

In the Wrong Paradise eBook

In the Wrong Paradise by Andrew Lang

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

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| In the Wrong Paradise eBook..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Table of Contents..... | 7 |
| Page 1..... | 8 |
| Page 2..... | 10 |
| Page 3..... | 11 |
| Page 4..... | 12 |
| Page 5..... | 14 |
| Page 6..... | 15 |
| Page 7..... | 16 |
| Page 8..... | 17 |
| Page 9..... | 18 |
| Page 10..... | 19 |
| Page 11..... | 21 |
| Page 12..... | 22 |
| Page 13..... | 23 |
| Page 14..... | 24 |
| Page 15..... | 25 |
| Page 16..... | 26 |
| Page 17..... | 27 |
| Page 18..... | 28 |
| Page 19..... | 29 |
| Page 20..... | 30 |
| Page 21..... | 31 |
| Page 22..... | 33 |

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Page 23..... | 34 |
| Page 24..... | 35 |
| Page 25..... | 37 |
| Page 26..... | 38 |
| Page 27..... | 39 |
| Page 28..... | 40 |
| Page 29..... | 41 |
| Page 30..... | 43 |
| Page 31..... | 45 |
| Page 32..... | 47 |
| Page 33..... | 49 |
| Page 34..... | 50 |
| Page 35..... | 51 |
| Page 36..... | 53 |
| Page 37..... | 54 |
| Page 38..... | 55 |
| Page 39..... | 56 |
| Page 40..... | 57 |
| Page 41..... | 59 |
| Page 42..... | 61 |
| Page 43..... | 62 |
| Page 44..... | 63 |
| Page 45..... | 64 |
| Page 46..... | 65 |
| Page 47..... | 66 |
| Page 48..... | 67 |

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Page 49..... | 68 |
| Page 50..... | 69 |
| Page 51..... | 71 |
| Page 52..... | 73 |
| Page 53..... | 74 |
| Page 54..... | 76 |
| Page 55..... | 78 |
| Page 56..... | 80 |
| Page 57..... | 82 |
| Page 58..... | 84 |
| Page 59..... | 85 |
| Page 60..... | 87 |
| Page 61..... | 89 |
| Page 62..... | 91 |
| Page 63..... | 93 |
| Page 64..... | 94 |
| Page 65..... | 96 |
| Page 66..... | 98 |
| Page 67..... | 99 |
| Page 68..... | 100 |
| Page 69..... | 101 |
| Page 70..... | 102 |
| Page 71..... | 103 |
| Page 72..... | 105 |
| Page 73..... | 106 |
| Page 74..... | 107 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Page 75..... | 109 |
| Page 76..... | 111 |
| Page 77..... | 112 |
| Page 78..... | 113 |
| Page 79..... | 114 |
| Page 80..... | 116 |
| Page 81..... | 117 |
| Page 82..... | 118 |
| Page 83..... | 120 |
| Page 84..... | 122 |
| Page 85..... | 123 |
| Page 86..... | 124 |
| Page 87..... | 126 |
| Page 88..... | 128 |
| Page 89..... | 129 |
| Page 90..... | 130 |
| Page 91..... | 131 |
| Page 92..... | 133 |
| Page 93..... | 135 |
| Page 94..... | 136 |
| Page 95..... | 138 |
| Page 96..... | 140 |
| Page 97..... | 141 |
| Page 98..... | 142 |
| Page 99..... | 144 |
| Page 100..... | 146 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Page 101..... | 147 |
| Page 102..... | 148 |
| Page 103..... | 150 |
| Page 104..... | 151 |
| Page 105..... | 152 |
| Page 106..... | 153 |
| Page 107..... | 155 |
| Page 108..... | 157 |
| Page 109..... | 159 |
| Page 110..... | 160 |

Table of Contents

| Section | Page |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Start of eBook | 1 |
| DEAR RIDER HAGGARD, | 1 |
| PREFACE. | 1 |
| THE END OF PHAEACIA | 2 |
| II. NARRATIVE OF MR. GOWLES. | 3 |
| {6} | |
| III. THE PROPHECY. | 8 |
| IV. AT THE CHIEF'S HOUSE. | 10 |
| V. A STRANGER ARRIVES. | 16 |
| VI. A BACKSLIDER. A WARNING. | 21 |
| VII. FLIGHT. | 29 |
| VIII. SAVED! | 33 |
| | 41 |
| A CHEAP NIGGER. | 50 |
| I. | 50 |
| II. | 55 |
| III. | 62 |
| THE ROMANCE OF THE FIRST RADICAL. | 64 |
| THE YOUTH OF WHY-WHY. | 65 |
| THE MANHOOD OF WHY-WHY. | 69 |
| THE LOVES OF VERVA AND WHY- WHY. | 71 |
| LA MORT WHY-WHY. | 74 |
| A DUCHESS'S SECRET. | 75 |
| THE HOUSE OF STRANGE STORIES. | 82 |
| IN CASTLE PERILOUS. | 91 |
| THE GREAT GLADSTONE MYTH. | 99 |
| {283} | |
| MY FRIEND THE BEACH-COMBER. | 105 |
| Footnotes: | 110 |

Page 1

DEAR RIDER HAGGARD,

I have asked you to let me put your name here, that I might have the opportunity of saying how much pleasure I owe to your romances. They make one a boy again while one is reading them; and the student of "The Witch's Head" and of "King Solomon's Mines" is as young, in heart, as when he hunted long ago with Chingachgook and Uncas. You, who know the noble barbarian in his African retreats, appear to retain more than most men of his fresh natural imagination. We are all savages under our white skins; but you alone recall to us the delights and terrors of the world's nonage. We are hunters again, trappers, adventurers bold, while we study you, and the blithe barbarian awakens even in the weary person of letters. He forgets proof-sheets and papers, and the "young lion" seeks his food from God, in the fearless ancient way, with bow or rifle. Of all modern heroes of romance, the dearest to me is your faithful Zulu, and I own I cried when he bade farewell to his English master, in "The Witch's Head."

In the following tales the natural man takes a hand, but he is seen through civilized spectacles, not, as in your delightful books, with the eyes of the sympathetic sportsman. If Why-Why and Mr. Gowles amuse you a little, let this be my Diomedean exchange of bronze for gold—of the new Phaeacia for Kukuana land, or for that haunted city of Kor, in which your fair Ayesha dwells undying, as yet unknown to the future lovers of She.

Very sincerely yours,
A. Lang.
Cromer, August 29, 1886.

PREFACE.

The writer of these apologues hopes that the Rev. Mr. Gowles will not be regarded as his idea of a typical missionary. The countrymen of Codrington and Callaway, of Patteson and Livingstone, know better what missionaries may be, and often are. But the wrong sort as well as the right sort exists everywhere, and Mr. Gowles is not a very gross caricature of the ignorant teacher of heathendom. I am convinced that he would have seen nothing but a set of darkened savages in the ancient Greeks. The religious eccentricities of the Hellenes are not exaggerated in "The End of Phaeacia;" nay, Mr. Gowles might have seen odder things in Attica than he discovered, or chose to record, in Boothland.

To avoid the charge of plagiarism, perhaps it should be mentioned that "The Romance of the First Radical" was written long before I read Tanner's "Narrative of a Captivity among the Indians." Tanner, like Why-Why, had trouble with the chief medicine-man of his community.

If my dear kinsman and companion of old days, J. J. A., reads “My Friend the Beach-comber,” he will recognize many of his own yarns, but the portrait of the narrator is wholly fanciful.

“In Castle Perilous” and “A Cheap Nigger” are reprinted from the Cornhill Magazine; “My Friend the Beach-comber,” from Longman’s; “The Great Gladstone Myth,” from Macmillan’s; “In the Wrong Paradise,” from the Fortnightly Review; “A Duchess’s Secret,” from the Overland Mail; “The Romance of the First Radical,” from Fraser’s Magazine; and “The End of Phaeacia,” from Time, by the courteous permission of the editors and proprietors of those periodicals.

Page 2

THE END OF PHAEACIA

I. INTRODUCTORY. {1}

The Rev. Thomas Gowles, well known in Colonial circles where the Truth is valued, as “the Boanerges of the Pacific,” departed this life at Hackney Wick, on the 6th of March, 1885. The Laodiceans in our midst have ventured to affirm that the world at large has been a more restful place since Mr. Gowles was taken from his corner of the vineyard. The Boanerges of the Pacific was, indeed, one of those rarely-gifted souls, souls like a Luther or a Knox, who can tolerate no contradiction, and will palter with no compromise, where the Truth is concerned. Papists, Puseyites, Presbyterians, and Pagans alike, found in Mr. Gowles an opponent whose convictions were firm as a rock, and whose method of proclaiming the Truth was as the sound of a trumpet. Examples of his singular courage and daring in the work of the ministry abound in the following narrative. Born and brought up in the Bungleonian communion, himself collaterally connected, by a sister’s marriage, with Jedediah Bungleton, the revered founder of the Very Particular People, Gowles was inaccessible to the scepticism of the age.

His youth, it is true, had been stormy, like that of many a brand afterwards promoted to being a vessel. His worldly education was of the most elementary and indeed eleemosynary description, consequently he despised secular learning, and science “falsely so called.” It is recorded of him that he had almost a distaste for those difficult chapters of the Epistles in which St. Paul mentions by name his Greek friends and converts. In a controversy with an Oxford scholar, conducted in the open air, under the Martyrs’ Memorial in that centre of careless professors, Gowles had spoken of “Nicodemus,” “Eubulus,” and “Stephanas.” His unmannerly antagonist jeering at these slips of pronunciation, Gowles uttered his celebrated and crushing retort, “Did Paul know Greek?” The young man, his opponent, went away, silenced if not convinced.

Such a man was the Rev. Thomas Gowles in his home ministry. Circumstances called him to that wider field of usefulness, the Pacific, in which so many millions of our dusky brethren either worship owls, butterflies, sharks, and lizards, or are led away captive by the seductive pomps of the Scarlet Woman, or lapse languidly into the lap of a bloated and Erastian establishment, ignorant of the Truth as possessed by our community. Against all these forms of soul-destroying error the Rev. Thomas Gowles thundered nobly, “passing,” as an admirer said, “like an evangelical cyclone, from the New Hebrides to the Aleutian Islands.” It was during one of his missionary voyages, in a labour vessel, the Blackbird, that the following singular events occurred, events which Mr. Gowles faithfully recorded, as will be seen, in his missionary narrative. We omit, as of purely secular interest, the description

Page 3

of the storm which wrecked the Blackbird, the account of the destruction of the steamer with all hands (not, let us try to hope, with all souls) on board, and everything that transpired till Mr. Gowles found himself alone, the sole survivor, and bestriding the mast in the midst of a tempestuous sea. What follows is from the record kept on pieces of skin, shards of pottery, plates of metal, papyrus leaves, and other strange substitutes for paper, used by Mr. Gowles during his captivity.

II. NARRATIVE OF MR. GOWLES. {6}

"I must now, though in sore straits for writing materials, and having entirely lost count of time, post up my diary, or rather commence my narrative. So far as I can learn from the jargon of the strange and lost people among whom Providence has cast me, this is, in their speech, the last of the month, Thargeelyun, as near as I can imitate the sound in English. Being in doubt as to the true time, I am resolved to regard to-morrow, and every seventh day in succession, as the Sabbath. The very natives, I have observed with great interest, keep one day at fixed intervals sacred to the Sun-god, whom they call Apollon, perhaps the same word as Apollyon. On this day they do no manner of work, but *that* is hardly an exception to their usual habits. A less industrious people (slaves and all) I never met, even in the Pacific. As to being more than common idle on one day out of seven, whether they have been taught so much of what is *essential* by some earlier missionary, or whether they may be the corrupted descendants of the Lost Tribes (whom they do not, however, at all resemble outwardly, being, I must admit, of prepossessing appearance), I can only conjecture. This Apollon of theirs, in his graven images (of which there are many), carries a bow and arrows, *fiery darts of the wicked*, another point in common between him and Apollyon, in the Pilgrim's Progress. May I, like Christian, turn aside and quench his artillery!

To return to my narrative. When I recovered consciousness, after the sinking of the Blackbird, I found myself alone, clinging to the mast. Now was I tossed on the crest of the wave, now the waters opened beneath me, and I sank down in the valleys of the sea. Cold, numbed, and all but lifeless, I had given up hope of earthly existence, and was nearly insensible, when I began to revive beneath the rays of the sun.

The sea, though still moved by a swell, was now much smoother, and, but for a strange vision, I might have believed that I was recovering my strength. I must, however, have been delirious or dreaming, for it appeared to me that a foreign female, of prepossessing exterior, though somewhat indelicately dressed, arose out of the waters close by my side, as lightly as if she had been a sea-gull on the wing. About her head there was wreathed a kind of muslin scarf, which she unwound and offered to me, indicating that

Page 4

I was to tie it about my waist, and it would preserve me from harm. So weak and exhausted was I that, without thinking, I did her bidding, and then lost sight of the female. Presently, as it seemed (but I was so drowsy that the time may have been longer than I fancied), I caught sight of land from the crest of a wave. Steep blue cliffs arose far away out of a white cloud of surf, and, though a strong swimmer, I had little hope of reaching the shore in safety.

Fortunately, or rather, I should say, providentially, the current and tide-rip carried me to the mouth of a river, and, with a great effort, I got into the shoal-water, and finally staggered out on shore. There was a wood hard by, and thither I dragged myself. The sun was in mid heavens and very warm, and I managed to dry my clothes. I am always most particular to wear the dress of my calling, observing that it has a peculiar and gratifying effect on the minds of the natives. I soon dried my tall hat, which, during the storm, I had attached to my button-hole by a string, and, though it was a good deal battered, I was not without hopes of partially restoring its gloss and air of British respectability. As will be seen, this precaution was, curiously enough, the human means of preserving my life. My hat, my black clothes, my white neck-tie, and the hymn-book I carry would, I was convinced, secure for me a favourable reception among the natives (if of the gentle brown Polynesian type), whom I expected to find on the island.

Exhausted by my sufferings, I now fell asleep, but was soon wakened by loud cries of anguish uttered at no great distance. I started to my feet, and beheld an extraordinary spectacle, which at once assured me that I had fallen among natives of the worst and lowest type. The dark places of the earth are, indeed, full of horrid cruelty.

The first cries which had roused me must have been comparatively distant, though piercing, and even now they reached me confused in the notes of a melancholy chant or hymn. But the shrieks grew more shrill, and I thought I could distinguish the screams of a woman in pain or dread from the groans drawn with more difficulty from a man. I leaped up, and, climbing a high part of the river bank, I beheld, within a couple of hundred yards, an extraordinary procession coming from the inner country towards the mouth of the stream.

At first I had only a confused view of bright stuffs—white, blue, and red—and the shining of metal objects, in the midst of a crowd partly concealed by the dust they raised on their way. Very much to my surprise I found that they were advancing along a wide road, paved in a peculiar manner, for I had never seen anything of this kind among the heathen tribes of the Pacific. Their dresses, too, though for the most part mere wraps, as it were, of coloured stuff, thrown round them, pinned with brooches, and often clinging in a very improper way to the figure, did not remind me of the costume (what

there is of it) of Samoans, Fijians, or other natives among whom I have been privileged to labour.

Page 5

But these observations give a more minute impression of what I saw than, for the moment, I had time to take in. The foremost part of the procession consisted of boys, many of them almost naked. Their hands were full of branches, wreathed in a curious manner with strips of white or coloured wools. They were all singing, and were led by a woman carrying in her arms a mis-shapen wooden idol, not much unlike those which are too frequent spectacles all over the Pacific. Behind the boys I could now distinctly behold a man and woman of the Polynesian type, naked to the waist, and staggering with bent backs beneath showers of blows. The people behind them, who were almost as light in colour as ourselves, were cruelly flogging them with cutting branches of trees. Round the necks of the unfortunate victims—criminals I presumed—were hung chains of white and black figs, and in their hands they held certain herbs, figs, and cheese, for what purpose I was, and remain, unable to conjecture. Whenever their cries were still for a moment, the woman who carried the idol turned round, and lifted it in her arms with words which I was unable to understand, urging on the tormentors to ply their switches with more severity.

Naturally I was alarmed by the strangeness and ferocity of the natives, so I concealed myself hastily in some brushwood behind a large tree. Much to my horror I found that the screams, groans, and singing only drew nearer and nearer. The procession then passed me so close that I could see blood on the backs of the victims, and on their faces an awful dread and apprehension. Finally, the crowd reached the mouth of the river, at the very place where I had escaped from the sea. By aid of a small pocket-glass I could make out that the men were piling great faggots of green wood, which I had noticed that some of them carried, on a spot beneath the wash of high tide. When the pile had reached a considerable height, the two victims were placed in the middle. Then, by some means, which I was too far off to detect, fire was produced, and applied to the wild wood in which the unhappy man and woman were enveloped. Soon, fortunately, a thick turbid smoke, in which but little flame appeared, swept all over the beach. I endeavoured to stop my ears, and turned my head away that I might neither see nor hear more of this spectacle, which I now perceived to be a human sacrifice more cruel than is customary even among the Fijians.

When I next ventured to look up, the last trails of smoke were vanishing away across the sea; the sun gazed down on the bright, many-coloured throng, who were now singing another of their hymns, while some of the number were gathering up ashes (human ashes!) from a blackened spot on the sand, and were throwing them into the salt water. The wind tossed back a soft grey dust in their faces, mixed with the surf and spray. It was dark before the crowd swept by me again, now chanting in what appeared to be a

Page 6

mirthful manner, and with faces so smiling and happy that I could scarcely believe they had just taken part in such abominable cruelty. On the other hand, a weight seemed to have been removed from their consciences. So deceitful are the wiles of Satan, who deludes the heathen most in their very religion! Tired and almost starved as I was, these reflections forced themselves upon me, even while I was pondering on the dreadful position in which I found myself. Way of escape from the island (obviously a very large one) there was none. But, if I remained all night in the wood, I must almost perish of cold and hunger. I had therefore no choice but to approach the barbarous people, though, from my acquaintance with natives, I knew well that they were likely either to kill and eat me, or to worship me as a god. Either event was too dreadful to bear reflection. I was certain, however, that, owing to the dress of my sacred calling, I could not be mistaken for a mere beach-comber or labour-hunter, and I considered that I might easily destroy the impression (natural among savages on first seeing a European) that I was a god. I therefore followed the throng from a distance, taking advantage for concealment of turns in the way, and of trees and underwood beside the road. Some four miles' walking, for which I was very unfit, brought us across a neck of land, and from high ground in the middle I again beheld the sea. Very much to my surprise the cape on which I looked down, safe in the rear of the descending multitude, was occupied by a kind of city.

The houses were not the mere huts of South Sea Islanders, but, though built for the most part of carved and painted wood, had white stone foundations, and were of considerable height. On a rock in the centre of the bay were some stone edifices which I took to be temples or public buildings. The crowd gradually broke up, turning into their own dwellings on the shore, where, by the way, some large masted vessels were drawn up in little docks. But, while the general public, if I may say so, slowly withdrew, the woman with the idol in her arms, accompanied by some elderly men of serious aspect, climbed the road up to the central public buildings.

Moved by some impulse which I could hardly explain, I stealthily followed them, and at last found myself on a rocky platform, a kind of public square, open on one side to the sea, and shut in on either hand, and at the back, by large houses with smooth round pillars, and decorated with odd coloured carvings. There was in the open centre of the square an object which I recognized as an altar, with a fire burning on it. Some men came out of the chief building, dragging a sheep, with chains of flowers round its neck. Another man threw something on the fire, which burned with a curious smell. At once I recognized the savour of incense, against which (as employed illegally by the Puseyites) I had often firmly protested in old days at home. The spirit of

Page 7

a soldier of the Truth entered into me; weary as I was, I rushed from the dusky corner where I had been hidden in the twilight, ran to the altar, and held up my hand with my hymn-book as I began to repeat an address that had often silenced the papistic mummers in England. Before I had uttered half a dozen words, the men who were dragging the sheep flew at me, and tried to seize me, while one of them offered a strange-looking knife at my throat. I thought my last hour had come, and the old Adam awakening in me, I delivered such a blow with my right on the eye of the man with the knife, that he reeled and fell heavily against the altar. Then assuming an attitude of self-defence (such as was, alas! too familiar to me in my unregenerate days), I awaited my assailants.

They were coming on in a body when the veil of the large edifice in front was lifted, and a flash of light streamed out on the dusky square, as an old man dressed in red hurried to the scene of struggle. He wore a long white beard, had green leaves twisted in his hair, and carried in his hand a gilded staff curiously wreathed with wool. When they saw him approaching, my assailants fell back, each of them kissing his own hand and bowing slightly in the direction of the temple, as I rightly supposed it to be. The old man, who was followed by attendants carrying torches burning, was now close to us, and on beholding me, he exhibited unusual emotions.

My appearance, no doubt, was at that moment peculiar, and little creditable, as I have since thought, to a minister, however humble. My hat was thrust on the back of my head, my coat was torn, my shirt open, my neck-tie twisted round under my ear, and my whole attitude was not one generally associated with the peaceful delivery of the message. Still, I had never conceived that any spectacle, however strange and unbecoming, could have produced such an effect on the native mind, especially in a person who was manifestly a chief, or high-priest of some heathen god. Seeing him pause, and turn pale, I dropped my hands, and rearranged my dress as best I might. The old Tohunga, as my New Zealand flock used to call their priest, now lifted his eyes to heaven with an air of devotion, and remained for some moments like one absorbed in prayer or meditation. He then rapidly uttered some words, which, of course, I could not understand, whereon his attendants approached me gently, with signs of respect and friendship. Not to appear lacking in courtesy, or inferior in politeness to savages, I turned and raised my hat, which seemed still more to alarm the old priest. He spoke to one of his attendants, who instantly ran across the square, and entered the courtyard of a large house, surrounded by a garden, of which the tall trees looked over the wall, and wooden palisade. The old man then withdrew into the temple, and I distinctly saw him scatter, with the leafy bough of a tree, some water round him as he entered, from a vessel beside the door. This convinced me that some of the emissaries of the Scarlet Woman had already been busy among the benighted people, a conjecture, however, which proved to be erroneous.

Page 8

I was now left standing by the altar, the attendants observing me with respect which I feared might at any moment take the blasphemous form of worship. Nor could I see how I was to check their adoration, and turn it into the proper channel, if, as happened to Captain Cook, and has frequently occurred since, these darkened idolaters mistook me for one of their own deities. I might spurn them, indeed; but when Nicholson adopted that course, and beat the Fakirs who worshipped him during the Indian Mutiny, his conduct, as I have read, only redoubled their enthusiasm. However, as events proved, they never at any time were inclined to substitute me for their heathen divinities; very far from it indeed, though their peculiar conduct was calculated to foster in my breast this melancholy delusion.

I had not been left long to my own thoughts when I marked lights wandering in the garden or courtyard whither the messenger had been sent by the old priest. Presently there came forth from the court a man of remarkable stature, and with an air of seriousness and responsibility. In his hand he carried a short staff, or baton, with gold knobs, and he wore a thin golden circlet in his hair. As he drew near, the veil of the temple was again lifted, and the aged priest came forward, bearing in his arms a singular casket of wood, ornamented with alternate bands of gold and ivory, carved with outlandish figures. The torch-bearers crowded about us in the darkness, and it was a strange spectacle to behold the smoky, fiery light shining on the men's faces and the rich coloured dresses, or lighting up the white idol of Apollon, which stood among the laurel trees at the entrance of the temple.

III. THE PROPHECY.

The priest and the man with the gold circlet, whom I took to be a chief, now met, and, fixing their eyes on me, held a conversation of which, naturally, I understood nothing. I maintained an unmoved demeanour, and, by way of showing my indifference, and also of impressing the natives with the superiority of our civilization, I took out and wound up my watch, which, I was glad to find, had not been utterly ruined by the salt water. Meanwhile the priest was fumbling in his casket, whence he produced a bundle of very ragged and smoky old bits of parchment and scraps of potsherds. These he placed in the hands of his attendants, who received them kneeling. From the very bottom of the casket he extracted some thin plates of a greyish metal, lead, I believe, all mouldy, stained, and ragged. Over these he pored and puzzled for some time, trying, as I guessed, to make out something inscribed on this curious substitute for writing-paper. I had now recovered my presence of mind, and, thinking at once to astonish and propitiate, I drew from my pocket, wiped, and presented to him my spectacles, indicating, by example, the manner of their employment. No sooner did he behold

Page 9

these common articles of every-day use, than the priest's knees began to knock together, and his old hands trembled so that he could scarcely fix the spectacles on his nose. When he had managed this it was plain that he found much less difficulty with his documents. He now turned them rapidly over, and presently discovered one thin sheet of lead, from which he began to read, or rather chant, in a slow measured tone, every now and then pausing and pointing to me, to my hat, and to the spectacles which he himself wore at the moment. The chief listened to him gravely, and with an expression of melancholy that grew deeper and sadder till the end. It was a strange scene.

I afterwards heard the matter of the prophecy, as it proved to be, which was thus delivered. I have written it down in the language of the natives, spelling it as best I might, and I give the translation which I made when I became more or less acquainted with their very difficult dialect. {23a} It will be seen that the prophecy, whatever its origin, was strangely fulfilled. Perhaps the gods of this people were not mere idols, but evil spirits, permitted, for some wise purpose, to delude their unhappy worshippers. {23b} This, doubtless, they might best do by occasionally telling the truth, as in my instance. But this theory—namely, that the gods of the heathen are perhaps evil and wandering spirits—is, for reasons which will afterwards appear, very painful to me, personally reminding me that I may have sinned as few have done since the days of the early Christians. But I trust this will not be made a reproach to me in our Connection, especially as I have been the humble instrument of so blessed a change in the land of the heathen, there being no more of them left. But, to return to the prophecy, it is given roughly here in English. It ran thus:—"But when a man, having a chimney pot on his head, and four eyes, appears, and when a sail-less ship also comes, sailing without wind and breathing smoke, then will destruction fall upon the Scherian island." Perhaps, from this and other expressions to be offered in a later chapter, the learned will be able to determine whether the speech is of the Polynesian or the Papuan family, or whether, as I sometimes suspect, it is of neither, but of a character quite isolated and peculiar.

The effect produced on the mind of the chief by the prophecy amazed me, as he looked, for a native, quite a superior and intelligent person. None of them, however, as I found, escaped the influence of their baneful superstitions. Approaching me, he closely examined myself, my dress, and the spectacles which the old priest now held in his hands. The two men then had a hurried discussion, and I have afterwards seen reason to suppose that the chief was pointing out the absence of certain important elements in the fulfilment of the prophecy. Here was I, doubtless, "a man bearing a chimney on his head" (for in this light they regarded my hat), and having

Page 10

“four eyes,” that is, including my spectacles, a convenience with which they had hitherto been unacquainted. It was undeniable that a prophecy written by a person not accustomed to the resources of civilization, could not more accurately have described me and my appearance. But the “ship without sails” was still lacking to the completion of what had been foretold, as the chief seemed to indicate by waving his hand towards the sea. For the present, therefore, they might hope that the worst would not come to the worst. Probably this conclusion brought a ray of hope into the melancholy face of the chief, and the old priest himself left off trembling. They even smiled, and, in their conversation, which assumed a lighter tone, I caught and recorded in pencil on my shirt-cuff, for future explanation, words which sounded like aiskistos aneer, farmakos, catharma, and Thargeelyah. {25} Finally the aged priest hobbled back into his temple, and the chief, beckoning me to follow, passed within the courtyard of his house.

IV. AT THE CHIEF’S HOUSE.

The chief leading the way, I followed through the open entrance of the courtyard. The yard was very spacious, and under the dark shade of the trees I could see a light here and there in the windows of small huts along the walls, where, as I found later, the slaves and the young men of the family slept. In the middle of the space there was another altar, I am sorry to say; indeed, there were altars everywhere. I never heard of a people so religious, in their own darkened way, as these islanders. At the further end of the court was a really large and even stately house, with no windows but a clerestory, indicated by the line of light from within, flickering between the top of the wall and the beginning of the high-pitched roof. Light was also streaming through the wide doorway, from which came the sound of many voices. The house was obviously full of people, and, just before we reached the deep verandah, a roofed space open to the air in front, they began to come out, some of them singing. They had flowers in their hair, and torches in their hands. The chief, giving me a sign to be silent, drew me apart within the shadow of a plane tree, and we waited there till the crowd dispersed, and went, I presume, to their own houses. There were no women among them, and the men carried no spears nor other weapons. When the court was empty, we walked up the broad stone steps and stood within the doorway. I was certainly much surprised at what I saw. There was a rude magnificence about this house such as I had never expected to find in the South Sea Islands. Nay, though I am not unacquainted with the abodes of opulence at home, and have been a favoured guest of some of our merchant princes (including Messrs. Bunton, the eminent haberdashers, whose light is so generously bestowed on our Connection), I admit that I had never looked on a more spacious reception-room, furnished, of course, in a somewhat savage manner, but, obviously, regardless of expense. The very threshold between the court and the reception-room, to which you descended by steps, was made of some dark metal, inlaid curiously with

figures of beasts and birds, also in metal (gold, as I afterwards learned), of various shades of colour and brightness.

Page 11

At first I had some difficulty in making out the details of the vast apartment which lay beyond. I was almost dizzy with hunger and fatigue, and my view was further obscured by a fragrant blue smoke, which rose in soft clouds from an open fireplace in the middle of the room. Singular to say, there was no chimney, merely a hole in the lofty roof, through which most of the smoke escaped. The ceiling itself, which was supported by carved rafters, was in places quite black with the vapour of many years. The smoke, however, was thin, and as the fuel on the fire, and on the braziers, was of dry cedar and sandal-wood, the perfume, though heavy, was not unpleasant. The room was partly illuminated by the fire itself, partly by braziers full of blazing branches of trees; but, what was most remarkable, there were rows of metal images of young men (naked, I am sorry to say), with burning torches in their hands, ranged all along the side walls.

A good deal of taste, in one sense, had been expended in making these images, and money had clearly been no object. I might have been somewhat dazzled by the general effect, had I not reflected that, in my own country, gas is within reach of the poorest purse, while the electric light itself may be enjoyed by the very beggar in the street. Here, on the contrary, the dripping of the wax from the torches, the black smoke on the roof, the noisy crackling of the sandal-wood in the braziers, all combined to prove that these natives, though ingenious enough in their way, were far indeed below the level of modern civilization. The abominable ceremony of the afternoon would have proved as much, and now the absence of true *comfort*, even in the dwelling of a chief, made me think once more of the hardships of a missionary's career.

But I must endeavour to complete the picture of domestic life in the island, which I now witnessed for the first time, and which will never be seen again by Europeans. The walls themselves were of some dark but glittering metal, on which designs in lighter metal were inlaid. There were views of the chief going to the chase, his bow in his hand; of the chief sacrificing to idols; of men and young women engaged in the soul-destroying practice of promiscuous dancing; there were wild beasts, lions among others; rivers, with fish in them; mountains, trees, the sun and moon, and stars, all not by any means ill designed, for the work of natives. The pictures, indeed, reminded me a good deal of the ugly Assyrian curiosities in the British Museum, as I have seen them when conducting the children of the Bungletonian Band of Hope through the rooms devoted to the remains of Bible peoples, such as the Egyptians, Hittites, and others.

Page 12

Red or blue curtains, strangely embroidered, hung over the doors, and trophies of swords, shields, and spears, not of steel, but of some darker metal, were fixed on the tall pillars that helped to prop the roof. At the top of the wall, just beneath the open unglazed spaces, which admitted light and air in the daytime, and wind and rain in bad weather, was a kind of frieze, or coping, of some deep blue material. {30} All along the sides of the hall ran carved seats, covered with pretty light embroidered cloths, not very different from modern Oriental fabrics. The carpets and rugs were precisely like those of India and Persia, and I supposed that they must have been obtained through commerce. But I afterwards learned that they were, beyond doubt, of native manufacture.

At the further end of the room was a kind of platform, or dais, on which tables were set with fruit and wine. But much more curious than the furniture of the hall was the group of women sitting by the fire in the centre. There sat in two rows some twenty girls, all busily weaving, and throwing the shuttle from hand to hand, laughing and chattering in low voices. In the midst of them, on a high chair of cedar-wood, decorated with ivory, and with an ivory footstool, sat a person whom, in a civilized country, one must have looked on with respect as a lady of high rank. She, like her husband the chief, had a golden circlet twisted in her hair, which was still brown and copious, and she wore an appearance of command.

At her feet, on a stool, reclined a girl who was, I must confess, of singular beauty. Doto had long fair hair, a feature most unusual among these natives. She had blue eyes, and an appearance of singular innocence and frankness. She was, at the moment, embroidering a piece of work intended, as I afterwards learned with deep pain, for the covering of one of their idols, to whose service the benighted young woman was devoted. Often in after days, I saw Doto stooping above her embroidery and deftly interweaving the green and golden threads into the patterns of beasts and flowers. Often my heart went out to this poor child of pagan tribe, and I even pleased myself with the hope that some day, a reclaimed and enlightened character, she might employ her skill in embroidering slippers and braces for a humble vessel. I seemed to see her, a helpmate meet for me, holding Mothers' Meetings, playing hymn-tunes on the lyre, or the double pipes, the native instruments, and, above all, winning the islanders from their cruel and abominable custom of exposing their infant children on the mountains. How differently have all things been arranged.

