang in the manner of a kangaroo down the steep slope on my left.  When I turned the ridge, a wide and quite new landscape burst upon my sight.  I was looking upon an extensive plain, the continuation apparently of a valley of which the mountain range formed the southern limit.  To the southward this plain was bounded by the sea, bathed in the peculiar light I have tried to describe, and lying in what seemed from this distance a glassy calm.  To eastward and northward the plain extended to the horizon, and doubtless far beyond it; while from the valley north of the mountain range emerged a broad river, winding through the plain till it was lost at the horizon.  Plain I have called it, but I do not mean to imply that it was by any means level.  On the contrary, its surface was broken by undulations, and here and there by hills, but all so much lower than the point on which I stood that the general effect was that of an almost flat surface.  And now the question of habitation, and of human habitation, seemed to be solved.  Looking through my field-glass, I saw, following the windings of the river, what must surely be a road; serving also, perhaps, as an embankment, since it was raised many feet above the level of the stream.  It seemed, too, that the plain was cultivated.  Everywhere appeared extensive patches, each of a single colour, in every tint between deep red and yellowish green, and so distinctly rectangular in form as irresistibly to suggest the idea of artificial, if not human, arrangement.  But there were other features of the scene that dispelled all doubt upon this point.  Immediately to the south-eastward, and about twenty miles from where I stood, a deep arm of the sea ran up into the land, and upon the shores of this lay what was unquestionably a city.  It had nothing that looked like fortifications, and even at this distance I could discern that its streets were of remarkable width, with few or no buildings so high as mosques, churches, State-offices, or palaces in Tellurian cities.  Their colours were most various and brilliant, as if reflected from metallic surfaces; and on the waters of the bay itself rode what I could not doubt to be ships or rafts.  More immediately beneath me, and scattered at intervals over the entire plain, clustering more closely in the vicinity of the city, were walled enclosures, and in the centre of each was what could hardly be

**Page 47**

anything but a house, though not apparently more than twelve or fourteen feet high, and covering a space sufficient for an European or even American street or square.  Upon the lower slopes of the hill whereon I stood were moving figures, which, seen through the binocular, proved to be animals; probably domestic animals, since they never ranged very far, and presented none of those signs of watchfulness and alarm which are peculiar to creatures not protected by man from their less destructive enemies, and taught to lay aside their dread of man himself.  I had descended, then, not only into an inhabited world—­not only into a world of men, who, however they might differ in outward form, must resemble in their wants, ideas, and habits, in short, in mind if not in body, the lords of my own planet—­but into a civilised world and among a race living under a settled order, cultivating the soil, and taming the brutes to their service.

And now, as I came on lower ground, I found at each step new objects of curiosity and interest.  A tree with dark-yellowish leaves, taller than most timber trees on Earth, bore at the end of drooping twigs large dark-red fruits—­fruits with a rind something like that of a pomegranate, save for the colour and hardness, and about the size of a shaddock or melon.  One of these, just within reach of my hand, I gathered, but found it impossible to break the thin, dry rind or shell, without the aid of a knife.  Having pierced this, a stream of red juice gushed out, which had a sweet taste and a strong flavour, not unlike the juice expressed from cherries, but darker in colour.  Dissecting the fruit completely, I found it parted by a membrane, essentially of the same nature as the rind, but much thinner and rather tough than hard, into sixteen segments, like those of an orange divided across the middle, each of which enclosed a seed.  These seeds were all joined at the centre, but easily separated.  They were of a yellow colour and about as large as an almond kernel.  Some fruits that, being smaller, I concluded to be less ripe, were of a reddish-yellow.  After walking for about a mile through a grove of such trees, always tending downwards, I came to another of more varied character.  The most prevalent tree here was of lower stature and with leaves of great length and comparatively narrow, the fruit of which, though protected by a somewhat similar rind, was of rich golden colour, not so easily seen among the yellowish leaves, and contained one solid kernel of about the size of an almond, enclosed entirely in a sort of spongy material, very palatable to the taste, and resembling more the inside of roasted maize than any other familiar vegetable.  As I emerged entirely from the grove, I came upon a ditch about twice as broad as deep.  On Earth I certainly could not have leaped it; but since landing on Mars, I had forgotten the weightless life of the Astronaut, and felt as if on Earth, but enjoying great increase of strength and energy; and with these sensations had come instinctively an exalted confidence in my physical powers.  I took, therefore, a vigorous run, and leaping with all my strength, landed, somewhat to my own surprise, a full yard on the other side of the ditch.

**Page 48**

Having done so, I found myself in what was beyond doubt a cultivated field, producing nothing but one crimson-coloured plant, about a foot in height.  This carpeted the soil with broad leaves shaped something like those of the laurel, and in colour exactly resembling a withered laurel leaf, but somewhat thicker, more metallic and brighter in appearance, and perfectly free from the bitter taste of the bay tribe.  At a little distance I saw half-a-dozen animals somewhat resembling antelopes, but on a second glance still more resembling the fabled unicorn.  They were like the latter, at all events, in the single particular from which it derived its name:  they had one horn, about eight inches in length, intensely sharp, smooth and firm in texture as ivory, but marbled with vermilion and cream white.  Their skins were cream-coloured, dappled with dark red.  Their ears were large and protected by a lap which fell down so as to shelter the interior part of the organ, but which they had not quite lost the power to erect at the approach of a sound that startled them.  They looked up at me, at first without alarm, afterwards with some surprise, and presently bounded away; as if my appearance, at first familiar, had, on a closer examination, presented some unusual particulars, frightening them, as everything unusual frightens even those domestic animals on Earth best acquainted with man and most accustomed to his caprices.  I noticed that all were female, and their abnormally large udders suggested that they were domestic creatures kept for their milk.  Not being able to see a path through the field, I went straight forward, endeavouring to trample the pasture as little as I could, but being surprised to remark how very little the plants had been injured by the feet of the animals.  The leaves had been grazed, but the stems were seldom or never broken.  In fact, the animals seemed to have gathered their food as man would do, with an intelligent or instinctive care not to injure the plant so as to deprive it of the power of reproducing their sustenance.

In another minute I discerned the object of my paramount interest, of whose vicinity I had thus far seen nearly every imaginable evidence except himself.  It was undoubtedly a man, but a man very much smaller than myself.  His eyes were fixed upon the ground as if in reverie, and he did not perceive me till I had come within fifty yards of him, so that I had full time to remark the peculiarities of his form and appearance.  He was about four feet eight or nine inches in height, with legs that seemed short in proportion to the length and girth of the body, but only because, as was apparent on more careful scrutiny, the chest was proportionately both longer and wider than in our race; otherwise he greatly resembled the fairer families of the Aryan breed, the Swede or German.  The yellow hair, unshaven beard, whiskers, and moustache were all close and short.  The dress consisted of a sort of blouse and short pantaloons, of some

**Page 49**

soft woven fabric, and of a vermilion colour.  The head was protected from the rays of an equatorial sun by a species of light turban, from which hung down a short shade or veil sheltering the neck and forehead.  His bare feet were guarded by sandals of some flexible material just covering the toes and bound round the ankle by a single thong.  He carried no weapon, not even a staff; and I therefore felt that there was no immediate danger from him.  On seeing me he started as with intense surprise and not a little alarm, and turned to run.  Size and length of limb, however, gave me immense advantage in this respect, and in less than a minute I had come up with and laid my hand upon him.

He looked up at me, scanning my face with earnest curiosity.  I took from my pocket first a jewel of very exquisite construction, a butterfly of turquoise, pearl, and rubies, set on an emerald branch, upon which he looked without admiration or interest, then a watch very small and elaborately enamelled and jewelled.  To the ornament he paid no attention whatever; but when I opened the watch, its construction and movement evidently interested him.  Placing it in his hands and endeavouring to signify to him by signs that he was to retain it, I then held his arm and motioned to him to guide me towards the houses visible in the distance.  This he seemed willing to do, but before we had gone many paces he repeated two or three times a phrase or word which sounded like “r’mo-ah-el” ("whence-who-what” do you want?).  I shook my head; but, that he might not suppose me dumb, I answered him in Latin.  The sound seemed to astonish him exceedingly; and as I went on to repeat several questions in the same tongue, for the purpose of showing him that I could speak and was desirous of doing so, I observed that his wonder grew deeper and deeper, and was evidently mingled first with alarm and afterwards with anger, as if he thought I was trying to impose upon him.  I pointed to the sky, to the summit of the mountain from which I had descended, and then along the course by which I had come, explaining aloud at the same time the meaning of my signs.  I thought that he had caught the latter, but if so, it only provoked an incredulous indignation, contempt of a somewhat angry character being the principal expression visible in his countenance.  I saw that it was of little use to attempt further conversation for the present, and, still holding his hand and allowing him to direct me, looked round again at the scenes through which we were passing.  The lower hill slopes before us appeared to be divided into fields of large extent, perhaps some 100 acres each, separated by ditches.  We followed a path about two yards broad, raised two or three inches above the level of the ground, and paved with some kind of hard concrete.  Each ditch was crossed by a bridge of planks, in the middle of which was a stake or short pole, round which we passed with ease, but which would obviously baffle a four-footed

**Page 50**

animal of any size.  The crops were of great variety, and wonderfully free from weeds.  Most of them showed fruit of one kind or another, sometimes gourd-like globes on the top of upright stalks, sometimes clusters of a sort of nut on vines creeping along the soil, sometimes a number of pulpy fruits about the size of an orange hanging at the end of pendulous stalks springing from the top of a stiff reed-like stem.  One field was bare, its surface of an ochreish colour deeper than that of clay, broken and smoothed as perfectly as the surface of the most carefully tended flower-bed.  Across this was ranged a row of birds, differing, though where and how I had hardly leisure to observe, from the form of any earthly fowl, about twice the size of a crow, and with beaks apparently at least as powerful but very much longer.  Extending entirely across the field, they kept line with wonderful accuracy, and as they marched across it, slowly and constantly dug their beaks into the soil as if seeking grubs or worms beneath the surface.  They went on with their work perfectly undisturbed by our presence.  In the next field was a still odder sight; here grew gourd-like heads on erect reed-like stems, and engaged in plucking the ripe purple fruit, carefully distinguishing them from the scarlet unripened heads, were half-a-score of creatures which, from their occupation and demeanour, I took at first to be human; but which, as we approached nearer, I saw were only about half the size of my companion, and thickly covered with hair, with bushy tails, which they kept carefully erect so as not to touch the ground; creatures much resembling monkeys in movement, size, and length, and flexibility of limb, but in other respects more like gigantic squirrels.  They held the stalks of the fruit they plucked in their mouths, filling with them large bags left at intervals, and from the manner in which they worked I suspected that they had no opposable thumbs—­that the whole hand had to be used like the paw of a squirrel to grasp an object.  I pointed to these, directing my companion’s attention and asking, “What are they?” “Ambau,” he said, but apparently without the slightest interest in their proceedings.  Indeed, the regularity and entire freedom from alarm or vigilance which characterised their movements, convinced me that both these and the birds we passed were domesticated creatures, whose natural instincts had been turned to such account by human training.

After a few moments more, we came in sight of a regular road, in a direction nearly at right angles to that which followed the course of the river.  Like the path, it was constructed of a hard polished concrete.  It was about forty paces broad, and in the centre was a raised way about four inches higher than the general surface, and occupying about one-fourth of the entire width.  Along the main way on either side passed from time to time with great rapidity light vehicles of shining metal, each having three wheels, one small

**Page 51**

one in front and two much larger behind, with box-like seat and steering handle; otherwise resembling nothing so much as the velocipedes I have seen ridden for amusement by eccentric English youths.  It was clear, however, that these vehicles were not moved by any effort on the part of their drivers, and their speed was far greater than that of the swiftest mail-coach:—­say, from fifteen to thirty miles an hour.  All risk of collision was avoided, as those proceeding in opposite directions took opposite sides of the road, separated by the raised centre I have described.  Crossing the road with caution, we came upon a number of small houses, perhaps twenty feet square, each standing in the midst of a garden marked out by a narrow ditch, some of them having at either side wings of less height and thrown a little backward.  In the centre of each, and at the end of the wings where these existed, was what seemed to be a door of some translucent material about twelve feet in height.  But I observed that these doors were divided by a scarcely perceptible line up to six feet from the ground, and presently one of these parted, and a figure, closely resembling that of my guide, came out.

We had now reached another road which led apparently towards the larger houses I had seen in the distance, and were proceeding along the raised central pathway, when some half-dozen persons from the cottages followed us.  At a call from my guide, these, and presently as many more, ran after and gathered around us.  I turned, took down my air-gun from my back, and waving it around me, signalled to them to keep back, not choosing to incur the danger of a sudden rush, since their bearing, if not plainly hostile, was not hospitable or friendly.  Thus escorted, but not actually assailed, I passed on for three or four miles, by which time we were among the larger dwellings of which I have spoken.  Each of them stood in grounds enclosed by walls about eight feet high, each of some uniform colour, contrasting agreeably with that chosen for the exterior of the house.  The enclosures varied in size from about six to sixty acres.  The houses were for the most part some twelve feet in height, and from one to four hundred feet square.  On several flat roofs, guarded by low parapets, other persons, all about the size of my guide, now showed themselves, all of them interested, and, as it seemed, somewhat excited by my appearance.  In a few cases groups differently dressed, and, from their somewhat smaller stature, slighter figures, and the long hair here and there visible, probably consisting of women, were gathered on a remoter portion of the roof.  But these, when seen by those in front, were always waived back with an impatient or threatening gesture, and instantly retired.  Presently two or three men more richly dressed than my escort, and in various colours, came out upon the road.  Addressing one of these, I pointed again to the sky, and again endeavoured to describe my journey, holding out to him at the

**Page 52**

same time, as the thing most likely to conciliate him, a watch somewhat larger than that I had bestowed upon my guide.  He, however, did not come within arm’s length; and when I repeated my signs, he threw back his head with a sort of sneer and uttered a few words in a sharp tone, at which my escort rushed upon and attempted to throw me down.  For this, however, I had been long prepared, and striking right and left with my air-gun—­for I was determined not to shed blood except in the last extremity—­I speedily cleared a circle round me, still grasping my guide with the left hand, from a providential instinct which suggested that his close contiguity might in some way protect me.  A call from the chief of my antagonists was answered from the roof of a neighbouring house.  I heard a whizzing through the air, and presently something like a winged serpent, but with a slender neck, and shoulders of considerable breadth, and a head much larger than a serpent’s in proportion to the body, and shaped more like a bird’s, with a sharp, short beak, sprang upon and coiled round my left arm.  That it was trying to sting with an erectile organ placed about midway between the shoulders and the tail I became instinctively aware, and presently felt something like a weak electric thrill over all my body, while my left hand, which was naked, sustained a severe shock, completely numbing it for the moment.  I caught the beast by the neck, and flung him with all my force right in the face of my chief antagonist, who fell with a cry of terror.  Looking in the direction from which this dangerous assailant had come, I perceived another in the air, and saw that not a moment was to be lost.  Dropping my gun with the muzzle between my feet, and holding it so far as I could with my numbed left hand—­releasing also my guide, but throwing him to the ground as I released him—­I drew my sword; and but just in time, with the same motion with which I drew it, I cut right through the neck of the dragon that had been launched against me.  My principal enemy had quickly recovered his feet and presence of mind, and spoke very loudly and at some length to the person who had launched the dragons.  The latter disappeared, and at the same time the group around me began to disperse.  Whatever suited them was certain not to suit me, and accordingly, still holding my sword, I caught one of them with each hand.  It was well I had done so, for within another minute the owner of the dragons reappeared with a weapon not wholly unlike a long cannon of very small bore fixed upon a sort of stand.  This he levelled at me, and I, seeing that a danger of whose magnitude and nature I could form no exact estimate was impending, caught up instinctively one of my prisoners, and held him as a shield between myself and the weapon pointed at me.  This checked my enemy, who for the moment seemed almost as much at a loss as myself.  Fortunately his hostile intention evidently endangered not only my life but all near me, and secured me from any close attack.

**Page 53**

At this moment a somewhat remarkable personage came to the front of the group which had gathered some few yards before me.  He wore a long frock of emerald green and trousers of the same colour, gathered in at the waist by a belt of a red metal.  On earth I should have taken him for a hale and vigorous gentleman of some fifty years; he was two inches short of five feet, but well proportioned as a man of middle size.  Gentleman I say emphatically; for something of dignity, gravity, and calm good-breeding, was conspicuous in his manner, as authority unmixed with menace was evident in his tone.  He called, somewhat peremptorily as I thought, to the man who was still aiming his weapon at my head, then waived back those behind him, and presently advanced towards me, looking me straight in the eyes with a steadiness and intensity of gaze far exceeding, both in expressiveness and in effect, the most fixed stare of the most successful mesmerists I have known.  I doubt whether I should have had the power to resist his will had I thought it wise to do so.  But I was perfectly aware that, however successful in repelling the first tumultuous attack, prolonged self-defence was hopeless.

I must, probably at the next move, certainly in a few minutes, succumb to the enemies around me.  I could not conciliate those whose malignity I could not comprehend.  I had done them no injury, and they could hardly be maddened by fear, since my size and strength did not seem to overawe them save at close quarters, and of my weapons they were certainly less afraid than I of theirs.  My only chance must lie in finding favour with an individual protector.  When, therefore, the new-comer fearlessly laid his hand on an arm which could have killed him at a blow, and rather by gesture than by force released my captives, policy as well as instinct dictated submission.  I allowed him to disarm and make me in some sense his prisoner without a show of resistance.  He took me by the left hand, first placing my fingers upon his own wrist and then grasping mine, and led me quietly through the crowd, which gave way before him reluctantly and not without angry murmurs, but with a certain awe as before one superior either in power or rank.

Thus he led me for about half a mile, till we reached the crystal gate of an enclosure of exceptional size, the walls of which, like the gate itself, were of a pale rose-colour.  Through grounds laid out in symmetrical alternation of orchard and grove, shrubbery, close-carpeted field, and garden beds, arranged with evident regard to effect in form and colour, as well as to fitting distribution of shade and sun, we followed a straight path which sloped under a canopy of flowering creepers up to the terrace on which stood the house itself.  There were some eight or nine crystal doors (or windows) in the front, and in the centre one somewhat larger than the others, which, as we came immediately in front of it, opened, not turning on hinges, but, like every other door I had seen,

**Page 54**

dividing and sliding rapidly into the walls to the right and left.  We entered, and it immediately closed behind us in the same way.  Turning my head for a moment, I was surprised to observe that, whereas I could see nothing through the door from the outside, the scene without was as visible from within as through the most perfectly transparent glass.  The chamber in which I found myself had walls of bright emerald green, with all the brilliant transparency of the jewel; their surface broken by bas-reliefs of minutely perfect execution, and divided into panels—­each of which seemed to contain a series of distinct scenes, one above the other—­by living creepers with foliage of bright gold, and flowers sometimes pink, sometimes cream-white of great size, both double and single; the former mostly hemispherical and the latter commonly shaped as hollow cones or Avide shallow champagne glasses.  In these walls two or three doors appeared, reaching, from the floor to the roof, which was coloured like the walls, and seemingly of the same material.  Through one of these my guide led me into a passage which appeared to run parallel with the front of the house, and turning down this, a door again parted on the right hand, through which he led me into a similar but smaller apartment, some twenty feet in width and twenty-five in length.  The window—­if I should so call that which was simply another door—­of this apartment looked into one corner of a flower-garden of great extent, beyond and at each end of which were other portions of the dwelling.  The walls of this chamber were pink, the surface appearing as before of jewel-like lustre; the roof and floor of a green lighter than that of the emerald.  In two corners were piles of innumerable cushions and pillows covered with a most delicate satin-like fabric, embroidered with gold, silver, and feathers, all soft as eider-down and of all shapes and sizes.  There were three or four light tables, apparently of metal, silver, or azure, or golden in colour, in various parts of the chamber, with one or two of different form, more like small office-tables or desks.  In one of the walls was sunk a series of shelves closed by a transparent sheet of crystal of pale yellow tinge.  There were three or four movable seats resembling writing or easy-chairs, but also of metal, luxurious all though all different.  In the corner to the left, farthest from the inner court or peristyle, was a screen, which, as my host showed me, concealed a bath and some other convenient appurtenances.  The bath was a cylinder some five feet in depth and about two in diameter, with thin double walls, the space between which was filled with an apparatus of small pipes.  By pressing a spring, as my protector pointed out, countless minute jets of warm perfumed water were thrown from every part of the interior wall, forming the most delicious and perfect shower-bath that could well be devised.

**Page 55**

My host then led me to a seat among the cushions, and placed himself beside me, looking for some time intently and gravely into my face, but with nothing of offensive curiosity, still less of menace in his gaze.  It appeared to me as if he wished to read the character and perhaps the thoughts of his guest.  The scrutiny seemed to satisfy him.  He stretched out his left hand, and grasping mine, placed it on his heart, and then dropping my hand, placed his upon my breast.  He then spoke in words whose meaning I could not guess, but the tone sounded to me as that of inquiry.  The question most likely to be asked concerned my character and the place from which I had come.  I again explained, again pointing upward.  He seemed dubious or perplexed, and it occurred to me that drawing might assist explanation; since, from the bas-reliefs and tracery, it was evident that the art was carried to no common excellence in Mars.  I drew, therefore, in the first place, a globe to represent the Earth, traced its orbit round the Sun, and placed a crescent Moon at some little distance, indicating its path round the Earth.  It was evident that my host understood my meaning, the more clearly when I marked upon the form of the Earth a crescent, such as she would often present through a Martial telescope.  Sketches in outline roughly exhibiting different stages of my voyage, from the first ascent to the final landing, appeared to convince my host of my meaning, if not of my veracity.  Signing to me to remain where I was, he left the room.  In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by one of the strange squirrel-like animals I had seen in the fields.  I was right in conjecturing that the creature had no opposable thumb; but a little ingenuity had compensated this so far as regarded the power of carrying.  A little chain hung down from each wrist, and to these was suspended a tray, upon which were arranged a variety of fruits and what seemed to be small loaves of various materials.  Breaking one of these and cutting open with a small knife, apparently of silver, one of the fruits, my host tasted each and then motioned to me to eat.  The attendant had placed the tray upon a table, disengaged the chains, and disappeared; the door opening and closing as he trod, somewhat more heavily than had been necessary for my host, upon particular points of the floor.

The food offered me was very delicious and various in flavour.  My host showed me how to cut the top from some of the hard-rind fruits, so as to have a cup full of the most delicately-flavoured juice, the whole pulp having been reduced to a liquid syrup by a process with which some semicivilised cultivators on Earth are familiar.  When I had finished my meal, my host whistled, and the attendant, returning, carried away the tray.  His master gave him at the same time what was evidently an order, repeating it twice, and speaking with signal clearness of intonation.  The little creature bowed its head, apparently as

**Page 56**

a sign of intelligence, and in a few minutes returned with what seemed like a pencil or stylus and writing materials, and with a large silver-like box of very curious form.  To one side was affixed a sort of mouthpiece, consisting of a truncated cone expanding into a saucer-shaped bowl.  Across the wider and outer end of the cone was stretched a membrane or diaphragm about three inches in diameter.  Into the mouth of the bowl, two or three inches from the diaphragm, my host spoke one by one a series of articulate but single sounds, beginning with *a, a, aa, au, o, oo, ou, u, y or ei (long), i (short), oi, e,* which I afterwards found to be the twelve vowels of their language.  After he had thus uttered some forty distinct sounds, he drew from the back of the instrument a slip of something like goldleaf, on which as many weird curves and angular figures were traced in crimson.  Pointing to these in succession, he repeated the sounds in order.  I made out that the figures in question represented the sounds spoken into the instrument, and taking out my pencil, marked under each the equivalent character of the Roman alphabet, supplemented by some letters not admitted therein but borrowed from other Aryan tongues.  My host looked on with some interest whilst I did this, and bent his head as if in approval.  Here then was the alphabet of the Martial tongue—­an alphabet not arbitrary, but actually produced by the vocal sounds it represented!  The elaborate machinery modifies the rough signs which are traced by the mere aerial vibrations; but each character is a true physical type, a visual image, of the spoken sound; the voice, temper, accent, sex, of a speaker affect the phonograph, and are recognisable in the record.  The instrument wrote, so to speak, different hands under my voice and under Esmo’s; and those who knew him could identify his phonogram, as my friends my manuscript.

After I had been employed for some time in fixing these forms and the corresponding sounds in my memory, my host advanced to the window, and opening it, led me into the interior garden; which, as I had supposed, was a species of central court around which the house was built.

The construction of the house was at once apparent.  It consisted of a front portion, divided by the gallery of which I have spoken, all the rooms on one side thereof looking, like the chamber I first entered, into the outer enclosure; those on the other into the interior garden or peristyle.  Beyond the latter was a single row of chambers opening upon it, appropriated to the ladies and children of the household.  The court was roofed over with the translucent material of the windows.  It was about 360 feet in length by 300 in width.  At either end were chambers entirely formed of the same material as the roof, in one of which the various birds and animals employed either in domestic service or in agriculture, in another the various stores of the household, were kept.  In front of these, two inclined planes of the same

**Page 57**

material as the walls of the house led up to the several parts of the roof.  The court was divided by broad concrete paths into four gardens.  In the centre of each was a basin of water and a fountain, above which was a square opening of some twenty feet in the roof.  Each garden was, so to speak, turfed with minute plants, smaller than daisy roots, and even more closely covering the soil than English lawn grass.  These were of different colours—­emerald, gold, and purple—­arranged in bands.  This turf was broken by a number of beds of all shapes, the crescent, circle, and six-rayed star being apparently the chief favourites.  The smaller of these were severally filled with one or two flowers; in the larger, flowers of different colours were set in patterns, generally rising from the outside to the centre, and never allowing the soil to be seen through a single interval.  The contrast of colours and tints was admirably ordered; the size, form, and structure of the flowers wonderfully various and always exquisitely beautiful.  The exact tints of silver and gold were frequent and especially favoured, At each corner of every garden was a hollow silvery pillar, up which creepers with flowers of marvellous size and beauty, and foliage of hues almost as striking as those of the flowers, were conducted to form a perfect arch overhead, parting off the gardens from the walks.  In each basin were fishes whose brilliancy of colouring and beauty of form far surpassed anything I have seen in earthly seas or rivers.

At the meeting of the four cross paths was a wide space covered with a soft woven carpet, upon which were strown cushions similar to those in my room.  On these several ladies were reclining, who rose as the head of the family approached.  One who seemed by her manner to be the mistress, and by her resemblance to some of her younger companions the mother, of the family, wore a sort of light golden half-helmet on the head, and over this, falling round her half-way to the waist, a crimson veil, intended apparently to protect her head and neck from the sun as much as to conceal them.  Her face was partially uncovered.  The dress of all was, except in colour and in certain omissions and additions, much the same.  The under-garments must have been slight in material and few in number.  Nothing was to be seen of them save the sleeves, which were of a delicate substance, resembling that of the finest Parisian kid gloves, but far softer and finer.  Over all was a robe almost without shape, save what it took from the figure to which it closely adapted itself, suspended by broad ribbons and jewelled clasps from the shoulders, falling nearly to the ankles, and gathered in by a zone at the waist.  This garment left the neck, shoulders, and the upper part of the bosom uncovered; but the veil, whether covering the head completely, drawn round all save the face, or consisting only of two separate muslin falls behind either ear, was always so arranged as to render the

**Page 58**

general effect far more decorous than the “low dresses” of European matrons and maidens.  The ankles and feet were entirely bare, save for sandals with an embroidered velvety covering for the toes, and silver bands clasped round the ankles.  The eldest lady wore a pale green robe of a fine but very light silken-seeming fabric.  Three younger ones wore a similar material of pink, with silver head-dresses and veils hiding everything but the eyes.  All these had sleeves reaching to the wrist, ending in gloves of the same fabric.  Two young girls were robed in white gauze, with gauze veils attached over either ear to a very slight silver coronal; their arms bare till the sleeve of the under-robe appeared, a couple of inches below the shoulder; their bright soft faces and their long hair (which fell freely down the back, kept in graceful order here and there by almost invisible silver clasps or bands) were totally uncovered.  “A maiden,” says the Martialist, “may make the most of her charms; a wife’s beauty is her lord’s exclusive right.”  One of the girls, my host’s daughters, might almost have veiled her entire form above the knees in the masses of rich soft brown hair inherited from her father, but mingled with tresses of another tinge, shimmering like gold under certain lights.  Her eyes, of deepest violet, were shaded by dark thick lashes, so long that when the lids were closed they traced a clear black curve on either cheek.  The other maiden had, like their mother, and, I believe, like the younger matrons, the bright hair—­flaxen in early childhood, pale gold in maturer years—­and the blue or grey eyes characteristic of the race.  My host spoke two or three words to the chief of the party, indicating me by a graceful and courteous wave of the hand, upon which the person addressed slightly bent her head, laying her hand at the same time upon her heart.  The others acknowledged the introduction by a similar but slighter inclination, and all resumed their places as soon as my host, seating himself between us, signed to me to occupy some pillows which one of the young ladies arranged on his left hand, I had observed by this time that the left hand was used by preference, as we use the right, for all purposes, and therefore was naturally extended in courtesy; and the left side was, for similar reasons, the place of honour.

Three or four children were playing in another part of the court.  All, with one exception, were remarkably beautiful and healthy-looking, certainly not less graceful in form and movement than the happiest and prettiest in our own world.  Their tones were soft and gentle, and their bearing towards each other notably kind and considerate.  One unfortunate little creature differed from the rest in all respects.  It was slightly lame, misshapen rather than awkward, and with a face that indicated bad health, bad temper, or both.  Its manner was peevish and fractious, its tones sharp and harsh, and its actions rough and hasty.  I took it for a mother’s sickly

**Page 59**

favourite, deformed in character to compensate for physical deformity.  Watching them for a short time, I saw the little creature repeatedly break out in all the humours of an ill-tempered, over-indulged youngest-born in an ill-managed family; snatching toys from the others, and now and then slapping or pinching them.  But they never returned either word or blow, even when pain or vexation brought the tears to their eyes.  When its caprices became intolerable most of its companions withdrew; one, however, always remaining on the watch, even if driven from the immediate neighbourhood by its intolerably provoking temper, tones, and acts.

Before sunset we were joined by a young man, who, first approaching my host with a respectful inclination of the head, stood before him till apparently desired by a few quiet words to speak; when he addressed the head of the family in some short sentences, and then, at a sign from him, turned to two of the squirrel-like animals, “ambau,” which followed him.  These then laid at my feet two large baskets, or open bags of golden network, containing many of the smaller objects left in the Astronaut.  Emptying these, they brought several more, till they had laid before me the whole of my wardrobe and my store of intended presents, books, and drawings, with such of my instruments as were not attached to the walls.  It was evident that great care had been taken not to injure or dismantle the vessel.  Nothing that actually belonged to it had been taken away, and of the articles brought not one had been broken or damaged.  It was equally evident that there was no intention or idea of appropriating them.  They were brought and handed over to me as a host on Earth might send for the baggage of an unexpected guest.  Of the various toys and ornaments that I had brought for the purpose, I offered several of the most precious to my host.  He accepted one of the smallest and least valuable, rather declining to understand than refusing the offer of the rest.  The bringer did the same.  Then placing in the chief’s hands an open jewel-box containing a variety of the choicest jewellery, I requested by signs his permission to offer them to the ladies.  The elder ones imitated his example, and graciously accepted one or two tasteful feminine ornaments, of far less beauty and value than any of the few splendid jewels that adorned their belts and clasped their robes at the shoulder, or fastened their veils.  The white-robed maidens shrank back shyly until the box was pressed upon them, when each, at a word from the mistress, selected some small gold or silver locket or chain; each at once placing the article accepted about her person, with an evident intention of adding to the grace with which it was received and acknowledging the intended courtesy.  How valueless the most valuable of these trifles must have been in their eyes I had begun to suspect from what I saw, and was afterwards made fully aware.  As the shades of evening fell, the fountains ceased to play, the young

**Page 60**

man pressed electric springs which closed the openings in the roof, and, finally, turning a small handle, caused a bright light to diffuse itself over the whole garden, and through the doors into the chambers opening upon it.  At the same time a warmer air gradually spread throughout the interior of the building.  A meal was then served in small low trays, which was eaten by all of us reclining on our cushions; after which the ladies retired, and my host conducted me back to my chamber, and left me to repose.

My books and sketches, as well as the portfolios of popular prints which I had selected to assist me in describing the life and scenery of our world, were, with my wardrobe and other properties, arranged on my shelves by the *ambau*, under the direction of Kevima, the young gentleman who had superintended their removal and conveyance to his father’s house.  The portfolios gave me occasional means and topics of pleasant intercourse with the family of my host, before we could converse at ease in their language.  The children, though never troublesome or importunate, took frequent opportunities of stealing into the room to look over the prints I produced for their amusement.  The ladies also, particularly the violet-eyed maiden, who seemed to be the especial guardian of the little ones, would draw near to look and listen.  The latter, though she never entered the room or directly addressed me, often assisted in explaining my broken sentences to her charges, some of them not many years younger than herself.  I took sincere pleasure in the children’s company and growing confidence, but they were not the less welcome because they drew their sisters to listen to my descriptions of an existence so strange and so remote in habits and character, as well as in space.  Perhaps their gentle governess learned more than any other member of the family respecting Earth-life, and my own adventures by land and water, in air and space.  For, though just not child enough to share the children’s freedom, she took in all they heard; she listened in silence during our evening gatherings to the conversation in which her father and brother encouraged me to practise the language I was laboriously studying.  She had, therefore, double opportunities of acquiring a knowledge which seemed to interest her deeply; naturally, since it was so absolutely novel, and communicated by one whose very presence was the most marvellous of the marvels it attested.  How much she understood I could not judge.  Except her mother, the ladies did not take a direct part in my talk with the children, and but very seldom interposed, through my host, a shy brief question when the evening brought us all together.  The maidens, despite their theoretical privileges, were even more reserved than their elders, and the dark-haired Eveena the most silent and shy of all.

I learned afterwards that the privilege of intercourse with the ladies of the household, restricted as it was, was wholly exceptional, and even in this family was conceded only out of consideration for one who could not safely be allowed to leave the house.

**Page 61**

**CHAPTER V — LANGUAGE, LAWS, AND LIFE.**

Though treated with the greatest kindness and courtesy, I soon found reason to understand that I was, at least for the present, a prisoner.  My host or his son never failed to invite me each day to spend some time in the outer enclosure, but never intentionally left me alone there.  On one occasion, when Kevima had been called away and I ventured to walk down towards the gate, my host’s youngest child, who had been playing on the roof, ran after me, and reaching me just as my foot was set on the spring that opened the gate or outer door, caught me by the hand, and looking up into my face, expressed by glance and gesture a negative so unmistakable that I thought it expedient at once to comply and return to the house.  There my time was occupied, for as great a part of each day as I could give to such a task without extreme fatigue, in mastering the language of the country.  This was a much simpler task than might have been supposed.  I soon found that, unlike any Terrestrial tongue, the language of this people had not grown but been made—­constructed deliberately on set principles, with a view to the greatest possible simplicity and the least possible taxation of the memory.  There were no exceptions or irregularities, and few unnecessary distinctions; while words were so connected and related that the mastery of a few simple grammatical forms and of a certain number of roots enabled me to guess at, and by and by to feel tolerably sure of, the meaning of a new word.  The verb has six tenses, formed by the addition of a consonant to the root, and six persons, plural and singular, masculine and feminine.

Singular. | Masc. | Fem. || Plural. | Masc. | Fem.
--------------|-------|------||----------|-------|--------
I am | ava | ava || We are | avau | avaa
Thou art | avo | avoo || You are | avou | avu
He or she is | avy | ave || They are | avoi | avee
--------------|-------|------||----------|-------|--------
pre>

The terminations are the three pronouns, feminine
and masculine, singular and plural, each represented
by one of twelve vowel characters, and declined like
nouns. When a nominative immediately follows
the verb, the pronominal suffix is generally dropped,
unless required by euphony. Thus, “a man
strikes” is *dak klaftas*, but in the past
tense, *dakny klaftas*, the verb without the suffix
being unpronounceable. The past tense is formed
by the insertion of *n* (*avna*: “I
have been"), the future by *m*: *avma*.
The imperative, *avsa*; which in the first person
is used to convey determination or resolve; *avsa*,
spoken in a peremptory tone, meaning “I *will*
be,” while *avso*, according to the intonation,
means “be” or “thou shalt be;”
*i.e*., shalt whether or no. *R* forms the
conditional, *avra*, and *ren* the conditional
past, *avrena*, “I should have been.”

**Page 62**

The need for a passive voice is avoided by the simple
method of putting the pronoun in the accusative; thus,
*daca* signifies “I strike,” *dacal*
(me strike) “I am struck.” The infinitive
is *avi; avyta*, “being;” *avnyta*,
“having been;” *avmyta*, “about
to be.” These are declined like nouns,
of which latter there are six forms, the masculine
in *a, o, and y,* the feminine in *a, oo, and
e;* the plurals being formed exactly as in the
pronominal suffixes of the verb. The root-word,
without inflexion, alone is used where the name is
employed in no connection with a verb, where in every
terrestrial language the nominative would be employed.
Thus, my guide had named the squirrel-monkeys *ambau*
(sing. *amba*); but the word is declined as follows:—­
 *Singular.* *Plural.
Nominative* ambas
 ambaus
 *Accusative* ambal
 ambaul
 *Dative, to* or *in*
 amban ambaun
 *Ablative, by* or *from*
 ambam ambaum

The five other forms are declined in the same manner,
the vowel of the last syllable only differing.
Adjectives are declined like nouns, but have no comparative
or superlative degree; the former being expressed
by prefixing the intensitive syllable *ca*, the
latter, when used (which is but seldom) by the prefix
*ela*, signifying *the* in an emphatic sense,
as his Grace of Wellington is in England called *The*
Duke *par excellence*. Prepositions and adverbs
end in *t* or *d*.

Each form of the noun has, as a rule, its special
relation to the verb of the same root: thus from
dac, “strike,” are derived *daca*,
“weapon” or “hammer;”, *daco*,
a “stroke” or “striking” [as
given] both masculine; *daca*, “anvil;”
*dacoo*, “blow” or “beating”
[as received]; and *dake*, “a thing beaten,”
feminine. The sixth form, *daky*, masculine,
has in this case no proper signification, and not
being wanted, is not used. Individual letters
or syllables are largely employed in combination to
give new and even contradictory meanings to a root.
Thus *n*, like the Latin *in*, signifies
“penetration,” “motion towards,”
or simply “remaining in a place,” or, again,
“permanence.” *M*, like the Latin
*ab* or *ex*, indicates “motion from.”
*R* expresses “uncertainty” or “incompleteness,”
and is employed to convert a statement into a question,
or a relative pronoun into one of inquiry. *G*,
like the Greek *a* or *anti*, generally
signifies “opposition” or “negation;”
*ca* is, as aforesaid, intensitive, and is employed,
for example, to convert *afi*, “to breathe,”
into *cafi*, “to speak.” *Cr*
is by itself an interjection of abhorrence or disgust;
in composition it indicates detestation or destruction:
thus, *craky* signifies “hatred;”

**Page 63**

*cravi*, “the destruction of life”
or “to kill.” *L* for the most part
indicates passivity, but with different effect according
to its place in the word. Thus *mepi* signifies
“to rule;” *mepil*, “to be ruled;”
*melpi*, “to control one’s self;”
*lempi*, “to obey.” The signification
of roots themselves is modified by a modification of
the principal vowel or consonant, *i.e.*, by
exchanging the original for one closely related.
Thus *avi*, “exist;” *avi*, “be,”
in the positive sense of being this or that; *afi*,
“live;” *afi*, “breathe.”
*Z* is a diminutive; *zin*, “with,”
often abbreviated to *zn*, “combination,”
“union.” Thus *znaftau* means
“those who were brought into life together,”
or “brethren.”

I may add, before I quit this subject, that the Martial
system of arithmetic differs from ours principally
in the use of a duodecimal instead of a decimal basis.
Figures are written on a surface divided into minute
squares, and the value of a figure, whether it signify
so many units, dozens, twelve dozens, and so forth,
depends upon the square in which it is placed.
The central square of a line represents the unit’s
place, and is marked by a line drawn above it.
Thus a figure answering to our I, if placed in the
fourth square to the left, represents 1728. In
the third place to the right, counting the unit square
in both cases, it signifies 1/144, and so forth.

In less than a fortnight I had obtained a general
idea of the language, and was able to read easily
the graven representations of spoken sound which I
have described; and by the end of a month (to use
a word which had no meaning here) I could speak intelligibly
if not freely. Only in a language so simple could
my own anxiety to overcome as soon as possible a fatal
obstacle to all investigation of this new world, and
the diligent and patient assistance given by my host
or his son for a great part of every day, have enabled
me to make such rapid progress. I had noted even,
during the short evening gatherings when the whole
family was assembled, the extreme taciturnity of both
sexes; and by the time I could make myself understood,
I was not surprised to learn that the Martials have
scarcely the idea of what we mean by conversation,
not talking for the sake of talking, or speaking unless
they have something to discuss, explain, or communicate.
I found, again, that a new and much more difficult
task, though fortunately one not so indispensable,
was still in store for me. The Martials have two
forms of writing: the one I have described, which
is simply a mechanical rendering of spoken words into
artificially simplified visible signs; the other,
written by hand, with a fine pencil of some chemical
material on a prepared surface, textile or metallic.
The characters of the latter are, like ours wholly
arbitrary; but the contractions and abbreviations
are so numerous that the mastery of the mere alphabet,

**Page 64**

the forty or fifty single letters employed, is but
a single step in the first stage of the hard task
of learning to read. In no country on Earth,
except China, is this task half so severe as in Mars.
On the other hand, when it is once mastered, a far
superior instrument has been gained; the Martial writing
being a most terse but perfectly legible shorthand.
Every Martial can write at least as quickly as he
can speak, and can read the written character more
rapidly than the quickest eye can peruse the best Terrestrial
print. Copies, whether of the phonographic or
stylographic writing, are multiplied with extreme
facility and perfection. The original, once inscribed
in either manner upon the above-mentioned *tafroo*
or gold-leaf, is placed upon a sheet of a species
of linen, smoother than paper, called *difra*.
A current of electricity sent through the former reproduces
the writing exactly upon the latter, which has been
previously steeped in some chemical composition; the
effect apparently depending on the passage of the
electricity through the untouched metal, and its absolute
interception by the ink, if I may so call it, of the
writing, which bites deeply into the leaf. This
process can be repeated almost *ad libitum*;
and it is equally easy to take at any time a fresh
copy upon *tafroo*, which serves again for the
reproduction of any number of *difra* copies.
The book, for the convenience of this mode of reproduction,
consists of a single sheet, generally from four to
eight inches in breadth and of any length required.
The writing intended to be thus copied is always minute,
and is read for the most part through magnifying spectacles.
A roller is attached to each end of the sheet, and
when not in use the latter is wound round that attached
to the conclusion. When required for reading,
both rollers are fixed in a stand, and slowly moved
by clockwork, which spreads before the eyes of the
reader a length of about four inches at once.
The motion is slackened or quickened at the reader’s
pleasure, and can be stopped altogether, by touching
a spring. Another means of reproducing, not merely
writings or drawings, but natural objects, consists
in a simple adaptation of the *camera obscura*.
[The only essential difference from our photographs
being that the Martial art reproduces colour as well
as outline, I omit this description.]

While I was practising myself in the Martial language
my host turned our experimental conversations chiefly,
if not exclusively, upon Terrestrial subjects; endeavouring
to learn all that I could convey to him of the physical
peculiarities of the Earth, of geology, geography,
vegetation, animal life in all its forms, human existence,
laws, manners, social and domestic order. Afterwards,
when, at the end of some fifty days, he found that
we could converse, if not with ease yet without fear
of serious misapprehension, he took an early opportunity
of explaining to me the causes and circumstances of
my unfriendly reception among his people.

**Page 65**

“Your size and form,” he said, “startled
and surprised them. I gather from what you have
told me that on Earth there are many nations very
imperfectly known to one another, with different dress,
language, and manners. This planet is now inhabited
by a single race, all speaking the same tongue, using
much the same customs, and differing from one another
in form and size much less widely than (I understand)
do men upon your Earth. There you might have
been taken for a visitor from some strange and unexplored
country. Here it was clear that you were not
one of our race, and yet it was inconceivable what
else you could be. We have no giants; the tallest
skeleton preserved in our museums is scarcely a hand’s
breadth taller than myself, and does not, of course,
approach to your stature. Then, as you have pointed
out, your limbs are longer and your chest smaller
in proportion to the rest of the body; probably because,
as you seem to say, your atmosphere is denser than
ours, and we require ampler lungs to inhale the quantity
of air necessary at each breath for the oxidation of
the blood. Then you were not dumb, and yet affected
not to understand our language and to speak a different
one. No such creature could have existed in this
planet without having been seen, described, and canvassed.
You did not, therefore, belong to us. The story
you told by signs was quickly apprehended, and as
quickly rejected as an audacious impossibility.
It was an insult to the intelligence of your hearers,
and a sufficient ground for suspecting a being of
such size and physical strength of some evil or dangerous
design. The mob who first attacked you were probably
only perplexed and irritated; those who subsequently
interfered may have been animated also by scientific
curiosity. You would have been well worth anatomisation
and chemical analysis. Your mail-shirt protected
you from the shock of the dragon, which was meant
to paralyse and place you at the mercy of your assailants;
the metal distributing the current, and the silken
lining resisting its passage. Still, at the moment
when I interposed, you would certainly have been destroyed
but for your manoeuvre of laying hold of two of your
immediate escort. Our destructive weapons are
far superior to any you possess or have described.
That levelled at you by my neighbour would have sent
to ten times your distance a small ball, which, bursting,
would have asphyxiated every living thing for several
yards around. But our laws regarding the use
of such weapons are very stringent, and your enemy
dared not imperil the lives of those you held.
Those laws would not, he evidently thought, apply
to yourself, who, as he would have affirmed, could
not be regarded as a man and an object of legal protection.”

He explained the motives and conduct of his countrymen
with such perfect coolness, such absence of surprise
or indignation, that I felt slightly nettled, and
answered sarcastically, “If the slaughter of
strangers whose account of themselves appears improbable
be so completely a matter of course among you, I am
at a loss to understand your own interference, and
the treatment I have received from yourself and your
family, so utterly opposite in spirit as well as in
form to that I met from everybody else.”

**Page 66**

“I do not,” he answered, “always
act from the motives in vogue among my fellow-creatures
of this planet; but why and how I differ from them
it might not be well to explain. It is for the
moment of more consequence to tell you why you have
been kept in some sense a prisoner here. My neighbours,
independently of general laws, are for certain reasons
afraid to do me serious wrong. While in my company
or in my dwelling they could hardly attempt your life
without endangering mine or those of my family.
If you were seen alone outside my premises, another
attempt, whether by the asphyxiator or by a destructive
animal, would probably be made, and might this time
prove successful. Till, therefore, the question
of your humanity and right to the protection of our
law is decided by those to whom it has been submitted,
I will beg you not to venture alone beyond the bounds
that afford you security; and to believe that in this
request, as in detaining you perforce heretofore,
I am acting simply for your own welfare, and not,”
he added, smiling, “with a view to secure the
first opportunity of putting your relation to our
race to the tests of the dissecting table and the
laboratory.”

“But my story explained everything that seemed
inexplicable; why was it not believed? It was
assumed that I could not belong to Mars; yet I was
a living creature in the flesh, and must therefore
have come from some other planet, as I could hardly
be supposed to be an inhabitant of space.”

“We don’t reason on impossibilities,”
replied my friend. “We have a maxim that
it is more probable that any number of witnesses should
lie, that the senses of any number of persons should
be deluded, than that a miracle should be true; and
by a miracle we mean an interruption or violation
of the known laws of nature.”

“One eminent terrestrial sceptic,” I rejoined,
“has said the same thing, and masters of the
science of probabilities have supported his assertion.
But a miracle should be a violation not merely of the
known but of all the laws of nature, and until you
know all those laws, how can you tell what is a miracle?
The lifting of iron by a magnet—­I suppose
you have iron and loadstones here as we have on Earth—­was,
to the first man who witnessed it, just as complete
a violation of the law of gravity as now appears my
voyage through space, accomplished by a force bearing
some relation to that which acts through the magnet.”

“Our philosophers,” he answered, “are
probably satisfied that they know nearly all that
is to be known of natural laws and forces; and to
delusion or illusion human sense is undeniably liable.”

“If,” I said, “you cannot trust
your senses, you may as well disbelieve in your own
existence and in everything around you, for you know
nothing save through those senses which are liable
to illusion. But we know practically that there
are limits to illusion. At any rate, your maxim
leads directly and practically to the inference that,
since I do not belong to Mars and cannot have come
from any other world, I am not here, and in fact do
not exist. Surely it was somewhat illogical to
shoot an illusion and intend to dissect a spectre!
Is not a fact the complete and unanswerable refutation
of its impossibility?”

**Page 67**

“A good many facts to which I could testify,”
he replied, “are in this world confessed impossibilities,
and if my neighbours witnessed them they would pronounce
them to be either impostures or illusions.”

“Then,” said I, somewhat indignantly,
“they must prefer inferences from facts to facts
themselves, and the deductions of logic to the evidence
of their senses. Yet, if that evidence be wanting
in certainty, then, since no chain can be stronger
than its weakest point, inferences are doubly uncertain;
first, because they are drawn from facts reported
by sense, and, secondly, because a flaw in the logic
is always possible.”

“Do not repeat that out of doors,” he
answered, smiling. “It is not permitted
here to doubt the infallibility of science; and any
one who ventures to affirm persistently a story which
science pronounces impossible (like your voyage through
space), if he do not fall at once a victim to popular
piety, would be consigned to the worse than living
death of life-long confinement in a lunatic hospital.”

“In that case I fear very much that I have little
chance of being put under the protection of your laws,
since, whatever may be the impression of those who
have seen me, every one else must inevitably pronounce
me non-existent; and a nonentity can hardly be the
subject of legal wrong or have a right to legal redress.”

“Nor,” he replied, “can there be
any need or any right to annihilate that which does
not exist. This alternative may occupy our Courts
of Justice, for aught I know, longer than you or I
can hope to live. What I have asked is that,
till these have decided between two contradictory
absurdities, you shall be provisionally and without
prejudice considered as a human reality and an object
of legal protection.”

“And who,” I asked, “has authority
*ad interim* to decide this point?”

“It was submitted,” he answered, “in
the first place, to the Astynta (captain, president)
who governs this district; but, as I expected, he
declined to pronounce upon it, and referred it to the
Mepta (governor) of the province. Half-an-hour’s
argument so bewildered the latter that he sent the
question immediately to the Zampta (Regent) of this
dominion, and he, after hearing by telegraph the opening
of the case, at once pronounced that, as affecting
the entire planet, it must be decided by the Campta
or Suzerain. Now this gentleman is impatient of
the dogmatism of the philosophers, who have tried recently
to impose upon him one or two new theoretical rules
which would limit the amount of what he calls free
will that he practically enjoys; and as the philosophers
are all against you, and as, moreover, he has a strong
though secret hankering after curious phenomena—­it
would not do to say, after impossibilities—­I
do not think he will allow you to be destroyed, at
least till he has seen you.”

“Is it possible,” I said, “that
even your monarch cherishes a belief in the incredible
or logically impossible, and yet escapes the lunatic
asylum with which you threaten me?”

**Page 68**

“I should not escape grave consequences were
I to attribute to him a heresy so detestable,”
said my host. “Even the Campta would not
be rash enough to let it be said that he doubts the
infallibility of science, or of public opinion as
its exponent. But as it is the worst of offences
to suggest the existence of that which is pronounced
impossible or unscientific, the supreme authority can
always, in virtue of the enormity of the guilt, insist
on undertaking himself the executive investigation
of all such cases; and generally contrives to have
the impossibility, if a tangible one, brought into
the presence either as evidence or as accomplice.”

“Well,” I rejoined, after a few minutes’
reflection, “I don’t know that I have
much right to complain of ideas which, after all, are
but the logical development of those which, are finding
constantly more and more favour among our most enlightened
nations. I can quite believe, from what I have
seen of our leading scientists, that in another century
it may be dangerous in my own country for my descendants
to profess that belief in a Creator and a future life
which I am superstitious enough to prefer to all the
revelations of all the material sciences.”

“As you value your life and freedom,”
he replied, “don’t speak of such a belief
here, save to the members of my own family, and to
those with whom I may tell you you are safe.
Such ideas were held here, almost as generally as
you say they now are on Earth, some twelve thousand
years ago, and twenty thousand years ago their profession
was compulsory. But for the last hundred centuries
it has been settled that they are utterly fatal to
the progress of the race, to enlightenment, to morality,
and to the practical devotion of our energies to the
business of life; and they are not merely disavowed
and denounced, but hated with an earnestness proportioned
to the scientific enthusiasm of classes and individuals.”

“But,” said I, “if so long, so severely,
and so universally discountenanced, how can their
expression by one man here or there be considered
perilous?”

“Our philosophers say,” he replied, “that
the attractiveness of these ideas to certain minds
is such that no reasoning, no demonstration of their
absurdity, will prevent their exercising a mischievous
influence upon weak, and especially upon feminine
natures; and perhaps the suspicion that they are still
held in secret may contribute to keep alive the bitterness
with which they are repudiated and repressed.
But if they are so held, if there be any who believe
that the order of the universe was at first established,
and that its active forces are still sustained and
governed, by a conscious Intelligence—­if
there be those who think that they have proof positive
of the continued existence of human beings after death—­their
secret has been well kept. For very many centuries
have elapsed since the last victim of such delusions,
as they were solemnly pronounced by public vote in
the reign of the four-hundredth predecessor of the
present Campta, was sent as incurable to the dangerous
ward of our strictest hospital for the insane.”

**Page 69**

A tone of irony, and at the same time an air of guarded
reserve, seemed to pervade all my host’s remarks
on this subject, and I perceived that for some reason
it was so unpleasant to him that courtesy obliged
me to drop it. I put, therefore, to turn the
conversation, some questions as to the political organisation
of which his words had afforded me a glimpse; and
in reply he undertook to give me a summary of the
political history of his planet during the last few
hundred generations.

“If,” he said, “in giving you this
sketch of the process by which our present social
order has been established, I should mention a class
or party who have stood at certain times distinctly
apart from or in opposition to the majority, I must,
in the first place, beg you to ask no questions about
them, and in the next not to repeat incautiously the
little I may tell you, or to show, by asking questions
of others, what you have heard from me.”

I gave my promise frankly, of course, and he then
gave me the following sketch of Martial history:—­

We date events from the union of all races and nations
in a single State, a union which was formally established
13,218 years ago. At that time the large majority
of the inhabitants of this planet possessed no other
property than their houses, clothes, and tools, their
furniture, and a few other trifles. The land was
owned by fewer than 400,000 proprietors. Those
who possessed movable wealth may have numbered thrice
as many. Political and social power was in the
hands of the owners of property, and of those, generally
connected with them by birth or marriage, who were
at any rate not dependent on manual labour for their
bread. But among these there were divisions and
factions on various questions more or less trivial,
none of them approaching in importance or interest
to the fundamental and irreconcilable conflict sure
one day to arise between those who had accumulated
wealth and those who had not. To gain their ends
in one or another of these frivolous quarrels, each
party in turn admitted to political influence section
after section of what you call the proletariat; till
in the year 3278 universal suffrage was granted, every
man and woman over the age of twelve years [6] being
entitled to a single and equal vote.

About the same time the change in opinion of which
I have spoken had taken general effect, and the vast
majority of the men, at any rate, had ceased to believe
in a future life wherein the inequalities and iniquities
of this might be redressed. It followed that they
were fiercely impatient of hardships and suffering,
especially such as they thought might be redressed
by political and social changes. The leaders
of the multitude, for the most part men belonging to
the propertied classes who had either wasted their
wealth or never possessed any, demanded the abolition
of private ownership, first of land, then of movable
wealth; a demand which fiercely excited the passions

**Page 70**

of those who possessed neither, and as bitterly provoked
the anger and alarm of those who did. The struggle
raged for some generations and ended by an appeal
to the sword; in which, since the force of the State
was by law in the hands of the majority, the intelligent,
thrifty, careful owners of property with their adherents
were signally defeated. Universal communism was
established in 3412, none being permitted to own,
or even to claim, the exclusive use of any portion
of the planet’s surface, or of any other property
except the share of food and clothing allotted to
him. One only privilege was allowed to certain
sectaries who still clung to the habits of the past,
to the permanence and privacy of family life.
They were permitted to have houses or portions of
houses to themselves, and to live there on the share
of the public produce allotted to the several members
of each household. It had been assumed as matter
of course by the majority that when every one was
forced to work there would be more than enough for
all; that public spirit, and if necessary coercion,
would prove as effectual stimulants to exertion and
industry as interest and necessity had done under
the system of private ownership.

Those who relied on the refutation of this theory
forgot that with poor and suffering men who look to
no future, and acknowledge no law but such as is created
by their own capricious will and pleasure, envy is
even a more powerful passion than greed. The Many
preferred that wealth and luxury should be destroyed,
rather than that they should be the exclusive possession
of the Few. The first and most visible effect
of Communism was the utter disappearance of all perishable
luxuries, of all food, clothing, furniture, better
than that enjoyed by the poorest. Whatever could
not be produced in quantities sufficient to give each
an appreciable share was not produced at all.
Next, the quarrels arising out of the apportionment
of labour were bitter, constant, and savage.
Only a grinding despotism could compose them, and
those who wielded such despotism for a short time excited
during the period of their rule such fierce and universal
hatred, that they were invariably overturned and almost
invariably murdered before their very brief legal
term of office had closed. It was not only that
those engaged in the same kind of labour quarrelled
over the task assigned to each, whether allotted in
proportion to his strength, or to the difficulty of
his labour, or by lot equally to all. Those to
whom the less agreeable employments were assigned
rebelled or murmured, and at last it was necessary
to substitute rotation for division of labour, since
no one would admit that he was best fitted for the
lower or less agreeable. Of course we thus wasted
silver tools in doing the work of iron, and reduced
enormously the general production of wealth. Next,
it was found that since one man’s industry or
idleness could produce no appreciable effect upon
the general wealth, still less upon the particular

**Page 71**

share assigned to him, every man was as idle as the
envy and jealousy of his neighbours would allow.
Finally, as the produce annually diminished and the
number of mouths to be fed became a serious consideration,
the parents of many children were regarded as public
enemies. The entire independence of women, as
equal citizens, with no recognised relation to individual
men, was the inevitable outcome, logically and practically,
of the Communistic principle; but this only made matters
worse. Attempts were of course made to restrain
multiplication by law, but this brought about inquisitions
so utterly intolerable that human nature revolted
against them. The sectaries I have mentioned—­around
whom, without adopting or even understanding their
principles, gradually gathered all the better elements
of society, every man of intellect and spirit who
had not been murdered, with a still larger proportion
of women—­seceded separately or in considerable
numbers at once; established themselves in those parts
of the planet whose less fertile soil or less genial
climate had caused them to be abandoned, and there
organised societies on the old principles of private
ownership and the permanence of household ties.
By and by, as they visibly prospered, they attracted
the envy and greed of the Communists. They worked
under whatever disadvantage could be inflicted by
climate and soil, but they had a much more than countervailing
advantage in mutual attachment, in freedom from the
bitter passions necessarily excited by the jealousy
and incessant mutual interference inseparable from
the Communistic system, and in their escape from the
caprice and instability of popular government—­these
societies, whether from wisdom or mere reaction, submitting
to the rule of one or a few chief magistrates selected
by the natural leaders of each community. Moreover,
they had not merely the adhesion of all the more able,
ambitious, and intellectual who seceded from a republic
in which neither talent nor industry could give comfort
or advantage, but also the full benefit of inventive
genius, stimulated by the hope of wealth in addition
to whatever public spirit the habits of Communism
had not extinguished. They systematically encouraged
the cultivation of science, which the Communists had
very early put down as a withdrawal of energy from
the labour due to the community at large. They
had a monopoly of machinery, of improvement, of invention
both in agriculture, in manufactures, and in self-defence.
They devised weapons far more destructive than those
possessed by the old *regime*, and still more
superior to such as, after centuries of anarchy and
decline, the Communists were able to procure.
Finally, when assailed by the latter, vast superiority
of numbers was annulled by immeasurable superiority
in weapons and in discipline. The secessionists
were animated, too, by a bitter resentment against
their assailants, as the authors of the general ruin
and of much individual suffering; and when the victory

**Page 72**

was gained, they not infrequently improved it to the
utter destruction of all who had taken part in the
attack. Whichever side were most to blame in
the feud, no quarter was given by either. It was
an internecine war of numbers, ignorance, and anarchy
against science and order. On both sides there
still remained much of the spirit generated in times
when life was less precious than the valour by which
alone it could be held, and preserved through milder
ages by the belief that death was not annihilation—­enough
to give to both parties courage to sacrifice their
lives for the victory of their cause and the destruction
of their enemies. But after a few crushing defeats,
the Communists were compelled to sue for peace, and
to cede a large part of their richest territory.
Driven back into their own chaotic misery, deterred
by merciless punishment from further invasion of their
neighbours’ dominions, they had leisure to contrast
their wretched condition with that of those who prospered
under the restored system of private ownership, family
interest, strong, orderly, permanent government, material
and intellectual civilisation. Machinery did for
the new State, into which the seceding societies were
consolidated by the necessity of self-defence, much
more than it had done before Communism declared war
on it. The same envy which, if war had been any
longer possible, would have urged the Communists again
and again to plunder the wealth that contrasted so
forcibly their own increasing poverty, now humbled
them to admire and covet the means which had produced
it. At last, after bitter intestine struggles,
they voluntarily submitted to the rule of their rivals,
and entreated the latter to accept them as subjects
and pupils. Thus in the 39th century order and
property were once more established throughout the
planet.

“But, as I have said, what you call religion
had altogether disappeared—­had ceased,
at least as an avowed principle, to affect the ideas
and conduct of society or of individuals. The
re-establishment of peace and order concentrated men’s
energies on the production of material wealth and
the achievement of physical comfort and ease.
Looking forward to nothing after death, they could
only make the best of the short life permitted to
them and do their utmost to lengthen it. In the
assurance of speedy separation, affection became a
source of much more anxiety and sorrow than happiness.
All ties being precarious and their endurance short,
their force became less and less; till the utmost
enjoyment of the longest possible life for himself
became the sole, or almost the sole, animating motive,
the one paramount interest, of each individual.
The equality which logic had established between the
sexes dissolved the family tie. It was impossible
for law to dictate the conditions on which two free
and equal individuals should live together, merely
because they differed in sex. All the State could
do it did; it insisted on a provision for the children.

**Page 73**

But when parental affection was extinguished, such
provision could only be secured by handing over the
infant and its portion to the guardianship of the
State. As children were troublesome and noisy,
the practice of giving them up to public officers to
be brought up in vast nurseries regulated on the strictest
scientific principles became the general rule, and
was soon regarded as a duty; what was at first almost
openly avowed selfishness soon justifying and glorifying
itself on the ground that the children were better
off under the care of those whose undivided attention
was given to them, and in establishments where everything
was regulated with sole regard to their welfare, than
they could be at home. No law compels us to send
our children to these establishments. In rare
cases a favourite will persuade her lord to retain
her pet son and make him heir, but both the Courts
and public opinion discountenance this practice.
Some families, like my own, systematically retain
their children and educate them at home; but it is
generally thought that in doing so we do them a wrong,
and our neighbours look askance upon so signal a deviation
from custom; the more so, perhaps, that they half suspect
us of dissenting from their views on other subjects,
on which our opinions do not so directly or so obviously
affect our conduct, and on which therefore we are
not so easily convicted of free choice” [heresy].
Here I inquired whether the birth and parentage of
the children sent to the public establishments were
registered, so as to permit their being reclaimed
or inheriting property.

“No,” he replied. “Inheritance
by mere descent is a notion no longer favoured.
I believe that young mothers sometimes, before parting
with their children, impress upon them some indelible
mark by which it may be possible hereafter to recognise
them; but such recognitions seldom occur. Maternal
affection is discountenanced as a purely animal instinct,
a survival from a lower grade of organisation, and
does not generally outlast a ten years’ separation;
while paternal love is utterly scouted as an absurdity
to which even the higher animals are not subject.
Boys are kept in the public establishments until the
age of twelve, those from ten to twelve being separated
from the younger ones and passing through the higher
education in separate colleges. The girls are
educated apart till they complete their tenth year,
and are almost invariably married in the course of
the next. At first, under the influence of the
theory of sexual equality, both received their intellectual
instruction in the same classes and passed through
the same examinations. Separation was soon found
necessary; but still girls passed through the same
intellectual training as their brothers. Experience,
however, showed that this would not answer. Those
girls who distinguished themselves in the examinations
were, with scarcely an exception, found unattractive
as wives and unfit to be mothers. A very much

**Page 74**

larger number, a number increasing in every generation,
suffered unmistakably from the severity of the mental
discipline to which they were subjected. The
advocates of female equality made a very hard fight
for equal culture; but the physical consequences were
perfectly clear and perfectly intolerable. When
a point was reached at which one half the girls of
each generation were rendered invalids for life, and
the other half protected only by a dense stupidity
or volatile idleness which no school punishments could
overcome, the Equalists were driven from one untenable
point to another, and forced at last to demand a reduction
of the masculine standard of education to the level
of feminine capacities. Upon this ground they
took their last stand, and were hopelessly beaten.
The reaction was so complete that for the last two
hundred and forty generations, the standard of female
education has been lowered to that which by general
confession ordinary female brains can stand without
injury to the physique. The practical consequences
of sexual equality have re-established in a more absolute
form than ever the principle that the first purpose
of female life is marriage and maternity; and that,
for their own sakes as for the sake of each successive
generation, women should be so trained as to be attractive
wives and mothers of healthy children, all other considerations
being subordinated to these. A certain small
number of ladies avail themselves of the legal equality
they still enjoy, and live in the world much as men.
But we regard them as third-rate men in petticoats,
hardly as women at all. Marriage with one of
them is the last resource to which a man too idle or
too foolish to earn his own living will betake himself.
Whatever their education, our women have always found
that such independence as they could earn by hard
work was less satisfactory than the dependence, coupled
with assured comfort and ease, which they enjoy as
the consorts, playthings, or slaves of the other sex;
and they are only too glad to barter their legal equality
for the certainty of protection, indolence, and permanent
support.”

“Then your marriages,” I said, “are
permanent?”

“Not by law,” he replied. “Nothing
like what our remote ancestors called marriage is
recognised at all. The maidens who come of age
each year sell themselves by a sort of auction, those
who purchase them arranging with the girls themselves
the terms on which the latter will enter their family.
Custom has fixed the general conditions which every
girl expects, and which only the least attractive are
forced to forego. They are promised a permanent
maintenance from their master’s estate, and
promise in return a fixed term of marriage. After
two or three years they are free to rescind the contract;
after ten or twelve they may leave their husbands
with a stipulated pension. They receive an allowance
for dress and so forth proportionate to their personal
attractions or to the fancy of the suitor; and of course
the richest men can offer the best terms, and generally
secure the most agreeable wives, in whatever number
they please or think they can without inconvenience
support.”

**Page 75**

“Then,” I said, “the women can divorce
themselves at pleasure, but the men cannot dismiss
them! This hardly looks like equality.”

“The practical result,” he answered, “is
that men don’t care for a release which would
part them from complaisant slaves, and that women
dare not seek a divorce which can only hand them over
to another master on rather worse terms. When
the longer term has expired, the latter almost always
prefer the servitude to which they are accustomed
to an independent life of solitude and friendlessness.”

“And what becomes,” I asked, “of
the younger men who must enter the world without property,
without parents or protectors?”

“We are, after youth has passed, an indolent
race. We hardly care, as a rule, to cultivate
our fields or direct our factories; but prefer devoting
the latter half at least of our lives to a somewhat
easy-going cultivation of that division of science
which takes hold of our fancy. These divisions
are such as your conversation leads me to think you
would probably consider absurdly minute. A single
class of insects, a single family of plants, the habits
of one race of fishes, suffice for the exclusive study
of half a lifetime. Minds of a more active or
more practical bent will spend an equal time over the
construction of a new machine more absolutely automatic
than any that has preceded it. Physical labour
is thrown as much as possible on the young; and even
they are now so helped by machinery and by trained
animals, that the eight hours’ work which forms
their day’s labour hardly tires their muscles.
Our tastes render us very anxious to devolve upon
others as soon as possible the preservation and development
of the property we have acquired. A man of moderate
means, long before he has reached his thirtieth [7]
year, generally seeks one assistant; men of larger
fortune may want two, five, or ten. These are
chosen, as a rule, by preference from those who have
passed the most stringent and successful collegiate
examination. Martial parents are not prolific,
and the mortality in our public nurseries is very large.
I impute it to moral influences, since the chief cause
of death is low vitality, marked nervous depression
and want of animal spirits, such as the total absence
of personal tenderness and sympathy must produce in
children. It is popularly ascribed to the over-cultivation
of the race, as plants and animals highly civilised—­that
is, greatly modified and bred to an artificial excellence
by human agency—­are certainly delicate,
unprolific, and especially difficult to rear.
There is little disease in the nurseries, but there
is little health and a deficiency of nervous energy.
One fact is significant, however interpreted, and
bears directly on your last question. Since the
wide extension of polygamy, female births are to male
about as seven to six; but the deaths in public nurseries
between the first and tenth years are twenty-nine
in twelve dozen admissions in the stronger sex, and
only about ten in the weaker. Read these facts
as we may, they ensure employment to the young men
when their education is completed—­the two
last years of severe study adding somewhat to the
mortality among them.

**Page 76**

“A large number find employment in superintending
the property of others. To give them a practical
interest in its preservation and improvement, they
are generally, after a shorter or longer probation,
adopted by their employers as heirs to their estate;
our experience of Communism having taught us that
immediate and obvious self-interest is the only motive
that certainly and seriously affects human action.
The distance at which they are kept, and the absolute
seclusion of our family life, enables us easily to
secure ourselves against any over-anxiety on their
part to anticipate their inheritance. The minority
who do not thus find a regular place in society are
employed in factories, as artisans, or on the lands
belonging to the State. To ensure their zeal,
the last receive a fixed proportion of the produce,
or are permitted to rent land at fixed rates, and at
the end of ten years receive a part thereof in full
property. By these means we are free from all
the dangers and difficulties of that state of society
which preceded the Communistic cataclysm. We have
poor men, and men who can live only by daily labour;
but these have dissipated their wealth, or are looking
forward at no very distant period to a sufficient
competence. The entire population of our planet
does not exceed two hundred millions, and is not much
increased from generation to generation. The
area of cultivable land is about ten millions of square
miles, and half a square mile in these equatorial continents,
which alone are at all generally inhabited, will, if
well cultivated and cared for, furnish the largest
household with every luxury that man’s heart
can desire. Eight hours’ labour in the day
for ten years of life will secure to the least fortunate
a reasonable competence; and an ambitious man, with
quick intelligence and reasonable industry, may always
hope to become rich, if he thinks wealth worth the
labour of invention or of exceptionally troublesome
work.”

“Mars ought, then,” I said, “to
be a material paradise. You have attained nearly
all that our most advanced political economists regard
as the perfection of economical order—­a
population nearly stationary, and a soil much more
than adequate to their support; a general distribution
of property, total absence of permanent poverty, and
freedom from that gnawing anxiety regarding the future
of ourselves or our children which is the great evil
of life upon Earth and the opprobrium of our social
arrangements. You have carried out, moreover,
the doctrines of our most advanced philosophers; you
have absolute equality before the law, competitive
examination among the young for the best start in
life, with equal chances wherever equality is possible;
and again, perfect freedom and full legal equality
as regards the relations of the sexes. Are your
countrymen satisfied with the results?”

**Page 77**

“Yes,” answered my host, “in so
far, at least, that they have no wish to change them,
no idea that any great social or political reforms
could improve our condition. Our lesson in Communism
has rendered all agitation on such matters, all tendency
to democratic institutions, all appeals to popular
passions, utterly odious and alarming to us.
But that we are happy I will venture neither to affirm
nor to deny. Physically, no doubt, we have great
advantages over you, if I rightly understand your
description of life on Earth. We have got rid
of old age, and, to a great extent, of disease.
Many of our scientists persist in the hope to get
rid of death; but, since all that has been accomplished
in this direction was accomplished some two thousand
years back, and yet we continue to die, general opinion
hardly concurs in this hope.”

“How do you mean,” I inquired, “that
you have got rid of old age and of disease?”

“We have,” he replied, “learned
pretty fully the chemistry of life. We have found
remedies for that hardening of the bones and weakening
of the muscles which used to be the physical characteristics
of declining years. Our hair no longer whitens;
our teeth, if they decay, are now removed and naturally
replaced by new ones; our eyes retain to the last
the clearness of their sight. A famous physician
of five thousand years back said in controversy on
this subject, that ’the clock was not made to
go for ever;’ by which he meant that human bodies,
like the materials of machines, wore out by lapse
of time. In his day this was true, since it was
impossible fully to repair the waste and physical
wear and tear of the human frame. This is no longer
so. The clock does not wear out, but it goes
more and more slowly and irregularly, and stops at
last for some reason that the most skilful inspection
cannot discover. The body of him who dies, as
we say, ’by efflux of time’ at the age
of fifty is as perfect as it was at five-and twenty.
[8] Yet few men live to be fifty-five, [9] and most
have ceased to take much interest in practical life,
or even in science, by forty-five.” [10]

“That seems strange,” I said. “If
no foreign body gets into the machinery, and the machinery
itself does not wear out, it is difficult to understand
why the clock should cease to go.”

“Would not some of your race,” he asked,
“explain the mystery by suggesting that the
human frame is not a clock, but contains, and owes
its life to, an essence beyond the reach of the scalpel,
the microscope, and the laboratory?”

“They hold that it is so. But then it is
not the soul but the body that is worn out in seventy
or eighty of the Earth’s revolutions.”

“Ay,” he said; “but if man were
such a duplex being, it might be that the wearing
out of the body was necessary, and had been adapted
to release the soul when it had completed its appropriate
term of service in the flesh.”

I could not answer this question, and he did not pursue
the theme. Presently I inquired, “If you
allow no appeal to popular feeling or passion, to
what was I so nearly the victim? And what is the
terrorism that makes it dangerous to avow a credulity
or incredulity opposed to received opinion?”

**Page 78**

“Scientific controversies,” he replied,
“enlist our strongest and angriest feelings.
It is held that only wickedness or lunacy can resist
the evidence that has convinced a vast majority.
By arithmetical calculation the chances that twelve
men are wrong and twelve thousand [11] right, on a
matter of inductive or deductive proof, are found
to amount to what must be taken for practical certainty;
and when the twelve still hold out, they are regarded
as madmen or knaves, and treated accordingly by their
fellows. If it be thought desirable to invoke
a legal settlement of the issue, a council of all
the overseers of our scientific colleges is called,
and its decision is by law irrevocable and infallible,
especially if ratified by the popular voice.
And if a majority vote be worth anything at all, I
think this modern theory at least as sound as the democratic
theory of politics which prevailed here before the
Communistic revolution, and which seems by your account
to be gaining ground on Earth.”

“And what,” I inquired, “is your
political constitution? What are the powers of
your rulers; and how, in the absence of public discussion
and popular suffrage, are they practically limited?”

“In theory they are unlimited,” he answered;
“in practice they are limited by custom, by
caution, and, above all, by the lack of motives for
misrule. The authority of each prince over those
under him, from the Sovereign to the local president
or captain, is absolute. But the Executive leaves
ordinary matters of civil or criminal law to the Courts
of Justice. Cases are tried by trained judges;
the old democratic usage of employing untrained juries
having been long ago discarded, as a worse superstition
than simple decision by lot. The lot is right
twelve times in two dozen; the jury not oftener than
half-a-dozen times. The judges don’t heat
or bias their minds by discussion. They hear
all that can be elicited from parties, accuser, accused,
and witnesses, and all that skilled advocates can say.
Then the secretary of the Court draws up a summary
of the case, each judge takes it home to consider,
each writes out his judgment, which is read by the
secretary, none but the author knowing whose it is.
If the majority be five to two, judgment is given;
if less, the case is tried again before a higher tribunal
of twice as many judges. If no decision can be
reached, the accused is acquitted for the time, or,
in a civil dispute, a compromise is imposed.
The rulers cannot, without incurring such general
anger as would be fatal to their power, disregard our
fundamental laws. Gross tyranny to individuals
is too dangerous to be carried far. It is a capital
crime for any but the officers of the Sovereign and
of the twelve Regents to possess the fearfully destructive
weapons that brought our last wars to an end.
But any man, driven to desperation, can construct
and use similar weapons so easily that no ruler will
drive a man to such revengeful despair. Again,

**Page 79**

the tyranny of subordinate officials would be checked
by their chief, who would be angry at being troubled
and endangered by misconduct in which he had no direct
interest. And finally, *personal* malice
is not a strong passion among us; and our manners
render it unlikely that a ruler should come into such
collision with any of his subjects as would engender
such a feeling. Of those immediately about him,
he can and does at once get rid as soon as he begins
to dislike, and before he has cause to hate them.
It is our maxim that greed of wealth or lust of power
are the chief motives of tyranny. Our rulers cannot
well hope to extend a power already autocratic, and
we take care to leave them nothing to covet in the
way of wealth. We can afford to give them all
that they can desire of luxury and splendour.
To enrich to the uttermost a few dozen governors costs
us nothing comparable to the cost of democracy, with
its inseparable party conflicts, maladministration,
neglect, and confusion.”

“A clever writer on Earth lately remarked that
it would be easy to satiate princes with all personal
enjoyments, but impossible to satiate all their hangers-on,
or even all the members of their family.”

“You must remember,” he replied, “that
we have here, save in such exceptional cases as my
own, nothing like what you call a family. The
ladies of a prince’s house have everything they
can wish for within their bounds and cannot go outside
of these. As for dependents, no man here, at
least of such as are likely to be rulers, cares for
his nearest and dearest friends enough to incur personal
peril, public displeasure, or private resentment on
their account. The officials around a ruler’s
person are few in number, so that we can afford to
make their places too comfortable and too valuable
to be lightly risked. Neglect, again, is pretty
sure to be punished by superior authority. Activity
in the promotion of public objects is the only interest
left to princes, while tyranny is, for the reasons
I have given, too dangerous to be carried far.”

**CHAPTER VI — AN OFFICIAL VISIT.**

At this point of our conversation an amba entered
the room and made certain signs which my host immediately
understood.

“The Zampta,” he said, “has called
upon me, evidently on your account, and probably with
some message from his Suzerain. You need not be
afraid,” he added. “At worst they
would only refuse you protection, and I could secure
you from danger under my own roof, and in the last
extremity effect your retreat and return to your own
planet; supposing for a moment,” he added, smiling,
“that you are a real being and come from a real
world.”

The Regent of that dominion, the only Martialist outside
my host’s family with whom I had yet been able
to converse, awaited us in the hall or entrance chamber.
I bowed low to him, and then remained standing.
My host, also saluting his visitor, at once took his
seat. The Regent, returning the salute and seating
himself, proceeded to address us; very little ceremony
on either side being observed between this autocratic
deputy of an absolute Sovereign and his subjects.

**Page 80**

“Esmo *dent Ecasfen*” said the Regent,
“will you point out the person you declare yourself
to have rescued from assault and received into your
house on the 431st day of this year?”

“That is the person, Regent,” said my
host, pointing to me.

The visitor then asked my name, which I gave, and
addressing me thereby, he continued—­

“The Campta has requested me to ascertain the
truth regarding your alleged size, so far exceeding
anything hitherto known among us. You will permit
me, therefore, to measure your height and girth.”

I bowed, and he proceeded to ascertain that I was
about a foot taller and some ten inches larger round
the waist than himself. Of these facts he took
note, and then proceeded—­

“The signs you made to those who first encountered
you were understood to mean that you descended from
the sky, in a vessel which is now left on the summit
of yonder mountain, Asnyca.”

“I did not descend from the sky,” I replied,
“for the sky is, as we both know, no actual
vault or boundary of the atmospheric depths. I
ascended from a world nearer to the Sun, and after
travelling for forty days through space, landed upon
this planet in the vessel you mention.”

“I am directed,” he answered, “to
see this vessel, to inspect your machinery and instruments,
and to report thereon to the Suzerain. You will
doubtless be ready to accompany me thither to-morrow
two hours after sunrise. You may be accompanied,
if you please, by your host or any members of his
family; I shall be attended by one or more of my officers.
In the meantime I am to inform you that, until my report
has been received and considered, you are under the
protection of the law, and need not apprehend any
molestation of the kind you incurred at first.
You will not, however, repeat to any one but myself
the explanation you have offered of your appearance—­which,
I understand, has been given in fuller detail to Esmo—­until
the decision of the Campta shall have been communicated
to you.”

I simply bowed my assent; and after this brief but
sufficient fulfilment of the purpose for which he
had called, the Regent took his leave.

“What,” I asked, when we re-entered my
chamber, “is the meaning of the title by which
the Regent addressed you?”

