## THE TWIN SOUL

OR,

## THE STRANGE EXPERIENCES <br> OF

MR. RAMESES.

## F $\mathbb{H}$ Psuchological and TRealistic TRomance.

IN TIVO VOLUMES.

VOL. I
" Fay que mon âme à la tienne s'assemble, Range nos cours et nos esprits ensemble,

L'amour l'entend ainsi ; Tu es mon feu, je dois être ta flamme, Et dois encor puisque je suis ton âme

Etre la mienne aussi!"
-Philippes Des Portes, 1575.

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THE TWIN SOUL.

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## Ei lisycbological and TRealistic TRomance.

## CHAPTER I.

A RURAL HOME.
Though I flatter myself that I am a philosopher, I am not a recluse. I love my books very dearly, as I do my flowergarden, my orchard, and my kail-yard, where, like the Emperor Diocletian, I grow very fine drum-head cabbages ; but I also love at times to close my library door, to shut my garden gate, and go forth into the busy world, to mix with my fellows, hear their opinions and give them mine. On these occasions I endeavour to rub off the rust and mildew of rural solitude, to acquire, I will not say a polish, but a certain smoothness, from the lubrication of social intercourse. At the same time cultivate my sympathies by laughing at human nature, whenever, as Beaumarchais says, 1 am not inclined to weep for it. Some people call me-a
cynic, others a wit and humourist, while a few consider me to be a kindly and well-meaning philosopher, and speak of me as the country people spoke of the poor gentleman in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," with a kind of wonder at the vastness of my knowledge. Others again, who are nothing if they are not critical, assert that I know too much to know anything well, and say of me as the envious critic said in another sense of the late Lord Brougham, that if I knew a little of the world, I should know a little of everything. But having a good income wholly unincumbered, and being untroubled by reckless or extravagant connections or relatives, and possessing marginal money enough to keep adding week by week and day by day to one of the rarest libraries in England without depriving myself of any other luxury, I manage to be happy enough without caring very particularly what anybody thinks or says of me. I am fifty years of age, a widower, and likely to remain so. I was once in love, very desperately, with one who was as good as she was beautiful, "but thereof came in the end" a short, too short, happiness succeeded by "despondency and sadness "-a sorrowful memory, and regrets for lost joy. I am to a certain extent selfish-all men are, or ought to be;
for selfishness, like everything else in this world, is only bad in excess, like wine, or courage, or prudence, or a belief in the goodness of everybody. But, though I love myself tolerably well when I am in good health, which is pretty nearly always, I love my fellow creatures-especially when I do not see too much of them-and am glad if I can wisely distribute a portion of my wealth among the struggling and the deserving, to strengthen the weak, to lighten the sorrows of venerable age, or to help the young along the stony and thorny path that leads to fame or fortune.

I am fond of music and languages. I can play on the violin and the organ. I can speak French, German, Italian and Spanish ; and understand Latin and Greek tolerably well ; Celtic, Hebrew, and Sanscrit, less tolerably. I dabble a little in chemistry, have read all the writings of the old Alchemists and Rosicrucians ; have made the religion, mythology, manners and history of Egypt, and of still more ancient nations, my particular study, and have come to the conclusion that I know little or nothing of any of them. I am rect an Admirable Crichton ; I can neither dance, sing, fence, ride, wrestle, fish nor shoot ; and when I think of what I know and compare it with what I don't know, I am almost
-I will not say quite-convinced that I am a poor ignoramus, and that possibly I might pass the threshold of the great Temple of Isis at the age of three hundred, if I could live as long in mental and bodily health, and possess the same love of knowledge at the end that I do at the beginning.