Page 13

But I am wandering from my story. When we reached the group by the fireside, who had at first been unaware of our entrance, the chief's wife gave a slight start, alarmed doubtless by my appearance. She could never have seen, nor even dreamed of, such a spectacle as I must have presented, haggard, ragged, faint with hunger, and worn with fatigue as I was. The chief motioned to me that I should kneel at his wife's feet, and kiss her hand, but I merely bowed, not considering this a fit moment to protest otherwise against such sacrilegious mummeries. But the woman—her name I learned later was Ocyale—did not take my attitude in bad part. The startled expression of her face changed to a look of pity, and, with a movement of her hand, she directed Doto to bring a large golden cup from the table at the upper end of the room. Into this cup she ladled some dark liquid from a bowl which was placed on a small three-legged stand, or dumb waiter, close to her side. Next she spilt a little of the wine on the polished floor, with an appearance of gravity which I did not understand. It appears that this spilling of wine is a drink offering to their idols. She then offered me the cup, which I was about to taste, when I perceived that the liquor was indubitably *alcoholic*!

A total abstainer, I had, I am thankful to say, strength enough to resist the temptation thus adroitly thrust upon me. Setting down the cup, I pointed to the badge of blue ribbon, which, though damp and colourless, remained faithful to my button-hole. I also made signs I was hungry, and would be glad of something to eat. My gestures, as far as the blue ribbon went, must have been thrown away, of course, but any one could understand that I was fainting from hunger. The mistress of the house called to one of the spinning girls, who rose and went within the door opening from the platform at the upper end of the room. She presently returned with an old woman, a housekeeper, as we would say, and obviously a faithful and familiar servant. After some conversation, of which I was probably the topic, the old woman hobbled off, laughing. She soon came back, bringing, to my extreme delight, a basket with cakes and goat cheese, and some cold pork in a dish.

I ought, perhaps, to say here that, in spite of the luxury of their appointments, and their extraordinary habit of "eating and drinking all day to the going down of the sun" (as one of their own poets says), these islanders are by no means good cooks. I have tasted of more savoury meats, dressed in coverings of leaves on hot stones, in Maori pahs, or in New Caledonian villages, than among the comparatively civilized natives of the country where I now found myself. Among the common people, especially, there was no notion of hanging or keeping meat. Often have I seen a man kill a hog on the floor of his house, cut it up, toast it, as one may say, at the fire, and then offer the grilled and frequently under-done

Page 14

flesh to his guests. Invariably the guests are obliged to witness the slaughter of the animal which is to supply their dinner. This slaughter is performed as a kind of sacrifice; the legs of the beast are the portions of the gods, and are laid, with bits of fat, upon the altars. Then chops, or rather kabobs, of meat are hacked off, spitted, and grilled or roasted at the fire. Consequently all the meat tasted in this island is actually “meat offered to idols.”

When I made this discovery the shock was very great, and I feared I was repeating a sin denounced from the earliest ages. But what was I to do? Not the meat only, but the vegetables, the fruit, the grain, the very fish (which the natives never eat except under stress of great hunger), were sacred to one or other of their innumerable idols. I must eat, or starve myself to death—a form of suicide. I therefore made up my mind to eat without scruple, remembering that the gods of the nations are nothing at all, but the fancies of vain dreamers, and the invention of greedy and self-seeking priests.

These scruples were of later growth, after I had learned that their meals were invariably preceded by a sacrifice, partly to provide the food, partly as grace before meat. On the present occasion I made an excellent supper, though put to a good deal of inconvenience by the want of forks, which were entirely unknown on the island. Finding that I would not taste the alcoholic liquor, which the natives always mixed with a large proportion of water, Doto rose, went out, and returned with a great bowl of ivy-wood, curiously carved, and full of milk. In this permitted beverage, as my spirits were rising, I drank the young lady's health, indicating my gratitude as well as I could. She bowed gracefully, and returned to her task of embroidery. Meanwhile her father and mother were deep in conversation, and paid no attention to me, obviously understanding that my chief need was food. I could not but see that the face of the chief's wife was overclouded, probably with anxiety caused by the prophecy of which I was, or was taken for, the subject.

When my hunger was satisfied, I fell, it seems, into a kind of doze, from which I was wakened by the noise of people rising, moving, and pushing back chairs. I collected my senses, and perceived that the room was almost dark, most of the inmates had gone, and the chief was lighting a torch at one of the braziers. This torch he placed in my hand, indicating, as I understood, that I was to put myself under the guidance of two of the young women who had been spinning. At this I was somewhat perplexed, but followed where they went before me, each of them holding a burning torch. The light flared and the smoke drifted among the corridors, till we came within sound of running water. In a lofty green chamber was a large bath of polished marble, carved with shapes of men armed with pitchforks, and employed in spearing

Page 15

fish. The bath was full of clear water, of somewhat higher than tepid heat, and the stream, welling up in one part, flowed out in another, not splashing or spilling. The young women now brought flasks of oil, large sponges, such as are common in these seas, and such articles of dress as are worn by the men among the natives. But, to my astonishment, the girls showed no intention of going away, and it soon became evident *that they meant to assist me in my toilet!* I had some difficulty in getting them to understand the indecorum of their conduct, or rather (for I doubt if they understood it after all) in prevailing on them to leave me. I afterwards learned that this custom, shocking as it appears to Europeans, is regarded as entirely right and usual even by the better class of islanders; nor, to do them justice, have I ever heard any imputations on the morality of their women. Except among the shepherds and shepherdesses in the rural districts, whose conduct was very regardless, a high standard of modesty prevailed among the female natives. In this, I need not say, they were a notable exception among Polynesian races.

Left to my own devices by the retreat of the young women, I revelled in the pleasures of the bath, and then the question arose, How was I to be clothed?

I had, of course, but one shirt with me, and that somewhat frayed and worn. My boots, too, were almost useless from their prolonged immersion in salt water. Yet I could not bring myself to adopt the peculiar dress of the natives, though the young persons had left in the bath-room changes of raiment such as are worn by the men of rank. These garments were simple, and not uncomfortable, but, as they showed the legs from the knees downwards, like kilts, I felt that they would be unbecoming to one in my position.

Almost the chief distinction between civilized man and the savage, is the wearing of trousers. When a missionary in Tongo, and prime minister of King Haui Ha there, I made the absence of breeches in the males an offence punishable by imprisonment. Could I, on my very first appearance among the islanders to-morrow, fly, as it were, in the face of my own rules, and prove false to my well-known and often expressed convictions? I felt that such backsliding was impossible. On mature consideration, therefore, I made the following arrangement.

The garments of the natives, when they condescended to wear any, were but two in number. First, there was a long linen or woollen shirt or smock, without sleeves, which fell from the neck to some distance below the knees. This shirt I put on. A belt is generally worn, into which the folds of the smock can be drawn up or "kilted," when the wearer wishes to have his limbs free for active exercise. The other garment is simply a large square piece of stuff, silken or woollen as it happens in accordance with the weather, and the rank of the wearer. In this a man swathes himself,

Page 16

somewhat as a Highlander does in his plaid, pinning it over the shoulder and leaving the arms free. When one is accustomed to it, this kind of dress is not uncomfortable, and many of the younger braves carried it with a good deal of grace, showing some fancy and originality in the dispositions of the folds. Though attired in this barbarous guise, I did not, of course, dispense with my trousers, which, being black, contrasted somewhat oddly with my primrose-coloured kilt, as they call the smock, and the dark violet clamis, or plaid. When the natives do not go bareheaded, they usually wear a kind of light, soft wideawake, but this. I discarded in favour of my hat, which had already produced so remarkable an effect on their superstitious minds.

Now I was dressed, as fittingly as possible in the circumstances, but I felt that my chief need was a bed to lie down upon. I did not wish to sleep in the bath-room, so, taking my torch from the stand in which I had placed it, I sallied forth into the corridors, attired as I have described, and carrying my coat under my arm. A distant light, and the noise of females giggling, which increased most indecorously as I drew near, attracted my attention. Walking in the direction of the sounds, I soon discovered the two young women to whose charge I had been committed by the chief. They appeared to be in high spirits, and, seizing my arms before I could offer any resistance, they dragged me at a great pace down the passage and out into the verandah. Here the air was very fragrant and balmy, and a kind of comfortable “shakedown” of mattresses, covered with coloured blankets, had been laid for me in a corner. I lay down as soon as the sound of the young women’s merriment died out in the distance, and after the extraordinary events of the night, I was soon sleeping as soundly as if I had been in my father’s house at Hackney Wick.

V. A STRANGER ARRIVES.

When I wakened next morning, wonderfully refreshed by sleep and the purity of the air, I had some difficulty in remembering where I was and how I came there in such a peculiar costume. But the voices of the servants in the house, and the general stir of people going to and fro, convinced me that I had better be up and ready to put my sickle into this harvest of heathen darkness. Little did I think how soon the heathen darkness would be trying to put the sickle into me! I made my way with little difficulty, being guided by the sound of the running water, to the bath-room, and thence into the gardens. These were large and remarkably well arranged in beds and plots of flowers and fruit-trees. I particularly admired a fountain in the middle, which watered the garden, and supplied both the chief’s house and the town. Returning by way of the hall, I met the chief, who, saluting me gravely, motioned me to one of many small tables on which was set a bowl of milk, some cakes, and some roasted kid’s flesh.

Page 17

After I had done justice to this breakfast, he directed me to follow him, and, walking before me with his gold-knobbed staff in his hand, passed out of the shady court into the public square. Here we found a number of aged men seated on unpleasantly smooth and cold polished stones in a curious circle of masonry. They were surrounded by a crowd of younger men, shouting, laughing, and behaving with all the thoughtless levity and merriment of a Polynesian mob. They became silent as the chief approached, and the old men rose from their places till he had taken a kind of rude throne in the circle.

For my part, I was obliged to stand alone in their midst, and it seemed that they were debating about myself and my future treatment. First the old priest, whom I had seen on the night before, got up, and, as I fancied, his harangue was very unfavourable to me. He pointed at the inevitable flower-crowned altar which, of course, was in the centre of the market-place, and from the way he shook a sickle he held in his hand I believe that he was proposing to sacrifice me on the spot. In the midst of his oration two vultures, black with white breasts, flew high over our heads, chasing a dove, which they caught and killed right above the market-place, so that the feathers fell down on the altar. The islanders, as I afterwards discovered, are full of childish superstitions about the flight of birds, from which they derive omens as to future events. The old priest manifestly attempted to make political capital against me out of the interesting occurrence in natural history which we had just observed. He hurried to the altar, caught up a handful of the bleeding feathers, and, with sickle in hand, was rushing towards me, when he tripped over the head of a bullock that had lately been sacrificed, and fell flat on his face, while the sickle flew far out of his hand.

On this the young men, who were very frivolous, like most of the islanders, laughed aloud, and even the elders smiled. The chief now rose with his staff in his grasp, and, pointing first to me and then to the sky, was, I imagined, propounding a different interpretation of the omen from that advanced by the old priest. Meantime the latter, with a sulky expression of indifference, sat nursing his knees, which had been a good deal damaged by his unseemly sprawl on the ground. When the chief sat down, a very quiet, absent-minded old gentleman arose. Elatreus was his name, as I learned later; his family had a curious history, and he himself afterwards came to an unhappy and terrible end, as will be shown in a subsequent part of my narrative.

Page 18

I felt quite at home, as if I had been at some vestry-meeting, or some committee in the old country, when Elatreus got up. He was stout, very bald, and had a way of thrusting his arm behind him, and of humming and hawing, which vividly brought back to mind the oratory of my native land. He had also, plainly enough, the trick of forgetting what he intended to say, and of running off after new ideas, a trick very uncommon among these natives, who are born public speakers. I flattered myself that this orator was in favour of leniency towards me, but nobody was paying much attention to him, when a shout was heard from the bottom of the hill on which the square is built. Everybody turned round, the elders jumped up with some alacrity for the sake of a better view on the polished stones where they had been sitting, and so much was the business before the meeting forgotten in the new excitement, that I might have run away unnoticed, had there been anywhere to run to. But flight was out of the question, unless I could get a boat and some provisions, and I had neither. I was pleased, however, to see that I was so lightly and laxly guarded.

The cause of the disturbance was soon apparent. A number of brown, half-naked, sturdy sailors, with red caps, not unlike fezzes, on their heads, appeared, bawling and making for the centre of the square. They were apparently carrying or dragging some person with them, some person who offered a good deal of resistance. Among the foreign and unintelligible cries and howls which rang through the market-place, my heart leaped up, in natural though unsanctified pleasure, as I heard the too well-known but unexpected accents of British profanity.

“Where the (somewhere) are you blooming sons of beach-combers dragging a Bri’sh shailor? Shtand off, you ragged set of whitewashed Christy Minstrels, you! Where’s the Bri’sh Conshul’s? Take me, you longshore sons of sharks, to the Bri’sh Conshul’s! If there’s one white man among you let him stand out and hit a chap his own weight.”

“Hullo!” suddenly cried the speaker, whom I had recognized as William Bludger, one of the most depraved and regardless of the whole wicked crew of the Blackbird,—“hullo, if here isn’t old Captain Hymn-book!”—a foolish nickname the sailors had given me.

He was obviously more than half-drunk, and carried in his hand a black rum-bottle, probably (from all I knew of him) not nearly full. His shirt and trousers were torn and dripping; apparently he had been washed ashore, like myself, after the storm, and had been found and brought into the town by some of the fishing population.

Page 19

What a blow to all my hopes was the wholly unlooked-for arrival of this tipsy, irreclaimable seaman, this unawakened Bill Bludger! I had framed an ideal of what my own behaviour, in my trying circumstances, ought to be. Often had I read how these islanders possess a tradition that a wonderful white man, a being all sweetness and lucidity, landed in their midst, taught them the knowledge of the arts, converted them to peace and good manners, and at last mysteriously departed, promising that he would return again. I had hopes—such things have happened—that the islanders might take me for this wonderful white man of their traditions, come back according to his promise. If this delusion should occur, I would not at once undeceive them, but take advantage of the situation, and so bring them all into the Bungletonian fold. I knew there was no time to waste. Lutheran, French, or Church of England schemers, in schooners, might even now be approaching the island, with their erroneous and deplorable tenets. Again, I had reckoned, if my hopes proved false, on attaining, not without dignity, the crown of the proto-martyr of my Connection. Beyond occasional confinement in police cells, consequent on the strategic manoeuvres of the Salvation Army, none of us had ever known what it was to suffer in the cause. If I were to be the first to testify with my blood, on this unknown soil, at least I could meet my doom with dignity. In any case, I should be remembered, I had reckoned, in the island traditions, either as an isolated and mysterious benefactor, the child of an otherwise unknown race, or as a solitary martyr from afar.

All these vain hopes of spiritual pride were now blown to the wind by Bill Bludger's unexpected appearance and characteristic conduct. No delusions about a divine white stranger from afar could survive the appearance and behaviour of so compromising an acquaintance as William. He was one white stranger too many. There he was, still struggling, shouting, swearing, smelling of rum, and making frantic attempts to reach me and shake hands with me.

"Let bygones be bygones, Captain Hymn-book, your Reverence," he screamed; "here's your jolly good health and song," and he put his horrible black bottle to his unchastened lips. "Here we are, Captain, two Englishmen agin a lot o' blooming Kanekas; let's clear out their whole blessed town, and steer for Sydney."

But, perceiving that I did not intend to recognize or carouse with him, William Bludger now changed his tone; "Yah, you lily-livered Bible-reader," he exclaimed, "what are you going about in *that* toggery for: copying Mr. Toole in Paw Claudian? *You* call yourself a missionary? Jove, you're more like a blooming play hactor in a penny gaff! Easy, then, my hearties," he added, seeing that the fishermen were approaching him again, with ropes in their hands. "Avast! stow your handcuffs."

In spite of his oaths and struggles, the inebriated mariner was firmly bound, hand and foot, and placed in the centre of the assembly. I only wished that the natives had also gagged him, for his language, though, of course, unintelligible to them, was profane, and highly painful to me.

Page 20

Before returning to business, the chiefs carefully inspected the black bottle, of which they had dispossessed William Bludger. A golden vase was produced—they had always plenty of *them* handy—and the dark fluid was poured into this princely receptacle, diffusing a strong odour of rum. Each chief carefully tasted the stuff, and I was pained, on gathering, from the expression of their countenances, that they obviously relished the “fire-water” which has been the ruin of so many peoples in these beautiful but benighted seas. However, there was not enough left to go round, and it was manifestly unlikely that William Bludger had succeeded in conveying larger supplies from the wreck.

The meeting now assumed its former air of earnestness, and it was not hard to see that the arrival of my unhappy and degraded fellow-countryman had introduced a new element into the debate. Man after man spoke, and finally the chief rose, as I had little doubt, to sum up the discussion. He pointed to myself, and to William Bludger alternately, and the words which I had already noted, Thargeelyah, and farmakoi, frequently recurred in his speech. His ideas seemed to meet with general approval; even the old priest laid aside his sickle, and beat applause with his hands. He next rose, and, taking two garlands of beautiful flowers from the horns of the altar, placed one wreath on the head of the drunken sailor, who had fallen asleep by this time. He then drew near me, and I had little doubt that he meant to make me also wear a garland, like some woman of rank and fashion at a giddy secular entertainment. Whatever his motive might be I was determined to wear nothing of the kind. But here some attendants grappled and held me, my hat was lifted from my brows, and the circlet of blossoms was carefully entwined all round my hat. The head-covering was then replaced, the whole assembly, forming a circle, danced around me and the unconscious Bludger, and, finally, the old priest, turning his face alternately to me and to the sun, intoned a hymn, the audience joining in at intervals.

My worst fears were, apparently, being realized. In spite of the compromising appearance and conduct of Bludger, it seemed beyond doubt that we were both regarded as, in some degree, divine and sacred. Resistance on my part was, it will be seen, impossible. I could not escape from the hands of my tormentors, and I was so wholly ignorant, at that time, of their tongue, that I knew not how to disclaim the honours thus blasphemously thrust upon me. I did my best, shouting, in English, “I am no Thargeelyah. I am no farmakos” supposing those words to be the native terms for one or other of their gods. On this the whole assembly, even the gravest, burst out laughing, each man poking his neighbour in the ribs, and uttering what I took to be jests at my expense. Their behaviour in this juncture, and frequently afterwards, when I attempted to make them tell me the meaning of the unknown words, and of catharma (another expression the chief had used), greatly perplexed me. I had afterwards too good reason to estimate their dreadful lack of the ordinary feelings of humanity at its true value.

Page 21

However, nothing but laughter (most unfitting the occasion) could be got out of the assembled natives. They now began to return to their homes, and Bludger, crowned with flowers that became him but ill, was carried off, not, as it seemed to me, without even a reverential demeanour on the part of his escort. Those who surrounded me, a kind of body-guard of six young men, had entirely recovered their composure, and behaved to me with a deference that was astonishing, but reassuring. From this time, I ought to say, though permitted to go where I would, and allowed to observe even their most secret rites, enjoying opportunities such as will never fall to another European, I was never, but once, entirely alone. My worshippers, as they might almost be called, so humble was their demeanour, still kept watchful eyes upon me, as if I were a being so precious that they were jealous of my every movement. It was now made plain to me, by signs, that I must wait for some little space before being conveyed to my appointed residence.

VI. A BACKSLIDER. A WARNING.

We had not remained long by ourselves in the square, when the most extraordinary procession which I had ever beheld began to climb into the open space from the town beneath. I do not know if I have made it sufficiently clear that the square, on the crest of the isolated hill above the sea, was occupied only by public buildings, such as the temple, the house of the chief, and a large edifice used as a kind of town hall, so to speak. The natives in general lived in much smaller houses, many of them little better than huts, and divided by extremely narrow and filthy streets, on the slopes, and along the shores of the bay.

It was from these houses and from all the country round that the procession, with persons who fell into its ranks as they came, was now making its way. Almost all the parties concerned were young, boys and girls, or very young men and women, and though their dress was much scantier and less decent than what our ideas of delicacy require, it must be admitted that the general aspect of the procession was far from unpleasing. The clothes and wraps which the men and women wore were of various gay colours, and were, in most cases, embroidered quite skilfully with representations of flowers, fruits, wild beasts, and individuals of grotesque appearance. Every one was crowned with either flowers or feathers.

But, most remarkable of all, there was scarcely a person in this large gathering who did not bring or lead some wild bird or beast. The girls carried young wild doves, young rooks, or the nestlings of such small fowls as sparrows and finches. It was a pretty sight to see these poor uninstructed young women, flushed with the exertion of climbing, and merry, flocking into the square, each with her pet (as I supposed, but the tender mercies of the heathen are cruel) half hidden in the folds of her gown. Of the young men, some carried hawks, some chained eagles, some young vultures. Many were struggling, too, with wild stags and wild goats, which they compelled with the utmost difficulty to march

in the ranks of the procession. A number of young persons merely bore in their hands such fruits as were in season, obviously fine specimens, of which they had reason to be proud.

Page 22

Others, again, were carrying little young bears, all woolly, comfortable-looking creatures, while the parent bears, adult bears at any rate, were brought along, chained, in the rear. My guards, or adorers, or whatever the young men who looked after me really were, led me forward, and made signs to me that I was to bring up the rear of the procession—behind the bears, which made no attempt (as in the case of the prophet) to take the part of a Minister of the Bungletonian Connection. What a position for one who would fain have been opening the eyes of this darkened people to better things! But, till I had acquired some knowledge of their language, I felt my only chance was to acquiesce in everything not positively sinful. The entrance of a menagerie and horticultural exhibition into the town—for thus I explained to myself what was going on before my eyes—could not be severely censured by the harshest critic, and I prepared to show my affability by joining in an innocent diversion and popular entertainment.

Soon I found that, after all, I was not to be absolutely last in the advance of this miscellaneous exhibition, nor were the intentions of the people so harmless as I had imagined. This was no affair of cottage window gardens, and a distribution of prizes.

The crowd which had collected in front of the chief's house opened suddenly, and, in the throng of people, I detected a movement of excitement and alarm. Next I saw the horns of animals mixed with the heads and shoulders of the multitude, and then an extraordinary spectacle burst, at full speed, upon my gaze. Four great wild stags, plunging, rearing, and kicking, rushed by, dragging a small vehicle of unusual shape, in which stood, to my horror, the chief's beautiful daughter, Doto. The vehicle passed me like a flash of horns, in spite of the attempts of four resolute men, who clung at the stags' heads to restrain the impetuosity of these coursers. The car, I should explain—though I can hardly expect to be believed—was not unlike the floor of a hansom cab, from which the seat, the roof, the driver's perch, and everything else should have been removed, except the basis, the wheels, and the splashboard, the part on which we generally find the advertisements of Messrs. Mappin and Webb. On this floor, then, Doto stood erect, holding the reins; her yellow hair had become unbound, and was floating like a flag behind her, and her beautiful face, far from displaying any alarm, was flushed with pleasure and pride. She was dressed in splendid and glittering attire, over which was fastened—so strange were the manners of these islanders—the newly-stripped skin of a great black bear. Thus dragged by the wild deer, Doto passed like a flash through the midst of the men and women, her stags being maddened to fresh excitement by the sight and smell of the bears, and other wild animals. But, eager as were the brutes that dragged the precarious carriage, they were somewhat tamed by the great steepness

Page 23

of the ascent, up which they bounded, to the heights at the back of the town. Up this path, often narrow and excessively dangerous, we all took our way, and finally, after passing through various perilous defiles and skirting many cliffs, we arrived at a level space in front of an ancient temple of one of their heathen gods. It was built like the others in the settlement below, but the white stone had become brown and yellow with time and weather, and the colours, chiefly red and blue, with which the graven images, in contempt of the second commandment, were painted, had faded, and grown very dim.

On the broad platform in front of this home of evil spirits had been piled a great mound of turf, sloping very gradually and smoothly, like the terrace of a well-kept lawn, to the summit, which itself was, perhaps, a hundred feet in circumference. On this was erected a kind of breastwork of trunks of trees, each tree some fifteen feet in length, and in the centre of the circular breastwork was an altar, as usual, under which blazed a fire of great fierceness. From the temple came a very aged woman, dressed in bear skins, who carried a torch. This torch she lit at the blaze under the altar, and a number of the young men, lighting their torches at hers, set fire to the outer breastwork, in which certain open spaces or entrances had been purposely left. No sooner had the trees begun to catch fire, which they did slowly, being of green wood, than the multitude outside, with the most horrible and piercing outcries, began to drive the animals which they had brought with them into the midst of the flames.

The spectacle was one of the most terrible I ever beheld, even among this cruel and outlandish people, whose abominable inventions contrasted so strangely with the mildness of their demeanour where their religion was not concerned. It was pitiful to see the young birds, many of them not yet able to fly, flutter into the flames and the stifling smoke, and then fall, scorched, and twittering miserably. The young lambs and other domesticated animals were forced in without much resistance, but the great difficulty was to urge the wolves, antelopes, and other wild creatures, into the blaze. The cries of the multitude, who bounded about like maniacs, armed with clubs and torches, rose madly over the strange unusual screams and howls uttered by the wild beasts in their pain and terror. Ever and anon some animal would burst through the crowd, perhaps half burned, and with its fur on fire, and would be pursued to a certain distance, after which it was allowed to escape by the sacrificers. As I was watching, with all my hopes enlisted on its side, the efforts of an antelope to escape, I heard a roar which was horrible even in that babel of abominable sights and sounds.

Page 24

A great black bear, its pelt one sheet of flame, its whole appearance (if I may be permitted to say so) like that of a fiend from the pit, forced its way through the throng, and, bounding madly to the spot where Doto's car stood at a little distance, rose erect on its hind feet, and fixed its claws in the flank of one of the stags, the off-leader. Instantly the team of stags, escaping from the hands of the strong men who stood at their heads, plunged violently down the narrow and dangerous path which led to the city. I shouted to Doto to leap out, but she did not hear or did not understand me.

With a fixed look of horror on her white face, she dropped the useless reins, and the vehicle passed out of sight round a corner of the cliff.

I had but a moment in which to reflect on what might be done to rescue her. In that moment I providentially spied a double-edged axe which lay beside me on the grass, having fallen from the hands of one of the natives. Snatching up this weapon, I rushed to the edge of the cliff, and looked down. It was almost a sheer precipice, broken only by narrow shelves and clefts, on some of which grass grew, while on others a slight mountain-ash or a young birch just managed to find foothold.

Far, far beneath, hundreds of feet below, I could trace the windings of the path up which we had climbed.

Instantly my plan was conceived. I would descend the cliff, risking my life, of course, but that was now of small value in this hopelessly heathen land, and endeavour to save the benighted Doto from the destruction to which she was hastening. Her car must pass along that portion of the path which lay, like a ribbon, in the depth below me, unless, as seemed too probable, it chanced to be upset before reaching the spot. To pursue it from behind was manifestly hopeless.

These thoughts flashed through my brain more rapidly than even the flight of the maddened red deer; and scarcely less swiftly, I began scrambling down the face of the cliff. It was really a series of almost hopeless leaps to which I was committed, and the axe, to which I clung, rather impeded than aided me as I let myself drop from one rocky shelf to another, catching at the boughs and roots of trees to break my fall. At last I reached the last ledge before the sheer wall of rock, which hung above the path. As I let myself down, feeling with my feet for any shelf or crack in the wall, I heard the blare of the stags, and the rattle of the wheels. Half intentionally, half against my will, I left my hold of a tree-root, and slid, bumping and scratching myself terribly, down the slippery and slatey face of the rocky wall, till I fell in a mass on the narrow road. In a moment I was on my feet, the axe I had thrown in front of me, and I grasped it instinctively as I rose. It was not too soon. The deer were almost on me. Stepping to the side of the way, where a rock gave some shelter, I dealt a blow at the nearest stag, under which he reeled and fell to the ground, his companion stumbling over him. In the mad group of rearing beasts I smote right and left at the harness, which gave way beneath my strokes, and the unhurt stags sped down the glen, and then rushed into separate carries

of the hills. The car was upset, and Doto lay pale and bleeding among the hoofs of the stricken deer.

Page 25

I dragged her out of the danger to the side of the path. I felt her pulse, which still fluttered. I brought her, in my hat, water from the stream; and, finally, had the pleasure of seeing her return to life before the first of her friends came, wailing and lamenting, and tearing their hair, down the path.

When they found the girl unwounded, though still weak and faint, their joy knew no bounds, though I too plainly perceived that they were returning thanks to the heathen goddess whose priestess Doto was. As for me, they once more crowned me in the most elaborate, and, I think, unbecoming manner, with purple pandanus flowers. Then, having laid Doto on a litter, they returned in procession to the town, where the girl was taken into the chiefs house. As we parted, she held out her hand to me, but instantly withdrew it with a deep sigh. I closely watched her. She was weeping. I had noticed before that all the natives, as much as possible, avoided personal contact with me. This fact, coupled with the reverence which they displayed towards me, confirmed my impression that they regarded me as something supernatural, not of this world, and divine.

To remove this belief was most certainly my duty, but how was it to be done? Alas! I must now admit that I yielded to a subtle temptation, and was led into conduct unworthy of a vessel. Sad to say, as I search the rewards of my own heart, I am compelled to confess that my real desire was not so much to undeceive the people—for in their bewildering myriads of foolish beliefs one more or less was of small importance—as to recommend myself to Doto. This young woman, though not a member of our Connection, and wholly ignorant of saving Truths, had begun to find favour in my eyes, and I hoped to lead her to the altar; altars, for that matter, being plentiful enough in this darkened land. I should have remembered the words once spoken by a very gracious young woman, the daughter of a pious farmer. “Mother,” said she, “I have made up my mind never to let loose my affections upon any man as is not pious, and in good circumstances.” Doto was, for an islander, in good circumstances, but who, ah! who, could call her pious?

I endeavoured, it is true, to convert her, but, ah! did I go to work in the right way? Did I draw, in awful colours, the certain consequences of ignorance of the Truth? Did I endeavour to strike a salutary terror into her heathen heart?

No; such would have been a proper course of conduct, but such was not mine! I weakly adopted the opposite plan—that used by the Jesuits in their dealings with the Chinese and other darkened peoples. I attempted, meanly attempted (but, as may be guessed, with but limited success), to give an orthodox Nonconformist character to the observances of Doto’s religion. For example, instead of thundering, as was my duty, at her worldly diversions of promiscuous dancing, and ball play, I took a part in these secular pursuits, fondly persuading myself that my presence discouraged levity, and was a check upon unseemly mirth.

Page 26

Thus, among the young native men and maidens, in the windings of the mazy dance, might have been seen disporting himself, a person of stalwart form, whose attire still somewhat faintly indicated his European origin and sacred functions. A hymn-book in my hand instead of a rattle (used by the natives), I capered gaily through their midst. Often and often I led the music, instructing my festive flock in English hymns, which, however, I adapted to gay and artless melodies, such as "There's some one in de house wid Dinah!" or "Old Joe kicking up behind and afore!"

This kind of entertainment was entirely new to the natives, who heartily preferred it to their own dull music, resembling what are called, I believe, "Gregorians," by a bloated and Erastian establishment.

So far, then, I may perchance trust that my efforts were not altogether vain, and the seed thus sown may, in one or two cases, have fallen on ground not absolutely stony. But, alas! I have little room for hope.

I pursued my career of unblushing "economy"—as the Jesuits say, meaning, alas! economy of plain truth speaking—and of heathen dissipation. Few were the dances in which I did not take a part, sinking so low as occasionally to oblige with a hornpipe. My blue ribbon had long ago worn out, and with it my strict views on Temperance. I acquired a liking for the strange drink of the islanders—a thick wine and water, sometimes mixed with cheese and honey. In fact, I was sliding back—like the unfortunate Fanti missionary, John Greedy, M.A., whose case, as reported by precious Mr. Grant Allen, so painfully moved serious circles—I was sliding back to the level of the savagery around me. May these confessions be accepted in the same spirit as they are offered; may it partly palliate my guilt that I had apparently no chance of escape from the island, and no hope beyond that of converting the natives and marrying Doto. I trusted to do it, not (as of old) by open and fearless denunciation, but by slowly winning hearts, in a secular and sportive capacity, before gaining souls.

Even so have I seen young priests of the prelatical Establishment aim at popularity by playing cricket with liberal coal-miners of sectarian persuasions. They told me they were "in the mission field," and one observed that his favourite post in the field was third man. I know not what he meant. But to return to the island.

My career of soul-destroying "amusement" (ah, how hollow!) was not uninterrupted by warnings. Every now and again the mask was raised, and I saw clearly the unspeakable horrors of heathen existence.

Page 27

For example, in an earlier part of this narrative, I have mentioned an old heathen called Elatreus, a good-natured, dull, absent-minded man, who reminded me of a respectable British citizen. How awful was *his* end, how trebly awful when I reflect how nearly I—but let me not anticipate. Elatreus was the head, and eldest surviving member of a family which had a singular history. I never could make out what the story was, but, in consequence of some ancient crime, the chief of the family was never allowed to enter the town hall. The penalty, if he infringed the law, was terrible. Now it chanced one day that I was wandering down the street, my hands full of rare flowers which I had gathered for Doto, and with four young doves in my hat. It was spring, and at that season the young persons of the island expected to receive such gifts from their admirers. I was also followed by eleven little fawns, which I had tamed for her, and four young whelps of the bear. At the same time, in the lightness of my foolish heart, I was singing a native song, all about one Lityerses, to the tune of “Barbara Allen.”