“In speaking to officials,” he replied,
“of rank so high as his, it is customary to
address them simply by their titles, unless more than
one of the same rank be present, in which case we
call them, as we do inferior officials, by their name
with the title appended. For instance, in the
Court of the Sovereign our Regent would be called
Endo Zampta. Men of a certain age and social position,
but having no office, are addressed by their name
and that of their residence; and, *asfe* meaning
a town or dwelling, usage gives me the name of Esmo,
in or of the town of Eca.

**Page 81**

“I am sorry,” he went on, “that
neither my son nor myself can accompany you to-morrow.
All the elder members of my family are engaged to
attend at some distance hence before the hour at which
you can return. But I should not like you to
be alone with strangers; and, independently of this
consideration, I should perhaps have asked of you
a somewhat unusual favour. My daughter Eveena,
who, like most of *our* women” (he laid
a special emphasis on the pronoun) “has received
a better education than is now given in the public
academies, has been from the first greatly interested
in your narrative and in all you have told us of the
world from which you come. She is anxious to see
your vessel, and I had hoped to take her when I meant
to visit it in your company. But after to-morrow
I cannot tell when you may be summoned to visit the
Campta, or whether after that visit you are likely
to return hither. I will ask you, therefore, if
you do not object to what I confess is an unusual
proceeding, to take Eveena under your charge to-morrow.”

“Is it,” I inquired, “permissible
for a young lady to accompany a stranger on such an
excursion?”

“It is very unusual,” returned my host;
“but you must observe that here family ties
are, as a rule, unknown. It cannot be usual for
a maiden to be attended by father or brother, since
she knows neither. It is only by a husband that
a girl can, as a rule, be attended abroad. Our
usages render such attendance exceedingly close, and,
on the other hand, forbid strangers to interrupt or
take notice thereof. In Eveena’s presence
the Regent will find it difficult to draw you into
conversation which might be inconvenient or dangerous;
and especially cannot attempt to gratify, by questioning
you, any curiosity as to myself or my family.”

“But,” I said, “from what you say,
it seems that the Regent and any one who might accompany
him would draw inferences which might not be agreeable
to you or to the young lady.”

“I hardly understand you,” he replied.
“The only conjecture they could make, which
they will certainly make, is that you are, or are about
to be, married to her; and as they will never see
her again, and, if they did, could not recognise her—­as
they will not to-morrow know anything save that she
belongs to my household, and certainly will not speak
to her—­I do not see how their inference
can affect her. When I part with her, it will
be to some one of my own customs and opinions; and
to us this close confinement of girls appears to transcend
reasonable restraint, as it contradicts the theoretical
freedom and equality granted by law to the sex, but
utterly withheld by the social usages which have grown
out of that law.”

“I can only thank you for giving me a companion
more agreeable than the official who is to report
upon my reality,” I said.

“I do not desire,” he continued, “to
bind you to any reserve in replying to questions,
beyond what I am sure you will do without a pledge—­namely,
to avoid betraying more than you can help of that
which is not known outside my own household. But
on this subject I may be able to speak more fully
after to-morrow. Now, if you will come into the
peristyle, we shall be in time for the evening meal.”

**Page 82**

Eveena’s curiosity had in nowise overcome her
silent shyness. She might possibly have completed
her tenth year, which epoch in the life of Mars is
about equivalent to the seventeenth birthday of a damsel
nurtured in North-Western Europe. I hardly think
that I had addressed her directly half-a-dozen times,
or had received from her a dozen words in return.
I had been attracted, nevertheless, not only by her
grace and beauty, but by the peculiar sweetness of
her voice and the gentleness of her manner and bearing
when engaged in pacifying dispute or difficulty among
the children, and particularly in dealing with the
half-deformed spoilt infant of which I have spoken.
This evening that little brat was more than usually
exasperating, and having exhausted the patience or
repelled the company of all the rest, found itself
alone, and set up a fretful, continuous scream, disagreeable
even to me, and torturing to Martial ears, which,
adapted to hear in that thin air, are painfully alive
to strident, harsh, or even loud sounds. Instantly
obeying a sign from her mother, Eveena rose in the
middle of a conversation to which she had listened
with evident interest, and devoted herself for half-an-hour
to please and pacify this uncomfortable child.
The character and appearance of this infant, so utterly
unlike all its companions, had already excited my curiosity,
but I had found no opportunity of asking a question
without risking an impertinence. On this occasion,
however, I ventured to make some remark on the extreme
gentleness and forbearance with which not only Eveena
but the children treated their peevish and exacting
brother.

“He is no brother of theirs,” said Zulve,
the mistress of the house. “You would hardly
find in any family like ours a child with so irritable
a temper or a disposition so selfish, and nowhere a
creature so hardly treated by Nature in body as well
as mind.”

“Indeed,” I said, hardly understanding
her answer.

“No,” said my host. “It is
the rule to deprive of life, promptly and painlessly,
children to whom, from physical deformity or defect,
life is thought unlikely to be pleasant, and whose
descendants might be a burden to the public and a
cause of physical deterioration to the race.
It is, however, one of the exceptional tenets to which
I have been obliged to allude, that man should not
seek to be wiser than Nature; and that life should
neither be cut short, except as a punishment for great
crimes, nor prolonged artificially contrary to the
manifest intention, or, as our philosophers would say,
the common course of Nature. Those who think
with me, therefore, always endeavour, when we hear
in time of their approaching fate, to preserve children
so doomed. Precautions against undue haste or
readiness to destroy lives that might, after all,
grow up to health and vigour are provided by law.
No single physician or physiologist can sign a death-warrant;
and I, though no longer a physician by craft, am among

**Page 83**

the arbiters, one or more of whom must be called in
to approve or suspend the decision. On these
occasions I have rescued from extinction several children
of whose unfitness to live, according to the standard
of the State Nurseries, there was no question, and
placed them in families, mostly childless, that were
willing to receive them. Of this one it was our
turn to take charge; and certainly his chance is better
for being brought up among other children, and under
the influence of their gentler dispositions and less
exacting temperaments.”

“And is such ill-temper and selfishness,”
I asked, “generally found among the deformed?”

“I don’t think,” replied Esmo, “that
this child is much worse than most of my neighbours’
children, except that physical discomfort makes him
fretful. What you call selfishness in him is only
the natural inheritance derived from an ancestry who
for some hundred generations have certainly never
cared for anything or any one but themselves.
I thought I had explained to you by what train of
circumstances and of reasoning family affection, such
as it is reputed to have been thousands of years ago,
has become extinct in this planet; and, family affection
extinguished, all weaker sentiments of regard for others
were very quickly withered up.”

“You told me something of the kind,” I
said; “but the idea of a life so utterly swallowed
up in self that no one even thinks it necessary to
affect regard for and interest in others, was to me
so unintelligible and inconceivable that I did not
realise the full meaning of your account. Nor
even now do I understand how a society formed of such
members can be held together. On Earth we should
expect them either to tear one another to pieces,
or to relapse into isolation and barbarism lower than
that of the lowest tribe which preserves social instincts
and social organisation. A society composed of
men resembling that child, but with the intelligence,
force, and consistent purpose of manhood, would, I
should have thought, be little better than a congregation
of beasts of prey.”

“We have such beasts,” said Esmo, “in
the wild lands, and they are certainly unsociable
and solitary. But men, at least civilised men,
are governed not only by instinct but by interest,
and the interest of each individual in the preservation
of social co-operation and social order is very evident
and very powerful. Experience and school discipline
cure children of the habit of indulging mere temper
and spite before they come to be men, and they are
taught by practice as well as by precept the absolute
necessity of co-operation. Egotism, therefore,
has no tendency to dissolve society as a mere organisation,
though it has utterly destroyed society as a source
of pleasure.”

“Does your law,” I asked, “confine
the principle of euthanasia to infants, or do you
put out of the world adults whose life is supposed,
for one reason or another, to be useless and joyless?”

**Page 84**

“Only,” he answered, “in the case
of the insane. When the doctors are satisfied
that a lunatic cannot be cured, an inquest is held;
and if the medical verdict be approved, he is quietly
and painlessly dismissed from existence. Logically,
of course, the same principle should be applied to
all incurable disease; and I suspect—­indeed
I know—­that it is applied when the household
have become weary, and the patient is utterly unable
to protect himself or appeal to the law. But
the general application of the principle has been successfully
resisted, on the ground that the terror it would cause,
the constant anxiety and alarm in which men would
live if the right of judging when life had become
worthless to them were left to others, would far outweigh
any benefit which might be derived from the legalised
extinction of existences which had become a prolonged
misery; and such cases, as I have told you, are very
rare among us. A case of hopeless bodily suffering,
not terminating very speedily in death, does not occur
thrice a year among the whole population of the planet,
except through accident. We have means of curing
at the outset almost all of those diseases which the
observance for hundreds of generations of sound physical
conditions of life has not extirpated; and in the worst
instances our anaesthetics seldom fail to extinguish
the sense of pain without impairing intellect.
Of course, any one who is tired of his life is at
liberty to put an end to it, and any one else may assist
him. But, though the clinging to existence is
perhaps the most irrational of all those purely animal
instincts on emancipation from which we pride ourselves,
it is the strongest and the most lasting. The
life of most of my countrymen would be to me intolerable
weariness, if only from the utter want, after wealth
is attained, of all warmer and less isolated interest
than some one pet scientific pursuit can afford; and
yet more from the total absence of affection, family
duties, and the various mental occupations which interest
in others affords. But though the question whether
life is worth living has long ago been settled among
us in the negative, suicide, the logical outcome of
that conviction, is the rarest of all the methods
by which life is terminated.”

“Which seems to show that even in Mars logic
does not always dominate life and prevail over instinct.
But what is the most usual cause of death, where neither
disease nor senility are other than rare exceptions?”

“Efflux of time,” Esmo replied with an
ironical smile. “That is the chief fatal
disease recognised by our physicians.”

“And what is its nature?”

“Ah, that neither I nor any other physician
can tell you. Life ’goes out,’ like
a lamp when the materials supplying the electric current
are exhausted; and yet here all the waste of which
physic can take cognisance is fully repaired, and
the circuit is not broken.”

“What are the symptoms, then?”

**Page 85**

“They are all reducible to one—­exhaustion
of the will, the prime element of personality.
The patient ceases to *care*. It is too much
trouble to work; then too much trouble to read; then
too much trouble to exert even those all but mechanical
powers of thought which are necessary to any kind
of social intercourse—­to give an order,
to answer a question, to recognise a name or a face:
then even the passions die out, till the patient cannot
be provoked to rate a stupid amba or a negligent wife;
finally, there is not energy to dress or undress,
to rise up or sit down. Then the patient is allowed
to die: if kept alive perforce, he would finally
lack the energy to eat or even to breathe. And
yet, all this time, the man is alive, the self is
there; and I have prolonged life, or rather renewed
it, for a time, by some chance stimulus that has reached
the inner sight through the thickening veil, and shocked
the essential man into willing and thinking once more
as he thought and willed when he was younger than
his grandchildren are now.... It is well that
some of us who know best how long the flesh may be
kept in life, are, in right of that very knowledge,
proof against the wish to keep the life in the flesh
for ever.”

**CHAPTER VII — ESCORT DUTY.**

Immediately after breakfast the next morning my host
invited me to the gate of his garden, where stood
one of the carriages I had seen before in the distance,
but never had an opportunity of examining. It
rested on three wheels, the two hind ones by far larger
than that in front, which merely served to sustain
the equilibrium of the body and to steer. The
material was the silver-like metal of which most Martial
vessels and furniture are formed, every spar, pole,
and cross-piece being a hollow cylinder; a construction
which, with the extreme lightness of the metal itself,
made the carriage far lighter than any I had seen
on Earth. The body consisted of a seat with sides,
back, and footboard, wide enough to accommodate two
persons with ease. It was attached by strong
elastic fastenings to a frame consisting of four light
poles rising from the framework in which the axles
turned; completely dispensing with the trouble of
springs, while affording a more complete protection
from anything like jolting. The steering gear
consisted of a helm attached to the front wheel and
coming up within easy reach of the driver’s
hand. The electric motive power and machinery
were concealed in a box beneath the seat, which was
indeed but the top of this most important and largest
portion of the carriage. The poles sustained
a light framework supporting a canopy, which could
be drawn over the top and around three sides of the
carriage, leaving only the front open. This canopy,
in the present instance, consisted of a sort of very
fine silken material, thickly embroidered within and
without with feathers of various colours and sizes,
combined in patterns of exquisite beauty. My host

**Page 86**

requested me to mount the carriage with him, and drove
for some distance, teaching me how to steer, and how,
by pressing a spring, to stop or slacken the motion
of the vehicle, also how to direct it over rough ground
and up or down the steepest slope on which it was
available. When we returned, the Regent’s
carriage was standing by the gate, and two others
were waiting at a little distance in the rear.
The Regent, with a companion, was already seated,
and as soon as we reached the gate, Eveena appeared.
She was enveloped from head to foot in a cloak of
something like swans-down covering her whole figure,
loose, like the ordinary outer garments of both sexes,
and gathered in at the waist by a narrow zone of silver,
with a sort of clasp of some bright green jewel; and
a veil of white satin-looking material covered the
whole head and face, and fell half-way to the waist.
Her gloved right hand was hidden by the sleeve of
her cloak; that of the left arm was turned back, and
the hand which she gave me as I handed her to the seat
on my left was bare—­a usage both of convenience
and courtesy. At Esmo’s request, the Regent,
who led the way, started at a moderate pace, not exceeding
some ten miles an hour. I observed that on the
roofs of all the houses along the road the inhabitants
had gathered to watch us; and as my companion was
so completely veiled, I did not baulk their curiosity
by drawing the canopy. I presently noticed that
the girl held something concealed in her right sleeve,
and ventured to ask her what she had there.

“Pardon me,” she said; “if we had
been less hurried, I meant to have asked your permission
to bring my pet *esve* with me.” Drawing
back her sleeve, she showed a bird about the size
of a carrier-pigeon, but with an even larger and stronger
beak, white body, and wings and tail, like some of
the plumage of the head and neck, tinted with gold
and green. Around its neck was a little string
of silver, and suspended from this a small tablet
with a pencil or style. Since by her look and
manner she seemed to expect an answer, I said—­

“I am very glad you have given me the opportunity
of making acquaintance with another of those curiously
tame and manageable animals which your people seem
to train to such wonderful intelligence and obedience.
We have birds on Earth which will carry a letter from
a strange place to their home, but only homewards.”

“These,” she answered, “will go
wherever they are directed, if they have been there
before and know the name of the place; and if this
bird had been let loose after we had left, he would
have found me, if not hidden by trees or other shelter,
anywhere within a score of miles.”

“And have your people,” I asked, “many
more such wonderfully intelligent and useful creatures
tamed to your service, besides the ambau, the tyree,
and these letter-carriers?”

**Page 87**

“Oh yes!” she answered. “Nearly
all our domestic animals will do anything they are
told which lies within their power. You have seen
the tyree marching in a line across a field to pick
up every single worm or insect, or egg of such, within
the whole space over which they move, and I think
you saw the ambau gathering fruit. It is not very
usual to employ the latter for this purpose, except
in the trees. Have you not seen a big creature—­I
should call it a bird, but a bird that cannot fly,
and is covered with coarse hair instead of feathers?
It is about as tall as myself, but with a neck half
as long as its body, and a very sharp powerful beak;
and four of these *carvee* would clear a field
the size of our garden (some 160 acres) of weeds in
a couple of days. We can send them, moreover,
with orders to fetch a certain number of any particular
fruit or plant, and they scarcely ever forget or blunder.
Some of them, of course, are cleverer than others.
The cleverest will remember the name of every plant
in the garden, and will, perhaps, bring four or even
six different kinds at a time; but generally we show
them a leaf of the plant we want, or point out to
them the bed where it is to be found, and do not trouble
their memory with more than two different orders at
a time. The Unicorns, as you call them, come
regularly to be milked at sunset, and, if told beforehand,
will come an hour earlier or later to any place pointed
out to them. There were many beasts of burden
before the electric carriages were invented, so intelligent
that I have heard the rider never troubled himself
to guide them except when he changed his purpose,
or came to a road they had not traversed before.
He would simply tell them where to go, and they would
carry him safely. The only creature now kept
for this purpose is the largest of our birds (the
*caldecta*), about six feet long from head to
tail, and with wings measuring thrice as much from
tip to tip. They will sail through the air and
carry their rider up to places otherwise inaccessible.
But they are little used except by the hunters, partly
because the danger is thought too great, partly because
they cannot rise more than about 4000 feet from the
sea-level with a rider, and within that height there
are few places worth reaching that cannot be reached
more safely. People used to harness them to balloons
till we found means to drive these by electricity—­the
last great invention in the way of locomotion, which
I think was completed within my grandfather’s
memory.”

“And,” I asked, “have you no animals
employed in actually cultivating the soil?”

“No,” she replied, “except the weeding
birds of whom I have told you. When we have a
piece of ground too small for our electric ploughs,
we sometimes set them to break it up, and they certainly
reduce the soil to a powder much finer than that produced
by the machine.”

“I should like to see those machines at work.”

“Well,” answered Eveena, “I have
no doubt we shall pass more than one of them on our
way.”

**Page 88**

As she said this we reached the great road I had crossed
on my arrival, and turning up this for a short distance,
sufficient, however, to let me perceive that it led
to the seaport town of which I have spoken, we came
to a break in the central footpath, just wide enough
to allow us to pass. Looking back on this occasion,
I observed that we were followed by the two other
carriages I have mentioned, but at some distance.
We then proceeded up the mountain by a narrow road
I had not seen in descending it. On either side
of this lay fields of the kind already described,
one of which was in course of cultivation, and here
I saw the ploughs of which my companion had spoken.
Evidently constructed on the same principle as the
carriages, but of much greater size, and with heavier
and broader wheels, they tore up and broke to pieces
a breadth of soil of some two yards, working to a
depth of some eighteen inches, with a dozen sharp powerful
triangular shares, and proceeding at a rate of about
fifty yards per minute. Eveena explained that
these fields were generally from 200 to 600 yards
square. The machine having traversed the whole
field in one direction, then recommenced its work,
ploughing at right angles to the former, and carrying
behind it a sort of harrow, consisting of hooks supported
by light, hollow, metallic poles fixed at a certain
angle to the bar forming the rearward extremity of
the plough, by which the surface was levelled and
the soil beaten into small fragments; broken up, in
fact, as I had seen, not less completely than ordinary
garden soil in England or Flanders. When it reached
the end of its course, the plough had to be turned;
and this duty required the employment of two men,
one at each end of the field, who, however, had no
other or more difficult labour than that of turning
the machine at the completion of each set of furrows.
In another field, already doubly ploughed, a sowing
machine was at work. The large seeds were placed
singly by means of an instrument resembling a magnified
ovipositor, such as that possessed by many insects,
which at regulated intervals made a hole in the ground
and deposited a seed therein. Eveena explained
that where the seed and plant were small, a continuous
stream was poured into a small furrow made by a different
instrument attached to the same machine, while another
arm, placed a little to the rear, covered in the furrow
and smoothed the surface. In reply to another
question of mine—­“There are,”
she said, “some score of different wool or hair
bearing animals, which are shorn twice in the year,
immediately after the rains, and furnish the fibre
which is woven into most of the materials we use for
dress and other household purposes. These creatures
adapt themselves to the shearing machines with wonderful
equanimity and willingness, so that they are seldom
or never injured.”

“Not even,” I asked, “by inexperienced
or clumsy hands?”

“Hands,” she said, “have nothing
to do with the matter. They have only to send
the animal into the machine, and, indeed, each goes
in of his own accord as he sees his fellow come out.”

**Page 89**

“And have you no vegetable fibres,” I
said, “that are used for weaving?”

“Oh yes,” she answered, “several.
The outer dress I wear indoors is made of a fibre
found inside the rind of the fruit of the algyro tree,
and the stalks of three or four different kinds of
plants afford materials almost equally soft and fine.”

“And your cloak,” I asked, “is not
that made of the skin of some animal?”

“Yes,” she replied, “and the most
curious creature I have heard of. It is found
only in the northern and southern Arctic land-belts,
to which indeed nearly all wild animals, except the
few small ones that are encouraged because they prey
upon large and noxious insects, are now confined.
It is about as large as the Unicorns, and has, like
them, four limbs; but otherwise it more resembles
a bird. It has a bird’s long slight neck,
but a very small and not very bird-like head, with
a long horny snout, furnished with teeth, something
between a beak and a mouth. Its hind limbs are
those of a bird, except that they have more flesh
upon the lowest joints and are covered with this soft
down. Its front limbs, my father says, seem as
if nature had hesitated between wings and arms.
They have attached to them several long, sharp, featherless
quills starting from a shrivelled membrane, which make
them very powerful and formidable weapons, so that
no animal likes to attack it; while the foot has four
fingers or claws with, which it clasps fish or small
dragons, especially those electric dragons of which
you have seen a tame and very much enlarged specimen,
and so holds them that they cannot find a chance of
delivering their electric shock. But for the
*Thernee* these dragons, winged as they are, would
make those lands hardly habitable either for man, or
other beasts. All our furs are obtained from
those countries, and the creatures from which they
are derived are carefully preserved for that purpose,
it being forbidden to kill more than a certain number
of each every year, which makes these skins by far
the costliest articles we use.”

By this time we had reached the utmost point to which
the carriages could take us, about a furlong from
the platform on which I had rested during my descent.
Seeing that the Regent and his companion had dismounted,
I stopped and sprang down from my carriage, holding
out my hand to assist Eveena’s descent, an attention
which I thought seemed to surprise her. Up to
the platform the path was easy enough; after that
it became steep even for me, and certainly a troublesome
and difficult ascent for a lady dressed as I have
described, and hardly stronger than a child of the
same height and size on earth. Still my companion
did not seem to expect, and certainly did not invite
assistance. That she found no little difficulty
in the walk was evident from her turning back both
sleeves and releasing her bird, which hovered closely
round her. Very soon her embarrassments and stumbles
threatened such actual danger as overcame my fear of

**Page 90**

committing what, for aught I knew, might be an intrusion.
Catching her as she fell, and raising her by the left
hand, I held it fast in my own right, begging to be
permitted to assist her for the rest of the journey.
Her manner and the tone of her voice made it evident
that such an attention, if unusual, was not offensive;
but I observed that those who were following us looked
at us with some little surprise, and spoke together
in words which I could not catch, but the tone of
which was not exactly pleasant or complimentary.
The Regent, a few steps in advance of us, turned back
from time to time to ask me some trivial question.
At last we reached the summit, and here I released
my companion’s hand and stepped forward a pace
or two to point out to the Regent the external structure
of the Astronaut. I was near enough, of course,
to be heard by Eveena, and endeavoured to address my
explanations as much to her as to the authority to
whom I was required to render an account. But
from the moment that we had actually joined him she
withdrew from all part and all apparent interest in
the conversation. When our companions moved forward
to reach the entrance, which I had indicated, I again
offered my hand, saying, “I am afraid you will
find some little difficulty in getting into the vessel
by the window by which I got out.”

The Regent, however, had brought with him several
light metal poles, which I had not observed while
carried by his companion, but which being put together
formed a convenient ladder of adequate length.
He desired me to ascend first and cut the riband by
means of which the window had been sealed; the law
being so strict that even he would not violate the
symbol of private ownership which protected my vessel.
Having done this and opened the window, I sprang down,
and he, followed by his companion, ascended the ladder,
and resting himself upon the broad inner ledge of
the window—­which afforded a convenient
seat, since the crystal was but half the thickness
of the wall—­first took a long look all
round the interior, and then leaped down, followed
by his attendant. Eveena drew back, but was at
last persuaded to mount the ladder with my assistance,
and rest on the sill till I followed her and lifted
her down inside. The Regent had by this time
reached the machinery, and was examining it very curiously,
with greater apparent appreciation of its purpose
than I should have expected. When we joined them,
I found little difficulty in explaining the purpose
and working of most parts of the apparatus. The
nature and generation of the apergic power I took
care not to explain. The existence of such a
repulsive force was the point on which the Regent
professed incredulity; as it was, of course, the critical
fact on which my whole narrative turned—­on
which its truth or falsehood depended. I resolved
ere the close of the inspection to give him clear
practical evidence on this score. In the meantime,
listening without answer to his expressions of doubt,

**Page 91**

I followed him round the interior, explaining to him
and to Eveena the use and structure of the thermometer,
barycrite, and other instruments. My fair companion
seemed to follow my explanation almost as easily as
the officials. Our followers, who had now entered
the vessel, kept within hearing of my remarks; but,
evidently aware that they were there on sufferance,
asked no questions, and made their comments in a tone
too low to allow me to understand their purport.
The impression made on the Regent by the instruments,
so far as I could gather from his brief remarks and
the expression of his face, was one of contemptuous
surprise rather than the interest excited by the motive
machinery. Most of them were evidently, in his
opinion, clumsy contrivances for obtaining results
which the scientific knowledge and inventive genius
of his countrymen had long ago secured more completely
and more easily. But he was puzzled by the combination
of such imperfect knowledge or semi-barbaric ignorance
with the possession of a secret of such immense importance
as the repulsive current, not yet known nor, as I
gathered, even conceived by the inhabitants of this
planet. When he had completed his inspection,
he requested permission to remove some of the objects
I had left there; notably many of the dead plants,
and several books of drawings, mathematical, mechanical,
and ornamental, which I had left, and which had not
been brought away by my host’s son when he visited
the vessel. These I begged him to present to the
Campta, adding to them a few smaller curiosities, after
which I drew him back towards the machinery.
He summoned his attendant, and bade him take away
to the carriages the articles I had given him, calling
upon the intruders to assist.

I was thus left with him and with Eveena alone in
the building; and with a partly serious, partly mischievous
desire to prove to him the substantial reality of
objects so closely related to my own disputed existence,
and to demonstrate the truth of my story, I loosened
one of the conductors, connected it with the machinery,
and, directing it against him, sent through it a very
slight apergic current. I was not quite prepared
for the result. His Highness was instantly knocked
head over heels to a considerable distance. Turning
to interrupt the current before going to his assistance,
I was startled to perceive that an accident of graver
moment, in my estimation at least, than the discomfiture
of this exalted official, had resulted from my experiment.
I had not noticed that a conductive wire was accidentally
in contact with the apergion, while its end hung down
towards the floor Of this I suppose Eveena had carelessly
taken hold, and a part of the current passing through
it had lessened the shock to the Regent at the expense
of one which, though it could not possibly have injured
her, had from its suddenness so shaken her nerves as
to throw her into a momentary swoon. She was
recovering almost at soon as I reached her; and by

**Page 92**

the time her fellow-sufferer had picked himself up
in great disgust and astonishment, was partly aware
what had happened. She was, however; much more
anxious to excuse herself, in the manner of a frightened
child, for meddling with the machinery than to hear
my apologies for the accident. Noting her agitation,
and seeing that she was still trembling all over,
I was more anxious to get her into the open air, and
out of reach of the apparatus she seemed to regard
with considerable alarm, than to offer any due apology
to the exalted personage to whom I had afforded much
stronger evidence, if not of my own substantiality,
yet of the real existence of a repulsive energy, than
I had seriously intended. With a few hurried words
to him, I raised Eveena to the window, and lifted
her to the ground outside. I felt, however, that
I could not leave the Regent to find his own way out,
the more so that I hardly saw how he could reach the
window from the inside without my assistance.
I excused myself, therefore, and seating her on a
rock close to the ladder, promised to return at once.
This, however, I found impossible. By the time
the injured officer had recovered the physical shock
to his nerves and the moral effect of the disrespect
to his person, his anxiety to verify what he had heard
entirely occupied his mind; and he requested further
experiments, not upon himself, which occupied some
half-hour. He listened and spoke, I must admit,
with temper; but his air of displeasure was evident
enough, and I was aware that I had not entitled myself
to his good word, whether or not he would permit his
resentment to colour his account of facts. He
was compelled, however, to request my help in reaching
the window, which I gave with all possible deference.

But, to my alarm, when we reached the foot of the
ladder, Eveena was nowhere to be seen. Calling
her and receiving no reply, calling again and hearing
what sounded like her voice, but in a faint tone and
coming I knew not whither, I ran round the platform
to seek her. I could see nothing of her; but
at one point, just where the projecting edge of the
platform overhung the precipice below, I recognised
her bird fluttering its wings and screaming as if
in pain or terror. The Regent was calling me
in a somewhat imperious tone, but of course received
neither answer nor attention. Reaching the spot,
I looked over the edge and with some trouble discovered
what had happened. Not merely below but underneath
the overhanging edge was a shelf about four feet long
and some ten inches in breadth, covered with a flower
equally remarkable in form and colour, the former being
that of a hollow cylindrical bell, about two inches
in diameter; the latter a bluish lilac, the nearest
approach to azure I have seen in Mars—­the
whole ground one sheet of flowers. On this, holding
in a half-insensible state to the outward-sloping
rock above her, Eveena clung, her veil and head-dress
fallen, her face expressing utter bewilderment as

**Page 93**

well as terror. I saw, though at the moment I
hardly understood, how she had reached this point.
A very narrow path, some hundred feet in length, sloped
down from the table-rock of the summit to the shelf
on which she stood, with an outer hedge of shrubs and
the summits of small trees, which concealed, and in
some sort guarded, the precipice below, so that even
a timid girl might pursue the path without fear.
But this path ended several feet from the commencement
of the shelf. Across the gap had lain a fallen
tree, with boughs affording such a screen and railing
on the outward side as might at once conceal the gulf
below, and afford assistance in crossing the chasm.
But in crossing this tree Eveena’s footsteps
had displaced it, and it had so given way as not only
to be unavailable, but a serious obstacle to my passage.
Had I had time to go round, I might have been able
to leap the chasm; I certainly could not return that
way with a burden even so light as that of my precious
charge. The only chance was to lift her by main
force directly to where I stood; and the outward projection
of the rock at this point rendered this peculiarly
difficult, as I had nothing to cling or hold by.
The Regent had by this time reached me, and discerned
what had occurred.

“Hold me fast,” I said, “or sit
upon me if you like, to hold me with your weight whilst
I lean over.” The man stood astounded, not
by the danger of another but by the demand on himself;
and evidently without the slightest intention of complying.

“You are mad!” he said. “Your
chance is ten times greater to lose your own life
than to save hers.”

“Lose my life!” I cried. “Could
I dare return alive without her? Throw your whole
weight on me, I say, as I lean over, and waste no more
time!”

“What!” he rejoined. “You are
twice as heavy as I, and if you are pulled over I
shall probably go over too. Why am I to endanger
myself to save a girl from the consequences of her
folly?”

“If you do not,” I swore, “I will
fling you where the carcass of which you are so careful
shall be crushed out of the very form of the manhood
you disgrace.”

Even this threat failed to move him. Meantime
the bird, fluttering on my shoulder, suggested a last
chance; and snatching the tablet round its neck, I
wrote two words thereon, and calling to it, “Home!”
the intelligent creature flew off at fullest speed.

“Now,” I said, “if you do not help
me I will kill you here and now. If you pretend
to help and fail me, that bird carries to Esmo my request
to hold you answerable for our lives.”

I invoked, in utter desperation, the awe with which,
as his hints and my experience implied, Esmo was regarded
by his neighbours; and slender as seemed this support,
it did not fail me. The Regent’s countenance
fell, and I saw that I might depend at least on his
passive compliance. Clasping his arm with my left
hand, I said, “Pull back with all your might.
If I go over, you *shall* go over too.”
Then pulling him down with me, and stretching myself
over the precipice so far that but for this additional
support I must have fallen, I reached Eveena, whose
closed eyes and relaxing limbs indicated that another
moment’s delay might be fatal.

**Page 94**

“Give me your hand,” I cried in despair,
seeing how tightly she still grasped the tough fibrous
shoots growing in the crevices of the rock, whereof
she had taken hold. “Give me your hand,
and let go!”

To give me her hand was beyond the power of her will;
to let go without giving me hold would have been fatal.
Beaching over to the uttermost, I contrived to lay
a firm grasp upon her wrist. But this would not
do. I could hardly drag her up by one arm, especially
if she would not relax her grasp. I must release
the Regent and depend upon his obedience, or forfeit
the chance of saving her, as in a few more moments
she would certainly swoon and fall.

“Throw yourself upon me, and sit firm, if you
value your life,” I cried, and I relaxed my
hold on his arm, stretching both hands to grasp Eveena.
I felt the man’s weight on my body, and with
both arms extended to the uttermost hanging over the
edge, I caught firm bold of the girl’s shoulders.
Even now, with any girl of her age on earth, and for
aught I know with many Martial damsels, the case would
have been hopeless. My whole strength was required
to raise her; I had none to spare to force her loose
from her hold. Fortunately my rough and tight
clasp seemed to rouse her. Her eyes half opened,
and semi-consciousness appeared to have returned.

“Let go!” I cried in that sharp tone of
imperious anger which—­with some tempers
at least—­is the natural expression of the
outward impulse produced by supreme and agonizing
terror. Obedience is the hereditary lesson taught
to her sex by the effects of equality in Mars.
Eveena had been personally trained in a principle long
discarded by Terrestrial women; and not half aware
what she did, but yielding instinctively to the habit
of compliance with imperative command spoken in a
masculine voice, she opened her hands just as I had
lost all hope. With one desperate effort I swung
her fairly on to the platform, and, seeing her safe
there, fell back myself scarcely more sensible than
she was.

The whole of this terrible scene, which it has taken
so long to relate, did not occupy more than a minute
in action. I know not whether my readers can
understand the full difficulty and danger of the situation.
I know that no words of mine can convey the impression
graven into my own memory, never to be effaced or weakened
while consciousness remains. The strongest man
on Earth could not have done what I did; could not,
lying half over the precipice, have swung a girl of
eighteen right out from underneath him, and to his
own level. But Eveena was of slighter, smaller
frame than a healthy French girl of twelve, while
I retained the full strength of a man adapted to the
work of a world where every weight is twice as heavy
as on Mars. What I had practically to do was
to lift not seven or eight stone of European girlhood,
not even the six Eveena might possibly have weighed
on Earth, but half that weight. And yet the position
was such that all the strength I had acquired through
ten years of constant practice in the field and in
the chase, all the power of a frame in healthful maturity,
and of muscles whose force seemed doubled by the tension
of the nerves, hardly availed. When I recovered
my own senses, and had contrived to restore Eveena’s,
my unwilling assistant had disappeared.

**Page 95**

It was an hour before Eveena seemed in a condition
to be removed, and perhaps I was not very urgent to
hurry her away. I had done no more than any man,
the lowest and meanest on Earth, must have done under
the circumstances. I can scarcely enter into the
feelings of the fellow-man who, in my position, could
have recognised a choice but between saving and perishing
with the helpless creature entrusted to his charge.
But hereditary disbelief in any power above the physical
forces of Nature, in any law higher than that of man’s
own making, has rendered human nature in Mars something
utterly different from, perhaps, hardly intelligible
to, the human nature of a planet forty million miles
nearer the Sun. Though brought up in an affectionate
home, Eveena shared the ideas of the world in which
she was born; and so far accepted its standards of
opinion and action as natural if not right, that the
risk I had run, the effort I had made to save her,
seemed to her scarcely less extraordinary than it had
appeared to the Zampta. She rated its devotion
and generosity as highly as he appreciated its extravagance
and folly; and if he counted me a madman, she was
disposed to elevate me into a hero or a demi-god.
The tones and looks of a maiden in such a temper,
however perfect her maidenly reserve, would, I fancy,
be very agreeable to men older than I was, either
in constitution or even in experience. I doubt
whether any man under fifty would have been more anxious
than myself to cut short our period of repose, broken
as it was, when I refused to listen to her tearful
penitence and self-reproach, by occasional words and
looks of gratitude and admiration. I did, however,
remember that it was expedient to refasten the window,
and re-attach the seals, before departing. At
the end of the hour’s rest I allowed my charge
and myself, I had recovered more or less completely
the nervous force which had been for a while utterly
exhausted, less by the effort than by the terror that
preceded it. I was neither surprised, nor perhaps
as much grieved as I should have been, to find that
Eveena could hardly walk; and felt to the full the
value of those novel conditions which enabled me to
carry her the more easily in my arms, though much
oppressed even by so slight an effort in that thin
air, to the place where we had left our carriage—­no
inconsiderable distance by the path we had to pursue.
Before starting on our return I had, in despite of
her most earnest entreaties, managed to recover her
head-dress and veil, at a risk which, under other
circumstances, I might not have cared to encounter.
But had she been seen without it on our return, the
comments of the whole neighbourhood would have been
such as might have disturbed even her father’s
cool indifference. We reached her home in safety,
and with little notice, having, of course, drawn the
canopy around us as completely as possible. I
was pleased to find that only her younger sister,
to whose care I at once committed her, was there at
present, the elders not having yet returned. I
took care to detach from the bird’s neck the
tablet which had served its purpose so well.
The creature had found his way home within half-an-hour
after I dismissed him, and had frightened Zevle [Stella]
not a little; though the message, which a fatal result
would have made sufficiently intelligible to Esmo,
utterly escaped her comprehension.

**Page 96**

**CHAPTER VIII — A FAITH AND ITS FOUNDER.**

On the return of the family, my host was met at the
door with such accounts of what had happened as led
him at once to see and question his daughter.
It was not, therefore, till he had heard her story
that I saw him. More agitated than I should have
expected from one under ordinary circumstances so
calm and self-possessed, he entered my room with a
face whose paleness and compressed lips indicated intense
emotion; and, laying his hand on my shoulder, expressed
his feeling rather in look and tone than in his few
broken and not very significant words. After
a few moments, however, he recovered his coolness,
and asked me to supply the deficiencies of Eveena’s
story. I told him briefly but exactly what had
passed from the moment when I missed her to that of
her rescue. He listened without the slightest
symptom of surprise or anger to the tale of the Regent’s
indifference, and seemed hardly to understand the
disgust and indignation with which I dwelt upon it.
When I had finished—­

“You have made,” he said, “an enemy,
and a dangerous one; but you have also secured friends
against whose support even the anger of a greater
than the Zampta might break as harmlessly as waves
upon a rock. He behaved only as any one else
would have done; and it is useless to be angry with
men for being what they habitually and universally
are. What you did for Eveena, one of ourselves,
perhaps, but no other, might have risked for a first
bride on the first day of her marriage. Indeed,
though I am most thankful to you, I should, perhaps,
have withheld my consent to my daughter’s request
had I supposed that you felt so strongly for her.”

“I think,” I replied with some displeasure,
“that I may positively affirm that I have spoken
no word to your daughter which I should not have spoken
in your presence. I am too unfamiliar with your
ideas to know whether your remark has the same force
and meaning it would have borne among my own people;
but to me it conveys a grave reproach. When I
accepted the charge of your daughter during this day’s
excursion, I thought of her only as every man thinks
of a young, pretty, and gentle girl of whom he has
seen and knows scarcely anything. To avail myself
of what has since happened to make a deeper impression
on her feelings than you might approve would have
seemed to me unpardonable treachery.”

“You do utterly misunderstand me,” he
answered. “It may be that Eveena has received
an impression which will not be effaced from her mind.
It may be that this morning, could I have foreseen
it, I should have decidedly wished to avoid anything
that would so impress her. But that feeling,
if it exist, has been caused by your acts and not by
your words. That you should do your utmost, at
any risk to yourself, to save her, is consistent with
what I know of your habit of mind, and ought not much
to surprise me. But, from your own account of
what you said to the Zampta, you were not merely willing
to risk life for life. When you deemed it impossible
to return without her, you spoke as few among us would
seriously speak of a favourite bride.”

**Page 97**

“I spoke and felt,” I replied, “as
any man trained in the hereditary thought of my race
and rank would have spoken of any woman committed
to his care. All that I said and did for Eveena,
I should have said and done, I hope, for the least
attractive or least amiable maiden in this planet
who had been similarly entrusted to my charge.
How could any but the vilest coward return and say
to a father, ’You trusted your daughter to me,
and she has perished by my fault or neglect’?”

“Not so,” he answered, “Eveena alone
was to blame—­and much to blame. She
says herself that you had told her to remain where
you left her till your return; and if she had not
disobeyed, neither her life nor yours would have been
imperilled.”

“One hardly expects a young lady to comply exactly
with such requests,” I said. “At
any rate, Terrestrial feelings of honour and even
of manhood would have made it easier to leap the precipice
than to face you and the world if, no matter by whose
fault, my charge had died in such a manner under my
eyes and within my reach.”

Esmo’s eyes brightened and his cheek flushed
a little as I spoke, with more of earnestness or passion
than any incident, however exciting, is wont to provoke
among his impassive race.

“Of one thing,” he said, “you have
assured me—­that the proposal I was about
to make rather invites honour than confers it.
I have been obliged, in speaking of the manners and
ideas of my countrymen, to let you perceive not only
that I differ from them, but that there are others
who think and act as I do. We have for ages formed
a society bound together by our peculiar tenets.
That we individually differ in conduct, and, therefore,
probably in ideas, from our countrymen, they necessarily
know; that we form a body apart with laws and tenets
of our own, is at least suspected. But our organisation,
its powers, its methods, its rules of membership,
and its doctrines are, and have always been, a secret,
and no man’s connection with it is avowed or
provable. Our chief distinctive and essential
doctrines you hold as strongly as we do—­the
All-perfect Existence, the immortal human soul.
From these necessarily follow conceptions of life and
principles of conduct alien to those that have as
necessarily grown up among a race which repudiates,
ignores, and hates our two fundamental premises.
After what has happened, I can promise you immediate
and eager acceptance among those invested with the
fullest privileges of our order. They will all
admire your action and applaud your motives, though,
frankly speaking, I doubt whether any of us would carry
your views so far as you have done. The best
among us would have flinched, unless under the influence
of the very strongest personal affection, from the
double peril of which you seemed to think so lightly.
They might indeed have defied the Regent but it would
have been in reliance on the protection of, a power
superior to his of which you knew nothing.”

**Page 98**

“Then,” I said, “I suppose your
engagement of to-day was a meeting of this society?”

“Yes,” he answered, “a meeting of
the Chamber to which I and the elder members of my
household, including my son and his wife, belong.”
“But,” I said, “if you are more powerful
than the rulers of your people, what need of such
careful secrecy?”

“You will understand the reason,” he answered,
“when you learn the nature of our powers.
Hundreds among millions, we are no match for the fighting
force of our unbelieving countrymen. Our safety
lies in the terror inspired by a tradition, verified
by repeated and invariable experience, that no one
who injures one of us but has reason to rue it, that
no mortal enemy of *the Star* has ever escaped
signal punishment, more terrible for the mystery attending
it. Were we known, were our organisation avowed,
we might be hunted down and exterminated, and should
certainly suffer frightful havoc, even if in the end
we were able to frighten or overcome our enemies.
But if you are disposed to accept my offer—­and
enrolment among us gives you at once your natural
place in this planet and your best security against
the enmity you have incurred and will incur here—­I
should prefer to make the rest of the explanation
that must precede your admission in presence of my
family. The first step, the preliminary instruction
in our creed and our simpler mysteries, which is the
work of the Novitiate, is a solemn epoch in the lives
of our children. They are not trusted with our
secret till we can rely on the maturity of their intelligence
and loyalty of their nature. Eveena would in any
case have been received as a novice within some dozen
days. It will now be easy for me, considering
her education and intelligence and my own position
in the Order, to obtain, for her as for you, exemption
from the usual probation on proof that you both know
all that is usually taught therein, and admission
on the same occasion; and it will add solemnity and
interest to her first initiation, that this chief lesson
of her life should be shared this evening with him
to whom she owes it that she lives to enter the society,
to which her ancestors have belonged since its institution.”

We passed into the peristyle, where the ladies were
as usual assembled; but the children had been dismissed,
and of the maidens Eveena only was present. Fatigue
and agitation had left her very pale, and she was
resting at full length on the cushions with her head
pillowed on her mother’s knee. As we approached,
however, they all rose, the other ladies greeting
me eagerly and warmly, Eveena rising with difficulty
and faltering the welcome which the rest had spoken
with enthusiastic earnestness. Forgetting for
the moment the prudence which ignorance of Martial
customs had hitherto dictated, I lifted to my lips
the hand that she, following the example of the rest,
but shyly and half reluctantly, laid on my shoulder—­a
form very different to the distant greeting I had

**Page 99**

heretofore received, and marking that I was no longer
to be treated as a stranger to the family. My
unusual salute brought the colour back to her cheeks,
but no one else took notice of it. I observed,
however, that on this occasion, instead of interposing
himself between me and the ladies as usual, her father
left vacant the place next to her; and I seated myself
at her feet. She would have exchanged her reclining
posture for that of the others, but her mother gently
drew her down to her former position.

“Eveena,” said my host, “I have
told our friend, what you know, that there is in this
world a society, of which I am a member, whose principles
are not those of our countrymen, but resemble rather
those which supplied the impulses on which he acted
to-day. This much you know. What you would
have learned a few days hence, I mean that you and
he shall now hear at the same time.”

“Before you enter on that subject,” interposed
Zulve timidly—­for it is most unusual for
a lady to interfere in her husband’s conversation,
much more to offer a suggestion or correction—­but
yet earnestly, “let me say, on my own part,
what I am sure you must have said already on yours.
If there be now, or ever shall be, anything we can
do for our guest, anything we can give that he would
value, not in requital, but in memory of what he has
done for us—­whatever it should cost us,
though he should ask the most precious thing we possess,
it will be our pride and pleasure—­the greatest
pleasure he can afford us—­to grant it.”

The time and the surroundings were not perhaps exactly
suitable to the utterance of the wish suggested by
these words; but I knew so little what might be in
store for me, and understood so well the difficulty
and uncertainty of finding future opportunities of
intercourse with the ladies at least of the family,
that I dared not lose the present. I spoke at
once upon the impulse of the moment, with a sense of
reckless desperation not unlike that with which an
artillerist fires the train whose explosion may win
for him the obsidional wreath or blow him into atoms.
“You and my host,” I said, “have
one treasure that I have learned to covet, but it
is exactly the most precious thing you possess, and
one which it would be presumptuous to ask as reward;
even had I not owed to Esmo the life I perilled for
Eveena, and if I had acted from choice and freely,
instead of doing only what only the vilest of cowards
could have failed to attempt. In asking it indeed,
I feel that I cancel whatever claim your extravagant
estimate of that act can possibly ascribe to me.”

“We don’t waste words,” answered
Esmo, “in saying what we don’t mean, and
I confirm fully what my wife has said. There is
nothing we possess that we shall not delight to give
as token of regard and in remembrance of this day
to the saviour of our child.”

“If,” I said, “I find a neighbour’s
purse containing half his fortune, and return it to
him, he may offer me what reward I ask, but would
hardly think it reasonable if I asked for the purse
and its contents. But you have only one thing
I care to possess—­that which I have, by
God’s help, been enabled to save to-day.
If I must ask a gift, give me Eveena herself.”

**Page 100**

Utilitarianism has extinguished in Mars the use of
compliment and circumlocution; and until I concluded,
their looks of mild perplexity showed that neither
Zulve nor her husband caught my purpose. I fancied—­for,
not daring to look them in the face, I had turned my
downcast glance on Eveena—­that she had perhaps
somewhat sooner divined the object of my thoughts.
However, a silence of surprise—­was it of
reluctance?—­followed, and then Zulve bent
over her daughter and looked into her half-averted
face, while Esmo answered—­

“What you should ask I promised to give; what
you have asked I give, in so far as it is mine to
give, in willing fulfilment of my pledge. But,
of course, what I can give is but my free permission
to my daughter to answer for herself. You will
be, I hope, within a few days at furthest, one of
those in whose possession alone a woman of my house
could be safe or content; and, free by the law of the
land to follow her own wish, she is freed by her father’s
voice from the rule which the usage of ten thousand
years imposes on the daughters of our brotherhood.”

Zulve then looked up, for Eveena had hidden her face
in her mother’s robe, and said—­

“If my child will not speak for herself I must
speak for her, and in my own name and in hers I fulfil
her father’s promise. And now let my husband
tell his story, for nothing can solemnise more appropriately
the betrothal of a daughter of the Star, than her admission
to the knowledge of the Order whose privileges are
her heritage.”

“At the time,” Esmo began, “when
material science had gained a decided ascendant, and
enforced the recognition of its methods as the only
ones whereby certain knowledge and legitimate belief
could be attained, those who clung most earnestly
to convictions not acquired or favoured by scientific
logic were sorely dismayed. They were confounded,
not so much by the yet informal but irrevocable majority-vote
against them, as by an instinctive misgiving that
Science was right; and by irrepressible doubts whether
that which would not bear the application of scientific
method could in any sense be true or trustworthy knowledge.
At the same time, to apply a scientific method to
the cherished beliefs threatened only to dissolve
them. Fortunately for them and their successors,
there was living at that time one of the most remarkable
and original thinkers whom our race has produced.
From him came the suggestions that gave impulse to
our learning and birth to our Order. ’The
reasonings, the processes of Science,’ he affirmed,’are
beyond challenge. Their trustworthiness depends
not on their subject-matter, but on their own character;
not on their relation to outward Nature, but on their
conformity to the laws of thought. Their upholders
are right in affirming that what will not ultimately
bear the test of their application cannot be knowledge,
and probably—­for the practical purposes
of human life we may say certainly—­cannot

**Page 101**

be truth. They are wrong in alleging that the
ideas for which they can find no foundation in the
subjects to which scientific method has hitherto been
applied, are therefore unscientific, or sure to disappear
under scientific investigation. I hold that the
existence of a Creator and Ruler of the Universe can
be logically deduced from first principles, as well
as justly inferred from cumulative evidences of overwhelming
weight. The existence of something in Man that
is not merely corporeal, of powers that can act beyond
the reach of any corporeal instruments at his command,
or without the range of their application, is not
proven; it may be, only because the facts that indicate
without proving it have never yet been subject to
systematic verification or scientific analysis.
But of such facts there exists a vast accumulation;
unsifted, untested, and therefore as yet ineffective
for proof, but capable, I can scarcely doubt, of reduction
to methodical order and scientific treatment.
There are records and traditions of every degree of
value, from utter worthlessness to the worth of the
most authentic history, preserving the evidences of
powers which may be generally described as spiritual.
Through all ages, among all races, the living have
alleged themselves from time to time to have seen
the forms and even heard the voices of the dead.
Scientific men have been forced by the actual and public
exercise of the power under the most crucial tests—­for
instance, to produce insensibility in surgical operations—­to
admit that the will of one man can control the brain,
the senses, the physical frame of another without
material contact, perhaps at a distance. There
are narratives of marvels wrought by human will, chiefly
in remote, but occasionally in recent times, transcending
and even contradicting or overruling the known laws
of Nature. All these evidences point to one conclusion;
all corroborate and confirm one another. The men
of science ridicule them because in so many cases
the facts are imperfectly authenticated, and because
in others the action of the powers is uncertain, dependent
on conditions imperfectly ascertained, and not of
that material kind to which material science willingly
submits. But if they be facts, if they relate
to any element of human nature, all these things can
be systematically investigated, the true separated
from the false, the proven from the unproven.
The powers can be investigated, their conditions of
action laid down. Probably they may be so developed
as to be exercised with comparative certainty, whether
by every one or only by those special constitutions
in which they may inhere. Such investigations
will at present only enlist the attention and care
of a few qualified persons, and, that they may be
carried on in peace and safety, should be carried on
in secrecy. But upon them may, I hope, be founded
a certainty as regards the higher side of man’s
nature not less complete than that which science, by
similar methods, has gradually acquired in regard to
its purely physical aspects.’

**Page 102**

“For this end he instituted a secret society,
which has subsisted in constantly increasing strength
and cohesion to the present hour. It has collected
evidence, conducted experiments, investigated records,
studied methodically the abnormal phenomena you call
occult or spiritual, and reduced them to something
like the certainty of science. Discoveries from
the first curious and interesting have become more
and more complete, practical, and effective. Our
results have surpassed the hopes of our Founder, and
transcend in importance, while they equal in certainty,
the contemporary achievements of physical science,—­some
of the chief of which belong to us. All that
profound knowledge of human nature could suggest to
bring its weakness to the support of its strength,
and enlist both in the work, was done by our Founder,
and by those who have carried out his scheme.
The corporate character of the society, its rites
and formularies, its grades and ranks, are matter
of deep interest to all its members, have linked them
together by an inviolable bond, and given them a strength
infinitely greater than numbers without such cohesion
could possibly have afforded. The Founder left
us no moral code, imposed on us none of his own most
cherished ethical convictions, as he pledged us to
none of the conclusions which his own occult studies
had led him to anticipate, nearly all of which have
been verified by later investigation. Such rules
as he imposed were directed only to the cohesion and
efficiency of the Order. Our creed still consists
only of the two fundamental doctrines; two settled
principles only are laid down by our aboriginal law.
We are taught to cultivate the closest personal affection,
the most intimate and binding ties among ourselves;
to defend the Order and one another, whether by strenuous
resistance or severe reprisals, against all who injure
us individually or collectively, and especially against
persecutors of the Order. But the few laws our
Founder has left are given in the form of striking
precepts, brief, and often even paradoxical. For
example, the law of defence or reprisal is concentrated
in one antithetic phrase:—­*Gavart dax
Zvelta, gavart gedex Zinta* [Never let the member
strike, never let the Order spare]. As it is
a rule with us to embody none of our symbols, forms,
or laws in writing, this manner of statement served
to impress them on the memory, as well as to leave
the utmost freedom in their application, by the gathered
experience of ages, and the prudence of those who
had to deal with the circumstances of each successive
period. Another maxim says, ’Who kisses
a brother’s hand may kick the Campta,’
thus enforcing at once the value of ceremonial courtesy,
and the power conferred by union. We observe more
ceremony in family life than others in the most formal
public relations. Their theory of life being
utterly utilitarian, no form is observed that serves
no distinct practical purpose. We wish to make
life graceful and elegant, as well as easy. Principles

**Page 103**

originally inculcated upon us by the necessity of
self-protection have been enforced and graven on our
very nature, by the reaction of our experience against
the rough and harsh relations, the jarring and often
unfriendly intercourse, of external society.
Aliens to our Order—­that is, ninety-nine
hundredths of our race—­take delight in
the infliction of petty personal annoyance, at least
never take care not to ’jar each other’s
elbow-nerves,’ or set on edge the teeth that
never bit them. *We* are careful not to wound
the feelings or even the weaknesses of a brother.
Punctilious courtesy, frank apology for unintentional
wrong, is with us a point of honour. Disputes,
when by any chance they arise, are referred to the
arbitration of our chiefs, who never consider their
work done till the disputants are cordially reconciled.
Envy, the most dangerous source of ill-will among
men, can hardly exist among us. Rank has been
well earned by its holder, or in a few cases by his
ancestors; and authority is a trust never to be used
for its holder’s benefit. Wealth never
provokes covetousness, since no member is ever allowed
to be poor. Not only the Order but each member
is bound to take every opportunity of assisting every
other by every method within his power. We employ
them, we promote them, we give them the preference
in every kind of patronage at our command. But
these obligations are points of honour rather than
of law. Only apostasy or treason to the Order
involve compulsory penalties; and the latter, if it
ever occurred in these days, would be visited with
instant death,—­inflicted, as it is inflicted
upon irreconcilable enemies, in such a manner that
none could know who passed the sentence, or by whom
it was executed.”

“And have you,” I asked, “no apostates,
as you have no traitors?”

“No,” he said. “In the first
place, none who has lived among us could endure to
fall into the ordinary Martial life. Secondly,
the foundations of our simple creed are so clear,
so capable of being made apparent to every one, that
none once familiar with the evidences can well cease
to believe them.”

Here he paused, and I asked, “How is it possible
that the means you employ to punish those who have
wronged you should not, in some cases at least, indicate
the person who has employed them?”

“Because,” he said, “the means of
vengeance are not corporeal; the agency does not in
the least resemble any with which our countrymen,
or apparently your race on Earth, are acquainted.
A traitor would be found dead with no sign of suffering
or injury, and the physician would pronounce that
he had died of apoplexy or heart disease. A persecutor,
or one who had unpardonably wronged any of the Children
of the Star, might go mad, might fling himself from
a precipice, might be visited with the most terrible
series of calamities, all natural in their character,
all distinctly traceable to natural causes, but astonishing
and even apparently supernatural in their accumulation,
and often in their immediate appropriateness to the
character of his offence. Our neighbours would,
of course, destroy the avenger, if they could find
him out—­would attempt to exterminate our
society, could they prove its agency.”

**Page 104**

“But surely your countrymen must either disbelieve
in such agency, in which case they can hardly fear
your vengeance, or they must believe it, and then
would deem it just and necessary to retaliate.”

“No,” he said. “They disbelieve
in the possibility while they are forced to see the
fact. It is impossible, they would say, that a
man should be injured in mind or body, reputation
or estate, that the forces of Nature or the feelings
of men should be directed against him, without the
intervention of any material agent, by the mere will
of those who take no traceable means to give that will
effect. At the same time, tradition and even
authentic history record, what experience confirms,
that every one who has wronged us deeply has come
to some terrible, awe-striking end. Each man would
ridicule heartily a neighbour who should allege such
a ground for fearing to injure one of us; but there
is none who is so true to his own unbelief as to do
that which, in every instance, has been followed by
signal and awful disaster. Moreover, we do by
visible symbols suggest a relation between the vengeance
and the crime. Over the heart of criminals who
have paid with their lives, no matter by what immediate
agency, for wrong to us, is found after death the
image of a small blood-red star; the only case in
which any of our sacred symbols are exposed to profane
eyes.”

“Surely,” I said, “in the course
of generations, and with your numbers, you must be
often watched and traced; and some one spy, on one
out of a million occasions, must have found access
to your meetings and heard and seen all that passed.”

“Our meetings,” he said, “are held
where no human eye can possibly see, no human ear
hear what passes. The Chambers meet in apartments
concealed within the dwellings of individual members.
When we meet the doors are guarded, and can be passed
only by those who give a token and a password.
And if these could become known to an enemy, the appearance
of a stranger would lead to questions that would at
once expose his ignorance of our simplest secrets.
He would learn nothing, and would never tell his story
to the outer world.” ...

Opening the door, or rather window, of his private
chamber, Esmo directed our eyes to a portrait sunk
in the wall, and usually concealed by a screen which
fitted exactly the level and the patterns of the general
surface. It displayed, in a green vesture not
unlike his own, but with a gold ribbon and emerald
symbol like the cross of an European knighthood over
the right shoulder, a spare soldierly form, with the
most striking countenance I have ever seen; one which,
once seen, none could forget. The white long hair
and beard, the former reaching the shoulders, the
latter falling to the belt, were not only unlike the
fashion of this generation, but gave tokens of age
never discerned in Mars for the last three or four
thousand years. The form, though erect and even
stately, was that of one who had felt the long since

**Page 105**

abolished infirmity of advancing years. The countenance
alone bore no marks of old age. It was full, unwrinkled,
firm in physical as in moral character; calm in the
unresisted power of intellect and will over the passions,
serene in a dignity too absolute and self-contained
for pride, but expressing a consciousness of command
over others as evident as the unconscious, effortless
command of self to which it owed its supreme and sublime
quietude. The lips were not set as with a habit
of reserve or self-restraint, but close and even as
in the repose to which restraint had never been necessary.
The features were large, clearly defined, and perfect
in shape, proportion, and outline. The brow was
massive and broad, but strangely smooth and even;
the head had no single marked development or deficiency
that could have enlightened a phrenologist, as the
face told no tale that a physiognomist could read.
The dark deep eyes were unescapable; while in presence
of the portrait you could not for a moment avoid or
forget their living, fixed, direct look into your own.
Even in the painted representation of that gaze, almost
too calm in its absolute mastery to be called searching
or scrutinising, yet seeming to look through the eyes
into the soul, there was an almost mesmeric influence;
as if, across the abyss of ten thousand years, the
Master could still control the wills and draw forth
the inner thoughts of the living, as he had dominated
the spirits of their remotest ancestors.

**CHAPTER IX — MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.**

Next morning Esmo asked me to accompany him on a visit
to the seaport I have mentioned. In the course
of this journey I had opportunities of learning many
things respecting the social and practical conditions
of human life and industry on Mars that had hitherto
been unknown to me, and to appreciate the enormous
advance in material civilisation which has accompanied
what seems to me, as it would probably seem to any
other Earth-dweller, a terrible moral degeneration.
Most of these things I learned partly from my own
observation, partly from the explanations of my companion;
some exclusively from what he told me. We passed
a house in process of building, and here I learned
the manner in which the wonders of domestic architecture,
which had so surprised me by their perfection and
beauty, are accomplished. The material employed
in all buildings is originally liquid, or rather viscous.
In the first place, the foundation is excavated to
a depth of two or three feet, the ground beaten hard,
and the liquid concrete poured into the level tank
thus formed. When this has hardened sufficiently
to admit of their erection, thin frames of metal are
erected, enclosing the spaces to be occupied by the
several outer and interior walls.

**Page 106**

These spaces are filled with the concrete at a temperature
of about 80 deg. C. The tracery and the bas-reliefs
impressed on the walls are obtained by means of patterns
embossed or marked upon thinner sheets placed inside
the metallic frames. The hardening is effected
partly by sudden cooling, partly by the application
of electricity under great hydraulic pressure.
The flat roof is constructed in the same manner, the
whole mass, when the fluid concrete is solidified,
being simply one continuous stone, as hard and cohesive
as granite. Where a flat roof would be liable
to give way or break from its own weight, the arch
or dome is employed to give the required strength,
and consequently all the largest Martial buildings
are constructed in the form of vaults or domes.
As regards the form of the building, individual or
public taste is absolutely free, it being just as easy
to construct a circular or octagonal as a rectangular
house or chamber; but the latter form is almost exclusively
employed for private dwellings. The jewel-like
lustre and brilliancy I have described are given to
the surfaces of the walls by the simultaneous action
of cold, electricity, and pressure, the principle of
which Esmo could not so explain as to render it intelligible
to me. Almost the whole physical labour is done
by machinery, from the digging and mixing of the materials
to their conveyance and delivery into the place prepared
for them by the erection of the metallic frames, and
from the erection to the removal of the latter.
The translucent material for the windows I have described
is prepared by a separate process, and in distinct
factories, and, ready hardened and cut into sheets
of the required size, is brought to the building and
fixed in its place by machinery. It can be tinted
to the taste of the purchaser; but, as a rule, a tintless
crystal is preferred. The entire work of building
a large house, from the foundation to the finishing
and removal of the metallic frames, occupies from half-a-dozen
to eighteen workmen from four to eight days.
This, like most other labour in Mars, goes on continuously;
the electric lamps, raised to a great height on hollow
metallic poles, affording by night a very sufficient
substitute for the light of the sun. All work
is done by three relays of artisans; the first set
working from noon till evening, the next from evening
till morning, and the third from morning to noon.
The Martial day, which consists of about twenty-four
hours forty minutes of our time, is divided in a somewhat
peculiar manner. The two-hour periods, of which
“mean” sunrise and sunset are severally
the middle points, are respectively called the morning
and evening *zydau*. Two periods of the
same length before and after noon and midnight are
distinguished as the first and second dark, the first
and second mid-day zyda. There remain four intervals
of three hours each, popularly described as the sleeping,
waking, after-sunrise, and fore-sunset zyda respectively.

**Page 107**

This is the popular reckoning, and that marked upon
the instruments which record time for ordinary purposes,
and by these the meals and other industrial and domestic
epochs are fixed. But for purposes of exact calculation,
the day, beginning an hour before mean sunrise, is
distributed into twelve periods, or antoi, of a little
more than two terrestrial hours each. These again
are subdivided by twelve into periods of a little more
than 10m., 50s., 2-1/2s., and 5/24s respectively;
but of these the second and last are alone employed
in common speech. The uniform employment of twelve
as the divisor and multiplier in tables of weight,
distance, time, and space, as well as in arithmetical
notation, has all the conveniences of the decimal
system of France, and some others besides due to the
greater convenience of twelve as a base. But as
regards the larger divisions of time, the Martials
are placed at a great disadvantage by the absence
of any such intermediate divisions as the Moon has
suggested to Terrestrials. The revolutions of
the satellites are too rapid and their periods too
brief to be of service in dividing their year of 668-2/3
solar days. Martial civilisation having taken
its rise within the tropics—­indeed the equatorial
continents, which only here and there extend far into
the temperate zone, and two minor continents in the
southern ocean, are the only well-peopled portions
of the planet—­the demarcation of the seasons
afforded by the solstices have been comparatively
disregarded. The year is divided into winter
and summer, each beginning with the Equinox, and distinguished
as the North and South summer respectively. But
these being exceedingly different in duration—­the
Northern half of the planet having a summer exceeding
by seventy-six days that of the Southern hemisphere—­are
of no use as accurate divisions of time. Time
is reckoned, accordingly, from the first day of the
year; the 669th day being incomplete, and the new
year beginning at the moment of the Equinox with the
0th day. In remote ages the lapse of time was
marked by festivals and holidays occurring at fixed
periods; but the principle of utility has long since
abolished all anniversaries, except those fixed by
Nature, and these pass without public observance and
almost without notice.

The climate is comparatively equable in the Northern
hemisphere, the summer of the South being hotter and
the winter colder, as the planet is much nearer the
Sun during the former. On an average, the solar
disc seems about half as large as to eyes on Earth;
but the continents lying in a belt around the middle
of the planet, nearly the whole of its population
enjoy the advantages of tropical regularity. There
are two brief rainy seasons on the Equator and in
its neighbourhood, and one at each of the tropics.
Outside these the cold of winter is aggravated by
cloud and mist. The barometer records from 20
inches to 21 inches at the sea-level. Storms
are slight, brief, and infrequent; the tides are insignificant;

**Page 108**

and sea-voyages were safe and easy even before Martial
ingenuity devised vessels which are almost independent
of weather. During the greater part of the year
a clear sky from the morning to the evening zyda may
be reckoned upon with almost absolute confidence.
A heavy dew, thoroughly watering the whole surface,
rendering the rarity of rain no inconvenience to agriculture,
falls during the earlier hours of the night, which
nevertheless remains cloudy; while the periods of
sunset and sunrise are, as I have already said, marked
almost invariably by dense mist, extending from one
to four thousand feet above the sea-level, according
to latitude and season. From the dissipation
of the morning to the fall of the evening mist, the
tropical temperature ranges, according to the time
of the day and year, from 24 deg. to 35 deg.
C. A very sudden change takes place at sunset.
Except within 28 deg. of the Equator, night frosts
prevail during no small part of the year. Fine
nights are at all times chilly, and men employed out
of doors from the fall of the evening to the dispersal
of the morning mists rely on an unusually warm under-dress
of soft leather, as flexible as kid, but thicker, which
is said to keep in the warmth of the body far better
than any woven material. Women who, from whatever
reason, venture out at night, wear the warmest cloaks
they can procure. Those of limited means wear
a loosely woven hair or woollen over-robe in lieu
of their usual outdoor garment, resembling tufted
cotton. Those who can afford them substitute
for the envelope of down, described a while back, warm
skin or fur overgarments, obtained from the sub-arctic
lands and seas, and furnished sometimes by a creature
not very unlike our Polar bear, but passing half his
time in the water and living on fish; sometimes by
a mammal more resembling something intermediate between
the mammoth and the walrus, with the habits of the
hippopotamus and a fur not unlike the sealskin so
much affected in Europe.

Outside the city, at a distance protecting it from
any unpleasant vapours, which besides were carried
up metallic tubes of enormous height, were several
factories of great extent, some chemical, some textile,
others reducing from their ores, purifying, forging,
and producing in bulk and forms convenient for their
various uses, the numerous metals employed in Mars.
The most important of these—­*zorinta*—­is
obtained from a tenacious soil much resembling our
own clay. [12] It is far lighter than tin, has the
colour and lustre of silver, and never tarnishes,
the only rust produced by oxidation of its surface
being a white loose powder, which can be brushed or
shaken off without difficulty. Of this nearly
all Martial utensils and furniture are constructed;
and its susceptibility to the electric current renders
it especially useful for mechanical purposes, electricity
supplying the chief if not the sole motive-power employed
in Martial industry. The largest factories, however,

**Page 109**

employ but a few hands, the machinery being so perfect
as to perform, with very little interposition from
human hands, the whole work, from the first purification
to the final arrangement. I saw a mass of ore
as dug out from the ground put into one end of a long
series of machines, which came out, without the slightest
manual assistance, at the close of a course of operations
so directed as to bring it back to our feet, in the
form of a thin sheet of lustrous metal. In another
factory a mass of dry vegetable fibre was similarly
transformed by machinery alone into a bale of wonderfully
light woven drapery resembling satin in lustre, muslin
or gauze in texture.

The streets were what, even in the finest and latest-built
American cities, would be thought magnificent in size
and admirable in construction. The roadway was
formed of that concrete, harder than granite, which
is the sole material employed in Martial building,
and which, as I have shown, can take every form and
texture, from that of jewels or of the finest marble
to that of plain polished slate. Along each side
ran avenues of magnificent trees, whose branches met
at a height of thirty feet over the centre. Between
these and the houses was a space reserved for the
passage of light carriages exclusively. The houses,
unlike those in the country, were from two to four
stories in height.

All private dwellings, however, were built, as in
the country, around a square interior garden, and
the windows, except those of the front rooms employed
for business purposes, looked out upon this. The
space occupied, however, was of course much smaller
than where ground was less precious, few dwellings
having four chambers on the same floor and front.
The footway ran on the level of what we call the first
story, over a part of the roof of the ground floor;
and the business apartments were always the front
chambers of the former, while the stores of the merchants
were collected in a single warehouse occupying the
whole of the ground front. No attempt was made
to exhibit them as on Earth. I entered with my
host a number of what we should call shops. In
every case he named exactly the article he wanted,
and it was either produced at once or he was told
that it was not to be had there, a thing which, however,
seldom happened. The traders are few in number.
One or two firms engaged in a single branch of commerce
do the whole business of an extensive province.
For instance, all the textile fabrics on sale in the
province were to be seen in one or other of two warehouses;
all metals in sheets, blocks, and wires in another;
in a third all finished metal-work, except writing
materials; all writing, phonographic, and telegraphic
conveniences in a fourth; all furs, feathers, and
fabrics made from these in a fifth. The tradesman
sells on commission, as we say, receiving the goods
from the manufacturer, the farmer, or the State, and
paying only for what are sold at the end of each year,
reserving to himself one-twenty-fourth of the price.
Prices, however, do not vary from year to year, save
when, on rare occasions, an adverse season or a special
accident affects the supply and consequently the price
of any natural product—­choice fruit, skins,
silver, for instance—­obtained only from
some peculiarly favoured locality.

**Page 110**

The monetary system, like so many other Martial institutions,
is purely artificial and severely logical. It
is held that the exchange value of any article of
manufacture or agricultural produce tends steadily
downwards, while any article obtained by mining labour,
or supplied by nature alone, tends to become more
and more costly. The use of any one article of
either class as a measure of value tends in the long-run
to injustice either towards creditors or debtors.
Labour may be considered as the most constant in intrinsic
value of all things capable of sale or barter; but
the utmost ingenuity of Martial philosophers has failed
to devise a fixed standard by which one kind of labour
can be measured against another, and their respective
productive force, and consequently their value in exchange,
ascertained. One thing alone retains in their
opinion an intrinsic value always the same, and if
it increase in value, increases only in proportion
as all produce is obtained in greater quantities or
with greater facility. Land, therefore, is in
their estimation theoretically the best available
measure of value—­a dogma which has more
practical truth in a planet where population is evenly
diffused and increases very slowly, if at all, than
it might have in the densely but unevenly peopled
countries of Europe or Asia. A *stalta*,
or square of about fifty yards (rather more than half
an acre), is the primary standard unit of value.
For purposes of currency this is represented by a
small engraved document bearing the Government stamp,
which can always at pleasure be exchanged for so much
land in a particular situation. The region whose
soil is chosen as the standard lies under the Equator,
and the State possesses there some hundreds of square
miles, let out on terms thought to ensure its excellent
cultivation and the permanence of its condition.
The immediate convertibility of each such document,
engraven on a small piece of metal about two inches
long by one in breadth, and the fortieth part of an
inch in thickness, is the ultimate cause and permanent
guarantee of its value. Large payments, moreover,
have to be made to the State by those who rent its
lands or purchase the various articles of which it
possesses a monopoly; or, again, in return for the
services it undertakes, as lighting roads and supplying
water to districts dependent on a distant source.
Great care is taken to keep the issue of these notes
within safe limits; and as a matter of fact they are
rather more valuable than the land they represent,
and are in consequence seldom presented for redemption
therein. To provide against the possibility of
such an over-issue as might exhaust the area of standard
land at command of the State, it is enacted that,
failing this, the holder may select his portion of
State domain wherever he pleases, at twelve years’
purchase of the rental; but in point of fact these
provisions are theoretically rather than practically
important, since not one note in a hundred is ever

**Page 111**

redeemed or paid off. The “square measure,”
upon which the coinage, if I may so call it is based,
following exactly the measure of length, each larger
area in the ascending scale represents 144 times that
below it. Thus the *styly* being a little
more than a foot, the *steely* is about 13 feet,
or one-twelfth of the *staly*; but the *steelta*
(or square steely) is 1/144th part of the *stalta*.
The *stolta*, again, is about 600 yards square,
or 360,000 square yards, 144 times the *stalta*.
The highest note, so to speak, in circulation represents
this last area; but all calculations are made in *staltau*,
or twelfths thereof. The *stalta* will purchase
about six ounces of gold. Notes are issued for
the third, fourth, and twelfth parts of this:
values smaller than the latter are represented by a
token coinage of square medals composed of an alloy
in which gold and silver respectively are the principal
elements. The lowest coin is worth about threepence
of English money.

Stopping at the largest public building in the city,
a central hexagon with a number of smaller hexagons
rising around it, we entered one of the latter, each
side of which might be some 30 feet in length and 15
in height. Here were ranged a large number of
instruments on the principle of the voice-writer,
but conveying the sound to a vast distance along electric
wires into one which reverses the voice-recording
process, and repeats the vocal sound itself. Through
one of these, after exchanging a few words with one
of the officials in charge of them, Esmo carried on
a conversation of some length, the instrument being
so arranged that while the mouth is applied to one
tube another may be held to the ear to receive the
reply. In the meantime I fell in with one of
the officers, apparently very young, who was strongly
interested at the sight of the much-canvassed stranger,
and, perhaps on this account, far more obliging than
is common among his countrymen. From him I learnt
that this, with another method I will presently describe,
is the sole means of distant communication employed
in Mars. Those who have not leisure or do not
care to visit one of the offices, never more than twelve-miles
distant from one another, in which the public instruments
are kept, can have a wire conveyed to their own house.
Almost every house of any pretension possesses such
a wire. Leading me into the next apartment, my
friend pointed out an immense number of instruments
of a box-like shape, with a slit in which a leaf of
about four inches by two was placed. These were
constantly ejected and on the instant mechanically
replaced. The fallen leaves were collected and
sorted by the officers present, and at once placed
in one or other of another set of exactly similar
instruments. Any one possessing a private wire
can write at his own desk in the manual character
a letter or message on one of these slips. Placing
it in his own instrument, it at once reproduces itself

**Page 112**

exactly in his autograph, and with every peculiarity,
blot, or erasure, at the nearest office. Here
the copy is placed in the proper box, and at once
reproduced in the office nearest the residence of the
person to whom it is addressed, and forwarded in the
same manner to him. A letter, therefore, covering
one of these slips, and saying as much as we could
write in an average hand upon a large sheet of letter-paper,
is delivered within five minutes at most from the time
of despatch, no matter how great the distance.

I remarked that this method of communication made
privacy impossible.

“But,” replied the official, “how
could we possibly have time to indulge in curiosity?
We have to sort hundreds of these papers in an hour.
We have just time to look at the address, place them
in the proper box, and touch the spring which sets
the electric current at work. If secrecy were
needed a cipher would easily secure it, for you will
observe that by this telegraph whatever is inscribed
on the sheet is mechanically reproduced; and it would
be as easy to send a picture as a message.”

I learnt that a post of marvellous perfection had,
some thousand years ago, delivered letters all over
Mars, but it was now employed only for the delivery
of parcels. Perhaps half the commerce of Mars,
except that in metals and agricultural produce, depends
on this post. Purchasers of standard articles
describe by the telegraph-letter to a tradesman the
exact amount and pattern of the goods required, and
these are despatched at once; a system of banking,
very completely organised, enabling the buyer to pay
at once by a telegraphic order.

When Esmo had finished his business, we walked down,
at my request, to the port. Around three sides
of the dock formed by walls, said to be fifty feet
in depth and twenty in thickness, ran a road close
to the water’s edge, beyond which was again
a vast continuous warehouse. The inner side was
reserved for passenger vessels, and everywhere the
largest ships could come up close, landing either passengers
or cargo without even the intervention of a plank.
The appearance of the ships is very unlike that of
Terrestrial vessels. They have no masts or rigging,
are constructed of the zorinta, which in Mars serves
much more effectively all the uses of iron, and differ
entirely in construction as they are intended for
cargo or for travel. Mercantile ships are in
shape much like the finest American clippers, but with
broad, flat keel and deck, and with a hold from fifteen
to twenty feet in depth. Like Malayan vessels,
they have attached by strong bars an external beam
about fifty feet from the side, which renders overturning
almost impossible. Passenger ships more resemble
the form of a fish, but are alike at both ends.
Six men working in pairs four hours at a time compose
the entire crew of the largest ship, and half this
number are required for the smallest that undertakes
a voyage of more than twelve hours.

**Page 113**

I may here mention that the system of sewage is far
superior to any yet devised on Earth. No particle
of waste is allowed to pollute the waters. The
whole is deodorised by an exceedingly simple process,
and, whether in town or country, carried away daily
and applied to its natural use in fertilising the
soil. Our practice of throwing away, where it
is an obvious and often dangerous nuisance, material
so valuable in its proper place, seemed to my Martial
friends an inexplicable and almost incredible absurdity.

As we returned, Esmo told me that he had been in communication
with the Campta, who had desired that I should visit
him with the least possible delay.

“This,” he said, “will hurry us
in matters where I at any rate should have preferred
a little delay. The seat of Government is by a
direct route nearly six thousand miles distant, and
you will have opportunity of travelling in all the
different ways practised on this planet. A long
land-journey in our electric carriages, with which
you are not familiar, is, I think, to be avoided.
The Campta would wish to see your vessel as well as
yourself; but, on the whole, I think it is safer to
leave it where it is. Kevima, and I propose to
accompany you during the first part of your journey.
At our first halt, we will stay one night with a friend,
that you may be admitted a brother of our Order.”

“And,” said I, “what sort of a reception
may I expect at the end of my journey?”

“I think,” he answered, “that you
are more likely to be embarrassed by the goodwill
of the Campta than by the hostility of some of those
about him. His character is very peculiar, and
it is difficult to reckon upon his action in any given
case. But he differs from nearly all his subjects
in having a strong taste for adventure, none the less
if it be perilous; and since his position prevents
him from indulging this taste in person, he is the
more disposed to take extreme interest in the adventures
of others. He has, moreover, a great value for
what you call courage, a virtue rarely needed and
still more rarely shown among us; and I fancy that
your venture through space has impressed him with
a very high estimate of your daring. Assuredly
none of us, however great his scientific curiosity,
would have dreamed of incurring such a peril, and
incurring it alone. But I must give you one warning.
It is not common among us to make valuable gifts:
we do not care enough for any but ourselves to give
except with the idea of getting something valuable
in return. Our princes are, however, so wealthy
that they can give without sacrifice, and it is considered
a grave affront to refuse any present from a superior.
Whatever, then, our Suzerain may offer you—­and
he is almost sure, unless he should take offence,
to give you whatever he thinks will induce you to settle
permanently in the neighbourhood of his Court—­you
must accept graciously, and on no account, either
then or afterwards, lead him to think that you slight
his present.”

**Page 114**

“I must say,” I replied, “that while
I wish to remain in your world till I have learnt,
if not all that is to be learnt, yet very much more
than I at present know about it, the whole purpose
of my voyage would be sacrificed if I could not effect
my return to Earth.”

“I suppose so,” he answered, “and
for that reason I wish to keep your vessel safe and
within your reach; for to get away at all you may have
to depart suddenly. But you will not do wisely
to make the Prince suspect that such is your intention.
Tell him of what you wish to see and to explore in
this world; tell him freely of your own, for he will
not readily fancy that you prefer it to this; but say
as little as possible of your hopes of an ultimate
return, and, if you are forced to acknowledge them,
let them seem as indefinite as possible.”

By this time, returning by another road, Esmo stopped
the carriage at the gate of an enclosed garden of
moderate size, about two miles from Ecasfe. Entering
alone, he presently returned with another gentleman,
wearing a dress of grey and silver, with a white ribbon
over the shoulder; a badge, I found, of official rank
or duties. Mounting his own carriage, this person
accompanied us home.