I have a small house in London, a large one in the country, and my name is De Vere. I understood, when a child, that my father desired to call me Triptolemus, because of his great love for agriculture, and of his hope that I too would become an agriculturist. He relinquished his absurd idea of Triptolemus, for which I am very grateful, and called me Godfrey, after my grandfather. As regards the hope which he cherished, that I should become a great agriculturist and improver of stock, it has not been fulfilled. I cultivate no fields, only a garden, and, like the Roman Emperor, I live happier among my splendid "drum-heads"-the finest cabbages in the world-than I should be in the Senate, or on the vice-regal chair of Canada or India. No vice-regal chair would suit my caprice or my pleasure. I have a throne on which I sit comfortably-the great chair in my library-that stands
opposite my writing-table. Here I am monarch of all the historians, philosophers, sages, wits, poets and famous story-tellers of all times. They are each and all of them my subjects, who administer to my pleasure and my instruction. They never "bore" me (I hate the word, but use it in default of a better), unless I happen to be in a lazy condition of mind or body, when I put them back on their shelves without offending them, to be ready for my use when I am more worthy of profiting by their perennial wisdom. In my library, placed on top of my book-cases, are six busts of great sages, all of comparatively modern origin, for I have no faith in the marble portraits of antiquity. Shaks. peare the first, though I can't believe that the Stratford-onAvon bust can resemble him; second,Geoffrey Chaucer; third, John Milton ; fourth, George Gordon Byron ; fifth, Walter Scott ; and sixth, a poet in his way almost as great as any of them-Ludwig von Beethoven. Lastly, my inner study and private sanctum-my holy of holies, as I call it to the housekeeper, who would fain dust it and keep it in order, but is not allowed to do so, to her sore tribulation (I believe it is the only sorrow the good old woman has', -is adorned with two ancient sarcophagi from Egypt, cach con-
taining a mummy, as yet unrolled, but to be unrolled on some great occasion hereafter, in presence of a select and congenial few, capable of enjoying and appreciating the ceremony.

One word more about myself, when my personal revelations must cease. My income is five thousand pounds per annum. I state this fact, of which I am not in the least proud, in order that he or she who may be induced to read the following pages may look upon my writings with becoming respect, as not being the handiwork (or head-work) of a common fellow who writes for money, or of a mere man of genius who expects to live by his writings, and pay his butcher or his baker as punctually as if he were a banker.

## CHAPTER II.

## A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.

One day I received a letter from Paris from a particular friend, a member of the Academy and a chevalier of the Legion of Honour. The letter interested me greatly. Let nue call the writer, for the purposes of this narrative, the Vicomte de Palliasse ; that is not his name, but his family is as old as the first introduction of the palliasse into France, and it will suit him as well as any other. He informed me that he had given his friend, Mr. Rameses, a short but cordial letter of introduction to me, and expressing his confident belief that he was a gentleman whose acquaintance I should be glad to make. It was possible, he added, that the letter would not be personally presented for two or three weeks. Meanwhile, being of opinion that I ought to be fully prepared for the advent of a remarkable personage, he had resolved to communicate such particulars concerning ing him as he knew or had reason to believe were authentic. Mr. Rameses, he went on to say, though he was sometimes called Ramsay, and which some people believed to be his
true name, was not a Scotsman. He did not even believe that he was a European, though there was a report that his father or grandfather was either an Englishman or a Scotsman, who had been in the service of the old East India Company, and that his mother was a powerful Begum, who had been attracted by the good looks, stalwart presence or flattering tongue of the Englishman or Scotsman aforesaid, and had contracted marriage with him. He was apparently about thirty years of age, was of commanding stature and presence, had a jet-black beard, and a luxuriant head of hair of the same colour, and looked as if he might have sat for the model of an old Assyrian. He was reputed to be exceedingly rich, and was certainly learned. He had travelled in every part of the world between Copenhagen and Melbourne, and between Kamschatka and New Zealand, spoke many languages, and was neither Christian, Jew, Mahomedan, Buddhist nor Atheist, but appeared to be, as far as anybody could make out, a fire worshipper-an ancient Druid, or possibly a Rosicrucian. His manners were agreeable and his conversation full of matter. He was tant soit peu cynical, and such a favourite of the ladies that the young men of Paris, the copurchics
especially, held him in detestation, and scores of handsome young women, who loved money more than matrimonyor who, at all events, behaved as if they did-had set their caps at him. But hitherto all their efforts had been in vain. "I anticipate," said M. de Palliasse," that Mr. Rameses will create a sensation in London. All the ladies in Paris, mothers and daughters, desire much to know whether he is or ever has been married, but all who are impudent or imprudent enough to ask him the question receivelsuch a reply, by word and look, as effectually prevents them from asking a second time. Probably it will be the same in London. Mr. Rameses has letters of introduction-to a score of your dukes, marquises, earls, and other fashionable people and leaders of society. He banks with Rothschild, and is fabled to be a Crœesus. Anyhow, he is a very able and very handsome man, and seems, if I may believe his words, his looks, his gestures, to set more store upon the letter I have given him to you than to any of the others that have been showered upon him.
"His intention in visiting London is to study the manners, the customs, and the characteristics of the English, but I don't think he means to write a book. He has heard of
your learning, and as he admires you, I suppose, on the principle of Boileau's saying: 'Chaque sot trouz'e toujours un plus grand sot qui l'admire' (for 'sot' read 'sage'), you will admire him, and that you will both get on very well together. Please introduce him to all the Oriental scholars, especially to the Egyptologists, but don't trust him alone with your mummies, lest he proceed to unswaddle them. He is very affable, and very good, but, as you will soon discover, he is somewhat eccentric. But eccentricity is nothing, or if it be anything it is a something that is rather agreeable than otherwise, if it be quiet and unaggressive. So you know all about Mr. Rameses, or, at all events, as much as I can tell you. I recommend him earnestly to your polite attention and amiable services."