At this moment, I observed, coming out of a side street, old Elatreus. He was doddering along, his hands behind his back, and his nose in the air, followed by a small but increasing crowd of the natives, who crept stealthily behind at a considerable distance. I paused to watch what was happening.

Elatreus entered the main street, and lounged along till he came opposite the town hall, on which some repairs were being made. The door stood wide open. He gazed at it, in a vacant but interested way, and went up the steps, where he stood staring in an absent-minded, vacant kind of fashion. I could see that the crowd watching him from the corner of the side street was vastly excited.

Elatreus now passed his hand across his brow, seemed vastly puzzled, and yawned. Then he slowly entered the town hall. With a wild yell of savage triumph the mob rushed in after him, and in a few moments came forth again, with Elatreus bound and manacled. Some one sped away, and brought the old priest, who carried the sickle. He appeared full of joy, and lustily intoned—for they have this Popish custom of intoning—an unintelligible hymn. By this time Elatreus had been wreathed and crowned with flowers, and the rude multitude for this purpose seized the interesting orchids which I had gathered for my Doto. They then dragged the old man, pitifully lamenting, to the largest altar in the centre of the square.

Need I say what followed? The scene was too awful. With a horrible expression of joy the priest laid the poor wretch on the great stone altar, and with his keen sickle—but it is too horrible! . . . This was the penalty for a harmless act, forbidden by a senseless law, which Elatreus—a most respectable man for an idolater—had broken in mere innocent absence of mind.

Alas! among such a people, how could I ever hope, alone and unaided, to effect any truly regenerating work?

Page 28

Yet I was not wholly discouraged; indeed, my *infatuation* for Doto made me overlook much profligate behaviour that I do not care to mention in a tract which may fall into the hands of the young. One other example of the native barbarity, however, I must narrate.

A respected couple in the vicinity had long been childless. At length their wishes were crowned with success, and a little baby girl was born to them. But the priest, who had curious ideas of his own, insisted on consulting, as to this child, a certain witch, a woman who dwelt apart in a cave where there was a sulphurous hot-water spring, surrounded by laurel bushes, regarded as sacred by the benighted islanders. This spring, or the fumes that arose from it, was supposed to confer on the dweller in the cave the gift of prophecy. She was the servant of Apollon, and was credited with possessing a spirit of divination. The woman, after undergoing, or simulating, an epileptic attack, declared, in rhythmical language, that the babe must not be allowed to live. She averred that it would “bring destruction on Scheria,” the native name for the island, which I have styled Boothland, in honour of the Salvation Army. This was enough for the priests, who did not actually slay the infant, but exposed it on the side of a mountain, where the beasts and birds were likely to have their way with it.

Now it chanced that I had climbed the hill-top that day to watch for a sail, for I never quite lost hope of being taken away by some British or continental vessel. My attendants, for a wonder, were all absent at some feast—Carneia, I think they called it—of their heathen gods. The time was early summer; it only wanted a fortnight of the date, as far as I could reckon, at which I had first been cast on the island, a year before.

As I descended the hillside, pleased, I must own, by the warm blight sunlight, the colour of the sea, and the smell of the aromatic herbs,—pleased, and half forgetful of the horrid heathenism that surrounded me, I heard a low wail as of an infant. I searched about, in surprise, and came on a beautiful baby, in rich swaddling bands, with a gold signet ring tied round its neck. Such an occurrence was not very unusual, as the natives, like most savages, were in the habit of keeping down the surplus population, by thus exposing their little ones. The history of the island was full of legends of exposed children, picked up by the charitable (there was, oddly enough, no prohibition against this), and afterwards recognized and welcomed by their families. As any Englishman would have done, I lifted the dear little thing in my arms, and, a happy thought occurring to me, carried it off as a present to Doto, who doted on babies, as all girls do. The gift proved to be the most welcome that I had ever offered, though Doto, as usual, would not accept it from my hands, but made me lay it down beside the hearth, which they regarded as a sacred place. Even if an enemy reached the hearth of his foe, he would, thenceforth, be quite safe in his house. Doto then picked up the child, warmed and caressed it, sent for milk for its entertainment, and was full of pleasure in her new pet.

Page 29

She was a dear good girl, Doto, in spite of her heathen training. {74}

Strangely enough, as I thought at the time, she burst out weeping when I took my leave of her, and seemed almost as if she had some secret to impart to me. This, at least, showed an interest in me, and I walked to my home with high presumptuous thoughts.

As I passed a certain group of rocks, in a lonely uncultivated district, while the grey of evening was falling, I heard a low whistle. The place had a bad reputation, being thought to be haunted. Perhaps I had unconsciously imbibed some of the superstitions of the natives, for I started in alarm.

Then I heard an unmistakably British voice cry, in a suppressed tone, "Hi!"

The underwood rustled, and I beheld, to my astonishment, the form, the crawling and abject form, of William Bludger!

Since the day of his landing we had never once met, William having been sent off to a distant part of the island.

"Hi!" he said again, and when I exclaimed, naturally, "Hullo!" he put his finger on his lips, and beckoned to me to join him. This I did, and found that he was lurking in a cavern under the group of grey weather-worn stones.

When I entered the cave, Bludger fell a-trembling so violently that he could not speak. He seemed in the utmost alarm, his face quite ashen with terror.

"What is the matter, William Bludger?" I asked; "have you had a Call, or why do you thrust yourself on me?"

"Have *you* sich a thing as a chaw about ye?" he asked in tremulous accents. "I'm *that* done; never a drop has passed my lips for three days, strike me dead; and I'd give anything for a chaw o' tobacco. A sup of drink you have *not* got, Capt'n Hymn-book, axing your pardon for the liberty?"

"William," I said, "even in this benighted island, you set a pitiful example. You have been drinking, sir; you are reaping what you have sown; and only temperance, strict, undeviating total abstinence rather, can restore your health."

"So help me!" cried the wretched man, "except a drop of Pramneian {76} I took, the morning I cut and run,—and that was three days ago,—nothing stronger than castor-oil berries have crossed my lips. It ain't that, sir; it ain't the drink. It's—it's the Thargeelyah. Next week, sir, they are going to roast us—you and me—flog us first, and roast us after. Oh Lord! Oh Lord!"

VII. FLIGHT.

“Flog us first, and roast us afterwards.” I repeated mechanically the words of William Bludger. “Why, you must be mad; they are more likely to fall down and worship us,—*me* at any rate.”

“No, Capt’n,” replied William; “that’s your mistake. They say we’re both Catharmata; that’s what they call us; and you’re no better than me.”

“And what are Catharmata?” I inquired, remembering that this word, or something like it, had been constantly used by the natives in my hearing.

Page 30

"Well, Capt'n, it means, first and foremost, just the off-scourings of creation, the very dust and sweepings of the shop," answered Bludger, who had somehow regained his confidence. To have a fellow-sufferer, and to see the pallor which, doubtless, overspread my features, was a source of comfort to this hardened man. At the same time I confess that, if William Bludger alone had been destined to suffer, I could have contemplated the decree with Christian resignation.

"I speak the beggars' patter pretty well now," Bludger went on; "and I see Catharmata means more than just mere dirt. It means two unlucky devils."

"William?" I exclaimed.

"It means, saving your presence, two poor coves, as has no luck, like you and me, and that can be got rid of once a year, at an entertainment they call the Thargeelyah, I dunno why, a kind o' friendly lead. They choose fellows as either behaves ill, or has no friends to make a fuss about them, and they gives them three dozen, or more, and takes them down to the beach, and burns them alive over a slow fire. And then they toss the ashes out to sea, and think all the bad luck goes away with the tide. Oh, I never was in such a hole as this!"

Bludger's words made me shudder. I had never forgotten the hideous sacrifice, doubtless the Thargeelyah, as they called it, that greeted me when I was first cast ashore on the island. To think that I had only been saved that I might figure as a victim of some of their heathen gods!

Oh, now the thought came back to me with a bitter repentance, that if I had only converted all the islanders, they would never have dreamed of sacrificing me in honour of a mere idol! Why had I been so lukewarm, why had I backslidden, why had I endeavoured to make myself agreeable by joining in promiscuous dances, when I should have been thundering against Pagan idolatry, holy water, idols, sacrifices and the whole abominable system of life on the island? True, I might have goaded them into slaying me; I might have suffered as a martyr; but, at the least, I would have deserved the martyr's crown. And now I was to perish at the stake, without even the precious consolation of being a real martyr, and was to be flogged into the bargain.

I gave a hollow groan as these reflections passed through my mind, and this appeared to afford William Bludger some consolation.

"You don't seem to like it yourself, Capt'n; what's your advice? We're both in the same boat; leastways I wish we *were* in a boat; anyhow we're both in the same hole."

There was no denying this, and it was high time to mature some plan of escape. Already I must have been missed by my attendants, my gaolers rather, who would have returned from their festival, and would be looking for me everywhere.

I bitterly turned over in my mind the facts of our situation; “ours,” for, as a just punishment of my remissness, I was in the same quandary as a drunken, dissipated sailor before the mast.

Page 31

If William had but possessed a sweet and tuneful voice (often a gift found in the most depraved natures), and if I had been able to borrow a harmonium on wheels, I would not, even now, have despaired of converting the whole island in the course of the week. As remarkable feats have been performed, with equal alacrity, by precious Messrs. Moody and Sankey, and I am informed that expeditious conversions are by no means infrequent among politicians. But it was vain to think of this resource, as William had no voice, and knew no hymns, while I had no means of access to a perambulating harmonium.

"I'll tell you what it is, sir," said Bludger; "I have a notion."

"Name it, William," I replied, my heart and manner softened by community in suffering and terror.

"Well, if I were you, sir, I would not go home to-night at all; I'd stop where you are. The beggars won't find you, let them hunt as they like; they daren't come near this place, bless you, it's an 'Arnt;" by which he meant that it was haunted.

"Well," said I, "but how should we be any better off to-morrow morning?"

"That's just it, sir," said Bludger. "We'll be up with the first stroke of dawn, nip down to the harbour, get on board a boat, and be off before any of them are stirring."

"But, even if we manage to secure a boat," I said, "what about provisions, and where are we to sail for?"

"Oh, never mind that," said Bill; "we can't be worse off than we are, and I'll slip out to-night, and lay in some prog in the town. Also some grog, if I can lay my hands on it," he added, with an unholy smile.

"No, William," I murmured; "no grog; our lives depend on our sobriety."

"Always a-preaching, the old tub-thumper," I heard William say to himself; but he made no further reference to the subject.

It was now quite dark, and we lay whispering, in the damp hollow under the great stone. Our plan was to crawl away at the first blush of dawn, when men generally sleep most soundly; that William should enter one of the unguarded houses (for these people never stole, and did not know the meaning of the word "thief"), that he should help himself to provisions, and that meanwhile I should have a boat ready to start in the harbour.

This larcenous but inevitable programme we carried out, after waiting through dreadful hours of cold and shivering anxiety. Every cry of a night bird from the marsh or the wood sent my heart into my mouth. I felt inconceivably mean and remorseful, my vanity

having received a dreadful shock from the discovery that, far from being a god, I was to be a kind of burnt-offering.

At last the east grew faintly grey, and we started, not keeping together, but Bludger marching cautiously in my rear, at a considerable distance. We only met one person, a dissipated young man, who, I greatly fear, had been paying his court to a shepherdess in the hills. When he shouted a challenge, I replied, *Erastes eimi*, which means, I am sorry to say, "I am a lover," and implied that I, also, had been engaged in low intrigue. "Farewell, with good fortune," he replied, and went on his way, singing some catch about *Amaryllis*, who, I presume, was the object of his unhallowed attentions.

Page 32

We slipped into the silent town, unwallled and unguarded as it was, for as one of their own poets had said, “We dwell by the wash of the waves, far off from toilsome men, and with us are no folk conversant.” They were a race that knew war only by a vague tradition, that they had dwelt, at some former age, in an island, perhaps New Zealand, where they were subject to constant annoyance from Giants,—a likely story. Thence they had migrated to their present home, where only one white man had ever been cast away—one Odysseus, so their traditions declared—before our arrival. Him, however, they had treated hospitably, very unlike their contemplated behaviour to Bludger and me.

I am obliged to make this historical digression that the reader may understand how it happened, under Providence, that we were not detected in passing through the town, and how Bludger successfully accomplished what, I fear, was by no means his first burglary.

We parted at the chief’s house, Bill to secure provisions, and I to unmoor a boat, and bring her round to a lonely bay on the coast, where my companion was to join me.

I accomplished my task without the slightest difficulty, selected a light craft,—they did not use canoes, but rowed boats like coracles,—and was lying at anchor, moored with a heavy stone, in the bay.

The dawn was now breaking in the most beautiful colours—gold, purple, crimson, and green—across the sea. All nature was still, save for the first pipe of awakening birds.

There was a delicate fragrance in the air, which was at once soft and keen, and, as I watched the red sunlight on the high cliffs, and on the smooth trunks of the palm trees, I felt, strange to say, a kind of reluctance to leave the island.

The people, apart from their cruel and abominable religion, were the gentlest and most peaceful I have ever known. They were beautiful to look upon, so finely made and shapely that I have never seen their like. Their language was exquisitely sweet and melodious, and though, except hymns, I do not care for poetry, yet I must admit that some of their compositions in verse were extremely pleasing, though they were ignorant of the art of rhyme. All about them was beautifully made, and they were ignorant of poverty. I never saw a beggar on the island; and Christians, unhappily, do not share their goods with each other, and with the poor, so freely as did these benighted heathens. Often have I laboured to make them understand what our Pauper Question means, but they could not comprehend me.

“How can a man lack home, and food, and fire?” they would say; “do people not love each other in your country?”

I explained that we love each other *as Christians*, but this did not seem to enlighten their benighted minds. On the other hand, it is true that they settle their population question by strangling or exposing the majority of their infant daughters.

Page 33

Rocked on the smooth green swell of the sea, beneath the white rocks, I was brooding over these and many other matters, when I heard sudden and violent movements in the deep vegetation on the hillside. The laurel groves were stirred, and Bill Bludger, with a basket in his hand, bounded down the slope, and swam for dear life to the boat.

"They're after me," he cried; and at that moment an arrow quivered in the side of the boat.

I helped William on board as well as I might, under a shower of arrows from the hill-top, most of which, owing to the distance, were ill directed and fell short, or went wide.

Into the boat, at last, I got him, and thrusting an oar in his direction, I said, "Pull for your life," and began rowing. To my horror, the boat made no way, but kept spinning round. A glance in the bow showed me what was the matter: *William Bludger was hopelessly intoxicated!* He had got at the jars of wine in the chief's cellar,—thalamos, they call it,—and had not taken the precaution of mixing the liquor with water, as the natives invariably do when they drink. The excitement of running had sent the alcoholic fumes direct to his brain, and now he lay, a useless and embarrassing cargo, in the bows. Meanwhile, the shouts of the natives rang nearer and louder, and I knew that boats would soon be launched for our capture. I thought of throwing Bludger overboard, and sculling, but determined not to stain what might be my last moments with an act of selfishness. I therefore pulled hard for the open sea, but to no avail. On every side boats crowded round me, and I should probably have been shot, or speared, but for the old priest, who, erect in the bows of the largest vessel, kept yelling that we were to be taken alive.

Alas! I well knew the secret of his cruel mercies.

He meant to reserve us for the sacrifice.

VIII. SAVED!

Why should I linger over the sufferings of the miserable week that followed our capture? Hauled back to my former home, I was again made the object of the mocking reverence of my captors. Ah, how often, in my reckless youth, have my serious aunts warned me that I "would be a goat at the last"! Too true, too true; now I was to be a scapegoat, to be driven forth, as these ignorant and strangely perverted people believed, with the sins of the community on my head, those sins which would, according to their *miserable superstition*, be expiated by the death, and consumed away by the burning, of myself and William Bludger!

Page 34

The week went by, as all weeks must, and at length came the solemn day which they call Thargeelyah, the day more sacred than any other to their idol, Apollon. Long before sunrise the natives were astir; indeed, I do not think they went to bed at all, but spent the night in hideous orgies. I know that, tossing sleepless through the weary hours, I heard the voices of young men and women singing on the hillsides, and among the myrtle groves which are holy to the most disreputable of their deities, a female, named Aphrodishty. Harps were twanging too, and I heard the refrain of one of the native songs, "To-night they love who never loved before; to-night let him who loves love all the more." The words have unconsciously arranged themselves, even in English, as poetry; those who know Thomas Gowles best, best know how unlikely it is that he would willingly dabble in the worldly art of verse-fashioning. Think of my reflections with a painful, shameful, and, above all, *undeserved* death before me, while all the fragrant air was ringing with lascivious merriment. My impression is that, as all the sins of the year were, in their opinion, to be got rid of next day, and tossed into the sea with the ashes of Bludger and myself, the natives had made up their minds—an eligible opportunity now presenting itself—to be as *wicked as they knew how*. Alas! though I have not dwelt on this painful aspect of their character, they "knew how" only too well.

The sun rose at last, and flooded the island, when I perceived that, from every side, crowds of revellers were pressing together to the place where I lay in fetters. They had a wild, dissipated air, flowers were wreathed and twisted in their wet and dewy locks, which floated on the morning wind. Many of the young men were merely dressed—if "dressed" it could be called—in the skins of leopards, panthers, bears, goats, and deer, tossed over their shoulders. In their hands they all held wet, dripping branches of fragrant trees, many of them tipped with pine cones, and wreathed with tendrils of the vine. Others carried switches, of which I divined the use only too clearly, and the women were waving over their heads tame serpents, which writhed and wriggled hideously. It was an awful spectacle!

I was dragged forth by these revellers; many of them were intoxicated, and, in a moment—I blush even now to think of it—I was stripped naked! Nothing was left to me but my hat and spectacles, which, for some religious reason I presume, I was, fortunately, allowed to retain. Then I was driven with blows, which hurt a great deal, into the market-place, and up to the great altar, where William Bludger, also naked, was lying more dead than alive.

"William," I said solemnly, "what cheer?" He did not answer me. Even in that supreme moment it was not difficult to discern that William had been looking on the wine when it was red, and had not confined himself to mere ocular observation. I tried to make him remember he was an Englishman, that the honour of our country was in our hands, and that we should die with the courage and dignity befitting our race. These were strange consolations and exhortations for *me* to offer in such an extremity, but, now it had come to the last pass, it is curious what mere worldly thoughts hurried through my mind.

Page 35

My words were wasted: the natives seized William and forced him to his feet. Then, while a hymn was sung, they put chains of black and white figs round our necks, and thrust into our hands pieces of cheese, figs, and certain peculiar herbs. This formed part of what may well be called the “Ritual” of this cruel race. May Ritualists heed my words, and turn from the errors of their ways!

Too well I knew all that now awaited us. All that I had seen and shuddered at, on the day of my landing on the island, was now practised on self and partner. We had to tread the long paved way to the distant cove at the river’s mouth; we had to endure the lashes from the switches of wild fig. The priestess, carrying the wooden idol, walked hard by us, and cried out, whenever the blows fell fewer or lighter, that the idol was waxing too heavy for her to bear. Then they redoubled their cruelties.

It was a wonderfully lovely day. In the blue heaven there was not a cloud. We had reached the river’s mouth, and were fast approaching the stakes that had already been fixed in the sands for our execution; nay, the piles of green wood were already being heaped up by the young men. There was, there could be, no hope, and, weary and wounded, I almost welcomed the prospect of death, however cruel.

Suddenly the blows ceased to shower on me, and I heard a cry from the lips of the old priest, and, turning about, I saw that the eyes of all the assembled multitude were fixed on a point on the horizon.

Looking automatically in the direction towards which they were gazing, I beheld—oh joy, oh wonder!—I beheld a long trail of cloud floating level with the sea! It was the smoke of a steamer!

“Too late, too late,” I thought, and bitterly reflected that, had the vessel appeared but an hour earlier, the attention of my cruel captors might have been diverted to such a spectacle as they had never seen before.

But it was *not* too late.

Perched on a little hillock, and straining his gaze to the south, the old priest was speaking loudly and excitedly. The crowd deserted us, and gathered about him.

I threw myself on the sand, weary, hopeless, parched with thirst, and racked with pain. Bludger was already lying in a crumpled mass at my feet. I think he had fainted.

I retained consciousness, but that was all. The fierceness of the sun beat upon me, the sky and sea and shore swam before me in a mist. Presently I heard the voice of the priest, raised in the cadences which he favoured when he was reading texts out of their sacred books, if books they could be called. I looked at him with a faint curiosity, and

perceived that he held in his hands the wooden casket, adorned with strangely carved bands of gold and ivory, which I had seen on the night of my arrival on the island.

From this he had selected the old grey scraps of metal, scratched, as I was well aware, with what they conceived to be ancient prophecies.

Page 36

I was now sufficiently acquainted with the language to understand the verses which he was chanting, and which I had already heard, without comprehending them. They ran thus in English:

“But when a man, having a chimney pot on his head, and four eyes, appears in Scheria, and when a ship without sails also comes, sailing without wind, and breathing smoke, then shall destruction fall on the island.”

He had not ended when it was plain, even to those ignorant people, that the prophecy was about to be fulfilled. From the long, narrow, black line of the steamer, which had approached us with astonishing speed, “sailing without wind, and breathing smoke,” there burst six flashes of fire, followed by a peal like thunder, and six tall fountains, as the natives fancied, of sea-water rose and fell in the bay, where the shells had lighted.

It was plain that the commander of the vessel, finding himself in unknown seas, and hard by an unvisited country, was determined to strike terror and command respect by this salute.

The noise of the broadside had scarcely died away, when the natives fled, disappeared like magic, leaving many of their garments behind them.

They were making for their town, which was concealed from the view of the rapidly nearing steamer. From her mast I could now see, flaunting the slight breeze, the dear old Union Jack, and the banner of the Salvation Navy! {95}

My resolution was taken in a moment. Bludger had now recovered consciousness, and was picking up heart. I thrust into his hands one of the branches with which we had been flogged, fastened to it a cloak of one of the natives, bade him keep waving it from a rocky promontory, and, rushing down to the sea, I leaped in, and swam with all my strength towards the vessel. Weak as I was, my new hopes gave me strength, and presently, from the crest of a wave, I saw that the people of the steamer were lowering a boat, and rowing towards me.

In a few minutes they had reached me, my countrymen’s hands were in mine. They dragged me on board; they pulled back to their vessel; and I stood, entirely undressed, on the deck of a British ship!

So long had I lived among people heedless of modesty that I was rushing, with open arms, towards the officer on the quarter-deck, who was dressed as a bishop, when I heard a scream of horror. I turned round in time to see the bishop’s wife fleeing precipitately to the cabin, and driving her children and governess in front of her.

Then all the horror of the situation flooded my heart and brain, and I fell fainting on the quarter-deck.

Page 37

When I recovered my consciousness, I found myself plainly but comfortably dressed in the ordinary costume, except the hat, which lay beside me, of a dean in the Church of England. My wounds had been carefully attended to, William Bludger had been taken on board, and I was surrounded by the kind faces of my benefactors, including the bishop's consort. My apologies for my somewhat sudden and unceremonious intrusion were cut short by the arrival of tea and a slight collation suitable for an invalid. In an hour I was walking the quarter-deck with the bishop in command of the William Wilberforce, armed steam yacht, of North Shields, fitted out for the purposes of the Salvation Navy. From the worthy prelate in command of the William Wilberforce, I learned much concerning his own past career and the nature of his enterprise, as I directed the navigation of the vessel through the shoals and reefs which lay about the harbour of the island.

The bishop (a purely brevet title) would refresh his memory, now and then, from a penny biography of himself with which he was provided, and the following, in brief, is a record of his life and adventures:—

Thomas Sloggins (that was his name), from his earliest infancy, had been possessed with a passion for *doing good to others*, a passion, alas! but too rarely reciprocated. I pass over many affecting details of his adventures as a ministering child: how he endeavoured to win his father from tobacco by breaking his favourite pipes; how he strove to wean his elder brother from cruel field-sports, by stuffing the joints of his fishing-rod with gravel; with many other touching incidents.

Being almost entirely uneducated, young Sloggins, when he reached man's estate, conceived that he would most benefit his fellow-creatures by combining the professions of the pulpit and the press—by preaching on Sundays and at odd times, while he acted as outdoor reporter to *The Rowdy Puritan* on every lawful day. Being a man of great earnestness and enterprise, he soon rose in the ranks of the Salvation Navy; and at one time commanded an evangelical barge on the benighted canals of our country. Finally, he made England almost too hot to hold him, by the original forms of his benevolence, while, at the same time, he acquired the utmost esteem and confidence of many wealthy philanthropists and excellent, if impulsive, ladies. These good people provided him with that well-equipped and armed steam yacht, the William Wilberforce, which he manned with a crew of converted characters (they certainly looked as if they must have needed a great deal of converting), and he had now for months been cruising in the South Pacific. A local cyclone had driven the William Wilberforce out of her reckoning, and hence the appearance of that vessel in the very nick of time to achieve my rescue.

Page 38

When the bishop had finished his story, I briefly recapitulated to him my own adventures, and we agreed that the conversion of the island must be our earliest task. To begin with, we steered into the harbour, where a vast multitude of the natives were assembled in arms, and awaited our approach with a threatening demeanour. Our landing was opposed, but a few well-directed volleys from a Gardiner gun (which did not jam) caused the hostile force to disperse, and we landed in great state. Marching on the chief's house, we were received with an abject submission that I had scarcely expected. The people were absolutely cowed, more by the fulfilment of the prophecy, I think, than even by the execution done by our Gardiner machine gun. At the bishop's request, I delivered a harangue in the native tongue, declaring that we only required the British flag to be hoisted on the palace, and the immediate disendowment of the heathen church as in those parts established. I was listened to in uneasy silence; but my demand for lodgings in the palace was acceded to; and, in a few hours, the bishop, with his wife and children, were sumptuously housed under the roof of the chief. The ladies of the chief's family showed great curiosity in watching and endeavouring to converse with our friends. I was amused to see how soon the light-hearted islanders appeared to forget their troubles and apprehensions. Doto, in particular, became quite devoted to the prelate's elder daughter (the youngest of the bishop's family was suffering from measles), and would never be out of her company. Thus all seemed to fare merrily; presents were brought to us—flowers, fruit, the feathers of rare birds, and ornaments of native gold were literally showered upon the ladies of the party. The chief promised to call a meeting of his counsellors on the morrow, and all seemed going on well, when, alas! measles broke out in the palace. The infant whom I had presented to Doto—the infant whom I had found on the mountain side—was the first sufferer. Then Doto caught the disease herself, then her mother, then the chief. In vain we attempted to nurse and tend them; in vain we expended the contents of the ship's medicine chest on the invalids. The malady having, as it were, an entirely new field to work upon, raged like the most awful pestilence. Through all ranks of the people it spread like wild-fire; many died, none could be induced to take the most ordinary precautions. The natives became, as it were, mad under the torments of fever and the burning heat of the unaccustomed malady; they rushed about, quite unclad, for the sake of the deceptive coolness, and hundreds of them cast themselves into the sea and into the river.

Page 39

It was my sad lot to see my dear Doto die—the first of the sufferers in the palace to succumb to the disease. Meanwhile, the bishop and myself being entirely absorbed in attendance on the sick, the crew of the William Wilberforce, I deeply regret to say, escaped from all restraint, and forgot what was due to themselves and their profession. They revelled with the most abandoned of the natives, and disease and drink ravaged the once peaceful island. Every sign of government and order vanished. The old priest built a huge pile of firewood, and laying himself there with the images of the gods, set fire to the whole, and perished with his own false religion.

After this event, the island ceased to be a safe residence for ourselves. Among the mountains, as I learned, where the pestilence had not yet penetrated, the shepherds and the wilder tribes were gathering in arms. One night we stole on board the William Wilberforce, leaving the city desolate, filled with the smoke of funeral pyres, and the wailing of men and women. There was a dreadful sultry stillness in the air, and all day long wild beasts had been dashing madly into the sea, and the sky had been obscured by flights of birds. On all the crests of the circle of surrounding hills we saw, in the growing darkness, the beacons and camp fires of the insurgents from the interior. Just before the dawn the William Wilberforce was attacked by the whole mass of the natives in boats and rafts. But we had not been unprepared for this movement, nor were the resources of science unequal to the occasion. We had surrounded the William Wilberforce with a belt, or cordon, of torpedoes, and as each of the assaulting boats touched the boom, a terrible explosion shook the water into fountains of foam, and the waves were strewn with scalded, wounded, and mutilated men. Meanwhile, we bombarded the city and the harbour, and the night passed amid the most awful sounds and sights—fire, smoke, yells of anger and pain, cries of the native leaders encouraging their men, and shouts from our own people, who had to repel the boarders, when the boom was at last forced, with pikes and cutlasses. Just before the dawn a strange thing happened. A great glowing coal, as it seemed, fell with a hissing crash on the deck of the William Wilberforce, and others dropped, with a strange sound and a dreadful odour of burning, in the water all around us. Had the natives discovered some mode of retaliating on our use of firearms?

I looked in the direction of their burning city, and beheld, on the sharp peak of the highest mountain (now visible in the grey morning light), an object like a gigantic pine-tree of fire. The blazing trunk rose, slim and straight, from the mountain crest, and, at a vast height, developed a wilderness of burning branches. Fearful hollow sounds came from the hill, its sides were seamed with racing cataracts of living lava, of coursing and leaping flames, which

Page 40

rolled down with incredible swiftness and speed towards the doomed city. Then the waters of the harbour were smitten and shaken, and the William Wilberforce rocked and heaved as in the most appalling storm, though all the winds were silent, while a mighty wave swept far inland towards the streams of fire. There was no room for doubt; a volcanic eruption was occurring, and a submarine earthquake, as not uncommonly happens, had also taken place. Our only hope was in immediate flight. Presently steam was got up, and we steamed away into the light of the glowing east, leaving behind us only a burning island, and a fire like an ugly dawn flaring in the western sky.

When we returned in the evening, Boothland—as I may now indeed call it, for Scheria has ceased to be—was one black smoking cinder.

Hardly a tree or a recognizable rock remained to show that this had once been a peaceful home of men. The oracle, or prophecy of the old priest, had been horribly, though, of course, quite accidentally, fulfilled.

* * * * *

Little remains to be told. On my return home, I chanced to visit the British Museum, and there, much to my surprise, observed an old piece of stone, chipped with the characters, or letters, in use among the natives of Scheria.

“Why,” said I, reading the words aloud, “these are the characters which the natives employed on my island.”

“These?” said the worthy official who accompanied me. “Why, these are the most archaic Greek letters which have yet been discovered: inscriptions from beneath the lava beds of Santorin.”

“I can’t help that,” I said. “The Polynesians used them too; and you see I can read them easily, though I don’t know Greek.”

I then told him the whole story of my connection with the island, and of the unfortunate results of the contact between these poor people and our superior modern civilization.

I have rarely seen a man more affected by any recital than was the head of the classical department of the Museum by my artless narrative. When I described the sacrifice I saw on landing in the island, he exclaimed, “Great Heavens! the Attic Thargelia.” He grew more and more excited as I went on, and producing a Greek book, “Pausanias,” he showed me that the sacrifice of wild beasts was practised sixteen hundred years ago in honour of Artemis Elaphria. The killing of old Elatreus for entering the town hall reminded him of a custom in Achaea Pthiotis. When I had finished my tale, he burst out into violent and libellous language. “You have destroyed,” he said, “with your miserable



modern measles and Gardiner guns, the last remaining city of the ancient Greeks. The winds cast you on the shore of Phaeacia, the island sung by Homer; and, in your brutal ignorance, you never knew it. You have ruined a happy, harmless, and peaceful people, and deprived archaeology of an opportunity that can never, never return!"

Page 41

I do not know about archaeology, but as for “harmless and peaceful people,” I leave it to my readers to say whether the islanders were anything of the sort.

I learn that the Government has just refused to give the Museum a grant of five thousand pounds to be employed in what are called “Excavations in Ancient Phaeacia,” diggings, that is, in Boothland.

With so many darkened people still ignorant of our enlightened civilization, I think the grant would be a shameful waste of public money. {106}

* * * * *

We publish the original text of the prophecy repeatedly alluded to by Mr. Gowles. The learned say that no equivalent occurs for the line about his “four eyes,” and it is insinuated, in a literary journal of eminence, that Mr. Gowles pilfered the notion from Good’s glass eye, in a secular romance, called King Solomon’s Mines, which Mr. Gowles, we are sure, never heard of in his life.—ED.

THE PROPHECY.

[The Prophecy in Greek — not reproduced]

IN THE WRONG PARADISE AN OCCIDENTAL APOLOGUE.