**CHAPTER X — WOMAN AND WEDLOCK.**

We arrived at home in the course of some few minutes,
and here my host requested us to wait in the hall,
where in about half-an-hour he rejoined us, accompanied
by all the members of his family, the ladies all closely
veiled. Looking among them instinctively for Eveena,
I observed that she had exchanged her usual light
veil for one fuller and denser, and wore, contrary
to the wont of maidens indoors, sleeves and gloves.
She held her father’s hand, and evinced no little
agitation or alarm. The visitor stood by a table
on which had been placed the usual pencils or styles,
and a sort of open portfolio, on one side of which
was laid a small strip of the golden tafroo, inscribed
with crimson characters of unusual size, leaving several
blanks here and there. Most of these he filled
up, and then, leading forward his daughter, Esmo signed
to me also to approach the table. The others
stood just behind us, and the official then placed
the document in Eveena’s hand. She looked
through it and replaced it on the table with the gesture
of assent usual among her people, inclining her head
and raising her left hand to her lips. The document
was then handed to me, but I, of course, was unable
to read it. I said so, and the official read
it aloud:—­

“Between Eveena, daughter of Esmo dent Ecasfen,
and ——­ [13] *reclamomorta*
(the alleged arch-traveller), covenant: Eveena
will live with ——­ in wedlock for
two years, foregoing during that period the liberty
to quit his house, or to receive any one therein save
by his permission. In consideration whereof he
will maintain her, clothing her to her satisfaction,
at a cost not exceeding five staltau by the year.

**Page 115**

He will provide for any child or children she may bear
while living with him, or within twice twelve dozen
days thereafter. And if at any time he shall
dismiss her or permit her to leave him, or if she
shall desire to leave him after the expiration of eight
years, he will ensure to her for her life an annual
payment of fifteen staltau. Neither shall appeal
to a court of law or public authority against the
other on account of anything done during the time they
shall live together, except for attempt to kill or
for grave bodily injury.”

Such is the form of marriage covenant employed in
Mars. The occasion was unfit for discussion,
and I simply intimated my acceptance of the covenants,
oo which Eveena and myself forthwith were instructed
to write our names where they appear in the above
translation. The official then inquired whether
I recognised the lady standing beside me as Eveena,
daughter of Esmo. It then struck me that, though
I felt pretty certain of her identity, marriage under
such conditions might occasionally lead to awkward
mistakes. There was no such difference between
my bride and her companions as, but for her dress and
her agitation, would have enabled me positively to
distinguish them, veiled and silent as all were.
I expressed no doubt, however, and the official then
proceeded to affix his own stamp to the document; and
then lifting up that on which our names had actually
been written, showed that, by some process I hardly
understand, the signature had been executed and the
agreement filled up in triplicate, the officer preserving
one copy, the others being given to the bride and
bridegroom respectively. The ladies then retired,
Esmo, his son, and the official remaining, when two
ambau brought in a tray of refreshments. The
official tasted each article offered to him, evidently
more as a matter of form than of pleasure. I took
this opportunity to ask some questions regarding the
Martial cuisine, and learnt that all but the very
simplest cookery is performed by professional confectioners,
who supply twice a day the households in their vicinity;
unmarried men taking their meals at the shop.
The preparation of fruit, roasted grain, beverages
consisting of juices mixed with a prepared nectar,
and the vegetables from the garden, which enter into
the composition of every meal, are the only culinary
cares of the ladies of the family. Everything
can be warmed or freshened on the stove which forms
a part of that electric machinery by which in every
household the baths and lights are supplied and the
house warmed at night. The ladies have therefore
very little household work, and the greater part of
this is performed under their superintendence by the
animals, which are almost as useful as any human slaves
on earth, with the one unquestionable advantage that
they cannot speak, and therefore cannot be impertinent,
inquisitive, or treacherous. No fermented liquors
form part of the Martial diet; but some narcotics
resembling haschisch and opium are much relished.
When the official had retired, I said to my host—­

**Page 116**

“I thought it best to raise no question or objection
in signing the contract put before me with your sanction;
but you must be aware, in the first place, that I
have no means here of performing the pecuniary part
of the covenant, no means of providing either maintenance
or pin-money.”

The explanation of the latter phrase, which was immediately
demanded, produced not a little amusement, after which
Esmo replied gravely—­

“It will be very easy for you, if necessary,
to realise a competence in the course of half a year.
A book relating your adventures, and describing the
world you have left, would bring you in a very comfortable
fortune; and you might more than double this by giving
addresses in each of our towns, which, if only from
the curiosity our people would entertain to see you
with their own eyes, would attract crowded audiences.
You could get a considerable sum for the exclusive
right to take your likeness; and, if you chose to explain
it, you might fix your own price on the novel motive
power you have introduced. But there is another
point in regard to the contract which you have overlooked,
but which I was bound to bear in mind. What you
have promised is, I believe, what Eveena would have
obtained from any suitor she was likely to accept.
But since you left the matter entirely to my discretion,
I am bound to make it impossible that you should be
a loser; and this document (and he handed me a small
slip very much like that which contained the marriage
covenant) imposes on my estate the payment of an income
for Eveena’s life equal to that you have promised
her.”

With much reluctance I found myself obliged to accept
a dowry which, however natural and proper on Earth,
was, I felt, unusual in Mars. I may say that
such charges do not interfere with the free sale of
land. They are registered in the proper office,
and the State trustee collects them from the owner
for the time being as quit-rents are collected in
Great Britain or land revenue in India. Turning
to another but kindred question, I said—­

“Your marriage contract, like our own laws,
appears to favour the weaker sex more than strict
theoretical equality would permit. This is quite
right and practically inevitable; but it hardly agrees
with the theory which supposes bride and bridegroom,
husband and wife, to enter on and maintain a coequal
voluntary partnership.”

“How so?” he inquired.

“The right of divorce,” I said, “at
the end of two years belongs to the wife alone.
The husband cannot divorce her except under a heavy
penalty.”

“Observe,” he answered, “that there
is a grave practical inequality which even theory
can hardly ignore. The wife parts with something
by the very fact of marriage. At the end of two
years, when she has borne two, three, or four children,
her value in marriage is greatly lessened. Her
capacity of maintaining herself, in the days when women
did work, was found practically to be even smaller
than before marriage. You may say that this really
amounts to a recognition by custom of the natural
inequality denied by law; but at any rate, it is an
inequality which it was scarcely possible to overlook.
Examine the practical working of the covenants, and
you will find that in affecting to treat unequals
as equals they merely make the weaker the slave of
the stronger.”

**Page 117**

“Surely,” I said, “husband and wife
are so far equal, where neither is tied to the children,
that each can make the other heartily glad to assent
to a divorce.”

“Perhaps, where law interferes to enforce monogamy,
and thereby to create an artificial equality of mutual
dependence. But our law cannot dictate to equals,
whose sex it ignores, the terms or numbers of partnership.
So, the terms of the contract being voluntary, men
of course insist on excluding legal interference in
household quarrels; and before the prohibitive clause
was generally adopted, legal interposition did more
harm than good. As you will find, equality before
the law gives absolute effect to the real inequality,
and chiefly through its coarsest element, superior
physical force. The liberty that is a necessary
logical consequence of equality takes from the woman
her one natural safeguard—­the man’s
need of her goodwill, if not of her affection.”

“In our world,” I replied, “I always
held that even slaves, so they be household slaves,
are secure against gross cruelty. The owner cannot
make life a burden to them without imperilling his
own. To reduce the question to its lowest terms—­malice
will always be a match for muscle, and poison an efficient
antidote to the *ferula*.”

“So,” rejoined Esmo, “our men have
perceived, and consequently they have excepted attempts
to murder, as the women have excepted serious bodily
injury, from the general rule prohibiting appeals to
a court of law.”

“And,” said I, “are there many such
appeals?”

“Not one in two years,” he replied; “and
for a simple reason. Our law, as matter of course
and of common sense, puts murder, attempted or accomplished,
on the same footing, and visits both with its supreme
penalty. Consequently, a wife detected in such
an attempt is at her husband’s mercy; and if
he consent to spare her life, she must submit to any
infliction, however it may transgress the covenanted
limit. In fact, if he find her out in such an
attempt, he may do anything but put her to death on
his own authority.”

“Still,” I answered, “as long as
she remains in the house, she must have frequent opportunity
of repeating her attempt at revenge; and to live in
constant fear of assassination would break down the
strongest nerves.”

“Our physicians,” he said, “are
more skilful in antidotes than our women in poisons,
even when the latter have learned chemistry. No
poisonous plants are grown near our houses; and as
wives never go out alone, they have little chance
of getting hold of any fatal drug. I believe
that very few attempts to poison are successful, and
that many women have suffered very severely on mere
suspicion.”

“And what,” I asked, “is the legal
definition of ’grave bodily injury’?”

**Page 118**

“Injury,” he said, “of which serious
traces remain at the end of twenty-four days; the
destruction of a limb, or the deprivation, partial
or total, of a sense. I have often thought bitterly,”
he continued, “of that boasted logic and liberality
of our laws under which my daughters might have to
endure almost any maltreatment from their husbands,
so long as these have but the sense not to employ
weapons that leave almost ineffaceable marks.
This is one main reason why we so anxiously avoid
giving them save to those who are bound by the ties
of our faith to treat them as kindly as children—­for
whom, at the worst, they remain sisters of the Order.
If women generally had parents, our marriage law could
never have carried out the fiction of equality to
its logical perfection and practical monstrosity.”

“Equality, then, has given your women a harder
life and a worse position than that of those women
in our world who are, not only by law but by fact
and custom, the slaves of their husbands?”

“Yes, indeed,” he said; “and our
proverbs, though made by men, express this truth with
a sharpness in which there is little exaggeration.
Our school textbooks tell us that action and reaction
are equal and opposite; and this familiar phrase gives
meaning to the saw, *Pelmave dakal dake,* ‘She
is equal, the thing struck to the hammer,’ meaning
that woman’s equality to man is no more effective
than the reaction of the leather on the mallet.
’Bitterer smiles of twelve than tears of ten’
(referring to the age of marriage). *Thleen delkint
treen lalfe zevleen*, ‘’Twixt fogs
and clouds she dreams of stars.’”

“What *does* that mean?”

“Would you not render it in the terminology
of the hymn you translated for us, ‘Between
Purgatory and Hell, one dream of Heaven?’ Still
puzzled? ’Between the harshness of school
and the misery of marriage, the illusions of the bride.’
Again, *Zefoo zevleel, zave marneel, clafte cratheneel*,
’A child [cries] for the stars, a maiden for
the matron’s dress, a woman for her shroud.’”

“Do you mean to say that that is not exaggerated?”

“I suppose it is, as women are even less given
to suicide than men. That is perhaps the ugliest
proverb of its kind. I will only quote one more,
and that is two-edged—­

 “’Fool he who heeds a woman’s
tears, to woman’s tongue replies;
 Fool she who braves man’s
hand—­but when was man or woman wise?’”

Here Zulve came to the door and made a sign to her
husband. Waiting courteously to ascertain that
I had finished speaking, and until his son had somewhat
ceremoniously taken leave of me, he led me to the
door of a chamber next to that I had hitherto occupied.
Pausing here himself, he motioned me to go on, and
the door parting, I found myself in a room I had not
before entered, about the same size as my own and
similarly furnished, but differently coloured, now
communicating with it by a door which I knew had not
previously existed. Here were Eveena’s
mother and sister, dressed as usual.

**Page 119**

Eveena herself had exchanged her maiden white for
the light pink of a young matron, but was closely
veiled in a similar material. Her mother and
sister kissed her with much emotion, though without
the tears and lamentations, real or affected, with
which—­alike among the nomads of Asia and
the most cultivated races of Europe—­even
those relatives who have striven hardest to marry
a daughter or sister think it necessary to celebrate
the fulfilment of their hopes, and the termination
of their often prolonged and wearisome labours.
I was then left alone with my bride, who remained
half-seated, half-crouching on the cushions in a corner
of the room. I could not help feeling keenly how
much a marriage so unceremonious and with so little
previous acquaintance, or rather so great a reserve
and distance in our former intercourse, intensified
the awkwardness many a man on Earth feels when first
left alone with the partner of his future life.
But a single glance at the small drooping figure half-hidden
in the cushions brought the reflection that a situation,
embarrassing to the bridegroom, must be in the last
degree alarming and distressing to the bride.
But for her visit to the Astronaut we should have been
almost strangers; I could hardly have recognised even
her voice. I must, however, speak; and naturally
my first sentence was a half-articulate request that
she would remove her veil.

“No,” she whispered, rising, “*you*
must do that.”

Taking off the glove of her left hand, she came up
to me shyly and slowly, and placed it in my right—­a
not unmeaning ceremony. Having obeyed her instruction,
my lips touched for the first time the brow of my
young wife. That she was more than shy and startled,
was even painfully agitated and frightened, became
instantly apparent now that her countenance was visible.
What must be the state of Martial brides in general,
when the signature of the contract immediately places
them at the disposal of an utter stranger, it was
beyond the power of my imagination to conceive, if
their feelings were at all to be measured by Eveena’s
under conditions sufficiently trying, but certainly
far better than theirs. Nothing was so likely
to quiet her as perfect calmness on my side; and,
though with a heart beating almost as fast as her
own, if with very different emotions, I led her gently
back to her place, and resting on a cushion just out
of reach, began to talk to her. Choosing as the
easiest subject our adventure of yesterday, I asked
what could have induced her to place herself in a situation
so dangerous.

“Do not be angry with me now,” she pleaded.
“I am exceedingly fond of flowers; they have
been my only amusement except the training of my pets.
You can see how little women have to do, how little
occupation or interest is permitted us. The rearing
of rare flowers, or the creation of new ones, is almost
the only employment in which we can find exercise
for such intelligence as we possess. I had never
seen before the flower that grew on that shelf.
I believe, indeed, that it only grows on a few of
our higher mountains below the snow-line, and I was
anxious to bring it home and see what could be made
of it in the garden. I thought it might be developed
into something almost as beautiful as that bright
*leenoo* you admired so greatly in my flower-bed.”

**Page 120**

“But,” said I, “the two flowers
are not of the same shape or colour; and, though I
am not learned in botany, I should say hardly belong
to the same family.”

“No,” she said. “But with care,
and with proper management of our electric apparatus,
I accomplished this year a change almost as great.
I can show you in my flower-bed one little white flower,
of no great beauty and conical in shape, from which
I have produced in two years another, saucer-shaped,
pink, and of thrice the size, almost exactly realising
an imaginary flower, drawn by my sister-in-law to represent
one of which she had dreamed. We can often produce
the very shape, size, and colour we wish from something
that at first seems to have no likeness to it whatever;
and I have been told that a skilful farmer will often
obtain a fruit, or, what is more difficult, an animal,
to answer exactly the ideal he has formed.”

“Some of our breeders,” I said, “profess
to develop a sort of ideal of any given species; but
it takes many generations, by picking and choosing
those that vary in the right direction, to accomplish
anything of the kind; and, after all, the difference
between the original and the improved form is mere
development, not essential change.”

She hardly seemed to understand this, but answered—­

“The seedling or rootlet would be just like
the original plant, if we did not from the first control
its growth by means of our electric frames. But
if you will allow me, I will show you to-morrow what
I have done in my own flower-bed, and you will have
opportunities of seeing afterwards how very much more
is done by agriculturists with much more time and
much more potent electricities.”

“At any rate,” I said, “if I had
known your object, you certainly should have had the
flowers for which you risked so much: and if I
remain here three days longer, I promise you plenty
of specimens for your experiment.”

“You do not mean to go back to the Astronaut?”
she asked, with an air of absolute consternation.

“I had not intended to do so,” I replied,
“for it seems to be perfectly safe under your
father’s seal and your stringent laws of property.
But now, if time permit, I must get these flowers to
which you tell me I am so deeply indebted.”

“You are very kind,” returned Eveena earnestly,
“but I entreat you not to venture there again.
I should be utterly miserable while you were running
such a risk again, and for such a trifle.”

“It is no such terrible risk to me, and to please
you is not quite a trifle. Besides, I ought to
deserve my prize better than I have yet done.
But you seem to have some especial spite against the
unlucky vessel that brought me here; and that,”
I added, smiling, “seems hardly gracious in
a bride of an hour.”

“No, no!” she murmured, evidently much
distressed; “but the vessel that brought you
here may take you away.”

“I will not pain you yet by saying that I hope
it may. At all events, it shall not do so till
you are content that it should.”

**Page 121**

She made no answer, and seemed for some time to hesitate,
as if afraid or unwilling to say something which rose
irrepressibly to her lips. A few persuasive words,
however, encouraged her, and she found her voice,
though with a faltering accent, which greatly surprised
me when I learned at last the purport of her request.

“I do not understand,” she said, “your
ideas or customs, but I know they are different from
ours. I have found at least that they make you
much more indulgent and tender to women than our own;
and I hope, therefore, you will forgive me if I ask
more than I have any right to do.”

“I could scarcely refuse my bride’s first
request, whatever it might be. But your hesitation
and your apologies might make me fear that you are
about to ask something which one or both of us may
wish hereafter had neither been asked nor granted.”

She still hesitated and faltered, till I began to
fancy that her wish must have a much graver import
than I at first supposed. Perhaps to treat the
matter lightly and sportively would be the course most
likely to encourage her to explain it.

“What is it, child,” I asked, “which
you think the stranger of another world more likely
to grant than one of your own race, and which is so
extravagant, nevertheless, that you tremble to ask
it even from me? Is it too much to be bound not
to appeal against me to the law, which cannot yet
determine whether I am a reality or a fiction?
Or have I proved my arm a little too substantial?
Must the giant promise not to exercise the masculine
prerogative of physical force safely conceded to the
dwarf? Fie, Eveena! I am almost afraid to
touch you, lest I should hurt you unawares; lest tenderness
itself should transgress the limit of legal cruelty,
and do grave bodily harm to a creature so much more
like a fairy than a woman!”

“No, no!” she expostulated, not at all
reciprocating the jesting tone in which I spoke.
“If you would consent to give such a promise,
it is just one of those we should wish unmade.
How could I ask you to promise that I may behave as
ill as I please? I dare say I shall be frightened
to tears when you are angry; but I shall never wish
you to retain your anger rather than vent it and forgive.
The proverb says, ‘Who punishes pardons; who
hates awaits.’ No, pray do not play with
me; I am so much in earnest. I know that I don’t
understand where and why your thoughts and ways are
so unlike ours. But—­but—­I
thought—­I fancied—­you seemed
to hold the tie between man and wife something more—­faster—­more
lasting—­than—­our contract has
made it.”

“Certainly! With us it lasts for life at
least; and even here, where it may be broken at pleasure,
I should not have thought that, on the very bridal
eve, the coldest heart could willingly look forward
to its dissolution.”

She was too innocent of such a thought—­perhaps
too much absorbed by her own purpose—­to
catch the hint of unjust reproach.

**Page 122**

“Well, then,” she said, with a desperate
effort, in a voice that trembled between the fear
of offending by presumption or exaction, and the desire
to give utterance to her wish—­“I want
... will you say that—­if by that time you
do not think that I have been too faulty, too undeserving—­that
I shall go with you when you quit this world?”
And, her eagerness at last overpowering her shyness,
she looked up anxiously into my face.

We wholly misconceived each other. She drooped
in bitter disappointment, mistaking my blank surprise
for displeasure; her words brought over my mind a
rush of that horror with which I ever recall the scenes
I witnessed but too often at Indian funerals.

“That, of course, will rest with yourself.
But even should I hereafter deserve and win such love
as would prompt the wish, I trust you will never dream
of cutting short your life because—­in the
ordinary course of nature—­mine should end
long before the term of yours.”

Her face again brightened, and she looked up more
shyly but not less earnestly.

“I did not make my meaning clear,” she
replied. “I spoke not, as my father sometimes
speaks, of leaving this world, when he means to remind
us that death is only a departure to another; though
that was, not so long ago, the only meaning the words
could bear. I was thinking of your journey, and
I want you to take me with you when you go.”

“You have quite settled in your own mind that
I shall go! And in truth you have now removed,
as you yesterday created, the only obstacle. If
you would not go with me, I might, rather than give
you up, have given up the whole purpose of my enterprise,
and have left my friends, and the world from which
I came, ignorant whether it had ever been accomplished.
But if you accompany me, I shall certainly try to regain
my own planet.”

“Then,” she said hopefully, but half confidently,
“when you go, if I have not given you cause
of lasting displeasure, you *will* take me with
you? Most men do not think much of promises, especially
of promises made to women; but I have heard you speak
as if to break a plighted word were a thing impossible.”

“I promise,” I returned earnestly, very
much moved by a proof of real affection such as I
had no right to expect, and certainly had not anticipated.
“I give you the word of one who has never lied,
that if, when the time comes, you wish to go with
me, you shall. But by that time, you will probably
have a better idea what are the dangers you are asking
to share.”

“What can that matter?” she answered.
“I suppose in almost any case we should escape
or die together? To leave me here is to inflict
certainly, and at once, the worst that can possibly
befall me; to take me gives me the hope of living
or dying with you; and even if I were killed, I should
be with you, and feel that you were kind to me, to
the last.”

**Page 123**

“I little thought,” said I, hesitating
long for some expression of tenderness, which the
language of Mars refuses to furnish,—­“I
little thought to find in a world of which selfishness
seems to be the paramount principle, and the absence
of real love even between man and woman the most prevalent
characteristic, a wife so true to the best and deepest
meaning of wedlock. Still less could I have hoped
to find such a wife in one who had scarcely spoken
to me twenty-four hours before our marriage.
If my unexampled adventure had had no other reward—­if
I had cared nothing for the triumph of discovering
a new world with all its wonders—­Eveena,
this discovery alone is reward in full for all my
studies, toils, and perils. For all I have done
and risked already, for all the risks of the future,
I am tenfold repaid in winning you.”

She looked up at these words with an expression in
which there was more of bewilderment and incredulity
than of satisfaction, evidently touched by the earnestness
of my tone, but scarcely understanding my words better
than if I had spoken in my own tongue. It would
not be worth while to record the next hour’s
conversation; I would only note the strong and painful
impression it left upon my mind. There was in
Eveena’s language and demeanour a timidity—­a
sort of tentative fearful venturing as on dangerous
ground, feeling her way, as it were, in almost every
sentence—­which could not be wholly attributed
to the shyness of a very young and very suddenly wedded
bride. There was enough and to spare of this
shyness; but more of the sheer physical or nervous
fear of a child suddenly left in hands whose reputed
severity has thoroughly frightened her; not daring
to give offence by silence, but afraid at each word
to give yet more fatal offence in speaking. Longer
experience of a world in which even the first passion
of love is devoid of tenderness—­in which
asserted equality has long since deprived women of
that claim to indulgence which can only rest on acknowledged
weakness—­taught me but too well the meaning
of this fearful, trembling anxiety to please, or rather
not to offend. I suppose that even a brutal master
hardly likes to see a child cower in his presence
as if constantly expecting a blow; and this cowering
was so evident in my bride’s demeanour, that,
after trying for a couple of hours to coax her into
confidence and unreserved feminine fluency, I began
to feel almost impatient. It was fortunate that,
just as my tone involuntarily betrayed to her quick
and watchful ear some shade of annoyance, just as
I caught a furtive upward glance that seemed to ask
what error she had committed and how it might be repaired,
a scratching on the door startled her. She did
not, however, venture to disengage herself from the
hand which now held her own, but only moved half-imperceptibly
aside with a slight questioning look and gesture,
as if tacitly asking to be released. As I still
held her fast, she was silent, till the unnoticed

**Page 124**

scratching had been two or three times repeated, and
then half-whispered, “Shall I tell them to come
in?” When I released her, there appeared to
my surprise at her call, no human intruder, but one
of the ambau, bearing on a tray a goblet, which, as
he placed it on a table beside us, I perceived to contain
a liquid rather different from any yet offered me.
The presence of these mute servants is generally no
more heeded than that of our cats and dogs; but I
now learnt that Martial ideas of delicacy forbid them,
even as human servants would be forbidden, to intrude
unannounced on conjugal privacy. When the little
creature had departed, I tasted the liquid, but its
flavour was so unpleasant that I set down the vessel
immediately. Eveena, however, took it up, and
drinking a part of it, with an effort to control the
grimace of dislike it provoked, held it up to me again,
so evidently expecting and inviting me to share it
that courtesy permitted no further demur. A second
sign or look, when I set it down unemptied, induced
me to finish the draught. Regarding the matter
as some trivial but indispensable ceremonial, I took
no further notice of it; but, thankful for the diversion
it had given to my thoughts, continued my endeavours
to soothe and encourage my fair companion. After
a few minutes it seemed as if she were somewhat suddenly
gaining courage and confidence. At the same time
I myself became aware of a mental effect which I promptly
ascribed to the draught. Nor was I wrong.
It contained one of those drugs which I have mentioned;
so rarely used in this house that I had never before
seen or tasted any of them, but given, as matter of
course, on any occasion that is supposed to involve
unusual agitation or make an exceptional call on nerves
or spirits. But for the influence of this cup
I should still have withheld the remark which, nevertheless,
I had resolved to make as soon as I could hope to
do so without annoying or alarming Eveena.

“Are you afraid of me?” I asked somewhat
abruptly. The question may have startled her,
but I was more startled by the answer.

“Of course,” she said in a tone which
would have been absolutely matter of fact, except
that the doubt evidently surprised her. “Ought
I not to be so? But what made you ask? And
what had I done to displease you, just before they
sent us the ’courage cup’?”

“I did not mean to show anything like displeasure,”
I replied. “But I was thinking then, and
I may tell you now, that you remind me not of the
women of my own Earth, but of petted children suddenly
transferred to a harsh school. You speak and
look like such a child, as if you expected each moment
at least to be severely scolded, if not beaten, without
knowing your fault.”

“Not yet,” she murmured, with a smile
which seemed to me more painful than tears would have
been. “But please don’t speak as if
I should fear anything so much as being scolded by
you. We have a saying that ‘the hand may
bruise the skin, the tongue can break the heart.’”

**Page 125**

“True enough,” I said; “only on
Earth it is mostly woman’s tongue that breaks
the heart, and men must not in return bruise the skin.”

“Why not?” she asked. “You
said to my mother the other day that Arga (the fretful
child of Esmo’s adoption) deserved to be beaten.”

“Women are supposed,” I answered, “to
be amenable to milder influences; and a man must be
drunk or utterly brutal before he could deal harshly
with a creature so gentle and so fragile as yourself.”

“Don’t spoil me,” she said, with
a pretty half-mournful, half-playful glance. “‘A
petted bride makes an unhappy wife.’ Surely
it is no true kindness to tempt us to count on an
indulgence that cannot last.”

“There is among us,” I rejoined, “a
saying about ’breaking a butterfly on the wheel’—­as
if one spoke of driving away the tiny birds that nestle
and feed in your flowers with a hammer. To apply
your proverbs to yourself would be to realise this
proverb of ours. Can you not let me pet and spoil
my little flower-bird at least till I have tamed her,
and trust me to chastise her as soon as she shall give
reason—­if I can find a tendril or flower-stem
light enough for the purpose?”

“Will you promise to use a hammer when you wish
to be rid of her?” said she, glancing up for
one moment through her drooping lashes with a look
exactly attuned to the mingled archness and pathos
of her tone.

**CHAPTER XI — A COUNTRY DRIVE.**

Like all Martialists, I had been accustomed since
my landing to wake with the first light of dawn; but
the draught, though its earlier effects were anything
but narcotic or stupifying, deepened and prolonged
my sleep. It was not till the rays of sunlight
came clear and full through the crystal roof of the
peristyle, and the window of our bridal chamber, that
my eyes unclosed. The first object on which they
opened startled me into full waking recollection.
Exactly where the sunbeams fell, just within reach
of my hand, Eveena stood; the loveliest creature I
ever beheld, a miniature type of faultless feminine
grace and beauty. By the standard of Terrestrial
humanity she was tiny rather than small: so light,
so perfect in proportion, form, and features, so absolutely
beautiful, so exquisitely delicate, as to suggest
the ideal Fairy Queen realised in flesh and blood,
rather than any properly human loveliness. In
the transparent delicacy of a complexion resembling
that of an infant child of the fairest and most tenderly
nurtured among the finest races of Europe, in the ideally
perfect outline of face and features—­the
noble but even forehead—­the smooth, straight,
clearly pencilled eyebrows—­the large almond-shaped
eyes and drooping lids, with their long, dark, soft
fringe—­the little mouth and small, white,
even regular teeth—­the rosy lips, slightly
compressed, save when parted in speech, smile, or eager
attention—­she exhibited in their most perfect

**Page 126**

but by no means fullest development the characteristics
of Martial physiognomy; or rather the characteristic
beauty of a family in which the finest traits of that
physiognomy are unmixed with any of its meaner or harsher
peculiarities. The hands, long, slight, and soft,
the unsandalled feet, not less perfectly shaped, could
only have belonged to the child of ancestors who for
more than a hundred generations have never known hard
manual toil, rough exposure, or deforming, cramping
costume; even as every detail of her beauty bore witness
to an immemorial inheritance of health unbroken by
physical infirmity, undisturbed by violent passions,
and developed by an admirable system of physical and
mental discipline and culture. The absence of
veil and sleeves left visible the soft rounded arms
and shoulders, in whose complexion a tinge of pale
rose seemed to shine through a skin itself of translucent
white; the small head, and the perfection of the slender
neck, with the smooth unbroken curve from the ear to
the arm. Her long hair, fastened only by a silver
band woven in and out behind the small rounded ears,
fell almost to her knee; and, as it caught the bright
rays of the morning sun, I discerned for the first
time the full beauty of that tinge of gold which varied
the colour of the rich, soft, brown tresses.
As her sex are seldom exposed to the cold of the night
or the mists, their underclothing is slight and close
fitting. Eveena’s thin robe, of the simplest
possible form—­two wide straight pieces
of a material lustrous as satin but rivalling the finest
cambric in texture (lined with the same fabric reversed),
sewn together from the hem of the skirt to the arm,
and fastened again by the shoulder clasps—­fell
perfectly loose save where compressed by the zone
or by the movements of the wearer; and where so compressed,
defined the outlines of the form as distinctly as the
lightest wet drapery of the studio. Her dress,
in short, achieved in its pure simplicity all at which
the artistic skill of matrons, milliners, and maidens
aims in a Parisian ball costume, without a shadow of
that suggestive immodesty from which ball costumes
are seldom wholly free. Exactly reversing Terrestrial
practice, a Martial wife reserves for strictest domestic
privacy that undressed full-dress, that frank revelation
of her beauty, which the matrons of London, Paris,
or New York think exclusively appropriate to the most
public occasions. Till now, while still enjoying
the liberty allowed to maidens in this respect, Eveena,
by the arrangement of her veil, had always given to
her costume a reserve wholly unexceptionable, even
according to the rules enforced by the customs of
Western Europe on young girls not yet presented in
the marriage market of society. A new expression,
or one, at least, which I had never before seen there,
gave to her face a strange and novel beauty; the beauty,
I wish to think, of shy, but true happiness; felt,
it may be, for the first time, and softened, I fear,

**Page 127**

by a doubt of its possible endurance which rendered
it as touching as attractive. Never was the sleep
even of the poet of the *Midsummer Night’s
Dream* visited by a lovelier vision—­especially
lovely as the soft rose blush suffused her cheeks under
my gaze of admiration and delight. Springing
up, I caught her with both hands and drew her on my
knee. Some minutes passed before either of us
cared to speak. Probably as she rested her head
on my arm and looked into my eyes, each read the other’s
character more truly and clearly than words the most
frank and open could ever enable us to do. I had
taught her last night a few substitutes in the softest
tongue I knew for those words of natural tenderness
in which her language is signally deficient:
taught her to understand them, certainly not to use
them, for it was long before I could even induce her
to address me by name.

“My father bade me yesterday,” she said
at last, “ask you in future to wear the dress
of our people. Not that you will be the less an
object of attention and wonder, but that in retaining
a distinction which depends entirely on your own choice,
you will seem intentionally to prefer your own habits
to ours.”

“I comply of course,” I observed.
“Naturally the dress of every country is best
suited to its own conditions. Yet I should have
thought that a preference for my own world, even were
it wholly irrational, might seem at least natural
and pardonable.”

“People don’t,” she answered simply,
“like any sign of individual fancy or opinion.
They don’t like any one to show that he thinks
them wrong even on a matter of taste.”

“I fear, then, *carissima*, that I must
be content with unpopularity. I may wear the
costume of your people; but their thought, their conduct,
their inner and outer life, as your father reports
them, and as thus far I have seen them, are to me
so unnatural, that the more I resemble them externally
the more my unlikeness in all else is likely to attract
notice. I am sorry for this, because women are
by nature prone to judge even their nearest and dearest
by the standard of fashion, and to exact from men
almost as close a conformity to that standard as they
themselves display. I fear you will have to forgive
many heresies in my conduct as well as in my thoughts.”

“You cannot suppose,” she answered earnestly—­she
seemed incapable of apprehending irony or jest,—­“that
I should wish you more like others than you are.
Whatever may happen hereafter, I shall always feel
myself the happiest of women in having belonged to
one who cares for something beside himself, and holds
even life cheaper than love.” “I
hope so, *carissima*. But in that matter
there was scarcely more of love than of choice.
What I did for you I must have done no less for Zevle
[her sister]. If I had feared death as much as
the Regent does, I could not have returned alive and
alone. My venture into infinite space involved
possibilities of horror more appalling than the mere
terrors of death. You asked of me as my one bridal
gift leave to share its perils. How unworthy
of you should I be, if I did not hold the possession
of Eveena, even for the two years of her promise, well
worth dying for!”

**Page 128**

The moral gulf between the two worlds is wider than
the material. Utterly unselfish and trustful,
Eveena was almost pained to be reminded that the service
she so extravagantly overprized was rendered to her
sex rather than herself; while yet more deeply gratified,
though still half incredulous, by the commonplace that
preferred love to life. I had yet to learn, however,
that Eveena’s nature was as utterly strange
in her own world as the ideas in which she was educated
would seem in mine.

I left her for a few minutes to dress for the first
time in the costume which Esmo’s care had provided.
The single under-vestment of softest hide, closely
fitting from neck to knees, is of all garments the
best adapted to preserve natural warmth under the rapid
and extreme changes of the external atmosphere.
The outer garb consisted of blouse and trousers, woven
of a fabric in which a fine warp of metallic lustre
was crossed by a strong silken weft, giving the effect
of a diapered scarlet and silver; both fastened by
the belt, a broad green strap of some species of leather,
clasped with gold. Masculine dress is seldom
brilliant, as is that of the women, but convenient
and comfortable beyond any other, and generally handsome
and elegant. The one part of the costume which
I could never approve is the sandal, which leaves
the feet exposed to dust and cold. Rejoining my
bride, I said—­

“I have had no opportunity of seeing much of
this country, and I fancy from what I have seen of
feminine seclusion that an excursion would be as much
a holiday treat to you as to myself. If your father
will lend us his carriage, would you like to accompany
me to one or two places Kevima has described not far
from this, and which I am anxious to visit?”

She bent her head, but did not answer; and fancying
that the proposal was not agreeable to her, I added—­

“If you prefer to spend our little remaining
time here with your mother and sister, I will ask
your brother to accompany me, though I am selfishly
unwilling to part with you to-day.”

She looked up for a moment with an air of pain and
perplexity, and as she turned away I saw the tears
gather in her eyes.

“What *is* the matter?” I asked,
surprised and puzzled as one on Earth who tries to
please a woman by offering her her own way, and finds
that, so offered, it is the last thing she cares to
have. It did not occur to me that, even in trifles,
a Martial wife never dreams that her taste or wish
can signify, or be consulted where her lord has a
preference of his own. To invite instead of commanding
her companionship was unusual; to withdraw the expression
of my own wish, and bid her decide for herself, was
in Eveena’s eyes to mark formally and deliberately
that I did not care for her society.

“What have I done,” she faltered, “to
be so punished? I have not, save the day before
yesterday, left the house this year; and you offer
me the greatest of pleasures only to snatch it away
the next moment.”

**Page 129**

“Nay, Eveena!” I answered. “If
I had not told you, you must know that I cannot but
wish for your company; but by your silence I fancied
you disliked my proposal, yet did not like to decline
it.”

The expression of surprise and perplexity in her face,
though half pathetic, seemed so comical that I with
difficulty suppressed a laugh, because for her it
was evidently no laughing matter. After giving
her time, as I thought, to recover herself, I said—­

“Well, I suppose we may now join them at the
morning meal?”

Something was still wrong, the clue to which I gathered
by observing her shy glance at her head-dress and
veil.

“Must you wear those?” I asked—­a
question which gave her some such imperfect clue to
my thoughts as I had found to hers.

“How foolish of me,” she said, smiling,
“to forget how little you can know of our customs!
Of course I must wear my veil and sleeves; but to-day
you must put on the veil, as you removed it last night.”

The awkwardness with which I performed this duty had
its effect in amusing and cheering her; and the look
of happiness and trust had come back to her countenance
before the veil concealed it.

I made my request to Esmo, who answered, with some
amusement—­

“Every house like ours has from six to a dozen
larger or lighter carriages. Of course they cost
nothing save the original purchase. They last
for half a lifetime, and are not costly at the outset.
But I have news for you which, I venture to think,
will be as little agreeable to you as to ourselves.
Your journey must begin tomorrow, and this, therefore,
is the only opportunity you will have for such an
excursion as you propose.”

“Then,” I said, “will Eveena still
wish to share it?”

Even her mother’s face seemed to ask what in
the world that could matter; but a movement of the
daughter’s veiled head reminded me that I was
blundering; and pressing her little hand as she lay
beside me, I took her compliance for granted.

The morning mist had given place to hot bright sunshine
when we started. At first our road lay between
enclosures like that which surrounded Esmo’s
dwelling.

Presently the lines were broken here and there by
such fields as I had seen in descending from Asnyca;
some filled with crops of human food, some with artificial
pastures, in which Unicorns or other creatures were
feeding. I saw also more than one field wherein
the *carvee* were weeding or gathering fruit,
piling their burdens in either case as soon as their
beaks were full into bags or baskets. Pointing
out to Eveena the striking difference of colour between
the cultivated fields and gardens and the woods or
natural meadows on the mountain sides, I learned from
her that this distinction is everywhere perceptible
in Mars. Natural objects, plants or animals,
rocks and soil, are for the most part of dimmer, fainter,
or darker tints than on Earth; probably owing to the

**Page 130**

much less intense light of the Sun; partly, perhaps,
to that absorption of the blue rays by the atmosphere,
which diminishes, I suppose, even that light which
actually reaches the planet. But uncultivated
ground, except on the mountains above the ordinary
range of crops or pastures, scarcely exists in the
belt of Equatorial continents; the turf itself, like
the herbage or fruit shrubs in the fields, is artificial,
consisting of plants developed through long ages into
forms utterly unlike the native original by the skill
and ingenuity of man. Even the great fruit trees
have undergone material change, not only in the size,
flavour, and appearance of the fruits themselves,
which have been the immediate object of care, but,
probably through some natural correlation between,
the different organs, in the form and colour of the
foliage, the arrangement of the branches, and the
growth of the trunk, all of which are much more regular,
and, so to speak, more perfect, than is the case either
here or on Earth with those left to the control of
Nature and locality, or the effects of the natural
competition, which is in its way perhaps as keen among
plants and animals as among men. Martialists have
the same delight in bright colours as Orientals, with
far greater taste in selection and combination; and
the favourite hues not only of their flowers, tame
birds, fishes, and quadrupeds, but of plants in whose
cultivation utility has been the primary object, contrast
signally, as I have said, with the dull tints of the
undomesticated flora and fauna, of which comparatively
scanty remnants were visible here and there in this
rich country.

Presently we came within sight of the river, over
which was a single bridge, formed by what might be
called a tube of metal built into strong walls on
either bank. In fact, however, the sides were
of open work, and only the roof and floor were solid.
The river at this, its narrowest point, was perhaps
a furlong in breadth, and it was not without instinctive
uneasiness that I trusted to the security of a single
piece of metal spanning, without even the strength
afforded by the form of the arch, so great a space.

The first object we were to visit lay at some distance
down the stream. As we approached the point,
we passed a place where the river widened considerably.
The main channel in the centre was kept clear and
deep to afford an uninterrupted course for navigation;
but on either side were rocks that broke the river
into pools and shallows, such as here, no less than
on Earth, form the favourite haunts or spawning places
of the fish. In some of the lesser pools birds
larger than the stork, bearing under the throat an
expansible bag like that of the pelican, were seeking
for prey. They were watched and directed by a
master on the shore, and carried to a square tank,
fixed on a wheeled frame not unlike that of the ordinary
carriage, which accompanied him, each fish they took.
I observed that the latter were carefully seized,

**Page 131**

with the least possible violence or injury, placed
by a jerk head-downmost in the throat-bag, which, though
when empty it was scarcely perceptible, would contain
prey of very considerable size and weight, and as
carefully disgorged into the tank. In one of the
most extensive pools, too deep for these birds, a couple
of men had spread a sort of net, not unlike those
used on Earth, but formed of twisted metal threads
with very narrow meshes, enclosing the whole pool,
a space of perhaps some 400 square yards. In the
centre of this an electric lamp was let down into
the water, some feet below the surface. The fish
crowded towards it, and a sudden shock of electricity
transmitted through the meshes of the net, as well
as from the wires of the lamp circuit, stunned for
a few minutes all life within the enclosure.
The fish then floated on the surface, the net was
drawn together, and they were collected and sorted;
some which, as I afterwards learned, were required
for breeding, being carefully and separately preserved
in a smaller tank, those fit for food cast into the
larger one, those too small for the one purpose and
not needed for the other being thrown back into the
water. I noted, however, that many fish apparently
valuable were among those thus rejected. I spoke
to one of the fishermen, who, regarding me with great
surprise and curiosity, at last answered briefly that
a stringent law forbids the catching of spawning fish
except for breeding purposes. Those, therefore,
for which the season was close-time were invariably
spared.

In sea-fishing a much larger net, sometimes enclosing
more than 10,000 square yards, is employed. This
fishing is conducted chiefly at night, the electric
lamp being then much more effective in attracting the
prey, and lowered only a few inches below the surface.
Many large destructive creatures, unfit for food,
generally of a nature intermediate between fish and
reptiles, haunt the seas. It is held unwise to
exterminate them, since they do their part in keeping
down an immense variety of smaller creatures, noxious
for one reason or another, and also in clearing the
water from carrion and masses of seaweed which might
otherwise taint the air of the sea-coasts, especially
near the mouths of large tropical rivers. But
these sea-monsters devour enormous quantities of fish,
and the hunters appointed to deal with them are instructed
to limit their numbers to the minimum required.
Their average increase is to be destroyed each year.
If at any time it appear that, for whatever cause,
the total number left alive is falling off, the chief
of this service suspends it partially or wholly at
his discretion.

**Page 132**

We now came to the entrance of a vast enclosure bordering
on the river, the greatest fish-breeding establishment
on this continent, or indeed in this world. One
of its managers courteously showed me over it.
It is not necessary minutely to describe its arrangements,
from the spawning ponds and the hatching tanks—­the
latter contained in a huge building, whose temperature
is preserved with the utmost care at the rate found
best suited to the ova—­to the multitude
of streams, ponds, and lakes in which the different
kinds of fish are kept during the several stages of
their existence. The task of the breeders is
much facilitated by the fact that the seas of Mars
are not, like ours, salt; and though sea and river
fish are almost as distinct as on Earth, each kind
having its own habitat, whose conditions are carefully
reproduced in the breeding or feeding reservoirs, the
same kind of water suits all alike. It is necessary,
however, to keep the fishes of tropical seas and streams
in water of a very different temperature from that
suited to others brought from arctic or sub-arctic
climates; and this, like every other point affecting
the natural peculiarities and habits of the fish,
is attended to with minute and accurate care.
The skill and science brought to bear on the task
of breeding accomplish this and much more difficult
operations with marvellous ease and certainty.

On one of the buildings I observed one of the most
remarkable, largest, and most complete timepieces
I had yet seen; and I had on this occasion an opportunity
of examining it closely. The dial was oblong,
enclosed in a case of clear transparent crystal, somewhat
resembling in form the open portion of a mercurial
barometer. At the top were three circles of different
colours, divided by twelve equidistant lines radiating
from the centres and subdivided again and again by
the same number. Exactly at the uppermost point
of each was a golden indicator. One of these
circles marked the temperature, graduated from the
lowest to the highest degree ever known in that latitude.
Another indicated the direction of the wind, while
the depth of colour in the circle itself, graduated
in a manner carefully explained to me, but my notes
of which are lost, showed the exact force of the atmospheric
current. The third served the purpose of a barometer.
A coloured band immediately below indicated by the
variations of tint the character of the coming weather.
This band stretched right across the face; below it
were figures indicating the day of the year.
The central portion of the face was occupied by a
larger circle, half-green and half-black; the former
portion representing the colour of the daylight sky,
the latter emblematic of night. On this circle
the Sun and the planets were represented by figures
whose movement showed exactly the actual place of each
in the celestial sphere. The two Moons were also
figured, their phases and position at each moment
being accurately presented to the eye. Around

**Page 133**

this circle was a narrow band divided into strips of
different length of various colours, each representing
one of the peculiar divisions of the Martial day;
that point which came under the golden indicator showing
the *zyda* and the exact moment of the *zyda*,
while the movement of the inner circle fixed with
equal accuracy the period of day or night. Below
were other circles from which the observer could learn
the amount of moisture in the atmosphere, the intensity
of the sunlight, and the electric tension at the moment.
Each of the six smaller circles registered on a moving
ribbon the indications of every successive moment,
these ribbons when unrolled forming a perfect record
of temperature, atmospheric pressure, wind, and so
forth, in the form of a curve—­a register
kept for more than 8000 Martial years.

Four times during the revolution of the great circle
each large clock emits for a couple of minutes a species
of chime, the nature of which my ignorance of music
renders me unable to describe:—­viz., when
the line dividing the green and black semicircles
is horizontal at noon and midnight, and an hour before,
at average sunrise and sunset, it becomes perpendicular.
The individual character of the several chimes, tunes,
or peals, whatever they should be called, is so distinct
that even I appreciated it. Further, as the first
point of the coloured strip distinguishing each several
*zyda* reaches the golden indicator, a single
slightly prolonged sound—­I fancy what is
known on Earth as a single chord—­is emitted.
Of these again each is peculiar, so that no one with
an ear for music can doubt what is the period of the
day announced. The sound is never, even in the
immediate vicinity of the clock, unpleasantly loud;
while it penetrates to an amazing distance. It
would be perfectly easy, if needful, to regulate all
clocks by mechanical control through the electric
network extended all over the face of the planet;
but the perfect accuracy of each individual timepiece
renders any such check needless. In those latitudes
where day and night during the greater part of the
year are not even approximately equal, the black and
green semicircles are so enlarged or diminished by
mechanical means, that the hour of the day or night
is represented as accurately as on the Equator itself.

The examination of this establishment occupied us
for two or three hours, and when we remounted our
carriage it seemed to me only reasonable that Eveena
should be weary both in mind and body. I proposed,
therefore, to return at once, but against this she
earnestly protested.

“Well,” I said, “we will finish
our excursion, then. Only remember that whenever
you do feel tired you must tell me at once. I
do not know what exertion you can bear, and of course
it would be most inconsiderate to measure your endurance
by my own.”

**Page 134**

She promised, and we drove on for another hour in
the direction of a range of hills to the north-eastward.
The lower and nearer portion of this range might he
400 feet above the general level of the plain; beyond,
the highest peaks rose to perhaps 1500 feet, the average
summit being about half that height. Where our
road brought us to the foot of the first slope, large
groves of the *calmyra*, whose fruit contains
a sort of floury pulp like roasted potato, were planted
on ground belonging to the State, and tenanted by
young men belonging to that minority which, as Esmo
had told me not being fortunate enough to find private
employment, is thus provided for. Encountering
one of these, he pointed out to us the narrow road
which, winding up the slope, afforded means of bringing
down in waggons during the two harvest seasons, each
of which lasts for about fifty days, the fruit of
these groves, which furnishes a principal article of
food. The trees do not reach to a higher level
than about 400 feet; and above this we had to ascend
on foot by a path winding through meadows, which I
at first supposed to be natural. Eveena, however,
quickly undeceived me, pointing out the prevalence
of certain plants peculiar to the cultivated pastures
we had seen in the plain. These were so predominant
as to leave no reasonable doubt that they had been
originally sown by the hand of man, though the irregularity
of their arrangement, and the encroachment of one
species upon the ground of another, enabled my companion
to prove to me with equal clearness that since its
first planting the pasture had been entirely neglected.
It was, she thought, worth planting once for all with
the most nutritious herbage, but not worth the labour
of subsequent close cultivation. Any lady belonging
to a civilised people, and accustomed to a country
life, upon Earth might easily have perceived all that
Eveena discovered; but considering how seldom the
latter had left her home, how few opportunities she
had to see anything of practical agriculture, the
quickness of her perception and the correctness of
her inferences not a little surprised me. The
path we pursued led directly to the object of our
visit. The waters of the higher hills were collected
in a vast tank excavated in an extensive plateau at
the mid-level. At the summit of the first ascent
we met and were escorted by one of the officials entrusted
with the charge of these works, which supply water
of extraordinary purity to a population of perhaps
a quarter of a million, inhabiting a district of some
10,000 square miles in extent. The tank was about
sixty feet in depth, and perhaps a mile in length,
with half that breadth. Its sides and bottom-were
lined with the usual concrete. Our guide informed
me that in many cases tanks were covered with the
crystal employed for doors and windows; but in the-pure
air of these hills such a precaution was thought unnecessary,
as it would have been exceedingly costly. The
water itself was of wonderful purity, so clear that

**Page 135**

the smallest object at the bottom was visible where
the Sun, still high in the heavens, shone directly
upon the surface. But this purity would by no
means satisfy the standard of Martial sanitary science.
In the first place, it is passed into a second division
of the tank, where it is subjected to some violent
electric action till every kind of organic germ it
may contain is supposed to be completely destroyed.
It is then passed through several covered channels
and mechanically or chemically cleansed from every
kind of inorganic impurity, and finally oxygenated
or aerated with air which has undergone a yet more
elaborate purification. At every stage in this
process, a phial of water is taken out and examined
in a dark chamber by means of a beam of light emanating
from a powerful electric lamp and concentrated by a
huge crystal lens. If this beam detect any perceptible
dust or matter capable of scattering the light, the
water is pronounced impure and passed through further
processes. Only when the contents of the bottle
remain absolutely dark, in the midst of an atmosphere
whose floating dust renders the beam visible on either
side, so that the phial, while perfectly transparent
to the light, nevertheless interrupts the beam with
a block of absolute darkness, is it considered fit
for human consumption. It is then distributed
through pipes of concrete, into which no air can possibly
enter, to cisterns equally, air-tight in every house.
The water in these is periodically examined by officers
from the waterworks, who ascertain that it has contracted
no impurity either in the course of its passage through
hundreds of miles of piping or in the cisterns themselves.
The Martialists consider that to this careful purification
of their water they owe in great measure their exemption
from the epidemic diseases which were formerly not
infrequent. They maintain that all such diseases
are caused by organic self-multiplying germs, and
laugh to scorn the doctrine of spontaneous generation,
either of disease, or of even such low organic life
as can propagate it. I suggested that the atmosphere
itself must, if their theory were true, convey the
microscopic seeds of disease even more freely and
universally than the water.

“Doubtless,” replied our guide, “it
would scatter them more widely; but it does not enable
them to penetrate and germinate in the body half so
easily as when conveyed by water. You must be
aware that the lining of the upper air-passages arrests
most of the impurities contained in the inhaled air
before it comes into contact with the blood in the
lungs themselves. Moreover, the extirpation of
one disease after another, the careful isolation of
all infectious cases, and the destruction of every
article that could preserve or convey the poisonous
germs, has in the course of ages enabled us utterly
to destroy them.”

This did not seem to me consistent with the confession
that disorders of one kind or another still not infrequently
decimate their highly-bred domestic animals, however
the human race itself may have been secured against
contagion. I did not, however, feel competent
to argue the question with one who had evidently studied
physiology much more deeply than myself; and had mastered
the records of an experience infinitely longer, guided
by knowledge far more accurate, than is possessed
by the most accomplished of Terrestrial physiologists.

**Page 136**

The examination of these works of course occupied
us for a long time, and obliged us to traverse several
miles of ground. More than once I had suggested
to Eveena that we should leave our work unfinished,
and on every opportunity had insisted that she should
rest. I had been too keenly interested in the
latter part of the explanation given me, to detect
the fatigue she anxiously sought to conceal; but when
we left the works, I was more annoyed than surprised
to find that the walk down-hill to our carriage was
too much for her. The vexation I felt with myself
gave, after the manner of men, some sharpness to the
tone of my remonstrance with her.

“I bade you, and you promised, to tell me as
soon as you felt tired; and you have let me almost
tire you to death! Your obedience, however strict
in theory, reminds me in practice of that promised
by women on Earth in their marriage-vow—­and
never paid or remembered afterwards.”

She did not answer; and finding that her strength
was utterly exhausted, I carried her down the remainder
of the hill and placed her in the carriage. During
our return neither of us spoke. Ascribing her
silence to habit or fatigue, perhaps to displeasure,
and busied in recalling what I had seen and heard,
I did not care to “make conversation,”
as I certainly should have done had I guessed what
impression my taciturnity made on my companion’s
mind. I was heartily glad for her sake when we
regained the gate of her father’s garden.
Committing the carriage to the charge of an amba, I
half led, half carried Eveena along the avenue, overhung
with the grand conical bells—­gold, crimson,
scarlet, green, white, or striped or variegated with
some or all these colours—­of the glorious
*leveloo*, the Martial convolvulus. Its
light clinging stems and foliage hid the *astyra’s*
arched branches overhead, and formed a screen on either
side. From its bells flew at our approach a whole
flock of the tiny and beautiful caree, which take
the chief part in rendering to the flora of Mars such
services as the flowers of Earth receive from bees
and butterflies. They feed on the nectar, farina,
syrup, and other secretions, sweet or bitter, in which
the artificial flowers of Mars are peculiarly abundant,
and make their nests in the calyx or among the petals.
These lovely little birds—­about the size
of a hornet, but perfect birds in miniature, with
wings as large as those of the largest Levantine *papilio*,
and feathery down equally fine and soft—­are
perhaps the most shy and timid of all creatures familiar
with the presence of Martial humanity. The varied
colours of their plumage, combined and intermingled
in marvellously minute patterns, are all of those
subdued or dead tints agreeable to the taste of Japanese
artists, and perhaps to no other. They signally
contrast the vivid and splendid colouring of objects
created or developed by human genius and patience,
from the exquisite decorations and jewel-like masses

**Page 137**

of domestic and public architecture to the magnificent
flowers and fruit produced, by the labour of countless
generations, from originals so dissimilar that only
the records of past ages can trace or the searching
comparisons of science recognise them. I am told
that the present race of flower-birds themselves are
a sort of indirect creation of art. They certainly
vary in size, shape, and colour according to the flower
each exclusively frequents; and those which haunt
the cultivated bells of the *leveloo* present
an amazing contrast to the far tinier and far less
beautiful *caree* which have not yet abandoned
the wildflowers for those of the garden. Above
two hundred varieties distinguished by ornithologists
frequent only the domesticated flowers.

The flight of this swarm of various beauty recalled
the conversation of last night; and breaking off unobserved
a long fine tendril of the leveloo, I said lightly—­

“Flower-birds are not so well-trained as *esvee*,
bambina.”

Never forgetting a word of mine, and never failing
to catch with quick intelligence the sense of the
most epigrammatic or delicate metaphor, Eveena started
and looked up, as if stung by a serious reproach.
Fancying that overpowering fatigue had so shaken her
nerves, I would not allow her to speak. But I
did not understand how much she had been distressed,
till in her own chamber, cloak and veil thrown aside,
she stood beside my seat, her sleeveless arms folded
behind her, drooping like a lily beaten down by a
thunderstorm. Then she murmured sadly—­

“I did not think of offending. But you
are quite right; disobedience should never pass.”

“Certainly not,” I replied, with a smile
she did not see. Taking both the little hands
in my left, I laid the tendril on her soft white shoulders,
but so gently that in her real distress she did not
feel the touch. “You see I can keep my
word; but never let me tire you again. My flower-bird
cannot take wing if she anger me in earnest.”

“Are you not angered now?” she asked,
glancing up in utter surprise.

My eyes, or the sight of the leveloo, answered her;
and a sweet bright smile broke through her look of
frightened, penitent submission, as she snatched the
tendril and snapped it in my hand.

“Cruel!” she said, with a pretty assumption
of ill-usage, “to visit a first fault with the
whip.”

“You are hard to please, bambina! I knew
no better. Seriously, until I can measure your
strength more truly, never again let me feel that in
inviting your company I have turned my pleasure into
your pain.”

“No, indeed,” she urged, once more in
earnest. “Girls so seldom pass the gate,
and men never walk where a carriage will go, or I should
not have been so stupid. But if I had blistered
my feet, and the leveloo had been a nut-vine, the
fruit was worth the scratches.”

“What do you know, my child, either of blisters
or stripes?”

**Page 138**

“You will teach me——­No, you
know I don’t mean that! But you will take
me with you sometimes till I learn better! If
you are going to leave me at home in future “——­

“My child, can you not trust me to take you
for my own pleasure?”

The silvery tone of her low sweet laugh was truly
perfectly musical.

“Forgive me,” she said, nestling in the
cushions at my knee, and seeking with upturned eyes,
like a child better assured of pardon than of full
reconciliation, to read my face, “it is very
naughty to laugh, and very ungrateful, when you speak
to please me; but is it real kindness to say what
I should be very silly to believe?”

“You will believe whatever I tell you, child.
If you wish to anger a man, even with you, tell him
that he is lying.”

“I do nothing but misbehave,” she said,
in earnest despondency. “I——­”
But I sealed her lips effectually for the moment.

“Why did you not speak as we came home?”

“You were tired, and I was thinking over all
I had seen. Besides, who talks air?” [makes
conversation].

“You always talk when you are pleased.
The lip-sting (scolding) and silence frightened me
so, you nearly heard me crying.”

“Crying for fear? You did well to break
the leveloo!... And so you think I must be tired
of my bride, before the colours have gone round on
the dial?”

“Not tired of her. You will like a little
longer to find her in the cushions when you are vexed
or idle; but you don’t want her where her ignorance
wearies and her weakness hampers you.”

“Are you an *esve*, to be caged at home,
and played with for lack of better employment?
We shall never understand each other, child.”

“What more can I be? But don’t say
we shall never understand each other,” she pleaded
earnestly. “It took time and trouble to
make my pet understand and obey each word and sign.
Zevle gave hers more slaps and fewer sweets, and it
learned sooner. But, like me, you want your esve
to be happy, not only to fly straight and play prettily.
She will try hard to learn if you will teach her,
and not be so afraid of hurting her, as if she expected
sweets from both hands. It is easy for you to
see through her empty head: do cot give her up
till she has had time to look a little way into your
eyes.”

“Eveena,” I answered, almost as much pained
as touched by the unaffected humility which had so
accepted and carried out my ironical comparison, “one
simple magnet-key would unlock the breast whose secrets
seem so puzzling; but it has hardly a name in your
tongue, and cannot yet be in your hands.”

**Page 139**

“Ah, yes!” she said softly, “you
gave it me; do you think I have lost it in two nights?
But the esve cannot be loved as she loves her master.
I could half understand the prodigal heart that would
buy a girl’s life with yours, and all that is
bound up in yours. No other *man* would
have done it—­in our world,” she added,
answering my gesture of dissent; “but they say
that the terrible *kargynda* will stand by his
dying mate till he is shot down. You bought my
heart, my love, all I am, when you bought my life,
and never asked the cost.” She continued
almost in a whisper, her rose-suffused cheeks and moist
eyes hidden from my sight as the lips murmured their
loving words into my ear,—­“Though
the nestling never looked from under the wing, do you
think she knows not what to expect when she is bought
from the nest? She dares not struggle in the
hand that snatches her; much more did she deserve
to be rated and rapped for fluttering in that which
saved her life. Bought twice over, caged by right
as by might—­was her thought midnight to
your eyes, when she wondered at the look that watched
her so quietly, the hand that would not try to touch
lest it should scare her, the patience that soothed
and coaxed her to perch on the outstretched finger,
like a flower-bird tamed at last? Do you think
that name, given her by lips which softened even their
words of fondness for her ear, did not go to her heart
straight as the esve flies home, or that it could
ever be forgotten? There is a chant young girls
are fond of, which tells more than I can say.”

Her tones fell so low that I should have lost them,
had her lips not actually touched my ear while she
chanted the strange words in the sweetest notes of
her sweet voice:—­

 “Never yet hath single sun
 Seen a flower-bird tamed and won;
 Sun and stars shall quit the sky
 Ere a bird so tamed shall fly.

 “Never human lips have kissed
 Flower-bird tamed ’twixt mist
and mist;
 Bird so tamed from tamer’s
heart
 Night of death shall hardly part.”

**CHAPTER XII — ON THE RIVER.**

The next morning saw our journey commenced. Eveena’s
wardrobe, with my own and my books, portfolios, models,
and specimens of Terrestrial art and mechanism, were
packed in light metallic cases adapted to the larger
form of carriage whereof I have made mention.
I was fortunate in escaping the actual parting scene
between Eveena and her family, and my own leave-taking
was hurried. Esmo and his son accompanied us,
leading the way in one carriage, while Eveena and myself
occupied that which we had used on our memorable trip
to the Astronaut. Half an hour brought us to
the road beside the river, and a few minutes more to
the point at which a boat awaited us. The road
being some eight or ten feet above the level of the
water, a light ladder not three feet long was ready
to assist our descent to the deck. The difference

**Page 140**

of size between the Martial race and my own was forcibly
impressed upon me, in seeing that Esmo and his son
found this assistance needful, or at least convenient,
while I simply stepped rather than jumped to the deck,
and lifted Eveena straight from her carriage to her
seat under the canopy that covered the stern of the
vessel. Intended only for river navigation, propelled
by a small screw like two fishtails set at right angles,
working horizontally; the vessel had but two cabins,
one on either side of the central part occupied by
the machinery. The stern apartment was appropriated
to myself and my bride, the forecastle, if I may so
call it, to our companions, the boatmen having berths
in the corners of the machine-room. The vessel
was flat-bottomed, drawing about eighteen inches of
water and rising about five feet from the surface,
leaving an interior height which obliged me to be
cautious in order not to strike my head against every
projection or support of the cabin roof. We spent
the whole of the day, however, on deck, and purposely
slackened the speed of the boat, which usually travels
some thirty miles an hour, in order to enjoy the effect
and observe the details of the landscape. For
the first few miles our voyage lay through the open
plain. Then we passed, on the left as we ascended
the stream, the mountain on whose summit I tried with
my binocular to discern the Astronaut, but unsuccessfully,
the trees on the lower slopes intercepting the view.
Eveena, seeing my eyes fixed on that point, extended
her hand and gently drew the glass out of mine.

“Not yet,” she said; which elicited from
me the excuse—­

“That mountain has for me remembrances more
interesting than those of my voyage, or even than
the hopes of return.”

Presently, as we followed the course of the stream,
we lost sight altogether of the rapidly dwindling
patches of colour representing the enclosures of Ecasfe.
On our left, at a distance varying from three to five
miles, but constantly increasing as the stream bent
to the northward, was the mountain range I had scanned
in my descent. On our right the plain dipped
below the horizon while still but a few feet above
the level of the river; but in the distant sky we discerned
some objects like white clouds, which from their immobility
and fixedness of outline I soon discovered to be snow-crowned
hills, lower, however, than those to the northward,
and perhaps some forty miles distant. The valley
is one of the richest and most fertile portions of
this continent, and was consequently thoroughly cultivated
and more densely peopled than most parts even of the
Equatorial zone. An immediate river frontage
being as convenient as agreeable, the enclosures on
either bank were continuous, and narrow in proportion
to their depth; the largest occupying no more than
from one hundred and fifty to two hundred yards of
the bank, the smaller from half to one quarter of
that length. Most had a tunnel pierced under the

**Page 141**

road bordering the river, through which the water
was admitted to their grounds and carried in a minute
stream around and even through the house; for ornament
rather than for use, since every house in a district
so populous has a regular artificial water supply,
and irrigation, as I have explained, is not required.
The river itself was embellished with masses of water-flowers;
and water-birds, the smallest scarcely larger than
a wagtail, the largest somewhat exceeding the size
of a swan, of a different form and dark grey plumage,
but hardly less graceful, seemed to be aware of the
stringent protection they enjoyed from the law.
They came up to our boat and fed out of Eveena’s
hand with perfect fearlessness. I could not induce
any of them to be equally familiar with myself, my
size probably surprising them as much as their masters,
and leading them to the same doubt whether I were
really and wholly human. The lower slopes of the
hills were covered with orchards of every kind, each
species occupying the level best suited to it, from
the reed-supported orange-like *alva* of the
lowlands to the tall *astyra*, above which stretched
the timber forests extending as high as trees could
grow, while between these and the permanent snow-line
lay the yellowish herbage of extensive pastures.
A similar mountain range on earth would have presented
a greater variety of colouring and scenery, the total
absence of glaciers, even in the highest valleys,
creating a notable difference. The truth is that
the snows of Mars are nowhere deep, and melt in the
summer to such an extent that that constant increase
whose downward tendency feeds Terrestrial glaciers
cannot take place. Probably the thin atmosphere
above the snow-line can hold but little watery vapour.
Esmo was of opinion that the snow on the highest steeps,
even on a level plateau, was never more than two feet
in depth; and in more than one case a wind-swept peak
or pinnacle was kept almost clear, and presented in
its grey, green, or vermilion rocks a striking contrast
to the masses of creamy white around it. This
may explain the very rapid diminution of the polar
ice-caps in the summer of either, but especially of
the Southern hemisphere; and also the occasional appearance
of large dark spots in their midst, where the shallow
snow has probably been swept away by the rare storms
of this planet from an extensive land surface.
It is supposed that no inconsiderable part of the
ice and snow immediately surrounding the poles covers
land; but, though balloon parties have of late occasionally
reached the poles, they have never ventured to remain
there long enough to disembark and ascertain the fact.

**Page 142**

Towards evening the stream turned more decidedly to
the north, and at this point Esmo brought out an instrument
constructed somewhat on the principle of a sextant
or quadrant, but without the mirror, by which we were
enabled to take reliable measures of the angles.
By a process which at that time I did not accurately
follow, and which I had not subsequently the means
of verifying, the distance as well as the angle subtended
by the height was obtained. Kevima, after working
out his father’s figures, informed me that the
highest peak in view—­the highest in Mars—­was
not less than 44,000 feet. No Martial balloonist,
much less any Martial mountain-climber, has ever, save
once, reached a greater height than 16,000 feet—­the
air at the sea-level being scarcely more dense than
ours at 10,000 feet. Kevima indicated one spot
in the southern range of remarkable interest, associated
with an incident which forms an epoch in the records
of Martial geography. A sloping plateau, some
19,000 feet above the sea-level, is defined with remarkable
clearness in the direction from which we viewed it.
The forests appeared to hide, though they do not of
course actually approach, its lower edge. On
one side and to the rear it is shut in by precipices
so abrupt that the snow fails to cling to them, while
on the remaining side it is separated by a deep, wide
cleft from the western portion of the range.
Here for centuries were visible the relics of an exploring
party, which reached this plateau and never returned.
Attempts have, since the steering of balloons has become
an accomplished fact, been made to reach the point,
but without success, and those who have approached
nearest have failed to find any of the long-visible
remains of an expedition which perished four or five
thousand years ago. Kevima thought it probable
that the metallic poles even then employed for tents
and for climbing purposes might still be intact; but
if so, they were certainly buried in the snow, and
Esmo believed it more likely that even these had perished.

As the mists of evening fell we retreated to our cabin,
which was warmed by a current of heated air from the
electric machinery. Here our evening meal was
served, at which Esmo and his son joined us, Eveena
resuming, even in their presence, the veil she had
worn on deck but had laid aside the moment we were
alone. An hour or two after sunset, the night
(an unusual occurrence in Mars) was clear and fine,
and I took this opportunity of observing from a new
standpoint the familiar constellations. The scintillation
so characteristic of the fixed stars, especially in
the temperate climates of the Earth, was scarcely
perceptible. Scattered once more over the surface
of a defined sky, it was much easier than in space
to recognise the several constellations; but their
new and strange situations were not a little surprising
at first sight, some of those which, as seen on Earth
revolved slowly in the neighbourhood of the poles,

**Page 143**

being now not far from the tropics, and some, which
had their place within the tropics, now lying far
to north or south. Around the northern pole the
Swan swings by its tail, as in our skies the Lesser
Bear; Arided being a Pole-Star which needs no Pointers
to indicate its position. Vega is the only other
brilliant star in the immediate neighbourhood; and,
save for the presence of the Milky Way directly crossing
it, the arctic circle is distinctly less bright than
our own. The south pole lies in one of the dullest
regions of the heavens, near the chief star of the
Peacock. Arcturus, the Great Bear, the Twins,
the Lion, the Scorpion, and Fomalhaut are among the
ornaments of the Equatorial zone: the Cross,
the Centaur, and the Ship of our antarctic constellations,
are visible far into the northern hemisphere.
On the present occasion the two Moons were both visible
in the west, the horns of both crescents pointing
in the same direction, though the one was in her last,
the other in her first phase.

As we were watching them, Eveena, wrapped in a cloak
of fur not a little resembling that of the silver
fox, but far softer, stole her hand into mine and
whispered a request that I would lend her the instrument
I was using. With some instruction and help she
contrived to adjust it, her sight requiring a decided
alteration of the focus and an approach of the two
eye-pieces; the eyes of her race being set somewhat
nearer than in an average Aryan countenance. She
expressed no little surprise at the clearness of definition,
and the marked enlargement of the discs of the two
satellites, and would have used the instrument to
scan the stars and visible planets had I not insisted
on her retirement; the light atmosphere, as is always
the case on clear nights, when no cloud-veil prevents
rapid radiation from the surface, being bitterly cold,
and her life not having accustomed her to the night
air even in the most genial season.

As we could, of course, see nothing of the country
through which we passed during the night, and as Esmo
informed me that little or nothing of special interest
would occur during this part of our voyage, our vessel
went at full speed, her pilot being thoroughly acquainted
with the river, and an electric light in the bow enabling
him to steer with perfect confidence and safety.
When, therefore, we came on deck after the dissipation
of the morning mist, we found ourselves in a scene
very different from that which we had left. Our
course was north by west. On either bank lay a
country cultivated indeed, but chiefly pastoral, producing
a rich herbage, grazed by innumerable herds, among
which I observed with interest several flocks of large
birds, kept, as Esmo informed me, partly for their
plumage. This presented remarkable combinations
of colour, far surpassing in brilliancy and in variety
of pattern the tail of the peacock, and often rivalling
in length and delicacy, while exceeding in beauty of
colouring, the splendid feathers which must have embarrassed
the Bird of Paradise, even before they rendered him
an object of pursuit by those who have learnt the
vices and are eager to purchase the wares of civilised
man. Immediately across our course, at a distance
of some thirty miles, stretched a range of mountains.
I inquired of Esmo how the river turned in order to
avoid them, since no opening was visible even through
my glass.

**Page 144**

“The proper course of the river,” he said,
“lies at the foot of those hills. But this
would take us out of our road, and, moreover, the
stream is not navigable for many stoloi above the turning-point.
We shall hold on nearly in the same direction as the
present till we land at their foot.”

“And how,” I said, “are we to cross
them?”

“At your choice, either by carriage or by balloon,”
he said. “There is at our landing-place
a town in which we shall easily procure either.”

“But,” said I, “though our luggage
is far less heavy than would be that of a bride on
Earth, and Eveena’s forms the smallest portion
of it, I should fancy that it must be inconveniently
heavy for a balloon.”

“Certainly,” he replied; “but we
could send it by carriage even over the mountain roads.
The boat, however, will go on, and will meet us some
thirty miles beyond the point where we leave it.”

“And how is the boat to pass over the hills?”

“Not over, but under,” he said, smiling.
“There is no natural passage entirely through
the range, but there is within it a valley the bottom
of which is not much higher than this plain. Of
the thirty miles to be traversed, about one-half lies
in the course of this valley, along which an artificial
canal has been made. Through the hills at either
end a tunnel has been cut, the one of six, the other
of about nine miles in length, affording a perfectly
safe and easy course for the boat; and it is through
these that nearly all the heavy traffic passing in
this direction is conveyed.”

“I should like,” I said, “if it
be possible, to pass through one at least of these
tunnels, unless there be on the mountains themselves
something especially worth seeing.”

“Nothing,” he replied. “They
are low, none much exceeding the height of that from
which you descended.”

Eveena now joined us on deck, and we amused ourselves
for the next two hours in observing the different
animals, of which such numbers were to be seen at
every turn, domesticated and trained for one or other
of the many methods in which the brutes can serve
the convenience, the sustenance, or the luxury of
man. Animal food is eaten on Mars; but the flesh
of birds and fish is much more largely employed than
that of quadrupeds, and eggs and milk enter into the
cuisine far more extensively than either. In
fact, flesh and fish are used much as they seem to
have been in the earlier period of Greek civilisation,
as relish and supplement to fruits, vegetables, and
farinaceous dishes, rather than as the principal element
of food. As their training and their extreme
tameness indicate, domestic creatures, even those
destined only to serve as food or to furnish clothing,
are treated not indeed with tenderness, but with gentleness,
and without either the neglect or the cruelty which
so revolt humane men in witnessing the treatment of
Terrestrial animals by those who have personal charge
of them. To describe any considerable number

**Page 145**

of the hundred forms I saw during this short period
would be impossible. I have drawings, or rather
pictures, of most, taken by the light-painting process,
which I hope herewith to remit to Earth, and which
at least serve to give a general idea of the points
in which the Martial chiefly differs from the Terrestrial
fauna. Those animals whose coats furnish a textile
fibre more resemble reindeer and goats than sheep;
their wool is softer, longer, and less curly, free
also from the greasiness of the sheep.

It seemed to me that an extreme quaintness characterised
the domestic creatures kept for special purposes.
This was not the effect of mere novelty, for animals
like the *amba* and birds like the *esve*,
trained to the performance of services congenial to
their natural habits, however dissimilar to Terrestrial
species, had not the same air of singularity, or rather
of monstrosity. But in the creatures bred to
furnish wool, feathers, or the like, some single feature
was always exaggerated into disproportionate dimensions.
Thus the *elnerve* is loaded with long plumes,
sometimes twice the length of the body, and curled
upward at the extremity, so that it can neither fly
nor run; and though its plumage is exquisitely beautiful,
the creature itself is simply ludicrous. It bears
the same popular repute for sagacity as the goose
of European farmyards. The *angasto* has
hair or wool so long that its limbs are almost hidden,
just before shearing-time, in the tresses that hang
from the body half way to the ground. The *calperze*,
a bird no larger than a Norfolk turkey, has the hinder
part developed to an enormous size, so that the graceful
peacock-like neck and shoulders appear as if lost in
the huge proportions of the body, and the little wings
are totally unfit to raise it in the air; while it
lays almost daily eggs as large as those of the ostrich
and of peculiar richness and flavour. Nearly all
the domestic birds kept for the sake of eggs or feathers
have wings that look as if they had been clipped,
and are incapable of flight. Creatures valued
for their flesh, such as the *quorno* (somewhat
like the eland, but with the single horn so common
among its congeners in Mars, and with a soft white
hide), and the *viste*, a bird about the size
of the peacock, with the form of the partridge and
the flavour of grouse or black game, preserve more
natural proportions. The wing-quills of the latter,
however, having been systematically plucked for hundreds
of generations, are now dwarfed and useless. These
animals are not encouraged to make fat on the one hand,
or to develop powerful muscles and sinews on the other.
They are fed for part of the year on the higher and
thinner pastures of the mountains. When brought
down to the meadows of the plain, they are allowed
to graze only for a few hours before sunset and after
sunrise. They thus preserve much of the flavour
of game or mountain sheep and cattle, which the oxen

**Page 146**

and poultry of Europe have lost; flavour, not quantity,
being the chief object of care with Martial graziers.
Sometimes, however, some peculiarity perfectly useless,
or even inconvenient, appears to be naturally associated
with that which is artificially developed. Thus
the beak of the *elnerve* is weak and often splits,
so as to render its rearing troublesome and entail
considerable losses; while the horns of the wool-bearing
animals are long and strong enough to be formidable,
but so rough and coarsely grained that they are turned
to no account for use or ornament.

We were rapidly approaching the foot of the hills,
where the river made another and abrupt turn.
At this point the produce of the whole upper valley
is generally embarked, and supplies from all other
quarters are here received and distributed. In
consequence, a town large and important for this planet,
where no one who can help it prefers the crowded street
to the freedom and expanse of the country, had grown
up, with about a hundred and fifty houses, and perhaps
a thousand inhabitants. It was so much matter
of course that voyagers should disembark to cross
the hills or to pursue their journey along the upper
part of the river by road, that half-a-dozen different
partnerships made it their business to assist in the
transfer of passengers and light wares. Ahead
of us was a somewhat steep hill-slope, in the lower
part of which a wall absolutely perpendicular had
been cut by those who pierced the tunnel, the mouth
of which was now clearly visible immediately before
us. It was about twelve feet in height, and perhaps
twenty feet in width. The stream, which, like
nearly all Martial rivers, is wide and shallow, had
during the last fifty miles of our course grown narrower,
with a depth at the same time constantly lessening,
so that some care was required on the part of the
pilot to avoid running aground. A stream of twenty
inches in depth, affording room for two boats to pass
abreast, is considered navigable for vessels only
carrying passengers; thirty inches are required to
afford a course which for heavy freight is preferable
to the road. Eveena had taken it for granted
that we should disembark here, and it was not till
we had come within a hundred yards of the landing-place—­where
the bank was perpendicular and levelled to a height
above the water, which enabled passengers to step directly
from the deck of the boat—­without slackening
our speed, that the possibility of our intending to
accompany the boat on its subterrene course occurred
to her. As she did not speak, but merely drew
closer to me, and held fast my hand, I had no idea
of her real distress till we were actually at the
mouth of the black and very frightful-looking passage,
and the pilot had lighted the electric lamp. As
the boat shot under the arch she could not repress
a cry of terror. Naturally putting my arm round
her at this sign of alarm, I felt that she was trembling
violently, and a single look, despite her veil, convinced
me that she was crying, though in silence and doing
her utmost to conceal her tears.

**Page 147**

“Are you so frightened, child?” I asked.
“I have been through many subterranean passages,
though none so long and dark as this. But you
see our lamp lights up not only the boat but the whole
vault around and before us, and there can be no danger
whatever.”

“I am frightened, though,” she said, “I
cannot help it. I never saw anything of the kind
before; and the darkness behind and before us, and
the black water on either side, do make me shiver.”

“Stop!” I called to the boatman.

“Now, Eveena,” I said, “I do not
care to persist in this journey if it really distresses
you. I wished to see so wonderful a work of engineering;
but, after all, I have been in a much uglier and more
wonderful place, and I can see nothing here stranger
than when I was rowed for three-quarters of a mile
on the river in the Mammoth Cave. In any case
I shall see little but a continuation of what I see
already; so if you cannot bear it, we will go back.”

By this time Esmo, who had been in the bows, had joined
us, wishing to know why I had stopped the boat.

“This child,” I said, “is not used
to travelling, and the tunnel frightens her; so that
I think, after all, we had better take the usual course
across the mountains.”

“Nonsense!” he answered. “There
is no danger here; less probably than in an ordinary
drive, certainly less than in a balloon. Don’t
spoil her, my friend. If you begin by yielding
to so silly a caprice as this, you will end by breaking
her heart before the two years are out.”

“Do go on,” whispered Eveena. “I
was very silly; I am not so frightened now, and if
you will hold me fast, I will not misbehave again.”

Esmo had taken the matter out of my hands, desiring
the boatman to proceed; and though I sympathised with
my bride’s feminine terror much more than her
father appeared to do, I was selfishly anxious, in
spite of my declaration that there could be no novelty
in this tunnel, to see one thing certainly original—­the
means by which so narrow and so long a passage could
be efficiently ventilated. The least I could do,
however, was to appease Eveena’s fear before
turning my attention to the objects of my own curiosity.
The presence of physical strength, which seemed to
her superhuman, produced upon her nerves the quieting
effect which, however irrationally, great bodily force
always exercises over women; partly, perhaps, from
the awe it seems to inspire, partly from a yet more
unreasonable but instinctive reliance on its protection
even in dangers against which it is obviously unavailing.

Presently a current of air, distinctly warmer than
that of the tunnel, which had been gradually increasing
in force for some minutes, became so powerful that
I could no longer suppose it accidental. Kevima
being near us, I asked him what it meant.

“Ventilation,” he answered. “The
air in these tunnels would be foul and stagnant, perhaps
unbreathable, if we did not drive a constant current
of air through them. You did not notice, a few
yards from the entrance, a wheel which drives a large
fan. One of these is placed at every half mile,
and drives on the air from one end of the tunnel to
the other. They are reversed twice in a zyda,
so that they may create no constant counter-current
outside.”

**Page 148**

“But is not the power exerted to drive so great
a body of air exceedingly costly?”

“No,” he answered. “As you
are aware, electricity is almost our only motive power,
and we calculate that the labour of two men, even
without the help of machines, could in their working
zydau [eight hours] collect and reduce a sufficient
amount of the elements by which the current is created
to do the work of four hundred men during a whole
day and night.”