It was not until nearly a month after the receipt of this letter, about which I had not thought much, that, sitting alone in my study in my small house in Park Lanedingy in front, but beautiful enough behind, for the reason that my windows overlook the fair expanse of Hyde Park-that a well-appointed carriage drove up to my door, and that my servant brought me up a letter from M. de Palliasse, and the card of Mr. Rameses. I hastened down
to the reception-room, and found Mr. Rameses. He was staid, solemn, handsome, rather sad-looking, I thought. I gave him a cordial greeting. I had not been five minutes in his company before I was convinced that the commendations bestowed upon him by M. de Palliasse were not misplaced. The only thing that I did not admire about him was that his eyes were very black. I have a predilection, though the reader may think it wrong, for blue-grey eyes in man or woman, and somehow or other associate black eyes in men with an idea of ferocity. He spoke English as well as an Englishman-better than many who interlard their discourse with vulgar colloquialisms and the slang of the stable and the race-course-but he had a slight accent, which hinted rather than proved that he was a foreigner.

I had previously arranged to leave London on the morrow, and, without making any idle excuses, I informed Mr. Rameses of the fact, and I gave him, at the same time, a cordial invitation to visit me on a future day, at "The Rookery," to stay a week or ten days, or as long as he pleased.
"I have heard," he said, " of your mummies, and of the treasures of your library, both in manuscripts and printed books, and of your rolls of Egyptian papyri, baked tiles or
slabs, and your cuneiform inscriptions. Can you read the papyri or the slabs ?"
"No, unfortunately. I wish I could."
"I can," said Mr. Rameses, " as easily as if they were French or English."
"Happy man!" I thought, for my mouth watered at the information as the mouth of a hungry epicure waters when a rare dish steams before his nostrils. "Then," I said, " you will not pass a dull time in The Rookery, if you are as fond of ancient lore as I am."
"Dull!" he replied; "I am never dull. I am sometimes sad, sometimes weary with the world, with myself, or with Fate, Fortune, and Circumstance; but I am never dull-unless, perhaps, at a fashionable evening party or dinner, when the gossip of fools goes bubbling up around me ; but even then, by a happy faculty of abstraction, my mind can wander away and go back ten thousand years into the scenes of a bygone civilization, or fly to the uttermost ends of the earth."

Here was a man after my own heart. I felt grateful to M. de Palliasse for introducing him, and doubly grateful to Mr. Rameses for condescending to make my acquaintance.

## CHAPTER III.

THE ROOKERY.