In the drawing-room, or, as it is more correctly called, the “dormitory,” of my club, I had been reading a volume named “Sur l’Humanite Posthume,” by M. D’Assier, a French follower of Comte. The mixture of positivism and ghost-stories highly diverted me. Moved by the sagacity and pertinence of M. D’Assier’s arguments for a limited and fortuitous immortality, I fell into such an uncontrollable fit of laughter as caused, I could see, first annoyance and then anxiety in those members of my club whom my explosion of mirth had awakened. As I still chuckled and screamed, it appeared to me that the noise I made gradually grew fainter and more distant, seeming to resound in some vast empty space, even more funereal and melancholy than the dormitory of my club, the “Tepidarium.” It has happened to most people to laugh themselves awake out of a dream, and every one who has done so must remember the ghastly, hollow, and maniacal sound of his own mirth. It rings horribly in a quiet room where there has been, as the Veddahs of Ceylon say is the case in the world at large, “nothing to laugh at.” Dean Swift once came to himself, after a dream, laughing thus hideously at the following conceit: “I told Apronia to be very careful especially about the legs.” Well, the explosions of my laughter crackled in a yet more weird and lunatic fashion about my own ears as I slowly became aware that I had died of an excessive sense of the ludicrous, and that the space in which I was so inappropriately giggling was, indeed, the fore-court of the House of Hades. As I grew more absolutely convinced of this truth, and began dimly to discern a strange world visible in a sallow light, like that of the

London streets when a black fog hangs just over the houses, my hysterical chuckling gradually died away. Amusement at the poor follies of mortals was succeeded

Page 42

by an awful and anxious curiosity as to the state of immortality and the life after death. Already it was certain that “the Manes are somewhat,” and that annihilation is the dream of people sceptical through lack of imagination. The scene around me now resolved itself into a high grey upland country, bleak and wild, like the waste pastoral places of Liddesdale. As I stood expectant, I observed a figure coming towards me at some distance. The figure bore in its hand a gun, and, as I am short-sighted, I at first conceived that he was the gamekeeper. “This affair,” I tried to say to myself, “is only a dream after all; I shall wake and forget my nightmare.”

But still the man drew nearer, and I began to perceive my error. Gamekeepers do not usually paint their faces red and green, neither do they wear scalp-locks, a tuft of eagle’s feathers, moccasins, and buffalo-hide cloaks, embroidered with representations of war and the chase. This was the accoutrement of the stranger who now approached me, and whose copper-coloured complexion indicated that he was a member of the Red Indian, or, as the late Mr. Morgan called it the “Ganowanian” race. The stranger’s attire was old and clouted; the barrel of his flint-lock musket was rusted, and the stock was actually overgrown with small funguses. It was a peculiarity of this man that everything he carried was more or less broken and outworn. The barrel of his piece was riven, his tomahawk was a mere shard of rusted steel, on many of his accoutrements the vapour of fire had passed. He approached me with a stately bearing, and, after saluting me in the fashion of his people, gave me to know that he welcomed me to the land of spirits, and that he was deputed to carry me to the paradise of the Ojibbeways. “But, sir,” I cried in painful confusion, “there is here some great mistake. I am no Ojibbeway, but an Agnostic; the after-life of spirits is only (as one of our great teachers says) ‘an hypothesis based on contradictory probabilities;’ and I really must decline to accompany you to a place of which the existence is uncertain, and which, if it does anywhere exist, would be uncongenial in the extreme to a person of my habits.”

To this remonstrance my Ojibbeway Virgil answered, in effect, that in the enormous passenger traffic between the earth and the next worlds mistakes must and frequently do occur. *Quisque suos patimur manes*, as the Roman says, is the rule, but there are many exceptions. Many a man finds himself in the paradise of a religion not his own, and suffers from the consequences. This was, in brief, the explanation of my guide, who could only console me by observing that if I felt ill at ease in the Ojibbeway paradise, I might, perhaps, be more fortunate in that of some other creed. “As for your Agnostics,” said he, “their main occupation in their own next world is to read the poetry of George Eliot and the philosophical works of Mr. J. S. Mill.” On hearing this, I was much consoled for having missed the entrance to my proper sphere, and I prepared to follow my guide with cheerful alacrity, into the paradise of the Ojibbeways.

Page 43

Our track lay, at first, along the "Path of Souls," and the still, grey air was only disturbed by a faint rustling and twittering of spirits on the march. We seemed to have journeyed but a short time, when a red light shone on the left hand of the way. As we drew nearer, this light appeared to proceed from a prodigious strawberry, a perfect mountain of a strawberry. Its cool and shining sides seemed very attractive to a thirsty Soul. A red man, dressed strangely in the feathers of a raven, stood hard by, and loudly invited all passers-by to partake of this refreshment. I was about to excavate a portion of the monstrous strawberry (being partial to that fruit), when my guide held my hand and whispered in a low voice that they who accepted the invitation of the man that guarded the strawberry were lost. He added that, into whatever paradise I might stray, I must beware of tasting any of the food of the departed. All who yield to the temptation must inevitably remain where they have put the food of the dead to their lips. "You," said my guide, with a slight sneer, "seem rather particular about your future home, and you must be especially careful to make no error." Thus admonished, I followed my guide to the river which runs between our world and the paradise of the Ojibbeways. A large stump of a tree lies half across the stream, the other half must be crossed by the agility of the wayfarer. Little children do but badly here, and "an Ojibbeway woman," said my guide, "can never be consoled when her child dies before it is fairly expert in jumping. Such young children they cannot expect to meet again in paradise." I made no reply, but was reminded of some good and unhappy women I had known on earth, who were inconsolable because their babes had died before being sprinkled with water by a priest. These babes they, like the Ojibbeway matrons, "could not expect to meet again in paradise." To a grown-up spirit the jump across the mystic river presented no difficulty, and I found myself instantly among the wigwams of the Ojibbeway heaven. It was a remarkably large village, and as far as the eye could see huts and tents were erected along the river. The sound of magic songs and of drums filled all the air, and in the fields the spirits were playing lacrosse. All the people of the village had deserted their homes and were enjoying themselves at the game. Outside one hut, however, a perplexed and forlorn phantom was sitting, and to my surprise I saw that he was dressed in European clothes. As we drew nearer I observed that he wore the black garb and white neck-tie of a minister in some religious denomination, and on coming to still closer quarters I recognized an old acquaintance, the Rev. Peter McSnadden. Now Peter had been a "jined member" of that mysterious "U. P. Kirk" which, according to the author of "Lothair," was founded by the Jesuits for the greater confusion of Scotch theology. Peter, I knew, had been active

Page 44

as a missionary among the Red Men in Canada; but I had neither heard of his death nor could conceive how his shade had found its way into a paradise so inappropriate as that in which I encountered him. Though never very fond of Peter, my heart warmed to him, as the heart sometimes does to an acquaintance unexpectedly met in a strange land. Coming cautiously behind him, I slapped Peter on the shoulder, whereon he leaped up with a wild unearthly yell, his countenance displaying lively tokens of terror. When he recognized me he first murmured, "I thought it was these murdering Apaches again;" and it was long before I could soothe him, or get him to explain his fears, and the circumstance of his appearance in so strange a final home. "Sir," said Peter, "it's just some terrible mistake. For twenty years was I preaching to these poor painted bodies anent heaven and hell, and trying to win them from their fearsome notions about a place where they would play at the ba' on the Sabbath, and the like shameful heathen diversions. Many a time did I round it to them about a far, far other place—

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And sermons never end!"

And now, lo and behold, here I am in their heathenish Gehenna, where the Sabbath-day is just clean neglected; indeed, I have lost count myself, and do not know one day from the other. Oh, man, it's just rideec'lous. A body—I mean a soul—does not know where to turn." Here Peter, whose accent I cannot attempt to reproduce (he was a Paisley man), burst into honest tears. Though I could not but agree with Peter that his situation was "just rideec'lous," I consoled him as well as I might, saying that a man should make the best of every position, and that "where there was life there was hope," a sentiment of which I instantly perceived the futility in this particular instance. "Ye do not know the worst," the Rev. Mr. McSnadden went on. "I am here to make them sport, like Samson among the Philistines. Their paradise would be no paradise to them if they had not a pale-face, as they say, to scalp and tomahawk. And I am that pale-face. Before you can say 'scalping-knife' these awful Apaches may be on me, taking my scalp and other leeberties with my person. It grows again, my scalp does, immediately; but that's only that they may take it some other day." The full horror of Mr. McSnadden's situation now dawned upon me, but at the same time I could not but perceive that, without the presence of some pale-face to torture—Peter or another—paradise would, indeed, be no paradise to a Red Indian. In the same way Tertullian (or some other early Father) has remarked that the pleasures of the blessed will be much enhanced by what they observe of the torments of the wicked. As I was reflecting thus two wild yells burst upon my hearing. One came from a band of Apache spirits who had stolen into the Ojibbeway village; the other scream was uttered by my unfortunate friend. I confess that I fled with what speed I might, nor did I pause till the groans of the miserable Peter faded in the distance. He was, indeed, a man in the wrong paradise.

Page 45

In my anxiety to avoid sharing the fate of Peter at the hands of the Apaches, I had run out of sight and sound of the Ojibbeway village. When I paused I found myself alone, on a wide sandy tract, at the extremity of which was an endless thicket of dark poplar-trees, a grove dear to Persephone. Here and there in the dank sand, half buried by the fallen generations of yellow poplar-leaves, were pits dug, a cubit every way, and there were many ruinous altars of ancient stones. On some were engraved figures of a divine pair, a king and queen seated on a throne, while men and women approached them with cakes in their hands or with the sacrifice of a cock. While I was admiring these strange sights, I beheld as it were a moving light among the deeps of the poplar thicket, and presently saw coming towards me a young man clad in white raiment and of a radiant aspect. In his hand he bore a golden wand whereon were wings of gold. The first down of manhood was on his lip; he was in that season of life when youth is most gracious. Then I knew him to be no other than Hermes of the golden rod, the guide of the souls of men outworn. He took my hand with a word of welcome, and led me through the gloom of the poplar trees.

Like Thomas the Rhymer, on his way to Fairyland—

“We saw neither sun nor moon,
But we heard the roaring of the sea.”

This eternal “swowing of a flode” was the sound made by the circling stream of Oceanus, as he turns on his bed, washing the base of the White Rock, and the sands of the region of dreams. So we fleeted onwards till we came to marvellous lofty gates of black adamant, that rose before us like the steep side of a hill. On the left side of the gates we beheld a fountain flowing from beneath the roots of a white cypress-tree, and to this fountain my guide forbade me to draw near. “There is another yonder,” he said, pointing to the right hand, “a stream of still water that issues from the Lake of Memory, and there are guards who keep that stream from the lips of the profane. Go to them and speak thus: ‘I am the child of earth and of the starry sky, yet heavenly is my lineage, and this yourselves know right well. But I am perishing with thirst, so give me speedily of that still water which floweth forth of the mere of Memory.’ And they will give thee to drink of that spring divine, and then shalt thou dwell with the heroes and the blessed.” So I did as he said, and went before the guardians of the water. Now they were veiled, and their voices, when they answered me, seemed to come from far away. “Thou comest to the pure, from the pure,” they said, “and thou art a suppliant of holy Persephone. Happy and most blessed art thou, advance to the reward of the crown desirable, and be no longer mortal, but divine.” Then a darkness fell upon me, and lifted again like mist on the hills, and we found ourselves in the most beautiful place that can be conceived, a meadow of that short

Page 46

grass which grows on some shores beside the sea. There were large spaces of fine and solid turf, but, where the little streams flowed from the delicate-tinted distant mountains, there were narrow valleys full of all the flowers of a southern spring. Here grew narcissus and hyacinths, violets and creeping thyme, and crocus and the crimson rose, as they blossomed on the day when the milk-white bull carried off Europa. Beyond the level land beside the sea, between these coasts and the far-off hills, was a steep lonely rock, on which were set the shining temples of the Grecian faith. The blue seas that begirt the coasts were narrow, and ran like rivers between many islands not less fair than the country to which we were come, while other isles, each with its crest of clear-cut hills, lay westward, far away, and receding into the place of the sunset. Then I recognized the Fortunate Islands spoken of by Pindar, and the paradise of the Greeks. "Round these the ocean breezes blow and golden flowers are glowing, some from the land on trees of splendour, and some the water feedeth, with wreaths whereof they entwine their hands." {124} And, as Pindar says again, "for them shineth below the strength of the sun, while in our world it is night, and the space of crimson-flowered meadows before their city is full of the shade of frankincense-trees and of fruits of gold. And some in horses and in bodily feats, and some in dice, and some in harp-playing have delight, and among them thrive all fair flowering bliss; and fragrance ever streameth through the lovely land as they mingle incense of every kind upon the altars of the gods." In this beautiful country I took great delight, now watching the young men leaping and running (and they were marvellously good over a short distance of ground), now sitting in a chariot whereto were harnessed steeds swifter than the wind, like those that, Homer says, "the gods gave, glorious gifts, to Peleus." And the people, young and old, received me kindly, welcoming me in their Greek speech, which was like the sound of music. And because I had ever been a lover of them and of their tongue, my ears were opened to understand them, though they spoke not Greek as we read it. Now when I had beheld many of the marvels of the Fortunate Islands, and had sat at meat with those kind hosts (though I only made semblance to eat of what they placed before me), and had seen the face of Rhadamanthus of the golden hair, who is the lord of that country, my friends told me that there was come among them one of my own nation who seemed most sad and sorrowful, and they could make him no mirth. Then they carried me to a house in a grove, and all around it a fair garden, and a well in the midst.

Page 47

Now stooping over the well, that he might have sight of his own face, was a most wretched man. He was pale and very meagre; he had black rings under his eyes, and his hair was long, limp, and greasy, falling over his shoulders. He was clad somewhat after the manner of the old Greeks, but his raiment was wofully ill-made and ill-girt upon him, nor did he ever seem at his ease. As soon as I beheld his sallow face I knew him for one I had seen and mocked at in the world of the living. He was a certain Figgins, and he had been honestly apprenticed to a photographer; but, being a weak and vain young fellow, he had picked up modern notions about art, the nude, plasticity, and the like, in the photographer's workroom, whereby he became a weariness to the photographer and to them that sat unto him. Being dismissed from his honest employment, this chitterling must needs become a model to some painters that were near as ignorant as himself. They talked to him about the Greeks, about the antique, about Paganism, about the Renaissance, till they made him as much the child of folly as themselves. And they painted him as Antinous, as Eros, as Sleep, and I know not what, but whatever name they called him he was always the same lank-haired, dowdy, effeminate, pasty-faced photographer's young man. Then he must needs take to writing poems all about Greece, and the free ways of the old Greeks, and Lais, and Phryne, and therein he made "Aeolus" rhyme to "control us." For of Greek this fellow knew not a word, and any Greek that met him had called him a [Greek text], and bidden him begone to the crows for a cursed fellow, and one that made false quantities in every Greek name he uttered. But his little poems were much liked by young men of his own sort, and by some of the young women. Now death had come to Figgins, and here he was in the Fortunate Islands, the very paradise of those Greeks about whom he had always been prating while he was alive. And yet he was not happy. A little lyre lay beside him in the grass, and now and again he twanged on it dolorously, and he tried to weave himself garlands from the flowers that grew around him; but he knew not the art, and ever and anon he felt for his button-hole, wherein to stick a lily or the like. But he had no button-hole. Then he would look at himself in the well, and yawn and wish himself back in his friends' studios in London. I almost pitied the wretch, and, going up to him, I asked him how he did. He said he had never been more wretched. "Why," I asked, "was your mouth not always full of the 'Greek spirit,' and did you not mock the Christians and their religion? And, as to their heaven, did you not say that it was a tedious place, full of pious old ladies and Philistines? And are you not got to the paradise of the Greeks? What, then, ails you with your lot?" "Sir," said he, "to be plain with you, I do not understand a word these fellows about me say, and I feel as I did the first time I went to Paris, before I knew

Page 48

enough French to read the Master's poems. {128} Again, every one here is mirthful and gay, and there is no man with a divinely passionate potentiality of pain. When I first came here they were always asking me to run with them or jump against them, and one fellow insisted I should box with him, and hurt me very much. My potentiality of pain is considerable. Or they would have me drive with them in these dangerous open chariots,—me, that never rode in a hansom cab without feeling nervous. And after dinner they sing songs of which I do not catch the meaning of one syllable, and the music is like nothing I ever heard in my life. And they are all abominably active and healthy. And such of their poets as I admired—in Bohn's cribs, of course—the poets of the Anthology, are not here at all, and the poets who are here are tremendous proud toffs" (here Figgins relapsed into his natural style as it was before he became a Neopagan poet), "and won't say a word to a cove. And I'm sick of the Greeks, and the Fortunate Islands are a blooming fraud, and oh, for paradise, give me Pentonville." With these words, perhaps the only unaffected expression of genuine sentiment poor Figgins had ever uttered, he relapsed into a gloomy silence. I advised him to cultivate the society of the authors whose selected works are in the Greek Delectus, and to try to make friends with Xenophon, whose Greek is about as easy as that of any ancient. But I fear that Figgins, like the Rev. Peter McSnadden, is really suffering a kind of punishment in the disguise of a reward, and all through having accidentally found his way into what he foolishly thought would be the right paradise for him.

Now I might have stayed long in the Fortunate Islands, yet, beautiful as they were, I ever felt like Odysseus in the island of fair Circe. The country was lovely and the land desirable, but the Christian souls were not there without whom heaven itself were no paradise to me. And it chanced that as we sat at the feast a maiden came to me with a pomegranate on a plate of silver, and said, "Sir, thou hast now been here for the course of a whole moon, yet hast neither eaten nor drunk of what is set before thee. Now it is commanded that thou must taste if it were but a seed of this pomegranate, or depart from among us." Then, making such excuses as I might, I was constrained to refuse to eat, for no soul can leave a paradise wherein it has tasted food. And as I spoke the walls of the fair hall wherein we sat, which were painted with the effigies of them that fell at Thermopylae and in Arcadion, wavered and grew dim, and darkness came upon me.

Page 49

The first of my senses which returned to me was that of smell, and I seemed almost drowned in the spicy perfumes of Araby. Then my eyes became aware of a green soft fluttering, as of the leaves of a great forest, but quickly I perceived that the fluttering was caused by the green scarfs of a countless multitude of women. They were “fine women” in the popular sense of the term, and were of the school of beauty admired by the Faithful of Islam, and known to Mr. Bailey, in “Martin Chuzzlewit,” as “crumby.” These fond attendant nymphs carried me into gardens twain, in each two gushing springs, in each fruit, and palms, and pomegranates. There were the blessed reclining, precisely as the Prophet has declared, “on beds the linings whereof are brocade, and the fruit of the two gardens within reach to cull.” There also were the “maids of modest glances,” previously indifferent to the wooing “of man or ginn.” “Bright and large-eyed maids kept in their tents, reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets. About the golden couches went eternal youths with goblets and ewers, and a cup of flowing wine. No headache shall they feel therefrom,” says the compassionate Prophet, “nor shall their wits be dimmed.” And all that land is misty and fragrant with the perfume of the softest Latakia, and the gardens are musical with the bubbling of countless narghiles; and I must say that to the Christian soul which enters that paradise the whole place has, certainly, a rather curious air, as of a highly transcendental Cremorne. There could be no doubt, however, that the Faithful were enjoying themselves amazingly—“right lucky fellows,” as we read in the new translation of the Koran. Yet even here all was not peace and pleasantness, for I heard my name called by a small voice, in a tone of patient subdued querulousness. Looking hastily round, I with some difficulty recognized, in a green turban and silk gown to match, my old college tutor and professor of Arabic. Poor old Jones had been the best and the most shy of university men. As there was never any undergraduate in his time (it is different now) who wished to learn Arabic, his place had been a sinecure, and he had chiefly devoted his leisure to “drawing” pupils who were too late for college chapel. The sight of a lady of his acquaintance in the streets had at all times been alarming enough to drive him into a shop or up a lane, and he had not survived the creation of the first batch of married fellows. How he had got into this thoroughly wrong paradise was a mystery which he made no attempt to explain. “A nice place this, eh?” he said to me. “Nice gardens; remind me of Magdalene a good deal. It seems, however, to be decidedly rather gay just now; don’t you think so? Commemoration week, perhaps. A great many young ladies up, certainly; a good deal of cup drunk in the gardens too. I always did prefer to go down in Commemoration week, myself; never was a dancing man. There

Page 50

is a great deal of dancing here, but the young ladies dance alone, rather like what is called the ballet, I believe, at the opera. I must say the young persons are a little forward; a little embarrassing it is to be alone here, especially as I have forgotten a good deal of my Arabic. Don't you think, my dear fellow, you and I could manage to give them the slip? Run away from them, eh?" He uttered a timid little chuckle, and at that moment an innumerable host of houris began a ballet d'action illustrative of a series of events in the career of the Prophet. It was obvious that my poor uncomplaining old friend was really very miserable. The "thornless loto trees" were all thorny to him, and the "tal'h trees with piles of fruit, the outspread shade, and water outpoured" could not comfort him in his really very natural shyness. A happy thought occurred to me. In early and credulous youth I had studied the works of Cornelius Agrippa and Petrus de Abano. Their lessons, which had not hitherto been of much practical service, recurred to my mind. Stooping down, I drew a circle round myself and my old friend in the fragrant white blossoms which were strewn so thick that they quite hid the grass. This circle I fortified by the usual signs employed, as Benvenuto Cellini tells us, in the conjuration of evil spirits. I then proceeded to utter one of the common forms of exorcism. Instantly the myriad houris assumed the forms of irritated demons; the smoke from the uncounted narghiles burned thick and black; the cries of the frustrated ginnns, who were no better than they should be, rang wildly in our ears; the palm-trees shook beneath a mighty wind; the distant summits of the minarets rocked and wavered, and, with a tremendous crash, the paradise of the Faithful disappeared.

* * * * *

As I rang the bell, and requested the club-waiter to carry away the smoking fragments of the moderator-lamp which I had accidentally knocked over in awaking from my nightmare, I reflected on the vanity of men and the unsubstantial character of the future homes that their fancy has fashioned. The ideal heavens of modern poets and novelists, and of ancient priests, come no nearer than the drugged dreams of the angekok and the biraark of Greenland and Queensland to that rest and peace whereof it has not entered into the mind of man to conceive. To the wrong man each of our pictured heavens would be a hell, and even to the appropriate devotee each would become a tedious purgatory.

A CHEAP NIGGER.

I.

"Have you seen the Clayville Dime?"

Moore chuckled me a very shabby little sheet of printed matter. It fluttered feebly in the warm air, and finally dropped on my recumbent frame. I was lolling in a hammock in the shade of the verandah.

I did not feel much inclined for study, but I picked up the Clayville Dime and lazily glanced at that periodical, while Moore relapsed into the pages of Ixtlilxochitl. He was a literary character for a planter, had been educated at Oxford (where I made his acquaintance), and had inherited from his father, with a large collection of Indian and Mexican curiosities, a taste for the ancient history of the New World.

Page 51

Sometimes I glanced at the newspaper; sometimes I looked out at the pleasant Southern garden, where the fountain flashed and fell among weeping willows, and laurels, orange-trees, and myrtles.

“Hullo!” I cried suddenly, disturbing Moore’s Aztec researches, “here is a queer affair in the usually quiet town of Clayville. Listen to this;” and I read aloud the following “par,” as I believe paragraphs are styled in newspaper offices:—

“Instinct and Accident.—As Colonel Randolph was driving through our town yesterday and was passing Captain Jones’s sample-room, where the colonel lately shot Moses Widlake in the street, the horses took alarm and started violently downhill. The colonel kept his seat till rounding the corner by the Clayville Bank, when his wheels came into collision with that edifice, and our gallant townsman was violently shot out. He is now lying in a very precarious condition. This may relieve Tom Widlake of the duty of shooting the colonel in revenge for his father. It is commonly believed that Colonel Randolph’s horses were maddened by the smell of the blood which has dried up where old Widlake was shot. Much sympathy is felt for the colonel. Neither of the horses was injured.”

“Clayville appears to be a lively kind of place,” I said. “Do you often have shootings down here?”

“We do,” said Moore, rather gravely; “it is one of our institutions with which I could dispense.”

“And do you ‘carry iron,’ as the Greeks used to say, or ‘go heeled,’ as your citizens express it?”

“No, I don’t; neither pistol nor knife. If any one shoots me, he shoots an unarmed man. The local bullies know it, and they have some scruple about shooting in that case. Besides, they know I am an awkward customer at close quarters.”

Moore relapsed into his Mexican historian, and I into the newspaper.

“Here is a chance of seeing one of your institutions at last,” I said.

I had found an advertisement concerning a lot of negroes to be sold that very day by public auction in Clayville. All this, of course, was “before the war.”

“Well, I suppose you ought to see it,” said Moore, rather reluctantly. He was gradually emancipating his own servants, as I knew, and was even suspected of being a director of “the Underground Railroad” to Canada.

“Peter,” he cried, “will you be good enough to saddle three horses and bring them round?”

Peter, a “darkey boy” who had been hanging about in the garden, grinned and went off. He was a queer fellow, Peter, a plantation humourist, well taught in all the then unpublished lore of “Uncle Remus.” Peter had a way of his own, too, with animals, and often aided Moore in collecting objects of natural history.

“Did you get me those hornets, Peter?” said Moore, when the black returned with the horses.

“Got ’em safe, massa, in a little box,” replied Peter, who then mounted and followed at a respectful distance as our squire.

Page 52

Without many more words we rode into the forest which lay between Clayville and Moore's plantation. Through the pine barrens ran the road, and on each side of the way was luxuriance of flowering creepers. The sweet faint scent of the white jessamine and the homely fragrance of honeysuckle filled the air, and the wild white roses were in perfect blossom. Here and there an aloe reminded me that we were not at home, and dwarf palms and bayonet palmettoes, with the small pointed leaf of the "live oak," combined to make the scenery look foreign and unfamiliar. There was a soft haze in the air, and the sun's beams only painted, as it were, the capitals of the tall pillar-like pines, while the road was canopied and shaded by the skeins of grey moss that hung thickly on all the boughs.

The trees grew thinner as the road approached the town. Dusty were the ways, and sultry the air, when we rode into Clayville and were making for "the noisy middle market-place." Clayville was but a small border town, though it could then boast the presence of a squadron of cavalry, sent there to watch the "border ruffians." The square was neither large nor crowded, but the spectacle was strange and interesting to me. Men who had horses or carts to dispose of were driving or riding about, noisily proclaiming the excellence of their wares. But buyers were more concerned, like myself, with the slave-market. In the open air, in the middle of the place, a long table was set. The crowd gathered round this, and presented types of various sorts of citizens. The common "mean white" was spitting and staring—a man fallen so low that he had no nigger to wallop, and was thus even more abject, because he had no natural place and functions in local society, than the slaves themselves. The local drunkard was uttering sagacities to which no mortal attended. Two or three speculators were bidding on commission, and there were a few planters, some of them mounted, and a mixed multitude of tradesmen, loafers, bar-keepers, newspaper reporters, and idlers in general. At either end of the long table sat an auctioneer, who behaved with the traditional facetiousness of the profession. As the "lots" came on for sale they mounted the platform, generally in family parties. A party would fetch from one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars, according to its numbers and "condition." The spectacle was painful and monstrous. Most of the "lots" bore the examination of their points with a kind of placid dignity, and only showed some little interest when the biddings grew keen and flattered their pride.

Page 53

The sale was almost over, and we were just about to leave, when a howl of derision from the mob made us look round. What I saw was the apparition of an extremely aged and debilitated black man standing on the table. What Moore saw to interest him I could not guess, but he grew pale and uttered an oath of surprise under his breath, though he rarely swore. Then he turned his horse's head again towards the auctioneer. That merry tradesman was extolling the merits of nearly his last lot. "A very remarkable specimen, gentlemen! Admirers of the antique cannot dispense with this curious nigger—very old and quite imperfect. Like so many of the treasures of Greek art which have reached us, he has had the misfortune to lose his nose and several of his fingers. How much offered for this exceptional lot—unmarried and without encumbrances of any kind? He is dumb too, and may be trusted with any secret."

"Take him off!" howled some one in the crowd.

"Order his funeral!"

"Chuck him into the next lot."

"What, gentlemen, *no* bids for this very eligible nigger? With a few more rags he would make a most adequate scarecrow."

While this disgusting banter was going on I observed a planter ride up to one of the brokers and whisper for some time in his ear. The planter was a bad but unmistakable likeness of my friend Moore, worked over, so to speak, with a loaded brush and heavily glazed with old Bourbon whisky. After giving his orders to the agent he retired to the outskirts of the crowd, and began flicking his long dusty boots with a serviceable cowhide whip.

"Well, gentlemen, we must really adopt the friendly suggestion of Judge Lee and chuck this nigger into the next lot."

So the auctioneer was saying, when the broker to whom I have referred cried out, "Ten dollars."

"*This* is more like business," cried the auctioneer. "Ten dollars offered! What amateur says more than ten dollars for this lot? His extreme age and historical reminiscences alone, if he could communicate them, would make him invaluable to the student."

To my intense amazement Moore shouted from horseback, "Twenty dollars."

"What, *you* want a cheap nigger to get your hand in, do you, you blank-blanked abolitionist?" cried a man who stood near. He was a big, dirty-looking bully, at least half drunk, and attending (not unnecessarily) to his toilet with the point of a long, heavy knife.



Before the words were out of his mouth Moore had leaped from his horse and delivered such a right-handed blow as that wherewith the wandering beggar-man smote Irus of old in the courtyard of Odysseus, Laertes' son. "On his neck, beneath the ear, he smote him, and crushed in the bones; and the red blood gushed up through his mouth, and he gnashed his teeth together as he kicked the ground." Moore stooped, picked up the bowie-knife, and sent it glittering high through the air.

Page 54

"Take him away," he said, and two rough fellows, laughing, carried the bully to the edge of the fountain that played in the corner of the square. He was still lying crumpled up there when we rode out of Clayville.

The bidding, of course, had stopped, owing to the unaffected interest which the public took in this more dramatic interlude. The broker, it is true, had bid twenty-five dollars, and was wrangling with the auctioneer.

"You have my bid, Mr. Brinton, sir, and there is no other offer. Knock down the lot to me."

"You wait your time, Mr. Isaacs," said the auctioneer. "No man can do two things at once and do them well. When Squire Moore has settled with Dick Bligh he will desert the paths of military adventure for the calmer and more lucrative track of commercial enterprise."

The auctioneer's command of long words was considerable, and was obviously of use to him in his daily avocations.

When he had rounded his period, Moore was in the saddle again, and nodded silently to the auctioneer.

"Squire Moore bids thirty dollars. Thirty dollars for this once despised but now appreciated fellow-creature," rattled on the auctioneer.

The agent nodded again.

"Forty dollars bid," said the auctioneer.

"Fifty," cried Moore.

The broker nodded.

"Sixty."

The agent nodded again.

The bidding ran rapidly up to three hundred and fifty dollars.

The crowd were growing excited, and had been joined by every child in the town, by every draggled and sunburnt woman, and the drinking-bar had disgorged every loafer who felt sober enough to stay the distance to the centre of the square.

My own first feelings of curiosity had subsided. I knew how strong and burning was Moore's hatred of oppression, and felt convinced that he merely wished at any sacrifice of money to secure for this old negro some peaceful days and a quiet deathbed.

The crowd doubtless took the same obvious view of the case as I did, and was now eagerly urging on the two competitors.

"Never say die, Isaacs."

"Stick to it, Squire; the nigger's well worth the dollars."

So they howled, and now the biddings were mounting towards one thousand dollars, when the sulky planter rode up to the neighbourhood of the table—much to the inconvenience of the "gallery"—and whispered to his agent. The conference lasted some minutes, and at the end of it the agent capped Moore's last offer, one thousand dollars, with a bid of one thousand two hundred.

"Fifteen hundred," said Moore, amidst applause.

"Look here, Mr. Knock-'em-down," cried Mr. Isaacs: "it's hot and thirsty work sitting, nodding here; I likes my ease on a warm day; so just you reckon that I see the Squire, and go a hundred dollars more as long as I hold up my pencil."

Page 55

He stuck a long gnawed pencil erect between his finger and thumb, and stared impertinently at Moore. The Squire nodded, and the bidding went on in this silent fashion till the bids had actually run up to three thousand four hundred dollars. All this while the poor negro, whose limbs no longer supported him, crouched in a heap on the table, turning his haggard eye alternately on Moore and on the erect and motionless pencil of the broker. The crowd had become silent with excitement. Unable to stand the heat and agitation, Moore's unfriendly brother had crossed the square in search of a "short drink." Moore nodded once more.

"Three thousand six hundred dollars bid," cried the auctioneer, and looked at Isaacs.

With a wild howl Isaacs dashed his pencil in the air, tossed up his hands, and thrust them deep down between his coat collar and his body, uttering all the while yells of pain.

"Don't you bid, Mr. Isaacs?" asked the auctioneer, without receiving any answer except Semitic appeals to holy Abraham, blended with Aryan profanity.

"Come," said Moore very severely, "his pencil is down, and he has withdrawn his bid. There is no other bidder; knock the lot down to me."

"No more offers?" said the auctioneer slowly, looking all round the square.

There were certainly no offers from Mr. Isaacs, who now was bounding like the gad-stung lo to the furthest end of the place.

"This fine buck-negro, warranted absolutely unsound of wind and limb, going, going, a shameful sacrifice, for a poor three thousand six hundred dollars. Going, going—gone!"

The hammer fell with a sharp, decisive sound.

A fearful volley of oaths rattled after the noise, like thunder rolling away in the distance.

Moore's brother had returned from achieving a "short drink" just in time to see his coveted lot knocked down to his rival.

We left the spot, with the negro in the care of Peter, as quickly as might be.

"I wonder," said Moore, as we reached the inn and ordered a trap to carry our valuable bargain home in—"I wonder what on earth made Isaacs run off like a maniac."