“And how long,” I inquired, “has
electricity had so complete a monopoly of mechanical
work?”

“It was first brought into general use,”
he replied, “about eight thousand years ago.
Before that, heated air supplied our principal locomotive
force, as well as the power of stationary machines
wherever no waterfall of sufficient energy was at
hand. For several centuries the old powers were
still employed under conditions favourable to their
use. But we have found electricity so much cheaper
than the cheapest of other artificial forces, so much
more powerful than any supplied by Nature, that we
have long discontinued the employment of any other.
Even when we obtain electricity by means of heat, we
find that the gain in application more than compensates
the loss in the transmutation of one force into another.”

In the course of little more than half an hour we
emerged from the tunnel, whose gloom, when once the
attraction of novelty was gone, was certainly unpleasant
to myself, if not by any means so frightful as Eveena
still found it. There was nothing specially attractive
or noticeable in the valley through which our course
now ran, except the extreme height of its mountain
walls, which, though not by any means perpendicular,
rose to a height of some 3000 feet so suddenly that
to climb their sides would have been absolutely impossible.
Only during about two hours in the middle of the day
is the sun seen from the level of the stream; and
it is dark in the bottom of this valley long before
the mist has fallen on the plain outside. We had
presently, however, to ascend a slope of some twenty-five
feet in the mile, and I was much interested in the
peculiar method by which the ascent was made.
A mere ascent, not greater than that of some rapids
up which American boatmen have managed to carry their
barques by manual force, presented no great difficulty;
but some skill is required at particular points to
avoid being overturned by the rush of the water, and
our vessel so careened as to afford much more excuse
for Eveena’s outbreak of terror than the tunnel
had done. Had I not held her fast she must certainly
have been thrown overboard, the pilot, used to the
danger, having forgotten to warn us. For the rest,
in the absence of rocks, the vessel ascended more
easily than a powerful steamer, if she could find
sufficient depth, could make her way up the rapids
of the St. Lawrence or similar streams. We entered
the second tunnel without any sign of alarm from Eveena
perceptible to others; only her clinging to my hand

**Page 149**

expressed the fear of which she was ashamed but could
not rid herself. Emerging from its mouth, we
found ourselves within sight of the sea and of the
town and harbour of Serocasfe, where we were next
day to embark. Landing from the boat, we were
met by the friend whose hospitality Esmo had requested.
At his house, half a mile outside the town, for the
first time since our marriage I had to part for a
short period with Eveena, who was led away by the veiled
mistress of the house, while we remained in the entrance
chamber or hall. The evening meal was anticipated
by two hours, in order that we might attend the meeting
at which my bride and I were to receive our formal
admission into the Zinta.

**CHAPTER XIII — THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT.**

“Probably,” said Esmo, when, apparently
at a sign from him, our host left us for some minutes
alone, “much through which you are about to
pass will seem to you childish or unmeaning. Ceremonial
rendered impressive to us by immemorial antiquity,
and cherished the more because so contrary to the
absence of form and ceremony in the life around us—­symbolism
which is really the more useful, the more valuable,
because it contains much deeper meaning than is ever
apparent at first sight—­have proved their
use by experience; and, as they are generally witnessed
for the first time in early youth, make a sharper
impression than they are likely to effect upon a mind
like yours. But they may seem strangely inconsistent
with a belief which is in itself so limited, and founded
so absolutely upon logical proof or practical evidence.
The best testimony to the soundness of our policy
in this respect is the fact that our vows, and the
rites by which they are sanctioned, are never broken,
that our symbols are regarded with an awe which no
threats, no penalties, can attach to the highest of
civil authorities or the most solemn legal sanctions.
The language of symbol, moreover, has for us two great
advantages—­one dependent upon the depth
of thought and knowledge with which the symbols themselves
were selected by our Founder, owing to which each generation
finds in them some new truth of which we never dreamed
before; the other arising from the fact that we are
a small select body in the midst of a hostile and
jealous race, from whom it is most important to keep
the key of communications which, without the appearance,
have all the effect of ciphers.”

“I find,” I replied, “in my own
world that every religion and every form of occult
mysticism, nay, every science, in its own way and
within its own range, attaches great importance to
symbols in themselves apparently arbitrary. Experience
shows that these, symbols often contain a clue to
more than they were originally meant to convey, and
can be employed in reasonings far beyond the grasp
of those who first invented or adopted them.
That a body like the *Zinta* could be held together
without ceremonial and without formalities, which,
if they had no other value, would have the attraction
of secresy and exclusiveness, seems obviously impossible.”

**Page 150**

Here our host rejoined us. We passed into the
gallery, where several persons were awaiting us; the
men for the most part wearing a small vizor dependent
from the turban, which concealed their faces; the
women all, without exception, closely veiled.
As soon as Esmo appeared, the party formed themselves
into a sort of procession two and two. Motioning
me to take the last place, Esmo passed himself to
its head. If the figure beside me were not at
once recognised, I could not mistake the touch of
the hand that stole into my own. The lights in
the gallery were extinguished, and then I perceived
a lamp held at the end of a wand of crystal, which
gleamed above Esmo’s head, and sufficed to guide
us, giving light enough to direct our footsteps and
little more. Perhaps this half-darkness, the twilight
which gave a certain air of mystery to the scene and
of uncertainty to the forms of objects encountered
on our route, had its own purpose. We reached
very soon the end of the gallery, and then the procession
turned and passed suddenly into another chamber, apparently
narrow, but so faintly lighted by the lamp in our
leader’s hands that its dimensions were matter
of mere conjecture. That we were descending a
somewhat steep incline I was soon aware; and when
we came again on to level ground I felt sure that
we were passing through a gallery cut in natural rock.
The light was far too dim to enable me to distinguish
any openings in the walls; but the procession constantly
lengthened, though it was impossible to see where
and when new members joined. Suddenly the light
disappeared. I stood still for a moment in surprise,
and when I again went forward I became speedily conscious
that all our companions had vanished, and that we
stood alone in utter darkness. Fearing to lead
Eveena further where my own steps were absolutely uncertain,
I paused for some time, and with little difficulty
decided to remain where I was, until something should
afford an indication of the purpose of those who had
brought us so far, and who must know, if they had
not actual means of observing, that in darkness and
solitude I should not venture to proceed.

Presently, as gradually as in Northern climates the
night passes into morning twilight, the darkness became
less absolute. Whence the light came it was impossible
to perceive. Diffused all around and slowly broadening,
it just enabled me to discern a few paces before us
the verge of a gulf. This might have been too
shallow for inconvenience, it might have been deep
enough for danger. I waited till my eyes should
be able to penetrate its interior; but before the light
entered it I perceived, apparently growing across
it, really coming gradually into view under the brightening
gleam, a species of bridge which—­when the
twilight ceased to increase, and remained as dim as
that cast by the crescent moon—­assumed
the outline of a slender trunk supported by wings,
dark for the most part but defined along the edge by

**Page 151**

a narrow band of brightest green, visible in a gleam
too faint to show any object of a deeper shade.
Somewhat impatient of the obvious symbolism, I hurried
Eveena forward. Immediately on the other side
of the bridge the path turned almost at right angles;
and here a gleam of light ahead afforded a distinct
guidance to our steps. Approaching it, we were
challenged, and I gave the answer with which I had
been previously furnished; an answer which may not
be, as it never has been, written down. A door
parted and admitted us into a small vestibule, at
the other end of which a full and bright light streamed
through a portal of translucent crystal. A sentinel,
armed only with the antiquated spear which may have
been held by his first predecessor in office ten thousand
Martial years ago, now demanded our names. Mine
he simply repeated, but as I gave that of Eveena, daughter
of Esmo, he lowered his weapon in the salute still
traditional among Martial sentries; and bending his
head, touched with his lips the long sleeve of the
cloak of *therne*-down in which she was on this
occasion again enveloped. This homage appeared
to surprise her almost as much as myself, but we had
no leisure for observation or inquiry. From behind
the crystal door another challenge was uttered.
To this it was the sentry’s part to reply, and
as he answered the door parted; that at the other
end of the vestibule having, I observed, closed as
we entered, and so closed that its position was undiscoverable.
Before us opened a hall of considerable size, consisting
of three distinct vaults, defined by two rows of pillars,
slender shafts resembling tall branchless trees, the
capital of each being formed by a branching head like
that of the palm. The trunks were covered with
golden scales; the fern-like foliage at the summit
was of a bright sparkling emerald. It was evident
to my observation that the entire hall had been excavated
from solid rock, and the pillars left in their places.
Each of the side aisles, if I may so call them, was
occupied by four rows of seats similarly carved in
the natural stone; but lined after Martial fashion,
with cushions embroidered in feathers and metals, and
covered by woven fabrics finer than any known to the
looms of Lyons or Cashmere. About two-thirds
of the seats were occupied; those to the right as
we entered (that is, on the left of the dais at the
end of the hall) by men, those opposite by women.
All, I observed, rose for a moment as Eveena’s
name was announced, from the further end of the hall,
by the foremost of three or four persons vested in
silver, with belts of the crimson metal which plays
the part of our best-tempered steel, and bearing in
their hands wands of a rose-coloured jewel resembling
a clouded onyx in all but the hue. Each of them
wore over his dress a band or sash of gold, fastened
on the left shoulder and descending to the belt on
the right, much resembling the ribbons of European
knighthood. These supported on the left breast

**Page 152**

a silver star, or heraldic mullet, of six points.
Throughout the rest of the assembly a similar but
smaller star glimmered on every breast, supported,
however, by green or silver bands, the former worn
by the body of the assembly, the latter by a few persons
gathered together for the most part at the upper end
of the chamber.... The chief who had first addressed
us bade us pass on, and we left the Hall of the Novitiate
as accepted members of the Order.... That into
which we next entered was so dark that its form and
dimensions were scarcely defined to my eyes.
I supposed it, however, to be circular, surmounted
by a dome resembling in colour the olive green Martial
sky and spangled by stars, among which I discerned
one or two familiar constellations, but most distinctly,
brightened far beyond its natural brilliancy, the
arch of the *Via Lactea*. Presently, not
on any apparent sheet or screen but as in the air
before us, appeared a narrow band of light crossing
the entire visible space. It resembled a rope
twisted of three strands, two of a deep dull hue,
the one apparently orange, the other brown or crimson,
contrasting the far more brilliant emerald strand
that formed the third portion of the threefold cord.
I had learnt by this time that metallic cords so twined
serve in Mars most of the uses for which chains are
employed on Earth, and I assumed that this symbol
possessed the significance which poetry or ritual might
attach to the latter.

This cord or band retained its position throughout,
crossing the dark background of the scenes now successively
presented, each of which melted into its successor—­rapidly,
but so gradually that there was never a distinct point
of division, a moment at which it was possible to
say that any new feature was first introduced.

A bright mist of various colours intermixed in inextricable
confusion, an image of chaos but for the dim light
reflected from all the particles, filled a great part
of the space before us, but the cord was still discernible
in the background. Presently, a bright rose-coloured
point of light, taking gradually the form of an Eye,
appeared above the cord and beyond the mist; and, emanating
from it, a ray of similar light entered the motionless
vapour. Then a movement, whose character it was
not easy to discern, but which constantly became more
and more evidently rhythmical and regular, commenced
in the mist. Within a few moments the latter
had dissolved, leaving in its place the semblance
of stars, star-clusters, and golden nebulae, as dim
and confused as that in the sword-belt of Orion, or
as well defined as any of those called by astronomers
planetary. “What seest thou?” said
a voice whose very direction I could not recognise.

“Cosmos evolved out of confusion by Law; Law
emanating from Supreme Wisdom and irresistible Will.”

“And in the triple band?”

“The continuity of Time and Space preserved
by the continuity of Law, and controlled by the Will
that gave Law.”

**Page 153**

While I spoke a single nebula grew larger, brighter,
and filled the entire space given throughout to the
pictures presented to us; stars and star-clusters
gradually fading away into remoter distance. This
nebula, of spherical shape—­formed of coarser
particles than the previous mist, and reflecting or
radiating a more brilliant effulgence—­was
in rapid whirling motion. It flattened into the
form of a disc, apparently almost circular, of considerable
depth or thickness, visibly denser in the centre and
thinner towards the rounded edge. Presently it
condensed and contracted, leaving at each of the several
intervals a severed ring. Most of these rings
broke up, their fragments conglomerated and forming
a sphere; one in particular separating into a multitude
of minuter spheres, others assuming a highly elliptical
form, condensing here and thinning out there; while
the central mass grew brighter and denser as it contracted;
till there lay before me a perfect miniature of the
solar system, with planets, satellites, asteroids,
and meteoric rings.

“What seest thou?” again I heard.

“Intelligence directing Will, and Will by Law
developing the microcosm of which this world is one
of the smallest parts.”

The orb which represented Mars stood still in the
centre of the space, and this orb soon occupied the
whole area. It assumed at first the form of a
vast vaporous globe; then contracted to a comparatively
small sphere, glowing as if more than red-hot, and
leaving as it contracted two tiny balls revolving
round their primary. The latter gradually faded
till it gave out no light but that which from some
unseen source was cast upon it, one-half consequently
contrasting in darkness the reflected brightness of
the other. Ere long it presented the appearance
of sea and land, of cloud, of snow, and ice, and became
a perfect image of the Martial sphere. Then it
gave place to a globe of water alone, within which
the processes of crystallisation, as exhibited first
in its simpler then in its more complicated forms,
were beautifully represented. Then there appeared,
I knew not how, but seemingly developed by the same
agency and in the same manner as the crystals, a small
transparent sphere within the watery globe, containing
itself a spherical nucleus. From this were evolved
gradually two distinct forms, one resembling very much
some of the simplest of those transparent creatures
which the microscope exhibits to us in the water drop,
active, fierce, destructive in their scale of size
and life as the most powerful animals of the sea and
land. The other was a tiny fragment of tissue,
gradually shaping itself into the simplest and smallest
specimens of vegetable life. The watery globe
disappeared, and these two were left alone. From
each gradually emerged, growing in size, complexity,
and distinctness, one form after another of higher
organisation.

“What seest thou?”

“Life called out of lifelessness by Law.”

**Page 154**

Again, so gradually that no step of the process could
be separately distinguished, formed a panorama of
vegetable and animal life; a landscape in which appeared
some dozen primal shapes of either kingdom. Each
of these gradually dissolved, passing by slow degrees
into several higher or more perfect shapes, till there
stood before our eyes a picture of life as it exists
at present; and Man in its midst, more obviously even
than on Earth, dominating and subduing the fellow-creatures
of whom he is lord. From which of the innumerable
animal forms that had been presented to us in the course
of these transmutations this supreme form had arisen,
I did not note or cannot remember. But that no
true ape appeared among them, I do distinctly recollect,
having been on the watch for the representation of
such an epoch in the pictured history.

What was now especially noteworthy was that, solid
as they appeared, each form was in some way transparent.
From the Emblem before mentioned a rose-coloured light
pervaded the scene; scarcely discernible in the general
atmosphere, faintly but distinctly traceable in every
herb, shrub, and tree, more distinguishable and concentrated
in each animal. But in plant or animal the condensed
light was never separated and individualised, never
parted from, though obviously gathered and agglomerated
out of, the generally diffused rosy sheen that tinged
the entire landscape. It was as though the rose-coloured
light formed an atmosphere which entered and passed
freely through the tissues of each animal and plant,
but brightened and deepened in those portions which
at any moment pervaded any organised shape, while
it flowed freely in and out of all. The concentration
was most marked, the connection with the diffused
atmosphere least perceptible, in those most intelligent
creatures, like the *amba* and *carve*,
which in the service of man appear to have acquired
a portion of human intelligence. But turning to
the type of Man himself, the light within his body
had assumed the shape of the frame it filled and appeared
to animate. In him the rose-coloured image which
exactly corresponded to the body that encased it was
perfectly individualised, and had no other connection
with the remainder of the light than that it appeared
to emanate and to be fed from the original source.
As I looked, the outward body dissolved, the image
of rosy light stood alone, as human and far more beautiful
than before, rose upward, and passed away.

“What seest thou?” was uttered in an even
more earnest and solemn tone than heretofore.

“Life,” I said, “physical and spiritual;
the one sustained by the other, the spiritual emanating
from the Source of Life, pervading all living forms,
affording to each the degree of individuality and of
intelligence needful to it, but in none forming an
individual entity apart from the race, save in Man
himself; and in Man forming the individual being,
whereof the flesh is but the clothing and the instrument.”

**Page 155**

The whole scene suddenly vanished in total darkness;
only again in one direction a gleam of light appeared,
and guided us to a portal through which we entered
another long and narrow passage, terminating in a
second vestibule before a door of emerald crystal,
brilliantly illuminated by a light within. Here,
again, our steps were arrested. The door was
guarded by two sentries, in whom I recognised Initiates
of the Order, wearers of the silver sash and star.
The password and sign, whispered to me as we left
the Hall of the Novitiate, having been given, the
door parted and exposed to our view the inmost chamber,
a scene calculated to strike the eye and impress the
mind not more by its splendour and magnificence than
by the unexpected character it displayed. It
represented a garden, but the boundaries were concealed
by the branching trees, the arches of flowering creepers,
the thickets of flowers, shrubs, and tall reeds, which
in every direction imitated so perfectly the natural
forms that the closest scrutiny would have been required
to detect their artificiality. The general form,
however, seemed to be that of a square entered by
a very short, narrow passage, and divided by broad
paths, forming a cross of equal arms. At the central
point of this cross was placed on a pedestal of emerald
a statue in gold, which recalled at once the features
of the Founder. The space might have accommodated
two thousand persons, but on the seats—­of
a material resembling ivory, each of them separately
formed and gathered in irregular clusters—­there
were not, I thought, more than four hundred or five
hundred men and women intermingled; the former dressed
for the most part in green, the latter in pink or
white, and all wearing the silver band and star.
At the opposite end, closing the central aisle, was
a low narrow platform raised by two steps carved out
of the natural rock, but inlaid with jewellery imitating
closely the variegated turf of a real garden.
On this were placed, slanting backward towards the
centre, two rows of six golden seats or thrones, whose
occupants wore the golden band over silver robes.
That next the interval, but to the left, was filled
by Esmo, who to my surprise wore a robe of white completely
covering his figure, and contrasting signally the
golden sash to which his star was attached. On
his left arm, bare below the elbow, I noticed a flat
thick band of plain gold, with an emerald seal, bearing
the same proportion to the bracelet as a large signet
to its finger ring. What struck me at once as
most remarkable was, that the seats on the dais and
the forms of their occupiers were signally relieved
against a background of intense darkness, whose nature,
however, I could not discern. The roof was in
form a truncated pyramid; its material a rose-coloured
crystal, through which a clear soft light illuminated
the whole scene. Across the floor of the entrance,
immediately within the portal, was a broad band of
the same crystal, marking the formal threshold of the

**Page 156**

Hall. Immediately inside this stood the same
Chief who had received us in the former Hall; and
as we stood at the door, stretching forth his left
hand, he spoke, or rather chanted, what, by the rhythmical
sequence of the words, by the frequent recurrence of
alliteration and irregular rhyme, was evidently a
formula committed to the verse of the Martial tongue:
a formula, like all those of the Order, never written,
but handed down by memory, and therefore, perhaps,
cast in a shape which rendered accurate remembrance
easier and more certain.

 “Ye who, lost in outer night,
 Reach at last the Source of Light,
 Ask ye in that light to dwell?
 None we urge and none repel;
 Opens at your touch the door,
 Bright within the lamp of lore.
 Yet beware! The threshold passed,
 Fixed the bond, the ball is cast.
 Failing heart or faltering feet
 Find nor pardon nor retreat.
 Loyal faith hath guerdon given
 Boundless as the star-sown Heaven;
 Horror fathomless and gloom
 Rayless veil the recreant’s
doom.
 Warned betimes, in time beware—­Freely
 turn, or frankly swear.”

“What am I to swear?” I asked.

A voice on my left murmured in a low tone the formula,
which I repeated, Eveena accompanying my words in
an almost inaudible whisper—­

 “Whatsoe’er within the Shrine
 Eyes may see or soul divine,
 Swear we secret as the deep,
 Silent as the Urn to keep.
 By the Light we claim to share,
 By the Fount of Light, we swear.”

As these words were uttered, I became aware that some
change had taken place at the further end of the Hall.
Looking up, the dark background had disappeared, and
under a species of deep archway, behind the seats
of the Chiefs, was visible a wall diapered in ruby
and gold, and displaying in various interwoven patterns
the several symbols of the Zinta. Towards the
roof, exactly in the centre, was a large silver star,
emitting a light resembling that which the full moon
sheds on a tropical scene, but far more brilliant.
Around this was a broad golden circle or band; and
beneath, the silver image of a serpent—­perfectly
reproducing a typical terrestrial snake, but coiled,
as no snake ever coils itself, in a double circle
or figure of eight, with the tail wound around the
neck. On the left was a crimson shield or what
seemed to be such, small, round, and swelling in the
centre into a sharp point; on the right three crossed
spears of silver with crimson blades pointed upward.
But the most remarkable object—­immediately
filling the interval between the seats of the Chiefs,
and carved from a huge cubic block of emerald—­was
a Throne, ascended on each side by five or six steps,
the upper step or seat extending nearly across the
whole some two feet below the surface, the next forming
a footstool thereto. Above this was a canopy,
seemingly self-supported, of circular form. A

**Page 157**

chain formed by interlaced golden circles was upheld
by four great emerald wings. Within the chain,
again, was the silver Serpent, coiled as before and
resting upon a surface of foliage and flowers.
In the centre of all was repeated the silver Star
within the golden band; the emblem from which the
Order derives its name, and in which it embodies its
deepest symbolism. Following again the direction
of my unseen prompter, I repeated words which may
be roughly translated as follows:—­

 “By the outer Night of gloom,
 By the ray that leads us home,
 By the Light we claim to share,
 By the Fount of Light, we swear.
 Prompt obedience, heart and hand,
 To the Signet’s each command:
 For the Symbols, reverence mute,
 In the Sense faith absolute.
 Link by link to weld the Chain,
 Link with link to bear the strain;
 Cherish all the Star who wear,
 As the Starlight’s self—­we
swear.
 By the Life the Light to prove,
 In the Circle’s bound to move;
 Underneath the all-seeing Eye
 Act, nor speak, nor think the lie;
 Live, as warned that Life shall
last,
 And the Future reap the Past:
 Clasp in faith the Serpent’s
rings,
 Trust through death the Emerald
Wings,
 Hand and voice we plight the Oath:
 Fade the life ere fail the troth!”

Rising from his seat and standing immediately before
and to the left of the Throne, Esmo replied.
But before he had spoken half-a-dozen words, a pressure
on my arm drew my eyes from him to Eveena. She
stood fixed as if turned to stone, in an attitude
which for one fleeting instant recalled that of the
sculptured figures undergoing sudden petrifaction
at the sight of the Gorgon’s head. This
remembered resemblance, or an instinctive sympathy,
at once conveyed to me the consciousness that the
absolute stillness of her attitude expressed a horror
or an awe too deep for trembling. Looking into
her eyes, which alone were visible, their gaze fixed
intently on the Throne, at once caught and controlled
my own; and raising my eyes again to the same point,
I stood almost equally petrified by consternation and
amazement. I need not say how many marvels of
no common character I have seen on Earth; how many
visions that, if I told them, none who have not shared
them would believe; wonders that the few who have seen
them can never forget, nor—­despite all experience
and all theoretical explanation—­recall
without renewing the thrill of awe-stricken dismay
with which the sight was first beheld. But no
marvel of the Mystic Schools, no spectral scene, objective
or subjective, ever evoked by the rarest of occult
powers, so startled, so impressed me as what I now
saw, or thought I saw. The Throne, on which but
a few moments before my eyes had been steadily fixed,
and which had then assuredly been vacant, was now
occupied; and occupied by a Presence which, though
not seen in the flesh for ages, none who had ever looked

**Page 158**

on the portrait that represented it could forget or
mistake. The form, the dress, the long white
hair and beard, the grave, dignified countenance,
above all the deep, scrutinising, piercing eyes of
the Founder—­as I had seen them on a single
occasion in Esmo’s house—­were now
as clearly, as forcibly, presented to my sight as any
figure in the flesh I ever beheld. The eyes were
turned on me with a calm, searching, steady gaze,
whose effect was such as Southey ascribes to Indra’s:—­

 “The look he gave was solemn, not
severe;
 No hope to Kailyal it conveyed,
 And yet it struck no fear.”

For a moment they rested on Eveena’s veiled
and drooping figure with a widely different expression.
That look, as I thought, spoke a grave but passionless
regret or pity, as of one who sees a child unconsciously
on the verge of peril or sorrow that admits neither
of warning nor rescue. That look happily she
did not read; but we both saw the same object and
in the same instant; we both stood amazed and appalled
long enough to render our hesitation not only apparent,
but striking to all around, many of whom, following
the direction of my gaze, turned their eyes upon the
Throne. What they saw or did not see I know not,
and did not then care to think. The following
formula, pronounced by Esmo, had fallen not unheard,
but almost unheeded on my ears, though one passage
harmonised strangely with the sight before me:—­

 “Passing sign and fleeting breath
 Bind the Soul for life and death!
 Lifted hand and plighted word
 Eyes have seen and ears have heard;
 Eyes have seen—­nor ours
alone;
 Fell the sound on ears unknown.
 Age-long labour, strand by strand,
 Forged the immemorial band;
 Never thread hath known decay,
 Never link hath dropped away.”

Here he paused and beckoned us to advance. The
sign, twice repeated before I could obey it, at last
broke the spell that enthralled me. Under the
most astounding or awe-striking circumstances, instinct
moves our limbs almost in our own despite, and leads
us to do with paralysed will what has been intended
or is expected of us. This instinct, and no conscious
resolve to overcome the influence that held me spell-bound,
enabled me to proceed; and I led Eveena forward by
actual if gentle force, till we reached the lower step
of the platform. Here, at a sign from her father,
we knelt, while, laying his hands on our heads, and
stooping to kiss each upon the brow—­Eveena
raising her veil for one moment and dropping it again—­he
continued—­

 “So we greet you evermore,
 Brethren of the deathless Lore;
 So your vows our own renew,
 Sworn to all as each to you.
 Yours at once the secrets won
 Age by age, from sire to son;
 Yours the fruit through countless
years
 Grown by thought and toil and tears.
 He who guards you guards his own,
 He who fails you fails the Throne.”

**Page 159**

The last two lines were repeated, as by a simultaneous
impulse, in a low but audible tone by the whole assembly.
In the meantime Esmo had invested each of us with
the symbol of our enrolment in the Zinta, the silver
sash and Star of the Initiates. The ceremonial
seemed to me to afford that sort of religious sanction
and benediction which had been so signally wanting
to the original form of our union. As we rose
I turned my eyes for a moment upon the Throne, now
vacant as at first. Another Chief, followed by
the voices of the assembly, repeated, in a low deep
tone, which fell on our ears as distinctly as the loudest
trumpet-note in the midst of absolute silence, the
solemn imprecation—­

 “Who denies a brother’s need,
 Who in will, or word, or deed,
 Breaks the Circle’s bounded
line,
 Rends the Veil that guards the Shrine,
 Lifts the hand to lips that lie,
 Fronts the Star with soothless eye:—.
 Dreams of horror haunt his rest,
 Storms of madness vex his breast,
 Snares surround him, Death beset,
 Man forsake—­and God forget!”

It was probably rather the tone of profound conviction
and almost tremulous awe with which these words were
slowly enunciated by the entire assemblage, than their
actual sense, though the latter is greatly weakened
by my translation, that gave them an effect on my own
mind such as no oath and no rite, however solemn, no
religious ceremonial, no forms of the most secret
mysteries, had ever produced. I was not surprised
that Eveena was far more deeply affected. Even
the earlier words of the imprecation had caused her
to shudder; and ere it closed she would have sunk
to the ground, but for the support of my arm.
Disengaging the bracelet, Esmo held out to our lips
the signet, which, as I now perceived, reproduced
in miniature the symbols that formed the canopy above
the throne. A few moments of deep and solemn
silence had elapsed, when one of the Chiefs, who, except
Esmo, had now resumed their seats, rose, and addressing
himself to the latter, said—­

“The Initiate has shown in the Hall of the Vision
a knowledge of the sense embodied in our symbols,
of the creed and thoughts drawn from them, which he
can hardly have learned in the few hours that have
elapsed since you first spoke to him of their existence.
If there be not in his world those who have wrought
out for themselves similar truths in not dissimilar
forms, he must possess a rare and almost instinctive
power to appreciate the lessons we can teach.
I will ask your permission, therefore, to put to him
but one question, and that the deepest and most difficult
of all.”

Esmo merely bent his head in reply.

“Can you,” said the speaker, turning to
me with marked courtesy, “draw meaning or lesson
from the self-entwined coil of the Serpent?”

**Page 160**

I need not repeat an answer which, to those familiar
with the oldest language of Terrestrial symbolism,
would have occurred as readily as to myself; and which,
if they could understand it, it would not be well
to explain to others. The three principal elements
of thought represented by the doubly-coiled serpent
are the same in Mars as on Earth, confirming in so
far the doctrine of the Zinta, that their symbolic
language is not arbitrary, but natural, formed on principles
inherent in the correspondence between things spiritual
and physical. Some similar but trivial query,
whose purport I have now forgotten, was addressed
by the junior of the Chiefs to Eveena; and I was struck
by the patient courtesy with which he waited till,
after two or three efforts, she sufficiently recovered
her self-possession to understand and her voice to
answer. We then retired, taking our place on seats
remote from the platform, and at some distance from
any of our neighbours.

On a formal invitation, one after another of the brethren
rose and read a brief account of some experiment or
discovery in the science of the Order. The principles
taken for granted as fundamental and notorious truths
far transcend the extremest speculations of Terrestrial
mysticism. The powers claimed as of course so
infinitely exceed anything alleged by the most ardent
believers in mesmerism, clairvoyance, or spiritualism,
that it would be useless to relate the few among these
experiments which I remember and might be permitted
to repeat. I observed that a phonographic apparatus
of a peculiarly elaborate character wrote down every
word of these accounts without obliging the speakers
to approach it; and I was informed that this automatic
reporting is employed in every Martial assembly, scientific,
political, or judicial.

I listened with extreme interest, and was more than
satisfied that Esmo had even underrated the powers
claimed by and for the lowest and least intelligent
of his brethren, when he said that these, and these
alone, could give efficient protection or signal vengeance
against all the tremendous physical forces at command
of those State authorities, one of the greatest of
whom I had made my personal enemy. One battalion
of Martial guards or police, accompanied by a single
battery of what I may call their artillery, might,
even without the aid of a balloon-squadron, in half-an-hour
annihilate or scatter to the winds the mightiest and
bravest army that Europe could send forth. Yet
the Martial State had deliberately, and, I think,
with only a due prudence, shrunk during ages from
an open conflict of power with the few thousand members
of this secret but inevitably suspected organisation.

**Page 161**

Esmo called on me in my turn to give such account
as I might choose of my own world, and my journey
thence. I frankly avowed my indisposition to
explain the generation and action of the apergic force.
The power which a concurrent knowledge of two separate
kinds of science had given to a very few Terrestrials,
and which all the science of a far more enlightened
race had failed to attain, was in my conscientious
conviction a Providential trust; withheld from those
in whose hands it might be a fearful temptation and
an instrument of unbounded evil. My reserve was
perfectly intelligible to the Children of the Star,
and evidently raised me in their estimation.
I was much impressed by the simple and unaffected
reliance placed on my statements, as on those of every
other member of the Order. As a rule, Martialists
are both, and not without reason, to believe any unsupported
statement that might be prompted by interest or vanity.
But the *Zveltau* can trust one another’s
word more fully than the followers of Mahomet that
of his strictest disciples, or the most honest nations
of the West the most solemn oaths of their citizens;
while that bigotry of scientific unbelief, that narrowness
of thought which prevails among their countrymen,
has been dispelled by their wider studies and loftier
interests. They have a saying, whose purport might
be rendered in the proverbial language of the Aryans
by saying that the liar “kills the goose that
lays the golden eggs.” Again, “The
liar is like an opiatised tunneller” (miner),
*i.e*., more likely to blow himself to pieces than
to effect his purpose. Again, “The liar
drives the point into a friend’s heart, and
puts the hilt into a foe’s hand.”
The maxim that “a lie is a shield in sore need,
but the spear of a scoundrel,” affirms the right
in extremity to preserve a secret from impertinent
inquisitiveness. Rarely, but on some peculiarly
important occasions, the Zveltau avouch their sincerity
by an appeal to their own symbols; and it is affirmed
that an oath attested by the Circle and the Star has
never, in the lapse of ages, been broken or evaded.

Before midnight Esmo dismissed the assembly by a formula
which dimly recalled to memory one heard in my boyhood.
It is not in the power of my translation to preserve
the impressive solemnity of the immemorial ritual
of the Zinta, deepened alike by the earnestness of
its delivery, and the reverence of the hearers.
There was something majestic in the mere antiquity
of a liturgy whereof no word has ever been committed
to writing. Five hundred generations have, it
is alleged, gathered four times in each year in the
Hall of Initiation; and every meeting has been concluded
by the utterance from the same spot and in the same
words of the solemn but simple *Zulvakalfe* [word
of peace]:—­

**Page 162**

 “Peace be with you, near and far,
 Children of the Silver Star;
 Lore undoubting, conscience clean,
 Hope assured, and life serene.
 By the Light that knows no flaw,
 By the Circle’s perfect law,
 By the Serpent’s life renewed,
 By the Wings’ similitude—­
 Peace be yours no force can break;
 Peace not death hath power to shake;
 Peace from passion, sin, and gloom,
 Peace of spirit, heart, and home;
 Peace from peril, fear, and pain;
 Peace, until we meet again—­
 Meet—­before yon sculptured
stone,
 Or the All-Commander’s Throne.”

Before we finally parted, Esmo gave me two or three
articles to which he attached especial value.
The most important of these was a small cube of translucent
stone, in which a multitude of diversely coloured
fragments were combined; so set in a tiny swivel or
swing of gold that it might be conveniently attached
to the watch-chain, the only Terrestrial article that
I still wore. “This,” he said, “will
test nearly every poison known to our science; each
poison discolouring for a time one or another of the
various substances of which it is composed; and poison
is perhaps the weapon least unlikely to be employed
against you when known to be connected with myself,
and, I will hope, to possess the favour of the Sovereign.
If you are curious to verify its powers, the contents
of the tiny medicine-chest I have given you will enable
you to do so. There is scarcely one of those
medicines which is not a single or a combined poison
of great power. I need not warn you to be careful
lest you give to any one the means of reaching them.
I have shown you the combination of magnets which will
open each of your cases; that demanded by the chest
is the most complicated of all, and one which can
hardly be hit upon by accident. Nor can any one
force or pick open a case locked by our electric apparatus,
save by cutting to pieces the metal of the case itself,
and this only special tools will accomplish; and,
unless peculiarly skilful, the intruder would ’probably
be maimed or paralysed, if not killed by ...

 “Thoughts he sends to each planet,
 Uranus, Venus, and Mars;
 Soars to the Centre to span it,
 Numbers the infinite Stars.”
 *Courthope’s
Paradise of Birds*

**CHAPTER XIV — BY SEA.**

An hour after sunrise next morning. Esmo, his
son, and our host accompanied us to the vessel in
which we were to make the principal part of our journey.
We were received by an officer of the royal Court,
who was to accompany us during the rest of our journey,
and from whom, Esrno assured me, I might obtain the
fullest information regarding the various objects
of interest, to visit which we had adopted an unusual
and circuitous course. We embarked on a gulf
running generally from east to west, about midway between
the northern tropic and the arctic circle. As

**Page 163**

this was the summer of the northern hemisphere, we
should thus enjoy a longer day, and should not suffer
from the change of climate. After taking leave
of our friends, we went down below to take possession
of the fore part of the vessel, which was assigned
as our exclusive quarters. Immediately in front
of the machine-room, which occupied the centre of
the vessel, were two cabins, about sixteen feet square,
reaching from side to side. Beyond these, opening
out of a passage running along one side, were two
smaller cabins about eight feet long. All these
apartments were furnished and ornamented with the
luxury and elegance of chambers in the best houses
on shore. In the foremost of the larger cabins
were a couple of desks, and three or four writing
or easy chairs. In the outer cabin nearest to
the engine-room, and entered immediately by the ladder
descending from the deck, was fixed a low central table.
In all we found abundance of those soft exquisitely
covered and embroidered cushions which in Mars, as
in Oriental countries, are the most essential and
most luxurious furniture. The officer had quarters
in the stern of the vessel, which was an exact copy
of the fore part. But the first of these rooms
was considered as public or neutral ground. Leaving
Eveena below, I went on deck to examine, before she
started, the construction of the vessel. Her
entire length was about one hundred and eighty feet,
her depth, from the flat deck to the wide keel, about
one half of her breadth; the height of the cabins not
much more than eight feet; her draught, when most
completely lightened, not more than four feet.
Her electric machinery drew in and drove out with
great force currents of water which propelled her with
a speed greater than that afforded by the most powerful
paddles. It also pumped in or out, at whatever
depth, the quantity of water required as ballast, not
merely to steady the vessel, but to keep her in position
on the surface or to sink her to the level at which
the pilot might choose to sail. At either end
was fixed a steering screw, much resembling the tail-fin
of a fish, capable of striking sideways, upwards, or
downwards, and directing our course accordingly.

Ergimo, our escort, had not yet reached middle age,
but was a man of exceptional intellect and unusual
knowledge. He had made many voyages, and had
occupied for some time an important official post on
one of those Arctic continents which are inhabited
only by the hunters employed in collecting the furs
and skins furnished exclusively by these lands.
The shores of the gulf were lofty, rocky, and uninteresting.
It was difficult to see any object on shore from the
deck of the vessel, and I assented, therefore, without
demur, after the first hour of the voyage, to his
proposal that the lights, answering to our hatches,
should be closed, and that the vessel should pursue
her course below the surface. This was the more
desirable that, though winds and storms are, as I

**Page 164**

have said, rare, these long and narrow seas with their
lofty shores are exposed to rough currents, atmospheric
and marine, which render a voyage on the surface no
more agreeable than a passage in average weather across
the Bay of Biscay. After descending I was occupied
for some time in studying, with Ergimo’s assistance,
the arrangement of the machinery, and the simple process
by which electric force is generated in quantities
adequate to any effort at a marvellously small expenditure
of material. In this form the Martialists assert
that they obtain without waste all the potential energy
stored in ... [About half a score lines, or two pages
of an ordinary octavo volume like this, are here illegible.]
She (Eveena?) was somewhat pale, but rose quickly,
and greeted me with a smile of unaffected cheerfulness,
and was evidently surprised as well as pleased that
I was content to remain alone with her, our conversation
turning chiefly on the lessons of last night.
Our time passed quickly till, about the middle of
the day, we were startled by a shock which, as I thought,
must be due to our having run aground or struck against
a rock. But when I passed into the engine-room,
Ergimo explained that the pilot was nowise in fault.
We had encountered one of those inconveniences, hardly
to be called perils, which are peculiar to the waters
of Mars. Though animals hostile or dangerous to
man have been almost extirpated upon the land, creatures
of a type long since supposed to be extinct on Earth
still haunt the depths of the Martial seas; and one
of these—­a real sea-serpent of above a
hundred feet in length and perhaps eight feet in circumference—­had
attacked our vessel, entangling the steering screw
in his folds and trying to crush it, checking, at
the same time, by his tremendous force the motion
of the vessel.

“We shall soon get rid of him, though,”
said Ergimo, as I followed him to the stern, to watch
with great interest the method of dealing with the
monster, whose strange form was visible through a thick
crystal pane in the stern-plate. The asphyxiator
could not have been used without great risk to ourselves.
But several tubes, filled with a soft material resembling
cork, originally the pith of a Martial cane of great
size, were inserted in the floor, sides, and deck of
the vessel, and through the centre of each of these
passed a strong metallic wire of great conducting
power. Two or three of those in the stern were
placed in contact with some of the electric machinery
by which the rudder was usually turned, and through
them were sent rapid and energetic currents, whose
passage rendered the covering of the wires, notwithstanding
their great conductivity, too hot to be touched.
We heard immediately a smothered sound of extraordinary
character, which was, in truth, no other than a scream
deadened partly by the water, partly by the thick
metal sheet interposed between us and the element.
The steering screw was set in rapid motion, and at

**Page 165**

first revolving with some difficulty, afterwards moving
faster and more regularly, presently released us.
Its rotation was stopped, and we resumed our course.
The serpent had relaxed his folds, stunned by the shock,
but had not disentangled himself from the screw, till
its blades, no longer checked by the tremendous force
of his original grasp, striking him a series of terrific
blows, had broken the vertebrae and paralysed if not
killed the monstrous enemy.

At each side of the larger chambers and of the engine-room
were fixed small thick circular windows, through which
we could see from time to time the more remarkable
objects in the water. We passed along one curious
submarine bank, built somewhat like our coral rocks,
not by insects, however, but by shellfish, which,
fixing themselves as soon as hatched on the shells
below or around them, extended slowly upward and sideways.
As each of these creatures perished, the shell, about
half the size of an oyster, was filled with the same
sort of material as that of which its hexagonic walls
were originally formed, drawn in by the surrounding
and still living neighbours; and thus, in the course
of centuries, were constructed solid reefs of enormous
extent. One of these had run right across the
gulf, forming a complete bridge, ceasing, however,
within some five feet of the surface; but on this a
regular roadway had been constructed by human art and
mechanical labour, while underneath, at the usual
depth of thirty feet, several tunnels had been pierced,
each large enough to admit the passage of a single
vessel of the largest size. At every fourth hour
our vessel rose to the surface to renew her atmosphere,
which was thus kept purer than that of an ordinary
Atlantic packet between decks, while the temperature
was maintained at an agreeable point by the warmth
diffused from the electric machinery.

On the sixth day of our voyage, we reached a point
where the Gulf of Serocasfe divides, a sharp jutting
cape or peninsula parting its waters. We took
the northern branch, about fifteen miles in width,
and here, rising to the surface and steering a zigzag
course from coast to coast, I was enabled to see something
of the character of this most extraordinary strait.
Its walls at first were no less than 2000 feet in
height, so that at all times we were in sight, so to
speak, of land. A road had been cut along the
sea-level, and here and there tunnels ascending through
the rock rendered this accessible from the plateau
above. The strata, as upon Earth, were of various
character, none of them very thick, seldom reproducing
exactly the geology of our own planet, but seldom
very widely deviating in character from the rocks
with which we are acquainted. The lowest were
evidently of the same hard, fused, compressed character
as those which our terminology calls plutonic.
Above these were masses which, bike the carboniferous
strata of Earth, recalled the previous existence of
a richer but less highly organised form of vegetation

**Page 166**

than at present exists anywhere upon the surface.
Intermixed with these were beds of the peculiar submarine
shell-rock whose formation I have just described.
Above these again come strata of diluvial gravel,
and about 400 feet below the surface rocks that bore
evident traces of a glacial period. As we approached
the lower end of the gulf the shores sloped constantly
downward, and where they were no more than 600 feet
in height I was able to distinguish an upper stratum
of some forty yards in depth, preserving through its
whole extent traces of human life and even of civilisation.
This implied, if fairly representative of the rest
of the planet’s crust, an existence of man upon
its surface ten, twenty, or even a hundred-fold longer
than he is supposed to have enjoyed upon Earth.
About noon on the seventh day we entered the canal
which connects this arm of the gulf with the sea of
the northern temperate zone. It varies in height
from 400 to 600 feet, in width from 100 to 300 yards,
its channel never exceeds 20 feet in depth, Ergimo
explained that the length had been thought to render
a tunnel unsuitable, as the ordinary method of ventilation
could hardly have been made to work, and to ventilate
such a tunnel through shafts sunk to so great a depth
would have been almost as costly as the method actually
adopted. A much smaller breadth might have been
thought to suffice, and was at first intended; but
it was found that the current in a narrow channel,
the outer sea being many inches higher than the water
of the gulf, would have been too rapid and violent
for safety. The work had occupied fifteen Martial
years, and had been opened only for some eight centuries.
The water was not more than twenty feet in depth;
but the channel was so perfectly scoured by the current
that no obstacle had ever arisen and no expense had
been incurred to keep it a clear. We entered
the Northern sea where a bay ran up some half dozen
miles towards the end of the gulf, shortening the canal
by this distance. The bay itself was shallow,
the only channel being scarcely wider than the canal,
and created or preserved by the current setting in
to the latter; a current which offered a very perceptible
resistance to our course, and satisfied me that had
the canal been no wider than the convenience of navigation
would have required in the absence of such a stream,
its force would have rendered the work altogether
useless. We crossed the sea, holding on in the
same direction, and a little before sunset moored
our vessel at the wharf of a small harbour, along
the sides of which was built the largest town of this
subarctic landbelt, a village of some fifty houses
named Askinta.

**CHAPTER XV — FUR-HUNTING.**

**Page 167**

Ergimo landed to make arrangements for the chase,
to witness which was the principal object of this
deviation from what would otherwise have been our
most convenient course. Not only would it be possible
to take part in the pursuit of the wild fauna of the
continent, but I also hoped to share in a novel sport,
not unlike a whale-hunt in Baffin’s Bay.
A large inland sea, occupying no inconsiderable part
of the area of this belt, lay immediately to the northward,
and one wide arm thereof extended within a few miles
of Askirita, a distance which, notwithstanding the
interposition of a mountain range, might be crossed
in a couple of hours. One or two days at most
would suffice for both adventures. I had not
yet mentioned my intention to Eveena. During
the voyage I had been much alone with her, and it was
then only that our real acquaintance began. Till
then, however close our attachment, we were, in knowledge
of each other’s character and thought, almost
as strangers. While her painful timidity had in
some degree worn off, her anxious and watchful deference
was even more marked than before. True to the
strange ideas derived chiefly from her training, partly
from her own natural character, she was the more careful
to avoid giving the slightest pain or displeasure,
as she ceased to fear that either would be immediately
and intentionally visited upon herself. She evidently
thought that on this account there was the greater
danger lest a series of trivial annoyances, unnoticed
at the time, might cool the affection she valued so
highly. Diffident of her own charms, she knew
how little hold the women of her race generally have
on the hearts of men after the first fever of passion
has cooled. It was difficult for her to realise
that her thoughts or wishes could truly interest me,
that compliance with her inclinations could be an
object, or that I could be seriously bent on teaching
her to speak frankly and openly. But as this
new idea became credible and familiar, her unaffected
desire to comply with all that was expected from her
drew out her hitherto undeveloped powers of conversation,
and enabled me day by day to appreciate more thoroughly
the real intelligence and soundness of judgment concealed
at first by her shyness, and still somewhat obscured
by her childlike simplicity and absolute inexperience.
In the latter respect, however, she was, of course,
at the less disadvantage with a stranger to the manners
and life of her world. A more perfectly charming
companion it would have been difficult to desire and
impossible to find. If at first I had been secretly
inclined to reproach her with exaggerated timidity,
it became more and more evident that her personal
fears were due simply to that nervous susceptibility
which even men of reputed courage have often displayed
in situations of sudden and wholly unfamiliar peril.
Her tendency to overrate all dangers, not merely as
they affected herself, but as they might involve others,
and above all her husband, I ascribed to the ideas
and habits of thought now for so many centuries hereditary
among a people in whom the fear of annihilation—­and
the absence of all the motives that impel men on earth
to face danger and death with calmness, or even to
enjoy the excitement of deadly peril—­have
extinguished manhood itself.

**Page 168**

I could not, however, conceal from Eveena that I was
about to leave her for an adventure which could not
but seem to her foolhardy and motiveless. She
was more than terrified when she understood that I
really intended to join the professional hunters in
an enterprise which, even on their part, is regarded
by their countrymen with a mixture of admiration and
contempt, as one wherein only the hope of large remuneration
would induce any sensible man to share; and which,
from my utter ignorance of its conditions, must be
obviously still more dangerous to me. The confidence
she was slowly learning from what seemed to her extravagant
indulgence, to me simply the consideration due to
a rational being, wife or comrade, slave or free, first
found expression in the freedom of her loving though
provoking expostulations.

“You must be tired of me,” she said at
last, “if you are so ready to run the risk of
parting out of mere curiosity.”

“Sheer petulance!” I answered. “You
know well that you are dearer to me every day as I
learn to understand you better; but a man cannot afford
to play the coward because marriage has given new value
to life. And you might remember that I have threefold
the strength which emboldens your hunters to incur
all the dangers that seem to your fancy so terrible.”

That no shade of mere cowardice or feminine affectation
influenced her remonstrance was evident from her next
words.

“Well, then, if you will go, however improper
and outrageous the thing may be, let me go with you.
I cannot bear to wait alone, fancying at every moment
what may be happening to you, and fearing to see them
carry you back wounded or killed.”

Touched by the unselfishness of her terror, and feeling
that there was some truth in her representation of
the state of mind in which she would spend the hours
of my absence, I tried to quiet her by caresses and
soft words. But these she received as symptoms
of yielding on my part; and her persistence brought
upon her at last the resolute and somewhat sharp rebuke
with which men think it natural and right to repress
the excesses of feminine fear.

“This is nonsense, Eveena. You cannot accompany
me; and, if you could, your presence would multiply
tenfold the danger to me, and utterly unnerve me if
any real difficulty should call for presence of mind.
You must be content to leave me in the hands of Providence,
and allow me to judge what becomes a man, and what
results are worth the risks they may involve.
I hear Ergimo’s step on deck, and I must go and
learn from him what arrangements he has been able to
make for to-morrow.”

My escort had found no difficulty in providing for
the fulfilment of both my wishes. We were to
beat the forests which covered the southern seabord
in the neighbourhood, driving our game out upon the
open ground, where alone we should have a chance of
securing it. By noon we might hope to have seen
enough of this sport, and to find ourselves at no
great distance from that part of the inland sea where
a yet more exciting chase was to employ the rest of
the day. Failing to bring both adventures within
the sixteen hours of light which at this season and
in this latitude we should enjoy, we were to bivouac
for the night on the northern sea-coast and pursue
our aquatic game in the morning of the morrow, returning
before dark to our vessel.

**Page 169**

Ergimo, however, was more of Eveena’s mind than
of mine. “I have complied,” he said,
“with your wishes, as the Campta ordered me to
do. But I am equally bound, by his orders and
by my duty, to tell you that in my opinion you are
running risks altogether out of proportion to any
object our adventure can serve. Scarcely any of
the creatures we shall hunt are other than very formidable.
Eyen the therne, with the spikes on its fore-limbs,
can inflict painful if not dangerous wounds, and its
bite is said to be not unfrequently venomous.
You are not used to our methods of hunting, to the
management of the *caldecta*, or to the use of
our weapons. I can conceive no reason why you
should incur what is at any rate a considerable chance,
not merely of death, but of defeating the whole purpose
of your extraordinary journey, simply to do or to
see the work on which we peril only the least valuable
lives among us.”

I was about to answer him even more decidedly than
I had replied to Eveena, when a pressure on my arm
drew my eyes in the other direction; and, to my extreme
mortification, I perceived that Eveena herself, in
all-absorbing eagerness to learn the opinion of an
intelligent and experienced hunter, had stolen on
deck and had heard all that had passed. I was
too much vexed to make any other reply to Ergimo’s
argument than the single word, “I shall go.”
Really angry with her for the first and last time,
but not choosing to express my displeasure in the
presence of a third person, I hurried Eveena down the
ladder into our cabin.

“Tell me,” I said, “what, according
to your own rules of feminine reserve and obedience,
you deserve? What would one of your people say
to a wife who followed him without leave into the company
of a stranger, to listen to that which she knew she
was not meant to hear?”

She answered by throwing off her veil and head-dress,
and standing up silent before me.

“Answer me, child,” I repeated, more than
half appeased by the mute appeal of her half-raised
eyes and submissive attitude. “I know you
will not tell me that you have not broken all the restraints
of your own laws and customs. What would your
father, for instance, say to such an escapade?”

She was silent, till the touch of my hand, contradicting
perhaps the harshness of my words, encouraged her
to lift her eyes, full of tears, to mine.

“Nothing,” was her very unexpected reply.

“Nothing?” I rejoined. “If
you can tell me that you have not done wrong, I shall
be sorry to have reproved you so sharply.”

“I shall tell you no such lie!” she answered
almost indignantly. “You asked what would
be *said*.”

I was fairly at a loss. The figure which Martial
grammarians call “the suppressed alternative”
is a great favourite, and derives peculiar force from
the varied emphasis their syntax allows. But,
resolved not to understand a meaning much more distinctly
conveyed in her words than in my translation, I replied,
“*I* shall say nothing then, except—­don’t
do it again;” and I extricated myself promptly
if ignominiously from the dilemma, by leaving the
cabin and closing the door, so sharply and decidedly
as to convey a distinct intimation that it was not
again to be opened.

**Page 170**

We breakfasted earlier than usual. My gentle
bride had been subdued into a silence, not sullen,
but so sad that when her wistful eyes followed my
every movement as I prepared to start, I could willingly,
to bring back their brightness, have renounced the
promise of the day. But this must not be; and
turning to take leave on the threshold, I said—­

“Be sure I shall come to no harm; and if I did,
the worst pang of death would be the memory of the
first sharp words I have spoken to you, and which,
I confess, were an ill return for the inconvenient
expression of your affectionate anxiety.”

“Do not speak so,” she half whispered.
“I deserved any mark of your displeasure; I
only wish I could persuade you that the sharpest sting
lies in the lips we love. Do remember, since you
would not let me run the slightest risk of harm, that
if you come to hurt you will have killed me.”

“Rest assured I shall come to no serious ill.
I hope this evening to laugh with you at your alarms;
and so long as you do not see me either in the flesh
or in the spirit, you may know that I am safe.
I *could not* leave you for ever without meeting
you again.”

This speech, which I should have ventured in no other
presence, would hardly have established my lunacy
more decisively in Martial eyes than in those of Terrestrial
common sense. It conveyed, however, a real if
not sufficient consolation to Eveena; the idea it implied
being not wholly unfamiliar to a daughter of the Star.
I was surprised that, almost shrinking from my last
embrace, Eveena suddenly dropped her veil around her;
till, turning, I saw that Ergimo was standing at the
top of the ladder leading to the deck, and just in
sight.

“I will send word,” he said, addressing
himself to me, but speaking for her ears, “of
your safety at noon and at night. So far as my
utmost efforts can ensure it you will be safe; an obligation
higher, and enforced by sanctions graver, than even
the Campta’s command forbids me to lead a *brother*
into peril, and fail to bring him out of it.”

The significant word was spoken in so low a tone that
it could not possibly reach the ears of our companions
of the chase, who had mustered on shore within a few
feet of the vessel. But Eveena evidently caught
both the sound and the meaning, and I was glad that
they should convey to her a confidence which seemed
to myself no better founded than her alarms.
To me its only value lay in the friendly relation
it established with one I had begun greatly to like.
I relied on my own strength and nerve for all that
human exertion could do in such peril as we might
encounter; and, in a case in which these might fail
me, I doubted whether even the one tie that has binding
force on Mars would avail me much.

**Page 171**

Immediately outside the town were waiting, saddled
but not bridled, some score of the extraordinary riding-birds
Eveena had described. The seat of the rider is
on the back, between the wings; but the saddle consists
only of a sort of girth immediately in front, to which
a pair of stirrups, resembling that of a lady’s
side-saddle, were attached. The creature that
was to carry my unusual weight was the most powerful
of all, but I felt some doubt whether even his strength
might not break down. One of the hunters had
charge of a carriage on which was fixed a cage containing
two dozen birds of a dark greenish grey, about the
size of a crow, and with the slender form, piercing
eyes, and powerful beak of the falcon. They were
not intended, however, to strike the prey, but simply
to do the part of dogs in tracing out the game, and
driving it from the woods into the open ground.
Our birds, rising at once into the air, carried us
some fifty feet above the tops of the trees.
Here the chief huntsman took the guidance of the party,
keeping in front of the line in which we were ranged,
and watching through a pair of what might be called
spectacles, save that a very short tube with double
lenses was substituted for the single glass, the movement
of the hawks, which had been released in the wood below
us. These at first dispersed in every direction,
extending at intervals from end to end of a line some
three miles in length, and moving slowly forwards,
followed by the hunters. A sharp call from one
bird on the left gathered the rest around him, and
in a few moments the rustling and rushing of an invisible
flock through the glades of the forest apprised us
that we had started, though we could not see, the
prey. Ergimo, who kept close beside me, and who
had often witnessed the sport before, kept me informed
of what was proceeding underneath us, of which I could
see but little. Glimpses here and there showed
that we were pursuing a numerous flock of large white-plumed
or white-haired creatures, standing at most some four
feet in height; but what they were, even whether birds
or quadrupeds, their movements left me in absolute
uncertainty. Worried and frightened by the falcons,
which, however, never ventured to close upon them,
they were gradually driven in the direction intended
by the huntsman towards the open plain, which bordered
the forest at a distance of about six miles to the
northward. In half-an-hour after the “find,”
the leader of the flock broke out of the wood two or
three hundred yards ahead of us, and was closely followed
by his companions. I then recognised in the objects
of the chase the strange *thernee* described
by Eveena, whose long soft down furnished the cloak
she wore on our visit to the Astronaut. Their
general form, and especially the length and graceful
curve of the neck, led one instinctively to regard
them as birds; but the fore-limbs, drawn up as they
ran, but now and then outstretched with a sweep to
strike at a falcon that ventured imprudently near,

**Page 172**

had, in the distance, much more resemblance to the
arm of a baboon than to the limb of any other creature,
and bore no likeness whatever to the wing even of
the bat. The object of the hunters was not to
strike these creatures from a distance, but to run
them down and capture them by sheer exhaustion.
This the great wing-power of the *caldectaa*
enabled us to do, though by the time we had driven
the thernee to bay my own Pegasus was fairly tired.
The hunters, separating and spreading out in the form
of a semicircle, assisted the movements of the hawks,
driving the prey gradually into a narrow defile among
the hills bordering the plain to the north-eastward,
whose steep upward slope greatly hindered and fatigued
creatures whose natural habitat consists of level plains
or seabord forests. At last, under a steep half-precipitous
rock which defended them in rear, and between clumps
of trees which guarded either flank—­protected
by both overhead—­the flock, at the call
of their leader, took up a position which displayed
an instinctive strategy, whereof an Indian or African
chief might have been proud. The *caldectaa*,
however, well knew the vast superiority of their own
strength and of their formidable beaks, and did not
hesitate to carry us close to but somewhat above the
thernee, as these stood ranged in line with extended
fore-limbs and snouts; the latter armed with teeth
about an inch and a half in length tapering singly
to a sharp point, the former with spikes stronger,
longer, and sharper than those of the porcupine; but,
as I satisfied myself by a subsequent inspection,
formed by rudimentary, or, more properly speaking,
transformed or degenerated quills. The bite was
easily avoided. It was not so easy to keep out
of reach of the powerful fore-limb while endeavouring
to strike a fatal blow at the neck with the long rapier-like
cutting weapons carried by the hunters. My own
shorter and sharp sword, to which I had trusted, preferring
a familiar weapon to one, however suitable, to which
I was not accustomed, left me no choice but to abandon
the hope of active participation in the slaughter,
or to venture dangerously near. Choosing the
latter alternative, I received from the arm of the
thernee I had singled out a blow which, caught upon
my sword, very nearly smote it from my hand, and certainly
would have disarmed at once any of my weaker companions.
As it was, the stroke maimed the limb that delivered
it; but with its remaining arm the creature maintained
a fight so stubborn that, had both been available,
the issue could not have been in my favour. This
conflict reminded me singularly of an encounter with
the mounted swordsmen of Scindiah and the Peishwah;
all my experience of sword-play being called into
use, and my brute opponent using its natural weapon
with an instinctive skill not unworthy of comparison
with that of a trained horse-soldier; at the same
time that it constantly endeavoured to seize with
its formidable snout either my own arm or the wing

**Page 173**

or body of the caldecta, which, however, was very
well able to take care of itself. In fact, the
prey was secured at last not by my sword but by a
blow from the caldecta’s beak, which pierced
and paralysed the slender neck of our antagonist.
Some twenty thernee formed the booty of a chase certainly
novel, and possessing perhaps as many elements of
peril and excitement as that finest of Earthly sports
which the affected cynicism of Anglo-Indian speech
degrades by the name of “pig-sticking.”

When the falcons had been collected and recaged, and
the bodies of the thernee consigned to a carriage
brought up for the purpose by a subordinate who had
watched the hunters’ course, our birds, from
which we had dismounted, were somewhat rested; and
Ergimo informed me that another and more formidable,
as well as more valuable, prey was thought to be in
sight a few miles off. Mounted on a fresh bird,
and resolutely closing my ears to his urgent and reasonable
dissuasion, I joined the smaller party which was detached
for this purpose. As we were carried slowly at
no great distance from the ground, managing our birds
with ease by a touch on either side of the neck—­they
are spurred at need by a slight electric shock communicated
from the hilt of the sword, and are checked by a forcible
pressure on the wings—­I asked Ergimo why
the thernee were not rather shot than hunted, since
utility, not sport, governs the method of capturing
the wild beasts of Mars.

“We have,” he replied, “two weapons
adapted to strike at a distance. The asphyxiator
is too heavy to be carried far or fast, and pieces
of the shell inflict such injuries upon everything
in the immediate neighbourhood of the explosion, as
to render it useless where the value of the prey depends
upon the condition of its skin. Our other and
much more convenient, if less powerful, projective
weapon has also its own disadvantage. It can
be used only at short distances; and at these it is
apt to burn and tear a skin so soft and delicate as
that of the thernee. Moreover, it so terrifies
the caldecta as to render it unmanageable; and we
are compelled to dismount before using it, as you
may presently see. Four or five of our party are
now armed with it, and I wish you had allowed me to
furnish you with one.”

“I prefer,” I answered, “my own
weapon, an air-gun which I can fire sixteen times
without reloading, and which will kill at a hundred
yards’ distance. With a weapon unknown to
me I might not only fail altogether, but I might not
improbably do serious injury, by my clumsiness and
inexperience, to my companions.”

“I wish, nevertheless,” he said, “that
you carried the *mordyta*. You will have
need of an efficient weapon if you dismount to share
the attack we are just about to make. But I entreat
you not to do so. You can see it all in perfect
safety, if only you will keep far enough away to avoid
danger from the fright of your bird.”

**Page 174**

As he spoke, we had come into proximity to our new
game, a large and very powerful animal, about four
feet high at the shoulders, and about six feet from
the head to the root of the tail. The latter carries,
as that of the lion was fabled to do, a final claw,
not to lash the creature into rage, but for the more
practical purpose of striking down an enemy endeavouring
to approach it in flank or rear. Its hide, covered
with a long beautifully soft fur, is striped alternately
with brown and yellow, the ground being a sort of
silver-grey. The head resembles that of the lion,
but without the mane, and is prolonged into a face
and snout more like those of the wild boar. Its
limbs are less unlike those of the feline genus than
any other Earthly type, but have three claws and a
hard pad in lieu of the soft cushion. The upper
jaw is armed with two formidable tusks about twelve
inches in length, and projecting directly forwards.
A blow from the claw-furnished tail would plough up
the thigh or rip open the abdomen of a man. A
stroke from one of the paws would fracture his skull,
while a wound from the tusk in almost any part of
the body must prove certainly fatal. Fortunately,
the *kargynda* has not the swiftness of movement
belonging to nearly all our feline races, otherwise
its skins, the most valuable prize of the Martial
hunter, would yearly be taken at a terrible cost of
life. Two of these creatures were said to be reposing
in a thick jungle of reeds bordering a narrow stream
immediately in our front. The hunters, with Ergimo,
now dismounted and advanced some two hundred yards
in front of their birds, directing the latter to turn
their heads in the opposite direction. I found
some difficulty in making my wish to descend intelligible
to the docile creature which carried me, and was still
in the air when one of the enormous creatures we were
hunting rushed out of its hiding-place. The nearest
hunter, raising a shining metal staff about three and
a half feet in length (having a crystal cylinder at
the hinder end, about six inches in circumference,
and occupying about one-third the entire length of
the weapon), levelled it at the beast. A flash
as of lightning darted through the air, and the creature
rolled over. Another flash from a similar weapon
in the hands of another hunter followed. By this
time, however, my bird was entirely unmanageable,
and what happened I learned afterwards from Ergimo.
Neither of the two shots had wounded the creature,
though the near passage of the first had for a moment
stunned and overthrown him. His rush among the
party dispersed them all, but each being able to send
forth from his piece a second flash of lightning,
the monster was mortally wounded before they fairly
started in pursuit of their scared birds, which—­their
attention being called by the roar of the animal,
by the crash accompanying each flash, and probably
above all by the restlessness of my own *caldecta*
in their midst—­had flown off to some distance.

**Page 175**

My bird, floundering forwards, flung me to the ground
about two hundred yards from the jungle, fortunately
at a greater distance from the dying but not yet utterly
disabled prey. Its companion now came forth and
stood over the tortured creature, licking its sores
till it expired. By this time I had recovered
the consciousness I had lost with the shock of my fall,
and had ascertained that my gun was safe. I had
but time to prepare and level it when, leaving its
dead companion, the brute turned and charged me almost
as rapidly as an infuriated elephant. I fired
several times and assured, if only from my skill as
a marksman, that some of the shots had hit it, was
surprised to see that at each it was only checked
for a moment and then resumed its charge. It was
so near now that I could aim with some confidence
at the eye; and if, as I suspected, the previous shots
had failed to pierce the hide, no other aim was likely
to avail. I levelled, therefore, as steadily as
I could at its blazing eyeballs and fired three or
four shots, still without doing more than arrest or
rather slacken its charge, each shot provoking a fearful
roar of rage and pain. I fired my last within
about twenty yards, and then, before I could draw my
sword, was dashed to the ground with a violence that
utterly stunned me. When I recovered my senses
Ergimo was kneeling beside me pouring down my throat
the contents of a small phial; and as I lifted my head
and looked around, I saw the enormous carcass from
under which I had been dragged lying dead almost within
reach of my hand. One eye was pierced through
the very centre, the other seriously injured.
But such is the creature’s tenacity of life,
that, though three balls were actually in its brain,
it had driven home its charge, though far too unconscious
to make more than convulsive and feeble use of any
of its formidable weapons. When I fell it stood
for perhaps a second, and then dropped senseless upon
my lower limbs, which were not a little bruised by
its weight. That no bone was broken or dislocated
by the shock, deadened though it must have been by
the repeated pauses in the kargynda’s charge
and by its final exhaustion, was more than I expected
or could understand. Before I rose to my feet,
Ergimo had peremptorily insisted on the abandonment
of the further excursion we had intended, declaring
that he could not answer to his Sovereign, after so
severe a lesson, for my exposure to any future peril.
The Campta had sent him to bring me into his presence
for purposes which would not be fulfilled by producing
a lifeless carcass, or a maimed and helpless invalid;
and the discipline of the Court and central Administration
allowed no excuse for disobedience to orders or failure
in duty. My protest was very quickly silenced.
On attempting to stand, I found myself so shaken,
torn, and shattered that I could not again mount a
*caldecta* or wield a weapon; and was carried
back to Askinta on a sort of inclined litter placed
upon the carriage which had conveyed our booty.

**Page 176**

I was mortified, as we approached the place where
our vessel lay, to observe a veiled female figure
on the deck. Eveena’s quick eye had noted
our return some minutes before, and inferred from the
early abandonment of the chase some serious accident.
Happily our party were so disposed that I had time
to assume the usual position before she caught sight
of me. I could not, however, deceive her by a
desperate effort to walk steadily and unaided.
She stood by quietly and calmly while the surgeon
of the hunters dressed my hurts, observing exactly
how the bandages and lotions were applied. Only
when we were left alone did she in any degree give
way to an agitation by which she feared to increase
my evident pain and feverishness. It was impossible
to satisfy her that black bruises and broad gashes
meant no danger, and would be healed by a few days’
rest. But when she saw that I could talk and
smile as usual, she was unsparing in her attempts to
coax from me a pledge that I would never again peril
life or limb to gratify my curiosity regarding the
very few pursuits in which, for the highest remuneration,
Martialists can be induced to incur the probability
of injury and the chance of that death they so abjectly
dread. Scarcely less reluctant to repeat the scolding
she felt so acutely than to employ the methods of
rebuke she deemed less severe, I had no little difficulty
in evading her entreaties. Only a very decided
request to drop the subject at once and for ever, enforced
on her conscience by reminding her that it would be
enforced no otherwise, at last obtained me peace without
the sacrifice of liberty.

**CHAPTER XVI — TROUBLED WATERS.**

We were now in Martial N. latitude 57 deg., in a comparatively
open part of the narrow sea which encloses the northern
land-belt, and to the south-eastward lay the only
channel by which this sea communicates with the main
ocean of the southern hemisphere. Along this we
took our course. Bather against Ergimo’s
advice, I insisted on remaining on the surface, as
the sea was tolerably calm. Eveena, with her usual
self-suppression, professed to prefer the free air,
the light of the long day, and such amusement as the
sight of an occasional sea-monster or shoal of fishes
afforded, to the fainter light and comparative monotony
of submarine travelling. Ergimo, who had in his
time commanded the hunters of the Arctic Sea, was
almost as completely exempt as myself from sea-sickness;
but I was surprised to find that the crew disliked,
and, had they ventured, would have grumbled at, the
change, being so little accustomed to any long superficial
voyage as to suffer like landsmen from rough weather.
The difference between sailing on and below the surface
is so great, both in comfort and in the kind of skill
and knowledge required, that the seamen of passenger
and of mercantile vessels are classes much more distinct
than those of the mercantile and national marine of

**Page 177**

England, or any other maritime Power on Earth.
I consented readily that, except on the rare occasions
when the heavens were visible, the short night, from
the fall of the evening to the dissipation of the
morning mists, should he passed under water.
I have said that gales are comparatively rare and the
tides insignificant; but the narrow and exceedingly
long channels of the Martial seas, with the influence
of a Solar movement from north to south more extensive
though slower than that which takes place between
our Winter and Summer Solstices, produce currents,
atmospheric and oceanic, and sudden squalls that often
give rise to that worst of all disturbances of the
surface, known as a “chopping sea.”
When we crossed the tropic and came fairly into the
channel separating the western coast of the continent
on which the Astronaut had landed from the eastern
seabord of that upon whose southern coast I was presently
to disembark, this disturbance was even worse than,
except on peculiarly disagreeable occasions, in the
Straits of Dover. After enduring this for two
or three hours, I observed that Eveena had stolen
from her seat beside me on the deck. Since we
left Askinta her spirits had been unusually variable.
She had been sometimes lively and almost excitable;
more generally quiet, depressed, and silent even beyond
her wont. Still, her manner and bearing were always
so equable, gentle, and docile that, accustomed to
the caprices of the sex on Earth, I had hardly noticed
the change. I thought, however, that she was
to-day nervous and somewhat pale; and as she did not
return, after permitting the pilot to seek a calmer
stratum at some five fathoms depth, I followed Eveena
into our cabin or chamber. Standing with her
back to the entrance and with a goblet to her lips,
she did not hear me till I had approached within arm’s
length. She then started violently, so agitated
that the colour faded at once from her countenance,
leaving it white as in a swoon, then as suddenly returning,
flushed her neck and face, from the emerald shoulder
clasps to the silver snood, with a pink deeper than
that of her robe.

“I am very sorry I startled you,” I said.
“You are certainly ill, or you would not be
so easily upset.”

I laid my hand as I spoke on her soft tresses, but
she withdrew from the touch, sinking down among the
cushions. Leaving her to recover her composure,
I took up the half-empty cup she had dropped on the
central table. Thirsty myself, I had almost drained
without tasting it, when a little half-stifled cry
of dismay checked me. The moment I removed the
cup from my mouth I perceived its flavour—­the
unmistakable taste of the *dravadone* ("courage
cup"), so disagreeable to us both, which we had shared
on our bridal evening. Wetting with one drop the
test-stone attached to my watch-chain, it presented
the local discoloration indicating the narcotic poison
which is the chief ingredient of this compound.

**Page 178**

“I don’t think this is wise, child,”
I said, turning once more to Eveena. To my amazement,
far from having recovered the effect of her surprise,
she was yet more overcome than at first; crouching
among the cushions with her head bent down over her
knees, and covering her face with her hands.
Reclining in the soft pile, I held her in my arms,
overcoming perforce what seemed hysterical reluctance;
but when I would have withdrawn the little hands,
she threw herself on my knee, burying her face in
the cushions.

“It is very wicked,” she sobbed; “I
cannot ask you to forgive me.”

“Forgive what, my child? Eveena, you are
certainly ill. Calm yourself, and don’t
try to talk just now.”

“I am not ill, I assure you,” she faltered,
resisting the arm that sought to raise her; “but
...”

In my hands, however, she was powerless as an infant;
and I would hear nothing till I held her gathered
within my arm and her two hands fast in my right.
Now that I could look into the face she strove to avert,
it was clear that she was neither hysterical nor simply
ill; her agitation, however unreasonable and extravagant,
was real.

“What troubles you, my own? I promise you
not to say one word of reproach; I only want to understand
with what you so bitterly reproach yourself.”

“But you cannot help being angry,” she
urged, “if you understand what I have done.
It is the *charny*, which I never tasted till
that night, and never ought to have tasted again.
I know you cannot forgive me; only take my fault for
granted, and don’t question me.”

These incoherent words threw the first glimpse of
light on the meaning of her distress and penitence.
I doubt if the best woman in Christendom would so
reproach and abase herself, if convicted of even a
worse sin than the secret use of those stimulants for
which the *charny* is a Martial equivalent.
No Martialist would dream of poisoning his blood and
besotting his brain with alcohol in any form.
But their opiates affect a race addicted to physical
repose, to sensuous enjoyment rather than to sensual
excitement, and to lucid intellectual contemplation,
with a sense of serene delight as supremely delicious
to their temperament as the dreamy illusions of haschisch
to the Turk, the fierce frenzy of bhang to the Malay,
or the wild excitement of brandy or Geneva to the
races of Northern Europe. But as with the luxury
of intoxication in Europe, so in Mars indulgence in
these drugs, freely permitted to the one sex, is strictly
forbidden by opinion and domestic rule to the other.
A lady discovered in the use of *charny* is as
deeply disgraced as an European matron detected in
the secret enjoyment of spirits and cigars; and her
lord and master takes care to render her sufficiently
conscious of her fault.

**Page 179**

And there was something stranger here than a violation
of the artificial restraint of sex. Slightly
and seldom as the Golden Circle touches the lines
defining personal or social morality—­carefully
as the Founder has abstained from imposing an ethical
code of his own, or attaching to his precepts any
rule not directly derived from the fundamental tenets
or necessary to the cohesion of the Order—­he
had expressed in strong terms his dread and horror
of narcotism; the use for pleasure’s sake, not
to relieve pain or nervous excitement, of drugs which
act, as he said, through the brain upon the soul.
His judgment, expressed with unusual directness and
severity and enforced by experience, has become with
his followers a tradition not less imperative than
the most binding of their laws. It was so held,
above all, in that household in which Eveena and I
had first learnt the “lore of the Starlight.”
Esmo, indeed, regarded not merely as an unscientific
superstition, but as blasphemous folly, the rejection
of any means of restoring health or relieving pain
which Providence has placed within human reach.
But he abhorred the use for pleasure’s sake
of poisons affirmed to reduce the activity and in the
long-run to impair the energies of the mind, and weaken
the moral sense and the will, more intensely than
the strictest follower of the Arabian Prophet abhors
the draughts which deprive man of the full use of the
senses, intelligence, and conscience which Allah has
bestowed, and degrade him below the brute, Esmo’s
children, moreover, were not more strictly compelled
to respect the letter than carefully instructed in
the principle of every command for which he claimed
their obedience.

But in such measure as Eveena’s distress became
intelligible, the fault of which she accused herself
became incredible. I could not believe that she
could be wilfully disloyal to me—­still less
that she could have suddenly broken through the fixed
ideas of her whole life, the principles engraved on
her mind by education more stringently than the maxims
of the Koran or the Levitical Law on the children of
Ishmael or of Israel; and this while the impressive
rites of Initiation, the imprecation at which I myself
had shuddered, were fresh in her memory—­their
impression infinitely deepened, moreover, by the awful
mystery of that Vision of which even yet we were half
afraid to speak to one another. While I hesitated
to reply, gathering up as well as I could the thread
of these thoughts as they passed in a few seconds
through my mind, my left hand touched an object hidden
in my bride’s zone. I drew out a tiny crystal
phial three parts full, taken, as I saw, from the
medicine-chest Esmo had carefully stocked and as carefully
fastened. As, holding this, I turned again to
her, Eveena repeated: “Punish, but don’t
question me!”

“My own,” I said, “you are far more
punished already than you deserve or I can bear to
see. How did you get this?”

Releasing her hands, she drew from the folds of her
robe the electric keys, which, by a separate combination,
would unlock each of my cases;—­without
which it was impossible to open or force them.

**Page 180**

“Yes, I remember; and you were surprised that
I trusted them to you. And now you expect me
to believe that you have abused that trust, deceived
me, broken a rule which in your father’s house
and by all our Order is held sacred as the rings of
the Signet, for a drug which twelve days ago you disliked
as much as I?”

“It is true.”

The words were spoken with downcast eyes, in the low
faltering tone natural to a confession of disgrace.

“It is not true, Eveena; or if true in form,
false in matter. If it were possible that you
could wish to deceive me, you knew it could not be
for long.”

“I meant to be found out,” she interrupted,
“only not yet.”

She had betrayed herself, stung by words that seemed
to express the one doubt she could not nerve herself
to endure—­doubt of her loyalty to me.
Before I could speak, she looked up hastily, and began
to retract. I stopped her.

“I see—­when you had done with it.
But, Eveena, why conceal it? Do you think I would
not have given this or all the contents of the chest
into your hands, and asked no question?”

“Do you mean it? Could you have so trusted
me?”

“My child! is it difficult to trust where I
know there is no temptation to wrong? Do you
think that to-day I have doubted or suspected you,
even while you have accused yourself? I cannot
guess at your motive, but I am as sure as ever of
your loyalty. Take these things,”—­forcing
back upon her the phial and the magnets,—­“yes,
and the test-stone.” ... She burst into
passionate tears.

“I cannot endure this. If I had dreamed
your patience would have borne with me half so far,
I would never have tried it so, even for your own
sake. I meant to be found out and accept the consequences
in silence. But you trust me so, that I must
tell you what I wanted to conceal. When you kept
on the surface it made me so ill”—–­

“But, Eveena, if the remedy be not worse than
the sickness, why not ask for it openly?”

“It was not that. Don’t you understand?
Of course, I would bear any suffering rather than
have done this; but then you would have found me out
at once. I wanted to conceal my suffering, not
to escape it.”

“My child! my child! how could you put us both
to all this pain?”

“You know you would not have given me the draught;
you would have left the surface at once; and I cannot
bear to be always in the way, always hindering your
pleasures, and even your discoveries. You came
across a distance that makes a bigger world than this
look less than that light, through solitude and dangers
and horrors I cannot bear to think of, to see and
examine this world of ours. And then you leave
things unseen or half-seen, you spoil your work, because
a girl is seasick! You ran great risk of death
and got badly hurt to see what our hunting was like,
and you will not let my head ache that you may find
out what our sea-storms and currents are! How

**Page 181**

can I bear to be such a burden upon you? You
trust me, and, I believe,” (she added, colouring),
“you love me, twelvefold more than I deserve;
yet you think me unwilling or unworthy to take ever
so small an interest in your work, to bear a few hours’
discomfort for it and for you. And yet,”
she went on passionately, “I may sit trembling
and heart-sick for a whole day alone that you may
carry out your purpose. I may receive the only
real sting your lips have given, because I could not
bear that pain without crying. And so with everything.
It is not that I must not suffer pain, but that the
pain must not come from without. Your lips would
punish a fault with words that shame and sting for
a day, a summer, a year; your hand must never inflict
a sting that may smart for ten minutes. And it
is not only that you do this, but you pride yourself
on it. Why? It is not that you think the
pain of the body so much worse than that of the spirit:—­you
that smiled at me when you were too badly bruised
and torn to stand, yet could scarcely keep back your
tears just now, when you thought that I had suffered
half an hour of sorrow I did not quite deserve.
Why then? Do you think that women feel so differently?
Have the women of your Earth hearts so much harder
and skins so much softer than ours?”

She spoke with most unusual impetuosity, and with
that absolute simplicity and sincerity which marked
her every look and word, which gave them, for me at
least, an unspeakable charm, and for all who heard
her a characteristic individuality unlike the speech
or manner of any other woman. As soon suspect
an infant of elaborate sarcasm as Eveena of affectation,
irony, or conscious paradox. Nay, while her voice
was in my ears, I never could feel that her views *were*
paradoxical. The direct straightforwardness and
simple structure of the Martial language enhanced
this peculiar effect of her speech; and much that
seems infantine in translation was all but eloquent
as she spoke it. Often, as on this occasion,
I felt guilty of insincerity, of a verbal fencing
unworthy of her unalloyed good faith and earnestness,
as I endeavoured to parry thrusts that went to the
very heart of all those instinctive doctrines which
I could the less defend on the moment, because I had
never before dreamed that they could be doubted.