Let me describe The Rookery. It is an old and spacious house (the guide-books call it a mansion). It was not built by any one architect, or at any one time, but grew like the British Constitution, and was the handiwork of many generations. The oldest part of it dates from early in the sixteenth century, and this oldest part, originally small, has received accretions at the hands of successive De Veres. Our original name was Brown, as I have heard, which we now write Browne, with a final $e$, and we took the name of De Vere on the marriage of the head of the family, a hundred and fifty years ago, or thereabouts, with a Miss De Vere, a wealthy heiress. Though of no order of architecture, but a combination of many styles, the old house is picturesque, and what is more, it is comfortable. It is approached by an avenue of elms, of half-a-mile in length, on the tops of which an ancient colony of rooks has long been established. Hence the name given to it by my ancestors.

In front is part of a moat, over which is a neat stone bridge, of antique fashion, that leads to the principal entrance. The moat, fed by a tiny spring of the purest water, is as clear as crystal, and is inhabited by a multitude of gold and silver fish, and by a profusion of water-lilies, that seem to me to be as full of life and enjoyment as the fish, and much more beautiful. The house contains three good reception-rooms, a stately entrance-hall, a picturegallery, and my library-consisting of six rooms en suite. The grounds are extensive and well laid out, containing fruit, flower, and vegetable gardens (I am my own head gardener), together with lawns, shrubberies, and meadows, sloping to an artificial lake. There are, in addition, about one hundred and eighty acres of woodland, consisting of venerable yews, oaks, elms, birch, and beeches, and some very magnificent hawthorns, that began to spread their green leaves to the breeze and to the blast long before the days of the so-called " merry monarch."

I do not live alone at The Rookery, for I have a daughter -beautiful, good, affectionate, clever, the model of all female virtue and loveliness, the joy of my heart, the delight of my eyes, the mistress of my household, the belle of the
county-who has scores of admirers, but not one whom she herself particularly admires. Her name is Laura; her age is twenty-two. She is neither tall nor short ; she has splendid golden hair, perfect teeth, lustrous blue-grey eyes, a voice that is all music and melody, and when she sings, which she often does, not Patti herself could excel her -that is to say in my opinion-which may be wrong ; though I do not think it is. She has, I think, but one fault-she loves me too much, who am only her father, and proud of the relationship, and gives to me the kindness for a thousandth part of which more than one fine fellow in the county would be only too happy to marry her.

But at this period of my story, she is absent in Italy, with a friendly family, for the sake of a little change and recreation, which she needs ; so that the inhabitants of The Rookery at the time when Mr. Rameses came to visit me, were my mother, my sister, Lady De Glastonbury, and her husband, Sir Henry De Glastonbury, a man about ten years older than herself. They lived very much abroad, but when they came to England they always made The Rookery their home, and were always welcome. Then there was my second sister, Mrs. Brocklesby, the widow of a London
merchant, who left her with three children and seventy thousand pounds. Mrs. Brocklesby usually passes the summer months with me in the home of her childhood, for the sake of old association, for love of the place, and for the fresh freedom of a country life which it affords her children.

When these visitors are with me, I meet my eldest sister and her husband and my second sister with her children at breakfast, and see nothing of them afterwards until dinnertime. The intermediate fhours are spent by me in the library, into which, by an unwritten and unspoken, but well understood and implicitly obeyed law, no gossips or visitors are permitted to enter, unless by special invitation. When I am wearied with sitting, or studying, or otherwise Idesirous of a change, I betake myself to the garden, and look after my flowers, my cabbages, and my gardeners, during which time I may be spoken to by any one who meets me accidentally and desires to exchange thoughts or words with me. My mother, kind soul, has one great grievance, the only drop of bitter in the otherwise pleasant cup of her existence, which is that I am a persistent widower, am not disposed to marry again, and do not
cultivate the acquaintance of the young and beautiful, so as to give me the chance of falling in love with any one of them, or any one of them the chance of falling in love with me, either for the sake of worldly position, or as the French say, "pour l'amour de mes beaux yeux."