"Massa," whispered Peter, "yesterday I jes' caught yer Brer Hornet a-loafin' around in the wood. 'Come wi' me,' says I, 'and bottled him in this yer pasteboard box,'" showing one which had held Turkish tobacco. "When I saw that Hebrew Jew wouldn't stir his pencil, I jes' crept up softly and dropped Brer Hornet down his neck. Then he jes' rose and went. Spec's he and Brer Hornet had business of their own."

“Peter,” said Moore, “you are a good boy, but you will come to a bad end.”

II.

As we rode slowly homeward, behind the trap which conveyed the dear-bought slave, Moore was extremely moody and disinclined for conversation.

“Is your purchase not rather an expensive one?” I ventured to ask, to which Moore replied shortly—

Page 56

"No; think he is perhaps the cheapest nigger that was ever bought."

To put any more questions would have been impertinent, and I possessed my curiosity in silence till we reached the plantation.

Here Moore's conduct became decidedly eccentric. He had the black man conveyed at once into a cool, dark, strong room with a heavy iron door, where the new acquisition was locked up in company with a sufficient meal. Moore and I dined hastily, and then he summoned all his negroes together into the court of the house. "Look here, boys," he cried: "all these trees"—and he pointed to several clumps "must come down immediately, and all the shrubs on the lawn and in the garden. Fall to at once, those of you that have axes, and let the rest take hoes and knives and make a clean sweep of the shrubs." The idea of wholesale destruction seemed not disagreeable to the slaves, who went at their work with eagerness, though it made my heart ache to see the fine old oaks beginning to fall and to watch the green garden becoming a desert. Moore first busied himself with directing the women, who, under his orders, piled up mattresses and bags of cotton against the parapets of the verandahs. The house stood on the summit of a gradually sloping height, and before the moon began to set (for we worked without intermission through the evening and far into the night) there was nothing but a bare slope of grass all round the place, while smoke and flame went up from the piles of fallen timber. The plantation, in fact, was ready to stand a short siege.

Moore now produced a number of rifles, which he put, with ammunition, into the hands of some of the more stalwart negroes. These he sent to their cabins, which lay at a distance of about a furlong and a half on various sides of the house. The men had orders to fire on any advancing enemy, and then to fall back at once on the main building, which was now barricaded and fortified. One lad was told to lurk in a thicket below the slope of the hill and invisible from the house.

"If Wild Bill's men come on, and you give them the slip, cry thrice like the 'Bob White,'" said Moore; "if they take you, cry once. If you get off, run straight to Clayville, and give this note to the officer commanding the cavalry."

The hour was now about one in the morning; by three the dawn would begin. In spite of his fatigues, Moore had no idea of snatching an hour's rest. He called up Peter (who had been sleeping, coiled up like a black cat, in the smoking-room), and bade him take a bath and hot water into the room where Gumbo, the newly purchased black, had all this time been left to his own reflections. "Soap him and lather him well, Peter," said Moore; "wash him white, if you can, and let me know when he's fit to come near."

Peter withdrew with his stereotyped grin to make his preparations.

Presently, through the open door of the smoking-room, we heard the sounds of energetic splashings, mingled with the inarticulate groans of the miserable Gumbo.

Moore could not sit still, but kept pacing the room, smoking fiercely. Presently Peter came to the door—

Page 57

"Nigger's clean now, massa."

"Bring me a razor, then," said Moore, "and leave me alone with him."

* * * * *

When Moore had retired, with the razor, into the chamber where his purchase lay, I had time to reflect on the singularity of the situation. In every room loaded rifles were ready; all the windows were cunningly barricaded, and had sufficient loopholes. The peaceful planter's house had become a castle; a dreadful quiet had succeeded to the hubbub of preparation, and my host, yesterday so pleasant, was now locked up alone with a dumb negro and a razor! I had long ago given up the hypothesis that Gumbo had been purchased out of pure philanthropy. The disappointment of baffled cruelty in Moore's brother would not alone account for the necessity of such defensive preparations as had just been made. Clearly Gumbo was not a mere fancy article, but a negro of real value, whose person it was desirable to obtain possession of at any risk or cost. The ghastly idea occurred to me (suggested, I fancy, by Moore's demand for a razor) that Gumbo, at some period of his career, must have swallowed a priceless diamond. This gem must still be concealed about his person, and Moore must have determined by foul means, as no fair means were available, to become its owner. When this fancy struck me I began to feel that it was my duty to interfere. I could not sit by within call (had poor Gumbo been capable of calling) and allow my friend to commit such a deed of cruelty. As I thus parleyed with myself, the heavy iron door of the store-room opened, and Moore came out, with the razor (bloodless, thank Heaven!) in his hand. Anxiety had given place to a more joyous excitement.

"Well?" I said interrogatively.

"Well, all's well. That man has, as I felt sure, the Secret of the Pyramid."

I now became quite certain that Moore, in spite of all his apparent method, had gone out of his mind. It seemed best to humour him, especially as so many loaded rifles were lying about.

"He has seen the myst'ry hid
Under Egypt's pyramid,"

I quoted; "but, my dear fellow, as the negro is dumb, I don't see how you are to get the secret out of him."

"I did not say he *knew* it," answered Moore crossly; "I said he *had* it. As to Egypt, I don't know what you are talking about—"

At this moment we heard the crack of rifles, and in the instant of silence which followed came the note of the "Bob White."



Once it shrilled, and we listened eagerly; then the notes came twice rapidly, and a sound of voices rose up from the negro outposts, who had been driven in and were making fast the one door of the house that had been left open. From the negroes we learned that our assailants (Bill Hicock's band of border ruffians, "specially engaged for this occasion") had picketed their horses behind the dip of the hill and were advancing on foot. Moore hurried to the roof to reconnoitre. The dawn was stealing on, and the smoke from the still smouldering trees, which we had felled and burned, rose through the twilight air.

Page 58

"Moore, you hound," cried a voice through the smoke of the furthest pile, "we have come for your new nigger. Will you give him up or will you fight?"

Moore's only reply was a bullet fired in the direction whence the voice was heard. His shot was answered by a perfect volley from men who could just be discerned creeping through the grass about four hundred yards out. The bullets rattled harmlessly against wooden walls and iron shutters, or came with a thud against the mattress fortifications of the verandah. The firing was all directed against the front of the house.

"I see their game," said Moore. "The front attack is only a feint. When they think we are all busy here, another detachment will try to rush the place from the back and to set fire to the building. We'll 'give them their kail through the reek.'"

Moore's dispositions were quickly made. He left me with some ten of the blacks to keep up as heavy a fire as possible from the roof against the advancing skirmishers. He posted himself, with six fellows on whom he could depend, in a room of one of the wings which commanded the back entrance. As many men, with plenty of ready-loaded rifles, were told off to a room in the opposite wing. Both parties were thus in a position to rake the entrance with a cross fire. Moore gave orders that not a trigger should be pulled till the still invisible assailants had arrived on his side, between the two projecting wings. "Then fire into them, and let every one choose his man."

On the roof our business was simple enough. We lay behind bags of cotton, firing as rapidly and making as much show of force as possible, while women kept loading for us. Our position was extremely strong, as we were quite invisible to men crouching or running hurriedly far below. Our practice was not particularly good; still three or four of the skirmishers had ceased to advance, and this naturally discouraged the others, who were aware, of course, that their movement was only a feint. The siege had now lasted about half an hour, and I had begun to fancy that Moore's theory of the attack was a mistake, and that he had credited the enemy with more generalship than they possessed, when a perfect storm of fire broke out beneath us, from the rooms where Moore and his company were posted. Dangerous as it was to cease for a moment from watching the enemy, I stole across the roof, and, looking down between two of the cotton bags which filled the open spaces of the balustrades, I saw the narrow ground between the two wings simply strewn with dead or wounded men. The cross fire still poured from the windows, though here and there a marksman tried to pick off the fugitives. Rapidly did I cross the roof to my post. To my horror the skirmishers had advanced, as if at the signal of the firing, and were now running up at full speed and close to the walls of the house. At that moment the door opened, and Moore, heading a

Page 59

number of negroes, picked off the leading ruffian and rushed out into the open. The other assailants fired hurriedly and without aim, then—daunted by the attack so suddenly carried into their midst, and by the appearance of one or two of their own beaten comrades—the enemy turned and fairly bolted. We did not pursue. Far away down the road we heard the clatter of hoofs, and thin and clear came the thrice-repeated cry of the “Bob White.”

“Dick’s coming back with the soldiers,” said Moore; “and now I think we may look after the wounded.”

* * * * *

I did not see much of Moore that day. The fact is that I slept a good deal, and Moore was mysteriously engaged with Gumbo. Night came, and very much needed quiet and sleep came with it. Then we passed an indolent day, and I presumed that adventures were over, and that on the subject of “the Secret of the Pyramid” Moore had recovered his sanity. I was just taking my bedroom candle when Moore said, “Don’t go to bed yet. You will come with me, won’t you, and see out the adventure of the Cheap Nigger?”

“You don’t mean to say the story is to be continued?” I asked.

“Continued? Why the fun is only beginning,” Moore answered. “The night is cloudy, and will just suit us. Come down to the branch.”

The “branch,” as Moore called it, was a strong stream that separated, as I knew, his lands from his brother’s. We walked down slowly, and reached the broad boat which was dragged over by a chain when any one wanted to cross. At the “scow,” as the ferry-boat was called, Peter joined us; he ferried us deftly over the deep and rapid water, and then led on, as rapidly as if it had been daylight, along a path through the pines.

“How often I came here when I was a boy,” said Moore; “but now I might lose myself in the wood, for this is my brother’s land, and I have forgotten the way.”

As I knew that Mr. Bob Moore was confined to his room by an accident, through which an ounce of lead had been lodged in a portion of his frame, I had no fear of being arrested for trespass. Presently the negro stopped in front of a cliff.

“Here is the ‘Sachem’s Cave,’” said Moore. “You’ll help us to explore the cave, won’t you?”

I did not think the occasion an opportune one for exploring caves, but to have withdrawn would have demanded a “moral courage,” as people commonly say when they mean

cowardice, which I did not possess. We stepped within a narrow crevice of the great cliff. Moore lit a lantern and went in advance; the negro followed with a flaring torch.

Suddenly an idea occurred to me, which I felt bound to communicate to Moore. "My dear fellow," I said in a whisper, "is this quite sportsmanlike? You know you are after some treasure, real or imaginary, and, I put it to you as a candid friend, is not this just a little bit like poaching? Your brother's land, you know."

Page 60

"What I am looking for is in my own land," said Moore. "The river is the march. Come on."

We went on, now advancing among fairy halls, glistening with stalactites or paved with silver sand, and finally pushing our way through a concealed crevice down dank and narrow passages in the rock. The darkness increased; the pavement plashed beneath our feet, and the drip, drip of water was incessant. "We are under the river-bed," said Moore, "in a kind of natural Thames Tunnel." We made what speed we might through this combination of the Valley of the Shadow with the Slough of Despond, and soon were on firmer ground again beneath Moore's own territory. Probably no other white men had ever crawled through the hidden passage and gained the further penetralia of the cave, which now again began to narrow. Finally we reached four tall pillars, of about ten feet in height, closely surrounded by the walls of rock. As we approached these pillars, that were dimly discerned by the torchlight, our feet made a faint metallic jingling sound among heaps of ashes which strewn the floor. Moore and I went up to the pillars and tried them with our knives. They were of wood, all soaked and green with the eternal damp. "Peter," said Moore, "go in with the lantern and try if you can find anything there."

Peter had none of the superstitions of his race, or he would never have been our companion. "All right, massa; me look for Brer Spook."

So saying, Peter walked into a kind of roofed over-room, open only at the front, and examined the floor with his lantern, stamping occasionally to detect any hollowness in the ground.

"Nothing here, massa, but this dead fellow's leg-bone and little bits of broken jugs," and the dauntless Peter came out with his ghastly trophy.

Moore seemed not to lose heart.

"Perhaps," he said, "there is something on the roof. Peter, give me a back."

Peter stooped down beside one of the wooden pillars and firmly grasped his own legs above the knee. Moore climbed on the improvised ladder, and was just able to seize the edge of the roof, as it seemed to be, with his hands.

"Now steady, Peter," he exclaimed, and with a spring he drew himself up till his head was above the level of the roof. Then he uttered a cry, and, leaping from Peter's back retreated to the level where we stood in some confusion.

"Good God!" he said, "what a sight!"

"What on earth is the matter?" I asked.

“Look for yourself, if you choose,” said Moore, who was somewhat shaken, and at the same time irritated and ashamed.

Grasping the lantern, I managed to get on to Peter’s shoulders, and by a considerable gymnastic effort to raise my head to the level of the ledge, and at the same time to cast the light up and within.

The spectacle was sufficiently awful.

I was looking along a platform, on which ten skeletons were disposed at full length, with the skulls still covered with long hair, and the fleshless limbs glimmering white and stretching back into the darkness.

Page 61

On the right hand, and crouching between a skeleton and the wall of the chamber (what we had taken for a roof was the floor of a room raised on pillars), I saw the form of a man. He was dressed in gay colours, and, as he sat with his legs drawn up, his arms rested on his knees.

On the first beholding of a dreadful thing, our instinct forces us to rush against it, as if to bring the horror to the test of touch. This instinct awakened in me. For a moment I felt dazed, and then I continued to stare involuntarily at the watcher of the dead. He had not stirred. My eyes became accustomed to the dim and flickering light which the lantern cast in that dark place.

"Hold on, Peter," I cried, and leaped down to the floor of the cave.

"It's all right, Moore," I said. "Don't you remember the picture in old Lafitau's 'Moeurs des Sauvages Americains'? We are in a burying-place of the Cherouines, and the seated man is only the kywash, 'which is an image of woode keeping the deade.'"

"Ass that I am!" cried Moore. "I knew the cave led us from the Sachem's Cave to the Sachem's Mound, and I forgot for a moment how the fellows disposed of their dead. We must search the platform. Peter, make a ladder again."

Moore mounted nimbly enough this time. I followed him.

The kywash had no more terrors for us, and we penetrated beyond the fleshless dead into the further extremity of the sepulchre. Here we lifted and removed vast piles of deerskin bags, and of mats, filled as they were with "the dreadful dust that once was man." As we reached the bottom of the first pile something glittered yellow and bright beneath the lantern.

Moore stooped and tried to lift what looked like an enormous plate. He was unable to raise the object, still weighed down as it was with the ghastly remnants of the dead. With feverish haste we cleared away the debris, and at last lifted and brought to light a huge and massive disk of gold, divided into rays which spread from the centre, each division being adorned with strange figures in relief—figures of animals, plants, and what looked like rude hieroglyphs.

This was only the firstfruits of the treasure.

A silver disk, still larger, and decorated in the same manner, was next uncovered, and last, in a hollow dug in the flooring of the sepulchre, we came on a great number of objects in gold and silver, which somewhat reminded us of Indian idols. These were thickly crusted with precious stones, and were accompanied by many of the sacred emeralds and opals of old American religion. There were also some extraordinary manuscripts, if the term may be applied to picture writing on prepared deerskins that



were now decaying. We paid little attention to cloaks of the famous feather-work, now a lost art, of which one or two examples are found in European museums. The gold, and silver, and precious stones, as may be imagined, overcame for the moment any ethnological curiosity.

Page 62

* * * * *

Dawn was growing into day before we reached the mouth of the cave again, and after a series of journeys brought all our spoil to the light of the upper air. It was quickly enough bestowed in bags and baskets. Then, aided by three of Moore's stoutest hands, whom we found waiting for us in the pine wood, we carried the whole treasure back, and lodged it in the strong room which had been the retreat of Gumbo.

III.

The conclusion of my story shall be very short. What was the connection between Gumbo and the spoils of the Sachem's Mound, and how did the treasures of the Aztec Temple of the Sun come to be concealed in the burial place of the Red Man? All this Moore explained to me the day after we secured the treasures.

"My father," said Moore, "was, as you know, a great antiquarian, and a great collector of Mexican and native relics. He had given almost as much time as Brasseur de Bourbourg to Mexican hieroglyphics, and naturally had made nothing out of them. His chief desire was to discover the Secret of the Pyramid—not the pyramids of Egypt, as you fancied, but the Pyramid of the Sun, Tonatiuh, at Teohuacan. To the problem connected with this mysterious structure, infinitely older than the empire of Montezuma, which Cortes destroyed, he fancied he had a clue in this scroll."

Moore handed me a prepared sheet of birch bark, like those which the red men use for their rude picture writings. It was very old, but the painted characters were still brilliant, and even a tyro could see that they were not Indian, but of the ancient Mexican description. In the upper left-hand corner was painted a pyramidal structure, above which the sun beamed. Eight men, over whose heads the moon was drawn, were issuing from the pyramid; the two foremost bore in their hands effigies of the sun and moon; each of the others seemed to carry smaller objects with a certain religious awe. Then came a singular chart, which one might conjecture represented the wanderings of these men, bearing the sacred things of their gods. In the lowest corner of the scroll they were being received by human beings dressed unlike themselves, with head coverings of feathers and carrying bows in their hands.

"This scroll," Moore went on, "my father bought from one of the last of the red men who lingered on here, a prey to debt and whisky. My father always associated the drawings with the treasures of Teohuacan, which, according to him, must have been withdrawn from the pyramid, and conveyed secretly to the north, the direction from which the old Toltec pyramid builders originally came. In the north they would find no civilized people like themselves, he said, but only the Indians. Probably, however, the Indians would receive with respect the bearers of mysterious images and rites, and my father

concluded that the sacred treasures of the Sun might still be concealed among some wandering

Page 63

tribe of red men. He had come to this conclusion for some time, when I and my brother returned from school, hastily summoned back, to find him extremely ill. He had suffered from a paralytic stroke, and he scarcely recognized us. But we made out, partly from his broken and wandering words, partly from old Tom (Peter's father, now dead), that my father's illness had followed on a violent fit of passion. He had picked up, it seems, from some Indians a scroll which he considered of the utmost value, and which he placed in a shelf of the library. Now, old Gumbo was a house-servant at that time, and, dumb as he was, and stupid as he was, my father had treated him with peculiar kindness. Unluckily Gumbo yielded to the favourite illusion of all servants, white and black, male and female, that anything they find in the library may be used to light a fire with. One chilly day Gumbo lighted the fire with the newly purchased Indian birch scroll. My father, when he heard of this performance, lost all self-command. In his ordinary temper the most humane of men, he simply raged at Gumbo. He would teach him, he said, to destroy his papers. And it appeared, from what we could piece together (for old Tom was very reticent and my father very incoherent), that he actually branded or tattooed a copy of what Gumbo had burnt on the nigger's body!"

"But," I interrupted, "your father knew all the scroll had to tell him, else he could not have copied it on Gumbo. So why was he in such a rage?"

"You," said Moore, with some indignation, "are not a collector, and you can't understand a collector's feelings. My father knew the contents of the scroll, but what of that? The scroll was the first edition, the real original, and Gumbo had destroyed it. Job would have lost his temper if Job had been a collector. Let me go on. My brother and I both conjectured that the scroll had some connection with the famous riches of the Sun and the secret of the Pyramid of Teohuacan. Probably, we thought, it had contained a chart (now transferred to Gumbo's frame) of the hiding-place of the treasure. However, in the confusion caused by my father's illness, death, and burial, Gumbo escaped, and, being an unusually stupid nigger, he escaped due south-west. Here he seems to have fallen into the hands of some slave-holding Indians, who used him even worse than any white owners would have done, and left him the mere fragment you saw. He filtered back here through the exchange of commerce, 'the higgling of the market,' and as soon as I recognized him at the sale I made up my mind to purchase him. So did my brother; but, thanks to Peter and his hornets, I became Gumbo's owner. On examining him, after he was well washed on the night of the attack, I found this chart, as you may call it, branded on Gumbo's back." Here Moore made a rapid tracing on a sheet of paper. "I concluded that the letters S M (introduced by my father, of course, as the Indian scroll must

Page 64

have been 'before letters') referred to the Sachem's Mound, which is in my land; that the Sun above referred to the treasures of the Sun, that S C stood for the Sachem's Cave, and that the cave led, under the river, within the mound. We might have opened the mound by digging on our own land, but it would have been a long job, and must have attracted curiosity and brought us into trouble. So, you see, the chart Gumbo destroyed was imprinted by my father on his black back, and though he *knew* nothing of the secret he distinctly *had* it."

"Yes," said I, "but why did you ask for a razor when you were left alone with Gumbo?"

"Why," said Moore, "I knew Gumbo was marked somewhere and somehow, but the place and manner I didn't know. And my father might have remembered the dodge of Histiaeus in Herodotus: he might have shaved Gumbo's head, tattooed the chart on that, and then allowed the natural covering to hide the secret 'on the place where the wool ought to grow.'"

THE ROMANCE OF THE FIRST RADICAL.

A PREHISTORIC APOLOGUE.

"Titius. Le premier qui supprime un abus, comme on dit, est toujours victime du service qu'il rend.

Un Homme du Peuple. C'est de sa faute! Pourquoi se mele t'il de ce qui ne le regarde pas."—Le Pretre de Nemi.

The Devil, according to Dr. Johnson and other authorities, was the first Whig. History tells us less about the first Radical—the first man who rebelled against the despotism of unintelligible customs, who asserted the rights of the individual against the claims of the tribal conscience, and who was eager to see society organized, off-hand, on what he thought a rational method. In the absence of history, we must fall back on that branch of hypothetics which is known as prehistoric science. We must reconstruct the Romance of the First Radical from the hints supplied by geology, and by the study of Radicals at large, and of contemporary savages among whom no Radical reformer has yet appeared. In the following little apologue no trait of manners is invented.

The characters of our romance lived shortly after the close of the last glacial epoch in Europe, when the ice had partly withdrawn from the face of the world, and when land and sea had almost assumed their modern proportions. At this period Europe was inhabited by scattered bands of human creatures, who roamed about its surface much as the black fellows used to roam over the Australian continent. The various groups

derived their names from various animals and other natural objects, such as the sun, the cabbage, serpents, sardines, crabs, leopards, bears, and hyaenas. It is important for our purpose to remember that all the children took their family name from the mother's side. If she were of the Hyaena clan, the children were Hyaenas. If the mother were tattooed with the badge of the Serpent, the children were Serpents,

Page 65

and so on. No two persons of the same family name and crest might marry, on pain of death. The man of the Bear family who dwelt by the Mediterranean might not ally himself with a woman of the Bear clan whose home was on the shores of the Baltic, and who was in no way related to him by consanguinity. These details are dry, but absolutely necessary to the comprehension of the First Radical's stormy and melancholy career. We must also remember that, among the tribes, there was no fixed or monarchical government. The little democratic groups were much influenced by the medicine-men or wizards, who combined the functions of the modern clergy and of the medical profession. The old men, too, had some power; the braves, or warriors, constituted a turbulent oligarchy; the noisy outcries of the old women corresponded to the utterances of an intelligent daily press. But the real ruler was a body of strange and despotic customs, the nature of which will become apparent as we follow the fortunes of the First Radical.

THE YOUTH OF WHY-WHY.

Why-Why, as our hero was commonly called in the tribe, was born, long before Romulus built his wall, in a cave which may still be observed in the neighbourhood of Mentone. On the warm shores of the Mediterranean, protected from winds by a wall of rock, the group of which Why-Why was the offspring had attained conditions of comparative comfort. The remains of their dinners, many feet deep, still constitute the flooring of the cave, and the tourist, as he pokes the soil with the point of his umbrella, turns up bits of bone, shreds of chipped flint, and other interesting relics. In the big cave lived several little families, all named by the names of their mothers. These ladies had been knocked on the head and dragged home, according to the marriage customs of the period, from places as distant as the modern Marseilles and Genoa. Why-Why, with his little brothers and sisters, were named Serpents, were taught to believe that the serpent was the first ancestor of their race, and that they must never injure any creeping thing. When they were still very young, the figure of the serpent was tattooed over their legs and breasts, so that every member of primitive society who met them had the advantage of knowing their crest and highly respectable family name.

The birth of Why-Why was a season of discomfort and privation. The hill tribe which lived on the summit of the hill now known as the Tete du Chien had long been aware that an addition to the population of the cave was expected. They had therefore prepared, according to the invariable etiquette of these early times, to come down on the cave people, maltreat the ladies, steal all the property they could lay hands on, and break whatever proved too heavy to carry. Good manners, of course, forbade the cave people to resist this visit, but etiquette permitted (and in New Caledonia still permits) the group to bury and hide its portable possessions. Canoes had been brought into the little creek beneath the cave, to convey the women and children into a safe retreat, and the

men were just beginning to hide the spears, bone daggers, flint fish-hooks, mats, shell razors, nets, and so forth, when Why-Why gave an early proof of his precocity by entering the world some time before his arrival was expected.

Page 66

Instantly all was confusion. The infant, his mother and the other non-combatants of the tribe, were bundled into canoes and paddled, through a tempestuous sea, to the site of the modern Bordighiera. The men who were not with the canoes fled into the depths of the Gorge Saint Louis, which now severs France from Italy. The hill tribe came down at the double, and in a twinkling had “made hay” (to borrow a modern agricultural expression) of all the personal property of the cave dwellers. They tore the nets (the use of which they did not understand), they broke the shell razors, they pouched the opulent store of flint arrowheads and bone daggers, and they tortured to death the pigs, which the cave people had just begun to try to domesticate. After performing these rites, which were perfectly legal—indeed, it would have been gross rudeness to neglect them—the hill people withdrew to their wind-swept home on the Tete du Chien.

Philosophers who believe in the force of early impressions will be tempted to maintain that Why-Why’s invincible hatred of established institutions may be traced to these hours of discomfort in which his life began.

The very earliest years of Why-Why, unlike those of Mr. John Stuart Mill, whom in many respects he resembled, were not distinguished by proofs of extraordinary intelligence. He rather promptly, however, showed signs of a sceptical character. Like other sharp children, Why-Why was always asking metaphysical conundrums. Who made men? Who made the sun? Why has the cave-bear such a hoarse voice? Why don’t lobsters grow on trees?—he would incessantly demand. In answer to these and similar questions, the mother of Why-Why would tell him stories out of the simple mythology of the tribe. There was quite a store of traditional replies to inquisitive children, replies sanctioned by antiquity and by the authority of the medicine-men, and in this lore Why-Why’s mother was deeply versed.

Thus, for example, Why-Why would ask his mother who made men. She would reply that long ago Pund-jel, the first man, made two images of human beings in clay, and stuck on curly bark for hair. He then danced a corroboree round them, and sang a song. They rose up, and appeared as full-grown men. To this statement, hallowed by immemorial belief, Why-Why only answered by asking who made Pund-jel. His mother said that Pund-jel came out of a plot of reeds and rushes. Why-Why was silent, but thought in his heart that the whole theory was “bosh-bosh,” to use the early reduplicative language of these remote times. Nor could he conceal his doubts about the Deluge and the frog who once drowned all the world. Here is the story of the frog: —“Once, long ago, there was a big frog. He drank himself full of water. He could not get rid of the water. Once he saw a sand-eel dancing on his tail by the sea-shore. It made him laugh so that he burst, and all the water ran out. There was a great

Page 67

flood, and every one was drowned except two or three men and women, who got on an island. Past came the pelican, in a canoe; he took off the men, but wanting to marry the woman, kept her to the last. She wrapped up a log in a 'possum rug to deceive the pelican, and swam to shore and escaped. The pelican was very angry; he began to paint himself white, to show that he was on the war trail, when past came another pelican, did not like his looks, and killed him with his beak. That is why pelicans are partly black and white, if you want to know, my little dear," said the mother of Why-Why.

Many stories like this were told in the cave, but they found no credit with Why-Why. When he was but ten years old, his inquiring spirit showed itself in the following remarkable manner. He had always been informed that a serpent was the mother of his race, and that he must treat serpents with the greatest reverence. To kill one was sacrilege. In spite of this, he stole out unobserved and crushed a viper which had stung his little brother. He noticed that no harm ensued, and this encouraged him to commit a still more daring act. None but the old men and the warriors were allowed to eat oysters. It was universally held that if a woman or a child touched an oyster, the earth would open and swallow the culprit. Not daunted by this prevalent belief, Why-Why one day devoured no less than four dozen oysters, opening the shells with a flint spear-head, which he had secreted in his waist-band. The earth did not open and swallow him as he had swallowed the oysters, and from that moment he became suspicious of all the ideas and customs imposed by the old men and wizards.

Two or three touching incidents in domestic life, which occurred when Why-Why was about twelve years old, confirmed him in the dissidence of his dissent, for the first Radical was the first Dissenter. The etiquette of the age (which survives among the Yorubas and other tribes) made it criminal for a woman to see her husband, or even to mention his name. When, therefore, the probable father of Why-Why became weary of supporting his family, he did not need to leave the cave and tramp abroad. He merely ceased to bring in tree-frogs, grubs, roots, and the other supplies which Why-Why's mother was accustomed to find concealed under a large stone in the neighbourhood of the cave.

The poor pious woman, who had always religiously abstained from seeing her lord's face, and from knowing his name, was now reduced to destitution. There was no one to grub up pig-nuts for her, nor to extract insects of an edible sort from beneath the bark of trees. As she could not identify her invisible husband, she was unable to denounce him to the wizards, who would, for a consideration, have frightened him out of his life or into the performance of his duty. Thus, even with the aid of Why-Why, existence became too laborious for her strength, and she gradually pined away. As she lay in a half-fainting and

Page 68

almost dying state, Why-Why rushed out to find the most celebrated local medicine-man. In half an hour the chief medicine-man appeared, dressed in the skin of a wolf, tagged about with bones, skulls, dead lizards, and other ornaments of his official attire. You may see a picture very like him in Mr. Catlin's book about the Mandans. Armed with a drum and a rattle, he leaped into the presence of the sick woman, uttering unearthly yells. His benevolent action and "bedside manner" were in accordance with the medical science of the time. He merely meant to frighten away the evil spirit which (according to the received hypothesis) was destroying the mother of Why-Why. What he succeeded in doing was to make Why-Why's mother give a faint scream, after which her jaw fell, and her eyes grew fixed and staring.

The grief of Why-Why was profound. Reckless of consequences, he declared, with impious publicity, that the law which forbade a wife to see her own husband, and the medical science which frightened poor women to death were cruel and ridiculous. As Why-Why (though a promising child) was still under age, little notice was taken of remarks which were attributed to the petulance of youth. But when he went further, and transgressed the law which then forbade a brother to speak to his own sister, on pain of death, the general indignation was no longer repressed. In vain did Why-Why plead that if he neglected his sister no one else would comfort her. His life was spared, but the unfortunate little girl's bones were dug up by a German savant last year, in a condition which makes it only too certain that cannibalism was practised by the early natives of the Mediterranean coast. These incidents then, namely, the neglect of his unknown father, the death of his mother, and the execution of his sister, confirmed Why-Why in the belief that radical social reforms were desirable.

The coming of age of Why-Why was celebrated in the manner usual among primitive people. The ceremonies were not of a character to increase his pleasure in life, nor his respect for constituted authority. When he was fourteen years of age, he was pinned, during his sleep, by four adult braves, who knocked out his front teeth, shaved his head with sharp chips of quartzite, cut off the first joint of his little finger, and daubed his whole body over with clay. They then turned him loose, imposing on him his name of Why-Why; and when his shaven hair began to show through the clay daubing, the women of the tribe washed him, and painted him black and white. The indignation of Why-Why may readily be conceived. Why, he kept asking, should you shave a fellow's head, knock out his teeth, cut off his little finger, daub him with clay, and paint him like a pelican, because he is fourteen years old? To these radical questions, the braves (who had all lost their own front teeth) replied, that this was the custom of their fathers. They tried to console him, moreover, by pointing

Page 69

out that now he might eat oysters, and catch himself a bride from some hostile tribe, or give his sister in exchange for a wife. This was little comfort to Why-Why. He had eaten oysters already without supernatural punishment, and his sister, as we have seen, had suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Nor could our hero persuade himself that to club and carry off a hostile girl in the dark was the best way to win a loving wife. He remained single, and became a great eater of oysters.

THE MANHOOD OF WHY-WHY.

As time went on our hero developed into one of the most admired braves of his community. No one was more successful in battle, and it became almost a proverb that when Why-Why went on the war-path there was certain to be meat enough and to spare, even for the women. Why-Why, though a Radical, was so far from perfect that he invariably complied with the usages of his time when they seemed rational and useful. If a little tattooing on the arm would have saved men from a horrible disease, he would have had all the tribe tattooed. He was no bigot. He kept his word, and paid his debts, for no one was ever very "advanced" all at once. It was only when the ceremonious or superstitious ideas of his age and race appeared to him senseless and mischievous that he rebelled, or at least hinted his doubts and misgivings. This course of conduct made him feared and hated both by the medicine-men, or clerical wizards, and by the old women of the tribe. They naturally tried to take their revenge upon him in the usual way.

A charge of heresy, of course, could not well be made, for in the infancy of our race there were neither Courts of Arches nor General Assemblies. But it was always possible to accuse Why-Why of malevolent witchcraft. The medicine-men had not long to wait for an opportunity. An old woman died, as old women will, and every one was asking "Who sent the evil spirit that destroyed poor old Dada?" In Why-Why's time no other explanation of natural death by disease or age was entertained. The old woman's grave was dug, and all the wizards intently watched for the first worm or insect that should crawl out of the mould. The head-wizard soon detected a beetle, making, as he alleged, in the direction where Why-Why stood observing the proceedings. The wizard at once denounced our hero as the cause of the old woman's death. To have blenched for a moment would have been ruin. But Why-Why merely lifted his hand, and in a moment a spear flew from it which pinned his denouncer ignominiously to a pine-tree. The funeral of the old woman was promptly converted into a free fight, in which there was more noise than bloodshed. After this event the medicine-men left Why-Why to his own courses, and waited for a chance of turning public opinion against the sceptic.