“At any rate,” I said at last, “your
sex gain by my heresy, since they are as richly gifted
in stinging words as we in physical force.”

“So much the worse for them, surely,”
she answered simply, “if it be right that men
should rule and women obey?”

“That is the received doctrine on Earth,”
I answered. “In practice, men command and
women disobey them; men bully and women lie. But
in truth, Eveena, having a wife only too loyal and
too loving, I don’t care to canvass the deserts
of ordinary women or the discipline of other households.
I own that it was wrong to scold you. Do not insist
on making me say that it would have been a little less
wrong to beat you!”

**Page 182**

She laughed—­her low, sweet, silvery laugh,
the like of which I have hardly heard among Earthly
women, even of the simpler, more child-like races
of the East and South; a laugh still stranger in a
world where childhood is seldom bright and womanhood
mostly sad and fretful. Of the very few satisfactory
memories I bore away from that world, the sweetest
is the recollection of that laugh, which I heard for
the first time on the morrow of our bridals, and for
the last time on the day before we parted. I
cherish it as evidence that, despite many and bitter
troubles, my bride’s short married life was not
wholly unhappy. By this time she had found out
that we had left the surface, and began to remonstrate.

“Nay, I have seen all I care to see, my own.
I confess the justice of your claim, as the partner
of my life, to be the partner of its paramount purpose.
You are more precious to me than all the discoveries
of which I ever dreamed, and I will not for any purpose
whatsoever expose you to real peril or serious pain.
But henceforth I will ask you to bear discomfort and
inconvenience when the object is worth it, and to
help me wherever your help can avail.”

“I can help you?”

“Much, and in many ways, my Eveena. You
will soon learn to understand what I wish to examine
and the use of the instruments I employ; and then
you will be the most useful of assistants, as you are
the best and most welcome of companions.”

As I spoke a soft colour suffused her face, and her
eyes brightened with a joy and contentment such as
no promise of pleasure or indulgence could have inspired.
To be the partner of adventure and hardship, the drudge
in toil and sentinel in peril, was the boon she claimed,
the best guerdon I could promise. If but the promise
might have been better fulfilled!

It was not till in latitude 9 deg. S. we emerged
into the open ocean, and presently found ourselves
free from the currents of the narrow waters, that,
in order to see the remarkable island of which I had
caught sight in my descent, I requested Ergimo to
remain for some hours above the surface. The
island rises directly out of the sea, and is absolutely
unascendible. Balloons, however, render access
possible, both to its summit and to its cave-pierced
sides. It is the home of enormous flocks of white
birds, which resemble in form the heron rather than
the eider duck, but which, like the latter, line with
down drawn from their own breasts the nests which,
counted by millions, occupy every nook and cranny
of the crystalline walls, about ten miles in circumference.
Each of the nests is nearly as large as that of the
stork. They are made of a jelly digested from
the bones of the fish upon which the birds prey, and
are almost as white in colour as the birds themselves.
Freshly formed nest dissolved in hot water makes dishes
as much to the taste of Martialists as the famous bird-nest
soup to that of the Chinese. Both down and nests,
therefore, are largely plundered; but the birds are
never injured, and care is taken in robbing them to
leave enough of the outer portion of the nest to constitute
a bed for the eggs, and encourage the creatures to
rebuild and reline it.

**Page 183**

One harvest only is permitted, the second stripping
of feathers and the rebuilt nest being left undisturbed.
The caverns are lined with a white guano, now some
feet thick, since it has ceased to be sought for manure;
the Martialists having discovered means of saturating
the soil with ammonia procured from the nitrogen of
the atmosphere, which with the sewage and other similar
materials enables them to dispense with this valuable
bird manure. Whether the white colour of the island,
perceptible even in a large Terrestrial telescope,
is in any degree due to the whiteness of the birds,
their nests, and leavings, or wholly to reflection
from the bright spar-like surface of the rock itself,
and especially of the flat table-like summit, I will
not pretend to say.

From this point we held our course south-westward,
and entered the northernmost of two extraordinary
gulfs of exactly similar shape, separated by an isthmus
and peninsula which assume on a map the form of a
gigantic hammer. The strait by which each gulf
is entered is about a hundred miles in length and
ten in breadth. The gulf itself, if it should
not rather be called an inland sea, occupies a total
area of about 100,000 square miles. The isthmus,
500 miles in length by 50 in breadth, ends in a roughly
square peninsula of about 10,000 square miles in extent,
nearly the whole of which is a plateau 2000 feet above
the sea-level. On the narrowest point of the isthmus,
just where it joins the mainland, and where a sheltered
bay runs up from either sea, is situated the great
city of Amakasfe, the natural centre of Martial life
and commerce. At this point we found awaiting
us the balloon which was to convey us to the Court
of the Suzerain. A very light but strong metallic
framework maintained the form of the “fish-shaped”
or spindle-shaped balloon itself, which closely resembled
that of our vessel, its dimensions being of necessity
greater. Attached to this framework was the car
of similar form, about twelve feet in length and six
in depth, the upper third of the sides, however, being
of open-work, so as not to interfere with the survey
of the traveller. Eveena could not help shivering
at the sight of the slight vehicle and the enormous
machine of thin, bladder-like material by which it
was to be upheld. She embarked, indeed, without
a word, her alarm betraying itself by no voluntary
sign, unless it were the tight clasp of my hand, resembling
that of a child frightened, but ashamed to confess
its fear. I noticed, however, that she so arranged
her veil as to cover her eyes when the signal for the
start was given. She was, therefore, wholly unconscious
of the sudden spring, unattended by the slightest
jolt or shake, which raised us at once 500 feet above
the coast, and under whose influence, to my eyes, the
ground appeared suddenly to fall from us. When
I drew out the folds of her veil, it was with no little
amazement that she saw the sky around her, the sea
and the city far below. An aerial current to the

**Page 184**

north-westward at our present level, which had been
selected on that account, carried us at a rate of
some twelve miles an hour; a rate much increased,
however, by the sails at the stern of the car, sails
of thin metal fixed on strong frames, and striking
with a screw-like motion. Their lack of expanse
was compensated by a rapidity of motion such that
they seemed to the eye not to move at all, presenting
the appearance of an uniform disc reflecting the rays
of the Sun, which was now almost immediately above
us. Towards evening the Residence of the Campta
became visible on the north-western horizon. It
was built on a plateau about 400 feet above the sea-level,
towards which the ground from all sides sloped up
almost imperceptibly. Around it was a garden
of great extent with a number of trees of every sort,
some of them masses of the darkest green, others of
bright yellow, contrasting similarly shaped masses
of almost equal size clothed from base to top in a
continuous sheet of pink, emerald, white or crimson
flowers. The turf presented almost as great a
variety of colours, arranged in. every conceivable
pattern, above which rose innumerable flower-beds,
uniform or varied, the smallest perhaps two, the largest
more than 200 feet in diameter; each circle of bloom
higher than that outside it, till in some cases the
centre rose even ten feet above the general level.
The building itself was low, having nowhere more than
two stories. One wing, pointed out to me by Ergimo,
was appropriated to the household of the Prince; the
centre standing out in front and rear, divided by
a court almost as wide as the wings; the further wing
accommodating the attendants and officials of the Court.
We landed, just before the evening mist began to gather,
at the foot of an inclined way of a concrete resembling
jasper, leading up to the main entrance of the Palace.

**CHAPTER XVII — PRESENTED AT COURT.**

Leading Eveena by the hand—­for to hold
my arm after the European fashion was always an inconvenience
and fatigue to her—­and preceded by Ergimo,
I walked unnoticed to the closed gate of pink crystal,
contrasting the emerald green of the outer walls.
Along the front of this central portion of the residence
was a species of verandah, supported by pillars overlaid
with a bright red metal, and wrought in the form of
smooth tree trunks closely clasped by creepers, the
silver flowers of the latter contrasting the dense
golden foliage and ruby-like stems. Under this,
and in front of the gate itself, were two sentries
armed with a spear, the shaft of which was about six
feet in length, hollow, and almost as light as the
cane or reed handle of an African assegai. The
blade more resembled the triangular bayonet.
Beside each, however, was the terrible asphyxiator,
fixed on its stand, with a bore about as great as
that of a nine-pounder, but incomparably lighter.
These two weapons might at one discharge have annihilated

**Page 185**

a huge mob of insurgents threatening to storm the palace,
were insurrections known in Mars, These men saluted
us by dropping the points of their weapons and inclining
the handle towards us; gazing upon me with surprise,
and with something of soldierly admiration for physical
superiority. The doors, wide enough to admit a
dozen Martialists abreast, parted, and we entered
a vaulted hall whose arched roof was supported not
by pillars but by gigantic statues, each presenting
the lustre of a different jewel, and all wrought with
singular perfection of proportion and of beauty.
Here we were met by two officers wearing the same
dress as the sentries outside—­a diaper
of crimson and silver. The rank of those who now
received us, however, was indicated by a silver ribbon
passing over the left shoulder, and supporting what
I should have called a staff, save that it was of
metal and had a sharp point, rendering it almost as
formidable a weapon as the rapier. Exchanging
a word or two with Ergimo, these gentlemen ushered
us into a small room on the right, where refreshments
were placed before us. Eveena whispered me that
she must not share our meal in presence of these strangers;
an intimation which somewhat blunted the keen appetite
I always derived from a journey through the Martial
atmosphere. Checked as it was, however, that
appetite seemed a new astonishment to our attendants;
the need of food among their race being proportionate
to their inferior size and strength. When we
rose, I asked Ergimo what was to become of Eveena,
as the officers were evidently waiting to conduct me
into the presence of their Sovereign, where it would
not be appropriate for her to appear. He repeated
my question to the principal official, and the latter,
walking to a door in the farther corner of the room,
sounded an electric signal; a few seconds after which
the door opened, showing two veiled figures, the pink
ground of whose robes indicated their matronhood,
if I may apply such a term to the relation of his hundred
temporary wives to the Campta. But this ground
colour was almost hidden in the embroidery of crimson,
gold, and white, which, as I soon found, were the
favourite colours of the reigning Prince. To these
ladies I resigned Eveena, the officer saying, as I
somewhat reluctantly parted from her, “What
you entrust to the Campta’s household you will
find again in your own when your audience is over.”
Whether this avoidance of all direct mention of women
were matter of delicacy or contempt I hardly knew,
though I had observed it on former occasions.

When the door closed, I noticed that Ergimo had left
us, and the officers indicated by gesture rather than
by words that they were to lead me immediately into
the presence. I had considered with some care
how I was, on so critical an occasion, to conduct myself,
and had resolved that the most politic course would
probably be an assumption of courteous but absolute
independence; to treat the Autocrat of this planet

**Page 186**

much as an English envoy would treat an Indian Prince.
It was in accordance with this intention that I had
assumed a dress somewhat more elaborate than is usually
worn here, a white suit of a substance resembling
velvet in texture, and moire in lustre, with collar
and belt of silver. On my breast I wore my order
of [illegible], and in my belt my one cherished Terrestrial
possession—­the sword, reputed the best
in Asia, that had twice driven its point home within
a finger’s breadth of my life; and that clove
the turban on my brow but a minute before it was surrendered—­just
in time to save its gallant owner and his score of
surviving comrades. In its hilt I had set the
emerald with which alone the Commander of the Faithful
rewarded my services. The turban is not so unlike
the masculine head-dress of Mars as to attract any
special attention. Re-entering the hall, I was
conducted along a gallery and through another crystal
door into the immediate presence of the Autocrat.
The audience chamber was of no extraordinary size,
perhaps one-quarter as large as the peristyle of Esmo’s
dwelling. Along the emerald walls ran a series
of friezes wrought in gold, representing various scenes
of peace and war, agricultural, judicial, and political;
as well as incidents which, I afterwards learnt, preserved
the memory of the long struggles wherein the Communists
were finally overthrown. The lower half of the
room was empty, the upper was occupied by a semicircle
of seats forming part of the building itself and directly
facing the entrance. These took up about one-third
of the space, the central floor being divided from
the upper portion of the room by a low wall of metal
surmounted by arches supporting the roof and hung
with drapery, which might be so lowered as to conceal
the whole occupied part of the chamber. The seats
rose in five tiers, one above the other. The
semicircle, however, was broken exactly in the middle,
that is, at the point farthest from the entrance,
by a broad flight of steps, at the summit of which,
and raised a very little above the seats of the highest
tier, was the throne, supported by two of the royal
brutes whose attack had been so nearly fatal to myself,
wrought in silver, their erect heads forming the arms
and front. About fifty persons were present, occupying
only the seats nearest to the throne. On the
upper tier were nine or ten who wore a scarlet sash,
among whom I recognised a face I had not seen since
the day of my memorable visit to the Astronaut; not
precisely the face of a friend—­Endo Zampta.
Behind the throne were ranged a dozen guards, armed
with the spear and with the lightning gun used in
hunting. That a single Martial battalion with
its appropriate artillery could annihilate the best
army of the Earth I could not but be aware; yet the
first thought that occurred to me, as I looked on
these formidably armed but diminutive soldiers, was
that a score of my Arab horsemen would have cut a
regiment of them to pieces. But by the time I

**Page 187**

had reached the foot of the steps my attention was
concentrated on a single figure and face—­the
form and countenance of the Prince, who rose from
his throne as I approached. Those who remember
that Louis XIV., a prince reputed to have possessed
the most majestic and awe-inspiring presence of his
age, was actually beneath the ordinary height of Frenchmen,
may be able to believe me when I say that the Autocrat
of Mars, though scarcely five feet tall, was in outward
appearance and bearing the most truly royal and imposing
prince I have ever seen. His stature, rising
nearly two inches over the tallest of those around
him, perhaps added to the effect of a mien remarkable
for dignity, composure, and self-confidence.
The predominant and most immediately observable expression
of his face was one of serene calm and command.
A closer inspection and a longer experience explained
why, notwithstanding, my first conception of his character
(and it was a true one) ascribed to him quite as much
of fire and spirit as of impassive grandeur.
His voice, though its tone was gentle and almost strikingly
quiet, had in it something of the ring peculiar to
those which have sent the word of command along a
line of battle. I felt as I heard it more impressed
with the personal greatness, and even with the rank
and power, of the Prince before me, than when I knelt
to kiss the hand of the Most Christian King, or stood
barefooted before the greatest modern successor of
the conqueror of Stamboul.

“I am glad to receive you,” he said.
“It will be among the most memorable incidents
of my reign that I welcome to my Court the first visitor
from another world, or,” he added, after a sudden
pause, and with an inflection of unmistakable irony
in his tone, “the first who has descended to
our world from a height to which no balloon could
reach and at which no balloonist could live.”

“I am honoured, Prince,” I replied, “in
the notice of a greater potentate than the greatest
of my own world.”

These compliments exchanged, the Prince at once proceeded
to more practical matters, aptly, however, connecting
his next sentence with the formal phrases preceding
it.

“Nevertheless, you have not shown excessive
respect for my power in the person of one of my greatest
officers. If you treated the princes of Earth
as unceremoniously as the Regent of Elcavoo, I can
understand that you found it convenient to place yourself
beyond their reach.”

I thought that this speech afforded me an opportunity
of repairing my offence with the least possible loss
of dignity.

“The proudest of Earthly princes,” I replied,
“would, I think, have pardoned the roughness
which forgot the duty of a subject in the first obligations
of humanity. No Sovereign whom I have served,
but would have forgiven me more readily for rough
words spoken at such a moment, than for any delay
or slackness in saving the life of a woman in danger
under his own eyes. Permit me to take this opportunity
of apologizing to the Regent in your presence, and
assuring him that I was influenced by no disrespect
to him, but only by overpowering terror for another.”

**Page 188**

“The lives of a dozen women,” said the
Campta, still with that covert irony or sarcasm in
his tone, “would seem of less moment than threats
and actual violence offered to the ruler of our largest
and wealthiest dominion. The excuse which Endo
Zampta must accept” (with a slight but perceptible
emphasis on the imperative) “is the utter difference
between our laws and ideas and your own.”

The Regent, at this speech from his Sovereign, rose
and made the usual gesture of assent, inclining his
head and lifting his left hand to his mouth.
But the look on his face as he turned it on me, thus
partly concealing it from the campta, boded no good
should I ever fall into his power. The Prince
then desired me to give an account of the motives
which had induced my voyage and the adventures I had
encountered. In reply, I gave him, as briefly
and clearly as I could, a summary of all that is recorded
in the earlier part of this narrative, carefully forbearing
to afford any explanation of the manner in which the
apergic force was generated. This omission the
Prince noticed at once with remarkable quickness.

“You do not choose,” he said, “to
tell us your secret, and of course it is your property.
Hereafter, however, I shall hope to purchase it from
you.”

“Prince,” I answered, “if one of
your subjects-found himself in the power of a race
capable of conquering this world and destroying its
inhabitants, would you forgive him if he furnished
them with the means of reaching you?”

“I think,” he replied, “my forgiveness
would be of little consequence in that case.
But go on with your story.”

I finished my narration among looks of surprise and
incredulity from no inconsiderable part of the audience,
which, however, I noticed the less because the Prince
himself listened with profound interest; putting in
now and then a question which indicated his perfect
comprehension of my account, of the conditions of such
a journey and of the means I had employed to meet
them.

“Before you were admitted,” he said, “Endo
Zampta had read to us his report upon your vessel
and her machinery, an account which in every respect
consists with and supports the truth of your relation.
Indeed, were your story untrue, you have run a greater
risk in telling it here than in the most daring adventure
I have ever known or imagined. The Court is dismissed.
Reclamomorta will please me by remaining with me for
the present.”

When the assembly dispersed, I followed their Autocrat
at his desire into his private apartments, where,
resting among a pile of cushions and motioning me
to take a place in immediate proximity to himself,
he continued the conversation in a tone and manner
so exactly the same as that he had employed in public
as to show that the latter was not assumed for purposes
of monarchical stage-play, but was the natural expression
of his own character as developed under the influence
of unlimited and uncontradicted power. He only
exchanged, for unaffected interest and implied confidence,
the tone of ironical doubt by which he had rendered
it out of the question for his courtiers to charge
him with a belief in that which public opinion might
pronounce impossible, while making it apparent to
me that he regarded the bigotry of scepticism with
scarcely veiled contempt.

**Page 189**

“I wish,” he said, “I had half-a-dozen
subjects capable of imagining such an enterprise and
hardy enough to undertake it. But though we all
profess to consider knowledge, and especially scientific
knowledge, the one object for which it is worth while
to live, none of us would risk his life in such an
adventure for all the rewards that science and fame
could give.”

“I think, Prince,” I replied, “that
I am in presence of one inhabitant of this planet
who would have dared at least as much as I have done.”

“Possibly,” he said. “Because,
weary as most of us profess to be of existence, the
weariest life in this world is that of him who rules
it; living for ever under the silent criticism which
he cannot answer, and bound to devote his time and
thoughts to the welfare of a race whose utter extermination
would be, on their own showing, the greatest boon
he could confer upon them. Certainly I would rather
be the discoverer of a world than its Sovereign.”

He asked me numerous questions about the Earth, the
races that inhabit it, their several systems of government,
and their relations to one another; manifesting a
keener interest, I thought, in the great wars which
ended while I was yet a youth, than in any other subject.
At last he permitted me to take leave. “You
are,” he said, “the most welcome guest
I ever have or could have received; a guest distinguished
above all others by a power independent of my own.
But what honour I can pay to courage and enterprise,
what welcome I can give such a guest, shall not be
unworthy of him or of myself. Retire now to the
home you will find prepared for you. I will only
ask you to remember that I have chosen one near my
own in order that I may see you often, and learn in
private all that you can tell me.”

At the entrance of the apartment I was met by the
officer who had introduced me into the presence, and
conducted at once to a door opening on the interior
court or peristyle of the central portion of the Palace.
This was itself a garden, but, unlike those of private
houses, a garden open to the sky and traversed by roads
in lieu of mere paths; not serving, as in private
dwellings, the purposes of a common living room.
Here a carriage awaited us, and my escort requested
me to mount. I had some misgivings on Eveena’s
account, but felt it necessary to imitate the reserve
and affected indifference on such subjects of those
among whom I had been thrown, at least until I somewhat
better understood their ways, and had established my
own position. Traversing a vaulted passage underneath
the rearward portion of the Palace, we emerged into
the outer garden, and through this into a road lighted
with a brilliancy almost equal to that of day.
Our journey occupied nearly half an hour, when we
entered an enclosure apparently of great size, the
avenue of which was so wide that, without dismounting,
our carriage passed directly up to the door of a larger
house than I had yet seen.

**Page 190**

**CHAPTER XVIII — A PRINCE’S PRESENT.**

“This,” said my escort, as we dismounted,
“is the residence assigned to you by the Campta.
Besides the grounds here enclosed, he has awarded
you, by a deed which will presently be placed in your
hands, an estate of some ten *stoltau*, which
you can inspect at your leisure, and which will afford
you a revenue as large as is enjoyed by any save by
the twelve Regents. He has endeavoured to add
to this testimony of his regard by rendering your
household as complete as wealth and forethought could
make it. What may be wanting to your own tastes
and habits you will find no difficulty in adding.”

We now entered that first and principal chamber of
the mansion wherein it is customary to receive all
visitors and transact all business. The hall
was one of unusual size and magnificence. Here,
at a table not far from the entrance, stood another
official, not wearing the uniform of the Court, with
several documents in his hand. As he turned to
salute me, his face wore an expression of annoyance
and discomfiture which not a little surprised me,
till, by following his sidelong, uncomfortable glances,
I perceived a veiled feminine figure, which could
be no other than Eveena’s. Misreading my
surprise, the official said—­

“It is no fault of mine, and I have not spoken
except to remonstrate, as far as might be allowed,
against so unusual a proceeding.”

He must have been astonished and annoyed indeed to
take such notice of a stranger’s wife; and,
above all, to take upon himself to comment on her
conduct for good or ill. I thought it best to
make no reply, and simply saluted him in form as I
received the first paper handed to me, to which, by
the absence of any blank space, I perceived that my
signature was not required. This was indeed the
document which bestowed on me the house and estate
presented by the Sovereign. The next paper handed
to me appeared to resemble the marriage-contract I
had already signed, save that but one blank was left
therein. Unable to decipher it, I was about to
ask the official to read it aloud, when Eveena, who
had stolen up to me unperceived, caught my arm and
drew me a little way aside, indifferent to the wondering
glances of the officials; who had probably never seen
a woman venture uncalled into the public apartments
of her husband’s house, still less interpose
in any matter of business, and no doubt thought that
she was taking outrageous advantage of my ignorance
and inexperience.

“I will scold you presently, child,” I
said quickly and low. “What is it?”

“Sign at once,” she whispered, “and
ask no questions. Deal with me as you will afterwards.
You must take what is given you now, without comment
or objection, simply expressing your thanks.”

“*Must*! Eveena?”

“It is not safe to refuse or slight gifts from
such a quarter,” she answered, in the same low
tone. “Trust me so far; please do what I
entreat of you now. I must bear your displeasure
if I fail to satisfy you when we are alone.”

**Page 191**

Her manner was so agitated and so anxious that it
recalled to me at once the advice of Esmo upon the
same point, though the fears which had prompted so
strange an intervention were wholly incomprehensible
to me. I knew her, however, by this time too well
to refuse the trust she now for the first time claimed,
and taking the documents one by one as if I had perfectly
understood them, I wrote my name in the space left
blank for it, and allowed the official to stamp the
slips without a word. I then expressed briefly
but earnestly my thanks both to the Autocrat and to
the officials who had been the agents of his kindness.
They retired, and I looked round for Eveena; but as
soon as she saw that I was about to comply with her
request, she had quitted the room. Alone in my
own house, knowing nothing of its geography, having
no notion how to summon the brute domestics—­if,
indeed, the dwelling were furnished with those useful
creatures, without whom a Martial household would
be signally incomplete—­I could only look
for the spring that opened the principal door.
This should lead into the gallery which, as I judged,
must divide the hall and the front apartments from
those looking into the peristyle. Having found
and pressed this spring, the door opened on a gallery
longer, wider, and more elaborately ornamented than
that of the only Martial mansions into which I had
been hitherto admitted. Looking round in no little
perplexity, I observed a niche in which stood a statue
of white relieved by a scarlet background; and beside
this statue, crouching and half hidden, a slight pink
object, looking at first like a bundle of drapery,
but which in a moment sprang up, and, catching my hand,
made me aware that Eveena had been waiting for me.

“I beg you,” she said with an earnestness
I could not understand, “I beg you to come *this*
way,” leading me to the right, for I had turned
instinctively to the left in entering the gallery,
perhaps because my room in Esmo’s house had
lain in that direction. Reaching the end of the
gallery, she turned into one of the inner apartments;
and as the door closed behind us, I felt that she
was sinking to the ground, as if the agitation she
had manifested in the hall, controlled till her object
was accomplished, had now overpowered her. I caught
and carried her to the usual pile of cushions in the
corner. The room, according to universal custom
in Martial houses after sunset, was brilliantly lighted
by the electric lamp in the peristyle, and throwing
back her veil, I saw that she was pale to ghastliness
and almost fainting. In my ignorance of my own
house, I could call for no help, and employ no other
restoratives than fond words and caresses. Under
this treatment, nevertheless, she recovered perhaps
as quickly as under any which the faculty might have
prescribed. She was, still, however, much more
distressed than mere consciousness of the grave solecism
she had committed could explain. But I had no
other clue to her trouble, and could only hope that
in repudiating this she would explain its real cause.

**Page 192**

“Come, bambina!” I expostulated, “we
understand one another too well by this time for you
to wrong me by all this alarm. I know that you
would not have broken through the customs of your people
without good reason; and you know that, even if your
reason were not sufficient, I should not be hard upon
the error.”

“I am sure you would not,” she said.
“But this time you have to consider others,
and you cannot let it be supposed that you do not
know a wife’s duty, or will allow your authority
to be set at naught in your own household.”

“What matter? Do you suppose I listen in
the roads?” [care for gossip], I rejoined.
“Household rule is a matter of the veil, and
no one—­not even your autocratic Prince—­will
venture to lift it.”

“You have not lifted it yourself yet,”
she answered. “You will understand me,
when you have looked at the slips you were about to
make them read aloud, had I not interrupted you.”

“Bead them yourself,” I said, handing
to her the papers I still held, and which, after her
interposition, I had not attempted to decipher.
She took them, but with a visible shudder of reluctance—­not
stronger than came over me before she had read three
lines aloud. Had I known their purport, I doubt
whether even Eveena’s persuasion and the Autocrat’s
power together could have induced me to sign them.
They were in very truth contracts of marriage—­if
marriage it can be called. The Sovereign had
done me the unusual, but not wholly unprecedented,
favour of selecting half a dozen of the fairest maidens
of those waiting their fate in the Nurseries of his
empire; had proffered on my behoof terms which satisfied
their ambition, gratified their vanity, and would
have induced them to accept any suitor so recommended,
without the insignificant formality of a personal
courtship. It had seemed to him only a gracious
attention to complete my household; and he had furnished
me with a bevy of wives, as I presently found he had
selected a complete set of the most intelligent *amlau,
carvee,* and *tyree* which he could procure.
Without either the one or the other, the dwelling
he had given me would have seemed equally empty or
incomplete.

This mark of royal favour astounded and dismayed me
more than Eveena herself. If she had entertained
the wish, she would hardly have acknowledged to herself
the hope, that she might remain permanently the sole
partner of my home. But so sudden, speedy, and
wholesale an intrusion thereon she certainly had not
expected. Even in Mars, a first bride generally
enjoys for some time a monopoly of her husband’s
society, if she cannot be said to enchain his affection.
It was hard, indeed, before the thirtieth day after
her marriage, to find herself but one in a numerous
family—­the harder that our union had from
the first been close, intimate, unrestrainedly confidential,
as it can hardly be where neither expects that the
tie can remain exclusive; and because she had learned

**Page 193**

to realise and rest upon such love as belongs to a
life in which woman, never affecting the independence
of coequal partnership, has never yet sunk by reaction
into a mere slave and toy. It was hard, cruelly
hard, on one who had given in the first hour of marriage,
and never failed to give, a love whose devotion had
no limit, no reserve or qualification; a submission
that was less self-sacrifice or self-suppression than
the absolute surrender of self—­of will,
feeling, and self-interest—­to the judgment
and pleasure of him she loved: hard on her who
had neither thought nor care for herself as apart
from me.

When I understood to what I had actually committed
myself, I snatched the papers from her, and might
have torn them to pieces but for the gentle restraining
hand she laid upon mine.

“You cannot help it,” she said, the tears
falling from her eyes, but with a self-command of
which I could not have supposed her capable.
“It seems hard on me; but it is better so.
It is not that you are not content with me, not that
you love me less. I can bear it better when it
comes from a stranger, and is forced upon you without,
and even, I think, against your will.”

The pressure of the arm that clasped her waist, and
the hand that held her own, was a sufficient answer
to any doubt that might be implied in her last words;
and, lifting her eyes to mine, she said—­

“I shall always remember this. I shall
always think that you were sorry not to have at least
a little while longer alone with me. It is selfish
to feel glad that you are pained; but your sympathy,
your sharing my own feeling, comforts me as I never
could have been comforted when, as must have happened
sooner or later, you had found for yourself another
companion.”

“Child, do you mean to say there is ‘no
portal to this passage;’ and that, however much
against my will, I am bound to women I have never
seen, and never wish to see?”

“You have signed,” replied Eveena gently.
“The contracts are stamped, and are in the official’s
hands; and you could not attempt to break them without
giving mortal offence to the Prince, who has intended
you a signal favour. Besides, these girls themselves
have done no wrong, and deserve no affront or unkindness
from you.”

I was silent for some minutes; at first simply astounded
at the calm magnanimity which was mingled with her
perfect simplicity, then, pondering the possibilities
of the situation—­

“Can we not escape?” I said at last, rather
to myself than to her.

“Escape!” she repeated with surprise.
“And from what? The favour shown you by
our Sovereign, the wealth he has bestowed, the personal
interest he has taken in perfecting every detail of
one of the most splendid homes ever given save to
a prince—­every incident of your position—­make
you the most envied man in this world; and you would
escape from them?”

Gazing for a few moments in my face, she added—­

**Page 194**

“These maidens were chosen as the loveliest
in all the Nurseries of two continents; every one
of them far more beautiful than I can be, even in
your eyes. Pray do not, for my sake, be unkind
to them or try to dislike them. What is it you
would escape?”

“Being false to you,” I answered, “if
nothing else.”

“False!” she echoed, in unaffected wonder.
“What did you promise me?”

Again I was silenced by the loyal simplicity with
which she followed out ideas so strange to me that
their consequences, however logical, I could never
anticipate; and could hardly admit to be sound, even
when so directly and distinctly deduced as now from
the intolerable consistency of the premises.

“But,” I answered at last, “how
much did *you* promise, Eveena? and how much
more have you given?”

“Nothing,” she replied, “that I
did not owe. You won your right to all the love
I could give before you asked for it, and since.”

“We ‘drive along opposite lines,’
Madonna; but we would both give and risk much to avoid
what is before us. Let me ask your father whether
it be not yet possible to return to my vessel, and
leave a world so uncongenial to both of us.”

“You cannot!” she answered. “Try
to escape—­you insult the Prince; you put
yourself and me, for whom you fear more, in the power
of a malignant enemy. You cannot guide a balloon
or a vessel, if you could get possession of one; and
within a few hours after your departure was known,
every road and every port would be closed to you.”

“Can I not send to your father?” I said.

“Probably,” she replied. “I
think we shall find a telegraph in your office, if
you will allow me to enter there, now there is no one
to see; and it must be morning in Ecasfe.”

Familiar with the construction and arrangement of
a Martial house, Eveena immediately crossed the gallery
to what she called the office—­the front
room on the right, where the head of the house carries
on his work or study. Here, above a desk attached
to the wall, was one of those instruments whose manipulation
was simple enough for a novice like myself.

“But,” I said, “I cannot write your
stylic characters; and if I used the phonic letters,
a message from me would be very likely to excite the
curiosity of officials who would care about no other.”

“May I,” she suggested, “write your
message for you, and put your purport in words that
will be understood by my father alone?”

“Do,” I rejoined, “but do it in
my name, and I will sign it.”

Under her direction, I took the stylus or pencil and
the slip of *tafroo* she offered me, and wrote
my name at the head. After eliciting the exact
purport of the message I desired to send, and meditating
for some moments, she wrote and read out to me words
literally translated as follows:—­

“The rich aviary my flower-bird thought over
full. I would breathe home [air]. Health-speak.”
The sense of which, as I could already understand,
was—­

**Page 195**

“A splendid mansion has been given us, but my
flower-bird has found it too full. I wish for
my native air. Prescribe.”

The brevity of the message was very characteristic
of the language. Equally characteristic of the
stylography was the fact that the words occupied about
an inch beyond the address. Following her pencil
as she pointed to the ciphers, I said—­

“Is not *asny care* a false concord?
And why have you used the past tense?”

This ill-timed pedantry, applying to Martial grammar
the rules of that with which my boyhood had been painfully
familiarised, provoked, amid all our trouble, Eveena’s
low silver-toned laugh.

“I meant it,” she answered. “My
father will look at his pupil’s writing with
both eyes.”

“Well, you are out of reach even of the leveloo.”

She laughed again.

“Asnyca-re,” she said; the changed accentuation
turning the former words into the well-remembered
name of my landing-place, with the interrogative syllable
annexed.

This message despatched, we could only await the reply.
Nestling among the cushions at my knee, her head resting
on my breast, Eveena said—­

“And now, forgive my presumption in counselling
you, and my reminding you of what is painful to both.
But what to us is as the course of the clock, is strange
as the stars to you. You must see—­*them*,
and must order all household arrangements; and”
(glancing at a dial fixed in the wall) “the
black is driving down the green.”

“So much the better,” I said. “I
shall have less time to speak to them, and less chance
of speaking or looking my mind. And as to arrangements,
those, of course, you must make.”

“I! forgive me,” she answered, “that
is impossible. It is for you to assign to each
of us her part in the household, her chamber, her rank
and duties. You forget that I hold exactly the
same position with the youngest among them, and cannot
presume even to suggest, much less to direct.”

I was silent, and after a pause she went on—­

“It is not for me to advise you; but”—­

“Speak your thought, now and always, Eveena.
Even if I did not stand in so much need of your guidance
in a new world, I never yet refused to hear counsel;
and it is a wife’s right to offer it.”

“Is it? We are not so taught,” she
answered. “I am afraid you have rougher
ground to steer over than you are aware. Alone
with you, I hope I should have done nay best, remembering
the lesson of the leveloo, never to give you the pain
of teaching a different one. But we shall no
longer be alone; and you cannot hope to manage seven
as you might manage one. Moreover, these girls
have neither had that first experience of your nature
which made that lesson so impressive to me, nor the
kindly and gentle training, under a mother’s
care and a father’s mild authority, that I had
enjoyed. They would not understand the control
that is not enforced. They will obey when they
must; and will feel that they must obey when they
cannot deceive, and dare not rebel. Do not think
hardly of them for this. They have known no life
but that of the strict clockwork routine of a great
Nursery, where no personal affection and no rule but
that of force is possible.”

**Page 196**

“I understand, Madonna. Your Prince’s
gift puts a man in charge of young ladies, hitherto
brought up among women only, and, of course, petty,
petulant, frivolous, as women left to themselves ever
are! I wish you could see the ridiculous side
of the matter which occurs to me, as I see the painful
aspect which alone is plain to you. I can scarcely
help laughing at the chance which has assigned to me
the daily personal management of half-a-dozen school-girls;
and school-girls who must also be wives! I don’t
think you need fear that I shall deal with them as
with you: as a man of sense and feeling must
deal with a woman whose own instincts, affection, and
judgment are sufficient for her guidance. I never
saw much of girls or children. I remember no
home but the Western school and the Oriental camp.
I never, as soldier or envoy, was acquainted with
other men’s homes. While still beardless,
I have ruled bearded soldiers by a discipline whose
sanctions were the death-shot and the bastinado; and
when I left the camp and court, it was for colleges
where a beardless face is never seen. I must
look to you to teach me how discipline may be softened
to suit feminine softness, and what milder sanction
may replace the noose and the stick of the *ferash*”
(Persian executioner).

“I cannot believe,” Eveena answered, taking
me, as usual, to the letter, “that you will
ever draw the zone too tight. We say that ‘anarchy
is the worst tyranny.’ Laxity which leaves
us to quarrel and torment each other, tenderness which
encourages disorder and disobedience till they must
be put down perforce, is ultimate unkindness.
I will not tell you that such indulgence will give
you endless trouble, win you neither love nor respect,
and probably teach its objects to laugh at you under
the veil. You will care more for this—­that
you would find yourself forced at last to change ’velvet
hand for leathern band.’ Believe me, my—­our
comfort and happiness must depend on your grasping
the helm at once and firmly; ruling us, and ruling
with a strong hand. Otherwise your home will resemble
the most miserable of all scenes of discomfort—­an
ungoverned school; and the most severe and arbitrary
household rule is better by far than that. And—­forgive
me once more—­but do not speak as if you
would deal one measure with the left hand and another
with the right. Surely you do not so misunderstand
me as to think I counselled you to treat myself differently
from others? ‘Just rule only can be gentle.’
If you show favouritism at first, you will find yourself
driven step by step to do what you will feel to be
cruel; what will pain yourself perhaps more than any
one else. You may make envy and dislike bite (hold)
their tongues, but you cannot prevent their stinging
under the veil. Therefore, once more, you cannot
let my interference pass as if none but you knew of
it.”

“Madonna, if I *am* to rule such a household,
I will rule as absolutely as your autocratic Prince.
I will tolerate no criticism and no questions.”

**Page 197**

“You surely forget,” she urged, “that
they know my offence, and do not know—­must
not know—­what in your judgment excuses it.
Let them once learn that it is possible so to force
the springs [bolts] without a sting, it will take
a salt-fountain [of tears] to blot the lesson from
their memory.”

“What would you have, Eveena? Am I to deal
unjustly that I may seem just? That course steers
straight to disaster. And, had you been in fault,
could, I humble you in other eyes?”

“If I feel hurt by any mark of your displeasure,
or humbled that it should be known to my equals in
your own household,” she replied, “it
is time I were deprived of the privileges that have
rendered me so overweening.”

My answer was intercepted by the sound of an electric
bell or miniature gong, and a slip of tafroo fell
upon the desk. The first words were in that vocal
character which I had mastered, and came from Esmo.

“Hysterical folly,” he had said.
“Mountain air might be fatal; and clear nights
are dangerously cold for more than yourselves.”

“What does he mean?” I asked, as I read
out a formula more studiously occult than those of
the Pharmacopoeia.

“That I am unpardonably silly, and that you
must not dream of going back to your vessel.
The last words, I suppose, warn you how carefully
in such a household you need to guard the secrets of
the Starlight.”

“Well, and what is this in the stylic writing?”

Eveena glanced over it and coloured painfully, the
tears gathering in her eyes.

“That,” she said, pointing to the first
cipher, “is my mother’s signature.”

“Then,” I said, “it is meant for
you, not for me.”

“Nay,” she answered. “Do you
think I could take advantage of your not knowing the
character?”—­and she read words quite
as incomprehensible to me as the writing itself.

“Can a star mislead the blind? I should
veil myself in crimson if I have trained a bird to
snatch sugar from full hands. Must even your
womanhood reverse the clasps of your childhood?”

“It chimes midnight twice,” I said—­a
Martial phrase meaning, ’I am as much in the
dark as ever.’ “Do not translate it,
carissima. I can read in your face that it is
unjust—­reproachful where you deserve no
reproach.”

“Nay, when you so wrong my mother I must tell
you exactly what she means:—­’Can
a child of the Star take advantage of one who relies
on her to explain the customs of a world unknown to
him? I blush to think that my child can abuse
the tenderness of one who is too eager to indulge
her fancies.’

“You see she is quite right. You do trust
me so absolutely, you are so strangely over-kind to
me, it is shameful I should vex you by fretting because
you are forced to do what you might well have done
at your own pleasure.”

“My own, I was more than vexed; chiefly perhaps
for your sake, but not by you. Where any other
woman would have stung the sore by sending fresh sparks
along the wire, you thought only to spare me the pain
of seeing you pained. But what do the last words
mean? No”—­for I saw the colour
deepen on her half-averted face—­“better
leave unread what we know to be written in error.”

**Page 198**

But the less agreeable a supposed duty, the more resolute
was Eveena to fulfil it.

“They were meant to recall a saying familiar
in every school and household,” she said:—­

 “’Sandal loosed and well-clasped
zone—­
 Childhood spares the woman
grown.
 Change the clasps, and woman
yet
 Pays with interest childhood’s
debt.’”

“This”—­tightening and relaxing
the clasp of her zone—­“is the symbol
of stricter or more indulgent household rule.”
Then bending so as to avert her face, she unclasped
her embroidered sandal and gave it into my hand;—­“and
this is what, I suppose, you would call its sanction.”

“There is more to be said for the sandal than
I supposed, bambina, if it have helped to make you
what you are. But you may tell Zulve that its
work and hers are done.”

Kneeling before her, I kissed, with more studied reverence
than the sacred stone of the Caaba, the tiny foot
on which I replaced its covering.

“Baby as she thinks and I call you, Eveena,
you are fast unteaching me the lesson which, before
you were born and ever since, the women of the Earth
have done their utmost to impress indelibly upon my
mind—­the lesson that woman is but a less
lovable, more petulant, more deeply and incurably
spoilt child. Your mother’s reproach is
an exact inversion of the truth. No one could
have acted with more utter unselfishness, more devoted
kindness, more exquisite delicacy than you have shown
in this miserable matter. I could not have believed
that even you could have put aside your own feelings
so completely, could have recognised so promptly that
I was not in fault, have thought so exclusively of
what was best and safe for me in the first place, and
next of what was kind and just and generous to your
rivals. I never thought such reasonableness and
justice possible to feminine nature; and if I cannot
love you more dearly, you have taught me how deeply
to admire and honour you. I accept the situation,
since you will have it so; be as just and considerate
henceforward as you have been to-night, and trust
me that it shall bring no shadow between us—­shall
never make you less to me than you are now.”

“But it must,” she insisted. “I
cannot now be other than one wife among many; and
what place I hold among them is, remember, for you
and you alone to fix. No rule, no custom, obliges
you to give any preference in form or fact to one,
merely because you chanced to marry her first.”

“Such, nevertheless, did not seem to be the
practice in your father’s house. Your mother
was as distinctly wife and mistress as if his sole
companion.”

“My father,” she replied, “did not
marry a second time till within my own memory; and
it was natural and usual to give the first place to
one so much older and more experienced. I have
no such claim, and when you see my companions you
may find good reason to think that I am the least
fit of all to take the first place. Nor,”
she added, drawing me from the room, “do I wish
it. If only you will keep in your mind one little
place for the memory of our visit to your vessel and
your promise respecting it, I shall be more than content.”

**Page 199**

Eveena’s humble, unconscious self-abnegation
was rendering the conversation intolerably painful,
and even the embarrassing situation now at hand was
a welcome interruption. Eveena paused before a
door opening from the gallery into one of the rooms
looking on the peristyle.

“You will find them there,” she said,
drawing back.

“Come with me, then,” I answered; and
as she shrank away, I tightened my clasp of her waist
and drew her forward. The door opened, and we
found ourselves in presence of six veiled ladies in
pink and silver, all of them, with one exception,
a little taller and less slight than my bride.
Eveena, with the kindness which never failed under
the most painful trial or the most powerful impulses
of natural feeling, extricated herself gently from
my hold, took the hand of the first, and brought her
up to me. The girl was evidently startled at the
first sight of her new possessor, and alarmed by a
figure so much larger and more powerful than any she
had ever seen, exceeding probably the picture drawn
by her imagination.

“This,” said Eveena gently and gravely,
“is Eunane, the prettiest and most accomplished
scholar in her Nursery.”

As I was about to acknowledge the introduction with
the same cold politeness with which I should have
bowed to a strange guest on Earth, Eveena took my
left hand in her own and laid it on the maiden’s
veil, recalling to me at once the proprieties of the
occasion and the justice she had claimed for her unoffending
and unintentional rivals; but at the same time bringing
back in full force a remembrance she could not have
forgotten, but whose effect upon myself the ideas to
which she was habituated rendered her unable to anticipate.
To accept in her presence a second bride, by the same
ceremonial act which had so lately asserted my claim
to herself, was intensely repugnant to my feelings,
and only her own self-sacrificing influence could have
overcome my reluctance. My hesitation was, I fear,
perceptible to Eunane; for, as I removed her veil
and head-dress, her expression and a colour somewhat
brighter than that of mere maiden shyness indicated
disappointment or mortified pride. She was certainly
very beautiful, and perhaps, had I now seen them both
for the first time, I might have acquiesced in the
truth of Eveena’s self-depreciation. As
it was, nothing could associate with the bright intelligent
face, the clear grey eyes and light brown hair, the
lithe active form instinct with nervous energy, that
charm which from our first acquaintance their expression
of gentle kindness, and, later, the devoted affection
visible in every look, had given to Eveena’s
features.

**Page 200**

It is, I suppose, hardly natural to man to feel actual
unkindness towards a young and beautiful girl who
has given no personal offence. Having once admitted,
the justice of Eveena’s plea, and feeling that
she would be more pained by the omission than by the
fulfilment of the forms which courtesy and common
kindness imperatively demanded, I kissed Eunane’s
brow and spoke a few words to her, with as much of
tenderness as I could feel or affect for Eveena’s
rival, after what had passed to endear Eveena more
than ever. The latter waited a little, to allow
me spontaneously to perform the same ceremony with
the other girls; but seeing my hesitation, she came
forward again and presented severally four others—­Enva
("Snow” = Blanche), Leenoo ("Rose"), Eirale,
Elfe, all more or less of the usual type of female
beauty in Mars, with long full tresses varying in tinge
from flax to deep gold or the lightest brown; each
with features almost faultless, and with all the attraction
(to me unfailing) possessed for men who have passed
their youth by *la beaute du Diable*—­the
bloom of pure graceful girlhood. Eive, the sixth
of the party, standing on the right of the others,
and therefore last in place according to Martial usage,
was smaller and slighter than Eveena herself, and made
an individual impression on my attention by a manifest
timidity and agitation greater than any of the rest
had evinced. As I removed her veil I was struck
by the total unlikeness which her face and form presented
to those I had just saluted. Her hair was so
dark as by contrast to seem black; her complexion
less fair than those of her companions, though as
fair as that of an average Greek beauty; her eyes of
deepest brown; her limbs, and especially the hands
and feet, marvellously perfect in shape and colour,
but in the delicacy and minuteness of their form suggesting,
as did all the proportions of her tiny figure, the
peculiar grace of childhood; an image in miniature
of faultless physical beauty. In Eive alone of
the bevy I felt a real interest; but the interest
called forth by a singularly pretty child, in whose
expression the first glance discerns a character it
will take long to read, rather than that commanded
by the charms of earliest womanhood.

When I had completed the ceremonial round, there was
a somewhat awkward silence, which Eveena at last broke
by suggesting that Eunane should show us through the
house, with which she had made the earliest acquaintance.
This young girl readily took the lead thus assigned
to her, and by some delicate manoeuvre, whose authorship
I could not doubt, I found her hand in mine as we
made our tour. The number of chambers was much
greater than in Esmo’s dwelling, the garden of
the peristyle larger and more elaborately arranged,
if not more beautiful. The ambau were more numerous
than even the domestic service of so large a mansion
appeared to require. The birds, whose duties lay
outside, were by this time asleep on their perches,
and we forbore to disturb them. The central chamber
of the seraglio, if I may so call it, the largest
and midmost of those in the rear of the garden, devoted
as of course to the ladies of the household, was especially
magnificent.

**Page 201**

When we stood in its midst, shy looks askance from
all the six betrayed their secret ambition; though
Eive’s was but momentary, and so slight that
I felt I might have unfairly suspected her of presumption.
I left this room, however, in silence, and assigned
to each, of my maiden brides, in order as they had
been presented to me, the rooms on the left; and then,
as we stood once more in the peristyle, having postponed
all further arrangements, all distribution of household
duties, to the morrow (assigning, however, to Eunane,
whose native energy and forwardness had made early
acquaintance with the dwelling and its dumb inhabitants,
the charge of providing and preparing with their assistance
our morning meal), I said, “I have let the business
of the evening zyda actually encroach on midnight,
and must detain you from your rest no longer.
Eveena, you know, I still have need of you.”

She was standing at a little distance, next to Eunane;
and the latter, with a smile half malicious, half
triumphant, whispered something in her ear. There
was a suppressed annoyance in Eveena’s look which
provoked me to interpose. On Earth I should never
have been fool enough to meddle in a woman’s
quarrel. The weakest can take her own part in
the warfare of taunt and innuendo, better and more
venomously than could dervish, priest, or politician.
But Eveena could no more lower herself to the ordinary
level of feminine malice than I could have borne to
hear her do so; and it was intolerable that one whose
sweet humility commanded respect from myself should
submit to slight or sneer from the lips and eyes of
petulant girls. Eunane started as I spoke, using
that accent which gives its most peremptory force to
the Martial imperative. “Repeat aloud what
you have chosen to say to Eveena in my presence.”

If the first to express the ill-will excited by Eveena’s
evident influence, though exerted in their own behalf,
it was less that Eunane surpassed her companions in
malice than that they fell short of her in audacity.
Her school-mates had found her their most daring leader
in mischief, the least reluctant scapegoat when mischief
was to be atoned. But she was cowed, partly perhaps
by her first collision with masculine authority, partly,
I fear, by sheer dread of physical force visibly greater
than she had ever known by repute. Perhaps she
was too much frightened to obey. At any rate,
it was from Eveena, despite her pleading looks, that
I extorted an answer. She yielded at last only
to that formal imperative which her conscience would
not permit her to disobey, and which for the first
time I now employed in addressing her.

“Eunane only repeated,” Eveena said, with
a reluctance so manifest that one might have supposed
her to be the offender, “a school-girl’s
proverb:—­

 “’Ware the wrath that stands to
cool:
 Then the sandal shows the rule.’”

**Page 202**

The smile that had accompanied the whisper—­though
not so much suggestive of a woman’s malignity
as of a child’s exultation in a companion’s
disgrace—­gave point and sting to the taunt.
It is on chance, I suppose, that the effect of such
things depends. Had the saying been thrown at
any of Eunane’s equals, I should probably have
been inclined to laugh, even if I felt it necessary
to reprimand. But, angered at a hint which placed
Eveena on their own level, I forgot how far the speaker’s
experience and inexperience alike palliated the impertinence.
That the insinuation shocked none of those around me
was evident. Theirs were not the looks of women,
however young and thoughtless, startled by an affront
to their sex; but of children amazed at a child’s
folly in provoking capricious and irresponsible power.
The angry quickness with which I turned to Eunane received
a double, though doubly unintentional, rebuke, equally
illustrative of Martial ideas and usages. The
culprit cowered like a child expecting a brutal blow.
A gentle pressure on my left arm evinced the same fear
in a quarter from which its expression wounded me
deeply. That pressure arrested not, as was intended,
my hand, but my voice; and when I spoke the frightened
girl looked up in surprise at its measured tones.

“Wrong, and wrong thrice over, Eunane.
It is for me to teach you the bad taste of bringing
into your new home the ideas and language of school.
Meanwhile, in no case would you learn more of my rule
than concerned your own fault. Take in exchange
for your proverb the kindliest I have learned in your
language:—­

 “’Whispered warnings reach the heart;
 Veil the blush and spare the smart.’

“But, happily for you, your taunt had not truth
enough to sting; and I can tell the story about which
you are unduly curious as frankly as you please.—­Let
me speak now, Eveena, that I may spare the need to
speak again and in another tone.—­That Eveena
seemed to have put us both in a false position only
convinced me that she had a motive she knew would
satisfy me as fully as herself. When I learned
what that motive was, I was greatly surprised at her
unselfishness and courage. If you threw me your
veil to save me from drowning, how would you feel
if my first words to you were:—­’No
one must think I could not swim, therefore even the
household must believe you, in unveiling, guilty of
an unpardonable fault’?... Answer me, Eunane.”

“I should let you sink next time,” she
replied, with a pretty half-dubious sauciness, showing
that her worst fears at least were relieved.

“Quite right; but you are less generous than
Eveena. To hide how I had acted on her advice,
she would have had you suppose her guilty. That
you might not laugh at my authority, and ’find
a dragon in the esve’s nest,’ she would
have had me treat her as guilty.”

“But I deserved it. A girl has no right
to break the seal in the master’s absence,”
interposed Eveena, much more distressed than gratified
by the vindication to which she was so well entitled.

**Page 203**

“Let your tongue sleep, Eveena. So [with
a kiss] I blot your first miscalculation, Eunane.
Earth [the Evening Star of Mars] light your dreams.”

It was with visible reluctance that Eveena followed
me into the chamber we had last left; and she expostulated
as earnestly as her obedience would permit against
the fiat that assigned it to her.

“Choose what room you please, then,” I
said; “but understand that, so far as my will
and my trust can make you, you are the mistress here.”

“Well, then,” she answered, “give
me the little octagon beside your own:”—­the
smallest and simplest, but to my taste the prettiest,
room in the house. “I should like to be
near you still, if I may; but, believe me, I shall
not be frozen (hurt) because you think another hand
better able to steer the carriage, if mine may sometimes
rest in yours.”

Leading her into the room she had chosen, and having
installed her among the cushions that were to form
her couch, I silenced decisively her renewed protest.

“Let me answer you on this point, once and for
ever, Eveena. To me this seems matter of right,
not of favour or fitness. But favour and fitness
here go with right. I could no more endure to
place another before or beside you than I could break
the special bond between us, and deny the hope of
which the Serpent” (laying my hand on her shoulder-clasp,
which, by mere accident, was shaped into a faint resemblance
to the mystic coil) “is the emblem; the hope
that alone can make such love as ours endurable, or
even possible, to creatures that must die. She
who knelt with me before the Emerald Throne, who took
with me the vows so awfully sanctioned, shall hold
the first place in my home as in my heart till the
Serpent’s promise be fulfilled.”

Both were silent for some time, for never could we
refer to that Vision—­whether an objective
fact, or an impression communicated from one spirit
to the other by the occult force of intense sympathy—­save
by such allusion; and the remembrance never failed
to affect us both with a feeling too deep for words.
Eveena spoke again—­

“I am sorry you have so bound yourself; perhaps
only because you knew me first. And it shames
me to receive fresh proof of your kindness to-night.”

“And why, my own?”

“Do not make me feel,” she said, “that—­though
the measured sentences you have taught me to call
scolding seemed the sharpest of all penances—­there
is a heavier yet in the silence which withholds forgiveness.”

“What have I yet to forgive, Madonna?”

But Eveena could read my feelings in spite of my words,
and knew that the pain she had given was too recent
to allow me to misconceive her penitence.

“I *ought* to say, my interference.
It was your right to rule as you chose, and my meddling
was a far worse offence than Eunane’s malice.
But it was not *that* you felt too deeply to reprove.”

“True! Eunane hurt me a little; but I expected
no such misjudgment from you. By the touch that
proved your alarm I know that I gave no cause for
it.”

**Page 204**

“How so?” she asked in surprise.

“You laid your hand instinctively on my *left*
arm, the one your people use. Had I made the
slightest angry gesture, you would have held back
my *right*. Had I deserved that Eveena should
think so ill of me—­think me capable of
doing such dishonour to her presence and to my own
roof, which should have protected an equal enemy from
that which you feared for a helpless girl? For
what you would have checked was such a blow as men
deal to men who can strike back; and the hand that
had given it would have been unfit to clasp man’s
in friendship or woman’s in love. You yourself
must have shrunk from its touch.”

She caught and held it fast to her lips.

“Can I forget that it saved my life? I
don’t understand you at all, but I see that
I have frozen your heart. I did fancy for one
moment you would strike, as passionate men and women
often do strike provoking girls, perhaps forgetting
your own strength; and I knew you would be miserable
if you did hurt her—­in that way. The
next moment I was ashamed, more than you will believe,
to have wronged you so. Like every man, from
the head of a household to the Arch-Judge or the Campta,
you must rule by fear. But your wrath *will*
‘stand to cool;’ and you will hate to
make a girl cry as you would hate to send a criminal
to the electric-rack, the lightning-stroke, or the
vivisection-table. And, whatever you had done,
do you fancy that I could shrink from you? I
said, ’If you weary of your flower-bird you
must strike with the hammer;’ and if you could
do so, do you think I should not feel for your hand
to hold it to the last?”

“Hush, Eveena! how can I bear such words?
You might forgive me for any outrage to you:
I doubt your easily forgetting cruelty to another.
I have not a heart like yours. As I never failed
a friend, so I never yet forgave a foe. Yet even
I might pardon one of those girls an attempt to poison
myself, and in some circumstances I might even learn
to like her better afterwards. But I doubt if
I could ever touch again the hand that had mixed the
poison for another, though that other were my mortal
enemy.”

**CHAPTER XIX — A COMPLETE ESTABLISHMENT.**

Before I slept Eveena had convinced me, much to my
own discomfiture, how very limited must be any authority
that could be delegated to her. In such a household
there could be no second head or deputy, and an attempt
to devolve any effective charge on her would only involve
her in trouble and odium. Even at the breakfast,
spread as usual in the centre of the peristyle, she
entreated that we should present ourselves separately.
Eunane appeared to have performed very dexterously
the novel duty assigned to her. The *ambau*
had obeyed her orders with well-trained promptitude,
and the *carvee*, in bringing fruit, leaves,
and roots from the outer garden, had more than verified

**Page 205**

all that on a former occasion Eveena had told me of
their cleverness and quick comprehension of instructions.
Eunane’s face brightened visibly as I acknowledged
the neatness and the tempting appearance of the meal
she had set forth. She was yet more gratified
by receiving charge for the future of the same duty,
and authority to send, as is usual, by an amba the
order for that principal part of each day’s food
which is supplied by the confectioner. By reserving
for Eveena the place among the cushions immediately
on my left, I made to the assembled household the
expected announcement that she was to be regarded
as mistress of the house; feminine punctiliousness
on points of domestic precedence strikingly contrasting
the unceremonious character of intercourse among men
out of doors. The very ambau recognise the mistress
or the favourite, as dogs the master of their Earthly
home.

The ladies were at first shy and silent, Eunane only
giving me more than a monosyllabic answer to my remarks,
and even Eunane never speaking save in reply to me.
A trivial incident, however, broke through this reserve,
and afforded me a first taste of the petty domestic
vexations in store for me. The beverage most to
my liking was always the *carcara*—­juice
flavoured with roasted kernels, something resembling
coffee in taste. On this occasion the *carcara*
and another favourite dish had a taste so peculiar
that I pushed both aside almost untouched. On
observing this, the rest—­Enva, Leenoo, Elfe,
and Eirale—­took occasion to criticise the
articles in question with such remarks and grimaces
as ill-bred children might venture for the annoyance
of an inexperienced sister. I hesitated to repress
this outbreak as it deserved, till Eunane’s
bitter mortification was evident in her brightening
colour and the doubtful, half-appealing glance of
tearful eyes. Then a rebuke, such as might have
been appropriately addressed yesterday to these rude
school-girls by their governess, at once silenced
them. As we rose, I asked Eveena, who, with more
courtesy than the rest of us, had finished her portion—­

“Is there any justice in these reproaches?
I certainly don’t like the carcara to-day, but
it does not follow that Eunane is in fault.”

The rest, Eunane included, looked their annoyance
at this appeal; but Eveena’s temper and kindness
were proof against petulance.

“The carcara is in fault,” she said; “but
I don’t think Eunane is. In learning cookery
at school she had her materials supplied to her; this
time the *carve* has probably given her an unripe
or overripe fruit which has spoiled the whole.”

“And do you not know ripe from unripe fruit?”
I inquired, turning to Eunane.

“How should she?” interposed Eveena.
“I doubt if she ever saw them growing.”

“How so?” I asked of Eunane.

“It is true,” she answered. “I
never went beyond the walls of our playground till
I came here; and though there were a few flower-beds
in the inner gardens, there were none but shade trees
among the turf and concrete yards to which we were
confined.”

**Page 206**

“I should have known no better,” observed
Eveena; “but being brought up at home, I learned
to know all the plants in my father’s grounds,
which were more various, I believe, than usual.”

“Then,” I said, “Eunane has a new
life and a multitude of new pleasures before her.
Has this peristyle given you your first sight of flowers
beyond those in the beds of your Nursery? And
have you never seen anything of the world about you?”

“Never,” she said. “And Eveena’s
excuse for me is, I believe, perfectly true.
The carve must have been stupid, but I knew no better.”

“Well,” I rejoined, “you must forgive
the bird, as we must excuse you for spoiling our breakfast.
I will contrive that you shall know more of fruits
and flowers before long. In the meantime, you
will probably have a different if not a wider view
from this roof than from that of your Nursery.”

After all, Eunane’s girlhood, typical of the
whole life of many Martial women, had not, I suppose,
been more dreary or confined than that of children
in London, Canton, or Calcutta. But this incident,
reminding me how dreary and limited that life was,
served to excuse in my eyes the pettiness and poverty
of the characters it had produced. A Martial
woman’s whole experience may well be confined
within a few acres, and from the cradle to the grave
she may see no more of the world than can be discerned
from the roof of her school or her husband’s
home.

Eunane, with the assistance of the ambau, busied herself
in removing the remains of the meal. The other
five, putting on their veils, scampered up the inclined
plane to the roof, much like children released from
table or from tasks. Turning to Eveena, who still
remained beside me, I said—­

“Get your veil, and come out with me; I have
not yet an idea where we are, and scarcely a notion
what the grounds are like.”

She followed me to my apartment, out of which, opened
the one she had chosen, and as the window closed behind
us she spoke in a tone of appeal—­

“Do not insist on my accompanying you.
As you bade me always speak my thought, I had much
rather you would take one of the others.”

“You professed,” I said, “to take
especial pleasure in a walk with me, and this time
I will be careful that you are not overtired.”

“Of course I should like it,” she answered;
“but it would not be just. Please let me
this time remain to take my part of the household
duties, and make myself acquainted with the house.
Choose your companion among the others, whom you have
scarcely noticed yet.”

Preferring not only Eveena’s company, but even
my own, to that of any of the six, and feeling myself
not a little dependent on her guidance and explanations,
I remonstrated. But finding that her sense of
justice and kindness would yield to nothing short of
direct command, I gave way.

“You forget *my* pleasure,” I said
at last. “But if you will not go, you must
at least tell me which I am to take. I will not
pretend to have a choice in the matter.”

**Page 207**

“Well, then,” she answered, “I should
be glad to see you take Eunane. She is, I think,
the eldest, apparently the most intelligent and companionable,
and she has had one mortification already she hardly
deserved.”

“And is much the prettiest,” I added maliciously.
But Eveena was incapable of even understanding so
direct an appeal to feminine jealousy.

“I think so,” she said; “much the
prettiest among us. But that will make no difference
under her veil.”

“And must she keep down her veil,” I asked,
“in our own grounds?”

Eveena laughed. “Wherever she might be
seen by any man but yourself.”

“Call her then,” I answered.

Eveena hesitated. But having successfully carried
her own way on the main question, she would not renew
her remonstrances on a minor point; and finding her
about to join the rest, she drew Eunane apart.
Eunane came up to me alone, Eveena having busied herself
in some other part of the house. She approached
slowly as if reluctant, and stood silent before me,
her manner by no means expressive of satisfaction.

“Eveena thought,” I said, “that
you would like to accompany me; but if not, you may
tell her so; and tell her in that case that she *must*
come.”

“But I shall be glad to go wherever you please,”
replied Eunane. “Eveena did not tell me
why you sent for me, and”——­

“And you were afraid to be scolded for spoiling
the breakfast? You have heard quite enough of
that.”

“You dropped a word last night,” she answered,
“which made me think you would keep your displeasure
till you had me alone.”

“Quite true,” I said, “if I had
any displeasure to keep. But you might spoil
a dozen meals, and not vex me half as much as the others
did.”

“Why?” she asked in surprise. “Girls
and women always spite one another if they have a
chance, especially one who is in disfavour or disgrace
with authority.”

“So much the worse,” I answered.
“And now—­you know as much or as little
of the house as any of us; find the way into the grounds.”

A narrow door, not of crystal as usual, but of metal
painted to resemble the walls, led directly from one
corner of the peristyle into the grounds outside.
I had inferred on my arrival, by the distance from
the road to the house, that their extent was considerable,
but I was surprised alike by their size and arrangement.
On two sides they were bounded by a wall about four
hundred yards in length—­that parting them
from the road was about twice as long. They were
laid out with few of the usual orchard plots and beds
of different fruits and vegetables, but rather in
the form of a small park, with trees of various sorts,
among which the fruit trees were a minority. The
surface was broken by natural rising grounds and artificial
terraces; the soil was turfed in the manner I have
previously described, with minute plants of different
colours arranged in bands and patterns. Here

**Page 208**

and there was a garden consisting of a variety of flower-beds
and flowering shrubs; broad concrete paths winding
throughout, and a beautiful silver stream meandering
hither and thither, and filling several small ponds
and fountains. That the grounds immediately appertaining
to the house were not intended as usual for the purposes
of a farm or kitchen-garden was evident. The reason
became equally apparent when, looking towards the
north, where no wall bounded them, I saw—­over
a gate in the middle of a dense hedge of flowering
shrubs, which, with a ditch beyond it, formed the
limit of the park in that direction—­an
extensive farm divided by the usual ditches into some
twenty-five or thirty distinct fields, and more than
a square mile in extent. This, as Eunane’s
native inquisitiveness and quickness had already learnt,
formed part of the estate attached to the mansion and
bestowed upon me by the Campta. It was admirably
cultivated, containing orchards, fields rich with
various thriving crops, and pastures grazed by the
Unicorn and other of the domestic birds and beasts
kept to supply Martial tables with milk, eggs, and
meat; producing nearly every commodity to which the
climate was suited, and, as a very short observation
assured me, capable of yielding a far greater income
than would suffice to sustain in luxury and splendour
a household larger than that enforced upon me.
We walked in this direction, my companion talking
fluently enough when once I had set her at ease, and
seemingly free from the shyness and timidity which
Eveena had at first displayed. She paused when
we reached a bridge that spanned the ditch dividing
the grounds from the farm, aware that, save on special
invitation, she might not, even in my company, go
beyond the former. I led her on, however, till
soon after we had crossed the ditch I saw a man approaching
us. On this, I desired Eunane to remain where
she was, seating her at the foot of a fruit tree in
one of the orchard plots, and proceeded to meet the
stranger. After exchanging the usual salute,
he came immediately to the point.

“I thought,” he said, “that you
would not care yourself to undertake the cultivation
of so extensive an estate. Indeed, the mere superintendence
would occupy the whole of one man’s attention,
and its proper cultivation would be the work of six
or eight. I have had some little experience in
agriculture, and determined to ask for this charge.”

“And who has recommended you?” I said.
“Or have you any sort of introduction or credentials
to me?”

He made a sign which I immediately recognised.
Caution, however, was imposed by the law to which
that sign appealed.

“You can read,” I said, “by starlight?”

“Better than by any other,” he rejoined
with a smile.

One or two more tokens interchanged left me no doubt
that the claim was genuine, and, of course, irresistible.

“Enough,” I replied. “You may
take entire charge on the usual terms, which, doubtless,
you know better than I.”

**Page 209**

“You trust me then, absolutely?” he said,
in a tone of some little surprise.

“In trusting you,” I replied, “I
trust the Zinta. I am tolerably sure to be safe
in hands recommended by them.”

“You are right,” he said, “and how
right this will prove to you,” and he placed
in my hand a small cake upon which was stamped an impression
of the signet that I had seen on Esmo’s wrist.
When he saw that I recognised it, he took it back,
and, breaking it into fragments, chewed and swallowed
it.

“This,” he said, “was given me to
avouch the following message:—­Our Chiefs
are informed that the Order is threatened with a novel
danger. Systematic persecution by open force
or by law has been attempted and defeated ages ago,
and will hardly be tried again. What seems to
be intended now is the destruction of our Chiefs,
individually, by secret means—­means which
it is supposed we shall not be able to trace to the
instigators, even if we should detect their instruments.”

“But,” I remarked, “those who have
warned you of the danger must know from whom it proceeds,
and those who are employed in such an attack must
run not only the ordinary risk of assassins, but the
further risk entailed by the peculiar powers of those
they assail.”

“Those powers,” he answered, “they
do not understand or recognise. The instruments,
I presume, will be encouraged by an assurance that
the Courts are in their favour, and by a pledge in
the last resort that they shall be protected.
The exceptional customs of our Order, especially their
refusal to send their children into the public Nurseries,
mark out and identify them; and though our places of
meeting are concealed and have never been invaded,
the fact that we do meet and the persons of those
who attend can hardly be concealed.”

“But,” I asked, “if a charge of
assassination is once made and proved, how can the
Courts refuse to do justice? Can the instigators
protect the culprit without committing themselves?”

“They would appeal, I do not doubt, to a law,
passed many ages ago with a special regard to ourselves,
but which has not been applied for a score of centuries,
putting the members of a secret religious society
beyond the pale of legal protection. That we shall
ultimately find them out and avenge ourselves, you
need not doubt. But in the meantime every known
dissentient from the customs of the majority is in
danger, and persons of note or prominence especially
so. Next to Esmo and his son, the husband of
his daughter is, perhaps, in as much peril as any
one. No open attempt on your life will be adventured
at present, while you retain the favour of the Campta.
But you have made at least one mortal and powerful
enemy, and you may possibly be the object of well-considered
and persistent schemes of assassination. On the
other hand, next to our Chief and his son, you have
a paramount claim on the protection of the Order;
and those who with me will take charge of your affairs
have also charge to watch vigilantly over your life.
If you will trust me beforehand with knowledge of all
your movements, I think your chief peril will lie
in the one sphere upon which we cannot intrude—­your
own household; and Clavelta directs your own special
attention to this quarter. Immediate danger can
scarcely threaten you as yet, save from a woman’s
hand.”

**Page 210**

“Poison?”

“Probably,” he returned coolly. “But
of the details of the plot our Council are, I believe,
as absolutely ignorant as of the quarter from which
it proceeds.”

“And how,” I inquired, “can it be
that the witness who has informed you of the plot
has withheld the names, without which his information
is so imperfect, and serves rather to alarm than to
protect us?”

“You know,” he replied, “the kind
of mysterious perception to which we can resort, and
are probably aware how strangely lucid in some points,
how strangely darkened in others, is the vision that
does not depend on ordinary human senses?”

As we spoke we had passed Eunane once or twice, walking
backwards and forwards along the path near which she
sat. As my companion was about to continue, we
were so certainly within her hearing that I checked
him.

“Take care,” I said; “I know nothing
of her except the Campta’s choice, and that
she is not of us.”

He visibly started.

“I thought,” he said, “that the
witness of our conversation was one at least as reliable
as yourself. I forgot how it happened that you
have diverged from the prudence which forbids our
brethren to admit to their households aliens from
the Order and possible spies on its secrets.”

“Of whom do you speak as Clavelta?” I
asked. “I was not even aware that the Order
had a single head.”

“The Signet,” replied my friend in evident
surprise, “should have distinguished the Arch-Enlightener
to duller sight than yours.”

We had not spoken, of course, till we were again beyond
hearing; but my companion looked round carefully before
he proceeded—­

“You will understand the better, then, how strong
is your own claim upon the care of your brethren,
and how confidently you may rely upon their vigilance
and fidelity.”

“I should regret,” I answered, “that
their lives should be risked for mine. In dangers
like those against which you could protect me, I have
been accustomed from boyhood to trust my own right
hand. But the fear of secret assassination has
often unnerved the bravest men, and I will not say
that it may not disturb me.”

“For you,” he answered, “personally
we should care as for one of our brethren exposed
to especial danger, For him who saved the descendant
of our Founder, and who in her right, after her father
and brother, would be the guardian, if not the head,
of the only remaining family of his lineage, one and
all of us are at need bound to die.”

After a few more words we parted, and I rejoined Eunane,
and led her back towards the house. I had learnt
to consider taciturnity a matter of course, except
where there was actual occasion for speech; but Eunane
had chattered so fluently and frankly just before,
that her absolute silence might have suggested to
me the possibility that she had heard and was pondering
things not intended for her knowledge, had I been

**Page 211**

less preoccupied. Enured to the perils of war,
of the chase, of Eastern diplomacy, and of travel
in the wildest parts of the Earth, I do not pretend
indifference to the fear of assassination, and especially
of poison. Cromwell, and other soldiers of equal
nerve and clearer conscience, have found their iron
courage sorely shaken by a peril against which no
precautions were effective and from which they could
not enjoy an hour’s security. The incessant
continuous strain on the nerves is, I suppose, the
chief element in the peculiar dread with which brave
men have regarded this kind of peril; as the best troops
cannot endure to be under fire in their camp.
Weighing, however, the probability that girls who
had been selected by the Sovereign, and had left their
Nursery only to pass directly into my house, could
have been already bribed or seduced to become the
instruments of murderous treachery, I found it but
slight; and before we reached the house I had made
up my mind to discard the apprehensions or precautions
recommended to me on their account. Far better,
if need be, to die by poison than to live in hourly
terror of it. Better to be murdered than to suspect
of secret treason those with whom I must maintain the
most intimate relations, and whose sex and years made
it intolerable to believe them criminal. I dismissed
the thought, then; and believing that I had probably
wronged them in allowing it to dwell for a moment
in my mind, I felt perhaps more tenderly than before
towards them, and certainly indisposed to name to
Eveena a suspicion of which I was myself ashamed.
Perhaps, too, youth and beauty weighed in my conclusion
more than cool reason would have allowed. A Martial
proverb says—­

 “Trust a foe, and you may rue it;
 Trust a friend, and perish through
it.
 Trust a woman if you will;—­
 Thrice betrayed, you’ll trust
her still.”

As to the general warning, I was wishful to consult
Eveena, and unwilling to withhold from her any secret
of my thoughts; but equally averse to disturb her
with alarms that were trying even to nerves seasoned
by the varied experience of twenty years against every
open peril.

**CHAPTER XX — LIFE, SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC.**

As we approached the house I caught sight of Eveena’s
figure among the party gathered on the roof.
She had witnessed the interview, but her habitual
and conscientious deference forbade her to ask a confidence
not volunteered; and she seemed fully satisfied when,
on the first occasion on which we were alone, I told
her simply that the stranger belonged to the Zinta
and had been recommended by her father himself to
the charge of my estate. Though reluctant to disturb
her mind with fears she could not shake off as I could,
and which would make my every absence at least a season
of terror, the sense of insecurity doubtless rendered
me more anxious to enjoy whenever possible the only
society in which it was permissible to be frank and

**Page 212**

off my guard. No man in his senses would voluntarily
have accepted the position which had been forced upon
me. The Zveltau never introduce aliens into their
households. Their leading ideas and fundamental
principles so deeply affect the conduct of existence,
the motives of action, the bases of all moral reasoning—­so
completely do the inferences drawn from them and the
habits of thought to which they lead pervade and tinge
the mind, conscience, and even language—­that
though it may be easy to “live in the light
at home and walk with the blind abroad,” yet
in the familiar intercourse of household life even
a cautious and reserved man (and I was neither) must
betray to the keen instinctive perceptions of women
whether he thought and felt like those around him,
or was translating different thoughts into an alien
language. This difficulty is little felt between
unbelievers and Christians. The simple creed
of the Zinta, however, like that of the Prophet, affects
the thought and life as the complicated and subtle
mysteries of more elaborate theologies, more refined
philosophic systems rarely do.

One of Eveena’s favourite quotations bore the
unmistakable stamp of Zveltic mysticism:—­

 “Symbols that invert the sense
 Form the Seal of Providence;
 Contradiction gives the key,
 Time unlocks the mystery.”

The danger in which my relation to the Zinta and its
chief involved me, and the presence of half a dozen
rivals to Eveena—­rivals also to that regard
for the Star which at first I felt chiefly for her
sake—­likely as they seemed to impair the
strength and sweetness of the tie between us, actually
worked to consolidate and endear it. To enjoy,
except on set occasions, without constant liability
to interruption, Eveena’s sole society was no
easy matter. To conceal our real secret, and
the fact that there was a secret, was imperative.
Avowedly exclusive confidence, conferences from which
the rest of the household were directly shut out,
would have suggested to their envious tempers that
Eveena played the spy on them, or influenced and advised
the exercise of my authority. To be alone with
her, therefore, as naturally and necessarily I must
often wish to be, required manoeuvres and arrangements
as delicate and difficult, though as innocent, as
those employed by engaged couples under the strict
conventions of European household usage; and the comparative
rarity of such interviews, and the manner in which
they had often to be contrived beforehand, kept alive
in its earliest freshness the love which, if not really
diminished, generally loses somewhat of its first
bloom and delicacy in the unrestrained intercourse
of marriage. Absolutely and solely trusted, assured
that her company was eagerly sought, and at least
as deeply valued as ever—­compelled by the
ideas of her race to accept the situation as natural
and right, and wholly incapable of the pettier and
meaner forms of jealousy—­Eveena was fully

**Page 213**

content and happy in her relations with me. That,
on the whole, she was not comfortable, or at least
much less so than during our suddenly abbreviated
honeymoon, was apparent; but her loss of brightness
and cheerfulness was visible chiefly in her weary and
downcast looks on any occasion when, after being absent
for some hours from the house, I came upon her unawares.
In my presence she was always calm and peaceful, kind,
and seemingly at ease; and if she saw or heard me
on my return, though she carefully avoided any appearance
of eagerness to greet me sooner than others, or to
claim especial attention, she ever met me with a smile
of welcome as frank and bright as a young bride on
Earth could give to a husband returning to her sole
society from a long day of labour for her sake.

In so far as compliance was possible I was compelled
to admit the wisdom of Eveena’s plea that no
open distinction should be made in her favour.
Except in the simple fact of our affection, there was
no assignable reason for making her my companion more
frequently than Eunane or Eive. Except that I
could trust her completely, there was no distinction
of age, social rank, or domestic relation to afford
a pretext for exempting her from restraints which,
if at first I thought them senseless and severe, were
soon justified by experience of the kind of domestic
control which just emancipated school-girls expected
and required. Nor would she accept the immunity
tacitly allowed her. It was not that any established
custom or right bounded the arbitrary power of domestic
autocracy. The right of all but unbounded wrong,
the liberty of limitless caprice, is unquestionably
vested in the head of the household. But the
very completeness of the despotism rendered its exercise
impossible. Force cannot act where there is no
resistance. The sword of the Plantagenet could
cleave the helmet but not the quilt of down.
I could do as I pleased without infringing any understanding
or giving any right to complain.

“But,” said Eveena, “you have a
sense of justice which has nothing to do with law
or usage. Even your language is not ours.
You think of right and wrong, where we should speak
only of what is or is not punishable. You can
make a favourite if you will pay the price. Could
you endure to be hated in your own home, or I to know
that you deserved it? Or, if you could, could
you bear to see me hated and my life made miserable?”

“They dare not!” I returned angrily fearing
that they had dared, and that she had already felt
the spite she was so careful not to provoke.

“Do you think that feminine malice cannot contrive
to envenom a dozen stings that I could not explain
if I would, and you could not deal with if I did?”

“But,” I replied, “it seems admitted
that there is no such thing as right or custom.
As Enva said, I have bought and paid for them, and
may do what I please within the contract; and you agree
that is just what any other man in this world would
do.”

**Page 214**

“Yes,” returned Eveena, “and I watched
your face while Enva spoke. How did you like
her doctrine? Of course you may do as you please—­if
you can please. You may silence discontent, you
may suppress spiteful innuendos and even sulky looks,
you may put down mutiny, by sheer terror. Can
you? You may command me to go with you whenever
you go out; you may take the same means to make me
complain of unkindness as to make them conceal it;
you may act like one of our own people, if you can
stoop to the level of their minds. But we both
know that you can do nothing of the kind. How
could you bear to be driven into unsparing and undeserved
severity, who can hardly bring yourself to enforce
the discipline necessary to peace and comfort on those
who will only be ruled by fear and would like you
better if they feared you more? Did you hear
the proverb Leenoo muttered, very unjustly, when she
left your room yesterday, ’A favourite wears
out many sandals’? No! You see the
very phrase wounds and disgusts you. But you
would find it a true one. Can you take vengeance
for a fault you have yourself provoked? Can you
decide without inquiry, condemn without evidence,
punish without hearing? Men do these things, of
course, and women expect them. But you—­I
do not say you would be ashamed so to act—­you
cannot do it, any more than you can breathe the air
of our snow-mountains.”

“At all events, Eveena, I no more dare do it
in your presence than I dare forswear the Faith we
hold in common.”

But whatever Eveena might exact or I concede, the
distinction between the wife who commanded as much
respect as affection, and the girls who could at best
be pets or playthings, was apparent against our will
in every detail of daily life and domestic intercourse.
It was alike impossible to treat Eveena as a child
and to rule Enva or Eirale as other than children.
It was as unnatural to use the tone of command or
rebuke to one for whom my unexpressed wishes were absolute
law, as to observe the form of request or advice in
directing or reproving those whose obedience depended
on the consequences of rebellion. It only made
matters worse that the distinction corresponded but
too accurately to their several deserts. No faults
could have been so irritating to Eveena’s companions
as her undeniable faultlessness.