She maintains that I am doing injustice to myself, to my country, to society, and to the long line of my ancestors, by not doing what I ought to do to become the ancestor of other people. To all her arguments I listen with patient resignation, and sometimes tell her that I am too oldwhich insinuation she vehemently resists as an imputation against herself-that I cannot fall in love by command, that I never saw but one sweet woman who approached my ideal of what a woman ought to be, and that she has gone and left no parallel ; that if another of the same kind should cross my path, I would look at her, and admire her, but would not promise to fall in love with her ; that I do not expect such a being is in existence, and that, all things considered, I am very happy as I am. "You are a fool, Godfrey," says my sister sometimes. "Call yourself old, indeed" (she is two years older than I am), "why, you are in the very prime of life, at the time when the blood is warmest, VOL. I.
and the reason strongest, and the imagination brightest ! One of these days, when you are really old, a quarter of a century hence perhaps, you will be taken in by some designing minx, who will marry you for your money and make your life miserable ever afterwards, and serve you right!" To this I seldom reply, except by the pococurante assertion, that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. But I can see that my mother and sister believe all the same that I am not so stony-hearted as I pretend to be, and that some day or other, while yet in my prime, as they say, that very wary bird, myself, will set his unsuspecting feet on the bird-lime and become a captive.

These two ladies, though accustomed to defer to my will, as the representative of the family, the inheritor of the blood and fortune of the De Veres, were not altogether pleased when they heard that Mr. Rameses was coming. Not that they objected to the presence of a stranger ; on the contrary, they liked the idea of a visitor. But Mr. Rameses, according to the account I gave of him, was a book-worm, a philosopher, a speaker of many languages, a Rosicrucian, a Pagan, more or less infatuated with the acquisition of dangerous and i:sele;s knowledge, a student of
antiquity, and altogether a person whose companionship was likely to confirm me in my bad habits of attempting to learn too much and make me more of a recluse and woman-shunner than I was already. In vain I represented that I was not a woman-hater, but that on the contrary I loved and admired the whole sex, young and old, provided they were not scolds, slatterns or tipplers. Lady De Glastonbury thought that a young man, such as she considered me to be, should not imagine that there could be women to whom such epithets could apply, and that those who boasted of admiring and loving the whole sex, did not in reality love anybody. But I refrained from arguing this particular point, and endeavoured to persuade the ladies that Mr. Rameses was not a book-worm, as they imagined, but an experienced and highly-accomplished man of the world.
"But he is not a Christian!" suggested my mother. "No but he may be as good a man, or better, than some who call themselves Christians," I replied. "He is not to blame because geography and the accident of birth made him a sun-worshipper, and for my part I like the sun-worshippers. They consider the sun the emblem of Divinity, and they worship the Divinity through the sun and beyond him '"
"Idolatry!" said my sister. "But never mind, the poor man can't help his birth and education, and I shall do my best to make him comfortable, and, Oh ! what a noble thing it would be if I could convert him to Christianity !"
"I hope you won't try," I replied, "for he might attempt, by way of revanche, as the French say, to convert you to sun-worship."

My sister smiled, for she is a sensible woman, and saw that there were two sides to the question. The result of my little rejoinder was that there was no further discussion on the subject of sun-worship.

When at the appointed day Mr. Rameses and his Persian valet arrived, my female folk did the honours of my household with a grace and a pleasantness that were very gratifying to me as well as to my guest.

It was evident that Mr. Rameses made a favourable impression both upon them and upon Sir Henry De Glastonbury. His noble, I might almost say majestic, presence, his sparkling black eyes, his dark, but not too dark, complexion, his faultless white teeth, that owed nothing to the dentist, his abundant hair, that owed nothing to the barber, graceful and well-formed hands, his small feet and
high insteps, and the perfect ease and elegance of his manners, were all well calculated to impress the imagination of women. I never yet knew a woman who did not look to the hands and feet of a man, and dislike him if these portions of his mortal frame were large and ungainly. And then Mr. Rameses' deference to their sex, without servility or obsequiousness, or awkward attempts to please them by unmeaning and over-condescending flattery, suggested the gentleman - which he was - and put them as much at their ease with him as he was with them.