Page 70

The conduct of Why-Why was certainly calculated to outrage all conservative feeling. When on the war-path or in the excitement of the chase he had even been known to address a tribesman by his name, as "Old Cow," or "Flying Cloud," or what not, instead of adopting the orthodox nomenclature of the classificatory system, and saying, "Third cousin by the mother's side, thrice removed, will you lend me an arrow?" or whatever it might be. On "tabu-days," once a week, when the rest of the people in the cave were all silent, sedentary, and miserable (from some superstitious feeling which we can no longer understand), Why-Why would walk about whistling, or would chip his flints or set his nets. He ought to have been punished with death, but no one cared to interfere with him.

Instead of dancing at the great "corroborees," or religious ballets of his people, he would "sit out" with a girl whose sad, romantic history became fatally interwoven with his own. In vain the medicine-men assured him that Pund-jel, the great spirit, was angry. Why-Why was indifferent to the thunder which was believed to be the voice of Pund-jel. His behaviour at the funeral of a celebrated brave actually caused what we would call a reformation in burial ceremonies.

It was usual to lay the corpses of the famous dead in a cave, where certain of the tribesmen were sent to watch for forty days and nights the decaying body. This ghastly task was made more severe by the difficulty of obtaining food. Everything that the watchers were allowed to eat was cooked outside the cave with complicated ceremonies. If any part of the ritual was omitted, if a drop or a morsel were spilled, the whole rite had to be done over again from the beginning. This was not all. The chief medicine-man took a small portion of the meat in a long spoon, and entered the sepulchral cavern. In the dim light he approached one of the watchers of the dead, danced before him, uttered a mysterious formula of words, and made a shot at the hungry man's mouth with a long spoon. If the shot was straight, if the spoon did not touch the lips or nose or mouth, the watcher made ready to receive a fresh spoonful. But if the attempt failed, if the spoon did not go straight to the mark, the mourners were obliged to wait till all the cooking ceremonies were performed afresh, when the feeding began again.

Now, Why-why was a mourner whom the chief medicine-man was anxious to "spite," as children say, and at the end of three days' watching our hero had not received a morsel of food. The spoon had invariably chanced to miss him. On the fourth night Why-Why entertained his fellow-watchers with a harangue on the imbecility of the whole proceeding. He walked out of the cave, kicked the chief medicine-man into a ravine, seized the pot full of meat, brought it back with him, and made a hearty meal. The other mourners, half dead with fear, expected to see the corpse they were "waking" arise, "girn," and take some horrible revenge. Nothing of the sort occurred, and the burials of the cave dwellers gradually came to be managed in a less irksome way.

Page 71

THE LOVES OF VERVA AND WHY-WHY.

No man, however intrepid, can offend with impunity the most sacred laws of society. Why-Why proved no exception to this rule. His decline and fall date, we may almost say, from the hour when he bought a fair-haired, blue-eyed female child from a member of a tribe that had wandered out of the far north. The tribe were about to cook poor little Verva because her mother was dead, and she seemed a bouche inutile. For the price of a pair of shell fish-hooks, a bone dagger, and a bundle of grass-string Why-Why (who had a tender heart) ransomed the child. In the cave she lived an unhappy life, as the other children maltreated and tortured her in the manner peculiar to pitiless infancy.

Such protection as a man can give to a child the unlucky little girl received from Why-Why. The cave people, like most savages, made it a rule never to punish their children. Why-Why got into many quarrels because he would occasionally box the ears of the mischievous imps who tormented poor Verva, the fair-haired and blue-eyed captive from the north. There grew up a kind of friendship between Why-Why and the child. She would follow him with dog-like fidelity and with a stealthy tread when he hunted the red deer in the forests of the Alpine Maritimes. She wove for him a belt of shells, strung on stout fibres of grass. In this belt Why-Why would attend the tribal corroborees, where, as has been said, he was inclined to "sit out" with Verva and watch, rather than join in the grotesque dance performed as worship to the Bear.

As Verva grew older and ceased to be persecuted by the children, she became beautiful in the unadorned manner of that early time. Her friendship with Why-Why began to embarrass the girl, and our hero himself felt a quite unusual shyness when he encountered the captive girl among the pines on the hillside. Both these untutored hearts were strangely stirred, and neither Why-Why nor Verva could imagine wherefore they turned pale or blushed when they met, or even when either heard the other's voice. If Why-Why had not distrusted and indeed detested the chief medicine-man, he would have sought that worthy's professional advice. But he kept his symptoms to himself, and Verva also pined in secret.

These artless persons were in love without knowing it.

It is not surprising that they did not understand the nature of their complaint, for probably before Why-Why no one had ever been in love. Courtship had consisted in knocking a casual girl on the head in the dark, and the only marriage ceremony had been that of capture. Affection on the side of the bride was out of the question, for, as we have remarked, she was never allowed so much as to see her husband's face. Probably the institution of falling in love has been evolved in, and has spread from, various early centres of human existence. Among the primitive Ligurian races, however, Why-Why and Verva must be held the inventors, and, alas! the protomartyrs of the

passion. Love, like murder, “will out,” and events revealed to Why-Why and Verva the true nature of their sentiments.

Page 72

It was a considerable exploit of Why-Why's that brought him and the northern captive to understand each other. The brother of Why-Why had died after partaking too freely of a member of a hostile tribe. The cave people, of course, expected Why-Why to avenge his kinsman. The brother, they said, must have been destroyed by a boilya or vampire, and, as somebody must have sent that vampire against the lad, somebody must be speared for it. Such are primitive ideas of medicine and justice. An ordinary brave would have skulked about the dwellings of some neighbouring human groups till he got a chance of knocking over a child or an old woman, after which justice and honour would have been satisfied. But Why-Why declared that, if he must spear somebody, he would spear a man of importance. The forms of a challenge were therefore notched on a piece of stick, which was solemnly carried by heralds to the most renowned brave of a community settled in the neighbourhood of the modern San Remo. This hero might have very reasonably asked, "Why should I spear Why-Why because his brother overate himself?" The laws of honour, however (which even at this period had long been established), forbade a gentleman when challenged to discuss the reasonableness of the proceeding.

The champions met on a sandy plain beside a little river near the modern Ventimiglia. An amphitheatre of rock surrounded them, and, far beyond, the valley was crowned by the ancient snow of an Alpine peak. The tribes of either party gathered in the rocky amphitheatre, and breathlessly watched the issue of the battle. Each warrior was equipped with a shield, a sheaf of spears, and a heavy, pointed club. At thirty paces distance they began throwing, and the spectators enjoyed a beautiful exposition of warlike skill. Both men threw with extreme force and deadly aim; while each defended himself cleverly with his shield. The spears were exhausted, and but one had pierced the thigh of Why-Why, while his opponent had two sticking in his neck and left arm.

Then, like two meeting thunder-clouds, the champions dashed at each other with their clubs. The sand was whirled up around them as they spun in the wild dance of battle, and the clubs rattled incessantly on the heads and shields. Twice Why-Why was down, but he rose with wonderful agility, and never dropped his shield. A third time he stooped beneath a tremendous whack, but when all seemed over, grasped a handful of sand, and flung it right in his enemy's eyes. The warrior reeled, blinded and confused, when Why-Why gave point with the club in his antagonist's throat; the blood leaped out, and both fell senseless on the plain.

* * * * *

Page 73

When the slow mist cleared from before the eyes of Why-Why he found himself (he was doubtless the first hero of the many heroes who have occupied this romantic position) stretched on a grassy bed, and watched by the blue eyes of Verva. Where were the sand, the stream, the hostile warrior, the crowds of friends and foes? It was Verva's part to explain. The champion of the other tribe had never breathed after he received the club-thrust, and the chief medicine-man had declared that Why-Why was also dead. He had suggested that both champions should be burned in the desolate spot where they lay, that their boilyas, or ghosts, might not harm the tribes. The lookers-on had gone to their several and distant caves to fetch fire for the ceremony (they possessed no means of striking a light), and Verva, unnoticed, had lingered beside Why-Why, and laid his bleeding head in her lap. Why-Why had uttered a groan, and the brave girl dragged him from the field into a safe retreat among the woods not far from the stream. Why-Why had been principally beaten about the head, and his injuries, therefore, were slight.

After watching the return of the tribesmen, and hearing the chief medicine-man explain that Why-Why's body had been carried away by "the bad black-fellow with a tail who lives under the earth," Why-Why enjoyed the pleasure of seeing his kinsmen and his foes leave the place to its natural silence. Then he found words, and poured forth his heart to Verva. They must never be sundered—they must be man and wife! The girl leaned her golden head on Why-Why's dark shoulder, and sniffed at him, for kissing was an institution not yet evolved. She wept. She had a dreadful thing to tell him,—that she could never be his. "Look at this mark," she said, exposing the inner side of her arm. Why-Why looked, shuddered, and turned pale. On Verva's arm he recognized, almost defaced, the same tattooed badge that wound its sinuous spirals across his own broad chest and round his manly legs. *It was the mark of the Serpent!*

Both were Serpents; both, unknown to Why-Why, though not to Verva, bore the same name, the same badge, and, if Why-Why had been a religious man, both would have worshipped the same reptile. Marriage between them then was a thing accursed; man punished it by death. Why-Why bent his head and thought. He remembered all his youth—the murder of his sister for no crime; the killing of the serpent, and how no evil came of it; the eating of the oysters, and how the earth had not opened and swallowed him. His mind was made up. It was absolutely certain that his tribe and Verva's kin had never been within a thousand miles of each other. In a few impassioned words he explained to Verva his faith, his simple creed that a thing was not necessarily wrong because the medicine-men said so, and the tribe believed them. The girl's own character was all trustfulness, and Why-Why was the person she trusted. "Oh, Why-Why, dear," she said blushing (for she had never before ventured to break the tribal rule which forbade calling any one by his name), "Oh, Why-Why, you are *always* right!"

Page 74

And o'er the hills, and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
Beyond the night, across the day,
Through all the world she followed him.

LA MORT WHY-WHY.

Two years had passed like a dream in the pleasant valley which, in far later ages, the Romans called Vallis Aurea, and which we call Vallauris. Here, at a distance of some thirty miles from the cave and the tribe, dwelt in fancied concealment Why-Why and Verva. The clear stream was warbling at their feet, in the bright blue weather of spring; the scent of the may blossoms was poured abroad, and, lying in the hollow of Why-Why's shield, a pretty little baby with Why-Why's dark eyes and Verva's golden locks was crowing to his mother. Why-Why sat beside her, and was busily making the first European pipkin with the clay which he had found near Vallauris. All was peace.

* * * * *

There was a low whizzing sound, something seemed to rush past Why-Why, and with a scream Verva fell on her face. A spear had pierced her breast. With a yell like that of a wounded lion, Why-Why threw himself on the bleeding body of his bride. For many moments he heard no sound but her long, loud and unconscious breathing. He did not mark the yells of his tribesmen, nor feel the spears that rained down on himself, nor see the hideous face of the chief medicine-man peering at his own. Verva ceased to breathe. There was a convulsion, and her limbs were still. Then Why-Why rose. In his right hand was his famous club, "the watcher of the fords;" in his left his shield. These had never lain far from his hand since he fled with Verva.

He knew that the end had come, as he had so often dreamt of it; he knew that he was trapped and taken by his offended tribesmen. His first blow shattered the head of the chief medicine-man. Then he flung himself, all bleeding from the spears, among the press of savages who started from every lentisk bush and tuft of tall flowering heath. They gave back when four of their chief braves had fallen, and Why-Why lacked strength and will to pursue them. He turned and drew Verva's body beneath the rocky wall, and then he faced his enemies. He threw down shield and club and raised his hands. A light seemed to shine about his face, and his first word had a strange tone that caught the ear and chilled the heart of all who heard him. "Listen," he said, "for these are the last words of Why-Why. He came like the water, and like the wind he goes, he knew not whence, and he knows not whither. He does not curse you, for you are that which you are. But the day will come" (and here Why-Why's voice grew louder and his eyes burned), "the day will come when you will no longer be the slave of things like that dead dog," and here he pointed to the shapeless face of the slain medicine-

man. "The day will come, when a man shall speak unto his sister in loving kindness,
and none shall

Page 75

do him wrong. The day will come when a woman shall unpunished see the face and name the name of her husband. As the summers go by you will not bow down to the hyaenas, and the bears, and worship the adder and the viper. You will not cut and bruise the bodies of your young men, or cruelly strike and seize away women in the darkness. Yes, and the time will be when a man may love a woman of the same family name as himself—but here the outraged religion of the tribesmen could endure no longer to listen to these wild and blasphemous words. A shower of spears flew out, and Why-Why fell across the body of Verva. His own was “like a marsh full of reeds,” said the poet of the tribe, in a song which described these events, “so thick the spears stood in it.”

* * * * *

When he was dead, the tribe knew what they had lost in Why-Why. They bore his body, with that of Verva, to the cave; there they laid the lovers—Why-Why crowned with a crown of sea-shells, and with a piece of a rare magical substance (iron) at his side. {208} Then the tribesmen withdrew from that now holy ground, and built them houses, and forswore the follies of the medicine-men, as Why-Why had prophesied. Many thousands of years later the cave was opened when the railway to Genoa was constructed, and the bones of Why-Why, with the crown, and the fragment of iron, were found where they had been laid by his repentant kinsmen. He had bravely asserted the rights of the individual conscience against the dictates of Society; he had lived, and loved, and died, not in vain. Last April I plucked a rose beside his cave, and laid it with another that had blossomed at the door of the last house which covered the homeless head of SHELLEY.

The prophecies of Why-Why have been partially fulfilled. Brothers, if they happen to be on speaking terms, may certainly speak to their sisters, though we are still, alas, forbidden to marry the sisters of our deceased wives. Wives *may* see their husbands, though in Society, they rarely avail themselves of the privilege. Young ladies are still forbidden to call young men at large by their Christian names; but this tribal law, and survival of the classificatory system, is rapidly losing its force. Burials in the savage manner to which Why-Why objected, will soon, doubtless, be permitted to conscientious Nonconformists in the graveyards of the Church of England. The teeth of boys are still knocked out at public and private schools, but the ceremony is neither formal nor universal. Our advance in liberty is due to an army of forgotten Radical martyrs of whom we know less than we do of Mr. Bradlaugh.

A DUCHESS'S SECRET.

When I was poor, and honest, and a novelist, I little thought that I should ever be rich, and something not very unlike a Duke; and, as to honesty, but an indifferent character. I have had greatness thrust on me. I am, like Simpcox in the *dramatis personae* of "Henry IV.," "an impostor;" and yet I scarcely know how I could have escaped this deplorable (though lucrative) position. "Love is a great master," says the "Mort d'Arthur," and I perhaps may claim sympathy and pity as a victim of love. The following unaffected lines (in which only names and dates are disguised) contain all the apology I can offer to a censorious world.

Page 76

Two or three years ago I was dependent on literature for my daily bread. I was a regular man-of-all-work. Having the advantage of knowing a clerk in the Foreign Office who went into society (he had been my pupil at the university), I picked up a good deal of scandalous gossip, which I published in the Pimlico Postboy, a journal of fashion. I was also engaged as sporting prophet to the Tipster, and was not less successful than my contemporaries as a vaticinator of future events. At the same time I was contributing a novel (anonymously) to the Fleet Street Magazine, a very respectable publication, though perhaps a little dull. The editor had expressly requested me to make things rather more lively, and I therefore gave my imagination free play in the construction of my plot. I introduced a beautiful girl, daughter of a preacher in the Shaker community. Her hand was sought in marriage by a sporting baronet, who had seen her as he pursued the chase through the pathless glens of the New Forest. This baronet she married after suffering things intolerable from the opposition of the Shakers. Here I had a good deal of padding about Shakers and their ways; and, near the end of the sixth chapter my heroine became the wife of Sir William Buckley. But the baronet proved a perfect William Rufus for variegated and versatile blackguardism. Lady Buckley's life was made impossible by his abominable conduct. At this juncture my heroine chanced to be obliged to lunch at a railway refreshment-room. My last chapter had described the poor lady lunching lonely in the bleak and gritty waiting room of Swilby Junction, lonely except for the company of her little boy. I showed how she fell into a strange and morbid vein of reflection suggested by the qualities of the local sherry. If she was to live, her lord and master, Sir W. Buckley, must die! And I described how a fiendish temptation was whispered to her by the glass of local sherry. "William's constitution, strong as it is," she murmured inwardly, "could never stand a dozen of that sherry. Suppose he chanced to partake of it—accidentally—rather late in the evening." Amidst these reflections I allowed the December instalment of "The Baronet's Wife" to come to a conclusion in the Fleet Street Magazine. Obviously crime was in the wind.

It is my habit to read the "Agony Column" (as it is flippantly called), the second column in the outer sheet of the Times. Who knows but he may there see something to his advantage; and, besides, the mysterious advertisements may suggest ideas for plots. One day I took up the "Agony Column," as usual, at my club, and, to my surprise, read the following advertisement:—

"F. S. M.—SHERRY WINE. WRECK OF THE "JINGO."—WRETCHED BOY: Stay your unhallowed hand! Would you expose an erring MOTHER'S secret? Author will please communicate with Messrs. Mantlepiece and Co., Solicitors, Upton-on-the-Wold."

Page 77

As soon as I saw this advertisement, as soon as my eyes fell on “Sherry Wine” and “Author,” I felt that here was something for me. “F. S. M.” puzzled me at first, but I read it Fleet Street Magazine, by a flash of inspiration. “Wretched Boy” seemed familiar and inappropriate—I was twenty-nine—but what of that? Of course I communicated with Messrs. Mantlepiece, saying that I had reason for supposing that I was the “author” alluded to in the advertisement. As to the words, “Wreck of the Jingo” they entirely beat me, but I hoped that some light would be thrown on their meaning by the respectable firm of solicitors. It did occur to me that if any one had reasons for communicating with me, it would have been better and safer to address a letter to me, under cover, to the editor of the Fleet Street Magazine. But the public have curious ideas on these matters. Two days after I wrote to Messrs. Mantlepiece I received a very guarded reply, in which I was informed that their client wished to make my acquaintance, and that a carriage would await me, if I presented myself at Upton-on-the-Wold Station, by the train arriving at 5.45 on Friday. Well, I thought to myself, I may as well do a “week-ending,” as some people call it, with my anonymous friend as anywhere else. At the same time I knew that the “carriage” might be hired by enemies to convey me to the Pauper Lunatic Asylum or to West Ham, the place where people disappear mysteriously. I might be the victim of a rival’s jealousy (and many men, novelists of most horrible imaginings, envied my talents and success), or a Nihilist plot might have drawn me into its machinery. But I was young, and I thought I would see the thing out. My journey was unadventurous, if you except a row with a German, who refused to let me open the window. But this has nothing to do with my narrative, and is not a false scent to make a guileless reader keep his eye on the Teuton. Some novelists permit themselves these artifices, which I think untradesmanlike and unworthy. When I arrived at Upton, the station-master made a charge at my carriage, and asked me if I was “The gentleman for the Towers?” The whole affair was so mysterious that I thought it better to answer in the affirmative. My luggage (a Gladstone bag) was borne by four stately and liveried menials to a roomy and magnificent carriage, in which everything, from the ducal crown on the silver foot-warmers to the four splendid bays, breathed of opulence, directed and animated by culture. I dismissed all thoughts of the Pauper Lunatic Asylum and the Nihilists, and was whirled through miles of park and up an avenue lighted by electricity. We reached the baronial gateway of the Towers, a vast Gothic pile in the later manner of Inigo Jones, and a seneschal stood at the foot of a magnificent staircase to receive me. I had never seen a seneschal before, but I recognized him by the peeled white wand he carried, by his great silver chain, and his black velvet coat and knee-breeches.

Page 78

"Your lordship's room," says the seneschal (obviously an old and confidential family servant), "is your old one—the Tapestry Chamber. Her Grace is waiting anxiously for you."

Then two menials marched, with my Gladstone bag, to the apartment thus indicated. For me, I felt in a dream, or like a man caught up into the fairyland of the "Arabian Nights." "Her Grace" was all very well—the aristocracy always admired my fictitious creations; but "Your Lordship!" Why your Lordship? Then the chilling idea occurred to me that I had *not* been "the gentleman for the Towers;" that I was in the position of the hero of "Happy Thoughts" when he went to the Duke's by mistake for the humble home of the Plyte Frazers. But I was young. "Her Grace" could not eat me, and I determined, as I said before, to see it out.

I dressed very deliberately, and that process over, was led by the worthy seneschal into a singular octagonal boudoir, hung with soft dark blue arras. The only person in the room was a gaunt, middle-aged lady, in deep mourning. Though I knew no more of the British aristocracy than Mr. W. D. Howells, of New York, I recognized her for the Duchess by her nose, which resembled those worn by the duchesses of Mr. Du Maurier. As soon as we were alone, she rose, drew me to her bosom, much to my horror, looked at me long and earnestly, and at last exclaimed, "How changed you are, Percy!" (My name is Thomas—Thomas Cobson.) Before I could reply, she was pouring out reproaches on me for having concealed my existence, and revealed in my novel what she spoke of as "the secret."

When she grew, not calm, but fatigued, I ventured to ask why she had conferred on me the honour of her invitation, and how I had been unfortunate enough to allude to affairs of which I had certainly no knowledge. Her reply was given with stately dignity. "You need not pretend," she said, "to have forgotten what I told you in this very room, before you left England for an African tour in the Jingo. I then revealed to you the secret of my life, the secret of the Duke's death. Your horror when you heard how that most unhappy man compelled me to free myself from his tyranny, by a method which his habits rendered only too easy—in short, by a dose of cheap sherry, was deep and natural. Oh, Percy, you did not kiss your mother before starting on your ill-omened voyage. As soon as I heard of the wreck of the Jingo, and that you were the only passenger drowned, I recognized an artifice, un vieux truc, by which you hoped to escape from a mother of whom you were ashamed. You had only pretended to be the victim of Ocean's rage! People who are drowned in novels always *do* reappear: and, Percy, your mother is an old novel-reader! My agents have ever since been on your track, but it was reserved for *me* to discover the last of the Birkenheads in the anonymous author of the 'Baronet's Wife.' That romance, in which you have had the baseness to use your knowledge of a mother's guilt as a motif in your twopenny plot, unveiled to me the secret of your hidden existence. You must stop the story, or alter the following numbers; you must give up your discreditable mode of life. Heavens, that a Birkenhead should be a literary character! And you must resume your place in my house and in society."

Page 79

Here the Duchess of Stalybridge paused; she had quite recovered that repose of manner and icy hauteur which, I understand, is the heritage of the house of Birkenhead. For my part, I had almost lost the modest confidence which is, I believe, hereditary in the family of Cobson. It was a scene to make the boldest stand aghast. Here was an unknown lady of the highest rank confessing a dreadful crime to a total stranger, and recognizing in that stranger her son, and the heir to an enormous property and a title as old—as old as British dukedoms, however old they may be. Ouida would have said “heir to a title older than a thousand centuries,” but I doubt if the English duke is so ancient as that, or a direct descendant of the Dukes of Edom mentioned in Holy Writ. I began pouring out an incoherent flood of evidence to show that I was only Thomas Cobson, and had never been any one else, but at that moment a gong sounded, and a young lady entered the room. She also was dressed in mourning, and the Duchess introduced her to me as my cousin, Miss Birkenhead. “Gwyneth was a child, Percy,” said my august hostess, “when you went to Africa.” I shook hands with my cousin with as much composure as I could assume, for, to tell the truth, I was not only moved by my recent adventures, but I had on the spot fallen hopelessly in love with my new relative. It was le coup de foudre of a French writer on the affections—M. Stendhal. Miss Birkenhead had won my heart from the first moment of our meeting. Why should I attempt to describe a psychological experience as rare as instantaneous conversion, or more so? Miss Birkenhead was tall and dark, with a proud pale face, and eyes which unmistakably indicated the possession of a fine sense of humour. Proud pale people seldom look when they first meet a total stranger—still more a long-lost cousin—as if they had some difficulty in refraining from mirth. Miss Birkenhead’s face was as fixed and almost as pure as marble, but I read sympathy and amusement and kindness in her eyes.

Presently the door opened again, and an elderly man in the dress of a priest came in. To him I was presented—

“Your old governor, Percy.”

For a moment my unhappy middle-class association made me suppose that the elderly ecclesiastic was my “old Guv’nor,”—my father, the late Duke. But an instant’s reflection proved to me that her Grace meant “tutor” by governor. I am ashamed to say that I now entered into the spirit of the scene, shook the holy man warmly by the hand, and quoted a convenient passage from Horace.

He appeared to fall into the trap, and began to speak of old recollections of my boyhood.

Stately liveried menials now, greatly to my surprise, brought in tea. I was just declining tea (for I expected dinner in a few minutes), when a voice (a sweet low voice) whispered

“Take some!”

I took some, providentially, as it turned out. Again, I was declining tea-cake, when I could have sworn I heard the same voice (so low that it seemed like the admonition of a passing spirit) say—

Page 80

"Take some!"

I took some, for I was exceedingly hungry; and then the conversation lapsed, began again vaguely, and lapsed again.

We all know that wretched quarter of an hour, or half hour, which unpunctual guests make us pass in famine and fatigue while they keep dinner waiting. Upon my word, we waited till half-past eleven before dinner was announced. But for the tea, I must have perished; for, like the butler in Sir George Dasent's novel, "I likes my meals regular."

The Duchess had obviously forgotten all about dinner. There was a spinning-wheel in the room, and she sat and span like an elderly Fate. When dinner was announced at last, I began to fear it would never end. The menu covered *both sides* of the card. The Duchess ate little, and "hardly anything was drunk." At last the ladies left us, about one in the morning. I saw my chance, and began judiciously to "draw" the chaplain. It appeared that the Duchess did not always dine at half-past eleven. The feast was a movable one, from eight o'clock onwards. The Duchess and the establishment had got into these habits during the old Duke's time. A very strange man the old Duke; rarely got up till eight in the evening, often prolonged breakfast till next day.

"But I need not tell *you* all this, Percy, my old pupil," said the chaplain; and he winked as a clergyman ought not to wink.

"My dear sir," cried I, encouraged by this performance, "for Heaven's sake tell me what all this means? In this so-called nineteenth century, in our boasted age of progress, what *does* the Duchess mean by her invitation to me, and by her conduct at large? Indeed, why is *she* at large?"

The chaplain drew closer to me. "Did ye ever hear of a duchess in a madhouse?" said he; and I owned that I never had met with such an incident in my reading (unless there is one in Webster's plays, somewhere).

"Well, then, who is to make a beginning?" asked the priest. "The Duchess has not a relation in the world but Miss Birkenhead, the only daughter of a son of the last Duke but one. The late Duke was a dreadful man, and he turned the poor Duchess's head with the life he led her. The drowning of her only son in the Jingo finished the business. She has got that story about"—(here he touched the decanter of sherry: I nodded)—"she has got that story into her head, and she believes her son is alive; otherwise she is as sane and unimaginative as—as—as Mr. Chaplin," said he, with a flash of inspiration. "Happily you are an honest man, or you seem like one, and won't take advantage of her delusion."

Page 81

This was all I could get out of the chaplain; indeed, there was no more to be got. I went to bed, but not to sleep. Next day, and many other days, I spent wrestling in argument with the Duchess. I brought her my certificate of baptism, my testamurs in Smalls and Greats, an old passport, a bill of Poole's, anything I could think of to prove my identity. She was obdurate, and only said—"If you are not Percy, how do you know my secret?" I had in the meantime to alter the intended course of my novel—"The Baronet's Wife." The Baronet was made to become a reformed character. But in all those days at the lonely Towers, and in the intervals of arguing with the poor Duchess, I could not but meet Gwyneth Birkenhead. We met, not as cousins, for Miss Birkenhead had only too clearly appreciated the situation from the moment she first met me. The old seneschal, too, was in the secret; I don't know what the rest of the menials thought. They were accustomed to the Duchess. But if Gwyneth and I did not meet as cousins, we met as light-hearted young people, in a queer situation, and in a strange, dismal old house.

We could not in the selfsame mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady;
We could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothed each to be the other by.

Indeed I could not sit at meals without being gratefully reminded of Gwyneth's advice about "taking some" on the night of my first arrival at the Towers.

These queer happy times ended.

One day a party of archaeologists came to visit the Towers. They were members of a "Society for Badgering the Proprietors of Old Houses," and they had been lunching at Upton-on-the-Wold. After luncheon they invaded the Towers, personally conducted by Mr. Bulkin, a very learned historian. Bulkin had nearly plucked me in Modern History, and when I heard his voice afar off I arose and fled swiftly. Unluckily the Duchess chanced, by an unprecedented accident, to be in the library, a room which the family never used, and which was, therefore, exhibited to curious strangers. Into this library Bulkin precipitated himself, followed by his admirers, and began to lecture on the family portraits. Beginning with the Crusaders (painted by Lorenzo Credi) he soon got down to modern times. He took no notice of the Duchess, whom he believed to be a housekeeper; but, posting himself between the unfortunate lady and the door, gave a full account of the career of the late Duke. This was more than the Duchess (who knew all about the subject of the lecture) could stand; but Mr. Bulkin, referring her to his own Appendices, finished his address, and offered the Duchess half-a-crown as he led his troop to other victories. From this accident the Duchess never recovered. Her spirits, at no time high, sank to zero, and she soon passed peacefully away. She left a will in which her personal property (about 40,000 pounds a year)

Page 82

was bequeathed to Gwyneth, "as my beloved son, Percy, has enough for his needs," the revenues of the dukedom of Stalybridge being about 300,000 pounds per annum before the agricultural depression. She might well have thought I needed no more. Of course I put in no claim for these estates, messuages, farms, mines, and so forth, nor for my hereditary ducal pension of 15,000 pounds. But Gwyneth and I are not uncomfortably provided for, and I no longer contribute paragraphs of gossip to the Pimlico Postboy, nor yet do I vaticinate in the columns of the Tipster. Perhaps I ought to have fled from the Towers the morning after my arrival. And I declare that I would have fled but for Gwyneth and "Love, that is a great Master."

THE HOUSE OF STRANGE STORIES.

The House of Strange Stories, as I prefer to call it (though it is not known by that name in the county), seems the very place for a ghost. Yet, though so many peoples have dwelt upon its site and in its chambers, though the ancient Elizabethan oak, and all the queer tables and chairs that a dozen generations have bequeathed, might well be tenanted by ancestral spirits, and disturbed by rappings, it is a curious fact that there is *not* a ghost in the House of Strange Stories. On my earliest visit to this mansion, I was disturbed, I own, by a not unpleasing expectancy. There *must*, one argued, be a shadowy lady in green in the bedroom, or, just as one was falling asleep, the spectre of a Jesuit would creep out of the priest's hole, where he was starved to death in the "spacious times of great Elizabeth," and would search for a morsel of bread. The priest was usually starved out, sentinels being placed in all the rooms and passages, till at last hunger and want of air would drive the wretched man to give himself up, for the sake of change of wretchedness. Then perhaps he was hanged, or he "died in our hands," as one of Elizabeth's officers euphemistically put it, when the Jesuit was tortured to death in the Tower. No "House of Seven Gables" across the Atlantic can have quite such memories as these, yet, oddly enough, I do not know of more than one ghost of a Jesuit in all England. *He* appeared to a learned doctor in a library, and the learned doctor described the phantom, not long ago, in the Athenaeum.

"Does the priest of your 'priest-hole' walk?" I asked the squire one winter evening in the House of Strange Stories.

Darkness had come to the rescue of the pheasants about four in the afternoon, and all of us, men and women, were sitting at afternoon tea in the firelit study, drowsily watching the flicker of the flame on the black panelling. The characters will introduce themselves, as they take part in the conversation.

“No,” said the squire, “even the priest does not walk. Somehow very few of the Jesuits have left ghosts in country houses. They are just the customers you would expect to ‘walk,’ but they don’t.”

Page 83

There is, to be sure, one priestly ghost-story, which you may or may not know, and I tell it here, though I don't believe it, just as I heard it from the Bishop of Dunchester himself. According to this most affable and distinguished prelate, now no more, he once arrived in a large country house shortly before dinner-time; he was led to his chamber, he dressed, and went downstairs. Not knowing the plan of the house, he found his way into the library, a chamber lined with the books of many studious generations. Here the learned bishop remained for a few minutes, when the gong sounded for dinner, and a domestic, entering the apartment showed the prelate the way to the drawing-room, where the other guests were now assembled. The bishop, when the company appeared complete, and was beginning to manoeuvre towards the dining-room, addressed his host (whom we shall call Lord Birkenhead), and observed that the ecclesiastic had not yet appeared.

"What ecclesiastic?" asked his lordship.

"The priest," replied the bishop, "whom I met in the library."

Upon this Lord Birkenhead's countenance changed somewhat, and, with a casual remark, he put the question by. After dinner, when the ladies had left the men to their wine, Lord Birkenhead showed some curiosity as to "the ecclesiastic," and learned that he had seemed somewhat shy and stiff, yet had the air of a man just about to enter into conversation.