The ludicrous aspect of my relation to the rest of
the household was even more striking than I had expected.
That I should find myself in the absurd position of
a man entrusted with the direct personal government
of half-a-dozen young ladies was even “more truly
spoke than meant.” One at least among them
might singly have made in time a not unlovable wife,
and all, perhaps, might severally and separately have
been reduced to conjugal complaisance. Collectively,
they were, as Eveena had said, a set of school-girls,
and school-girls used to stricter restraint and much
sharper discipline than those of a French or Italian
convent. They would have made life a burden to

**Page 215**

a vigorous English schoolmistress, and imperilled
the soul of any Lady-Abbess whose list of permissible
penances excluded the dark cell and the scourge.
Fortunately for both parties, I had the advantage of
governess and Superior in the natural awe which girls
feel for the authority of manhood—­till
they have found out of what soft fibre men are made—­and
in the artificial fear inspired by domestic usage and
tradition. For I was soon aware that even on its
ridiculous side the relation was not to be trifled
with. The simple indifference a man feels towards
the escapades of girlhood was not applicable to women
and wives, who yet lacked womanly sense and the feeling
of conjugal duty. This serious aspect of their
position soon contracted the indulgence naturally
conceded to youth’s heedlessness and animal
spirits. These, displayed at first only in the
energy and eagerness of their every movement within
the narrow limits of conventional usage, broke all
bounds when, after one or two half-timid, half-venturous
experiments on my patience, they felt that they had,
at least for the moment, exchanged the monotony, the
mechanical routine, the stern repression of their
life in the great Nurseries, not for the harsh household
discipline to which they naturally looked forward,
but for the “loosened zone” which to them
seemed to promise absolute liberty. When not
immediately in my presence or Eveena’s, their
keen enjoyment of a life so new, the sudden development
of the brighter side of their nature under circumstances
that gave play to the vigorous vitality of youth,
gave as much pleasure to me as to themselves.
But in contact with myself or Eveena they were women,
and showed only the wrong side of the varied texture
of womanhood. To the master they were slaves,
each anxious to attract his notice, win his preference;
before the favourite, spiteful, envious of her and
of each other, bitter, malicious, and false.
For Eveena’s sake, it was impossible to look
on with indolent indifference on freaks of temper
which, childish in the form they assumed, were envenomed
by the deliberate dislike and unscrupulous cunning
of jealous women.

But even on the childish side of their character and
conduct, they soon displayed a determination to test
by actual experiment the utmost extent of the liberty
allowed, and the nature and sufficiency of its limits.
Eunane was always the most audacious trespasser and
representative rebel. Fortunately for her, the
daring which had bewildered and exasperated feminine
guardians rather amused and interested me, giving
some variety and relief to the monotonous absurdity
of the situation. Nothing in her conduct was more
remarkable or more characteristic than the simplicity
and good temper with which she generally accepted
as of course the less agreeable consequences of her
outbreaks; unless it were the sort of natural dignity
with which, when she so pleased, the game played out
and its forfeit paid, the naughty child subsided into
the lively but rational companion, and the woman simply
ignored the scrapes of the school-girl.

**Page 216**

As her character seemed to unfold, Eive’s individuality
became as distinctly parted from the rest as Eunane’s,
though in an opposite direction. Comparatively
timid and indolent, without their fulness of life,
she seemed to me little more than a child; and she
fell with apparent willingness into that position,
accepting naturally its privileges and exemptions.
She alone was never in the way, never vexatious or
exacting. Content with the notice that naturally
fell to her share, she obtained the more. Never
intruding between Eveena and myself, she alone was
not wholly unwelcome to share our accidental privacy
when, in the peristyle or the grounds, the others left
us temporarily alone. On such occasions she would
often draw near and crouch at my feet or by Eveena’s
side, curling herself like a kitten upon the turf
or among the cushions, often resting her little head
upon Eveena’s knee or mine; generally silent,
but never so silent as to seem to be a spy upon our
conversation, rather as a favourite child privileged,
in consideration of her quietude and her supposed
harmlessness and inattention, to remain when others
are excluded, and to hear much to which she is supposed
not to listen. Having no special duties of her
own in the household, she would wait upon and assist
Eveena whenever the latter would accept her attendance.
When the whole party were assembled, it was her wont
to choose her place not in the circle, still less
at my side—­Eveena’s title to the post
of honour on the left being uncontested, and Eunane
generally occupying the cushions on my right.
But Eive, lying at our feet, would support herself
on her arm between my knee and Eunane’s, content
to attract my hand to play with her curls or stroke
her head. Under such encouragement she would
creep on to my lap and rest there, but seldom took
any part in conversation, satisfied with the attention
one pays half-consciously to a child. A word
that dropped from Enva, however, on one occasion,
obliged me to observe that it was in Eveena’s
absence that Eive always seemed most fully aware of
her privileges and most lavish of her childlike caresses.
The kind of notice and affection she obtained did
not provoke the envy even of Leenoo or Eirale.
She no more affected to imitate Eveena’s absolute
devotion than she ventured on Eunane’s reckless
petulance. She kept my interest alive by the
faults of a spoiled child. Her freaks were always
such as to demand immediate repression without provoking
serious displeasure, so that the temporary disgrace
cost her little, and the subsequent reconciliation
strengthened her hold on my heart. But with Eveena,
or in her presence, Eive’s waywardness was so
suppressed or controlled that Eveena’s perceptible
coolness towards her—­it was never coldness
or unkindness—­somewhat surprised me.

**Page 217**

Few Martialists, when wealthy enough to hand over
the management of their property to others, care to
interfere, or even to watch its cultivation.
This, however, to me was a subject of as much interest
as any other of the many peculiarities of Martial
society, commerce, and industry, which it concerned
me to investigate and understand; and when not otherwise
employed, I spent great part of my day in watching,
and now and then directing, the work that went on during
the whole of the sunlight, and not unfrequently during
the night, upon my farm. Davilo, the superintendent,
had engaged no fewer than eight subordinates, who,
with the assistance of the ambau, the carvee, and
the electric machines, kept every portion of the ground
in the most perfect state of culture. The most
valuable part of the produce consisted of those farinaceous
fruits, growing on trees from twenty to eighty feet
in height, which form the principal element of Martial
food. Between the tropics these trees yield ripe
fruit twice a year, during a total period of about
three of our months—­perhaps for a hundred
days. Various gourds, growing chiefly on canes,
hanging from long flexile stalks that spring from
the top of the stem at a height of from three to eight
feet, yield juice which is employed partly in flavouring
the various loaves and cakes into which the flour is
made, partly in the numerous beverages (never allowed
to ferment, and consequently requiring to be made
fresh every day), of which the smallest Martial household
has a greater variety than the most luxurious palace
of the East. The best are made from hard-skinned
fruits, whose whole pulp is liquified by piercing the
rind before the fruit is fully ripe, and closing the
orifice with a wax-like substance, almost exactly
according to a practice common in different parts
of Asia. The drinks are made, of course, at home.
The farinaceous fruits are sold to the confectioners,
who take also a portion of the milk and all the meat
supplied by the pastures. Many choice fruits
grow on shrubs, ranging from the size of a large black
currant tree to that of the smallest gooseberry bush.
Vines growing along the ground bear clustering nuts,
whose kernels are sometimes as hard as that of a cocoa-nut,
sometimes almost as soft as butter. The latter
with the juicy fruits, are preserved if necessary for
a whole year in storehouses dug in the ground and
lined with concrete, in which, by chemical means,
a temperature a little above the freezing-point is
steadily maintained at very trivial cost. The
number of dishes producible by the mixture of these
various materials, with the occasional addition of
meat, fish, and eggs, is enormous; and it is only
when some particular compound is in special favour
with the master of the house that it makes its appearance
more than perhaps once in ten days upon the same table.
The invention of the confectioners is exquisite and
inexhaustible; and every table is supplied with a
variety of dainties sufficient for a feast in the most
hospitable and wealthy household of Europe. Many
of the smaller fruit-trees and shrubs yield two crops
in the year. The vegetables, crisper, and of
much more varied taste than the best Terrestrial salads,
sometimes possessing a flavour as *piquant* as
that of cinnamon or nutmeg, are gathered continuously
from one end of the year to the other.

**Page 218**

The vines, tough and fibrous, supply the best and
strongest cordage used in Mars. For this purpose
they are dried, stripped, combed, and put through
an elaborate process of manufacture, which, without
weakening the fibres, renders them smooth, and removes
the, knots in which they naturally abound. The
twisted cord of the nut-vine is almost as strong as
a metallic wire rope of half its measurement.
There is another purpose for which these fibres in
their natural state are employed. Simply dried
and twisted, they form a scourge as terrible as the
Russian knout or African cowhide, though of a different
character—­a scourge which, even in its lightest
form, reduces the wildest herd to instant order; and
which, as employed on criminals, is hardly less dreaded
than that electric rack whereby Martial science inflicts
on every nerve a graduated torture such as even ecclesiastical
malignity has not invented on Earth—­such
as I certainly will not place in the hands of Terrestrial
rulers.

All these crops are raised with marvellously little
human labour, the whole work of ploughing and sowing
being done by machinery, that of weeding and harvesting
chiefly by the carvee. The ambau climb the trees
and pick the fruit from the ends of the branches, which
they are also taught to pinch in, so that none grow
so long as to break with the weight of these creatures,
as clever and agile as the smaller monkeys, but almost
as large as an ordinary baboon. It must always
be remembered that, size for size, and *caeteris
paribus,* all bodies, animate and inanimate, on
Mars weigh less than half as much as they would on
Earth. Eunane’s blunder about the *carcara*
was not explained by any subsequent errors of the
ambau or carvee, which always selected the ripe fruit
with faultless skill, leaving the immature untouched,
and throwing aside in small heaps to manure the ground
the few that had been allowed to grow too ripe for
use. The sums paid from time to time into my
hands, received from the sales of produce, were far
greater than I could possibly spend in gratifying any
taste of my own; and, as I presently found, the idea
that the surplus might indulge those of the ladies
never entered their minds.

Before we had been settled in our home for three days
Eveena had made two requests which I was well pleased
to grant. First, she entreated that I would teach
her one at least of the languages with which I was
familiar—­a task of whose extreme difficulty
she had little idea. Compared with her native
tongue, the complication and irregularities of the
simplest language spoken on Earth are far more arbitrary
and provoking than seems the most difficult of ancient
or Oriental tongues to a Frenchman or Italian.
In order to fulfil my promise that she should assist
me in recording my observations and writing out my
notes, I chose Latin. Unhappily for her, I found
myself as impatient and unsuccessful as I was inexperienced
in teaching; and nothing but her exquisite gentleness

**Page 219**

and forbearance could have made the lessons otherwise
than painful to us both. Well for me that the
“right to govern wrong” was to her a simple
truth—­an inalienable marital privilege,
to be met with that unqualified submission which must
have shamed the worst temper into self-control.
Eive on one occasion made a similar request; but besides
that I realised the convenience of a medium of communication
understood by ourselves alone, I had no inclination
to expose either my own temper or Eive’s to the
trial. Eveena’s second request came naturally
from one whose favourite amusement had been the raising
and modification of flowers. She asked to be
entrusted with the charge of the seeds I had brought
from Earth, and to be permitted to form a bed in the
peristyle for the purpose of the experiment.
Though this disfigured the perfect arrangement of the
garden, I was delighted to have so important and interesting
a problem worked out by hands so skilful and so careful.
I should probably have failed to rear a single plant,
even had I been familiar with those applications of
electricity to the purpose which are so extensively
employed in Mars. Eveena managed to produce specimens
strangely altered, sometimes stunted, sometimes greatly
improved, from about one-fourth of the seeds entrusted
to her; and among those with which she was most brilliantly
successful were some specimens of Turkish roses, the
roses of the attar, which I had obtained at Stamboul.
My admiration of her patience and pleasure in her
success deeply gratified her; and it was a full reward
for all her trouble when I suggested that she should
send to her sister Zevle a small packet of each of
the seeds with which she had succeeded. It happened,
however, that the few rose seeds had all been planted;
and the flowers, though apparently perfect, produced
no seed of their own, probably because they were not
suited to the taste of the flower-birds, and Eveena
somehow forgot or failed to employ the process of artificial
fertilisation.

If anything could have fully reconciled my conscience
to the household relations in which I was rather by
weakness than by will inextricably entangled, it would
have been the certainty that by the sacrifice Eveena
had herself enforced on me, and which she persistently
refused to recognise as such, she alone had suffered.
True that I could not give, and could hardly affect
for the wives bestowed on me by another’s choice,
even such love as the head of a Moslem household may
distribute among as many inmates. But to what
I could call love they had never looked forward.
But for the example daily presented before their own
eyes they would no more have missed than they comprehended
it. That they were happier than they had expected,
far happier than they would have been in an ordinary
home, happier certainly than in the schools they had
quitted, I could not doubt, and they did not affect
to deny. If my patience were not proof against
vexations the more exasperating from their pettiness,

**Page 220**

and the sense of ridicule which constantly attached
to them, I could read in the manner of most and understand
from the words of Eunane, who seldom hesitated to speak
her mind, whether its utterances, were flattering or
wounding, that she and her companions found me not
only far more indulgent, but incomparably more just
than they had been taught to hope a man could be.
Of justice, indeed, as consisting in restraint on one’s
own temper and consideration for the temper of others,
Martial manhood is incapable, or, at any rate, Martial
womanhood never suspects its masters.

Moreover, though no longer blest with the spirits
of youth, and finding little pleasure in what youth
calls pleasure, I had escaped the kind of satiety
that seems to attend lives more softly spent than
mine had been; and found a very real and unfading enjoyment
in witnessing the keen enjoyment of these youthful
natures in such liberty as could be accorded and such
amusements as the life of this dull and practical
world affords.

Among these, two at least are closely similar to the
two favourite pleasures of European society.
Music appears to have been carried, like most arts
and sciences, to a point of mechanical perfection
which, I should suppose, like much of the artificial
accuracy and ease which civilisation has introduced,
mars rather than enhances the natural gratification
enjoyed by simpler ages and races. Almost deaf
to music as distinguished from noise, I did not attempt
to comprehend the construction of Martial instruments
or the nature of the concords they emitted. One
only struck me with especial surprise by a peculiarity
which, if I could not understand, I could not mistake.
A number of variously coloured flames are made to
synchronise with or actually emit a number of corresponding
notes, dancing to, or, more properly, weaving a series
of strangely combined movements in accord with the
music, whose vibrations were directly and inseparably
connected with their motion. But all music is
the work of professional musicians, never the occupation
of woman’s leisure, never made more charming
to the ear by its association with the movement of
beloved hands or the tones of a cherished voice.
Electric wires, connected with the vast buildings
wherein instruments produce what sounds like fine
choral singing as well as musical notes, enable the
householder to turn on at pleasure music equal, I
suppose, to the finest operatic performances or the
grandest oratorio, and listen to it at leisure from
the cushions of his own peristyle. This was a
great though not wholly new delight to Eunane and
most of her companions. For their sake only would
Eveena ever have resorted to it, for though herself
appreciating music not less highly, and educated to
understand it much more thoroughly, than they, she
could derive little gratification from that which
was clearly incomprehensible if not disagreeable to
me—­could hardly enjoy a pleasure I could
not share.

**Page 221**

The theatre was a more prized and less common indulgence.
It is little frequented by the elder Martialists;
and not enjoying it themselves, they seldom sacrifice
their hours to the enjoyment of their women. But
it forms so important an aid to education, and tends
so much to keep alive in the public memory impressions
which policy will not permit to fade, that both from
the State and from the younger portion of the community
it receives an encouragement quite sufficient to reward
the few who bestow their time and talent upon it.
Great buildings, square or oblong in form, the stage
placed at one end, the arched boxes or galleries from
which the spectators look down thereon rising tier
above and behind tier to the further extremity, are
constantly filled. There are no actors, and Martial
feeling would hardly allow the appearance of women
as actresses. But an art, somewhat analogous to,
but infinitely surpassing, that displayed in the manipulation
of the most skilfully constructed and most complicated
magic lanterns, enables the conductors of the theatre
to present upon the stage a truly living and moving
picture of any scene they desire to exhibit.
The figures appear perfectly real, move with perfect,
freedom, and seem to speak the sounds which, in fact,
are given out by a gigantic hidden phonograph, into
which the several parts have long ago been carefully
spoken by male and female voices, the best suited to
each character; and which, by the reversal of its
motion, can repeat the original words almost for ever,
with the original tone, accent, and expression.
The illusion is far more perfect than that obtained
by all the resources of stage management and all the
skill of the actor’s art in the best theatres
of France. After the first novelty, the first
surprise and wonder were exhausted, I must confess
that these representations simply bored me, the more
from their length and character. But even Eveena
enjoyed them thoroughly, and my other companions prized
an evening or afternoon thus spent above all other
indulgences. A passage running along at the back
of each tier admits the spectator to boxes so completely
private as to satisfy the strictest requirements of
Martial seclusion.

The favourite scenes represent the most striking incidents
of Martial history, or realise the life, usages, and
manners of ages long gone by, before science and invention
had created the perfect but monotonous civilisation
that now prevails. One of the most interesting
performances I witnessed commenced with the exhibition
of a striking scene, in which the union of all the
various States that had up to that time divided the
planet’s surface, and occasionally waged war
on one another, in the first Congress of the World,
was realised in the exact reproduction of every detail
which historic records have preserved. Afterwards
was depicted the confusion, declining into barbarism
and rapid degradation, of the Communistic revolution,
the secession of the Zveltau and their merely political

**Page 222**

adherents, the construction of their cities, fleets,
and artillery, the terrible battles, in which the
numbers of the Communists were hurled back or annihilated
by the asphyxiator and the lightning gun; and finally,
the most remarkable scene in all Martial history,
when the last representatives of the great Anarchy,
squalid, miserable, degraded, and debased in form
and features, as well as indicating by their dress
and appearance the utter ruin of art and industry under
their rule, came into the presence of the chief ruler
of the rising State—­surrounded by all the
splendour which the “magic of property,”
stimulating invention and fostering science, had created—­to
entreat admission into the realm of restored civilisation,
and a share in the blessings they had so deliberately
forfeited and so long striven to deny to others.

**CHAPTER XXI — PRIVATE AUDIENCES.**

I spent my days between mist and mist, according to
the Martial saying, not infrequently in excursions
more or less extensive and adventurous, in which I
could but seldom ask Eveena’s company, and did
not care for any other. Comparatively courageous
as she had learned to be, and free from all affectation
of pretty feminine fear, Eveena could never realise
the practical immunity from ordinary danger which
a strength virtually double that I had enjoyed on Earth,
and thorough familiarity with the dangers of travel,
of mountaineering, and of the chase, afforded me.
When, therefore, I ventured among the hills alone,
followed the fishermen and watched their operations,
sometimes in terribly rough weather, from the little
open surface-boat which I could manage myself, I preferred
to give her no definite idea of my intentions.
Davilo, however, protested against my exposure to a
peril of which Eveena was happily as yet unaware.

“If your intentions are never known beforehand,”
he said, “still your habit of going forth alone
in places to which your steps might easily be dogged,
where you might be shot from an ambush or drowned by
a sudden attack from a submarine vessel, will soon
be pretty generally understood, if, as I fear, a regular
watch is set upon your life. At least let me
know what your intentions are before starting, and
make your absences as irregular and sudden as possible.
The less they are known beforehand, even in your own
household, the better.”

“Is it midnight still in the Council Chamber?”
I asked.

“Very nearly so. She who has told so much
can tell us no more. The clue that placed her
in mental relations with the danger did not extend
to its authorship. We have striven hard to find
in every conceivable direction some material key to
the plot, some object which, having been in contact
with the persons of those we suspect, probably at
the time when their plans were arranged, might serve
as a link between her thoughts and theirs; but as
yet unsuccessfully. Either her vision is darkened,

**Page 223**

or the connection we have sought to establish is wanting.
But you know who is your unsparing personal enemy;
and, after the Sovereign himself, no man in this world
is so powerful; while the Sovereign himself is, owing
to the restraints of his position, less active, less
familiar with others, less acquainted with what goes
on out of his own sight. Again I say we can avenge;
but against secret murder our powers only avail to
deter. If we would save, it must be by the use
of natural precautions.”

What he said made me desirous of some conversation
with Eveena before I started on a meditated visit
to the Palace. If I could not tell her the whole
truth, she knew something; and I thought it possible
on this occasion so far to enlighten her as to consult
with her how the secret of my intended journeys should
in future be kept. But I found no chance of speaking
to her until, shortly before my departure, I was called
upon to decide one of the childish disputes which constantly
disturbed my temper and comfort. Mere fleabites
they were; but fleas have often kept me awake a whole
night in a Turkish caravanserai, and half-a-dozen
mosquitos inside an Indian tent have broken up the
sleep earned on a long day’s march or a sharply
contested battlefield. I need only say that I
extorted at last from Eveena a clear statement of
the trifle at issue, which flatly contradicted those
of the four participants in the squabble. She
began to suggest a means of proving the truth, and
they broke into angry clamour. Silencing them
all peremptorily, I drew Eveena into my own chamber,
and, when assured that we were unheard, reproved her
for proposing to support her own word by evidence.

“Do you think,” I said, “that any
possible proof would induce me to doubt you, or add
anything to the assurance I derive from your word?”

“But,” she urged, “that cannot be
just to others. They must feel it very hard that
your love for me makes you take all I say for truth.”
“Not my love, but my knowledge. ‘Be
not righteous overmuch.’ Don’t forget
that they *know* the truth as well as you.”

I would hear no more, and passed to the matter I had
at heart....

Earnestly, and in a sense sincerely, as upon my second
audience I had thanked the Campta for his munificent
gifts, no day passed that I would not thankfully have
renounced the wealth he had bestowed if I could at
the same time have renounced what was, in intention
and according to Martial ideas, the most gracious
and most remarkable of his favours. On the present
occasion I thought for a moment that such renunciation
might have been possible.

The Prince had, after our first interview, observed
with regard to every point of my story on which I
had been carefully silent a delicacy of reserve very
unusual among Martialists, and quite unintelligible
to his Court and officers. To-day the conversation
in public turned again upon my voyage. Endo and
another studiously directed it to the method of steering,
and the intentional diminution of speed in my descent,
corresponding to its gradual increase at the commencement
of the journey—­points at which they hoped
to find some opening to the mystery of the motive
force. The Prince relieved me from some embarrassment
by requesting me as usual to attend him to his private
cabinet.

**Page 224**

He said:—­“I have not, as you must
be aware, pressed you to disclose a secret which,
for some reason or other, you are evidently anxious
to preserve. Of course the exclusive possession
of a motive power so marvellous as that employed in
your voyage is of almost incalculable pecuniary value,
and it is perfectly right that you should use your
own discretion with regard to the time and the terms
of its communication.”

“Pardon me,” I interposed, “if I
interrupt you, Prince, to prevent any misconception.
It is not with a view to profit that I have carefully
avoided giving any clue whatever to my secret.
Tour munificence would render it most ungrateful and
unjust in me to haggle over the price of any service
I could render you; and I should be greedy indeed if
I desired greater wealth than you have bestowed.
If I may say so without offending, I earnestly wish
that you would permit me, by resigning your gifts,
to retain in my own eyes the right to keep my secret
without seeming undutiful or unthankful.”

“I have said,” he replied, “that
on that point you misconceive our respective positions.
No one supposes that you are indebted to us for anything
more than it was the duty of the Sovereign to give,
as a mark of the universal admiration and respect,
to our guest from another world; still less could
any imagine that on such a trifle could be founded
any claim to a secret so invaluable. You will
offend me much and only if you ever again speak of
yourself as bound by personal obligation to me or
mine. But as we are wishful to buy, so I cannot
understand any reluctance on your part to sell your
secret on your own terms.”

“I think, Prince,” I replied, “that
I have already asked you what you would think of a
subject of your own, who should put such a power into
the hands of enemies as formidable to you as you would
be to the races of the Earth.”

“And *I* think,” he rejoined with
a smile, “that I reminded you how little my
judgment would matter to one possessed of such a power.
I have gathered from your conversation how easily
we might conquer a world as far behind us in destructive
powers as in general civilisation. But why should
you object? You can make your own terms both
for yourself and for any of your race for whom you
feel an especial interest.”

“A traitor is none the less a despicable and
loathsome wretch because his Prince cannot punish
him. I am bound by no direct tie of loyalty to
any Terrestrial sovereign. I was born the subject
of one of the greatest monarchs of the Earth; I left
his country at an early age, and my youth was passed
in the service of less powerful rulers, to one at
least of whom I long owed the same military allegiance
that binds your guards and officers to yourself.
But that obligation also is at an end. Nevertheless,
I cannot but recognise that I owe a certain fealty
to the race to which I belong, a duty to right and
justice. Even if I thought, which I do not think,

**Page 225**

that the Earth would be better governed and its inhabitants
happier under your rule, I should have no right to
give them up to a conquest I know they would fiercely
and righteously resist. If—­pardon me
for saying it—­you, Prince, would commit
no common crime in assailing and slaughtering those
who neither have wronged nor can wrong you, one of
themselves would be tenfold more guilty in sharing
your enterprise.”

“You shall ensure,” he replied, “the
good government of your own world as you will.
You shall rule it with all the authority possessed
by the Regents under me, and by the laws which you
think best suited to races very different from our
own. You shall be there as great and absolute
as I am here, paying only an obedience to me and my
successors which, at so immense a distance, can be
little more than formal.”

“Is it to acquire a merely formal power that
a Prince like yourself would risk the lives of your
own people, and sacrifice those of millions of another
race?”

“To tell you the truth,” he replied, “I
count on commanding the expedition myself; and perhaps
I care more for the adventure than for its fruits.
You will not expect me to be more chary of the lives
of others than of my own?”

“I understand, and as a soldier could share,
perhaps, a feeling natural to a great, a capable,
and an ambitious Prince. But alike as soldier
and subject it is my duty to resist, not to aid, such
an ambition. My life is at your disposal, but
even to save my life I could not betray the lives
of hundreds of millions and the future of a whole
world.”

“I fail to understand you fully,” he said,
abandoning with a sigh a hope that had evidently been
the object of long and eager day-dreams. “But
in no case would I try to force from you what you will
not give or sell; and if you speak sincerely—­and
I suppose you must do so, since I can see no motive
but those you assign that could induce you to refuse
my offer—­I must believe in the existence
of what I have heard of now and then but deemed incredible—­men
who are governed by care for other things than their
own interests, who believe in right and wrong, and
would rather suffer injustice than commit it.”

“You may be sure, Prince,” I replied,
perhaps imprudently, “that there are such men
in your own world, though they are perhaps among those
who are least known and least likely to be seen at
your Court.”

“If you know them,” he said, “you
will render me no little service in bringing them
to my knowledge.”

“It is possible,” I ventured to observe,
“that their distinguishing excellences are connected
with other distinctions which might render it a disservice
to them to indicate their peculiar character, I will
not say to yourself, but to those around you.”

“I hardly understand you,” he rejoined.
“Take, however, my assurance that nothing you
say here shall, without your own consent, be used
elsewhere. It is no light gratification, no trifling
advantage to me, to find one man who has neither fear
nor interest that can induce him to lie to me; to
whom I can speak, not as sovereign to subject, but
as man to man, and of whose private conversation my
courtiers and officials are not yet suspicious or
jealous. You shall never repent any confidence
you give to me.”

**Page 226**

My interest in and respect for the strange character
so manifestly suited for, so intensely weary of, the
grandest position that man could fill, increased with
each successive interview. I never envied that
greatness which seems to most men so enviable.
The servitude of a constitutional King, so often a
puppet in the hands of the worst and meanest of men—­those
who prostitute their powers as rulers of a State to
their interests as chiefs of a faction—­must
seem pitiable to any rational manhood. But even
the autocracy of the Sultan or the Czar seems ill
to compensate the utter isolation of the throne; the
lonely grandeur of one who can hardly have a friend,
since he can never have an equal, among those around
him. I do not wonder that a tinge of melancholo-mania
is so often perceptible in the chiefs of that great
House whose Oriental absolutism is only “tempered
by assassination.” But an Earthly sovereign
may now and then meet his fellow-sovereigns, whether
as friends or foes, on terms of frank hatred or loyal
openness. His domestic relations, though never
secure and simple as those of other men, may relieve
him at times from the oppressive sense of his sublime
solitude; and to his wife, at any rate, he may for
a few minutes or hours be the husband and not the
king. But the absolute Ruler of this lesser world
had neither equal friends nor open foes, neither wife
nor child. How natural then his weariness of his
own life; how inevitable his impatient scorn of those
to whom that life was devoted! A despot not even
accountable to God—­a Prince who, till he
conversed with me, never knew that the universe contained
his equal or his like—­it spoke much, both
for the natural strength and soundness of his intellect
and for the excellence of his education, that he was
so sane a man, so earnest, active, and just a ruler.
His reign was signalised by a better police, a more
even administration of justice, a greater efficiency,
judgment, and energy in the execution of great works
of public utility, than his realm had known for a
thousand years; and his duty was done as diligently
and conscientiously as if he had known that conscience
was the voice of a supreme Sovereign, and duty the
law of an unerring and unescapable Lawgiver.
Alone among a race of utterly egotistical cowards,
he had the courage of a soldier, and the principles,
or at least the instincts, worthy of a Child of the
Star. With him alone could I have felt a moment’s
security from savage attempts to extort by terror or
by torture the secret I refused to sell; and I believe
that his generous abstinence from such an attempt
was as exasperating as it was incomprehensible to
his advisers, and chiefly contributed to involve him
in the vengeance which baffled greed and humbled personal
pride had leagued to wreak upon myself, as on those
with whose welfare and safety my own were inextricably
intertwined. It was a fortunate, if not a providential,
combination of circumstances that compelled the enemies
of the Star, primarily on my account, to interweave
with their scheme of murderous persecution and private
revenge an equally ruthless and atrocious treason
against the throne and person of their Monarch.

**Page 227**

My audience had detained me longer than I had expected,
and the evening mist had fairly closed in before I
returned. Entering, not as usual through the
grounds and the peristyle, but by the vestibule and
my own chamber, and hidden by my half-open window,
I overheard an exceedingly characteristic discussion
on the incident of the morning.

“Serve her right!” Leenoo was saying.
“That she should for once get the worst of it,
and be disbelieved to sharpen the sting!”

“How do you know?” asked Enva. “I
don’t feel so sure we have heard the last of
it.”

“Eveena did not seem to have liked her half-hour,”
answered Leenoo spitefully. “Besides, if
he did not disbelieve her story, he would have let
her prove it.”

“Is that your reliance?” broke in Eunane.
“Then you are swinging on a rotten branch.
I would not believe my ears if, for all that all of
us could invent against her, I heard him so much as
ask Eveena, ’Are you speaking the truth?’”

“It is very uneven measure,” muttered
Enva.

“Uneven!” cried Eunane. “Now,
I think *I* have the best right to be jealous
of her place; and it does sting me that, when he takes
me for his companion out of doors, or makes most of
me at home, it is so plain that he is taking trouble,
as if he grudged a soft word or a kiss to another
as something stolen from her. But he deals evenly,
after all. If he were less tender of her we should
have to draw our zones tighter. But he won’t
give us the chance to say, ’Teach the *amba*
with stick and the *esve* with sugar.’”

“I do say it. She is never snubbed or silenced;
and if she has had worse than what he calls ‘advice’
to-day, I believe it is the first time. She has
never ‘had cause to wear the veil before the
household’ [to hide blushes or tears], or found
that his ’lips can give sharper sting than their
kiss can heal,’ like the rest of us.”

“What for? If he wished to find her in
fault he would have to watch her dreams. Do you
expect him to be harder to her than to us? He
don’t ‘look for stains with a microscope.’
None of us can say that he ‘drinks tears for
taste.’ None of us ever ’smarted because
the sun scorched *him*.’ Would you
have him ’tie her hands for being white’?”
[punish her for perfection].

“She is never at fault because he never believes
us against her,” returned Leenoo.

“How often would he have been right? I
saw nothing of to-day’s quarrel, but I know
beforehand where the truth lay. I tell you this:
he hates the sandal more than the sin, but, strange
as it seems, he hates a falsehood worse still; and
a falsehood against Eveena—­If you want
to feel ‘how the spear-grass cuts when the sheath
bursts,’ let him find you out in an experiment
like this! You congratulate yourself, Leenoo,
that you have got her into trouble. *Elnerve*
that you are!—­if you have, you had better
have poisoned his cup before his eyes. For every
tear he sees her shed he will reckon with us at twelve
years’ usury.”

**Page 228**

“*You* have made her shed some,”
retorted Enva.

“Yes,” said Eunane, “and if he knew
it, I should like half a year’s penance in the
black sash” [as the black sheep or scapegoat
of her Nursery] “better than my next half-hour
alone with him. When I was silly enough to tie
the veil over her mouth” [take the lead in sending
her to Coventry] “the day after we came here,
I expected to pay for it, and thought the fruit worth
the scratches. But when he came in that evening,
nodded and spoke kindly to us, but with his eyes seeking
for her; when he saw her at last sitting yonder with
her head down, I saw how his face darkened at the
very idea that she was vexed, and I thought the flash
was in the cloud. When she sprang up as he called
her, and forced a smile before he looked into her face,
I wished I had been as ugly as Minn oo, that I might
have belonged to the miseries, worst-tempered man
living, rather than have so provoked the giant.”

“But what did he do?”

“Well that he don’t hear you!” returned
Eunane. “But I can answer;—­nothing.
I shivered like a *leveloo* in the wind when he
came into my room, but I heard nothing about Eveena.
I told Eive so next day—­you remember Eive
would have no part with us? ’And you were
called the cleverest girl in your Nursery!’ she
said; ’you have just tied your own hands and
given your sandal into Eveena’s. Whenever
she tells him, you will drink the cup she chooses
to mix for you, and very salt you will find it.’”

“Crach!” (tush or stuff), said Eirale
contemptuously. “We have ’filled
her robe with pins’ for half a year since then,
and she has never been able to make him count them.”

“Able!” returned Eunane sharply, “do
you know no better? Well, I chose to fancy she
was holding this over me to keep me in her power.
One day she spoke—­choosing her words so
carefully—­to warn me how I was sure to
anger Clasfempta” (the master of the household)
“by pushing my pranks so often to the verge
of safety and no farther. I answered her with
a taunt, and, of course, that evening I was more perverse
than ever, till even he could stand it no longer.
When he quoted—­

 “’More lightly treat whom haste
or heat to headlong trespass urge;
 The heaviest sandals fit the feet
that ever tread the verge’—­

“I was well frightened. I saw that the
bough had broken short of the end, and that for once
Clasfempta could mean to hurt. But Eveena kept
him awhile, and when he came to me, she had persuaded
him that I was only mischievous, not malicious, teasing
rather than trespassing. But his last words showed
that he was not so sure of that. ’I have
treated you this time as a child whose petulance is
half play; but if you would not have your teasing
returned with interest, keep it clipped; and—­keep
it for *me*.’ I have often tormented
her since then, but I could not for shame help you
to spite her.”

“Crach!” said Enva. “Eveena
might think it wise to make friends with you; but
would she bear to be slighted and persecuted a whole
summer if she could help herself? You know that—­

**Page 229**

 “Man’s control in woman’s
hand
 Sorest tries the household band.
 Closer favourite’s kisses
cling,
 Favourite’s fingers sharper
sting.’”

“Very likely,” replied Eunane. “I
cannot understand any more than you can why Eveena
screens instead of punishing us; why she endures what
a word to him would put down under her sandal; but
she does. Does she cast no shadow because it
never darkens his presence to us? And after all,
her mind is not a deeper darkness to me than his.
He enjoys life as no man here does; but what he enjoys
most is a good chance of losing it; while those who
find it so tedious guard it like watch-dragons.
When the number of accidents made it difficult to fill
up the Southern hunt at any price, the Campta’s
refusal to let him go so vexed him that Eveena was
half afraid to show her sense of relief. You
would think he liked pain—­the scars of the
*kargynda* are not his only or his deepest ones—­if
he did not catch at every excuse to spare it.
And, again, why does he speak to Eveena as to the Campta,
and to us as to children—­’child’
is his softest word for us? Then, he is patient
where you expect no mercy, and severe where others
would laugh. When Enva let the electric stove
overheat the water, so that he was scalded horribly
in his bath, we all counted that he would at least
have paid her back the pain twice over. But as
soon as Eveena and Eive had arranged the bandages,
he sent for her. We could scarcely bring you
to him, Enva; but he put out the only hand he could
move to stroke your hair as he does Eive’s,
and spoke for once with real tenderness, as if you
were the person to be pitied! Any one else would
have laughed heartily at the figure her *esve*
made with half her tail pulled out. But not all
Eveena’s pleading could obtain pardon for me.”

“That was caprice, not even dealing,”
said Leenoo. “You were not half so bad
as Enva.”

“He made me own that I was,” replied Eunane.
“It never occurred to him to suppose or say
that she did it on purpose. But I was cruel on
purpose to the bird, if I were not spiteful to its
mistress. ’Don’t you feel,’
he said, ’that intentional cruelty is what no
ruler, whether of a household or of a kingdom, has
a right to pass over? If not, you can hardly
be fit for a charge that gives animals into your power.’
I never liked him half so well; and I am sure I deserved
a severer lesson. Since then, I cannot help liking
them both; though it *is* mortifying to feel
that one is nothing before her.”

“It is intolerable,” said Enva bitterly;
“I detest her.”

“Is it her fault?” asked Eunane with some
warmth. “They are so like each other and
so unlike us, that I could fancy she came from his
own world. I went to her next day in her own
room.”

“Ay,” interjected Leenoo with childish
spite, “’kiss the foot and ‘scape
the sandal.’”

**Page 230**

“Think so,” returned Eunane quietly, “if
you like. I thought I owed her some amends.
Well, she had her bird in her lap, and I think she
was crying over it. But as soon as she saw me
she put it out of sight. I began to tell her
how sorry I was about it, but she would not let me
go on. She kissed me as no one ever kissed me
since my school friend Ernie died three years ago;
and she cried more over the trouble I had brought
on myself than over her pet. And since then,”
Eunane went on with a softened voice, “she has
showed me how pretty its ways are, how clever it is,
how fond of her, and she tries to make it friends with
me.... Sometimes I don’t wonder she is so
much to him and he to her. She was brought up
in the home where she was born. Her father is
one of those strange people; and I fancy there is
something between her and Clasfempta more than....”

I could not let this go on; and stepping back from
the window as if I had but just returned, I called
Eunane by name. She came at once, a little surprised
at the summons, but suspecting nothing. But the
first sight of my face startled her; and when, on
the impulse of the moment, I took her hands and looked
straight into her eyes, her quick intelligence perceived
at once that I had heard at least part of the conversation.

“Ah,” she said, flushing and hanging her
head, “I am caught now, but”—­in
a tone half of relief—­“I deserve it,
and I won’t pretend to think that you are angry
only because Eveena is your favourite. You would
not allow any of us to be spited if you could help
it, and it is much worse to have spited her.”

I led her by the hand across the peristyle into her
own chamber, and when the window closed behind us,
drew her to my side.

“So you would rather belong to the worst master
of your own race than to me?”

“Not now,” she answered. “That
was my first thought when I saw how you felt for Eveena,
and knew how angry you would be when you found how
we—­I mean how I—­had used her,
and I remembered how terribly strong you were.
I know you better now. It is for women to strike
with five fingers” (in unmeasured passion);
“only, don’t tell Eveena. Besides,”
she murmured, colouring, with drooping eyelids, “I
had rather be beaten by you than caressed by another.”

“Eunane, child, you might well say you don’t
understand me. I could not have listened to your
talk if I had meant to use it against you; and with
*you* I have no cause to be displeased. Nay”
(as she looked up in surprise), “I know you
have not used Eveena kindly, but I heard from yourself
that you had repented. That she, who could never
be coaxed or compelled to say what made her unhappy,
or even to own that I had guessed it truly, has fully
forgiven you, you don’t need to be told.”

“Indeed, I don’t understand,” the
girl sobbed. “Eveena is always so strangely
soft and gentle—­she would rather suffer
without reason than let us suffer who deserve it.
But just because she is so kind, you must feel the
more bitterly for her. Besides,” she went
on, “I was so jealous—­as if you could
compare me with her—­even after I had felt
her kindness. No! you cannot forgive *for her*,
and you ought not.”

**Page 231**

“Child,” I answered, sadly enough, for
my conscience was as ill at ease as hers, with deeper
cause, “I don’t tell you that your jealousy
was not foolish and your petulance culpable; but I
do say that neither Eveena nor I have the heart—­perhaps
I have not even the right—­to blame you.
It is true that I love Eveena as I can love no other
in this world or my own. How well she deserves
that love none but I can know. So loving her,
I would not willingly have brought any other woman
into a relation which could make her dependent upon
or desirous of such love as I cannot give. You
know how this relation to you and the others was forced
upon me. When I accepted it, I thought I could
give you as much affection as you would find elsewhere.
How far and why I wronged Eveena is between her and
myself. I did not think that I could be wronging
you.”

Very little of this was intelligible to Eunane.
She felt a tenderness she had never before received;
but she could not understand my doubt, and she replied
only to my last words.

“Wrong us! How could you? Did we ask
whether you had another wife, or who would be your
favourite? Did you promise to like us, or even
to be kind to us? You might have neglected us
altogether, made one girl your sole companion, kept
all indulgences, all favours, for her; and how would
you have wronged us? If you had turned on us when
she vexed you, humbled us to gratify her caprice,
ill-used us to vent your temper, other men would have
done the same. Who else would have treated us
as you have done? Who would have been careful
to give each of us her share in every pleasure, her
turn in every holiday, her employment at home, her
place in your company abroad? Who would have inquired
into the truth of our complaints and the merits of
our quarrels; would have made so many excuses for
our faults, given us so many patient warnings?...
Wronged us! There may be some of us who don’t
like you; there is not one who could bear to be sent
away, not one who would exchange this house for the
palace of the campta though you pronounce him kingly
in nature as in power.”

She spoke as she believed, if she spoke in error.
“If so, my child, why have you all been so bitter
against Eveena? Why have you yourself been jealous
of one who, as you admit, has been a favourite only
in a love you did not expect?”

“But we saw it, and we envied her so much love,
so much respect,” she replied frankly.
“And for myself,”—­she coloured,
faltered, and was silent. “For yourself,
my child?”

“I was a vain fool,” she broke out impetuously.
“They told me that I was beautiful, and clever,
and companionable. I fancied I should be your
favourite, and hold the first place; and when I saw
her, I would not see her grace and gentleness, or
observe her soft sweet voice, and the charms that
put my figure and complexion to shame, and the quiet
sense and truth that were worth twelvefold my quickness,
my memory, and my handiness. I was disappointed
and mortified that she should be preferred. Oh,
how you must hate me, Clasfempta; for I hate myself
while I tell you what I have been!”

**Page 232**

According to European doctrine, my fealty to Eveena
must then have been in peril. And yet, warmly
as I felt for Eunane, the element in her passionate
confession that touched me most was her recognition
of Eveena’s superiority; and as I soothed and
comforted the half-childish penitent, I thought how
much it would please Eveena that I had at last come
to an understanding with the companion she avowedly
liked the best.

“But, Eunane,” I said at last, “do
you remember what you were saying when I called you—­called
you on purpose to stop you? You said that there
was something between Eveena and myself more than—–­more
than what? What did you mean? Speak frankly,
child; I know that this time you were not going to
scald me on purpose.”

“I don’t know quite what I meant,”
she replied simply. “But the first time
you took me out, I heard the superintendent say some
strange things; and then he checked himself when he
found your companion was not Eveena. Then Eive—­I
mean—­you use expressions sometimes in talking
to Eveena that we never heard before. I think
there is some secret between you.”

“And if there be, Eunane, were *you* going
to betray it—­to set Enva and Leenoo on
to find it out?”

“I did not think,” she said. “I
never do think before I get into trouble. I don’t
say, forgive me this time; but I *will* hold my
tongue for the future.”

By this time our evening meal was ready. As I
led Eunane to her place, Eveena looked up with some
little surprise. It was rarely that, especially
on returning from absence, I had sought any other company
than hers. But there was no tinge of jealousy
or doubt in her look. On the contrary, as, with
her entire comprehension of every expression of my
face, and her quickness to read the looks of others,
she saw in both countenances that we were on better
terms than ever before, her own brightened at the
thought. As I placed myself beside her, she stole
her hand unobserved into mine, and pressed it as she
whispered—­

“You have found her out at last. She is
half a child as yet; but she has a heart—­and
perhaps the only one among them.”

“The four,” as I called them, looked up
as we approached with eager malice:—­bitterly
disappointed, when they saw that Eunane had won something
more than pardon. Whatever penance they had dreaded,
their own escape ill compensated the loss of their
expected pleasure in the pain and humiliation of a
finer nature. Eunane’s look, timidly appealing
to her to ratify our full reconciliation, answered
by Eveena’s smile of tender, sisterly sympathy,
enhanced and completed their discomfiture.

**CHAPTER XXII — PECULIAR INSTITUTIONS.**

**Page 233**

A chief luxury and expense in which, when aware what
my income was, I indulged myself freely was the purchase
of Martial literature. Only ephemeral works are
as a rule printed in the phonographic character, which
alone I could read with ease. The Martialists
have no newspapers. It does not seem to them
worth while to record daily the accidents, the business
incidents, the prices, the amusements, and the follies
of the day; and politics they have none. In no
case would a people so coldly wise, so thoroughly
impressed by experience with a sense of the extreme
folly of political agitation, legislative change,
and democratic violence, have cursed themselves with
anything like the press of Europe or America.
But as it is, all they have to record is gathered
each twelfth day at the telegraph offices, and from
these communicated on a single sheet about four inches
square to all who care to receive it. But each
profession or occupation that boasts, as do most,
an organisation and a centre of discussion and council,
issues at intervals books containing collected facts,
essays, reports of experiments, and lectures.
Every man who cares to communicate his passing ideas
to the public does so by means of the phonograph.
When he has a graver work, which is, in his view at
least, of permanent importance to publish, it is written
in the stylographic character, and sold at the telegraphic
centres. The extreme complication and compression
employed in this character had, as I have already said,
rendered it very difficult to me; and though I had
learnt to decipher it as a child spells out the words
which a few years later it will read unconsciously
by the eye, the only manner in which I could quickly
gather the sense of such books was by desiring one
or other of the ladies to read them aloud. Strangely
enough, next to Eveena, Eive was by far the best reader.
Eunane understood infinitely better what she was perusing;
but the art of reading aloud is useless, and therefore
never taught, in schools whose every pupil learns to
read with the usual facility a character which the
practised eye can interpret incomparably faster than
the voice could possibly utter it. This reading
might have afforded many opportunities of private
converse with Eveena, but that Eive, whose knowledge
was by no means proportionate to her intelligence,
entreated permission to listen to the books I selected;
and Eveena, though not partial to her childish companion
and admirer, persuaded me not to refuse.

The story of my voyage and reports of my first audience
at Court were, of course, widely circulated and extensively
canvassed. Though regarded with no favour, especially
by the professed philosophers and scientists, my adventures
and myself were naturally an object of great curiosity;
and I was not surprised when a civil if cold request
was preferred, on behalf of what I may call the Martial
Academy, that I would deliver in their hall a series
of lectures, or rather a connected oral account of

**Page 234**

the world from which I professed to have come, and
of the manner in which my voyage had been accomplished.
After consulting Eveena and Davilo, I accepted the
invitation, and intended to take the former with me.
She objected, however, that while she had heard much
in her father’s house and during our travels
of what I had to tell, her companions, scarcely less
interested, were comparatively ignorant. Indiscreetly,
because somewhat provoked by these repeated sacrifices,
as much of my inclination as her own, I mentioned
my purpose at our evening meal, and bade her name those
who should accompany me. I was a little surprised
when, carefully evading the dictation to which she
was invited, she suggested that Eunane and Eive would
probably most enjoy the opportunity. That she
should be willing to get rid of the most wilful and
petulant of the party seemed natural. The other
selection confirmed the impression I had formed, but
dared not express to one whom I had never blamed without
finding myself in the wrong, that Eveena regarded
Eive with a feeling more nearly approaching to jealousy
than her nature seemed capable of entertaining.
I obeyed, however, without comment; and both the companions
selected for me were delighted at the prospect.

The Academy is situated about half-way between Amacasfe
and the Residence; the facilities of Martial travelling,
and above all of telegraphic and telephonic communication,
dispensing with all reason for placing great institutions
in or near important cities. We traveller by
balloon, as I was anxious to improve myself in the
management of these machines. After frightening
my companions so far as to provoke some, outcry from
Eive, and from Eunane some saucy remarks on my clumsiness,
on which no one else would have ventured, I descended
safely, if not very creditably, in front of the building
which serves as a local centre of Martial philosophy.
The residences of some sixty of the most eminent professors
of various sciences—­elected by their colleagues
as seats fall vacant, with the approval of the highest
Court of Judicature and of the campta—­cluster
around a huge building in the form of a hexagon made
up of a multitude of smaller hexagons, in the centre
whereof is the great hall of the same shape.
In the smaller chambers which surround it are telephones
through which addresses delivered in a hundred different
quarters are mechanically repeated; so that the residents
or temporary visitors can here gather at once all
the knowledge that is communicated by any man of note
to any audience throughout the planet. On this
account numbers of young men just emancipated from
the colleges come here to complete their education;
and above each of the auditory chambers is another
divided into six small rooms, wherein these visitors
are accommodated. A small house belonging to
one of the members who happened to be absent was appropriated
to me during my stay, and in its hall the philosophers
gathered in the morning to converse with or to question

**Page 235**

me in detail respecting the world whose existence they
would not formally admit, but whose life, physical,
social, and political, and whose scientific and human
history, they regarded with as much curiosity as if
its reality were ascertained. Courtesy forbids
evening visits unless on distinct and pressing invitation,
it being supposed that the head of a household may
care to spend that part of his time, and that alone,
with his own family.

The Academists are provided by the State with incomes,
of an amount very much larger than the modest allowances
which the richest nations of the Earth almost grudge
to the men whose names in future history will probably
be remembered longer than those of eminent statesmen
and warriors. Some of them have made considerable
fortunes by turning to account in practical invention
this or that scientific discovery. But as a rule,
in Mars as on Earth, the gifts and the career of the
discoverer, and the inventor are distinct. It
is, however, from the purely theoretical labours of
the men of science that the inventions useful in manufactures,
in communication, in every department of life and
business, are generally derived; and the prejudice
or judgment of this strange people has laid it down
that those who devote their lives to work in itself
unremunerative, but indirectly most valuable to the
public, should be at least as well off as the subordinate
servants of the State. In society they are perhaps
more honoured than any but the highest public authorities;
and my audience was the most distinguished, according
to the ideas of that world, that it could furnish.

At noon each day I entered the hall, which was crowded
with benches rising on five sides from the centre
to the walls, the sixth being occupied by a platform
where the lecturer and the members of the Academy
sat. After each lecture, which occupied some two
hours, questions more or less perplexing were put
by the latter. Only, however, on the first occasion,
when I reserved, as before the Zinta and the Court,
all information that could enable my hearers to divine
the nature of the apergic force, was incredulity so
plainly insinuated as to amount to absolute insult.

“If,” I said, “you choose to disbelieve
what I tell you, you are welcome to do so. But
you are not at liberty to express your disbelief to
me. To do so is to charge me with lying; and to
that charge, whatever may be the customs of this world,
there is in mine but one answer,” and I laid
my hand on the hilt of the sword I wore in deference
to Davilo’s warnings, but which he and others
considered a Terrestrial ornament rather than a weapon.

The President of the Academy quietly replied—­“Of
all the strange things we have heard, this seems the
strangest. I waive the probability of your statements,
or the reasonableness of the doubts suggested.
But I fail to understand how, here or in any other
world, if the imputation of falsehood be considered
so gross an offence—­and here it is too
common to be so regarded—­it can be repelled
by proving yourself more skilled in the use of weapons,
or stronger or more daring than the person who has
challenged your assertion.”

**Page 236**

The moral courage and self-possession of the President
were as marked as his logic was irrefragable; but
my outbreak, however illogical, served its purpose.
No one was disposed to give mortal offence to one
who showed himself so ready to resent it, though probably
the apprehension related less to my swordsmanship
than the favour I was supposed to enjoy with the Suzerain.

Seriously impressed by the growing earnestness of
Davilo’s warnings, and feeling that I could
no longer conceal the pressure of some anxiety on
my mind, gradually, cautiously, and tenderly I broke
to Eveena what I had learned, with but two reserves.
I would not render her life miserable by the suggestion
of possible treason in our own household. That
she might not infer this for herself, I led her to
believe that the existence and discovery of the conspiracy
was of a date long subsequent to my acceptance of
the Sovereign’s unwelcome gift. She was
deeply affected, and, as I had feared, exceedingly
disturbed. But, very characteristically, the keenest
impression made upon her mind concerned less the urgency
of the peril than its origin, the fact that it was
incurred through and for her. On this she insisted
much more than seemed just or reasonable. It was
for her sake, no doubt, that I had made the Regent
of Elcavoo my bitter, irreconcilable foe. It
was my marriage with her, the daughter of the most
eminent among the chiefs of the Zinta, that had marked
me out as one of the first and principal victims,
and set on my head a value as high as on that of any
of the Order save the Arch-Enlightener himself, whose
personal character and social distinction would have
indicated him as especially dangerous, even had his
secret rank been altogether unsuspected. It was
impossible to soothe Eveena’s first outbreak
of feeling, or reason with her illogical self-reproach.
Compelled at last to admit that the peril had been
unconsciously incurred when she neither knew nor could
have known it, she pleaded eagerly and earnestly for
permission to repair by the sacrifice of herself the
injury she had brought upon me. It was useless
to tell her that the acceptance of such a sacrifice
would be a thousand-fold worse than death. Even
the depth and devotion of her own love could not persuade
her to realise the passionate earnestness of mine.
It was still more in vain to remind her that such
a concession must entail the dishonour that man fears
above all perils; would brand me with that indelible
stain of abject personal cowardice which for ever degrades
and ruins not only the fame but the nature of manhood,
as the stain of wilful unchastity debases and ruins
woman.

**Page 237**

“Rescind our contract,” she insisted,
pleading, with the overpowering vehemence of a love
absolutely unselfish, against love’s deepest
instincts and that egotism which is almost inseparable
from it; giving passionate utterance to an affection
such as men rarely feel for women, women perhaps never
for men. “Divorce me; force the enemy to
believe that you have broken with my father and with
his Order; and, favoured as you are by the Sovereign,
you will be safe. Give what reason you will;
say that I have deserved it, that I have forced you
to it. I know that contracts *are* revoked
with the full approval of the Courts and of the public,
though I hardly know why. I will agree; and if
we are agreed, you can give or withhold reasons as
you please. Nay, there can be no wrong to me
in doing what I entreat you to do. I shall not
suffer long—­no, no, I *will* live,
I will be happy”—­her face white to
the lips, her streaming tears were not needed to belie
the words! “By your love for me, do not
let me feel that you are to die—­do not
keep me in dread to hear that you have died—­for
me and through me.”

If it had been in her power to leave me, if one-half
of the promised period had not been yet to run, she
might have enforced her purpose in despite of all
that I could urge;—­of reason, of entreaty,
of the pleadings of a love in this at least as earnest
as her own. Nay, she would probably have left
me, in the hope of exhibiting to the world the appearance
of an open quarrel, but for a peculiarity of Martial
law. That law enforces, on the plea of either
party, “specific performance” of the marriage
contract. I could reclaim her, and call the force
of the State to recover her. When even this warning
at first failed to enforce her submission, I swore
by all I held sacred in my own world and all she revered
in hers—­by the symbols never lightly invoked,
and never, in the course of ages that cover thrice
the span of Terrestrial history and tradition, invoked
to sanction a lie; symbols more sacred in her eyes
than, in those of mediaeval Christendom, the gathered
relics that appalled the heroic soul of Harold Godwinsson—­that
she should only defeat her own purpose; that I would
reclaim my wife before the Order and before the law,
thus asserting more clearly than ever the strength
of the tie that bound me to her and to her house.
The oath which it was impossible to break, perhaps
yet more the cold and measured tone with which I spoke,
in striving to control the white heat of a passion
as much stronger as it was more selfish than hers—­a
tone which sounded to myself unnatural and alien—­at
last compelled her to yield; and silenced her in the
only moment in which the depths of that nature, so
sweet and soft and gentle, were stirred by the violence
of a moral tempest.... A marvellously perfect
example of Martial art and science is furnished by
the Observatory of the Astronomic Academy, on a mountain
about twenty miles from the Residence. The hill

**Page 238**

selected stands about 4000 feet above the sea-level,
and almost half that height above any neighbouring
ground. It commands, therefore, a most perfect
view of the horizon all around, even below the technical
or theoretic horizon of its latitude. A volcano,
like all Martial volcanoes very feeble, and never
bursting into eruptions seriously dangerous to the
dwellers in the neighbouring plains, existed at some
miles’ distance, and caused earthquakes, or
perhaps I should more properly say disturbances of
the surface, which threatened occasionally to perturb
the observations. But the Martialists grudge
no cost to render their scientific instruments, from
the Observatory itself to the smallest lens or wheel
it contains, as perfect as possible. Having decided
that Eanelca was very superior to any other available
site, they were not to be baffled or diverted by such
a trifle as the opposition of Nature. Still less
would they allow that the observers should be put
out by a perceptible disturbance, or their observations
falsified by one too slight to be realised by their
senses. If Nature were impertinent enough to
interfere with the arrangements of science, science
must put down the mutiny of Nature. As seas had
been bridged and continents cut through, so a volcano
might and must be suppressed or extinguished.
A tunnel thirty miles in length was cut from a great
lake nearly a thousand feet higher than the base of
the volcano; and through this for a quarter of a year,
say some six Terrestrial months, water was steadily
poured into the subterrene cavities wherein the eruptive
forces were generated—­the plutonic laboratory
of the rebellious agency. Of course previous
to the adoption of this measure, the crust in the
neighbourhood had been carefully explored and tested
by various wonderfully elaborate and perfect boring
instruments, and a map or rather model of the strata
for a mile below the surface, and for a distance around
the volcano which I dare not state on the faith of
my recollection alone, had been constructed on a scale,
as we should say, of twelve inches to the mile.
Except for minor purposes, for convenience of pocket
carriage and the like, Martialists disdain so poor
a representation as a flat map can give of a broken
surface. On the small scale, they employ globes
of spherical sections to represent extensive portions
of their world; on the large scale (from two to twenty-four
inches per mile), models of wonderfully accurate construction.
Consequently, children understand and enjoy the geographical
lesson which in European schools costs so many tears
to so little purpose. A girl of six years knows
more perfectly the whole area of the Martial globe
than a German Professor that of the ancient Peloponnesus.
Eive, the dunce of our housed hold, won a Terrestrial
picture-book on which she had set her fancy by tracing
on a forty-inch globe, the first time she saw it,
every detail of my journey from Ecasfe as she had
heard me relate it; and Eunane, who had never left

**Page 239**

her Nursery, could describe beforehand any route I
wished to take between the northern and southern ice-belts.
Under the guidance afforded by the elaborate model
abovementioned, all the hollows wherein the materials
of eruption were stored, and wherein the chemical
forces of Nature had been at work for ages, were thoroughly
flooded. Of course convulsion after convulsion
of the most violent nature followed. But in the
course of about two hundred days, the internal combustion
was overmastered for lack of fuel; the chemical combinations,
which might have gone on for ages causing weak but
incessant outbreaks, were completed and their power
exhausted.

This source of disturbance extinguished in the reign
of the twenty-fifth predecessor of my royal patron,
the construction of the great Observatory on Eanelca
was commenced. A very elaborate road, winding
round and round the mountain at such an incline as
to be easily ascended by the electric carriages, was
built. But this was intended only as a subsidiary
means of ascent. Eight into the bowels of the
mountain a vast tunnel fifty feet in height was driven.
At its inner extremity was excavated a chamber whose
dimensions are imperfectly recorded in my notes, but
which was certainly much larger than the central cavern
from which radiate the principal galleries of the
Mammoth Cave. Around this were pierced a dozen
shafts, emerging at different heights, but all near
the summit, and all so far outside the central plateau
as to leave the solid foundation on which the Observatory
was to rest, down to the very centre of the planet,
wholly undisturbed. Through each of these, ascending
and descending alternately, pass two cars, or rather
movable chambers, worked by electricity, conveying
passengers, instruments, or supplies to and from the
most convenient points in the vast structure of the
Observatory itself. The highest part of Ranelca
was a rocky mass of some 1600 feet in circumference
and about 200 in height. This was carved into
a perfect octagon, in the sides of which were arranged
a number of minor chambers—­among them those
wherein transit and other secondary observations were
to be taken, and in which minor magnifying instruments
were placed to scan their several portions of the heavens.
Within these was excavated a circular central chamber,
the dome of which was constructed of a crystal so
clear that I verily believe the most exacting of Terrestrial
astronomers would have been satisfied to make his
observations through it. But an opening was made
in this dome, as for the mounting of one of our equatorial
telescopes, and machinery was provided which caused
the roof to revolve with a touch, bringing the opening
to bear on any desired part of the celestial vault.
In the centre of the solid floor, levelled to the utmost
perfection, was left a circular pillar supporting the
polar axis of an instrument widely differing from
our telescopes, especially in the fact that it had
no opaque tube connecting the essential lenses which
we call the eye-piece and the object-glass, names not
applicable to their Martial substitutes. On my
visit to the Observatory, however, I had not leisure
to examine minutely the means by which the images of
stars and planets were produced. I reserved this
examination for a second opportunity, which, as it
happened, never occurred.

**Page 240**

On this occasion Eveena and Eunane were with me, and
the astronomic pictures which were to be presented
to us, and which they could enjoy and understand almost
as fully as myself, sufficiently occupied our time.
Warned to stand at such a distance from the central
machinery that in a whole revolution no part of it
could by any possibility touch us, we were placed
near an opening looking into a dark chamber, with
our backs to the objects of observation. In this
chamber, not upon a screen but suspended in the air,
presently appeared an image several thousand times
larger than that of the crescent Moon as seen through
a tube small enough to correct the exaggeration of
visual instinct. It appeared, however, not flat,
as does the Moon to the naked eye, but evidently as
part of a sphere. At some distance was shown
another crescent, belonging to a sphere whose diameter
was a little more than one-fourth that of the former.
The light reflected from their surfaces was of silver
radiance, rather than the golden hue of the Moon or
of Venus as seen through a small telescope. The
smaller crescent I could recognise at once as belonging
to our own satellite; the larger was, of course, the
world I had quitted. So exactly is the clockwork
or its substitute adapted to counteract both the rotation
and revolution of Mars, that the two images underwent
no other change of place than that caused by their
own proper motion in space; a movement which, notwithstanding
the immense magnifying power employed, was of course
scarcely perceptible. But the rotation of the
larger sphere was visible as we watched it. It
so happened that the part which was at once lighted
by the rays of the Sun and exposed to our observation
was but little clouded. The atmosphere, of course,
prevented its presenting the clear, sharply-defined
outlines of lunar landscapes; but sea and land, ice
and snow, were so clearly defined and easily distinguishable
that my companions exclaimed with eagerness, as they
observed features unmistakably resembling on the grand
scale those with which they were themselves familiar.
The Arctic ice was scarcely visible in the North.
The vast steppes of Russia, the boundary line of the
Ural mountains, the greyish-blue of the Euxine, Western
Asia, Arabia, and the Red Sea joining the long water-line
of the Southern Ocean, were defined by the slanting
rays. The Antarctic ice-continent was almost
equally clear, with its stupendous glacier masses
radiating apparently from an elevated extensive land,
chiefly consisting of a deeply scooped and scored
plateau of rock, around the Pole itself. The
terminator, or boundary between light and shade, was
not, as in the Moon, pretty sharply defined, and broken
only by the mountainous masses, rings, and sea-beds,
if such they are, so characteristic of the latter.
On the image of the Moon there intervened between
bright light and utter darkness but the narrow belt
to which only part of the Sun was as yet visible, and
which, therefore, received comparatively few rays.

**Page 241**

The twilight to north and south extended on the image
of the Earth deep into that part on which as yet the
Sun was below the horizon, and consequently daylight
faded into darkness all but imperceptibly, save between
the tropics. We watched long and intently as
league by league new portions of Europe and Africa,
the Mediterranean, and even the Baltic, came into view;
and I was able to point out to Eveena lands in which
I had traveller, seas I had crossed, and even the
isles of the Aegean, and bays in which my vessel had
lain at anchor. This personal introduction to
each part of the image, now presented to her for the
first time, enabled her to realise more forcibly than
a lengthened experience of astronomical observation
might have done the likeness to her own world of that
which was passing under her eyes; and at once intensified
her wonder, heightened her pleasure, and sharpened
her intellectual apprehension of the scene. When
we had satiated our eyes with this spectacle, or rather
when I remembered that we could spare no more time
to this, the most interesting exhibition of the evening,
a turn of the machinery brought Venus under view.
Here, however, the cloud envelope baffled us altogether,
and her close approach to the horizon soon obliged
the director to turn his apparatus in another direction.
Two or three of the Asteroids were in view. Pallas
especially presented a very interesting spectacle.
Not that the difference of distance would have rendered
the definition much more perfect than from a Terrestrial
standpoint, but that the marvellous perfection of
Martial instruments, and in some measure also the rarity
of the atmosphere at such a height, rendered possible
the use of far higher magnifying powers than our astronomers
can employ. I am inclined to agree, from what
I saw on this occasion, with those who imagine the
Asteroids to be—­if not fragments of a broken
planet which once existed as a whole—­yet
in another sense fragmentary spheres, less perfect
and with surfaces of much greater proportionate irregularity
than those of the larger planets. Next was presented
to our view on a somewhat smaller scale, because the
area of the chamber employed would not otherwise have
given room for the system, the enormous disc and the
four satellites of Jupiter. The difference between
400 and 360 millions of miles’ distance is,
of course, wholly unimportant; but the definition
and enlargement were such that the image was perfect,
and the details minute and distinct, beyond anything
that Earthly observation had led me to conceive as
possible. The satellites were no longer mere
points or tiny discs, but distinct moons, with surfaces
marked like that of our own satellite, though far less
mountainous and broken, and, as it seemed to me, possessing
a distinct atmosphere. I am not sure that there
is not a visible difference of brightness among them,
not due to their size but to some difference in the
reflecting power of their surfaces, since the distance

**Page 242**

of all from the Sun is practically equal That Jupiter
gives out some light of his own, a portion of which
they may possibly reflect in differing amount according
to their varying distance, is believed by Martial
astronomers; and I thought it not improbable.
The brilliant and various colouring of the bands which,
cross the face of the giant planet was wonderfully
brought out; the bluish-grey around the poles, the
clear yellowish-white light of the light bands, probably
belts of white cloud, contrasted signally the hues—­varying
from deep orange-brown to what was almost crimson
or rose-pink on the one hand and bright yellow on
the other—­of different zones of the so-called
dark belts. On the latter, markings and streaks
of strange variety suggested, if they failed-to prove,
the existence of frequent spiral storms, disturbing,
probably at an immense height above the surface, clouds
which must be utterly unlike the clouds of Mars or
the Earth in material as well as in form and mass.
These markings enabled us to follow with clear ocular
appreciation the rapid rotation of this planet.
In the course of half-an-hour several distinct spots
on different belts had moved in a direct line across
a tenth of the face presented to us—­a distance,
upon the scale of the gigantic image, so great that
the motion required no painstaking observation, but
forced itself upon the notice of the least attentive
spectator. The belief of Martial astronomers
is that Jupiter is not by any means so much less dense
than the minor planets as his proportionately lesser
weight would imply. They hold that his visible
surface is that of an enormously deep atmosphere,
within which lies, they suppose, a central ball, not
merely hot but more than white hot, and probably, from
its temperature, not yet possessing a solid crust.
One writer argues that, since all worlds must by analogy
be supposed to be inhabited, and since the satellites
of Jupiter more resemble worlds than the planet itself,
which may be regarded as a kind of secondary sun, it
is not improbable that the former are the scenes of
life as varied as that of Mars itself; and that infinite
ages hence, when these have become too cold for habitation,
their giant primary may have gone through those processes
which, according to the received theory, have fitted
the interior planets to be the home of plants, animals,
and, in two cases at least, of human beings.

It was near midnight before the manifest fatigue of
the ladies overcame my selfish desire to prolong as
much as possible this most interesting visit.
Meteorological science in Mars has been carried to
high perfection; and the director warned me that but
three or four equally favourable opportunities might
offer in the course of the next half year.

**CHAPTER XXIII — CHARACTERISTICS.**

Time passed on, marked by no very important incident,
while I made acquaintance with manners and with men
around me, neither one nor the other worth further
description. Nothing occurred to confirm the
alarms Davilo constantly repeated.

**Page 243**

I called the ladies one day into the outer grounds
to see a new carriage, capable, according to its arrangement,
of containing from two to eight persons, and a balloon
of great size and new construction which Davilo had
urgently counselled me to procure, as capable of sudden
use in some of those daily thickening perils, of which
I could see no other sign than occasional evidence
that my steps were watched and dogged. Both vehicles
enlisted the interest and curiosity of Eunane and
her companions. Eveena, after examining with as
much attention as was due to the trouble I took to
explain it, the construction of the carriage, concentrated
her interest and observation upon the balloon, the
sight of which evidently impressed her. When
we had returned to the peristyle, and the rest had
dispersed, I said—­

“I see you apprehend some part of my reasons
for purchasing the balloon. The carriage will
take us to-morrow to Altasfe (a town some ten miles
distant). ‘Shopping’ is an amusement
so gratifying to all women on Earth, from the veiled
favourites of an Eastern seraglio to the very unveiled
dames of Western ballrooms, that I suppose the instinct
must be native to the sex wherever women and trade
co-exist. If you have a single feminine folly,
you will enjoy this more than you will own. If
you are, as they complain, absolutely faultless, you
will enjoy with me the pleasure of the girls in plaguing
one after another all the traders of Altasfe:”
and with these words I placed in her hands a packet
of the thin metallic plates constituting their currency.
Her extreme and unaffected surprise was amusing to
witness.

“What am I to do with this?” she inquired,
counting carefully the uncounted pile, in a manner
which at once dispelled my impression that her surprise
was due to childish ignorance of its value.

“Whatever you please, Madonna; whatever can
please you and the others.”

“But,” she remonstrated, “this is
more than all our dowries for another year to come;
and—­forgive me for repeating what you seem
purposely to forget—­I cannot cast the shadow
between my equals and the master. Would you so
mortify *me* as to make me take from Eunane’s
hand, for example, what should come from yours?”

“You are right, Madonna, now as always,”
I owned; wincing at the name she used, invariably
employed by the others, but one I never endured from
her. Her looks entreated pardon for the form of
the implied reproof, as I resumed the larger part
of the money she held out to me, forcing back the
smaller into her reluctant hands. “But what
has the amount of your dowries to do with the matter?
The contracts are meant, I suppose, to secure the
least to which a wife has a right, not to fix her
natural share in her husband’s wealth. You
need not fear, Eveena; the Prince has made us rich
enough to spend more than we shall care for.”

**Page 244**

“I don’t understand you,” she replied
with her usual gentle frankness and simple logical
consistency. “It pleases you to say ‘we’
and ‘ours’ whenever you can so seem to
make me part of yourself; and I love to hear you,
for it assures me each time that you still hold me
tightly as I cling to you. But you know those
are only words of kindness. Since you returned
my father’s gift, the dowry you then doubled
is my only share of what is yours, and it is more
than enough.”

“Do you mean that women expect and receive no
more: that they do not naturally share in a man’s
surplus wealth?”

While I spoke Enva had joined us, and, resting on
the cushions at my feet, looked curiously at the metallic
notes in Eveena’s hand.

“You do not,” returned the latter, “pay
more foe what you have purchased because you have
grown richer. You do not share your wealth even
with those on whose care it chiefly depends.”

“Yes, I do, Eveena. But I know what you
mean. Their share is settled and is not increased.
But you will not tell me that this affords any standard
for household dealings; that a wife’s share in
her husband’s fortune is really bounded by the
terms of the marriage contract?”

“Will you let Enva answer you?” asked
Eveena. “She looks more ready than I feel
to reply.”

This little incident was characteristic in more ways
than one. Eveena’s feelings, growing out
of the realities of our relation, were at issue with
and perplexed her convictions founded on the theory
and practice of her world. Not yet doubting the
justice of the latter, she instinctively shrank from
their application to ourselves. She was glad,
therefore, to let Enva state plainly and directly a
doctrine which, from her own lips, would have pained
as well as startled me. On her side, Enva, though
encouraged to bear her part in conversation, was too
thoroughly imbued with the same ideas to interpose
unbidden. As she would have said, a wife deserved
the sandal for speaking without leave; nor—­experience
notwithstanding—­would she think it safe
to interrupt in my presence a favourite so pointedly
honoured as Eveena. ’She waited, therefore,
till my eyes gave the permission which hers had asked.

“Why should you buy anything twice over, Clasfempta,
whether it be a wife or an amba? A girl sells
her society for the best price her attractions will
command. These attractions seldom increase.
You cannot give her less because you care less for
them; but how can she expect more?”

“I know, Enva, that the marriage contract here
is an open bargain and sale, as among my race it is
generally a veiled one. But, the bargain made,
does it really govern the after relation? Do men
really spend their wealth wholly on themselves, and
take no pleasure in the pleasure of women?”

**Page 245**

“Generally, I believe,” Enva replied,
“they fancy they have paid too much for their
toy before they have possessed it long, and had rather
buy a new one than make much of those they have.
Wives seldom look on the increase of a man’s
wealth as a gain to themselves. Of course you
like to see us prettily dressed, while you think us
worth looking at in ourselves. But as a rule
our own income provides for that; and *we* at
any rate are better off than almost any women outside
the Palace. The Prince did not care, and knew
it would not matter to you, what he gave to make his
gift worthy of him and agreeable to you. Perhaps,”
she added, “he wished to make it secure by offering
terms too good to be thrown away by any foolish rebellion
against a heavier hand or a worse temper than usual.
You hardly understand yet half the advantages you
possess.”

The latent sarcasm of the last remark did not need
the look of pretended fear that pointed it. If
Enva professed to resent my inadequate appreciation
of the splendid beauty bestowed on me by the royal
favour more than any possible ill-usage for which she
supposed herself compensated in advance, it was not
for me to put her sincerity to proof.

“Once bought, then, wives are not worth pleasing?
It is not worth while to purchase happy faces, bright
smiles, and willing kisses now and then at a cost
the giver can scarcely feel?”

Enva’s look now was half malicious, half kindly,
and wholly comical; but she answered gravely, with
a slight imitation of my own tone—­

“Can you not imagine, or make Eveena tell you,
Clasfempta, why women once purchased think it best
to give smiles and kisses freely to one who can command
their tears? Or do you fancy that their smiles
are more loyal and sincere when won by kindness than....”

“By fear? Sweeter, Enva, at any rate.
Well, if I do not offend your feelings, I need not
hesitate to disregard another of your customs.”

She received her share willingly and gratefully enough,
but her smile and kiss were so evidently given to
order, that they only testified to the thorough literality
of her statement. Leenoo, Eirale, and Elfe followed
her example with characteristic exactness. Equally
characteristic was the conduct of the others.
Eunane kept aloof till called, and then approached
with an air of sullen reluctance, as if summoned to
receive a reprimand rather than a favour. Not
a little amused, I affected displeasure in my turn,
till the window of her chamber closed behind us, and
her ill-humour was forgotten in wondering alarm.
Offered in private, the kiss and smile given and not
demanded, the present was accepted with frank affectionate
gratitude. Eive took her share in pettish shyness,
waiting the moment when she might mingle unobserved
with her childlike caresses the childish reproach—­

“If you can buy kisses, Clasfempta, you don’t
want mine. And if you fancy I sell them, you
shall have no more.”

**Page 246**

I saw Davilo in the morning before we started.
After some conversation on business, he said—­

“And pardon a suggestion which I make, not as
in charge of your affairs, but as responsible to our
supreme authority for your safety. No correspondence
should pass from your household unscrutinised; and
if there be such correspondence, I must ask you to
place in my hand, for the purpose of our quest, not
any message, but some of the slips on which messages
have been written. This may probably furnish
precisely that tangible means of relation with some
one acquainted with the conspiracy for which we have
sought in vain.”

My unwillingness to meddle with feminine correspondence
was the less intelligible to him that, as the master
alone commands the household telegraph, he knew that
it must have passed through my hands. I yielded
at last to his repeated urgency that a life more precious
than mine was involved in any danger to myself, so
far as to promise the slips required, to furnish a
possible means of *rapport* between the *clairvoyante*
and the enemy.

I returned to the house in grave thought. Eunane.
corresponded by the telegraph with some schoolmates;
Eive, I fancied, with three or four of those ladies
with whom, accompanying me on my visits, she had made
acquaintance. But I hated the very thought of
domestic suspicion, and, adhering to my original resolve,
refused to entertain a distrust that seemed ill-founded
and far-fetched. If there had been treachery,
it would be impossible to obtain any letters that
might have been preserved without resorting to a compulsion
which, since both Eunane and Eive had written in the
knowledge that their letters passed unread, would
seem like a breach of faith. I asked, however,
simply, and giving no reason, for the production of
any papers received and preserved by either.
Eive, with her usual air of simplicity, brought me
the two or three which, she said, were all she had
kept. Eunane replied with a petulance almost
amounting to refusal, which to some might have suggested
suspicion; but which to me seemed the very last course
that a culprit would have pursued. To give needless
offence while conscious of guilt would have been the
very wantonness of reckless temper.

“Bite your tongue, and keep your letters,”
I said sharply.

Turning to Eive and looking at the addresses of hers,
none of which bore the name of any one who could be
suspected of the remotest connection with a political
plot—­

“Give me which of these you please,” I
said, taking from her hand that which she selected
and marking it. “Now erase the writing yourself
and give me the paper.”

This incident gave Eunane leisure to recover her temper.
She stood for a few moments ashamed perhaps, but,
as usual, resolute to abide by the consequences of
a fault. When she found that my last word was
spoken, her mood changed at once.

“I did not quite like to give you Velna’s
letters. They are foolish, like mine; and besides——­But
I never supposed you would let me refuse. What
you won’t make me do, I must do of my own accord.”

**Page 247**

Womanly reasoning, most unlike “woman’s
reasons!” She brought, with unaffected alacrity,
a collection of tafroo-slips whose addresses bore
out her account of their character. Taking the
last from the bundle, I bade her erase its contents.

“No,” she said, “that is the one
I least liked to show. If you will not read it,
please follow my hand as I read, and see for yourself
how far I have misused your trust.”

“I never doubted your good faith, Eunane”—­But
she had begun to read, pointing with her finger as
she went on. At one sentence hand and voice wavered
a little without apparent reason. “I shall,”
wrote her school-friend, some half year her junior,
“make my appearance at the next inspection.
I wish the Campta, had left you here till now; we
might perhaps have contrived to pass into the same
household.”

“A very innocent wish, and very natural,”
I said, in answer to the look, half inquiring, half
shy, with which Eunane watched the effect of her words.
I could not now use the precaution in her case, which
it had somehow seemed natural to adopt with Eive,
of marking the paper returned for erasure. On
her part, Eunane thrust into my hand the whole bundle
as they were, and I was forced myself to erase, by
an electro-chemical process which leaves no trace
of writing, the words of that selected. The absence
of any mark on the second paper served sufficiently
to distinguish the two when, of course without stating
from whom I received them, I placed, them in Davilo’s
hands.

When we were ready to leave the peristyle for the
carriage, I observed that Eunane alone was still unveiled,
while the others wore their cloaks of down and the
thick veils, without which no lady may present herself
to the public eye.

“‘Thieving time is woman’s crime,’”
I said, quoting a domestic proverb. “In
another household you would; be left behind.”

“Of course,” she replied, such summary
discipline seeming to her as appropriate as to an
European child. “I don’t like always
to deserve the vine and receive the nuts.”

“You must take which *I* like,” I
retorted, laughing. Satisfied or silenced, she
hastened to dress, and enjoyed with unalloyed delight
the unusual pleasure of inspecting dresses and jewellery,
and making more purchases in a day than she had expected
to be able to do in two years. But she and her
companions acted with more consideration than ladies
permitted to visit the shops of Europe show for their
masculine escort. Eive alone, on this as on other
occasions, availed herself thoroughly of those privileges
of childhood which I had always extended to her.

So quick are the proceedings and so excellent the
arrangements of Martial commerce, even where ladies
are concerned, that a couple of hours saw us on our
way homeward, after having passed through the apartments
of half the merchants in Altasfe. Purposely for
my own pleasure, as well as for that of my companions,
I took a circuitous route homeward, and in so doing
came within sight of a principal feminine Nursery
or girls’ school. Recognising it, Eunane
spoke with some eagerness—­

**Page 248**

“Ah! I spent nine years there, and not
always unhappily.”

Eveena, who sat beside me, pressed my hand, with an
intention easily understood.

“And you would like to see it again?”
I inquired in compliance with her silent hint.