Binns, my butler, a man of venerable appearance, with beautiful white hair, a rosy face, and with an air of gravity that would have suited a bishop, looked somewhat askance, I thought, at the valet of Mr. Rameses, as Englishmen of his class generally do at foreigners, and Mrs. Grabb, the housekeeper, turned up her nose at him, not too demonstratively, in fact almost imperceptibly, but still in a manner sufficiently symptomatic of a latent dislike that was more likely to increase than to diminish. But of these matters I took little heed, being quite certain that when the day came for Mr. Rameses' departure, the "tips"
or "vails," or whatever is the proper slang for gratuities, which he would bestow upon them, would reconcile them alike to himself and to his valet.

Thus Mr. Rameses was satisfactorily installed at The Rookery; and after a short rest, an ablution, and a lunch, he joined me by invitation in the inner sanctum of my library.


## CHAPTER IV. <br> IN THE SANCTUM.

There is an electricity or magnetism (I was going to write freemasonry, but that is an artificial institution, whereas electricity is natural, spontaneous and irrepressible) between persons of congenial tastes and studies, which sometimes declares itself with the suddenness of the lightning flash, and this occurred between Mr. Rameses and me. We understood each other at the first interchange of looks, even before words gave expression to the ideas which prompted them.
"Excuse me," he said, "if I look at the backs of your books. I can never enter a library without an invincible curiosity to know what books are in it. Ah!" he added, "I see you have an imaginary library on the back of the door. Good! All the lost books of the Roman historians and the Greek poets! The original Homeric ballads ! 'Eve upon Millinery,' and 'Adam upon the varieties of the Potato,' 'Nimrod upon the necessity of irrigating the plain
of Shinar, and his purpose in building the 'Tower of Babel,' the nine books of the Sibyls, the reflections of Jonah in the Whale's Belly, the History of Human Folly, in one thousand volumes-volume the first, the nine hundred and ninetynine unwritten! Ah, my friend, a thousand volumes would be all too few for the mighty encyclopædia! But where are your Ninevite slabs ?"

I pointed them out to him, and he was soon engrossed in the perusal of the first that came to his hand.
"I really think," he said, "that, for the preservation of history, the baked clay is better than the printed paper. If the great Library of Alexandria, burned by Caliph Omar, had contained nothing but baked tiles and slabs, some of its priceless treasures might have come down to the present day as certainly as the worthless thing I hold in my hand, which is but a mortgage deed on a house and garden."
"But not altogether worthless," I said, "because it proves that three thousand years ago there were mortgages on land and houses as there are now."
"Yes. Human nature, human wants, and human contrivances to satisfy them, and to discount to-morrow for the sake of the pleasures of to-day, are the same in all ages.