"At that moment," said the bishop, "I was summoned to the drawing-room, and did not at first notice that my friend the priest had not followed me. He had an interesting and careworn face," added the bishop.

"You have certainly seen the family ghost," said Lord Birkenhead; "he only haunts the library, where, as you may imagine, his retirement is but seldom disturbed." And, indeed, the habits of the great, in England, are not studious, as a rule.

"Then I must return, Lord Birkenhead, to your library," said the bishop, "and that without delay, for this appears to be a matter in which the services of one of the higher clergy, however unworthy, may prove of incalculable benefit."

"If I could only hope," answered Lord Birkenhead (who was a Catholic) with a deep sigh, "that his reverence would recognize Anglican orders!"

The bishop was now, as may be fancied, on his mettle, and without further parley, retired to the library. The rest of the men awaited his return, and beguiled the moments of expectation with princely havannas.

In about half an hour the bishop reappeared, and a close observer might have detected a shade of paleness on his apostolic features, yet his face was radiant like that of a

good man who has performed a good action. Being implored to relieve the anxiety of the company, the worthy prelate spoke as follows:

Page 84

“On entering the library, which was illuminated by a single lamp, I found myself alone. I drew a chair to the fire, and, taking up a volume of M. Renan’s which chanced to be lying on the table, I composed myself to detect the sophistries of this brilliant but unprincipled writer. Thus, by an effort of will, I distracted myself from that state of ‘expectant attention’ to which modern science attributes such phantoms and spectral appearances as can neither be explained away by a morbid condition of the liver, nor as caused by the common rat (*Mus rattus*). I should observe by the way,” said the learned bishop, interrupting his own narrative, “that scepticism will in vain attempt to account, by the latter cause, namely rats, for the spectres, Lemures, simulacra, and haunted houses of the ancient Greeks and Romans. With these supernatural phenomena, as they prevailed in Athens and Rome, we are well acquainted, not only from the *Mostellaria* of Plautus, but from the numerous ghost-stories of Pliny, Plutarch, the Philopseudes of Lucian, and similar sources. But it will at once be perceived, and admitted even by candid men of science, that these spiritual phenomena of the classical period cannot plausibly, nor even possibly, be attributed to the agency of rats, when we recall the fact that the rat was an animal unknown to the ancients. As the learned M. Selys Longch observes in his *Etudes de Micromammalogie* (Paris, 1839, p. 59), ‘the origin of the rat is obscure, the one thing certain is that the vermin was unknown to the ancients, and that it arrived in Europe, introduced, perhaps, by the Crusaders, after the Middle Ages.’ I think,” added the prelate, looking round, not without satisfaction, “that I have completely disposed of the rat hypothesis, as far, at least, as the ghosts of classical tradition are concerned.”

“Your reasoning, bishop,” replied Lord Birkenhead, “is worthy of your reputation; but pray pardon the curiosity which entreats you to return from the simulacra of the past to the ghost of the present.”

“I had not long been occupied with M. Renan,” said the bishop, thus adjured, “when I became aware of the presence of another person in the room. I think my eyes had strayed from the volume, as I turned a page, to the table, on which I perceived the brown strong hand of a young man. Looking up, I beheld my friend the priest, who was indeed a man of some twenty-seven years of age, with a frank and open, though somewhat careworn, aspect. I at once rose, and asked if I could be of service to him in anything, and I trust I did not betray any wounding suspicion that he was other than a man of flesh and blood.

“‘You can, indeed, my lord, relieve me of a great burden,’ said the young man, and it was apparent enough that he *did* acknowledge the validity of Anglican orders. ‘Will you kindly take from the shelf that volume of Cicero “*De Officiis*,” he said, pointing to a copy of an Elzevir variorum edition,—not the small duodecimo Elzevir,—‘remove the paper you will find there, and burn it in the fire on the hearth.’

Page 85

“Certainly I will do as you say, but will you reward me by explaining the reason of your request?”

“In me,” said the appearance, “you behold Francis Wilton, priest. I was born in 1657, and, after adventures and an education with which I need not trouble you, found myself here as chaplain to the family of the Lord Birkenhead of the period. It chanced one day that I heard in confession, from the lips of Lady Birkenhead, a tale so strange, moving, and, but for the sacred circumstances of the revelation, so incredible, that my soul had no rest for thinking thereon. At last, neglecting my vow, and fearful that I might become forgetful of any portion of so marvellous a narrative, I took up my pen and committed the confession to the security of manuscript. *Litera scripta manet*. Scarcely had I finished my unholy task when the sound of a distant horn told me that the hunt (to which pleasure I was passionately given) approached the demesne. I thrust the written confession into that volume of Cicero, hurried to the stable, saddled my horse with my own hands, and rode in the direction whence I heard the music of the hounds. On my way a locked gate barred my progress. I put Rupert at it, he took off badly, fell, and my spirit passed away in the fall. But not to the place of repose did my sinful spirit wing its flight. I found myself here in the library, where, naturally, scarcely any one ever comes except the maids. When I would implore them to destroy the unholy document that binds me to earth, they merely scream; nor have I found any scion of the house, nor any guest, except your lordship, of more intrepid resolution or more charitable mood. And now, I trust, you will release me.”

“I rose (for I had seated myself during his narrative), my heart was stirred with pity; I took down the Cicero, and lit on a sheet of yellow paper covered with faded manuscript, which, of course, I did not read. I turned to the hearth, tossed on the fire the sere old paper, which blazed at once, and then, hearing the words *pax vobiscum*, I looked round. But I was alone. After a few minutes, devoted to private ejaculations, I returned to the dining-room; and that is all my story. Your maids need no longer dread the ghost of the library. He is released.”

“Will any one take any more wine?” asked Lord Birkenhead, in tones of deep emotion. “No? Then suppose we join the ladies.”

“Well,” said one of the ladies, the Girton girl, when the squire had finished the prelate’s narrative, “I don’t call that much of a story. What was Lady Birkenhead’s confession about? That’s what one really wants to know.”

“The bishop could not possibly have read the paper,” said the Bachelor of Arts, one of the guests; “not as a gentleman, nor a bishop.”

“I wish I had had the chance,” said the Girton girl.

“Perhaps the confession was in Latin,” said the Bachelor of Arts.

Page 86

The Girton girl disdained to reply to this unworthy sneer.

"I have often observed," she said in a reflective voice, "that the most authentic and best attested bogies don't come to very much. They appear in a desultory manner, without any context, so to speak, and, like other difficulties, require a context to clear up their meaning."

These efforts of the Girton girl to apply the methods of philology to spectres, were received in silence. The women did not understand them, though they had a strong personal opinion about their learned author.

"The only ghost I ever came across, or, rather, came within measurable distance of, never appeared at all so far as one knew."

"Miss Lebas has a story," said the squire, "Won't she tell us her story?"

The ladies murmured, "Do, please."

"It really cannot be called a ghost-story," remarked Miss Lebas, "it was only an uncomfortable kind of coincidence, and I never think of it without a shudder. But I know there is not any reason at all why it should make any of *you* shudder; so don't be disappointed.

"It was the Long Vacation before last," said the Girton girl, "and I went on a reading-party to Bantry Bay, with Wyndham and Toole of Somerville, and Clare of Lady Margaret's. Leighton coached us."

"Dear me! With all these young men, my dear?" asked the maiden aunt.

"They were all women of my year, except Miss Leighton of Newnham, who was our coach," answered the Girton girl composedly.

"Dear me! I beg your pardon for interrupting you," said the maiden aunt.

"Well, term-time was drawing near, and Bantry Bay was getting pretty cold, when I received an invitation from Lady Garryowen to stay with them at Dundellan on my way south. They were two very dear, old, hospitable Irish ladies, the last of their race, Lady Garryowen and her sister, Miss Patty. They were so hospitable that, though I did not know it, Dundellan was quite full when I reached it, overflowing with young people. The house has nothing very remarkable about it: a grey, plain building, with remains of the chateau about it, and a high park wall. In the garden wall there is a small round tower, just like those in the precinct wall at St. Andrews. The ground floor is not used. On the first floor there is a furnished chamber with a deep round niche, almost a separate room, like that in Queen Mary's apartments in Holy Rood. The first floor has long been fitted up as a bedroom and dressing-room, but it had not been occupied, and a curious



old spinning-wheel in the corner (which has nothing to do with my story, if you can call it a story), must have been unused since '98, at least. I reached Dublin late—our train should have arrived at half-past six—it was ten before we toiled into the station. The Dundellan carriage was waiting for me, and, after an hour's drive, I reached the house. The

Page 87

dear old ladies had sat up for me, and I went to bed as soon as possible, in a very comfortable room. I fell asleep at once, and did not waken till broad daylight, between seven and eight, when, as my eyes wandered about, I saw, by the pictures on the wall, and the names on the books beside my bed, that Miss Patty must have given up her own room to me. I was quite sorry and, as I dressed, determined to get her to let me change into any den rather than accept this sacrifice. I went downstairs, and found breakfast ready, but neither Lady Garryowen nor Miss Patty. Looking out of the window into the garden, I heard, for the only time in my life, the wild Irish *keen* over the dead, and saw the old nurse wailing and wringing her hands and hurrying to the house. As soon as she entered she told me, with a burst of grief, and in language I shall not try to imitate, that Miss Patty was dead.

“When I arrived the house was so full that there was literally no room for me. But ‘Dundellan was never beaten yet,’ the old ladies had said. There was still the room in the tower. But this room had such an evil reputation for being ‘haunted’ that the servants could hardly be got to go near it, at least after dark, and the dear old ladies never dreamed of sending any of their guests to pass a bad night in a place with a bad name. Miss Patty, who had the courage of a Bayard, did not think twice. She went herself to sleep in the haunted tower, and left her room to me. And when the old nurse went to call her in the morning, she could not waken Miss Patty. She was dead. Heart-disease, they called it. Of course,” added the Girton girl, “as I said, it was only a coincidence. But the Irish servants could not be persuaded that Miss Patty had not seen whatever the thing was that they believed to be in the garden tower. I don’t know what it was. You see the context was dreadfully vague, a mere fragment.”

There was a little silence after the Girton girl’s story.

“I never heard before in my life,” said the maiden aunt, at last, “of any host or hostess who took the haunted room themselves, when the house happened to be full. They always send the stranger within their gates to it, and then pretend to be vastly surprised when he does not have a good night. I had several bad nights myself once. In Ireland too.”

“Tell us all about it, Judy,” said her brother, the squire.

“No,” murmured the maiden aunt. “You would only laugh at me. There was no ghost. I didn’t hear anything. I didn’t see anything. I didn’t even *smell* anything, as they do in that horrid book, ‘The Haunted Hotel.’”

“Then why had you such bad nights?”

“Oh, I *felt*” said the maiden aunt, with a little shudder.

“What did *you feel*, Aunt Judy?”

Page 88

"I *know* you will laugh," said the maiden aunt, abruptly entering on her nervous narrative. "I felt all the time *as if somebody was looking through the window*. Now, you know, there *couldn't* be anybody. It was in an Irish country house where I had just arrived, and my room was on the second floor. The window was old-fashioned and narrow, with a deep recess. As soon as I went to bed, my dears, I *felt* that some one was looking through the window, and meant to come in. I got up, and bolted the window, though I knew it was impossible for anybody to climb up there, and I drew the curtains, but I could not fall asleep. If ever I began to dose, I would waken with a start, and turn and look in the direction of the window. I did not sleep all night, and next night, though I was dreadfully tired, it was just the same thing. So I had to take my hostess into my confidence, though it was extremely disagreeable, my dears, to seem so foolish. I only told her that I thought the air, or something, must disagree with me, for I could not sleep. Then, as some one was leaving the house that day, she implored me to try another room, where I slept beautifully, and afterwards had a very pleasant visit. But, the day I went away, my hostess asked me if I had been kept awake by anything in particular, for instance, by a feeling that some one was trying to come in at the window. Well, I admitted that I *had* a nervous feeling of that sort, and she said that she was very sorry, and that every one who lay in the room had exactly the same sensation. She supposed they must all have heard the history of the room, in childhood, and forgotten that they had heard it, and then been consciously reminded of it by reflex action. It seems, my dears, that that is the new scientific way of explaining all these things, presentiments and dreams and wraiths, and all that sort of thing. We have seen them before, and remember them without being aware of it. So I said I'd never heard the history of the room; but she said I *must* have, and so must all the people who felt as if some one was coming in by the window. And I said that it was rather a curious thing they should *all* forget they knew it, and *all* be reminded of it without being aware of it, and that, if she did not mind, I'd like to be reminded of it again. So she said that these objections had all been replied to (just as clergymen always say in sermons), and then she told me the history of the room. It only came to this, that, three generations before, the family butler (whom every one had always thought a most steady, respectable man), dressed himself up like a ghost, or like his notion of a ghost, and got a ladder, and came in by the window to steal the diamonds of the lady of the house, and he frightened her to death, poor woman! That was all. But, ever since, people who sleep in the room don't sleep, so to speak, and keep thinking that some one is coming in by the casement. That's all; and I told you it was not an interesting story, but perhaps you will find more interest in the scientific explanation of all these things."

Page 89

The story of the maiden aunt, so far as it recounted her own experience, did not contain anything to which the judicial faculties of the mind refused assent. Probably the Bachelor of Arts felt that something a good deal more unusual was wanted, for he instantly started, without being asked, on the following narrative:—

“I also was staying,” said the Bachelor of Arts, “at the home of my friends, the aristocracy in Scotland. The name of the house, and the precise rank in the peerage of my illustrious host, it is not necessary for me to give. All, however, who know those more than feudal and baronial halls, are aware that the front of the castle looks forth on a somewhat narrow drive, bordered by black and funereal pines. On the night of my arrival at the castle, although I went late to bed, I did not feel at all sleepy. Something, perhaps, in the mountain air, or in the vicissitudes of baccarat, may have banished slumber. I had been in luck, and a pile of sovereigns and notes lay, in agreeable confusion, on my dressing-table. My feverish blood declined to be tranquillized, and at last I drew up the blind, threw open the latticed window, and looked out on the drive and the pine-wood. The faint and silvery blue of dawn was just wakening in the sky, and a setting moon hung, with a peculiarly ominous and wasted appearance, above the crests of the forest. But conceive my astonishment when I beheld, on the drive, and right under my window, a large and well-appointed hearse, with two white horses, with plumes complete, and attended by mutes, whose black staffs were tipped with silver that glittered pallid in the dawn.

I exhausted my ingenuity in conjectures as to the presence of this remarkable vehicle with the white horses, so unusual, though, when one thinks of it, so appropriate to the chariot of Death. Could some belated visitor have arrived in a hearse, like the lady in Miss Ferrier’s novel? Could one of the domestics have expired, and was it the intention of my host to have the body thus honourably removed without casting a gloom over his guests?

Wild as these hypotheses appeared, I could think of nothing better, and was just about to leave the window, and retire to bed, when the driver of the strange carriage, who had hitherto sat motionless, turned, and looked me full in the face. Never shall I forget the appearance of this man, whose sallow countenance, close-shaven dark chin, and small, black moustache, combined with I know not what of martial in his air, struck into me a certain indefinable alarm. No sooner had he caught my eye, than he gathered up his reins, just raised his whip, and started the mortuary vehicle at a walk down the road. I followed it with my eyes till a bend in the avenue hid it from my sight. So wrapt up was my spirit in the exercise of the single sense of vision that it was not till the hearse became lost to view that I noticed the entire absence of sound which accompanied its departure. Neither had the bridles and trappings of the white horses jingled as the animals shook their heads, nor had the wheels of the hearse crashed upon the gravel of the avenue. I was compelled by all these circumstances to believe that what I had looked upon was not of this world, and, with a beating heart, I sought refuge in sleep.

Page 90

"Next morning, feeling far from refreshed, I arrived among the latest at a breakfast which was a desultory and movable feast. Almost all the men had gone forth to hill, forest, or river, in pursuit of the furred, finned, or feathered denizens of the wilds—"

"You speak," interrupted the schoolboy, "like a printed book! I like to hear you speak like that. Drive on, old man! Drive on your hearse!"

The Bachelor of Arts "drove on," without noticing this interruption. "I tried to 'lead up' to the hearse," he said, "in conversation with the young ladies of the castle. I endeavoured to assume the languid and preoccupied air of the guest who, in ghost-stories, has had a bad night with the family spectre. I drew the conversation to the topic of apparitions, and even to warnings of death. I knew that every family worthy of the name has its omen: the Oxenhams a white bird, another house a brass band, whose airy music is poured forth by invisible performers, and so on. Of course I expected some one to cry, 'Oh, we've got a hearse with white horses,' for that is the kind of heirloom an ancient house regards with complacent pride. But nobody offered any remarks on the local omen, and even when I drew near the topic of *hearses*, one of the girls, my cousin, merely quoted, 'Speak not like a death's-head, good Doll' (my name is Adolphus), and asked me to play at lawn-tennis.

In the evening, in the smoking-room, it was no better, nobody had ever heard of an omen in this particular castle. Nay, when I told my story, for it came to that at last, they only laughed at me, and said I must have dreamed it. Of course I expected to be wakened in the night by some awful apparition, but nothing disturbed me. I never slept better, and hearses were the last things I thought of during the remainder of my visit. Months passed, and I had almost forgotten the vision, or dream, for I began to feel apprehensive that, after all, it was a dream. So costly and elaborate an apparition as a hearse with white horses and plumes complete, could never have been got up, regardless of expense, for one occasion only, and to frighten one undergraduate, yet it was certain that the hearse was not 'the old family coach.' My entertainers had undeniably never heard of it in their lives before. Even tradition at the castle said nothing of a spectral hearse, though the house was credited with a white lady deprived of her hands, and a luminous boy.

Here the Bachelor of Arts paused, and a shower of chaff began.

"Is that really all?" asked the Girton girl.

"Why, this is the third ghost-story to-night without any ghost in it!"

"I don't remember saying that it was a ghost-story," replied the Bachelor of Arts; "but I thought a little anecdote of a mere 'warning' might not be unwelcome."

"But where does the warning come in?" asked the schoolboy.

Page 91

"That's just what I was arriving at," replied the narrator, "when I was interrupted with as little ceremony as if I had been Mr. Gladstone in the middle of a most important speech. I was going to say that, in the Easter Vacation after my visit to the castle, I went over to Paris with a friend, a fellow of my college. We drove to the Hotel d'Alsace (I believe there is no hotel of that name; if there is, I beg the spirited proprietor's pardon, and assure him that nothing personal is intended). We marched upstairs with our bags and baggage, and jolly high stairs they were. When we had removed the soil of travel from our persons, my friend called out to me, 'I say, Jones, why shouldn't we go down by the lift.' {256} 'All right,' said I, and my friend walked to the door of the mechanical apparatus, opened it, and got in. I followed him, when the porter whose business it is to 'personally conduct' the inmates of the hotel, entered also, and was closing the door.

"His eyes met mine, and I knew him in a moment. I had seen him once before. His sallow face, black, closely shaven chin, furtive glance, and military bearing, were the face and the glance and bearing of the driver of that awful hearse!

"In a moment—more swiftly than I can tell you—I pushed past the man, threw open the door, and just managed, by a violent effort, to drag my friend on to the landing. Then the lift rose with a sudden impulse, fell again, and rushed, with frightful velocity, to the basement of the hotel, whence we heard an appalling crash, followed by groans. We rushed downstairs, and the horrible spectacle of destruction that met our eyes I shall never forget. The unhappy porter was expiring in agony; but the warning had saved my life and my friend's."

"*I was that friend,*" said I—the collector of these anecdotes; "and so far I can testify to the truth of Jones's story."

At this moment, however, the gong for dressing sounded, and we went to our several apartments, after this emotional specimen of "Evenings at Home."

IN CASTLE PERILOUS.

"What we suffer from most," said the spectre, when I had partly recovered from my fright, "is a kind of aphasia."

The spectre was sitting on the armchair beside my bed in the haunted room of Castle Perilous.

"I don't know," said I, as distinctly as the chattering of my teeth would permit, "that I quite follow you. Would you mind—excuse me—handing me that flask which lies on the table near you. . . . Thanks."



The spectre, without stirring, so arranged the a priori sensuous schemata of time and space {261} that the silver flask, which had been well out of my reach, was in my hand. I poured half the contents into a cup and offered it to him.

“No spirits,” he said curtly.

I swallowed eagerly the heady liquor, and felt a little more like myself.

Page 92

"You were complaining," I remarked, "of something like aphasia?"

"I was," he replied. "You know what aphasia is in the human subject? A paralysis of certain nervous centres, which prevents the patient, though perfectly sane, from getting at the words which he intends to use, and forces others upon him. He may wish to observe that it is a fine morning, and may discover that his idea has taken the form of an observation about the Roman Calendar under the Emperor Justinian. That is aphasia, and we suffer from what, I presume, is a spiritual modification of that disorder."

"Yet to-night," I responded, "you are speaking like a printed book."

"To-night," said the spectre, acknowledging the compliment with a bow, "the conditions are peculiarly favourable."

"Not to *me*," I thought, with a sigh.

"And I am able to manifest myself with unusual clearness."

"Then you are not always in such form as I am privileged to find you in?" I inquired.

"By no means," replied the spectre. "Sometimes I cannot appear worth a cent. Often I am invisible to the naked eye, and even quite indiscernible by any of the senses. Sometimes I can only rap on the table, or send a cold wind over a visitor's face, or at most pull off his bedclothes (like the spirit which appeared to Caligula, and is mentioned by Suetonius) and utter hollow groans."

"That's exactly what you *did*," I said, "when you wakened me. I thought I should have died."

"I can't say how distressed I am," answered the spectre. "It is just an instance of what I was trying to explain. We don't know how we are going to manifest ourselves."

"Don't apologize," I replied, "for a constitutional peculiarity. To what do you attribute your success to night?"

"Partly to your extremely receptive condition, partly to the whisky you took in the smoking-room, but chiefly to the magnetic environment."

"Then you do not suffer at all from aphasia just now?"

"Not a touch of it at this moment, thank you; but, as a rule, we all *do* suffer horribly. This accounts for everything that you embodied spirits find remarkable and enigmatic in our conduct. We *mean* something, straight enough; but our failure is in expression. Just think how often you go wrong yourselves, though *your* spirits have a brain to play on, like the musician with a piano. Now *we* have to do as well as we can without any such

mechanical advantage as a brain of cellular tissue”—here he suddenly took the form of a white lady with a black sack over her head, and disappeared in the wainscot.

“Excuse me,” he said a moment afterwards, quite in his ordinary voice, “I had a touch of it, I fancy. I lost the thread of my argument, and am dimly conscious of having expressed myself in some unusual and more or less incoherent fashion. I hope it was nothing at all vulgar or distressing?”

Page 93

"Nothing out of the way in haunted houses, I assure you," I replied, "merely a white lady with a black sack over her head."

"Oh, *that* was it," he answered with a sigh; "I often am afflicted in that way. Don't mind me if I turn into a luminous boy, or a very old man in chains, or a lady in a green gown and high-heeled shoes, or a headless horseman, or a Mauth hound, or anything of that sort. They are all quite imperfect expressions of our nature,—symptoms, in short, of the malady I mentioned."

"Then the appalling manifestations to which you allude are not the apparitions of the essential ghost? It is not in those forms that he appears among his friends?"

"Certainly not," said the spectre; "and it would be very promotive of good feeling between men and disembodied spirits if this were more generally known. I myself—"

Here he was interrupted by an attack of spirit rappings. A brisk series of sharp faint taps, of a kind I never heard before, resounded from all the furniture of the room. {265} While the disturbance continued, the spectre drummed nervously with his fingers on his knee. The sounds ended as suddenly as they had begun, and he expressed his regrets. "It is a thing I am subject to," he remarked; "nervous, I believe, but, to persons unaccustomed to it, alarming."

"It *is* rather alarming," I admitted.

"A mere fit of sneezing," he went on; "but you are now able to judge, from the events of to-night, how extremely hard it is for us, with the best intentions, to communicate coherently with the embodied world. Why, there is the Puddifant ghost—in Lord Puddifant's family, you know: *he* has been trying for generations to inform his descendants that the drainage of the castle is execrable. Yet he can never come nearer what he means than taking the form of a shadowy hearse-and-four, and driving round and round Castle Puddifant at midnight. And old Lady Wadham's ghost, what a sufferer that woman is! She merely desires to remark that the family diamonds, lost many years ago, were never really taken abroad by the valet and sold. He only had time to conceal them in a secret drawer behind the dining-room chimney-piece. Now she can get no nearer expressing herself than producing a spirited imitation of the music of the bagpipes, which wails up and down the house, and frightens the present Sir Robert Wadham and his people nearly out of their wits. And that's the way with almost all of us: there is literally no connection (as a rule) between our expressions and the things we intend to express. You know how the Psychical Society make quite a study of rappings, and try to interpret them by the alphabet? Well, these, as I told you, are merely a nervous symptom; annoying, no doubt, but not dangerous. The only spectres, almost, that manage to hint what they really mean are Banshees."

"*They* intend to herald an approaching death?" I asked.

Page 94

"They do, and abominably bad taste I call it, unless a man has neglected to insure his life, and *then* I doubt if a person of honour could make use of information from—from that quarter. Banshees are chiefly the spectres of attached and anxious old family nurses, women of the lower orders, and completely destitute of tact. I call a Banshee rather a curse than a boon and a blessing to men. Like most old family servants, they are apt to be presuming."

It occurred to me that the complacent spectre himself was not an unmixed delight to the inhabitants of Castle Perilous, or at least to their guests, for they never lay in the Green Chamber themselves.

"Can nothing be done," I asked sympathetically, "to alleviate the disorders which you say are so common and distressing?"

"The old system of spiritual physic," replied the spectre, "is obsolete, and the holy-water cure, in particular, has almost ceased to number any advocates, except the Rev. Dr F. G. Lee, whose books," said this candid apparition, "appear to me to indicate superstitious credulity. No, I don't know that any new discoveries have been made in this branch of therapeutics. In the last generation they tried to bolt me with a bishop: like putting a ferret into a rabbit-warren, you know. Nothing came of *that*, and lately the Psychical Society attempted to ascertain my weight by an ingenious mechanism. But they prescribed nothing, and made me feel so nervous that I was rapping at large, and knocking furniture about for months. The fact is that nobody understands the complaint, nor can detect the cause that makes the ghost of a man who was perfectly rational in life behave like an uneducated buffoon afterwards. The real reason, as I have tried to explain to you, is a solution of continuity between subjective thought and will on the side of the spectre, and objective expression of them—confound it—"

Here he vanished, and the sound of heavy feet was heard promenading the room, and balls of incandescent light floated about irresolutely, accompanied by the appearance of a bearded man in armour. The door (which I had locked and bolted before going to bed) kept opening and shutting rapidly, so as to cause a draught, and my dog fled under the bed with a long low howl.

"I do hope," remarked the spectre, presently reappearing, "that these interruptions (only fresh illustrations of our malady) have not frightened your dog into a fit. I have known very valuable and attached dogs expire of mere unreasoning terror on similar unfortunate occasions."

"I'm sure I don't wonder at it," I replied; "but I believe Bingo is still alive; in fact, I hear him scratching himself."

"Would you like to examine him?" asked the spectre.

“Oh, thanks, I am sure he is all right,” I answered (for nothing in the world would have induced me to get out of bed while he was in the room). “Do you object to a cigarette?”

Page 95

"Not at all, not at all; but Lady Perilous, I assure you, is a very old fashioned chatelaine. However, if *you* choose to risk it—"

I found my cigarette-case in my hand, opened it, and selected one of its contents, which I placed between my lips. As I was looking round for a match-box, the spectre courteously put his forefinger to the end of the cigarette, which lighted at once.

"Perhaps you wonder," he remarked, "why I remain at Castle Perilous, the very one of all my places which I never could bear while I was alive—as you call it?"

"I had a delicacy about asking," I answered.

"Well," he continued, "I am the family genius."

"I might have guessed *that*," I said.

He bowed and went on. "It is hereditary in our house, and I hold the position of genius till I am relieved. For example, when the family want to dig up the buried treasure under the old bridge, I thunder and lighten and cause such a storm that they desist."

"Why on earth do you do *that*?" I asked. "It seems hardly worth while to have a genius at all."

"In the interests of the family morality. The money would soon go on the turf, and on dice, drink, *etc.*, if they excavated it; and then I work the curse, and bring off the prophecies, and so forth."

"What prophecies?"

"Oh, the rigmarole the old family seer came out with before they burned him for an unpalatable prediction at the time of the '15. He was very much vexed about it, of course, and he just prophesied any nonsense of a disagreeable nature that came into his head. You know what these crofter fellows are—ungrateful, vindictive rascals. He had been in receipt of outdoor relief for years. Well, he prophesied stuff like this: 'When the owl and the eagle meet on the same blasted rowan tree, then a lassie in a white hood from the east shall make the burn of Cross-cleugh run full red,' and drivel of that insane kind. Well, you can't think what trouble that particular prophecy gave me. It had to be fulfilled, of course, for the family credit, and I brought it off as near as, I flatter myself, it could be done."

"Lady Perilous was telling me about it last night," I said, with a shudder. "It was a horrible affair,"

"Yes, no doubt, no doubt; a cruel business! But how I am to manage some of them I'm sure I don't know. There's one of them in rhyme. Let me see, how does it go?"



“‘When Mackenzie lies in the perilous ha’,
The wild Red Cock on the roof shall crawl,
And the lady shall flee ere the day shall dawn,
And the land shall gird in the deed man’s thrall.’

“The ‘crowing of the wild Red Cock’ means that the castle shall be burned down, of course (I’m beginning to know his style by this time), and the lady is to elope, and the laird—that’s Lord Perilous—is to expire in the ‘deed man’s thrall’: that is the name the old people give the Secret Room. And all this is to happen when a Mackenzie, a member of a clan with which we are at feud, sleeps in the Haunted Chamber—where we are just now. By the way, what is *your* name?”

Page 96

I don't know what made me reply, "Allan Mackenzie." It was true, but it was not politic.

"By Jove!" said the spectre, eagerly. "Here's a chance! I don't suppose a Mackenzie has slept here for those hundred years. And now, how is it to be done? Setting fire to the castle is simple"—here I remembered how he had lighted my cigarette—"but who on earth is to elope with Lady Perilous? She's fifty if she's a day, and evangelical a tout casser! Oh no; the thing is out of the question. It really must be put off for another generation or two. There is no hurry."

I felt a good deal relieved. He was clearly a being of extraordinary powers, and might, for anything I knew, have made *me* run away with Lady Perilous. And then, when the pangs of remorse began to tell on her ladyship, never a very lively woman at the best of times—However, the spectre seemed to have thought better of it.

"Don't you think it is rather hard on a family," I asked, "to have a family genius, and prophecies, and a curse, and—"

"And everything handsome about them," he interrupted me by exclaiming; "and you call yourself a Mackenzie of Megasky! What has become of family pride? Why, you yourselves have Gruagach of the Red Hand in the hall, and he, I can tell you, is a very different sort of spectre from *me*. Pre-Christian, you know—one of the oldest ghosts in Ross-shire. But as to 'hard on a family,' why, noblesse oblige."

"Considering that you are the family genius, you don't seem to have brought them much luck," I put in, for the house of Perilous is neither rich in gold nor very distinguished in history.

"Yes, but just think what they would have been without a family genius, if they are what they are with one! Besides, the prophecies are really responsible," he added, with the air of one who says, "I have a partner—Mr. Jorkins."

"Do you mind telling me one thing?" I asked eagerly. "What is the mystery of the Secret Chamber—I mean the room whither the heir is taken when he comes of age, and he never smiles again, nor touches a card except at baccarat?"

"Never smiles *again*!" said the spectre. "Doesn't he? Are you quite certain that he ever smiled *before*?"

This was a new way of looking at the question, and rather disconcerted me.

"I did not know the Master of Perilous before he came of age," said I; "but I have been here for a week, and watched him and Lord Perilous, and I never observed a smile wander over their lips. And yet little Tompkins" (he was the chief social buffoon of the hour) "has been in great force, and I may say that I myself have occasionally provoked a grin from the good-natured."

Page 97

"That's just it," said the spectre. "The Perilouses have no sense of humour—never had. I am entirely destitute of it myself. Even in Scotland, even *here*, this family failing has been remarked—been the subject, I may say, of unfavourable comment. The Perilous of the period lost his head because he did not see the point of a conundrum of Macbeth's. We felt, some time in the fifteenth century, that this peculiarity needed to be honourably accounted for, and the family developed that story of the Secret Chamber, and the Horror in the house. There is nothing in the chamber whatever,—neither a family idiot aged three hundred years, nor a skeleton, nor the devil, nor a wizard, nor missing title-deeds. The affair is a mere formality to account creditably for the fact that we never see anything to laugh at—never see the joke. Some people can't see ghosts, you know" (lucky people! thought I), "and some can't see jokes."

"This is very disappointing," I said.

"I can't help it," said the spectre; "the truth often is. Did you ever hear the explanation of the haunted house in Berkeley Square?"

"Yes," said I. "The bell was heard to ring thrice with terrific vehemence, and on rushing to the fatal scene they found him beautiful in death."

"Fudge!" replied the spectre. "The lease and furniture were left to an old lady, who was not to underlet the house nor sell the things. She had a house of her own in Albemarle Street which she preferred, and so the house in Berkeley Square was never let till the lease expired. That's the whole affair. The house was empty, and political economists could conceive no reason for the waste of rent except that it was haunted. The rest was all Miss Broughton's imagination, in 'Tales for Christmas Eve.'"