“Not to go back,” said Eunane. “But
I should like to pay it a visit, if it were possible.”

“Can we?” I asked Eveena.

“I think so,” she answered. “I
observe half a dozen people have gone in since we
came in sight, and I fancy it is inspection day there.”

“Inspection?” I asked.

“Yes,” she replied in a tone of some little
annoyance and discomfort. “The girls who
have completed their tenth year, and who are thought
to have as good a chance now as they would have later,
are dressed for the first time in the white robe and
veil of maidenhood, and presented in the public chamber
to attract the choice of those who are looking for
brides.”

“Not a pleasant spectacle,” I said, “to
you or to myself; but it will hardly annoy the others,
and Eunane shall have her wish.”

We descended from our carriage at the gate, and entered
the grounds of the Nursery. Studiously as the
health, the diet, and the exercise of the inmates
are cared for, nothing is done to render the appearance
of the home where they pass so large and critical
a portion of their lives cheerful or attractive in
appearance. Utility alone is studied; how much
beauty conduces to utility where the happiness and
health of children are concerned, Martial science
has yet to learn. The grounds contained no flowers
and but few trees; the latter ruined in point of form
and natural grace to render them convenient supports
for gymnastic apparatus. A number of the younger
girls, unveiled, but dressed in a dark plain garment
reaching from the throat to the knees, with trousers
giving free play to the limbs, were exercising on the
different swings and bars, flinging the light weights
and balls, or handling the substitutes for dumb-bells,
the use of which forms an important branch of their
education. Others, relieved from this essential
part of their tasks, were engaged in various sports.
One of these I noticed especially. Perhaps a
hundred young ladies on either side formed a sort
of battalion, contending for the ground they occupied
with light shields of closely woven wire and masks
of the same material, and with spears consisting of
a reed or grass about five feet in length, and exceedingly
light. When perfectly ripened, these spears are
exceeding formidable, their points being sharp enough
to pierce the skin of any but a pachydermatous animal.
Those employed in these games, however, are gathered
while yet covered by a sheath, which, as they ripen,
bursts and leaves the keen, hard point exposed.
Considerable care is taken in their selection, since,
if nearly ripe, or if they should ripen prematurely
under the heat of the sun when severed from the stem,
the sheath bursting in the middle of a game, very

**Page 249**

grave accidents might occur. The movements of
the girls were so ordered that the game appeared almost
as much a dance as a conflict; but though there was
nothing of unseemly violence, the victory was evidently
contested with real earnestness, and with a skill superior
to that displayed in the movements of the actual soldiers
who have long since exchanged the tasks of warfare
for the duties of policemen, escorts, and sentries.
I held Eveena’s hand, the others followed us
closely, venturing neither to break from our party
without leave nor to ask permission, till, at Eveena’s
suggestion, it was spontaneously given. They
then quitted us, hastening, Eunane to seek out her
favourite companions of a former season, the others
to mingle with the younger girls and share in their
play. We walked on slowly, stopping from time
to time to watch the exercises and sports of the younger
portion of a community numbering some fifteen hundred
girls. When we entered the hall we were rejoined
by Eunane, with one of her friends who still wore
the ordinary school costume. Conversation with
or notice of a young lady so dressed was not only
not expected but disallowed, and the pair seated themselves
behind us and studiously out of hearing of any conversation
conducted in a low tone.

The spectacle, as I had anticipated, was to me anything
but pleasant. It reminded me of a slave-market
of the East, however, rather than of the more revolting
features of a slave auction in the United States.
The maidens, most of them very graceful and more than
pretty, their robes arranged and ornamented with an
evident care to set off their persons to the best
advantage, and with a skill much greater than they
themselves could yet have acquired, were seated alone
or by twos and threes in different parts of the hall,
grouped so as to produce the most attractive general
as well as individual effect. The picture, therefore,
was a pretty one; and since the intending purchasers
addressed the objects of their curiosity or admiration
with courtesy and fairly decorous reserve, it was
the known character rather than any visible incident
of the scene that rendered it repugnant or revolting
in my eyes. I need not say that, except Eveena,
there was no one of either sex in the hall who shared
my feeling. After all, the purpose was but frankly
avowed, and certainly carried out more safely and
decorously than in the ball-rooms and drawing-rooms
of London or Paris. Of the maidens, some seemed
shy and backward, and most were silent save when addressed.
But the majority received their suitors with a thoroughly
business-like air, and listened to the terms offered
them, or endeavoured to exact a higher price or a briefer
period of assured slavery, with a self-possession
more reasonable than agreeable to witness. One
maiden seated in our immediate vicinity was, I perceived,
the object of Eveena’s especial interest, and,
at first on this account alone, attracted my observation.
Dressed with somewhat less ostentatious care and elegance

**Page 250**

than her companions, her veil and the skirt of her
robe were so arranged as to show less of her personal
attractions than they generally displayed. A first
glance hardly did justice to a countenance which,
if not signally pretty, and certainly marked by a
beauty less striking than that of most of the others,
was modest and pleasing; a figure slight and graceful,
with hands and feet yet smaller than usual, even among
a race the shape of whose limbs is, with few exceptions,
admirable. Very few had addressed her, or even
looked at her; and a certain resigned mortification
was visible in her countenance.

“You are sorry for that child?” I said
to Eveena.

“Yes,” she answered. “It must
be distressing to feel herself the least attractive,
the least noticed among her companions, and on such
an occasion. I cannot conceive how I could bear
to form part of such a spectacle; but if I were in
her place, I suppose I should be hurt and humbled
at finding that nobody cared to look at me in the presence
of others prettier and better dressed than myself.”

“Well,” I said, “of all the faces
I see I like that the best. I suppose I must
not speak to her?”

“Why not?” said Eveena in surprise.
“You are not bound to purchase her, any more
than we bought all we looked at to-day.”

“It did not occur to me,” I replied, “that
I could be regarded as a possible suitor, nor do I
think I could find courage to present myself to that
young lady in a manner which must cause her to look
upon me in that light. Ask Eunane if she knows
her.”

Here Eive and the others joined us and took their
places on my right. Eveena, leaving her seat
for a moment, spoke apart with Eunane.

“Will you speak to her?” she said, returning.
“She is Eunane’s friend and correspondent,
Velna; and I think they are really fond of each other.
It is a pity that if she is to undergo the mortification
of remaining unchosen and going back to her tasks,
at least till the next inspection, she will also be
separated finally from the only person for whom she
seems to have had anything like home affection.”

“Well, if I am to talk to her,” I replied,
“you must be good enough to accompany me.
I do not feel that I could venture on such an enterprise
by myself.”

Eveena’s eyes, even through her veil, expressed
at once amusement and surprise; but as she rose to
accompany me this expression faded and a look of graver
interest replaced it. Many turned to observe us
as we crossed the short space that separated us from
the isolated and neglected maiden. I had seen,
if I had not noticed, that in no case were the men,
as they made the tour of the room or went up to any
lady who might have attracted their special notice,
accompanied by the women of their households.
A few of these, however, sat watching the scene, their
mortification, curiosity, jealousy, or whatever feeling
it might excite, being of course concealed by the veils

**Page 251**

that hid every feature but the eyes, which now and
then followed very closely the footsteps of their
lords. The object of our attention showed marked
surprise as we approached her, and yet more when, seeing
that I was at a loss for words, Eveena herself spoke
a kindly and gracious sentence. The girl’s
voice was soft and low, and her tone and words, as
we gradually fell into a hesitating and broken conversation,
confirmed the impression made by her appearance.
When, after a few minutes, I moved to depart, there
was in Eveena’s reluctant steps and expressive
upturned eyes a meaning I could not understand.
As soon as we were out of hearing, moving so as partly
to hide my countenance and entirely to conceal her
own gesture from the object of her compassion, she
checked my steps by a gentle pressure on my arm and
looked up earnestly into my face.

“What is it?” I asked. “You
seem to have some wish that I cannot conjecture; and
you can trust by this time my anxiety to gratify every
desire of yours, reasonable or not—­if indeed
you ever were unreasonable.”

“She is so sad, so lonely,” Eveena answered,
“and she is so fond of Eunane.”

“You don’t mean that you want me to make
her an offer!” I exclaimed in extreme amazement.

“Do not be angry,” pleaded Eveena.
“She would be glad to accept any offer you would
be likely to make; and the money you gave me yesterday
would have paid all she would cost you for many years.
Besides, it would please Eunane, and it would make
Velna so happy.”

“You must know far better than I can what is
likely to make her happy,” I replied. “Strange
to the ideas and customs of your world, I cannot conceive
that a woman can wish to take the last place in a
household like ours rather than the first or only one
with the poorest of her people.”

“She will hardly have the choice,” Eveena
answered. “Those whom you can call poor
mostly wait till they can have their choice before
they marry; and if taken by some one who could not
afford a more expensive choice, she would only be
neglected, or dismissed ill provided for, as soon
as he could purchase one more to his taste.”

“If,” I rejoined at last, “you think
it a kindness to her, and are sure she will so think
it; if you wish it, and will avouch her contentment
with a place in the household of one who does not desire
her, I will comply with this as with any wish of yours.
But it is not to my: mind to take a wife out
of mere compassion, as I might readily adopt a child.”

Once more, with all our mutual affection and appreciation
of each other’s character, Eveena and I were
fat as the Poles apart in thought if not in feeling.
It was as impossible for her to emancipate herself
utterly from the ideas and habits of her own world,
as for me to reconcile myself to them. I led
her back at last to her seat, and beckoned Eunane
to my side.

“Eveena,” I said, “has been urging
me to offer your friend yonder a place in our household.”

**Page 252**

Though I could not see her face, the instant change
in her attitude, the eager movement of her hands,
and the elastic spring that suddenly braced her form,
expressed her feeling plainly enough.

“It must be done, I suppose,” I murmured
rather to myself than to them, as Eunane timidly put
out her hand and gratefully clasped Eveena’s.
“Well, it is to be done for you, and you must
do it.”

“How can I?” exclaimed Eunane in astonishment;
and Eveena added, “It is for you; you only can
name your terms, and it would be a strange slight
to her to do so through us.”

“I cannot help that. I will not ‘act
the lie’ by affecting any personal desire to
win her, and I could not tell her the truth. Offer
her the same terms that contented the rest; nay, if
she enters my household, she shall not feel herself
in a secondary or inferior position.”

This condition surprised even Eveena as much as my
resolve to make her the bearer of the proposal that
was in truth her own. But, however reluctant,
she would as soon have refused obedience to my request
as have withheld a kindness because it cost her an
unexpected trial. Taking Eunane with her, she
approached and addressed the girl. Whatever my
own doubt as to her probable reception, however absurd
in my own estimation the thing I was induced to do,
there was no corresponding consciousness, no feeling
but one of surprise and gratification, in the face
on which I turned my eyes. There was a short
and earnest debate; but, as I afterwards learned, it
arose simply from the girl’s astonishment at
terms which, extravagant even for the beauties of
the day, were thrice as liberal as she had ventured
to dream of. Eveena and Eunane were as well aware
of this as herself; the right of beauty to a special
price seemed to them as obvious as in Western Europe
seems the right of rank to exorbitant settlements;
but they felt it as impossible to argue the point as
a solicitor would find it unsafe to expound to a *gentleman*
the different cost of honouring Mademoiselle with
his hand and being honoured with that of Milady.
Velna’s remonstrances were suppressed; she rose,
and, accompanied by Eveena and Eunane, approached a
desk in one corner of the room, occupied by a lady
past middle life. The latter, like all those
of her sex who have adopted masculine independence
and a professional career, wore no veil over her face,
and in lieu of the feminine head-dress a band of metal
around the head, depending from which a short fall
of silken texture drawn back behind the ears covered
the neck and upper edge of the dark robe. This
lady took from a heap by her side a slip containing
the usual form of marriage contract, and filled in
the blanks. At a sign from Eveena, I had by this
time approached close enough to hear the language of
half-envious, half-supercilious wonder in which the
schoolmistress congratulated her pupil on her signal
conquest, and the terms she had obtained, as well
as the maiden’s unaffected acknowledgment of
her own surprise and conscious unworthiness.
I could *feel*, despite the concealment of her
form and face, Eveena’s silent expression of
pained disgust with the one, and earnest womanly sympathy
with the other. The document was executed in
the usual triplicate.

**Page 253**

The girl retired for a few minutes, and reappeared
in a cloak and veil like those of her new companions,
but of comparatively cheap materials. As we passed
the threshold, Eveena gently and tacitly but decisively
assigned to her *protegee* her own place beside
me, and put her right hand in my left. The agitation
with which it manifestly trembled, though neither
strange nor unpleasing, added to the extreme embarrassment
I felt; and I had placed her next to Eunane in the
carriage and taken my seat beside Eveena, whom I never
permitted to resign her own, before a single spoken
word had passed in this extraordinary courtship, or
sanctioned the brief and practical ceremony of marriage.

I was alone in my own room that evening when a gentle
scratching on the window-crystal entreated admission.
I answered without looking up, assuming that Eveena
alone would seek me there. But hers were not the
lips that were earnestly pressed on my hand, nor hers
the voice that spoke, trembling and hesitating with
stronger feeling than it could utter in words—­

“I do thank you from my heart. I little
thought you would wish to make me so happy. I
shrank from showing you the letter lest you should
think I dared to hope.... It is not only Velna;
it is such strange joy and comfort to be held fast
by one who cares—­to feel safe in hands as
kind as they are strong. You said you could love
none save Eveena; but, Clasfempta, your way of not
loving is something better, gentler, more considerate
than any love I ever hoped or heard of.”

I could read only profound sincerity and passionate
gratitude in the clear bright eyes, softened by half-suppressed
tears, that looked up from where she knelt beside
me. But the exaggeration was painfully suggestive,
confirming the ugly view Enva had given yesterday of
the life that seemed natural and reasonable to her
race, and made ordinary human kindness appear something
strange and romantic by contrast.

“Surely, Eunane, every man wishes those around
him happy, if it do not cost too much to make them
so?”

“No, indeed! Oftener the master finds pleasure
in punishing and humiliating, the favourite in witnessing
her companions’ tears and terror. They
like to see the household grateful for an hour’s
amusement, crouching to caprice, incredulously thankful
for barest justice. One book much read in our
schools says that ’cruelty is a stronger, earlier,
and more tenacious human instinct than sympathy;’
and another that ’half the pleasure of power
lies in giving pain, and half the remainder in being
praised for sparing it.’ ... But that was
not all: Eveena was as eager to be kind as you
were.”

“Much more so, Eunane.”

“Perhaps. What seemed natural to her was
strange to you. But it was *your* thought
to put Velna on equal terms with us; taking her out
of mere kindness, to give her the dowry of a Prince’s
favourite. *That* surprised Eveena, and it puzzled
me. But I think I half understand you now, and
if I do.... When Eveena told us how you saved
her and defied the Regent, and Eive asked you about
it, you said so quietly, ’There are some things
a man cannot do.’ Is buying a girl cheap,
because she is not a beauty, one of those things?”

**Page 254**

“To take any advantage of her misfortune—­to
make her feel it in my conduct—­to give
her a place in my household on other terms than her
equals—­to show her less consideration or
courtesy than one would give to a girl as beautiful
as yourself—­yes, Eunane! To my eyes,
your friend is pleasant and pretty; but if not, would
you have liked to feel that she was of less account
here than yourself, because she has not such splendid
beauty as yours?”

Eunane was too frank to conceal her gratification
in this first acknowledgment of her charms, as she
had shown her mortification while it was withheld—­not,
certainly, because undeserved. Her eyes brightened
and her colour deepened in manifest pleasure.
But she was equally frank in her answer to the implied
compliment to her generosity, of whose justice she
was not so well assured.

“I am afraid I should half have liked it, a
year ago. Now, after I have lived so long with
you and Eveena, I should be shamed by it! But,
Clasfempta, the things ‘a man cannot do’
are the things men do every day;—­and women
every hour!”

**CHAPTER XXIV — WINTER.**

Hitherto I had experienced only the tropical climate
of Mars, with the exception of the short time spent
in the northern temperate zone about the height of
its summer. I was anxious, of course, to see something
also of its winter, and an opportunity presented itself.
No institution was more obviously worth a visit than
the great University or principal place of highest
education in this world, and I was invited thither
in the middle of the local winter. To this University
many of the most promising youths, especially those
intended for any of the Martial professions—­architects,
artists, rulers, lawyers, physicians, and so forth—­are
often sent directly from the schools, or after a short
period of training in the higher colleges. It
is situate far within the north temperate zone on
the shore of one of the longest and narrowest of the
great Martial gulfs, which extends from north-eastward
to south-west, and stretches from 43 deg. N. to
10 deg. S. latitude. The University in question
is situate nearly at the extremity of the northern
branch of this gulf, which splits into two about 300
miles from its end, a canal of course connecting it
with the nearest sea-belt. I chose to perform
this journey by land, following the line of the great
road from Amacasfe to Qualveskinta for about 800 miles,
and then turning directly northward. I did not
suppose that I should find a willing companion on
this journey, and was myself wishful to be alone,
since I dared not, in her present state of health,
expose Eveena to the fatigue and hardship of prolonged
winter travelling by land. To my surprise, however,
all the rest, when aware that I had declined to take
her, were eager to accompany me. Chiefly to take
her out of the way, and certainly with no idea of finding
pleasure in her society, I selected Enva; next to Leenoo

**Page 255**

the most malicious of the party, and gifted with sufficient
intelligence to render her malice more effective than
Leenoo’s stupidity could be. Enva, moreover,
with the vigorous youthful vitality-so often found
on Earth in women of her light Northern complexion,
seemed less likely to suffer from the severity of
the weather or the fatigue of a land journey than
most of her companions. When I spoke of my intention
to Davilo, I was surprised to find that he considered
even feminine company a protection.

“Any attempt upon you,” he said, “must
either involve your companion, for which there can
be no legal excuse preferred, or else expose the assailant
to the risk of being identified through her evidence.”

I started accordingly a few days before the winter
solstice of the North, reaching the great road a few
miles from the point at which it crosses another of
the great gulfs running due north and south, at its
narrowest point in latitude 3 deg. S. At this
point the inlet is no more than twenty miles wide,
and its banks about a hundred feet in height.
At this level and across this vast space was carried
a bridge, supported by arches, and resting on pillars
deeply imbedded in the submarine rock at a depth about
equal to the height of the land on either side.
The Martial seas are for the most part shallow, the
landlocked gulfs being seldom 100 fathoms, and the
deepest ocean soundings giving less than 1000.
The vast and solid structure looked as light and airy
as any suspension bridge across an Alpine ravine.
This gigantic viaduct, about 500 Martial years old,
is still the most magnificent achievement of engineering
in this department. The main roads, connecting
important cities or forming the principal routes of
commerce in the absence of convenient river or sea
carriage, are carried over gulfs, streams, ravines,
and valleys, and through hills, as Terrestrial engineers
have recently promised to carry railways over the
minor inequalities of ground. That which we were
following is an especially magnificent road, and signalised
by several grand exhibitions of engineering daring
and genius. It runs from Amacasfe for a thousand
miles in one straight line direct as that of a Roman
road, and with but half-a-dozen changes of level in
the whole distance. It crossed in the space of
a few miles a valley, or rather dell, 200 feet in
depth, and with semi-perpendicular sides, and a stream
wider than the Mississippi above the junction of the
Ohio. Next it traversed the precipitous side
of a hill for a distance of three or four miles, where
Nature had not afforded foothold for a rabbit or a
squirrel. The stupendous bridges and the magnificent
open road cut in the side of the rock, its roof supported
on the inside by the hill itself, on the outside by
pillars left at regular intervals when the stone was
cut, formed from one point a single splendid view.
Pointing it out to Enva, I was a little surprised
to find her capable, under the guidance of a few remarks

**Page 256**

from myself, of appreciating and taking pride in the
marvellous work of her race. In another place,
a tunnel pierced directly an intervening range of
hills for about eight miles, interrupted only in two
points by short deep open cuttings. This passage,
unlike those on the river previously mentioned, was
constantly and brilliantly lighted. The whole
road indeed was lit up from the fall of the evening
to the dispersion of the morning mist with a brilliancy
nearly equal to that of daylight. As I dared not
travel at a greater rate than twenty-five miles per
hour—­my experience, though it enabled me
to manage the carriage with sufficient skill, not
giving me confidence to push it to its greatest speed—­the
journey must occupy several days. We had, therefore,
to rest at the stations provided by public authority
for travellers undertaking such long land journeys.
These are built like ordinary Martial houses, save
that in lieu of peristyle or interior garden is an
open square planted with shrubs and merely large enough
to afford light to the inner rooms. The chambers
also are very much smaller than those of good private
houses. As these stations are nearly always placed
in towns or villages, or in well-peopled country neighbourhoods,
food is supplied by the nearest confectioner to each
traveller individually, and a single person, assisted
by the ambau, is able to manage the largest of them.

The last two or three days of our journey were bitterly
cold, and not a little trying. My own undergarment
of thick soft leather kept me warmer than the warmest
greatcoat or cloak could have done, though I wore
a large cloak of the kargynda’s fur in addition—­the
prize of the hunt that had so nearly cost me dear,
a personal and very gracious present from the Campta.
My companion, who had not the former advantage, though
wrapped in as many outer garments and quilts as I
had thought necessary, felt the cold severely, and
felt still more the dense chill mist which both by
night and day covered the greater part of the country.
This was not infrequently so thick as to render travelling
almost perilous; and but that an electric light, required
by law, was placed at each end of the carriage, collisions
would have been inevitable. These hardships afforded
another illustration of the subjection of the sex
resulting from the rule of theoretical equality.
More than a year’s experience of natural kindness
and consideration had not given Enva courage to make
a single complaint; and at first she did her best
to conceal the weeping which was the only, but almost
continuous, expression of her suffering. She was
almost as much surprised as gratified by my expressions
of sympathy, and the trouble I took to obtain, at
the first considerable town we reached, an apparatus
by which the heat generated by motion itself was made
to supply a certain warmth through the tubular open-work
of the carriage to the persons of its occupants.
The cold was as severe as that of a Swedish winter,
though we never approached within seventeen degrees
of the Arctic circle, a distance from the Pole equivalent
to that of Northern France. The Martial thermometer,
in form more like a watch-barometer, which I carried
in my belt, marked a cold equivalent to 12 deg. below
zero C. in the middle of the day; and when left in
the carriage for the night it had registered no less
than 22 deg. below zero.

**Page 257**

One of the Professors of the University received us
as his guests, assigning to us, as is usual when a
lady is of the party, rooms looking on the peristyle,
but whose windows remained closed. Enva, of course,
spent her time chiefly with the ladies of the family.
When alone with me she talked freely, though needing
some encouragement to express her own ideas, or report
what she had heard; but she had no intention of concealment,
perhaps no notion that I was interested in her accounts
of the prevalent feeling respecting the heretics of
whom she heard much, except of course that Eveena’s
father was among them. Through her I learned
that much pains had been taken to intensify and excite
into active hostility the dislike and distrust with
which they had always been regarded by the public
at large, and especially by the scientific guilds,
whose members control all educational establishments.
That some attempt against them was meditated appeared
to be generally reported. Its nature and the movers
in the matter were not known, so far as I could gather,
even to men so influential as the chief Professors
of the University. It was not merely that the
women had heard nothing on this point, but that their
lords had dropped expressions of surprise at the strictness
with which the secret was kept.

As their parents pay, when first the children are
admitted to the public Nurseries, the price of an
average education, this special instruction is given
in the first instance at the cost of the State to
those who, on account of their taste and talent, are
selected by the teachers of the Colleges. But
before they leave the University a bond is taken for
the amount of this outlay, which has to be repaid within
three years. It is fair to say that the tax is
trivial in comparison with the ordinary gains of their
professions; the more so that no such preference as,
in our world, is almost universally given to a reputation
which can only be acquired by age, excludes the youth
of Mars from full and profitable employment.

The youths were delighted to receive a lecture on
the forms of Terrestrial government, and the outlines
of their history; a topic I selected because they
were already acquainted with the substance of the
addresses elsewhere delivered. This afforded me
an opportunity of making the personal acquaintance
of some of the more distinguished pupils. The
clearness of their intellect, the thoroughness of their
knowledge in their several studies, and the distinctness
of their acquaintance with the outlines and principles
of Martial learning generally,—­an acquaintance
as free from smattering and superficiality as necessarily
unembarrassed by detail,—­testified emphatically
to the excellence of the training they had received,
as well as to the hereditary development of their
brains. What was, however, not less striking
was the utter absence at once of what I was accustomed
to regard as moral principle, and of the generous
impulses which in youth sometimes supply the place

**Page 258**

of principle. They avowed the most absolute selfishness,
the most abject fear of death and pain, with a frankness
that would have amazed the Cynics and disgusted the
felons of almost any Earthly nation. There were
partial exceptions, but these were to be found exclusively
among those in training for what we should call public
life, for administrative or judicial duties. These,
though professing no devotion to the interest of others,
and little that could be called public spirit, did
nevertheless understand that in return for the high
rank, the great power, and the liberal remuneration
they would enjoy, they were bound to consider primarily
the public interest in the performance of their functions—­the
right of society to just or at least to carefully
legal judgment, and diligent efficient administration.
Their feeling, however, was rather professional than
personal, the pride of students in the perfection of
their art rather than the earnestness of men conscious
of grave human responsibilities.

In conversing with the chief of this Faculty, I learned
some peculiarities of the system of government with
which I was not yet acquainted. Promotion never
depends on those with whom a public servant comes
into personal contact, but on those one or two steps
above the latter. The judges, for instance, of
the lower rank are selected by the principal judge
of each dominion; these and their immediate assistants,
by the Chief of the highest Court. The officers
around and under the Governor of a province are named
by the Regent of the dominion; those surrounding the
Regent, as the Regent himself, by the Sovereign.
Every officer, however, can be removed by his immediate
superior; but it depends on the chief with whom his
appointment rests, whether he shall be transferred
to a similar post elsewhere or simply dismissed.
Thus, while no man can be compelled to work with instruments
he dislikes, no subordinate is at the mercy of personal
caprice or antipathy.

Promotion, judicial and administrative, ends below
the highest point. The judges of the Supreme
Court are named by the Sovereign—­with the
advice of a Council, including the Regents, the judges
of that Court, and the heads of the Philosophic and
Educational Institutes—­from among the advocates
and students of law, or from among the ablest administrators
who seem to possess judicial faculties. The code
is written and simple. Every dubious point that
arises in the course of litigation is referred, by
appeal or directly by the judge who decides it, to
the Chief Court, and all points of interpretation thus
referred, are finally settled by an addition to the
code at its periodical revision. The Sovereign
can erase or add at pleasure to this code. But
he can do so only in full Council, and must hear,
though he need not regard, the opinions of his advisers.
He can, however, suspend immediately till the next
meeting of the Council the enforcement of any article.

**Page 259**

The Regents are never named from among subordinate
officials, nor is a Regent ever promoted to the throne.
It is held that the qualities required in an absolute
Sovereign are not such as are demanded from or likely
to be developed in the subordinate ruler of a dominion
however important, and that functions like those of
a Regent, at least as important as those of the Viceroy
of India, ought not to be entrusted to men trained
in subaltern administrative duties. Among the
youths of greatest promise, in their eighth year,
a certain small number are selected by the chiefs
of the University, who visit for this purpose all
the Nurseries of the kingdom. With what purpose
these youths are separated from their fellows is not
explained to them. They are carefully educated
for the highest public duties. Year by year those
deemed fitter for less important offices are drafted
off. There remain at last the very few who are
thought competent to the functions of Regent or Campta,
and from among these the Sovereign himself selects
at pleasure his own successor and the occupant of any
vacant Regency. The latter, however, holds his
post at first on probation, and can, of course, be
removed at any time by the Sovereign. If the latter
should not before his death have named his own successor,
the Council by a process of elimination is reduced
to three, and these cast lots which shall name the
new Autocrat from among the youths deemed worthy of
the throne, of whom six are seldom living at the same
time. No Prince is ever appointed under the age
of fourteen (twenty-seven) or over that of sixteen
(thirty). No Campta, has ever abdicated; but they
seldom live to fall into that sort of inert indolence
which may be called the dotage of their race.
The nature of their functions seems to preserve their
mental activity longer than that of others; and probably
they are not permitted to live when they have become
manifestly unfit or incapable to reign.

When first invited to visit the University, I had
hoped to make it only a stage and stepping-stone to
something yet more interesting—­to visit
the Arctic hunters once more, and join them in the
most exciting of their pursuits; a chase by the electric
light of the great Amphibia of the frozen sea-belt
immediately surrounding the permanent ice-cap of the
Northern Pole. For this, however, the royal licence
was required; and, as when I made a similar request
during the fur-chase of the Southern season, I met
with a peremptory refusal. “There are two
men in this world,” said the Prince, “who
would entertain such a wish. *I* dare not avow
it; and if there were a third, he would assuredly
be convicted of incurable lunacy, though on all other
points he were as cold-blooded as the President of
the Academy or the Vivisector-General.”
I did not tell Eveena of my request till it had been
refused; and if anything could have lessened my vexation
at the loss of this third opportunity, it would have
been the expression of her countenance at that moment.
Indeed, I was then satisfied that I could not have
left her in the fever of alarm and anxiety that any
suspicion of my purpose would have caused.

**Page 260**

I seized, however, the opportunity of a winter voyage
in a small vessel, manned by four or five ocean-hunters,
less timid and susceptible to surface disturbances
than ordinary seamen. On such an excursion, Enva,
though a far less pleasant companion, was a less anxious
charge than Eveena. We made for the Northern coast,
and ran for some hundred miles, along a sea-bord not
unlike that of Norway, but on a miniature scale.
Though in some former age this hemisphere, like Europe,
has been subject to glacial action much more general
and intense than at present, its ice-seas and ice-rivers
must always have been comparatively shallow and feeble.
Beaching at last a break in the long line of cliff-guarded
capes and fiords, where the sea, half covered with
low islands, eats a broad and deep ingress into the
land-belt, I disembarked, and made a day’s land
journey to the northward.

The ground was covered with a sheet of hard-frozen
snow about eighteen inches deep, with an upper surface
of pure ice. For the ordinary carriage, here
useless, was substituted a sledge, driven from behind
by an instrument something between a paddle-wheel and
a screw, worked, of course, by the usual electric
machinery. The cold was far more intense than
I had ever before known it; and the mist that fell
at the close of the very short zyda of daylight rendered
it all but intolerable. The Arctic circular thermometer
fell to within a few points from its minimum of—­50
deg. Centigrade [?]. No flesh could endure
exposure to such an atmosphere; and were not the inner
mask and clothing of soft leather pervaded by a constant
feeble current of electricity....

As we made our way back to the open sea, the temptation
to disobey the royal order was all but irresistible.
No fewer than three kargyndau were within shot at
one and the same time; plunging from the shore of
an icy island to emerge with their prey—­a
fish somewhat resembling the salmon in form and flavour.
My companions, however, were terrified at the thought
of disobedience to the law; and as we had but one
mordyta (lightning-gun) among the party, and the uncertainty
of the air-gun had been before proven to my cost,
there was some force in their supplementary argument
that, if I did not kill the kargynda, it was probable
that the kargynda might board us; in which event our
case would be summarily disposed of, without troubling
the Courts or allowing time to apply, even by telegraph,
for the royal pardon. I was suggesting, more
to the alarm than amusement of the crew, that we might
close the hatches, and either carry the regal beast
away captive, or, at worst, dive and drown him—­for
he cannot swim very far—­when their objections
were enforced in an unexpected manner. We were
drifting beyond shot of the nearest brute, when the
three suddenly plunged at once, and as if by concert,
and when they rose, were all evidently making for
the vessel, and within some eighty yards. I then
learnt a new advantage of the electric machinery, as

**Page 261**

compared with the most powerful steam-engine.
A pressure upon a button, and a few seconds sufficed
to exchange a speed of four for one of twenty miles
an hour; while, instead of sinking the vessel below
the surface, the master directed the engine to pump
out all the liquid ballast she contained. The
waterspout thus sent forth half-drowned the enemy
which had already come within a few yards of our starboard
quarter, and effectually-scared the others. It
was just as well that Enva, who heartily hated the
bitter cold, was snugly ensconced in the warm cushions
of the cabin, and had not, therefore, the opportunity
of giving to Eveena, on our return, her version of
an adventure whose alarming aspect would have impressed
them both more than its ludicrous side, For half a
minute I thought that I had, in sheer folly, exposed
half a dozen lives to a peril none the less real and
none the more satisfactory that, if five had been
killed, the survivor could not have so told the story
as to avoid laughing—­or being laughed at.

Sweet and serene as was Eveena’s smile of welcome,
it could not conceal the traces of more than mere
depression on her countenance. Heartily willing
to administer an effective lesson to her tormentors,
I seized the occasion of the sunset meal to notice
the weary and harassed look she had failed wholly
to banish.

“You look worse each time I return, Madonna.
This time it is not merely my absence, if it ever
were so. I will know who or what has driven and
hunted you so.”

Taken thus by surprise, every face but one bore witness
to the truth: Eveena’s distress, Eunane’s
mixed relief and dismay, shared in yet greater degree
by Velna, who knew less of me, the sheer terror and
confusion of the rest, were equally significant.
The Martial judge who said that “the best evidence
was lost because colour could not be tested or blushes
analysed,” would have passed sentence at once.
But if Eive’s air of innocent unconsciousness
and childish indifference were not sincere, it merited
the proverbial praise of consummate affectation, “more
golden than the sun and whiter than snow.”
Eveena’s momentary glance at once drew mine
upon this “pet child,” but neither disturbed
her. Nor did she overact her part. “Eive,”
said Enva one day, “never salts her tears or
paints her blushes.” As soon as she caught
my look of doubt—­

“Have *I* done wrong?” she said,
in a tone half of confidence, half of reproach.
“Punish me, then, Clasfempta, as you please—­with
Eveena’s sandal.”

The repartee delighted those who had reason to desire
any diversion. The appeal to Eveena disarmed
my unwilling and momentary distrust. Eveena,
however, answered by neither word nor look, and the
party presently broke up. Eive crept close to
claim some silent atonement for unspoken suspicion,
and a few minutes had elapsed before, to the evident
alarm of several conscious culprits, I sought Eveena
in her own chamber.

**Page 262**

In spite of all deprecation, I insisted on the explanation
she had evaded in public. “I guess,”
I said, “as much as you can tell me about ‘the
four.’ I have borne too long with those
who have made your life that of a hunted therne, and
rendered myself anxious and restless every day and
hour that I have left you alone. Unless you will
deny that they have done so——­ Well,
then, I will have peace for you and for myself.
I cannot leave you to their mercy, nor can I remain
at home for the next twelve dozen days, like a chained
watch-dragon. Pass them over!” (as she
strove to remonstrate); “there is something new
this time. You have been harassed and frightened
as well as unhappy.”

“Yes,” she admitted, “but I can
give nothing like a reason. I dare not entreat
you not to ask, and yet I am only like a child, that
wakes screaming by night, and cannot say of what she
is afraid. Ought she not to be whipped?”

“I can’t say, bambina; but I should not
advise Eive to startle *you* in that way!
But, seriously, I suppose fear is most painful when
it has no cause that can be removed. I have seen
brave soldiers panic-stricken in the dark, without
well knowing why.”

I watched her face as I spoke, and noted that while
the pet name I had used in the first days of our marriage,
now recalled by her image, elicited a faint smile,
the mention of Eive clouded it again. She was
so unwilling to speak, that I caught at the clue afforded
by her silence.

“It *is* Eive then? The little hypocrite!
She shall find your sandal heavier than mine.”

“No, no!” she pleaded eagerly. “You
have seen what Eive is in your presence; and to me
she is always the same. If she were not, could
I complain of her?”

“And why not, Eveena? Do you think I should
hesitate between you?”

“No!” she answered, with unusual decision
of tone. “I will tell you exactly what
you would do. You would take my word implicitly;
you would have made up your mind before you heard
her; you would deal harder measure to Eive than to
any one, *because* she is your pet; you would
think for once not of sparing the culprit, but of satisfying
me; and afterwards”——­

She paused, and I saw that she would not conclude
in words a sentence I could perhaps have finished
for myself.

“I see,” I replied, “that Eive is
the source of your trouble, but not what the trouble
is. For her sake, do not force me to extort the
truth from her.”

“I doubt whether she has guessed my misgiving,”
Eveena answered. “It may be that you are
right—­that it is because she was so long
the only one you were fond of, that I cannot like
and trust her as you do. But ... you leave the
telegraph in my charge, understanding, of course,
that it will be used as when you are at home.
So, after Davilo’s warning, I have written their
messages for Eunane and the others, but I could not
refuse Eive’s request to write her own, and,
like you, I have never read them.”

**Page 263**

“Why?” I asked. “Surely it
is strange to give her, of all, a special privilege
and confidence?”

Eveena was silent. She could in no case have
reproached me in words, and even the reproach of silence
was so unusual that I could not but feel it keenly.
I saw at that moment that for whatever had happened
or might happen I might thank myself; might thank
the doubt I would not avow to my own mind, but could
not conceal from her, that Eveena had condescended
to something like jealousy of one whose childish simplicity,
real or affected, had strangely won my heart, as children
do win hearts hardened by experience of life’s
roughness and evil.

“I know nothing,” Eveena said at last:
“yet somehow, and wholly without any reason
I can explain, I fear. Eive, you may remember,
has, as your companion, made acquaintance with many
households whose heads you do not believe friends
to you or the Zinta. She is a diligent correspondent.
She never affects to conceal anything, and yet no one
of us has lately seen the contents of a note sent or
received by her.”

There was nothing tangible in Eveena’s suspicion.
It was most repugnant to my own feelings, and yet
it implanted, whether by force of sympathy or of instinct,
a misgiving that never left me again.

“My own,” I answered, “I would trust
your judgment, your observation or feminine instinct
and insight into character, far sooner than my own
conclusions upon solid facts. But instincts and
presentiments, though we are not scientifically ignorant
enough to disregard them, are not evidence on which
we can act or even inquire.”

“No,” she said. “And yet it
is hard to feel, as I cannot help feeling, that the
thunder-cloud is forming, that the bolt is almost ready
to strike, and that you are risking life, and perhaps
more than life, out of a delicacy no other man would
show towards a child—­since child you will
have her—­who, I feel sure, deserves all
she might receive from the hands of one who would
have the truth at any cost.”

“You feel,” I answered, “for me
as I should feel for you. But is death so terrible
to *us*? It means leaving you—­I
wish we knew that it does not mean losing for ever,
after so brief an enjoyment, all that is perishable
in love like ours—­or it would not be worth
fearing. I don’t think I ever did fear
it till you made my life so sweet. But life is
not worth an unkindness or injustice. Better die
trusting to the last than live in the misery and shame
of suspecting one I love, or dreading treacherous
malice from any hand under my own roof.”

When I met Davilo the next morning, the grave and
anxious expression of his face—­usually
calm and serene even in deepest thought, as are those
of the experienced members of an Order confident in
the consciousness of irresistible secret power—­not
a little disturbed me. As Eveena had said, the
thunder-cloud was forming; and a chill went to my
heart which in facing measurable and open peril it
had never felt.

**Page 264**

“I bring you,” he said; “a message
that will not, I am afraid, be welcome. He whose
guest you were at Serocasfe invites you to pay him
an immediate visit; and the invitation must be accepted
at once.”

I drew myself up with no little indignation at the
imperative tone, but feeling at least equal awe at
the stern calmness with which the mandate was spoken.

“And what compels me to such haste, or to compliance
without consideration?”

“That power,” he returned, “which
none can resist, and to which you may not demur.”

Seeing that I still hesitated—­in truth,
the summons had turned my vague misgiving into intense
though equally vague alarm and even terror, which
as unmanly and unworthy I strove to repress, but which
asserted its domination in a manner as unwonted as
unwelcome—­he drew aside a fold of his robe,
and showed within the silver Star of the Order, supported
by the golden sash, that marked a rank second only
to that of the wearer of the Signet itself. I
understood too well by this time, through conversations
with him and other communications of which it has
been needless to speak, the significance of this revelation.
I knew the impossibility of questioning the authority
to which I had pledged obedience. I realised
with great amazement the fact that a secondary position
on my own estate, and a personal charge of my own
safety, had been accepted by a Chief of the Zinta.

“There is, of course,” I replied at last,
“no answer to a mandate so enforced. But,
Chief, reluctant as I am to say it, I fear—­fear
as I have never done before; and yet fear I cannot
say, I cannot guess what.”

“There is no cause for alarm,” he said
somewhat contemptuously. “In this journey,
sudden, speedy, and made under our guard as on our
summons, there is little or none of that peril which
has beset you so long.”

“You forget, Chief,” I rejoined, “that
you speak to a soldier, whose chosen trade was to
risk life at the word of a superior; to one whose
youth thought no smile so bright as that of naked steel,
and had often ‘kissed the lips of the lightning’
ere the down darkened his own. At any rate, you
have told me daily for more than a year that I am living
under constant peril of assassination; have I seemed
to quail thereat? If, then, I am now terrified
for the first time, that which I dread, without knowing
or dreaming what it is, is assuredly a peril worse
than any I have known, the shadow of a calamity against
which I have neither weapon nor courage. It cannot
be for myself that I am thus appalled,” I continued,
the thought flashing into my mind as I spoke it, “and
there is but one whose life is so closely bound with
mine that danger to her should bring such terror as
this. I go at your bidding, but I will not go
alone.”

He paused for some time, apparently in perplexity,
certainly in deep thought, before he replied.

“As you will. One thing more. The
slips of tafroo with which you furnished me have been
under the eyes of which you have heard. This”
(handing me the one that bore no mark) “has passed,
so far as the highest powers of the sense that is
not of the body can perceive, through none but innocent
hands. The hand from which you received this”
(the marked slip) “is spotted with treason, and
may to-morrow be red.”

**Page 265**

I was less impressed by this declaration than probably
would have been any other member of the Order.
I had seen on Earth the most marvellous perceptions
of a perfectly lucid vision succeeded, sometimes within
the space of the same day, by dreams or hallucinations
the most absolutely deceptive. I felt, therefore,
more satisfaction in the acquittal of Eunane, whom
I had never doubted, than trouble at the grave suspicion
suggested against Eive—­a suspicion I still
refused to entertain.

“You should enter your balloon as soon as the
sunset mist will conceal it,” said Davilo.
“By mid-day you may reach the deep bay on the
mid sea-belt of the North, where a swift vessel will
meet you and convey you in two or three days by a
direct course through the canal and gulf you have
traversed already, to the port from which you commenced
your first submarine voyage.”

“You had better,” I said, “make
your instruction a little more particular, or I shall
hardly know how to direct my course.”

“Do not dream,” he answered, “that
you will be permitted to undertake such a journey
but under the safest guidance. At the time I have
named all will be ready for your departure, and you
have simply to sleep or read or meditate as you will,
till you reach your destination.”

Eveena was not a little startled when I informed her
of the sudden journey before me, and my determination
that she should be my companion. It was unquestionably
a trying effort for her, especially the balloon voyage,
which would expose her to the cold of the mists and
of the night, and I feared to the intenser cold of
the upper air. But I dared not leave her, and
she was pleased by a peremptory decision which made
her the companion of my absence, without leaving room
for discussion or question. The time for our departure
was drawing near when, followed by Eunane, she came
into my chamber.

“If we are to be long away,” she said,
“you must say on whom my charges are to devolve.”

“As you please,” I answered, sure of her
choice, and well content to see her hand over her
cares to Eunane, who, if she lacked the wisdom and
forbearance of Eveena, could certainly hold the reins
with a stronger hand.

“Eive,” she said, “has asked the
charge of my flowerbed; but I had promised it, and”——­

“And you would rather give it,” I answered,
“to Eunane? Naturally; and I should not
care to allow Eive the chance of spoiling your work.
I think we may now trust whatever is yours in those
once troublesome hands,” looking at Eunane,
“with perfect assurance that they will do their
best.”

**Page 266**

I had never before parted even from Eunane with any
feeling of regret; but on this occasion an impulse
I could not account for, but have ever since been
glad to remember, made me turn at the last moment and
add to Eveena’s earnest embrace a few words
of affection and confidence, which evidently cheered
and encouraged her deputy. The car that awaited
us was of the light tubular construction common here,
formed of the silvery metal *zorinta*. About
eighteen feet in length and half that breadth, it
was divided into two compartments; each, with the aid
of canopy and curtains, forming at will a closed tent,
and securing almost as much privacy as an Arab family
enjoys, or opening to the sky. In that with which
the sails and machinery were connected were Davilo
and two of his attendants. The other had been
carefully lined and covered with furs and wrappings,
indicating an attention to my companion which indeed
is rarely shown to women by their own lords, and which
none but the daughter of Esmo would have received even
among the brethren of the Order. Ere we departed
I had arranged her cushions and wrapped her closely
in the warmest coverings; and flinging over her at
last the kargynda skin received from the Campta, I
bade her sleep if possible during our aerial voyage.
There was need to provide as carefully as possible
for her comfort. The balloon shot up at once
above the evening mists to a height at which the cold
was intense, but at which our voyage could be guided
by the stars, invisible from below, and at which we
escaped the more dangerously chilling damp. The
wind that blew right in our teeth, caused by no atmospheric
current but by our own rapid passage, would in a few
moments have frozen my face, perhaps fatally, had
not thick skins been arranged to screen us. Even
through these it blew with intense severity, and I
was glad indeed to cover myself from head to foot
and lie down beside Eveena. Her hand as she laid
it on mine was painfully cold; but the shivering I
could hardly suppress made her anxious to part in my
favour with some at least of the many coverings that
could hardly screen herself from the searching blast.
Not at the greatest height I reached among the Himalayas,
nor on the Steppes of Tartary, had I experienced a
cold severer than this. The Sun had just turned
westward when we reached the port at which we were
to embark. Despite the cold, Eveena had slept
during the latter part of our voyage, and was still
sleeping when I placed her on the cushions in our
cabin. The sudden and most welcome change from
bitter cold to comfortable warmth awakened her, as
it at last allowed me to sleep. Our journey was
continued below the surface at a rate of more than
twelve hundred miles in the day, a speed which made
observation through the thick but perfectly transparent
side windows of our cabin impossible. I was indisposed
for meditation, which could have been directed to
no other subject than the mysterious purpose of our
journey, and had not provided myself with books.
But in Eveena’s company it was impossible that
the time should pass slowly or wearily.

**Page 267**

In this balloon journey I had a specially advantageous
opportunity of observing the two moons—­velnaa,
as they are called. *Cavelna*, or Caulna, the
nearer, in diameter about 8’ or a little more
than one-fourth that of our Moon, is a tolerably brilliant
object, about 5000 miles from the surface. Moving,
like all planets and satellites, from west to east,
it completes its stellar revolution and its phases
in less than seven and a half hours; the contrary revolution
of the skies prolongs its circuit around the planet
to a period of ten hours. Zeelna (*Zevelna*)
returns to the same celestial meridian in thirty hours;
but as in this time the starry vault has completed
about a rotation and a quarter in the opposite direction,
it takes nearly five days to reappear on the same
horizon. It is about 3’ in diameter, and
about 12,000 miles from the surface. The result
of the combined motions is that the two moons, to
the eye, seem to move in opposite directions.
When we rose above the mists, Caulna was visible as
a very fine crescent in the west; Zeelna was rising
in the east, and almost full; but hardly a more brilliant
object than Venus when seen to most advantage from
Earth. Both moved so rapidly among the stars that
their celestial change of place was apparent from
minute to minute. But, as regarded our own position,
the appearance was as opposite as their direction.
Zeelna, traversing in twelve hours only one-fifth of
the visible hemisphere, while crossing in the same
time 144 deg. on the zodiac—­twelve degrees
per hour, or our Moon’s diameter in two minutes
and a half—­was left behind by the stars;
and fixing what I may call the ocular attention on
her, she seemed to stand still while they slowly passed
her; thus making their revolution perceptible to sense
as it never is on Earth, for lack of a similar standard.
Caulna, rising in the west and moving eastwards, crossed
the visible sky in five hours, and passed through
the stars at the rate of 48 deg. per hour, so that
she seemed to sail past them like a golden cloudlet
or celestial vessel driven by a slow wind. It
happened this night that she passed over the star
Fomalhaut—­an occultation which I watched
with great interest through an excellent field-glass,
but which lasted only for about half a minute.
About an hour before midnight the two moons passed
each other in the Eastern sky; both gibbous at the
moment, like our Moon in her last quarter. The
difference in size and motion was then most striking;
Caulna seeming to rush past her companion, and the
latter looking like a stationary star in the slowly
moving sky.

**CHAPTER XXV — APOSTACY.**

**Page 268**

We were received on landing by our former host and
conducted to his house. On this occasion, however,
I was not detained in the hall, but permitted at once
to enter the chamber allotted to us. Eveena, who
had exacted from me all that I knew, and much that
I meant to conceal, respecting the occasion of our
journey, was much agitated and not a little alarmed.
My own humble rank in the Zinta rendered so sudden
and imperative a summons the more difficult to understand,
and though by this time well versed in the learning,
neither of us was familiar with the administration
of the Brotherhood. I was glad therefore on her
account, even more than on my own, when, a scratch
at the door having obtained admission for an amba,
it placed before me a message from Esmo requesting
a private conference. Her father’s presence
set Eveena’s mind at rest; since she had learned,
strangely enough from myself, what she had never known
before, the rank he held among the brethren.

“I have summoned you,” he said as soon
as I joined him, “for more than one reason.
There is but one, however, that I need now explain.
Important questions, are as a rule either settled by
the Chiefs alone in Council, or submitted to a general
meeting of the Order. In this case neither course
can be adopted. It would not have occurred to
myself that, under present circumstances, you could
render material service in either of the two directions
in which it may be required. But those by whom
the cause has been prepared have asked that you should
be one of the Convent, and such a request is never
refused. Indeed, its refusal would imply either
such injustice as would render the whole proceeding
utterly incompatible with the first principles of
our cohesion, or such distrust of the person summoned
as is never felt for a member of the Brotherhood.
I would rather say no more on the subject now.
Your nerve and judgment will be sufficiently tried
to-night; and it is a valuable maxim of our science
that, in the hours immediately preceding either an
important decision or a severe trial, the spirit should
be left as far as possible calm and unvexed by vague
shadows of that which is to come.”

The maxim thus expressed, if rendered into the language
of material medicine, is among those which every man
of experience holds and practically acts upon.
I turned the conversation, then, by inviting Esmo
into my own apartment; and I was touched indeed by
the eager delight, even stronger than I had expected,
with which Eveena welcomed her father, and inquired
into the minutest details of the home life from which
she had been, as it seemed to her, so long separated.
What was, however, specially characteristic was the
delicate care with which, even in this first meeting
with one of her own family, she contrived still to
give the paramount place in her attention to her husband,
and never for a moment to let him feel excluded from
a conversation with whose topics he was imperfectly
acquainted, and in which he might have been supposed
uninterested. The hours thus passed pleasantly
away; and, except when Kevima, joined us at the evening
meal, adding a new and unexpected pleasure to Eveena’s
natural delight in this sudden reunion, we remained
undisturbed until a very low electric signal, sounding
apparently through several chambers at once, recalled
Esmo’s mind to the duties before him.

**Page 269**

“You will not,” he said, “return
till late, and I wish you would induce Eveena to ensure,
by composing herself to sleep before your return,
that you shall not be asked to converse until the morning.”

He withdrew with Kevima, and, as instructed, I proceeded
to change my dress for one of pure white adapted to
the occasion, with only a band of crimson around the
waist and throat, and to invest myself in the badge
of the Order. The turban which I wore, without
attracting attention, in the Asiatic rather than in
the Martial form, was of white mingled with red; a
novelty which seemed to Eveena’s eyes painfully
ominous. In Martial language, as in Zveltic symbolism,
crimson generally takes the place of black as the emblem
of guilt and peril. When Esmo re-entered our
chamber for a moment to summon me, he was invested,
as in the Shrine itself, in the full attire of his
office, and I was recalled to a recollection of the
reverence due to the head of the Brotherhood by the
sudden change in Eveena’s manner. To her
father, though a most respectful, she was a fearlessly
affectionate child. For Clavelta she had only
the reverence, deeply intermingled with awe, with
which a devout Catholic convert from the East may
approach for the first time some more than usually
imposing occupant of the Chair of St. Peter.
Before the arm that bore the Signet, and the sash
of gold, we bent knee and head in the deference prescribed
by our rules—­a homage which the youngest
child in the public Nurseries would not dream of offering
to the Campta himself. At a sign from his hand
I followed Esmo, hoping rather than expecting that
Eveena would obey the counsel indirectly addressed
to her. Traversing the same passages as before,
save that a slight turn avoided the symbolic bridge,
and formally challenged at each point as usual by
the sentries, who saluted with profoundest reverence
the Signet of the Order, we passed at last into the
Hall of Initiation.

But on this occasion its aspect was completely changed.
A space immediately in front of what I may call the
veil of the Shrine was closed in by drapery of white
bordered with crimson. The Chiefs occupied, as
before, their seats on the platform. Some fifty
members of the Order sat to right and left immediately
below; but Esmo, on this occasion, seated himself
on the second leftward step of the Throne, which,
with the silver light and the other mystic emblems,
was unveiled in the same strange manner as before
at his approach. Near the lower end of the small
chamber thus formed, crossing the passage between
the seats on either hand, was a barrier of the bright
red metal I have more than once mentioned, and behind
it a seat of some sable material. Behind this,
to right and left, stood silent and erect two sentries
robed in green, and armed with the usual spear.
A deep intense absolute silence prevailed, from the
moment when the last of the party had taken his place,
for the space of some ten minutes. In the faces

**Page 270**

of the Chiefs and of some of the elder Initiates, who
were probably aware of the nature of the scene to
follow, was an expression of calm but deep pain and
regret; crossed now and then by a shade of anxiety,
such as rarely appeared in that abode of assured peace
and profound security. On no countenance was
visible the slightest shadow of restlessness or curiosity.
In the changed aspect of the place, the changed tone
of its associations and of the feelings habitual to
its frequenters, there was something which impressed
and overawed the petulance of youth, and even the
indifference of an experience like my own. At
last, stretching forth the ivory-like staff of mingled
white and red, which on this occasion each of the
Chiefs had substituted for their usual crystal wand,
Esmo spoke, not raising his voice a single semitone
above its usual pitch, but with even unwonted gravity—­

“Come forward, Asco Zvelta!” he said.

The sight I now witnessed, no description could represent
to one who had not seen the same. Parting the
drapery at the lower end, there came forward a figure
in which the most absolutely inexperienced eye could
not fail to recognise a culprit called to trial.
“Came forward,” I have said, because I
can use no other words. But such was not the
term which would have occurred to any one who witnessed
the movement. “Was dragged forward,”
I should say, did I attempt to convey the impression
produced;—­save that no compulsion, no physical
force was used, nor were there any to use it.
And yet the miserable man approached slowly, reluctantly,
shrinking back as one who strives with superior corporeal
power exerted to force him onward, as if physically
dragged on step by step by invisible bonds held by
hands unseen. So with white face and shaking
form he reached the barrier, and knelt as Esmo rose
from his place, honouring instinctively, though his
eyes seemed incapable of discerning them, the symbols
of supreme authority. Then, at a silent gesture,
he rose and fell back into the chair placed for him,
apparently unable to stand and scarcely able to sustain
himself on his seat.

“Brother,” said the junior of the Chiefs,
or he who occupied the place farthest to the right;—­and
now I noticed that eleven were present, the last seat
on the right of him who spoke being vacant—­“you
have unveiled to strangers the secrets of the Shrine.”

He paused for an answer; and, in a tone strangely
unnatural and expressionless, came from the scarcely
parted lips of the culprit the reply—­”

“It is true.”

“You have,” said the next of the Chiefs,
“accepted reward to place the lives of your
brethren at the mercy of their enemies.”

“It is true.”

“You have,” said he who occupied the lowest
seat upon the left, “forsworn in heart and deed,
if not in word, the vows by which you willingly bound
yourself, and the law whose boons you had accepted.”

Again the same confession, forced evidently by some
overwhelming power from one who would, if he could,
have denied or remained silent.

**Page 271**

“And to whom,” said Esmo, interposing
for the first time, “have you thus betrayed
us?”

“I know not,” was the reply.

“Explain,” said the Chief immediately
to the left of the Throne, who, if there were a difference
in the expression of the calm sad faces, seemed to
entertain more of compassion and less of disgust and
repulsion towards the offender than any other.

“Those with whom I spoke,” replied the
culprit, in the same strange tone, “were not
known to me, but gave token of authority next to that
of the Campta. They told me that the existence
of the Order had long been known, that many of its
members were clearly indicated by their household
practices, that their destruction was determined; that
I was known as a member of the Order, and might choose
between perishing first of their victims and receiving
reward such as I should name myself for the information
I could give.”

“What have you told?” asked another of
the Chiefs.

“I have not named one of the symbols. I
have not betrayed the Shrine or the passwords.
I have told that the Zinta *is*. I have told
the meaning of the Serpent, the Circle, and the Star,
though I have not named them.”

“And,” said he on the left of the Throne,
“naming the hope that is more than all hope,
recalling the power that is above all power, could
you dare to renounce the one and draw on your own head
the justice of the other? What reward could induce
a child of the Light to turn back into darkness?
What authority could protect the traitor from the fate
he imprecated and accepted when he first knelt before
the Throne?” “The hope was distant and
the light was dim,” the offender answered.
“I was threatened and I was tempted. I knew
that death, speedy and painless, was the penalty of
treason to the Order, that a death of prolonged torture
might be the vengeance of the power that menaced me.
I hoped little in the far and dim future of the Serpent’s
promise, and I hoped and feared much in the life on
this side of death.”

“Do you know,” asked the last inquirer
again, “no name, and nothing that can enable
us to trace those with whom you spoke or those who
employed them?”

“Only this,” was the answer, “that
one of them has an especial hatred to one Initiate
present,” pointing to myself; “and seeks
his life, not only as a child of the Star, not only
as husband of the daughter of Clavelta, but for a
reason that is not known to me.”

“And,” asked another Chief, “do
you know what instrument that enemy seeks to use?”

“One who has over her intended victim such influence
as few of her sex ever have over their lords; one
of whom his love will learn no distrust, against whom
his heart has no guard and his manhood no wisdom.”

A shiver of horror passed over the forms of the Chiefs
and of many who sat near them, incomprehensible to
me till a sudden light was afforded by the indignant
interruption of Kevima, who sat not far from myself.

**Page 272**

“It cannot be,” he cried, “or you
can name her whom you accuse.”

“Be silent!” Esmo said, in the cold, grave
tone of a president rebuking disorder, mingled with
the deeper displeasure of a priest repressing irreverence
in the midst of the most solemn religious rite.
“None may speak here till the Chiefs have ceased
to speak.”

None of the latter, however, seemed disposed to ask
another question. The guilt of the accused was
confessed. All that he could tell to guide their
further inquiries had been told. To doubt that
what was forced from him was to the best of his knowledge
true, was to them, who understood the mysterious power
that had compelled the spirit and the lips to an unwilling
confession, impossible. And if it had seemed
that further information might have been extracted
relative to my own personal danger, a stronger tie,
a deeper obligation, bound them to the supposed object
of the last obscure imputation, and none was willing
to elicit further charges or clearer evidence.
Probably also they anticipated that, when the word
was extended to the Initiates, I should take up my
own cause.

“Would any brother speak?” asked Esmo,
when the silence of the Chiefs had lasted for a few
moments.

But his rebuke had silenced Kevima, and no one else
cared to interpose. The eyes of the assembly
turned upon me so generally and so pointedly, that
at last I felt myself forced, though against my own
judgment, to rise.

“I have no question to ask the accused,”
I said.

“Then,” replied Esmo calmly, “you
have nothing now to say. Give to the brother
accused before us the cup of rest.”

A small goblet was handed by one of the sentries to
the miserable creature, now half-insensible, who awaited
our judgment. In a very few moments he had sunk
into a slumber in which his face was comparatively
calm, and his limbs had ceased to tremble. His
fate was to be debated in the presence indeed of his
body, but in the absence of consciousness and knowledge.

“Has any elder brother,” inquired Esmo,
“counsel to afford?”

No word was spoken.

“Has any brother counsel to afford?”

Again all were silent, till the glance which the Chief
cast in order along the ranks of the assembly fell
upon myself.

“One word,” I said. “I claim
permission to speak, because the matter touches closely
and cruelly my own honour.”

There was that inaudible, invisible, motionless “movement,”
as some French reporters call it, of surprise throughout
the assembly which communicates itself instinctively
to a speaker.

“My own honour,” I continued, “in
the honour dearer and nearer to me even than my own.
What the accused has spoken may or may not be true.”

“It is true,” interposed a Chief, probably
pitying my ignorance.

**Page 273**

“May be true,” I continued, “though
I will not believe it, to whomsoever his words may
apply. That no such treason as they have suggested
ever for one moment entered, or could enter, the heart
of her who knelt with me, in presence of many now
here, before that Throne, I will vouch by all the
symbols we revere in common, and with the life which
it seems is alone threatened by the feminine domestic
treason alleged, from whomsoever that treason may proceed.
I will accuse none, as I suspect none; but I will
say that the charge might be true to the letter, and
yet not touch, as I know it does not justly touch,
the daughter of our Chief.”

A deep relief was visible in the faces which had so
lately been clouded by a suspicion terrible to all.
Esmo’s alone remained impassive throughout my
vindication, as throughout the apparent accusation
and silent condemnation of his daughter.

“Has any brother,” he said, “counsel
to speak respecting the question actually before us?”

One and all were silent, till Esmo again put the formal
question:—­

“Has he who was our brother betrayed the brotherhood?”

From every member of the assembly came a clear unmistakable
assent.

“Is he outcast?”

Silence rather than any distinct sign answered in
the affirmative.

“Is it needful that his lips be sealed for ever?”

One or two of the Chiefs expressed in a single sentence
an affirmative conviction, which was evidently shared
by all present except myself. Appealing by a
look to Esmo, and encouraged by his eye, I spoke—­

“The outcast has confessed treason worthy of
death. That I cannot deny. But he has sinned
from fear rather than from greed or malice; and to
fear, courage should be indulgent. The coward
is but what Allah has made him, and to punish cowardice
is to punish the child for the heritage his parents
have inflicted. Moreover, no example of punishment
will make cowards brave. It seems to me, then,
that there is neither justice nor wisdom in taking
vengeance upon the crime of weakness.”

In but two faces, those of Esmo and of his next colleague
on the left, could I see the slightest sign of approval.
One of the other chiefs answered briefly and decisively
my plea for mercy.

“If,” he said, “treason proceed
from fear, the more cause that a greater fear should
prevent the treason of cowardice for the future.
The same motives that have led the offender to betray
so much would assuredly lead him to betray more were
he released; and to attempt lifelong confinement is
to make the lives of all dependent on a chance in
order to spare one unworthy life. The excuse which
our brother has pleaded may, we hope, avail with a
tribunal which can regard the conscience apart from
the consequences. It ought not to avail with
us.”

**Page 274**

But the law of the Zinta, as I now learned, will not
allow sentence of death to be passed save by an absolutely
unanimous vote. It is held that if one judge
educated in the ideas of the Order, appreciating to
the full the priceless importance of its teaching and
the guilt of treason against it, is unpersuaded that
there exists sufficient cause for the supreme penalty,
the doubt is such as should preclude the infliction
of that penalty. It is, however, permitted and
expected that the dissentients, if few in number,
much more a single dissentient, shall listen attentively
and give the most respectful and impartial consideration
to the arguments of brethren, and especially of seniors.
If a single mind remains unmoved, its dissent is decisive.
But it would be the gravest dereliction of duty to
persist from wilfulness, obstinacy, or pride, in adhesion
to a view perhaps hastily expressed in opposition
to authority and argument. The debate to which
my speech gave rise lasted for two hours. Each
speaker spoke but a few terse expressive sentences;
and after each speech came a pause allowing full time
for the consideration of its reasoning. Two points
were very soon made clear to all. The offender
had justly forfeited his life; and if his death were
necessary or greatly conducive to the safety of the
rest, the mercy which for his sake imperilled worthier
men and sacred truths would have been no less than
a crime. The thought, however, that weighed most
with me against my natural feeling was an experience
to which none present could appeal. I had sat
on many courts-martial where cowardice was the only
charge imputed; and in every case in which that charge
was proved, sentence of death had been passed and
carried out on a ground I could not refuse to consider
sufficient:—­namely, that the infection of
terror can best be repressed by an example inspiring
deeper terror than that to which the prisoner has
yielded. Compelled by these precedents, though
with intense reluctance, I submitted at last to the
universal judgment. Esmo having collected the
will, I cannot say the voices, of the assembly, paused
for a minute in silence.

“The Present has pronounced,” he said
at last. “Are the voices of the Past assentient?”

He looked around as if to see whether, under real
or supposed inspiration, any of those before him would
give in another name a judgment opposite to that in
which all had concurred. Instinctively I glanced
towards the Throne, but it remained vacant as ever.
Then, fixing his eyes for a few moments upon the culprit,
who started and woke to full consciousness under his
gaze—­and receiving from the Chief nearest
to him on the left a chain of small golden circles
similar to that of the canopy, represented also on
the Signet, while he on the right held a small roll,
on the golden surface of which a long list of names
was inscribed—­our Superior pronounced, amid
deepest stillness, in a low clear tone, the form of
excommunication; breaking at the appropriate moment
one link from the chain, and, at a later point, drawing
a broad crimson bar through one cipher on the roll:—­

**Page 275**

 “Conscience-convict, tried in truth,
 Judged in justice, doomed in ruth;
 Ours no more—­once ours
in vain—­
 Falls the Veil and snaps the Chain,
 Drops the link and lies alone:—­
 Traitor to the Emerald Throne,
 Alien from the troth we plight,
 Kature native to the night;
 Trained in Light the Light to scorn,
 Soul apostate and forsworn,
 False to symbol, sense, and sign,
 To the Serpent’s pledge divine,
 To the Wings that reach afar,
 To the Circle and the Star;
 Recreant to the mystic rule,
 Outlaw from the sacred school—­
 Backward is the Threshold crossed;
 Lost the Light, the Life is lost.
 Go; the golden page we blot:
 Go; forgetting and forgot!
 Go—­by final sentence
shriven,
 Be thy crime absolved in Heaven!”

Once more the Throne and the Emblems behind and above
it had been veiled in impenetrable darkness.
Instinctively, as it seemed, every one present had
risen to his feet, and stood with bent head and downcast
eyes as the Condemned, rising mechanically, turned
without a word and passed away.

**CHAPTER XXVI — TWILIGHT.**

I was, perhaps, the only member of the assembly to
whom the doomed man was not personally known, and
to all of us the tie which had been severed was one
at least as close as that of natural brotherhood on
Earth.

How long the pause lasted—­how, or why,
or when we resumed our seats, even I knew not.
The Shrine was unveiled, and Esmo’s next colleague
spoke again—­

“A seat among the elders has been three days
vacant by the departure of one well known and dear
to all. His colleagues have considered how best
it may be filled. The member they have selected
is of the youngest in experience here; but from the
first moment of his initiation it was evident to us
that more than half the learning of the Starlight
had been his before. Nothing could so deeply confirm
our joy and confidence in that lore, as to find that
in another world the truths we hold dearest are held
with equal faith, that many of our deepest secrets
have there been sought and discovered by societies
not unlike our own. For that reason, and because
of that House, whereof now but two members are left
us, he is by wedlock and adoption the third, the elder
brethren have unanimously resolved to recommend to
Clavelta, and to the Children of the Star, that this
seat,” and he pointed to the vacant place, “shall
be filled by him who has but now expressed, with a
warmth seldom shown in this place, his love and trust
for the daughter of our Chief, the descendant of our
Founder.”

Certainly not on my own account, but from the earnest
attachment and devotion they felt for Esmo, both personally
as a long-tried and deservedly revered Chief, and
as almost the last representative of a lineage so
profoundly loved and honoured, the approval of all
present was expressed with a sudden and eager warmth
which deeply affected me; the more that it expressed
an hereditary regard and esteem, not for myself but
for Eveena, rarely or never, even among the Zveltau,
paid to a woman. Esmo bent his head in assent,
and then, addressing me by name, called me to the
foot of the platform.

**Page 276**

He held in his hand the golden sash and rose-coloured
wand which marked the rank about to be bestowed on
me. I felt very deeply my own incompetence and
ignorance; and even had I valued more the proffered
honour, I should have been bound to decline it.
But at the third word I spoke, I was silenced with
a stern though perfectly calm severity. Flinging
back the fold of his robe that covered his left arm,
with a gesture that placed the Signet full before
my eyes, he said—­

“You have sworn obedience.”

A soldier’s instinct or habit, the mesmeric
command of Esmo’s glance, and the awe, due less
to my own feeling than to the infectious reverence
of others, which the symbols and the oaths of the Order
extorted, left me no further will to resist. At
the foot of the Throne I received the investiture
of my new rank; and as I rose and faced my brethren,
every hand was lifted to the lips, every head bent
in salutation of their new leader. Then, as I
passed to the extreme place on the right, they came
forward to grasp my hand and utter a few words of
sympathy and kindness, in which a frank spirit of affectionate
comradeship, that reminded me forcibly of the mess-tent
and the bivouac fire, was mingled with the sense of
a deeper and more sacred tie.

Scarcely had we resumed our places than a startling
incident gave a new turn to the scene. Approaching
the barrier, a woman, veiled, but wearing the sash
and star, knelt for a moment to the presence of the
Arch-Teacher, and then, as the barrier was thrown open
by the sentries, came up to the dais.

“She,” said the new-comer, “has
a message for you, Clavelta, for your Council, and
particularly for the last of its members.”

“It is well,” he answered.

The messenger took her seat among the Initiates, and
Esmo dismissed the assembly in the solemn form employed
on the former occasion. Then, followed by the
twelve, and guided by the messenger (the gloved fingers
of whose left hand, as I observed, he very slightly
touched with his own right), he passed by another
door out of the Hall, and along one of the many passages
of the subterrene Temple, into a chamber resembling
in every respect an apartment in an ordinary residence.
Here, with her veil, as is permitted only to maidenhood,
drawn back from her face, but covering almost entirely
her neck and bosom, and clad in the vestal white,
reclined with eyes nearly closed a young girl, in
whose countenance a beauty almost spiritual was enhanced
rather than marred by signs of physical ill-health
painfully unmistakable. Warning us back with
a slight movement of his hand, Esmo approached her.
Our presence had at first seemed to cast her into
almost convulsive agitation; but under his steady gaze
and the movement of his hands, she lapsed almost instantly
into what appeared to be profound slumber.

\* \* \* \*
 \*

**Page 277**

The practical information that concerned the present
peril menacing the Order delivered, and when it was
plain that no further revelation or counsel was to
be expected on this all-important topic, Esmo beckoned
to me, taking my hand in his own and placing it very
gently and carefully in that of the unconscious sybil.
The effect, however, was startling. Without unclosing
her eyes, she sprang into a sitting posture and clasped
my hand almost convulsively with her own long, thin
all but transparent fingers. Turning her face
to mine, and seeming, though her eyes were closed,
as if she looked intently into it, she murmured words
at first unintelligible, but which seemed by degrees
to bear clearer and clearer reference to some of the
stormy scenes of my youth in another world. Then—­as
one looking upon pictures but partially intelligible
to her, and commenting on them as a girl who had never
seen or known the passions and the mutual enmity of
men—­she startled me by breaking into the
kind of chant in which the peculiar verse of her language
is commonly delivered. My own thought of the
moment was not her guide. The Moslem battle-cry
had rung too often in my ears ever to be forgotten;
but up to that moment I had never recalled to memory
the words in which on my last field I retorted upon
my Arab comrades, when flinching from a third charge
against those terrible “sons of Eblis,”
whose stubborn courage had already twice hurled us
back in confusion and disgrace with a hundred empty
saddles. At first her tone was one of simple amaze
and horror. It softened afterwards into wonder
and perplexity, and the oft-repeated rebuke or curse
was on its last recurrence spoken with more of pitying
tenderness and regret than of severity:—­

 “What! those are human bosoms whereon
the brute hath trod!
 What! through the storm of slaughter
rings the appeal to God!
 Through the smoke and flash of battle
a single form is shown;
 O’er clang and crash and rattle
peals out one trumpet-tone—­
 ‘Strike, for Allah and the
Prophet! let Eblis take his own!’

 “Strange! the soul that, fresh from
carnage, quailed not alone to face
 The unfathomed depths of Darkness,
the solitudes of Space!
 Strange! the smile of scorn, while
nerveless dropped the sword-arm from
 the
sting,
 On the death that scowled at distance,
on the closing murder-ring.
 Strange! no crimson stain on conscience
from the hand in gore imbrued!
 But Death haunts the death-dealer;
blood taints the life of blood!

 “Strange! the arm that smote and
spared not in the tempest of the strife,
 Quivers with pitying terror—­clings,
for a maiden’s life!
 Strange! the heart steel-hard to
death-shrieks by girlish tears subdued;
 The falcon’s sheathless talons
among the esve’s brood!
 But Death haunts the death-dealer;
blood taints the life of blood.

 “The breast for woman’s peril
that dared the despot’s ire,
 Shall dauntless front, and scathless,
the closing curve of fire.
 The heart, by household treason
stung home, that can forgive,
 Shall brave a woman’s hatred,
a woman’s wiles, and live.

**Page 278**

 “A woman’s well-won fealty
shall give the life he gave,
 Love shall redeem the loving, and
Sacrifice shall save.
 But—­God heal the tortured
spirit, God calm the maddened mood;
 For Death haunts the death-dealer;
blood taints the life of blood!”

Relaxing but not releasing her grasp of my own hand,
she felt about with her left till Esmo gently placed
his own therein. Then, in a tone at first of
deep and passionate anxiety and eagerness, passing
into one of regretful admiration, and varying with
the purport of each utterance, she broke into another
chant, in which were repeated over and again phrases
familiar in the traditions and prophetic or symbolic
formularies of the Zinta:—­

 “Ever on deadliest peril shines
the Star with steadiest ray;
 Ever quail the fiercest hunters
when Kargynda turns at bay.
 Close, Children of the Starlight!
close, for the Emerald Throne!
 Close round the life that closeth
your life within the zone!
 Rests the Golden Circle’s
glory, rests the silver gleam on her
 Who shall rein Kargynda’s
fury with a thread of gossamer.
 He metes not mortal measure, He
pays not human price,
 Who crowns that life’s devotion
with the death of sacrifice!
 Woe worth the moment’s panic;
woe worth the victory won!
 But the Night is near the breaking
when the Stranger claims his own.
“Ever on deadliest peril shines the Star with steadiest ray; Ever quail the fiercest hunters when Kargynda turns at bay.  No life is worth the living that counts each fleeting breath; No eyes from God averted can meet the eyes of Death.  Vague fear and spectral terrors haunt the soul that dwells in shade, Nor e’er can crimson conscience confront the crimson blade.  From a cloud of shame and sorrow breaks the Light that shines afar, And cold and dark the household spark that lit the Silver Star.  The triumph is a death-march; the victor’s voice a moan:—­But the Powers of Night are broken when the Stranger wins his own!
 “Ever in blackest midnight shines
the Star with brightest ray;
 Woe to them that hunt the theme
if Kargynda cross the way!
 In the Home of Peace, Clavelta,
can our fears thy spirit move?
 Look down! whence comes the rescue
to the household of thy love?
 As the All-Commander’s lightning
falls the Vengeance from above!
 A shriek from thousand voices; a
thunder crash; a groan;
 A thousand homes in mourning—­a
thousand deaths in one!
 Woe to the Sons of Darkness, for
the Stranger wields his own!
 Oh, hide that scene of horror in
the deepest shades of night!
 Look upward to the welkin, where
the Vessel fades from sight ...
 But the Veil is rent for ever by
the Hand that veiled the Shrine;
 And, on a peace of ages, the Star
of Peace shall shine!”

**Page 279**

Esmo listened with the anxious attention of one who
believed that her every word had a real and literal
meaning; and his face was overclouded with a calm
but deep sadness, which testified to the nature of
the impression made on his mind by language that hardly
conveyed to my own more than a dim and general prediction
of victory, won through scenes of trial and trouble.
But when she had closed, a quiet satisfaction in what
seemed to be the final promise of triumph to the Star,
at whatever cost to the noblest of its adherents, was
all that I could trace in his countenance.

The sibyl fell back as the last word passed her lips,
with a sigh of relief, into what was evidently a profound
and insensible sleep. Those around me must have
witnessed such scenes at least as often as I; but
it was plain that the impression made, even on the
experienced Chiefs of the Order, was far deeper than
had affected myself. I should hardly have been
able to remember the words of the prophecy, but for
subsequent conversation thereon with Eveena, when one
part had been fulfilled and the rest was on the eve
of a too terribly truthful fulfilment; but for the
events that fixed their prediction in my mind—­it
may be in terms a little more precise than those actually
employed, though I have endeavoured to record these
with conscientious accuracy.

Led by Esmo, we passed along another gallery into
the small chamber where met the secret Council of
the Order, and long and anxious were the debates wherein
the revelations of the dreamer were treated as conveying
the most certain and unquestionable warning. The
first rays of morning were stealing through the mists
into the peristyle of our host’s dwelling before
I re-entered Eveena’s chamber. She was
slumbering, but restlessly, and so lightly that she
sprang up at once on my entrance. For a few moments
all other thought was lost in the delight of my return
after an absence whose very length had alarmed her,
despite her father’s previous assurance.
But as at last she drew back sufficiently to look
into my face, its expression seemed to startle and
sadden her. The questions that sprang to her lips
died there, as she probably saw in my eyes a look
not only of weariness and perplexity, but of profound
reluctance to speak of what had passed. Expressing
her sympathy only by look and touch, she began to unclasp
my robe at the throat, aware that my only wish was
for rest, and content to postpone her own anxiety
and natural curiosity. Then, as the golden sash
which I had not removed met her sight, she looked up
for a moment with a glance of natural pride and fondness,
intensely gratified by the highly-prized honour paid
to her husband; then bent low and kissed my hand with
the gesture wherewith the presence of a superior is
acknowledged by the members of the Order. “Used
as my earlier life was, Eveena, to the Eastern prostrations
of my own world, I hate all that recals them; and
if I must accept, as I fulfil, these forms in the
Halls of the Zinta, let me never be reminded of them
by you.”

**Page 280**

**CHAPTER XXVII — THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.**

If I could have endured to describe to Eveena the
terrible trial scene, that which occurred before she
had the chance to question me would have certainly
sealed my lips. The past night had told upon me
as no fatigue, no anxiety, no disaster of my life on
Earth had ever done. I awoke faint and exhausted
as a nervous valetudinarian, and I suppose my feeling
must have been plainly visible in my face, for Eveena
would not allow me to rise from the cushions till she
had summoned an *amba* and procured the material
of a morning meal, though the hour was noon.
Far too considerate to question me then, she was perhaps
a little disappointed that, almost before I had dressed,
a message from her father summoned me to his presence.

“It is right,” he said quietly, and with
no show of feeling, though his face was somewhat pale,
“that you should be acquainted with the fulfilment
of the sentence you assisted to pass. The outcast
was found this morning dead in his own chamber.
Nay, you need not start! We need no deathsman;
alike by sudden disease, by suicide, by accident, our
doom executes itself. But enough of this.
I accepted the vote which invested you with the second
rank in our Order, less because I think you will render
service to it here than that I desired you to possess
that entire knowledge of its powers and secrets which
might enable you to plant a branch or offshoot where
none but you could carry it ... That you will
soon leave this world seemed to me probable, before
the anticipations of practical prudence were confirmed
by the voice of prophecy. Your Astronaut shall
be stored with all of which I know you have need,
and with any materials whose use I do not know that
you may point out. To remove it from Asnyea would
now be too dangerous. If you receive tidings
that shall bring you again into its neighbourhood,
do not lose the opportunity of re-entering it....
And now let me take leave of you, as of a dear friend
I may not meet again.”

“Do you know,” I said, more touched by
the tone than by the words, “that Eveena asked
and I gave a promise that when I do re-enter it she
shall be my companion?”

“I did not know it, but I took for granted that
she would desire it, and I should have been grieved
to doubt that you would assent. I cannot disturb
her peace by saying to her what I have just said to
you, and must part from her as on any ordinary occasion.”

That parting, happily, I did not witness. Before
evening we re-entered our vessel, and returned home
without any incident worthy of mention.

**Page 281**

To my surprise, my return plunged me at once into
the kind of vexation which Eveena had so anxiously
endeavoured to spare me, and which I had hoped Eunane’s
greater decision and less exaggerated tenderness would
have avoided. She seemed excited and almost fretful,
and before we had been half an hour at home had greeted
me with a string of complaints which, on her own showing,
seemed frivolous, and argued as much temper on her
part as customary petulance on that of others.
On one point, however, her report confirmed the suggestions
of Eveena’s previous experience. She had
wrested at once from Eive’s hand the pencil that
had hitherto been used in absolute secrecy, and the
consequent quarrel had been sharp enough to suggest,
if not to prove, that the privilege was of practical
as well as sentimental moment. Though aggravated
by no rebuke, my tacit depreciation of her grievances
irritated Eunane to an extreme of petulance unusual
with her of late; which I bore so long as it was directed
against myself, but which, turned at last on Eveena,
wholly exhausted my patience. But no sooner had
I dismissed the offender than Eveena herself interposed,
with even more than her usual tenderness for Eunane.