They were the same three thousand years ago as they were yesterday, as I can testify."
"As you can testify ?" I said, with a slight upraising of my eyebrows.
"Yes, as $I$ can testify. Do you believe in an Eternity with only one end? You and I are immortal-at least, our souls are-and if we are never to end, how can we ever have begun? The clothes and habiliments of my soul, after accompanying me and the earth in seventy or eighty gyrations round the sun, may wear out. But the wearer remains, and has to get new clothes, either in this world or in the next. And why not in this world ? "
"Why not, indeed ?" I replied. "But then, we do not obtain new clothes in this world-that is to say, new bodies after the old body is no longer capable of clothing the soul decently or comfortably; and it is of no use arguing or endeavouring to find out why not. It is sufficient to know the fact that we do not and cannot."
"But how do you know it to be a fact," asked Mr. Rameses, " that we do not, or that we cannot? I know for myself that this is not my first appearance in the world, though I most devoutly wish that it may be my last! You
may not know and you may not believe when told that thes fact is my particular fact, and that I know it and feel it as much as I know and feel that I am alive at this moment, and that I breathe and talk to you. And if you don't know it land won't believe it, the fault is yours, not mine, and my fact is to me an indubitable fact, in spite of your incredulity."
"Here," I thought to myself, as Mr. Rameses, his black eyes flashing phosphorescent light, thus delivered himself of his idea, "is the little eccentricity of which M. de Palliasse warned me." I never contradict eccentric people. I never argue with anybody whom I think to be more or less crotchetty-or, perhaps I should use a less offensive word, and say more or less the victim of hallucination-but, playing the part of Polonius to Hamlet, fool him to the top of his bent, and run no risk of making him furious by doubt, and, above all, by contradiction. So I carefully humoured Mr. Rameses in his idea.
"And on what do you ground your belief in this fact?" I enquired, "except what I suppose I must call your intuitive certainty that it is a fact ?"
"By my imperfect remembrance," he replied, " of all that
happened to me in my previous dress or body, which I cas off more than three thousand years ago. I cast it off after having worn it for seventy years, and remained a naked soul, floating along in the atmosphere, until about thirty years ago, when I came into the world once more, bringing all my previously acquired knowledge along with me, dull and vague until my new adolescence, when it burst partially upon me. But we will not venture further upon the subject just now. At a future time, if you like to hear it, It will tell you the story of my first life-no, not my first, for I have led many lives-but the life before this, more than three thousand years ago, and will unfold to you the record of my hopes, my fears, my knowledge, my ignorance, my loves, my hates. Would it interest you, do you think ?"
"It would interest me very powerfully indeed," I replied, still humouring him, and not venturing to cast even the shadow of a doubt upon anything he might choose to tell me; for human nature, even in its aberrations from the straight line, is always human nature to me, and there are wiser thoughts in mad people's brains than the world is willing to acknowledge. Not that Mr. Rameses
was mad. No! He was not only a man of genius, but of common sense, which for all I know may be much the rarer quality of the two.
"Well," he said, taking a second slab from the heap, " another time, not now. It will be a long story, and may perhaps weary you."

I was going to reply that it would not weary me at all, when he suddenly exclaimed, as he passed his finger over the cuneiform characters, "You have a treasure here, Mr. De Vere! A contemporary record of the building of one of the Great Pyramids. Do you love money?"
"I do, and I don't. I have more than enough for my wants and my luxuries, more than enough for urgency, and for the maintenance of the old family prestige of those who are to come after me."
"That's good," said Mr. Rameses; "but if you really wanted or desired money, I would offer to buy the slab of you at your own price."
"If you will read and translate it for me, I will cheerfully make you a present of it, whatever its worth or its worthlessness."
"Worthlessness!" rejoined Mr. Rameses. "It would be cheap at any fabulous price you might mention. It clears up a historical doubt-no doubt to me, however. I will tell you all about it, and all about the building of the Great Pyramid, some other day. Meanwhile, I will not accept your gift. Bestow it upon the British Museum, or upon some similar institution in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Brussels, St. Petersburg, lest it should be lost, injured, or destroyed in your private keeping. We will talk about it hereafter."

Mr. Rameses put back the tile in its place, and inspected another, with much apparent interest, but said nothing. He next proceeded to the papyri, several of which he unrolled. "Nothing of much moment here. Records of battles and victories, renowned in their day, waged and won by kings whose very names have perished, and for the sake of the stability of Empires which are extinguished as completely, and have left as little mark behind them, as the soap-bubbles that children toss into the sunshine from the bowls of tobacco-pipes, and wonder at for half a minute Thus it has been with Esypt and Assyria. Thus it will be with France, Russia, England, America, and all the rest of
the fussy nationalities, that think they are playing mightier parts in the world's great stage than ever were played before! Let us take a walk in your grounds, Mr. De Vere. I want to get out of antiquity into the atmosphere of the living day, and feel the breath of the skies upon my cheek."