He had evidently got on his hobby, and was beginning to be rather tedious. The contempt which a genuine old family ghost has for mere parvenus and impostors is not to be expressed in mere words apparently, for Mauth-hounds of prodigious size and blackness, with white birds, and other disastrous omens, now began to display themselves profusely in the Haunted Chamber. Accustomed as I had become to regard all these appearances as mere automatic symptoms, I confess that I heard with pleasure the crow of a distant cock.

"You have enabled me to pass a most instructive evening, most agreeable, too, I am sure," I remarked to the spectre, "but you will pardon me for observing that the first cock has gone. Don't let me make you too late for any appointment you may have about this time—anywhere."

Page 98

“Oh, you still believe in that old superstition about cock-crow, do you?” he sneered. “I thought you had been too well educated. ‘It faded on the crowing of the cock,’ did it, indeed, and that in Denmark too,—almost within the Arctic Circle! Why, in those high latitudes, and in summer, a ghost would not have an hour to himself on these principles. Don’t you remember the cock Lord Dufferin took North with him, which crowed at sunrise, and ended by crowing without intermission and going mad, when the sun did not set at all? You must observe that any rule of that sort about cock-crow would lead to shocking irregularities, and to an early-closing movement for spectres in summer, which would be ruinous to business—simply ruinous—and, in these days of competition, intolerable.”

This was awful, for I could see no way of getting rid of him. He might stay to breakfast, or anything.

“By the way,” he asked, “who does the Cock at the Lyceum just now? It is a small but very exacting part—’Act I. scene I. Cock crows.’”

“I believe Mr. Irving has engaged a real fowl, to crow at the right moment behind the scenes,” I said. “He is always very particular about these details. Quite right too. ‘The Cock, by kind permission of the Aylesbury Dairy Company,’ is on the bills. They have no Cock at the Francais; Mounet Sully would not hear of it.”

I knew nothing about it, but if this detestable spectre was going to launch out concerning art and the drama there would be no sleep for me.

“Then the glow-worm,” he said—“have they a real glow-worm for the Ghost’s ‘business’ (Act I. scene 5) when he says?—

“Fare thee well at once,
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And ‘gins to pale his ineffectual fire.’

Did it ever strike you how inconsistent that is? Clearly the ghost appeared in winter; don’t you remember how they keep complaining of the weather?

“For this relief much thanks; ‘tis bitter cold,’

and

“The air bites shrewdly: it is very cold.”

“Horatio blows on his hands to warm them, at the Francais,” I interrupted.

“Quite right; good business,” said he; “and yet they go on about the glow-worms in the neighbourhood! Most incongruous. How does Furnivall take it? An interpolation by Middleton?”

I don’t like to be rude, but I admit that I hate being bothered about Shakespeare, and I yawned.

“Good night,” he said snappishly, and was gone.

Presently I heard him again, just as I was dropping into a doze.

“You won’t think, in the morning, that this was all a dream, will you? Can I do anything to impress it on your memory? Suppose I shrivel your left wrist with a touch of my hand? Or shall I leave ‘a sable score of fingers four’ burned on the table? Something of that sort is usually done.”

“Oh, *pray* don’t take the trouble,” I said. “I’m sure Lady Perilous would not like to have the table injured, and she might not altogether believe my explanation. As for myself, I’ll be content with your word for it that you were really here. Can I bury your bones for you, or anything? Very well, as you *must* be off, good night!”

Page 99

"No, thanks," he replied. "By the way, I've had an idea about my apparitions in disguise. Perhaps it is my 'Unconscious Self' that does them. You have read about the 'Unconscious Self' in the Spectator?"

Then he really went.

A nun in grey, who moaned and wrung her hands, remained in the room for a short time, but was obviously quite automatic.

I slept till the hot water was brought in the morning.

THE GREAT GLADSTONE MYTH. {283}

In the post-Christian myths of the Teutonic race settled in England, no figure appears more frequently and more mysteriously than that of Gladstone or Mista Gladstone. To unravel the true germinal conception of Gladstone, and to assign to all the later accretions of myth their provenance and epoch, are the problems attempted in this chapter. It is almost needless (when we consider the perversity of men and the lasting nature of prejudice) to remark that some still see in Gladstone a shadowy historical figure. Just as our glorious mythical Bismarck has been falsely interpreted as the shadowy traditional Arminius (the Arminius of Tacitus, not of Leo Adollescens), projected on the mists of the Brocken, so Gladstone has been recognized as a human hero of the Fourth Dynasty. In this capacity he has been identified with Gordon (probably the north wind), with Spurgeon, {284} whom I have elsewhere shown to be a river god, and with Livingstone. In the last case the identity of the suffix "stone," and the resemblance of the ideas of "joy" and of "vitality," lend some air of speciousness to a fundamental error. Livingstone is ohne zweifel, a mythical form of the midnight sun, now fabled to wander in the "Dark Continent," as Bishop of Natal, the land of the sun's birthplace, now alluded to as lost in the cloud-land of comparative mythology. Of all these cobwebs spun by the spiders of sciolism, the Euhemeristic or Spencerian view—that Gladstone is an historical personage—has attracted most attention. Unluckily for its advocates, the whole contemporary documents of the Victorian Dynasty have perished. When an over-educated and over-rated populace, headed by two mythical figures, Wat Tyler and one Jo, {285a} rose in fury against the School Boards and the Department, they left nothing but tattered fragments of the literature of the time. Consequently we are forced to reconstruct the Gladstonian myth by the comparative method—that is, by comparing the relics of old Ritual treatises, hymns, imprecations, and similar religious texts, with works of art, altars, and statues, and with popular traditions and folklore. The results, again, are examined in the light of the Vedas, the Egyptian monuments, and generally of everything that, to the unscientific eye, seems most turbidly obscure in itself, and most hopelessly remote from the subject in hand. The aid of Philology will not be rejected because Longus, or Longinus, has {285b} meanly argued that her services must be

accepted with cautious diffidence. On the contrary, Philology is the only real key to the labyrinths of post-Christian myth.

Page 100

The philological analysis of the name of Gladstone is attempted, with very various results, by Roth, Kuhn, Schwartz, and other contemporary descendants of the old scholars. Roth finds in "Glad" the Scotch word "gled," a hawk or falcon. He then adduces the examples of the Hawk-Indra, from the Rig Veda, and of the Hawk-headed Osiris, both of them indubitably personifications of the sun. On the other hand, Kuhn, with Schwartz, fixes his attention on the suffix "stone," and quotes, from a fragment attributed to Shakespeare, "the all-dreaded thunder-stone." Schwartz and Kuhn conclude, in harmony with their general system, that Gladstone is really and primarily the thunderbolt, and secondarily the spirit of the tempest. They quote an isolated line from an early lay about the "Pilot who weathered the storm," which they apply to Gladstone in his human or political aspect, when the storm-spirit had been anthropomorphised, and was regarded as an ancestral politician. But such scanty folklore as we possess assures us that the storm, on the other hand, weathered Gladstone; and that the poem quoted refers to quite another person, also named William, and probably identical with William Tell—that is, with the sun, which of course brings us back to Roth's view of the hawk, or solar Gladstone, though this argument in his own favour has been neglected by the learned mythologist. He might also, if he cared, adduce the solar stone of Delphi, fabled to have been swallowed by Cronus. Kuhn, indeed, lends an involuntary assent to this conclusion (*Ueber Entwick. der Myth.*) when he asserts that the stone swallowed by Cronus was the setting sun. Thus we have only to combine our information to see how correct is the view of Roth, and how much to be preferred to that of Schwartz and Kuhn. Gladstone, philologically considered, is the "hawkstone," combining with the attributes of the Hawk-Indra and Hawk-Osiris those of the Delphian sun-stone, which we also find in the Egyptian Ritual for the Dead. {287} The ludicrous theory that Gladstone is a territorial surname, derived from some place ("Gledstane" Falkenstein), can only be broached by men ignorant of even the grammar of science; dabblers who mark with a pencil the pages of travellers and missionaries. We conclude, then, that Gladstone is, primarily, the hawk-sun, or sun-hawk.

From philology we turn to the examination of literary fragments, which will necessarily establish our already secured position (that Gladstone is the sun), or so much the worse for the fragments. These have reached us in the shape of burned and torn scraps of paper, covered with printed texts, which resolve themselves into hymns, and imprecations or curses. It appears to have been the custom of the worshippers of Gladstone to salute his rising, at each dawn, with printed outcries of adoration and delight, resembling in character the Osirian hymns. These are sometimes couched in rhythmical language, as when we read—

Page 101

“[Gla]dstone, the pillar of the People’s hopes,”—

to be compared with a very old text, referring obscurely to “the People’s William,” and “a popular Bill,” doubtless one and the same thing, as has often been remarked. Among the epithets of Gladstone which occur in the hymns, we find “versatile,” “accomplished,” “philanthropic,” “patriotic,” “statesmanlike,” “subtle,” “eloquent,” “illustrious,” “persuasive,” “brilliant,” “clear,” “unambiguous,” “resolute.” All of those are obviously intelligible only when applied to the sun. At the same time we note a fragmentary curse of the greatest importance, in which Gladstone is declared to be the beloved object of “the Divine Figure from the North,” or “the Great White Czar.” This puzzled the learned, till a fragment of a mythological disquisition was recently unearthed. In this text it was stated, on the authority of Brinton, that “the Great White Hare” worshipped by the Red Indians was really, when correctly understood, the Dawn. It is needless to observe (when one is addressing students) that “Great White Hare” (in Algonkin, Manibozho) becomes Great White Czar in Victorian English. Thus the Divine Figure from the North, or White Czar, with whom Gladstone is mythically associated, turns out to be the Great White Hare, or Dawn Hero, of the Algonkins. The sun (Gladstone) may naturally and reasonably be spoken of in mythical language as the “Friend of the Dawn.” This proverbial expression came to be misunderstood, and we hear of a Liberal statesman, Gladstone, and of his affection for a Russian despot. The case is analogous to Apollo’s fabled love for Daphne = Dahana, the Dawn. While fragments of laudatory hymns are common enough, it must not be forgotten that dirges or curses (Dirae) are also discovered in the excavations. These Dirae were put forth both morning and evening, and it is interesting to note that the imprecations vented at sunset (“evening papers,” in the old mythical language) are even more severe and unsparing than those uttered (“morning papers”) at dawn.

How are the imprecations to be explained? The explanation is not difficult, nothing *is* difficult—to a comparative mythologist. Gladstone is the sun, the enemy of Darkness. But Darkness has her worshippers as well as Light. Set, no less than Osiris, was adored in the hymns of Egypt, perhaps by kings of an invading Semitic tribe. Now there can be no doubt that the enemies of Gladstone, the Rishis, or hymn-writers who execrated him, were regarded by his worshippers as a darkened class, foes of enlightenment. They are spoken of as “the stupid party,” as “obscurantist,” and so forth, with the usual amenity of theological controversy. It would be painful, and is unnecessary, to quote from the curses, whether matins or vespers, of the children of night. Their language is terribly severe, and, doubtless, was regarded as blasphemy by the sun-worshippers. Gladstone is said to have “no conscience,”

Page 102

“no sense of honour,” to be so fugitive and evasive in character, that one might almost think the moon, rather than the sun, was the topic under discussion. But, as Roth points out, this is easily explained when we remember the vicissitudes of English weather, and the infrequent appearances of the sun in that climate. By the curses, uttered as they were in the morning, when night has yielded to the star of day, and at evening, when day is, in turn, vanquished by night, our theory of the sun Gladstone is confirmed beyond reach of cavil; indeed, the solar theory is no longer a theory, but a generally recognized fact.

Evidence, which is bound to be confirmatory, reaches us from an altar and from works of art. The one altar of Gladstone is by some explained as the pedestal of his statue, while the anthropological sciolists regard it simply as a milestone! In speaking to archaeologists it is hardly necessary even to touch on this preposterous fallacy, sufficiently confuted by the monument itself.

On the road into western England, between the old sites of Bristol and London, excavations recently laid bare the very interesting monument figured here.

[Sketch of monument: [image1.jpg](#)]

Though some letters or hieroglyphs are defaced, there can be no doubt that the inscription is correctly read G. O. M. The explanation which I have proposed (*Zeitschrift fur Ang. Ant*) is universally accepted by scholars. I read Gladstonio Optimo Maximo, “To Gladstone, Best and Greatest,” a form of adoration, or adulation, which survived in England (like municipal institutions, the game laws, and trial by jury) from the date of the Roman occupation. It is a plausible conjecture that Gladstone stepped into the shoes of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Hence we may regard him (like Osiris) as the sum of the monotheistic conception in England.

This interpretation is so manifest, that, could science sneer, we might laugh at the hazardous conjectures of smatterers. They, as usual, are greatly divided among themselves. The Spencerian or Euhemeristic school,—if that can be called a school

“Where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments all day long
On all things, unashamed,”—

protests that the monument is a pedestal of a lost image of Gladstone. The inscription (G. O. M.) is read “Grand Old Man,” and it is actually hinted that this was the *petit nom*, or endearing title, of a real historical politician. Weak as we may think such reasonings, we must regard them as, at least, less unscholarly than the hypothesis that the inscription should be read

“90 M.”

meaning “ninety miles from London.” It is true that the site whence the monument was excavated is at a distance of ninety miles from the ruins of London, but that is a mere coincidence, on which it were childish to insist. Scholars know at what rate such accidents should be estimated, and value at its proper price one clear interpretation like G. O. M.= Gladstonio Optimo Maximo.

Page 103

It is, of course, no argument against this view that the authors of the *Dirae* regard Gladstone as a *maleficent* being. How could they do otherwise? They were the scribes of the opposed religion. Diodorus tells us about an Ethiopian sect which detested the Sun. A parallel, as usual, is found in Egypt, where Set, or Typhon, is commonly regarded as a maleficent spirit, the enemy of Osiris, the midnight sun. None the less it is certain that under some dynasties Set himself was adored—the deity of one creed is the Satan of its opponents. A curious coincidence seems to show (as Bergaigne thinks) that Indra, the chief Indo-Aryan deity, was occasionally confounded with Vrittra, who is usually his antagonist. The myths of Egypt, as reported by Plutarch, say that Set, or Typhon, forced his way out of his mother's side, thereby showing his natural malevolence even in the moment of his birth. The myths of the extinct Algonkins of the American continent repeat absolutely the same tale about Malsumis, the brother and foe of their divine hero, Glooskap. Now the *Rig Veda* (iv. 18, 1-3) attributes this act to Indra, and we may infer that Indra had been the Typhon, or Set, or Glooskap, of some Aryan kindred, before he became the chief and beneficent god of the Kusika stock of Indo-Aryans. The evil myth clung to the good god. By a similar process we may readily account for the imprecations, and for the many profane and blasphemous legends, in which Gladstone is represented as oblique, mysterious, and equivocal. (Compare Apollo Loxias.) The same class of ideas occurs in the myths about Gladstone "in Opposition" (as the old mythical language runs), that is, about the too ardent sun of summer. When "in Opposition" he is said to have found himself in a condition "of more freedom and less responsibility," and to "have made it hot for his enemies," expressions transparently mythical. If more evidence were wanted, it would be found in the myth which represents Gladstone as the opponent of Huxley. As every philologist knows, Huxley, by Grimm's law, is Huskley, the hero of a "husk myth" (as Ralston styles it), a brilliant being enveloped in a husk, probably the night or the thunder-cloud. The dispute between Gladstone and Huskley as to what occurred at the Creation is a repetition of the same dispute between Wainamoinen and Joukahainen, in the *Kalewala* of the Finns. Released from his husk, the opponent becomes Beaconsfield = the field of light, or radiant sky.

In works of art, Gladstone is represented as armed with an axe. This, of course, is probably a survival from the effigies of Zeus Labrandeus, den Man auf Munsen mit der streitaxt erblickt (Preller, i. 112). We hear of axes being offered to Gladstone by his worshippers. Nor was the old custom of clothing the image of the god (as in the sixth book of the "Iliad") neglected. We read that the people of a Scotch manufacturing town, Galashiels, presented the Midlothian Gladstone (a local hero),

Page 104

with “trouserings,” which the hero graciously accepted. Indeed he was remarkably unlike Death, as described by AEschylus, “Of all gods, Death only recks not of gifts.” Gladstone, on the other hand, was the centre of a lavish system of sacrifice—loaves of bread, axes, velocipedes, books, in vast and overwhelming numbers, were all dedicated at his shrine. Hence some have identified him with Irving, also a deity propitiated (as we read in Josephus Hatton) by votive offerings. In a later chapter I show that Irving is really one of the Asvins of Vedic mythology, “the Great Twin Brethren,” or, in mythic language, “the Corsican Brothers” (compare Myriantheus on the Asvins). His inseparable companion is Wilson-Barrett.

Among animals the cow is sacred to Gladstone; and, in works of art, gems and vases (or “jam-pots”), he is represented with the cow at his feet, like the mouse of Horus, of Apollo Smintheus, and of the Japanese God of Plenty (see an ivory in the Henley Collection). How are we to explain the companionship of the cow? At other times the Sun-hero sits between the horns of the Cow-Goddess Dilemma, worshipped at Westminster. (Compare Brugsch, “Religion und Mythologie der alten Aegypter,” p. 168, “Die Darstellungen Zeigen uns den Sonnengott zwischen den Hornern der Kuh sitzend.”) The idea of Le Page Renouf, and of Pierret and De Rouge, is that the cow is a symbol of some Gladstonian attribute, perhaps “squeezability,” a quality attributed to the hero by certain Irish minstrels. I regard it as more probable that the cow is (as in the Veda) the rain-cloud, released from prison by Gladstone, as by Indra. At the same time the cow, in the Veda, stands for Heaven, Earth, Dawn, Night, Cloud, Rivers, Thunder, Sacrifice, Prayer, and Soma. We thus have a wide field to choose from, nor is our selection of very much importance, as any, or all, of these interpretations will be welcomed by Sanskrit scholars. The followers of McLennan have long ago been purged out of the land by the edict of Oxford against this sect of mythological heretics. *They* would doubtless have maintained that the cow was Gladstone’s totem, or family crest, and that, like other totemists, he was forbidden to eat beef.

It is curious that on some old and worn coins we detect a half-obliterated male figure lurking behind the cow. The inscription may be read “Jo,” or “Io,” and appears to indicate Io, the cow-maiden of Greek myth (see the “Prometheus” of AEschylus).

Another proof of the mythical character of Gladstone is the number of his birthplaces. Many cities claimed the honour of being his cradle, exactly as in the cases of Apollo and Irving. Their claims were allowed by the Deity. (Compare Callimachus, Hymn to Apollo.)

Page 105

In addressing scholars it is needless to refute the Euhemeristic hypothesis, worthy of the Abbe Banier, that the cow is a real cow, offered by a real historical Gladstone, or by his companion, Jo, to the ignorant populace of the rural districts. We have already shown that Jo is a mythological name. The tendency to identify Gladstone with the cow (as the dawn with the sun) is a natural and edifying tendency, but the position must not be accepted without further inquiry. The Sun-god, in Egyptian myth, is a Bull, but there is a difference, which we must not overlook, between a bull and a cow. Caution, prudence, a tranquil balancing of all available evidence, and an absence of preconceived opinions,—these are the guiding stars of comparative mythology.

MY FRIEND THE BEACH-COMBER.

“Been in some near things in the islands?” said my friend the beach-comber; “I fancy I *have*.”

The beach-comber then produced a piece of luggage like a small Gladstone bag, which he habitually carried, and thence he extracted a cigar about the size of the butt of a light trout-rod. He took a vesuvian out of a curious brown hollowed nut-shell, mounted in gold (the beach-comber, like Mycenae in Homer, was polychrysos, rich in gold in all his equipments), and occupied himself with the task of setting fire to his weed. The process was a long one, and reminded me of the arts by which the beach-comber’s native friends fire the root of a tree before they attack it with their stone tomahawks. However, there was no use in trying to hurry the ancient mariner. He was bound to talk while his cigar lasted, thereby providing his hearer with plenty of what is called “copy” in the profession of letters.

The beach-comber was a big man, loose (in physique only of course), broad, and black-bearded, his face about the colour of a gun-stock. We called him by the nickname he bore {304} (he bore it very good-naturedly), because he had spent the years of his youth among the countless little islands of the South Seas, especially among those which lie at “the back of beyond,” that is, on the far side of the broad shoulder of Queensland. In these regions the white man takes his life and whatever native property he can annex in his hand, caring no more for the Aborigines’ Protection Society than for the Kyrle Company for diffusing stamped-leather hangings and Moorish lustre plates among the poor of the East-End. The common beach-comber is usually an outcast from that civilization of which, in the islands, he is the only pioneer. Sometimes he deals in rum, sometimes in land, most frequently in “black-birds”—that is, in coolies, as it is now usual to call slaves. Not, of course, that all coolies are slaves. My friend the beach-comber treated his dusky labourers with distinguished consideration, fed them well, housed them well, taught them the game of cricket, and dismissed them, when the term of their engagement was up, to their island homes. He was, in fact, a planter, with a taste for observing wild life in out-of-the-way places.

Page 106

"Yes, I have been in some near things," he went on, when the trunk of his cigar was fairly ignited. "Do you see these two front teeth?"

The beach-comber opened wide a cavernous mouth. The late Mr. Macadam, who invented the system of making roads called by his name, allowed no stone to be laid on the way which the stone-breaker could not put in his mouth. The beach-comber could almost have inserted a milestone.

I did not see "these two front teeth," because, like the Spanish Fleet, they were not in sight. But I understood my friend to be drawing my attention to their absence.

"I see the place where they have been," I answered.

"Well, *that* was a near go," said the beach-comber. "I was running for my life before a pack of screeching naked beggars in the Admiralty Islands. I had emptied my revolver, and my cartridges, Government ones, were all in a parcel—a confounded Government parcel—fastened with a strong brass wire. Where's the good of giving you cartridges, which you need in a hurry if you need them at all, in a case you can't open without a special instrument? Well, as I ran, and the spears whizzed round me, I tore at the wire with my teeth. It gave at last, or my head would now be decorating a stake outside the chief's pah. But my teeth gave when the brass cord gave, and I'll never lift a heavy table with them again."

"But you got out the cartridges?"

"Oh yes. I shot two of the beggars, and 'purwailed on them to stop,' and then I came within sight of the boats, and Thompson shouted, and the others bolted. What a voice that fellow had! It reminded me of that Greek chap I read about at school; he went and faced the Trojans with nothing in his hand, and they hooked it when they only heard him roar. Poor Thompson! "and the beach-comber drank, in silence, to the illustrious dead.

"Who shot him?"

"A scientific kind of poop, a botanizing shaloot that was travelling around with a tin box on his back, collecting beetles and bird-skins. Poor Thompson! this was how it happened. He was the strongest fellow I ever saw; he could tear a whole pack of cards across with his hands. That man was all muscle. He and I had paddled this botanizing creature across to an island where some marooned fellow had built a hut, and we kept a little whisky in a bunk, and used the place sometimes for shooting or fishing. It was latish one night, the botanist had not come home, I fell asleep, and left Thompson with the whisky. I was awakened by hearing a shot, and there lay Thompson, stone-dead, a bullet in his forehead, and the naturalist with a smoking revolver in his hand, and trembling like an aspen leaf. It seems he had lost his way, and by the time he got home, Thompson was mad drunk, and came for him with his fists. If once he hit you,

just in play, it was death, and the stranger knew that. Thompson had him in a corner, and I am bound to say that shooting was his only chance. Poor old Thompson!"

Page 107

“And what was done to the other man?”

“Done! why there was no one to do anything, unless I had shot him, or marooned him. No law runs in these parts. Thompson was the best partner I ever had; he was with me in that lark with the tabooed pig.”

“What lark?”

“Oh, I’ve often spun you the yarn.”

“Never!”

“Well, it was like this. Thompson and I, and some other chaps, started in a boat, with provisions, just prospecting about the islands. So we went in and out among the straits—horrid places, clear water full of sharks, and nothing but mangroves on every side. One of these sounds is just like another. Once I was coming home in a coasting steamer, and got them to set me down on a point that I believed was within half-a-mile of my place. Well, I was landed, and I began walking homewards, when I found I was on the wrong track, miles and miles of mangrove swamp, cut up with a dozen straits of salt water, lay between me and the station. The first stretch of water I came to, gad! I didn’t like it. I kept prospecting for sharks very close before I swam it, with my clothes on my head. I was in awful luck all the way, though,—not one of them had a snap at me.”

“But about the taboo pig? Revenons a nos cochons!”

“I’m coming to that. Well, we landed at an island we had never been on before, where there was a village of Coast natives. A crowd of beehive-shaped huts, you know, the wall about three feet high, and all the rest roof, wattle, and clay, and moss, built as neat as a bird’s-nest outside, not very sweet inside. So we landed and got out the grub, and marched up to the village. Not a soul to be seen; not a black in the place. Their gear was all cleaned out too; there wasn’t a net, nor a spear, nor a mat, nor a bowl (they’re great beggars for making pipkins), not a blessed fetich stone even, in the whole place. You never saw anything so forsaken. But just in the middle of the row of huts, you might call it a street if you liked, there lay, as happy as if he was by the fireside among the children in Galway, a great big fat beast of a hog. Well, we couldn’t make out what had become of the people. Thought we had frightened them away, only then they’d have taken the hog. Suddenly, out of some corner, comes a black fellow making signs of peace. He held up his hands to show he had no weapon in them, and then he held up his feet ditto.”

“Why on earth did he hold up his feet?”

“To show he wasn’t trailing a spear between his toes; that is a common dodge of theirs. We made signs to him to come up, and up he came, speaking a kind of pigeon English. It seems he was an interpreter by trade, paying a visit to his native village; so we tried to get out of him what it was all about. Just what we might have expected. A kid had been born in the village that day.”

“What had the birth of a kid got to do with it?”

Page 108

"It's like this, don't you know. Every tribe is divided into Coast natives and Bush natives. One set lives by the sea, and is comparatively what you might call civilized. The other set, their cousins, live in the Bush, and are a good deal more savage. Now, when anything out of the way, especially anything of a fortunate kind, happens in one division of the tribe, the other division pops down on them, loots everything it can lay hands on, maltreats the women, breaks what's too heavy to carry, and generally plays the very mischief. The birth of a child is *always* celebrated in that way."

"And don't the others resist?"

"Resist! No! It would be the height of rudeness. Do *you* resist when people leave cards at your house, 'with kind inquiries'? It's just like that; a way they have of showing a friendly interest."

"But what can be the origin of such an extraordinary custom?"

"I don't know. Guess it has a kind of civilizing effect, as you'll see. Resources of civilization get handed on to the Bush tribes, but that can't be what it was started for. However, recently the tribes have begun to run cunning, and they hide themselves and all their goods when they have reason to expect a friendly visit. This was what they had done the day we landed. But, while we were jawing with the interpreter, we heard a yell to make your hair stand on end. The Bush tribe came down on the village all in their war paint,—white clay; an arrangement, as you say, in black and white. Down they came, rushed into every hut, rushed out again, found nothing, and an awful rage they were in. They said this kind of behaviour was most ungentlemanly; why, where was decent feeling? where was neighbourliness? While they were howling, they spotted the hog, and made for him in a minute; here was luncheon, anyhow,—pork chops. So they soon had a fire, set a light to one of the houses in fact, and heaped up stones; that's how they cook. They cut you up in bits, wrap them in leaves—"

"En papillotte?"

"Just that, and broil you on the hot stones. They cook everything that way."

"Are they cannibals?"

"Oh yes, in war-time. Or criminals they'll eat. I've often heard the queer yell a native will give, quite a peculiar cry, when he is carrying a present of cold prisoner of war from one chief to another. He cries out like that, to show what his errand is, at the border of the village property."

"Before entering the Mark?" I said, for I had been reading Sir Henry Maine.

"The pah, the beggars about me call it," said the beach-comber; "perhaps some niggers you've been reading about call it the Mark. I don't know. But to be done with this pig.

The fire was ready, and they were just going to cut the poor beast's throat with a green-stone knife, when the interpreter up and told them 'hands off.' 'That's a taboo pig,' says he. 'A black fellow that died six months ago that pig belonged to. When he was dying, and leaving his property to his friends, he was very sorry to part with the pig, so he made him taboo; nobody can touch him. To eat him is death.'

Page 109

"Of course this explained why that pig had been left when all the other live stock and portable property was cleared out. Nobody would touch a taboo pig, and that pig, I tell you, was tabooed an inch thick. The man he belonged to had been a Tohunga, and still 'walked,' in the shape of a lizard. Well, the interpreter, acting most fairly, I must say, explained all this to the Bush tribe, and we went down to the boat and lunched. Presently a smell of roast pork came drifting down on the wind. They had been hungry and mad after their march, and they were cooking the taboo pig. The interpreter grew as white as a Kaneka can; he knew something would happen.

"Presently the Bush fellows came down to the boat, licking their lips. There hadn't been much more than enough to go round, and they accepted some of our grub, and took to it kindly.

"'Let's offer them some rum,' says Thompson; he never cruised without plenty aboard. 'No, no,' says I; 'tea, give them tea.' But Thompson had a keg of rum out, and a tin can, and served round some pretty stiff grog. Now, would you believe it, these poor devils had never tasted spirits before? Most backward race they were. But they took to the stuff, and got pretty merry, till one of them tried to move back to the village. He staggered up and down, and tumbled against rocks, and finally he lay flat and held on tight. The others, most of them, were no better as soon as they tried to move. A rare fright they were in! They began praying and mumbling; praying, of all things, to the soul of the taboo pig! They thought they were being punished for the awful sin they had committed in eating him. The interpreter improved the occasion. He told them their faults pretty roundly. Hadn't he warned them? Didn't they know the pig was taboo? Did any good ever come of breaking a taboo? The soberer fellows sneaked off into the bush, the others lay and snoozed till the Coast tribe came out of hiding, and gave it to them pretty warm with throwing sticks and the flat side of waddies. I guess the belief in taboo won't die out of that Bush tribe in a hurry."

"It was like the companions of Odysseus devouring the oxen of the Sun," I said.

"Very likely," replied the beach-comber. "Never heard of the parties. They're superstitious beggars, these Kanekas. You've heard of buying a thing 'for a song'? Well, I got my station for a whistle. They believe that spirits twitter and whistle, and you'll hardly get them to go out at night, even with a boiled potato in their hands, which they think good against ghosts, for fear of hearing the bogies. So I just went whistling, 'Bonny Dundee' at nights all round the location I fancied, and after a week of that, not a nigger would go near it. They made it over to me, gratis, with an address on my courage and fortitude. I gave them some blankets in; and that's how real property used to change hands in the Pacific."

Page 110

Footnotes:

{1} From Wandering Sheep, the Bungleonian Missionary Record.

{6} 1884. Date unknown. Month probably June.

{23a} The original text of this prophecy is printed at the close of Mr. Gowles's narrative.

{23b} It has been suggested to me that some travelled priest or conjurer of this strange race may have met Europeans, seen hats, spectacles, steamers, and so forth, and may have written the prophecy as a warning of the dangers of our civilization. In that case the forgery was very cunningly managed, as the document had every appearance of great age, and the alarm of the priest was too natural to have been feigned.

{25} How terribly these words were afterwards to be interpreted, the reader will learn in due time.

{30} I afterwards found it was blue smalt.

{74} I have never been able to understand Mr. Gowles's infatuation for this stuck-up creature, who, I am sure, gave herself airs enough, as any one may see.—MRS. GOWLES.

{76} This was the name of a native vintage.

{95} Mr. Gowles was an ardent Liberal, but at the time when he wrote, the Union Jack had not been denounced by his great leader. We have no doubt that, at a word from Mr. Gladstone, he would have sung, Home Rule, Hibernia!—ED. Wandering Sheep.

{106} From Wandering Sheep.

{124} From Mr. E. Myers's "Pindar."

{128} Poor Figgins always called M. Baudelaire "the Master."

{208} His photograph, thus arrayed, may be purchased at Mentone.

{256} "Lift" is English for "elevator," or "elevator" is American for "lift."

{261} This article was originally written for "Mind," but the author changed his. The reference is to Kant's Philosophy.

{265} A similar phenomenon is mentioned in Mr. Howell's learned treatise, "An Undiscovered Country."

{283} A chapter from Prof. Boscher's "Post-Christian Mythology." Berlin and New York, A.D. 3886.

{284} Both these names are undoubtedly Greek neuter substantives.

{285a} Lieblein speaks ("Egyptian Religion," 1884, Leipzig,) of "the mythical name Jo." Already had Continental savants dismissed the belief in a historical Jo, a leader of the Demos.

{285b} There seems to be some mistake here.

{287} "Le pierre sorti du soleil se retrouve au Livre des Souffles." Lefebure, "Osiris," p. 204. Brugsch, "Shai-n. sinsin," i. 9.

{304} "Beach-comber" is the local term for the European adventurers and long-shore loafers who infest the Pacific Archipelagoes. There is a well-known tale of an English castaway on one of the isles, who was worshipped as a deity by the ignorant people. At length he made his escape, by swimming, and was taken aboard a British vessel, whose captain accosted him roughly. The mariner turned aside and dashed away a tear: "I've been a god for months, and you call me a (something alliterative) beach-comber!" he exclaimed, and refused to be comforted.