“Do not blame my presumption,” she said;
“do not think that I am merely soft or weak,
if I entreat you to take no further notice of Eunane’s
mood. I cannot but think that, if you do, you
will very soon repent it.”

She could not or would not give a reason for her intercession;
but some little symptoms I might have seen without
observing, some perception of the exceptional character
of Eunane’s outbreak, or some unacknowledged
misgiving accordant with her own, made me more than
willing to accept Eveena’s wish as a sufficient
cause for forbearance. When we assembled at the
morning meal Eunane appeared to be conscious of error;
at all events, her manner and temper were changed.
Watching her closely, I thought that neither shame
for an outbreak of unwonted extravagance nor fear
of my displeasure would account for her languor and
depression. But illness is so rare among a race
educated for countless generations on principles scientifically
sound and sanitary, inheriting no seeds of disease
from their ancestry, and safe from the infection of
epidemics long extirpated, that no apprehension of
serious physical cause for her changes of temper and
complexion entered into my mind. To spare her
when she deserved no indulgence was the surest way
to call forth Eunane’s best impulses; and I was
not surprised to find her, soon after the party had
dispersed, in Eveena’s chamber. That all
the amends I could desire had been made and accepted
was sufficiently evident. But Eunane’s agitation
was so violent and persistent, despite all Eveena’s
soothing, that I was at last seriously apprehensive
of its effect upon the latter. The moment we
were alone Eveena said—­

“I have never seen illness, but if Eunane is
not ill, and very ill, all I have gathered in my father’s
household from such books as he has allowed me, and
from his own conversation, deceives me wholly; and
yet no illness of which I have ever heard in the slightest
degree resembles this.”

**Page 282**

“I take it to be,” I said, “what
on Earth women call hysteria and men temper.”

To this opinion, however, I could not adhere when,
watching her closely, I noticed the evident lack of
spirit and strength with which the most active and
energetic member of the household went about her usual
pursuits. A terrible suspicion at first entered
my mind, but was wholly discountenanced by Eveena,
who insisted that there was no conceivable motive
for an attempt to injure Eunane; while the idea that
mischief designed for others had unintentionally fallen
on her was excluded by the certainty that, whatever
the nature of her illness, if it were such, it had
commenced before our return. Long before evening
I had communicated with Esmo, and received from him
a reply which, though exceedingly unsatisfactory,
rather confirmed Eveena’s impression. The
latter had taken upon herself the care of the evening
meal; but, before we could meet there, my own observation
had suggested an alarm I dared not communicate to
her—­one which a wider experience than hers
could neither verify nor dispel. Among symptoms
wholly alien, there were one or two which sent a thrill
of terror to my heart;—­which reminded me
of the most awful and destructive of the scourges
wherewith my Eastern life had rendered me but too familiar.
It was not unnatural that, if carried to a new world,
that fearful disease should assume a new form; but
how could it have been conveyed? how, if conveyed,
could its incubation in some unknown vehicle have
been so long? and how had it reached one, and one only,
of my household—­one, moreover, who had
no access to such few relics of my own world as I
had retained, of which Eveena had the exclusive charge?
All Esmo’s knowledge, even were he within reach,
could hardly help me here. I dared, of course,
suggest my apprehension to no one, least of all to
the patient herself. As, towards evening, her
languor was again exchanged for the feverish excitement
of the previous night, I seized on some petulant word
as an excuse to confine her to her room, and, selfishly
enough, resolved to invoke the help of the only member
of the family who should, and perhaps would, be willing
to run personal risk for the sake of aiding Eunane
in need and protecting Eveena. I had seen as
yet very little of Velna, Eunane’s school companion;
but now, calling her apart, I told her frankly that
I feared some illness of my own Earth had by some
means been communicated to her friend.

“You have here,” I said, “for ages
had no such diseases as those which we on Earth most
dread; those which, communicated through water, air,
or solid particles, spread from one person to another,
endangering especially those who come nearest to the
sufferers. Whoever approaches Eunane risks all
that I fear for her, and that ‘all’ means
very probably speedy death. To leave her alone
is impossible; and if I cannot report that she is
fully cared for in other hands, no command, nothing
short of actual compulsion, will keep Eveena away from
her.”

**Page 283**

The girl looked up with a steady frank courage and
unaffected readiness I had not expected.

“I owe you much, Clasfempta, and still more
perhaps to Eveena. My life is not so precious
that I should not be ready to give it at need for
either of you; and if I should lose Eunane, I would
prefer not to live to remember my loss.”

The last words reminded me that to her who spoke death
meant annihilation; a fact which has deprived the
men of her race of nearly every vestige of the calm
courage now displayed by this young girl, indebted
as little as any human being could be to the insensible
influences of home affection, or the direct moral teaching
which is sometimes supposed to be a sufficient substitute.
I led her at once into her friend’s chamber,
and a single glance satisfied me that my apprehensions
were but too well-founded. Remaining long enough
to assure the sufferer that the displeasure I had
affected had wholly passed away, and to suggest the
only measures of relief rather than of remedy that
occurred to me, I endeavoured for a few moments to
collect my thoughts and recover the control of my
nerves in solitude. In my own chamber Eveena
would assuredly have sought me, and I chose therefore
one of those as yet unoccupied. It did not take
long to convince me that no ordinary resources at
my command, no medical experience of my own, no professional
science existing among a race who probably never knew
the disease in question, and had not for ages known
anything like it, could avail me. My later studies
in the occult science of Eastern schools had not furnished
me with any antidote in which I believed on Earth,
and if they had, it was not here available. Despair
rather than hope suggested an appeal to those which
the analogous secrets of the Starlight might afford.
Anxiety, agitation, personal interest so powerful
as now disturbed me, are generally fatal to the exercise
of the powers recently placed at my command; so recently
that, but for Terrestrial experience, I should hardly
have known how to use them. But the arts which
assist in and facilitate that tremendous all-absorbing
concentration of will on which the exertion of those
powers depends, are far more fully developed in the
Zveltic science than in its Earthly analogues.
A desperate effort, aided by those arts, at last controlled
my thoughts, and turned them from the sick-room to
that distant chamber in which I had so lately stood.

\* \* \* \*
 \*

I seemed to stand beside her, and at once to be aware
that my thought was visible to the closed eyes.
From lips paler than ever, words—­so generally
resembling those I had previously heard that some readers
may think them the mere recollection thereof—­appeared
to reach my sense or my mind as from a great distance,
spoken in a tone of mingled pity, promise, and reproof:—­

**Page 284**

“What is youth or sex or beauty
in the All-Commander’s sight?
For the arm that smote and spared not, shall His
wisdom spare to smite?
Yet, love redeems the loving; yet in thy need avail
The Soul whose light surrounds thee, the faith
that will not fail.
Thy lips shall soothe the terror, call to yon couch
afar
The solace of the Serpent, the shadow of the Star!
Strength shall sustain the strengthless, nor the
soft hand loose its
grasp
Of the hand it trusts and clings to—­till
another meet its clasp....
—­Steel-hard to man’s last anguish,
wax-soft to woman’s mood!—­
Death quits not the death-dealer; blood haunts
the life of blood!”

\* \* \* \*
 \*

Returning to the peristyle, I encountered Eveena,
who had been seeking me anxiously. Much alarmed
for her, I bade her return at once to her room.
She obeyed as of course, equally of course surprised
and a little mortified; while I, marvelling by what
conceivable means the plague of Cairo or Constantinople
could have been conveyed across forty million miles
of space and some two years of Earthly time, paced
the peristyle for a few minutes. As I did so,
my eye fell on the roses which grew just where chance
arrested my steps. If they do not afford an explanation
which scientific medicine will admit, I can suggest
no other. But, if it were so, how fearfully true
the warning!—­by what a mysterious fate
did death dog my footsteps, and “blood haunt
the life of blood!”

The reader may not remember that the central chamber
of the women’s apartments, next to which was
Eunane’s, had been left vacant. This I
determined to occupy myself, and bade the girls remove
at once to those on its right, as yet unallotted.
I closed the room, threw off my dress, and endeavoured
by means of the perfumed shower-bath to drive from
my person what traces of the infection might cling
to it; for Eveena had the keys of all my cases and
of the medicine-chest, and I could not make up my
mind to reclaim them by a simple unexplained message
sent by an amba, or, still worse, by the hands of Enva
or Eive. I laid the clothes I had worn on one
of the shelves of the wall, closing over them the
crystal doors of the sunken cupboard; and, having
obtained through the amban a dress which I had not
worn since my return, and which therefore could hardly
have about it any trace of infection, I sought Eveena
in her own room.

That something had gone wrong, and gravely wrong,
she could not but know; and I found her silent and
calm, indeed, but weeping bitterly, whether for the
apprehension of danger to me, or for what seemed want
of trust in her. I asked her for the keys, and
she gave them; but with a mute appeal that made the
concealment I desired, however necessary, no longer
possible. Gently, cautiously as I could, but softening,
not hiding, any part of the truth, I gave her the
full confidence to which she was entitled, and which,
once forced out of the silence preserved for her sake,

**Page 285**

it was an infinite relief to give. If I could
not observe equal gentleness of word and manner in
absolutely forbidding her to approach, either Eunane’s
chamber or my own, it was because, the moment she
conceived what I was about to say, her almost indignant
revolt from the command was apparent. For the
first and last time she distinctly and firmly refused
compliance, not merely with the kindly though very
decided request at first spoken, but with the formal
and peremptory command by which I endeavoured to enforce
it.

“You command me to neglect a sister in peril
and suffering,” she said. “It is
not kind; it is hardly worthy of you; but my first
duty is to you, and you have the right, if you will,
to insist that I shall reserve my life for your sake.
But you command me also to forsake you in danger and
in sorrow; and nothing but the absolute force you may
of course employ shall compel me to obey you in that.”

“I understand you, Eveena; and you, in your
turn, must think and feel that I intend to express
neither displeasure nor pain; that I mean no harshness
to you, no less respect as well as love than I have
always shown you, when I say that obey you shall;
that the same sense of duty which impels you to refuse
obliges me to enforce my command. At no time
would I have allowed you to risk your life where others
might be available. But if you were the only
one who could help, I should, under other circumstances,
have felt that the same paramount duty that attaches
to me attached in a lighter degree to yourself.
Now, as you well know, the case is different; and
even were Eunane not quite safe in my hands and in
Velna’s, you must not run a risk that can be
avoided. You will promise me to remain on this
side the peristyle or in the further half of it, or
I must confine you perforce; and it is not kind or
right in this hour of trouble to impose upon me so
painful a task.”

With every tone, look, and caress that could express
affection and sympathy, Eveena answered—­

“Do what seems your duty, and do not think that
I misunderstand your motive or feel the shadow of
humiliation or unkindness. Make me obey if you
can, punish me if I disobey; but obey you, when you
tell me, for my own life’s sake or for any other,
to desert you in the hour of need, of danger, and
of sorrow, I neither will nor can.” I cut
short the scene, bidding her a passionate farewell
in view of the probability that we should not meet
again. I closed the door behind me, having called
her whom at this moment and in this case I could best
trust, because her worse as well as her better qualities
were alike guarantees for her obedience.

“Enva,” I said, “you will keep this
room till I release you; and you will answer it to
me, as the worst fault you can commit, if Eveena passes
this threshold, under whatever circumstances, until
I give her permission, or until, if it be beyond my
power to give it, her father takes the responsibilities
of my home upon himself.”

**Page 286**

I procured the sedatives which might relieve the suffering
I could not hope to cure. I wrote to Esmo, stating
briefly but fully the position as I conceived it;
and, on a suggestion from Eive, I despatched another
message to a female physician of some repute—­one
of those few women in Mars who lead the life and do
the work of men, and for whose attendance, as I remembered,
Eunane had expressed a strong theoretical preference.

From that time I scarcely left her chamber save for
a few minutes, and Velna remained constantly at her
friend’s side, save when, to give her at least
a chance of escape, I sent her to her room to bathe,
change her dress, and seek the fresh air for the half
hour during which alone I could persuade her to leave
the sufferer. The *daftare* (man-woman)
physician came, but on learning the nature of the disease,
expressed intense indignation that she had been summoned
to a position of so much danger to herself.

I answered by a contemptuous inquiry regarding the
price for which she would run so much risk as to remain
in the peristyle so long as I might have need of her
presence; and, for a fee which would ensure her a
life-income as large as that secured to Eveena herself,
she consented to remain within speaking distance for
the few hours in which the question must be decided.
Eunane was seldom insensible or even delirious, and
her quick intelligence caught very speedily the meaning
of my close attendance, and of the distress which neither
Velna nor I could wholly conceal. She asked and
extracted from me what I knew of the origin of her
illness, and answered, with a far stronger feeling
than I should have expected even from her—­

“If I am to die, I am glad it should be through
trying to serve and please Eveena.... It may
seem strange, Clasfempta,” she went on presently,
“scarcely possible perhaps; but my love for her
is not only greater than the love I bear you, but
is so bound up with it that I always think of you
together, and love you the better that I love her,
and that you love her so much better than me....
But,” she resumed later, “it is hard to
die, and die so young. I had never known what
happiness meant till I came here.... I have been
so happy here, and I was happier each day in feeling
that I no longer made Eveena or you less happy.
Ah! let me thank you and Eveena while I can for everything,
and above all for Velna.... But,” after
another long pause, “it is terrible and horrible—­never
to wake, to move, to hear your voices, to see you,
to look upon the sunlight, to think, or even to dream
again! Once, to remove a tooth and straighten
the rest, they made me senseless; and that sinking
into senselessness, though I knew I should waken in
a minute, was horrible; and—­to sink into
senselessness from which I shall never waken!”

She was sinking fast indeed, and this terror of death,
so seldom seen in the dying, grew apparently deeper
and more intense as death drew near. I could
not bear it, and at last took my resolve and dismissed
Velna, forbidding her to return till summoned.

**Page 287**

“Ah!” said Eunane, “you send her
away that she may not see the last. Is it so
near?”

“No, darling!” I replied (she, like Eveena,
had learnt the meaning of one or two expressions of
human affection in my own tongue), “but I have
that to say which I would not willingly say in her
presence. You dread death not as a short terrible
pain, and for you it will not be so, not as a short
sleep, but as eternal senselessness and nothingness.
Has it never seemed to you strange that, loving Eveena
as I do, *I* do not fear to die? Though
you did not know it, I have lived almost since first
you knew me under the threat of death; and death sudden,
secret, without warning, menacing me every day and
every hour. And yet, though death meant leaving
her and leaving her to a fate I could not foresee,
I have been able to look on it steadily. Kneeling
here, I know that I am very probably giving my life
to the same end as yours. I do not fear.
That may not seem strange to you; but Eveena knows
all I know, and I could scarcely keep Eveena away.
So loving each other, *we* do not fear to die,
because we believe, we know, that that in us which
thinks, and feels, and loves will live; that in death
we lay aside the body as we lay aside our worn-out
clothing. If I thought otherwise, Eunane, I could
not bear *this* parting.”

She clasped my hands, almost as much surprised and
touched, I thought, for the moment by the expression
of an affection of which till that hour neither of
us were fully aware, as by the marvellous and incredible
assurance she had heard.

“Ah!” she said, “I have heard her
people are strange, and they dream such things.
No, Clasfempta, it is a fancy, or you say it to comfort
me, not because it is true.”

The expression of terror that again came over her
face was too painful for endurance. To calm that
terror I would have broken every oath, have risked
every penalty. But in truth I could never have
paused to ask what in such a case oath or law permitted,
“Listen, Eunane,” I said, “and be
calm. Not only Eveena, not only I, but hundreds,
thousands, of the best and kindliest men and women
of your world hold this faith as fast as we do.
You feel what Eveena is. What she is and what
others are not, she owes to this trust:—­to
the assurance of a Power unseen, that rules our lives
and fortunes and watches our conduct, that will exact
an account thereof, that holds us as His children,
and will never part with us. Do you think it is
a lie that has made Eveena what she is?”

“But you *think*, you do not know.”

“Yes, I know; I have seen.” Here
a touch, breaking suddenly upon that intense concentration
of mind and soul on a single thought, violently startled
me, gentle as it was; and to my horror I saw that Eveena
was kneeling with me by the couch.

“Remember,” she said, in the lowest, saddest
whisper, “’the Veil that guards the Shrine.’”

“No matter, Eveena,” I answered in the
same tone, the pain at my heart suppressing even the
impulse of indignation, not with her, but with the
law that could put such a thought into her heart.
“Neither penalty nor oath should silence me
now. Whether I break our law I know not; but
I would forfeit life here—­I would forfeit
life hereafter, rather than fail a soul that rests
on mine at such a moment.”

**Page 288**

The clasp of her hand showed how thoroughly, despite
the momentary doubt, she felt with me; and I could
not now recur to that secondary selfishness which
had so imperiously repelled her from the sick-chamber.

“I have seen,” I repeated, as Eunane still
looked earnestly into my face, “and Eveena has
seen at the same moment, one long ages since departed
this world—­the Teacher of this belief, the
Founder of that Society which holds it, the ancestor
of her own house—­in bodily form before
us.”

“It is true,” said Eveena, in answer to
Eunane’s appealing look.

“And I,” I added, “have seen more
than once in my own world the forms of those I have
known in life recalled, according to promise, to human
eyes.”

The testimony, or the contagion of the strong undoubting
confidence we felt therein, if they did not convince
the intellect, changed the tone of thought and feeling
of the dying girl. Too weak now to reason, or
to resist the impression enforced upon her mind by
minds always far more powerful than her own in its
brightest hours, she turned instinctively from the
thought of blackness, senselessness eternal, to that
of a Father whose hand could uphold, of the wings that
can leap the grave. Her left hand clasped in
mine, her right in Eveena’s,—­ looking
most in my face, because weakness leant on strength
even more than love appealed to love—­Eunane
spent the remaining hours of that night in calm contentment
and peace. Perhaps they were among the most perfectly
peaceful and happy she had known. To strong, warm,
sheltering affection she had never been used save in
her new home; and in the love she received and returned
there was much too strange and self-contradicting
to be satisfactory. But no shadow of jealousy,
doubt, or contradictory emotion troubled her now:
assured of Eveena’s sisterly love as of my own
hardly and lately won trust and tenderness.

The light had been long subdued, and the chamber was
dim as dimmest twilight, when suddenly, with a smile,
Eunane cried—­

“It is morning already! and there,—­why,
there is Erme.”

She stretched out her arms as if to greet the one
creature she had loved—­perhaps more dearly
than she loved those now beside her. The hands
dropped; and Eveena’s closed for ever on the
sights of this world the eyes whose last vision had
been of another.

**CHAPTER XXVIII — DARKER YET.**

Leading Eveena from the room, I hastily dictated every
precaution that could diminish the danger to her and
others. Velna had run risks that could not well
be increased, and on her and on myself must devolve
what remained to be done. I sent an amba to summon
Davilo, gathered the garments that Eveena had thrown
off, and removed them to the death-chamber. When
the first arrangements were made, and I had paid the
fee of Astona, the woman-physician, I passed out into
the garden, and Davilo met me at the door of the peristyle.
A few words explained all that was necessary.
It was still almost dark; and as we stood close by
the door, speaking in the low tone partly of sadness,
partly of precaution, two figures were dimly discernible
just inside, and we caught a few broken words.

**Page 289**

“You have heard,” said a harsh voice,
which seemed to be Astona’s, “there is
no doubt now. You have your part to play, and
can do it quickly and safely.”

I paid little attention to words whose dangerous significance
would at another moment have been plain to me.
But Davilo, greatly alarmed, laid his hand upon my
arm. As he did so, another voice thrilled me
with intensest pain and amazement.

“Be quick to bear your message,” Eive
said, in rapid guarded tones. “They have
means of vengeance certain and prompt, and they never
spare.”

Astona departed without seeing us. Eive closed
the door, and Davilo and I, hastily and unperceived,
followed the spy to the gate of the enclosure.
Some one waited for her there. What passed we
could not hear; but, as we saw Astona and another
depart, Davilo spoke imprudently aloud—­

“She has the secret, and she must die.
‘Nay’ (as I would have expostulated),
she is spy, traitress, and assassin, and merits her
doom most richly.”

“Hist!” said I, “your words may
have fallen into other ears;” for I thought
that beyond the wall I discerned a crouching figure.
If that of a man, however, it was too far off, and
dressed in colours too dark, to be clearly seen; and
in another instant it had certainly vanished.

“Remember,” he urged, “you have
heard that one quite as dangerous is under your own
roof; and, once more, it is not only your life that
is at stake. What you call courage, what seems
to us sheer folly, may cost you and others what you
value far more than your life. An error of softness
now may make your future existence one long and useless
remorse.”

Half-an-hour later, having warned the women to their
rooms—­ordering a variety of disinfecting
measures in which Martial science excelled while they
were needed there—­I opened the door of the
death chamber to those who carried in a coffer hollowed
out of a dark, exceedingly dense natural stone, and
half-filled with a liquid of enormous destructive
power. Then I lifted tenderly the lifeless form,
laid it on cushions arranged therein, kissed the lips,
and closed the coffer. Two of Davilo’s
attendants had meantime adjusted the electric machinery.
We carried the coffer into the apartment where this
worked to heat the stove, to keep the lights burning,
to raise, warm, and diffuse the water through the
house, and perform many other important household
services. Two strong bars of conducting metal
were attached to the apparatus, and fitted into two
hollows of the coffer. A flash, a certain hissing
sound, followed. After a few moments the coffer
was opened, and Davilo, carefully gathering a few
handfuls of solid white material, something resembling
pumice stone in appearance, placed them in a golden
chest about twelve inches cube, which was then soldered
down by the heat derived from the electric power.
Then all infected clothes and the contents of the
death chamber were carried out for destruction; while,

**Page 290**

with a tool adjusted to the machinery, one of the
attendants engraved a few characters upon the chest.
Whatever the risk, I could not part with every relic
of her we had lost; and, after passing them through
such chemical purification as Martial science suggested,
I took the three long chestnut locks I had preserved.
Velna’s quick fingers wove them into plaits,
one of which I left with her, one bound around my
own neck, and one reserved for Eveena. As soon
as the sun had risen, I had despatched a message to
the Prince, explaining the danger of infection to
which I had been subjected, and asking permission
notwithstanding to wait upon him. The emergency
was so pressing that neither sorrow nor peril would
allow me to neglect an embassy on which the lives
of hundreds, and perhaps the safety of his kingdom,
might depend. Passing Eive as I turned towards
Eveena’s room, and fevered with intense thirst,
I bade her bring me thither a cup of the carcara.
I need not dwell on the terribly painful moments in
which I bound round Eveena’s arm a bracelet
prized above all the choicest ornaments she possessed.
To calm her agitation and my own by means of the charny,
I sought the keys. They were not at my belt, and
I asked, “Have I returned them to you?”

“Certainly not,” said Eveena, startled.
“Can you not find them?”

At this moment Eive entered the room and presented
me with the cup for which I had asked. It struck
me with surprise, even at that moment, that Eveena
took it from my hand and carried it first to her own
lips. Eive had turned to leave the room; but
before she had reached the threshold Eveena had sprung
up, placed her foot upon the spring that closed the
door, and snatching the test-stone from my watch chain
dipped it into the cup. Her face turned white
as death, while she held up to my eyes the discoloured
disc which proved the presence of the deadliest Martial
poison.

“Be calm,” she said, as a cry of horror
burst from my lips. “The keys!”

“*You* have them,” Eive said with
a gasp, her face still averted.

“I took them from Eveena myself,” I answered
sternly. “Stand back into that corner,
Eive,” as I opened the door and called sharply
the other members of the household. When they
entered, unable to stand, I had fallen back upon a
chair, and called Eive to my side. As I laid my
hand on her arm she threw herself on the floor, screaming
and writhing like a terrified child rather than a
woman detected in a crime, the conception and execution
of which must have required an evil courage and determination
happily seldom possessed by women.

“Stand up!” I said. “Lift her,
then, Enva and Eirale. Unfasten the shoulder-clasps
and zone.”

As her outer robe dropped, Eive snatched at an object
in its folds, but too late; and the electric keys,
which gave access to all my cases, papers, and to
the medicine-chest above all, lay glittering on the
ground.

“That cup Eive brought to me. Which of
you saw her?”

**Page 291**

“I did,” said Enva quietly, all feelings
of malice and curiosity alike awed into silence by
the evidence of some terrible, though as yet to them
unknown, secret. “She mixed it and brought
it hither herself.”

“And,” I said, “it contains a poison
against which, had I drunk one-half the draught, no
antidote could have availed—­a poison to
which these keys only could have given access.”

Again the test-stone was applied, and again the discoloration
testified to the truth of the charge.

“You have seen?” I said.

“We have seen,” answered Enva, in the
same tone of horror, too deep to be other than quiet.

We all left the room, closing the door upon the prisoner.
Dismissing the girls to their own chambers, with strict
injunctions not to quit them unpermitted, I was left
alone with Eveena. We were silent for some minutes,
my own heart oppressed with mingled emotions, all
intensely painful, but so confused that, while conscious
of acute suffering, I scarcely realised anything that
had occurred. Eveena, who knelt beside me, though
deeply horror-struck, was less surprised and was far
less agitated than I. At last, leaning forward with
her arms on my knee and looking up in my face, she
was about to speak. But the touch and look seemed
to break a spell, and, shuddering from head to foot,
I burst into tears like those of an hysterical girl.
When, with the strongest effort that shame and necessity
could prompt, aided by her silent soothing, I had
somewhat regained my self-command, Eveena spoke, in
the same attitude and with the same look:—­

“You said once that you could pardon such an
attempt. That you should ever forgive at heart
cannot be. That punishment should not follow so
terrible a crime, even I cannot desire. But for
*my* sake, do not give her up to the doom she
has deserved. Do you know” (as I was silent)
“what that doom is?”

“Death, I suppose.”

“Yes!” she said, shuddering, “but
death with torture—­death on the vivisection-table.
Will you, whatever the danger—­*can*
you, give up to such a fate, to such hands, one whom
your hand has caressed, whose head has rested on your
heart?”

“It needs not that, Eveena,” I answered;
“enough that she is woman. I would face
that death myself rather than, for whatever crime,
send a woman, above all a young girl, to such an end.
I would rather by far slay my worst enemy with my
own hand than consign him to a death of torture.
But, more than that, my conscience would not permit
me to call on the law to punish a household treason,
where household authority is so strong and so arbitrary
as here. Assassination is the weapon of the oppressed
and helpless; and it is not for me so to be judge
in my own cause as to pronounce that Eive has had no
provocation.”

“Shame upon her!” said Eveena indignantly.
“No one under your roof ever had or could have
reason to raise a hand, I do not say against your
life, but to give you a moment’s pain. I
do not ask, I do not wish you to spare her; only I
am glad to think you will deal with her yourself—­remember
she has herself removed all limit to your power—­and
not by the shameless and merciless hands to which the
law would give her.”

**Page 292**

We returned to Eveena’s chamber. The scene
that followed I cannot bear to recall. Enough
that Eive knew as well as Eveena the law she had broken
and the penalty she had incurred; and, petted darling
as she had been, she utterly lacked all faith in the
tenderness she had known so well, or even in the mercy
to which Eveena had confidently appealed. Understanding
at last that she was safe from the law, the expression
of her gratitude was as vehement as her terror had
been intense. But the new phase of passion was
not the less repugnant. Not that there was anything
strange in the violent revulsion of feeling.
Born and trained among a race who fear to forgive,
Eive was familiar by report at least with the merciless
vengeance of cowards. Whatever they might have
done later, few would have promised mercy in the very
moment of escape to an ordinary assassin; and if Eive
understood any aspect of my character, that she could
best appreciate was the outraged tenderness which
forbade me to look on hers as ordinary guilt.
Acutely sensitive to pain and fear, she had both known
the better to what terror might prompt the injured,
and was the more appalled by the prospect. Her
eagerness to accept by anticipation whatever degradation
and pain domestic power could inflict, when released
by the terrible alternative of legal prosecution from
its usual limits, breathed more of doubt and terror
than of shame or penitence. But at first it keenly
affected me. It was with something akin to a
bodily pang that I heard this fragile girl, so easily
subdued by such rebuke or menace as her companions
would scarcely have affected to fear, now pleading
for punishment such as would have quelled the pride
and courage of the most high-spirited of her sex.
I felt the deepest pity, not so much for the fear
with which she still trembled as for the agony of
terror she must have previously endured. Eveena
averted from her abject supplications a face in which
I read much pain, but more of what would have been
disgust in a less intensely sympathetic nature.
And ere long I saw or felt in Eive’s manner
that which caused me suddenly to dismiss Eveena from
the room, as from a presence unfit for her spotless
purity and exquisite delicacy. Finding in me
no sign of passionate anger, no readiness, but reluctance
to visit treason with physical pain, Eive’s own
expression changed. Unable to conceive the feeling
that rendered the course she had at first expected
simply impossible to me, a nature I had utterly misconceived
caught at an idea few women, not experienced in the
worst of life’s lessons, would have entertained.
The tiny fragile form, the slight limbs whose delicate
proportions seemed to me almost those of infancy,
their irrepressible quivering plainly revealed by the
absence of robe and veil, no man worthy of the name
could have beheld without intense compassion.
But such a feeling she could not realise. As her
features lost the sincerity of overwhelming fear, as
the drooping lids failed for one moment to conceal

**Page 293**

a look of almost assured exultation in the dark eyes,
my soul was suddenly and thoroughly revolted.
I had forgiven the hand aimed at a heart that never
throbbed with a pulse unkind to her. I might
have forgotten the treason that requited tenderness
and trust by seeking my life; but I could never forget,
never recover, that moment’s insight into thoughts
that so outraged an affection which, if my conscience
belied me not, was absolutely stainless and unselfish.

It cost a strong persistent effort of self-control
to address her again. But a confession full and
complete my duty to others compelled me to enforce.
The story of the next hour I never told or can tell.
To one only did I give a confidence that would have
rendered explanation natural; and that one was the
last to whom I could have spoken on this subject.
Enough that the charming infantine simplicity had disguised
an elaborate treachery of which I reluctantly learned
that human nature is capable. The caressed and
caressing child had sold my life, if not her own soul,
for the promise of wealth that could purchase nothing
I denied her, and of the first place among the women
of her world. That promise I soon found had not
been warranted, directly or indirectly, by him who
alone could at present fulfil it. Needless to
relate the details either of the confession or its
extortion. Enough that Eive learnt at last perforce
that though I had, as it seemed to her, been fool
enough to spare her the vengeance of the law, and to
spare her still as far as possible, her power to fool
me further was gone for ever. Needless to speak
of the lies repeated and sustained, till truth was
wrung from quivering lips and sobbing voice; of the
looks that appealed long and incredulously to a love
as utterly forfeited as misunderstood. To the
last Eive could not comprehend the nature that, having
spared her so much, would not spare wholly; the mercy
felt for the weakness, not for the charms of youth
and sex. Shamed, grieved, wounded to the quick,
I quitted the presence of one who, I fear, was as
little worth the anguish I then endured for her, as
the tenderness she had so long betrayed; and left the
late darling of my house a prisoner under strict guard,
necessary for the safety of others than ourselves.

Finding a message awaiting me, I sought at once the
interview which the Sovereign fearlessly granted.

“I see,” said the Prince with much feeling,
as he received my salute, “that you have gone
through deeper pain than such domestic losses can
well cause to us. I am sorry that you are grieved.
I can say no more, and perhaps the less I say the
less pain I shall give. Only permit me this remark.
Since I have known you, it has seemed to me that the
utter distinction between our character and yours,
showing as it does at so many points, springs from
some single root-difference. We, so careful of
our own life and comfort, care little for those of
others. We, so afraid of pain, are indifferent

**Page 294**

to its infliction, unless we have to witness it, and
only some of us flinch from the sight. The softness
of heart you show in this trouble seems in some strange
way associated with the strength of heart which you
have proved in dangers, the least of which none of
us would have encountered willingly, and which, forced
on us, would have unnerved us all. I am glad
to prove to you that to some extent I depart from my
national character and approach, however, distantly,
to yours. I can feel for a friend’s sorrow,
and I can face what you seem to consider a real danger.
But you had a purpose in asking this audience.
My ears are open—­your lips are unsealed.”

“Prince,” I replied, “what you have
said opens the way to that I wished to ask. You
say truly that courage and tenderness have a common
root, as have the unmanly softness and equally unmanly
hardness common among your subjects. Those for
whom death ends all utterly and for ever will of necessity,
at least as soon as the training of years and of generations
has rendered their thought consistent, dread death
with intensest fear, and love to brighten and sweeten
life with every possible enjoyment. Animal enjoyment
becomes the most precious, since it is the keenest.
Higher pleasures lose half their value, when the distinction
between the two is reduced to the distinction between
the sensations of higher and lower nerve centres.
Thus men care too much for themselves to care for
others; and after all, strong deep affection, entwined
with the heartstrings, can only torture and tear the
hearts for which death is a final parting. Such
love as I have felt for woman—­even such
love as I felt for her, your gift, whom I have lost—­would
be pain intolerable if the thought were ever present
that one day we must, and any day we might, part for
ever. I put the knife against my breast, my life
in your hand, when I say this, and I ask of you no
secrecy, no favour for myself; but that, as I trust
you, you will guard the life that is dearest to me
if you take from me the power to guard it....
There are those among your subjects who are not the
cowards you find around your throne, who are not brutal
in their households, not incapable of tenderness and
sacrifice for others.”

As I spoke I carefully watched the Prince’s
face, on which no shade of displeasure was visible;
rather the sentiment of one who is somewhat gratified
to hear a perplexing problem solved in a manner agreeable
to his wishes.

“And the reason is,” I continued, “that
these men and women believe or know that they are
answerable to an eternal Sovereign mightier than yourself,
and that they will reap, not perhaps here, but after
death as they shall have sown; that if they do not
forfeit the promise by their own deed, they shall
rejoin hereafter those dearest to them here.”

“There are such?” he said. “I
would they were known to me. I had not dreamed
that there were in my realm men who would screen the
heart of another with their own palm.”

**Page 295**

“Prince,” I replied earnestly, “I
as their ambassador as one of their leaders, appeal
to you to know and to protect them. They can defend
themselves at need, and, it may be, might prevail though
matched one against a thousand. For their weapons
are those against which no distance, no defences,
no numbers afford protection. But in such a strife
many of their lives must be lost, and infinite suffering
and havoc wrought on foes they would willingly spare.
They are threatened with extermination by secret spite
or open force; but open force will be the last resort
of enemies well aware that those who strike at the
Star have ever been smitten by the lightning.”

A slight change in his countenance satisfied me that
the Emblem was not unknown to him.

“You say,” he replied, “that there
is an organised scheme to destroy these people by
force or fraud?”

“The scheme, Prince, was confessed in my own
hearing by one of its instruments; and in proof thereof,
my own life, as a Chief of the Order, was attempted
this morning.”

The Prince sprang to his feet in all the passion of
a man who for the first time receives a personal insult;
of an Autocrat stung to the quick by an unprecedented
outrage to his authority and dignity.

“Who has dared?” he said. “Who
has taken on himself to make law, or form plans for
carrying out old law, without my leave? Who has
dared to strike at the life over which I have cast
the shadow of my throne? Give me their names,
my guest, and, before the evening mist closes in to-morrow,
pronounce their doom.”

“I cannot obey your royal command. I have
no proof against the only man who, to my knowledge,
can desire my death. Those who actually and immediately
aimed at my life are shielded by the inviolable weakness
of sex from the revenge and even the justice of manhood.”

“Each man,” returned the Prince, but partially
conceiving my meaning, “is master at home.
I wish I were satisfied that your heart will let you
deal justly and wisely with the most hateful offspring
of the most hateful of living races—­a woman
who betrays the life of her lord. But those who
planned a general scheme of destruction—­a
purpose of public policy—­without my knowledge,
must aim also at my life and throne; for even were
their purpose such as I approved, attempted without
my permission, they know I would never pardon the
presumption. I do not sit in Council with dull
ears, or silent lips, or empty hands; and it is not
for the highest more than for the lowest under me to
snatch my sceptre for a moment.”

“Guard then your own,” I said. “Without
your leave and in your lifetime, open force will scarcely
he used against us; and if against secret murder or
outrage we appeal to the law, you will see that the
law does justice?”

“I will,” he replied; “and I pardon
your advice to guard my own, because you judge me
by my people. But a Prince’s life is the
charge of his guards; the lives of his people are
his care.”

**Page 296**

He was silent for a few minutes, evidently in deep
reflection.

“I thank you,” he said at last, “and
I give you one warning in partial return for yours.
There is a law which can be used against the members
of a secret society with terrible effect. Not
only are they exposed to death if detected, but those
who strike them are legally exempt from punishment.
I will care that that law shall not menace you long.
Whilst it remains guard yourselves; I am powerless
to break it.”

As I quitted the Palace, Ergimo joined me and mounted
my carriage. Seizing a moment when none were
within sight or hearing, he said—­

“Astona was found two hours ago dead, as an
enemy or a traitor dies. She was seen to fall
from the roof of her house, and none was near her
when she fell. But Davilo has already been arrested
as her murderer, on the ground that he was heard before
sunrise this morning to say that she must die.”

“Who heard that must have heard more. Let
this news be quickly known to whom it concerns.”

I checked the carriage instantly, and turned into
a road that conducted us in ten minutes to a public
telegraph office.

“Come with me,” I said, “quickly.
As an officer of the Campta your presence may ensure
the delivery of letters which might otherwise be stopped.”

He seized the hint at once, and as we approached a
vacant desk he said to the nearest officer, “In
the Campta’s name;” a form which ensured
that the most audacious and curious spy, backed by
the highest authority save that invoked, dared neither
stop nor search into a message so warranted.
Before I left the desk every Chief of the Zinta at
his several post had received, through that strange
symbolic language of which I have already given samples,
from me advice of what had occurred and from Esmo
warning to meet at an appointed place and time.

The day at whose close we should meet was that of
Davilo’s trial. I mingled with the crowd
around the Court doors, a crowd manifesting bitter
hostility to the prisoner and to the Order, of whose
secrets a revelation was eagerly expected. Easily
forcing my way through the mass, I felt on a sudden
a touch, a sign; and turning my eyes saw a face I
had surely never looked on before. Yet the sign
could only have been given by a colleague. That
which followed implied the presence of the Signet
itself.

“I told you,” whispered a voice I knew
well, “how completely we can change even countenance
at will.”

It was so; but though acquainted with the process,
I had never believed that the change could be so absolute.
By help of my strength and height, still more perhaps
by the subtle influence of his own powerful will acting
none the less imperiously on minds unconscious of
its influence, Esmo made his way with me into the Court.

**Page 297**

Around five sides of the hexagon were seats, tier
above tier, appropriated to the public who wish to
see as well as hear. The phonograph reported
every word uttered to hundreds of distant offices.
Against the sixth side were placed the seats of the
seven judges; in front, at an equal elevation, the
chair of the prisoner, the seats of the advocates
on right and left, and the place from which each witness
must deliver his testimony in full view and within
easy hearing both of the bench, the bar, and the audience.
Davilo sat in his chair unguarded, but in an attitude
strangely constrained and motionless. Only his
bright eyes moved freely, and his head turned a little
from side to side. He recognised us instantly,
and his look expressed no trace of fear.

“The *quarry*” whispered Esmo, observing
my perplexity.

“It paralyses the nerves of motion, leaving
those of sensation active; and is administered to
a prisoner on the instant of his arrest, so as to
keep him absolutely helpless till his sentence is executed,
or till on his acquittal an antidote is administered.”

The counsel for the prosecution stated in the briefest
possible words the story of Astona, from the moment
when she left my house to that at which she was found
dead, and the method of her death; related Davilo’s
words, and then proceeded to call his witnesses.
Of course the one vital question was whether by possibility
Davilo, who had never left my premises since the words
were uttered, could have brought about a death, evidently
accidental in its immediate cause, at a distance of
many miles. His words were attested by one whom
I recognised as an officer of Endo Zampta, and I was
called to confirm or contradict them. The presiding
judge, as I took my place, read a brief telling terrible
menace, expounding the legal penalties of perjury.

“You will speak the truth,” he said, “or
you know the consequences.”

As he spoke, he encountered Esmo’s eyes, and
quailed under the gaze, sinking back into his seat
motionless as the bird under the alleged fascination
of the serpent. I admitted that the words in question
had been addressed to me; and I proved that Davilo
had been busily engaged with me from that moment until
an hour later than that of the fatal accident.
There being thus no dispute as to the facts, a keen
contest of argument proceeded between the advocates
on either side. The defenders of the prisoner
ridiculed with an affectation of scientific contempt—­none
the less effective because the chief pleader was himself
an experienced member of our Order—­the idea
that the actions or fate of a person at a distance
could be affected by the mere will of another; and
related, as absurd and incredible traditions of old
to this purport, some anecdotes which had been communicated
to me as among the best attested and most striking
examples of the historical exercise of the mystic
powers. The able and bigoted sceptics, who prosecuted

**Page 298**

this day in the interests of science, insisted, with
equal inconsistency and equal skill, on the innumerable
recorded and attested instances of some diabolical
power possessed by certain supposed members of a detested
and malignant sect. A year ago the judges would
probably have sided unanimously with the former.
But the feeling that animated the conspiracy, if it
should be so called, against the Zinta, had penetrated
all Martial society; and in order to destroy the votaries
of religion, Science, in the persons of her most distinguished
students, was this day ready to abjure her character,
and forswear her most cherished tenets. As has
often happened in Mars, and may one day happen on
Earth as the new ideas come into greater force, proven
fact was deliberately set against logical impossibility;
and for once—­what probably had not happened
in Mars for ten thousand years—­proven fact
and common sense carried the day against science and
“universal experience;” but, unhappily,
against the prisoner. After retiring separately
for about an hour, the Judges returned. Their
brief and very confused decisions were read by the
Secretary. The reasons were seldom intelligible,
each contradicting himself and all his colleagues,
and not one among the judgments having even the appearance
of cohesion and consistency. But, by six to one,
they doomed the prisoner to the vivisection-table.
As he was carried forth his eyes met ours, and the
perfect calm and steadiness of their glance astounded
me not a little.

My natural thought prompted, of course, an appeal
to the mercy of the Throne. In every State a
power of giving effect in the law’s despite
to public policy, or of commanding that, in certain
strange and unforeseen circumstances, common sense
and practical justice shall override a sentence which
no court bound by the letter of the law can withhold,
must rest with the Sovereign. But in Mars the
prerogative of mercy, in the proper sense of the word—­judicial
rather than political mercy—­is exercised
less by the Prince himself than by a small council
of judges advising him and pronouncing their decision
in his name. Even if we could have relied on
the Campta with absolute confidence, there were many
reasons against an appeal which would, in fact, have
asked him to declare himself on our side. While
such a declaration might, in the existing state of
public feeling, have caused revolt or riot, it would
have put on their guard, perhaps driven to a premature
attempt which he was not prepared to meet, the traitors
whose scheme against his life the Prince felt confident
that he should speedily detect and punish.

All these considerations were brought before our Council,
whose debate was brief but not hurried or excited.
The supreme calm of Esmo’s demeanour communicated
itself to all the eleven, in not one of whom could
I recognise till they spoke my colleagues of our last
Council. The order went forth that a party should
attend Esmo’s orders at a point about half a
mile distant from the studio in which, for the benefit
of a great medical school, my unhappy friend was to
be put to torture indescribable.

**Page 299**

“Happily,” said Esmo, “the first
portion of the experiment will be made by the Vivisector-General
alone, and will commence at midnight. Half an
hour before that time our party will be assembled.”

I had insisted on being one of the band, and Esmo
had very reluctantly yielded to the unanimous approval
of colleagues who thought that on this occasion physical
strength might render essential service at some unforeseen
crisis. Moreover, the place lying within my geographical
province, several of those engaged looked up to me
as their immediate chief, and it was thought well
to place me on such an occasion at their head.

The night was, as had been predicted, absolutely dark,
but the roads were brilliantly lighted. Suddenly,
however, as we drew towards the point of meeting,
the lights went out, an accident unprecedented in
Martial administration.

“But they will be relighted!” said one
of my companions.

“Can human skill relight the lamps that the
power of the Star has extinguished?” was the
reply of another.

We fell in military order, with perfect discipline
and steadiness, under the influence of Esmo’s
silent will and scarcely discernible gestures.
The wing of the college in which the dissection was
to take place was guarded by some forty sentinels,
armed with the spear and lightning gun. But as
we came close to them, I observed that each stood
motionless as a statue, with eyes open, but utterly
devoid of sight.

“I have been here before you,” murmured
Esmo. “To the left.”

The door gave way at once before the touch of some
electric instrument or immaterial power wielded by
his hand. We passed in, guided by him, through
one or two chambers, and along a passage, at the end
of which a light shone through a crystal door.
Here proof of Esmo’s superior judgment was afforded.
He would fain have had the party much smaller than
it was, and composed exclusively of the very few old
and experienced members of the Zinta within reach
at the moment. We were nearly a score in number,
some even more inexperienced than myself, half the
party my own immediate followers; and I remembered
far better the feelings of a friend and a soldier
than the lessons of the college or the Shrine.
As the door opened, and we caught sight of our friend
stretched on the vivisection table, the younger of
the company, hurried on by my own example, lost their
heads and got, so to speak, out of hand. We rushed
tumultuously forward and fell on the Vivisector and
two assistants, who stood motionless and perhaps unconscious,
but with glittering knives just ready for their fiendish
work. Before Esmo could interpose, these executioners
were cut down with the “crimson blade”
(cold steel); and we bore off our friend with more
of eagerness and triumph than at all befitted our
own consciousness of power, or suited the temper of
our Chief.

Never did Esmo speak so sharply or severely as in
the brief reprimand he gave us when we reassembled;
the justice of which. I instinctively acknowledged,
as he ceased, by the salute I had given so often at
the close of less impressive and less richly deserved
reprimands on the parade ground or the march.
Uninjured, and speedily relieved from the effects
of the *quarry*, Davilo was carried off to a place
of temporary concealment, and we dispersed.

**Page 300**

Eveena heard my story with more annoyance than interest,
mortified not a little by the reproof I had drawn
upon myself and my followers; and, despite her reluctance
to seem to acknowledge a fault in me, apparently afraid
that a similar ebullition of feeling might on some
future occasion lead to serious disaster.

**CHAPTER XXIX — AZRAEL.**

To detain as a captive and a culprit, thus converting
my own house into a prison, my would-be murderess
and former plaything, was intolerably painful.
To leave her at large was to incur danger such as
I had no right to bring on others. To dismiss
her was less perilous than the one course, less painful
than the other, but combined peril and pain in a degree
which rendered both Eveena and myself most reluctant
to adopt it. From words of Esmo’s, and from
other sources, I gathered that the usual course under
such circumstances would have been to keep the culprit
under no other restraint than that confinement to
the house which is too common to be remarkable, trusting
to the terror which punishment inflicted and menaced
by domestic authority would inspire. But Eive
now understood the limits which conscience or feeling
imposed on the use of an otherwise unlimited power.
She knew very nearly how much she could have to fear;
and, timid as she was, would not be cowed or controlled
by apprehensions so defined and bounded. Eveena
herself naturally resented the peril, and was revolted
by the treason even more intensely than myself; and
was for once hardly content that so heinous a crime
should be so lightly visited. In interposing “between
the culprit and the horrors of the law, she had taken
for granted the strenuous exertion of a domestic jurisdiction
almost as absolute under the circumstances as that
of ancient Rome.

“What suggested to you,” I asked one day
of Eveena, “the suspicion that so narrowly saved
my life?”

“The carefully steadied hand—­you
have teased her so often for spilling everything it
carried—­and the unsteady eyes. But,”
she added reluctantly, “I never liked to watch
her—­no, not lest you should notice it—­but
because she did not seem true in her ways with you;
and I should have missed those signs but for a strange
warning.” ... She paused.

“*I* would not be warned,” I answered
with a bitter sigh. “Tell me, Madonna.”

“It was when you left me in this room alone,”
she said, her exquisite delicacy rendering her averse
to recal, not the coercion she had suffered, but the
pain she knew I felt in so coercing her. “Dearest,”
she added with a sudden effort, “let me speak
frankly, and dispel the pain you feel while you think
over it in silence.”

I kissed the hand that clasped my own, and she went
on, speaking with intentional levity.

“Had a Chief forgotten?” tracing the outline
of a star upon her bosom. “Or did you think
Clavelta’s daughter had no share in the hereditary
gifts of her family?”

**Page 301**

“But how did you unlock the springs?”

“Ah! those might have baffled me if you had
trusted to them. You made a double mistake when
you left Enva on guard.... You don’t think
I tempted her to disobey? Eager as I was for
release, I could not have been so doubly false.
She did it unconsciously. It is time to put her
out of pain.”

“Does she know me so little as to think I could
mean to torture her by suspense? Besides, even
she must have seen that you had secured her pardon.”

“Or my own punishment,” Eveena answered.

“Spare me such words, Eveena, unless you mean
to make me yet more ashamed of the compulsion I did
employ. I never spoke, I never thought”——­

“Forgive me, dearest. Will it vex you to
find how clearly your flower-bird has learned to read
your will through your eyes? When I refused to
obey, and you felt yourself obliged to compel, your
first momentary thought was to threaten, your next
that I should not believe you. When you laid
your hand upon my shoulder, thus, it was no gesture
of anger or menace. You thought of the only promise
I must believe, and you dropped the thought as quickly
as your hand. You would not speak the word you
might have to keep. Nay, dearest, what pains you
so? You gave me no pain, even when you called
another to enforce your command. Yet surely you
know that *that* must have tried my spirit far
more than anything else you could do. You did
well. Do you think that I did not appreciate
your imperious anxiety for me; that I did not respect
your resolution to do what you thought right, or feel
how much it cost you? If anything in the ways
of love like yours could pain me, it would be the
sort of reserved tenderness that never treats me as
frankly and simply as” ... “There
was no need to name either of those so dearly loved,
so lately—­and, alas! so differently—­lost.
Trusting the loyalty of my love so absolutely in all
else, can you not trust it to accept willingly the
enforcement of your will ... as you have enforced
it on all others you have ruled, from the soldiers
of your own world to the rest of your household?
Ah! the light breaks through the mist. Before
you gave Enva her charge you said to me in her presence,
‘Forgive me what you force upon me;’ as
if I, above all, were not your own to deal with as
you will. Dearest, do you so wrong her who loves
you, and is honoured by your love, as to fancy that
any exertion of your authority could make her feel
humbled in your eyes or her own?”

It was impossible to answer. Nothing would have
more deeply wounded her simple humility, so free from
self-consciousness, as the plain truth; that as her
character unfolded, the infinite superiority of her
nature almost awed me as something—­save
for the intense and occasionally passionate tenderness
of her love—­less like a woman than an angel.

**Page 302**

“I was absorbed,” she continued, “in
the effort that had thrown Enva into the slumber of
obedience. I did not know or feel where I was
or what I had next to do. My thought, still concentrated,
had forgotten its accomplished purpose, and was bent
on your danger. Somehow on the cushioned pile
I seemed to see a figure, strange to me, but which
I shall never forget. It was a young girl, very
slight, pale, sickly, with dark circles round the
closed eyes, slumbering like Enva, but in everything
else Enva’s very opposite. I suppose I was
myself entranced or dreaming, conscious only of my
anxiety for you, so that it seemed natural that everything
should concern you. I remember nothing of my
dream but the words which, when I came to myself in
the peristyle, alone, were as clear in my memory as
they are now:—­

 “’Watch the hand and read the eyes;
 On his breast the danger lies—­
 Strength is weak and childhood wise.

 “’Fail the bowl, and—­’ware
the knife!
 Rests on him the Sovereign’s
life,
 Rests the husband’s on the
wife.

 “’They that would his power command
 Know who holds his heart in hand:
 Silken tress is surest band.

 “’Well they judge Kargynda’s
mood,
 Steel to peril, pain, and blood,
 Surely through his mate subdued.

 “’Love can make the strong a slave,
 Fool the wise and quell the brave
...
 Love by sacrifice can save.’”

“She again!” I exclaimed involuntarily.

“You hear,” murmured Eveena. “In
kindness to me heed my warning, if you have neglected
all others. Do not break my heart in your mercy
to another. Eive”——­

“*Eive*!—­The prophetess knows
me better than you do! The warning means that
they now desire my secret before my life, and scheme
to make your safety the price of my dishonour.
It is the Devil’s thought—­or the
Regent’s!”

As I could not decide to send Eive forth without home,
protection, or control, and Eveena could suggest no
other course, the days wore on under a domestic thunder-cloud
which rendered the least sensitive among us uncomfortable
and unhappy, and deprived three at least of the party
of appetite, of ease, and almost of sleep, till two
alarming incidents broke the painful stagnation.

I had just left Eive’s prison one morning when
Eveena, who was habitually entrusted with the charge
of these communications, put into my hands two slips
of tafroo. The one had been given her by an amba,
and came from Davilo’s substitute on the estate.
It said simply: “You and you alone were
recognised among the rescuers of your friend.
Before two days have passed an attempt will be made
to arrest you.” The other came from Esmo,
and Eveena had brought it to me unread, as was indeed
her practice. I could not bear to look at her,
though I held her closely, as I read aloud the brief
message which announced the death, by the sting of
two dragons (evidently launched by some assassin’s

**Page 303**

hand, but under circumstances that rendered detection
by ordinary means hopeless for the moment), of her
brother and Esmo’s son, Kevima; and invited
us to a funeral ceremony peculiar to the Zinta.
I need not speak of the painful minutes that followed,
during which Eveena strove to suppress for my sake
at once her tears for her loss and her renewed and
intensified terror on my own account. It was
suddenly announced by the usual signs of the mute messenger
that a visitor awaited me in the hall. Ergimo
brought a message from the Campta, which ran as follows:—­

“Aware that their treachery is suspected, the
enemy now seek your secret first, and then your life.
Guard both for a very short time. Your fate,
your friends’, and my own are staked on the issue.
The same Council that sends the traitors to the rack
will see the law repealed.”

I questioned Ergimo as to his knowledge of the situation.

“The enemy,” he said, “must have
changed their plan. One among them, at least,
is probably aware that his treason is suspected both
by his Sovereign and by the Order. This will
drive him desperate; and if he can capture you and
extort your secret, he will think he can use it to
effect his purpose, or at least to ensure his escape.
He may think open rebellion, desperate as it is, safer
than waiting for the first blow to come from the Zinta
or from the Palace.”

My resolve was speedily taken. At the same moment
came the necessity for escape, and the opportunity
and excuse. I sought out the writer of the first
message, who entirely concurred with me in the propriety
of the step I was about to take; only recommending
me to apply personally for a passport from the Campta,
such as would override any attempt to detain me even
by legal warrant. He undertook to care for those
I left behind; to release and provide for Eive, and
to see, in case I should not return, that full justice
was done to the interests of the others, as well as
to their claim to release from contracts which my departure
from their world ought, like death itself, to cancel.
The royal passport came ere I was ready to depart,
expressed in the fullest, clearest language, and such
as none, but an officer prepared instantly to rebel
against the authority which gave it, dared defy.
During the last preparations, Velna and Eveena were
closeted together in the chamber of the former; nor
did I care to interrupt a parting the most painful,
save one, of those that had this day to be undergone.
I went myself to Eive.

“I leave you,” I said, “a prisoner,
not, I hope, for long. If I return in safety,
I will then consider in what manner the termination
of your confinement can be reconciled with what is
due to myself and others. If not, you will be
yet more certainly and more speedily released.
And now, child whom I once loved, to whom I thought
I had been especially gentle and indulgent, was the
miserable reward offered you the sole motive that
raised your hand against my life? Poison, I have

**Page 304**

always said, is the protection of the household slave
against the domestic tyrant. If I had ever been
harsh or unjust to you, if I had made your life unhappy
by caprice or by severity, I could understand.
But you of all have had least reason to complain.
Not Enva’s jealous temper, not Leenoo’s
spite, ever suggested to them the idea which came so
easily and was so long and deliberately cherished
in your breast.”

She rose and faced me, and there was something of
contempt in the eyes that answered mine for this once
with the old fearless frankness.

“I had no reason to hate you? Not certainly
for the kind of injury which commonly provokes women
to risk the lives their masters have made intolerable.
That your discipline was the lightest ever known in
a household, I need not tell you. That it fell
more lightly, if somewhat oftener, on me than on others,
you know as well as I. Put all the correction or reproof
I ever received from you into one, and repeat it daily,
and never should I have complained, much less dreamed
of revenge. You think Enva or Leenoo might less
unnaturally, less unreasonably, have turned upon you,
because your measure to their faults was somewhat
harder and your heart colder to them! You did
not scruple to make a favourite of me after a fashion,
as you would never have done even of Eunane.
You could pet and play with me, check and punish me,
as a child who would not ’sicken at the sweets,
or be humbled by the sandal.’ You forbore
longer, you dealt more sternly with them, because,
forsooth, they were women and I a baby. I, who
was not less clever than Eunane, not less capable
of love, perhaps of devotion to you, than Eveena,
*I* might rest my head on your knee when she
was by, I might listen to your talk when others were
sent away; I was too much the child, too little the
woman, to excite your distrust or her jealousy.
Do you suppose I think better of you, or feel the
more kindly towards you, that you have not taken vengeance?
No! still you have dealt with me as a child; so untaught
yet by that last lesson, that even a woman’s
revenge cannot make you treat me as a woman!
Clasfempta! you bear, I believe, outside, the fame
of a wise and a firm man; but in these little hands
you have been as weak a fool as the veriest dotard
might have been;—­and may be yet.”

“As you will,” I answered, stung into
an anger which at any rate quelled the worst pain
I had felt when I entered the room. “Fool
or sage, Eive, I was your fellow-creature, your protector,
and your friend. When bitter trouble befals you
in life, or when, alone, you find yourself face to
face with death, you may think of what has passed
to-day. Then remember, for your comfort, my last
words—­I forgive you, and I wish you happy.”

**Page 305**

To Velna I could not speak. Sure that Eveena
had told her all she could wish to know or all it
was safe to tell, a long embrace spoke my farewell
to her who had shared with me the first part of the
long watch of the death-chamber. Enva and her
companions had gathered, not from words, that this
journey was more than an ordinary absence. Some
instinct or presentiment suggested to them that it
might, possibly at least, be a final parting; and
I was touched as much as surprised by the tears and
broken words with which they assured me that, greatly
as they had vexed my home life, conscious as they
were that they had contributed to it no element but
bitterness and trouble, they felt that they had been
treated with unfailing justice and almost unfailing
kindness. Then, turning to Eveena, Enva spoke
for the rest—­

“We should have treated you less ill if we could
at all have understood you. We understand you
just as little now. Clasfempta is man after all,
bridling his own temper as a strong man rules a large
household of women or a herd of *ambau*.
But you are not woman like other women; and yet, in
so far as women are or think they are softer or gentler
than men, so far, twelvefold twelve times told, are
you softer, tenderer, gentler than woman.”

Eveena struggled hard so far to suppress her sobs
as to give an answer. But, abandoning the effort,
she only kissed warmly the lips, and clasped long
and tenderly the hands, that had never spoken a kind
word or done a kind act for her. At the very last
moment she faltered out a few words which were not
for them.

“Tell Eive,” she said, “I wish her
well; and wishing her well, I cannot wish her happy—­*yet*.”

We embarked in the balloon, attended as on our last
journey by two of the brethren in my employment, both,
I noticed, armed with the lightning gun. I myself
trusted as usual to the sword, strong, straight, heavy,
with two edges sharp as razors, that had enabled my
hand so often to guard my head; and the air-gun that
reminded me of so many days of sport, the more enjoyed
for the peril that attended it. Screened from
observation, both reclining in our own compartment
of the car, Eveena and I spent the long undisturbed
hours of the first three days and nights of our journey
in silent interchange of thought and feeling that
seldom needed or was interrupted by words. Her
family affections were very strong. Her brother
had deserved and won her love; but conscious so long
of a peril surrounding myself, fearfully impressed
by the incident which showed how close that peril had
come, her thought and feeling were absorbed in me.
So, could they have known the present and foreseen
the future, even those who loved her best and most
prized her love for them would have wished it to be.
As we crossed, at the height of a thousand feet, the
river dividing that continent between east and west
which marks the frontier of Elcavoo, a slight marked
movement of agitation, a few eager whispers of consultation,
in the other compartment called my attention.
As I parted the screen, the elder of the attendant
brethren addressed me—­

**Page 306**

“There is danger,” he said in a low tone,
not low enough to escape Eveena’s quick ear
when my safety was in question. “Another
balloon is steering right across our path, and one
in it bears, as we see through the *pavlo* (the
spectacle-like double field-glass of Mars), the sash
of a Regent, while his attendants wear the uniform
of scarlet and grey” (that of Endo Zampta).
“Take, I beg you, this lightning-piece.
Will you take command, or shall we act for you?”

Parting slightly the fold of the mantle I wore, for
at that height, save immediately under the rays of
the sun, the atmosphere is cold, I answered by showing
the golden sash of my rank. We went on steadily,
taking no note whatever of the hostile vessel till
it came within hailing distance.

“Keep your guns steadily pointed,” I said,
“happen what may. If you have to fire,
fire one at any who is ready to fire at us, the other
at the balloon itself.”

A little below but beside us Endo Zampta hailed.
“I arrest you,” he said, addressing me
by name, “on behalf of the Arch-Court and by
their warrant. Drop your weapons or we fire.”

“And I,” I said, “by virtue of the
Campta’s sign and signet attached to this,”
and Eveena held forth the paper, while my weapon covered
the Regent, “forbid you to interrupt or delay
my voyage for a moment.”

I allowed the hostile vessel to close so nearly that
Endo could read through his glass the characters—­purposely,
I thought, made unusually large—­of his
Sovereign’s peremptory passport. To do so
he had dropped his weapon, and his men, naturally
expecting a peaceable termination to the interview,
had laid down theirs. Mine had obeyed my order,
and we were masters of the situation, when, with a
sudden turn of the screw, throwing his vessel into
an almost horizontal position, Endo brought his car
into collision with ours and endeavoured to seize
Eveena’s person, as she leaned over with the
paper in her hand. She was too quick for him,
and I called out at once, “Down, or we fire.”
His men, about to grasp their pieces, saw that one
of ours was levelled at the balloon, and that before
they could fire, a single shot from us must send them
earthwards, to be crushed into one shapeless mass
by the fall. Endo saw that he had no choice but
to obey or affect obedience, and, turning the tap
that let out the gas by a pipe passing through the
car, sent his vessel rapidly downward, as with a formal
salute he affected to accept the command of his Prince.
Instantly grasping, not the lightning gun, which, if
it struck their balloon, must destroy their whole
party in an instant, but my air-gun, which, by making
a small hole in the vast surface, would allow them
to descend alive though with unpleasant and perilous
rapidity, I fired, and by so doing prevented the use
of an asphyxiator concealed in the car, which the
treacherous Regent was rapidly arranging for use.

The success of these manoeuvres delighted my attendants,
and gave them a confidence they had not yet felt in
my appreciation of Martial perils and resources.
We reached Ecasfe and Esmo’s house without further
molestation, and a party of the Zinta watched the balloon
while Eveena and I passed into the dwelling.

**Page 307**

Preserved from corruption by the cold which Martial
chemistry applies at pleasure, the corpse of Kevima
looked as the living man looked in sleep, but calmer
and with features more perfectly composed. Quietly,
gravely, with streaming tears, but with self-command
which dispelled my fear of evil consequences to her,
Eveena kissed the lips that were so soon to exist
no longer. From the actual process by which the
body is destroyed, the taste and feeling of the Zinta
exclude the immediate relatives of the dead; and not
till the golden chest with its inscription was placed
in Esmo’s hands did we take further part in the
proceeding. Then the symbolic confession of faith,
by which the brethren attest and proclaim their confidence
in the universal all-pervading rule of the Giver of
life and in the permanence of His gift, was chanted.
A Chief of the Order pronounced a brief but touching
eulogy on the deceased. Another expressed on behalf
of all their sympathy with the bereaved father and
family. Consigned to their care, the case that
contained all that now remained to us of the last
male heir of the Founder’s house was removed
for conveyance to the mortuary chamber of the subterrene
Temple. But ere those so charged had turned to
leave the chamber in which the ceremony had passed,
a flash so bright as at noonday to light up the entire
peristyle and the chambers opening on it, startled
us all; and a sentinel, entering in haste and consternation,
announced the destruction of our balloon by a lightning
flash from the weapon of some concealed enemy.
Esmo, at this alarming incident, displayed his usual
calm resolve. He ordered that carriages sufficient
to convey some twenty-four of the brethren should
be instantly collected, and announced his resolve to
escort us at once to the Astronaut. Before five
minutes had elapsed from the destruction of the balloon,
Zulve and the rest of the family had taken leave of
Eveena and myself. Attended by the party mustered,
occupying a carriage in the centre of the procession,
we left the gate of the enclosure. I observed,
what seemed to escape even Esmo’s attention,
that angry looks were bent upon us from many a roof,
and that here and there groups were gathered in the
enclosures and on the road, among whom I saw not a
few weapons. I was glad to remember that a party
of the Zveltau still awaited Esmo’s return at
his own residence. We drove as fast as the electric
speed would carry us along the road I had traversed
once before in the company of her who was now my wife—­to
be, I hoped, for the future my sole wife—­and
of him who had been ever since our mortal enemy.
Where the carriages could proceed no further we dismounted,
and Esmo mustered the party in order. All were
armed with the spear and lightning gun. Placing
Eveena in the centre of a solid square, Esmo directed
me to take my place beside her. I expostulated—­

“Clavelta, it is impossible for me to take the
place of safety, when others who owe me nothing may
be about to risk life on my behalf. Eveena, as
woman and as descendant of the Founder, may well claim
their protection. It is for me to share in her
defence, not in her safety.”

**Page 308**

He raised the arm that bore the Signet, and looked
at me with the calm commanding glance that never failed
to enforce his will. “Take your place,”
he said; and recalled to the instincts of the camp,
I raised my hand in the military salute so long disused,
and obeyed in silence.

“Strike promptly, strike hard, and strike home,”
said Esmo to his little party. “The danger
that may threaten us is not from the law or from the
State, but from an attempt at murder through a perversion
of the law and in the name of the Sovereign.
Those who threaten us aim also at the Campta’s
life, and those we may meet are his foes as well as
ours. Conquered here, they can hardly assail us
again. Victorious, they will destroy us, not
leave us an appeal to the law or to the throne.”

Placing himself a little in front of the troop, our
Chief gave the signal to advance, and we moved forward.
It seemed to me a fatal error that no scout preceded
us, no flanking party was thrown out. This neglect
reminded me that, my comrades and commander were devoid
of military experience, and I was about to remonstrate
when, suddenly wheeling on the rocky platform on which
I had first paused in my descent from the summit,
and facing towards the latter, we encountered a force
outnumbering our own as two to one and wearing the
colours of the Regent. The front ranks quailed,
as men always quailed under Esmo’s steady gaze,
and lost nerve and order as they fell back to right
and left; a movement intended to give play to the asphyxiator
they had brought with them. Their strategy was
no less ridiculous than our own. Devoid for ages
of all experience in conflict, both leaders might
have learned better from the conduct of the theme at
bay. The enemy were drawn up so near the turn
that there was no room for the use of their most destructive
engine; and, had we been better prepared, neither
this nor their lightning guns would have been quick
enough to anticipate a charge that would have brought
us hand to hand. Even had they been steady and
prompt, the suffocating shell would probably have
annihilated both parties, and the discharge would
certainly have been as dangerous to them as to us.
In another instant a flash from several of our weapons,
simultaneously levelled, shattered the instrument
to fragments. We advanced at a run, and the enemy
would have given way at once but that their retreat
lay up so steep an incline, and neither to right nor
left could they well disperse, being hemmed in by
a rocky wall on one side and a precipitous descent
on the other. From our right rear, however, where
the ground would have concealed a numerous ambush,
I apprehended an attack which must have been fatal;
but even so simple and decisive a measure had never
occurred to the Regent’s military ignorance.

**Page 309**

At this critical moment a flash from a thicket revealed
the weapon of some hidden enemy, who thus escaped
facing the gaze that none could encounter; and Esmo
fell, struck dead at once by the lightning-shot.
The assassin sprang up, and I recognised the features
of Endo Zampta. Confounded and amazed, the Zveltau
broke and fell backward, hurrying Eveena away with
them. Enabled by size and strength to extricate
myself at once, I stood at bay with my back against
the rocks on our left, a projection rising as high
as my knee assisting to hinder the enemy from entirely
and closely surrounding me. I had thrown aside
at the moment of the attack the mantle that concealed
my sash and star; and I observed that another Chief
had done the same. It was he who, occupying at
the trial the seat on Esmo’s left, had shown
the strongest disposition to mercy, and now displayed
the coolest courage amid confusion and danger.

“Rally them,” I cried to him, “and
trust the crimson blade [cold steel]. These hounds
will never face that.”

The enemy had rushed forward as our men fell back,
and I was almost in their midst, thus protected to
a considerable extent from the lightning projectile,
against which alone I had no defence. Hand to
hand I was a match for more than one or two of my assailants,
though on this occasion I wore no defensive armour,
and they were clad in shirts of woven wire almost
absolutely proof against the spear in hands like theirs.

To die thus, to die for her under her eyes, leaving
to her widowed life a living token of our love—­what
more could Allah grant, what better could a lover
and a soldier desire? There was no honour, and
little to satisfy even the passion of vengeance, in
the sword-strokes that clove one enemy from the shoulder
to the waist, smote half through the neck of a second,
and laid two or three more dead or dying at my feet.
If the weight of the sword were lighter here than on
Earth, the arm that wielded it had been trained in
very different warfare, and possessed a strength which
made the combat so unequal that, had no other life
hung on my blows, I should have been ashamed to strike.
As I paused for a moment under this feeling, I noted
that, outside the space half cleared by slaughter
and by terror, the bearers of the lightning gun were
forming a sort of semicircle, embarrassed by the comrades
driven back upon them, but drawing momentarily nearer,
and seeking to enclose before firing the object of
their aim. They would have shattered my heart
and head in another instant but that—­springing
on the projecting stone of which I have spoken, which
raised her to my level—­Eveena had flung
her arms around me, and sheltered my person with her
own. This, and the confusion, disconcerted the
aim of most of the assailants. The roar and flash
half stunned me for a moment;—­then, as I
caught her in my left arm, I became aware that it
was but her lifeless form that I clasped to my breast.
Giving her life for mine, she had made mine worse than

**Page 310**

worthless. My sword fell for a moment from my
hand, retained only by the wrist-knot, as I placed
her gently and tenderly on the ground, resting against
the stone which had enabled her to effect the sacrifice
I as little desired as deserved. Then, grasping
my weapon again, and shouting instinctively the war-cry
of another world, I sprang into the midst of the enemy.
At the same moment, “*Ent an Clazinta*”
(To me the Zinta), cried the Chief behind; and having
rallied the broken ranks, even before the sight of
Eveena’s fall had inspired reckless fury in
the place of panic confusion, he led on the Zveltau,
the spear in hand elevated over their heads, and pointed
at the unprotected faces of the enemy. Exposed
to the cold steel or its Martial equivalent, the latter,
as I had predicted, broke at once. My sword did
its part in the fray. They scarcely fought, neither
did they fling down their weapons. But in that
moment neither force nor surrender would have availed
them. We gave no quarter to wounded or unwounded
foe. When, for lack of objects, I dropped the
point of my streaming sword, I saw Endo Zampta alive
and unwounded in the hands of the victors.

“Coward, scoundrel, murderer!” I cried.
“You shall die a more terrible death than that
which your own savage law prescribes for crimes like
yours. Bind him; he shall hang from my vessel
in the air till I see fit to let him fall! For
the rest, see that none are left alive to boast what
they have done this day.”

Struggling and screaming, the Regent was dragged to
the summit, and hung by the waist, as I had threatened,
from the entrance window of the Astronaut. Esmo’s
body and those of the other slain among the Zveltau
had been raised, and our comrades were about to carry
them to the carriages and remove them homeward.
From the wardrobe of the Astronaut, furnished anew
for our voyage, I brought a long soft therne-cloak,
intended for Eveena’s comfort; and wrapped in
it all that was left to us of the loveliest form and
the noblest heart that in two worlds ever belonged
to woman. I shred one long soft tress of mingled
gold and brown from those with which my hand had played;
I kissed for the last time the lips that had so often
counselled, pleaded, soothed, and never spoken a word
that had better been left unsaid. Then, veiling
face and form in the soft down, I called around me
again the brethren who had fallen back out of sight
of my last farewell, and gave the corpse into their
charge. Turning with restless eagerness from
the agony, which even the sudden shock that rendered
me half insensible could not deaden into endurable
pain, to the passion of revenge, I led two or three
of our party to the foot of the ladder beneath the
entrance window of my vessel, and was about in their
presence to explain his fate more fully to the struggling,
howling victim, half mad with protracted terror.
But at that moment my purpose was arrested. I
had often repeated to Eveena passages from those Terrestrial

**Page 311**

works whose purport most resembled that of the mystic
lessons she so deeply prized; and words, on which in
life she had especially dwelt, seemed now to be whispered
in my ear or my heart by the voice which with bodily
sense I could never hear again:—­ “Vengeance
is Mine; I will repay.” The absolute control
of my will and conscience, won by her perfect purity
and unfailing rectitude, outlasted Eveena’s
life. Turning to her murderer—­

“You shall die,” I said, “but you
shall die not by revenge but by the law; and not by
your own law, but by that which, forbidding that torture
shall add to the sting of death, commands that ’Whoso
sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood
be shed.’ Yet I cannot give you a soldier’s
death,” as my men levelled their weapons.
Cutting the cord that bound him, and grasping him
from behind, I flung the wretch forth from the summit
far into the air; well assured that he would never
feel the blow that would dismiss his soul to its last
account, before that Tribunal to whose judgment his
victim had appealed. Then I entered the vessel,
waved my hand in farewell to my comrades, and, putting
the machinery in action, rose from the surface and
prepared to quit a world which now held nothing that
could detain or recal me.

**CHAPTER XXX — FAREWELL!**

My task was not quite done. It was well for me
in the first moments of this new solitude, of this
maddening agony, that there was instant work imperatively
demanding the attention of the mind as well as the
exercise of the body. I had first, by means of
the air pump, to fill the vessel with an atmosphere
as dense as that in which I had been born and lived
so long; then to close the entrance window and seal
it hermetically, and then to arrange the steering
gear. To complete the first task more easily,
I arrested the motion of the vessel till she rose
only a few feet per minute. Whilst employed on
the air pump, I became suddenly aware, by that instinct
by which most men have been at one time or another
warned of the unexpected proximity of friend or foe,
that I was not alone. Turning and looking in the
direction of the entrance, I saw, or thought I saw,
once more the Presence beheld in the Hall of the Zinta.
But commanding, enthralling as were those eyes, they
could not now retain my attention; for beside that
figure appeared one whose presence in life or death
left me no thought for aught beside. I sprang
forward, seemed to touch her hand, to clasp her form,
to reach the lips I bent my head to meet:—­and
then, in the midst of the bright sunlight, a momentary
darkness veiled all from my eyes. Lifting my
head, however, my glance fell, through the window to
which the Vision had drawn me, directly upon Ecasfe
and upon the home from which I had taken her whose
remains were now being carried back thither.
Snatching up my field-glass, I scanned the scene of
which I had thus caught a momentary and confused glimpse.

**Page 312**

The roof was occupied by a score of men armed with
the lightning weapon, and among them glanced the familiar
badge—­the band and silver star. Clambering
over the walls of the wide enclosure, and threatening
to storm the house, were a mob perhaps a thousand
in number, many of them similarly armed, the rest
with staves, spears, or such rude weapons as chance
might afford. Two minutes brought me immediately
over them. In another, I was descending more
rapidly than prudence would have suggested. The
strife seemed for a moment to cease, as one of the
crowd pointed, not to the impending destruction overhead,
but to some object apparently at an equal elevation
to westward. A shout of welcome from the remaining
defenders of the house called right upward the eyes
of their assailants. For an instant they felt
the bitterness of death; a cry of agony and terror
that pierced even the thick walls and windows of the
Astronaut reached my ears. Then a violent shock
threw me from my feet. Springing up, I knew what
wholesale slaughter had avenged Eveena and her father,
preserved her family, and given a last victory to
the Symbol she so revered. In another instant
I was on the roof, and my hands clasped in Zulve’s.

“We know,” she said. “Our darling’s
*esve* brought us a line that told all; and what
is left of those who were all to me, of her who was
so much to you, will now be returned to us almost
at once.”

We were interrupted. A cry drew my eyes to the
right, where, springing from a balloon to the car
of which was attached a huge flag emblazoned with
the crimson and silver colours of the Suzerain, Ergimo
stood before us.

“I am too late,” he said, “to save
life; in time only to put an end to rebellion and
avert murder. The Prince has fulfilled his promise
to you; has repealed the law that was to be a weapon
in the hands that aimed at his life and throne, as
at the Star and its children. The traitors, save
one, the worst, have met by this time their just doom.
That one I am here to arrest. But where is our
Chief? And,” noticing for the first time
the group of women, who in the violence of alarm and
agony of sorrow had burst for once unconsciously the
restraints of a lifetime—­“where ...
Are you alone?”

“Alone for ever,” I said; and as I spoke
the procession that with bare and bent heads carried
two veiled forms into the peristyle below told all
he sought to know. I need not dwell on the scene
that followed. I scarcely remember anything,
till a chest of gold, bearing the cipher which though
seldom seen I knew so well, was placed in my hands.
I turned to Zulve, and to Ergimo, who stood beside
her.

“Have you need of me?” I said. “If
I can serve her house I will remain willingly, and
as long as I can help or comfort.”

**Page 313**

“No,” replied Ergimo; for Zulve could
not speak. “The household of Clavelta are
safe and honoured henceforth as no other in the land.
Something we must ask of him who is, at any rate for
the present, the head of this household, and the representative
of the Founder’s lineage. It may be,”
he whispered, “that another” (and his eyes
fell on the veiled forms whose pink robes covered
with dark crimson gauze indicated the younger matrons
of the family) “may yet give to the Children
of the Star that natural heir to the Signet we had
hoped from your own household. But the Order
cannot remain headless.”

Here Zulve, approaching, gave into my hand the Signet
unclasped from her husband’s arm ere the coffer
was closed upon his form. I understood her meaning;
and, as for the time the sole male representative of
the house, I clasped it on the arm of the Chief who
succeeded to Esmo’s rank, and to whom I felt
the care of Esmo’s house might be safely left.
The due honour paid to his new office, I turned to
depart. Then for the first time my eyes fell
on the unveiled countenance and drooping form of one
unlike, yet so like Eveena—­her favourite
and nearest sister, Zevle. I held out my hand;
but, emotion overcoming the habits of reserve, she
threw herself into my arms, and her tears fell on
my bosom, hardly faster than my own as I stooped and
kissed her brow. I had no voice to speak my farewell.
But as the Astronaut rose for the last time from the
ground, the voices of my brethren chanted in adieu
the last few lines of the familiar formula—­

 “Peace be yours no force can break,
 Peace not Death hath power to shake;”

\* \* \* \*
 \*

 “Peace from peril, fear, and pain;
 Peace—­until we meet again!
 Not before the sculptured stone,
 But the All-Commander’s Throne.”

[Footnote 1: Qy. [GREEK: apo], from, [GREEK:
ergos], work—­as en-ergy?]

[Footnote 2: The chemical notation of the MS.
is unfortunately different from any known to any chemist
of my acquaintance, and utterly undecipherable.]

[Footnote 3: Last figures illegible: the
year is probably 183.]

[Footnote 4: These distances are given in Roman
measures and round numbers not easy of exact rendering.]

[Footnote 5: In 1830 or thereabouts.—­ED.]

[Footnote 6: The Martial year is 687 of our days,
and eight Martial years are nearly equivalent to fifteen
Terrestrial. Roughly, and in round numbers, the
time figures given may be multiplied by two to reduce
them to Terrestrial periods.—­ED.]

[Footnote 7: Say fifty-sixth; in effect, fiftieth.—­Narrator.]

[Footnote 8: Equivalent in time to ninety-three
and forty-seven with us; in effect corresponding to
eighty and forty.]

[Footnote 9: About ninety; in time, one hundred
and six.]

[Footnote 10: Seventy; in time, eighty-three.—­*Narrator*.]

**Page 314**

[Footnote 11: The centuries, hundreds, thousands,
*etc*., appear to represent multiples of twelve,
not ten.—­ED.]

[Footnote 12: Aluminium?—­ED.]

[Footnote 13: Here, and here only, the name is
written in full; but the first part is blurred.
It may be Alius (Ali), Julius (Jules), Elias, or may
represent any one of a dozen English surnames.
The single cipher, employed elsewhere throws no light
on it.—­ED.]

[Transcriber’s Notes: A page was torn in
our print copy, causing a few lines in Chapter I to
be illegible. The missing words have been indicated
with [\*\*\*]. Also, “authypnotism” was
corrected to “autohypnotism.”]