I led the way into the woodland, among the oaks and beeches, and was gratified to find that Mr. Rameses had as much admiration for noble old trees as I have myself, and that he looked upon them with the eyes of a poet and a painter. "Do you not think," he said, turning to me as we stood under the wide-spreading boughs of the very finest old beech in the park, "that men are a little arrogant in the pride of what they thin'z their superior wisdom, but which may be nothing more than their superior conceit, in denying to trees and flowers the possession of a certain amount of intelligence? The sense of enjoyment, accompanied as it must be, if it exists at all, by the sense of pain and suffering ?"
"I have often thought so," I replied, "as regards the trees-
" That all their leaves
In morns, or noons, or eves, Or in the starry stillness of the night,

May look to Heaven in prayer,
Or bend to earth and share
Some joy of sense, some natural delight,

*     *         *             * And feel through all their sap God's glory infinite."
"Exactly so," said Mr. Rameses. "It is the faculty of poetry to utter musical truth, and to say what we have all of us thought, but never found words to express The Greeks, who imagined that there were Dryads and Hamadryads in the trees, and Nereids in the water, were nearer to truth than modern mathematicians are willing to allow. And the ancient Phœenicians and the Egyptians, from whom the Greeks borrowed nearly everything they knew, were nearer to it still. Compared with the Phœenicians and Egyptians, the Greeks were only babes and sucklings."
"That would be considered rank heresy by most of the scholars of our day ; though I am quite prepared to accept it as indubitably true. But then my opinion is not worth much, as my knowledge is small, and I have not studied the learning of the ancient Egyptians half or a hundredth part as much as I shoald like to study it. And human life is short !"
"But I am an ancient Egyptian myself," said Mr. Rameses. "I have been initiated into their mysteries. I have been admitted into the Inner Circle, and I know, where others only suspect, Greece and Rome were but the great-grandchildren of Egypt and Phœeicia; and all the inventions and discoveries of your boasted modern civilization, are but accidental and imperfect re-discoveries of what was once familiar to me and my ancestors. But we must have a long evening alone to discuss these matters. At present I am weary of knowledge, and only wish to feel that I am alive, like a bird or a butterfly."

We talked no more about antiquity that day; but the more I saw of Mr. Rameses, and the oftener I conversed with him, the more I seemed to be convinced that his eccentricity was assumed-that he had a wonderfully capacious memory, in which he had stored a vast multitude of facts and ideas, all ranged in their proper niches, ready for use whenever he required them, for his own pleasure, or that of his listener.

We returned to The Rookery to dinner, where a few gentlemen of the neighbourhood assembled by special invitation to mect the distinguished traveller. Mr. Rameses
made himself very agreeable, and my guests were all delighted with him. But after they had taken their departure, and we were seated alone in the "sanctum," he asked me as a particular favour not to invite him too often into company, and to be allowed, as long as he remained in my house, to dine alone, or with the family.
"You and I, and Sir Henry de Glastonbury, are quite sufficient company when the ladies have retired. English dinner-parties are only the feeding-times of tame beasts, and I don't care to be one of their number."

I was too much interested in him to thwart his wishes, and so I gave the promise of compliance, and kept it.


## CHAPTER V.

## A RAINY DAY.

"You don't hunt or shoot, Mr. Rameses?" said Sir Henry, at the breakfast-table next morning.
"No, I take no joy in killing. If animals are to be killed for my food-and I must say that I am almost a vegetarian, and eat little but fruit and grain-I like to have the killing done by an expert, by the poulterer, the butcher, or the fisherman."
"But don't you think that sport-I won't call it killing -is good for the health, and that it leads a man to take necessary exercise ?"
"I don't," replied Mr. Rameses emphatically. "If a man desires exercise-as every man ought-he can take it without destroying the life of innocent creatures. Is it not as healthy to climb a mountain-top for the sake of climbing as to climb for the sake of the stags or the birds, and for the mere love of slaughter ? I can understand the hunting of tigers, lions, wolves, and noxious animals, but I can't
understand the killing of grouse, pheasants, partridges, deer, and other harmless creatures for the sake of killing them. Let the poulterers and butchers do it ; not me! Why don't your ruthless sportsmen hire themselves out to the butchers, and kill oxen, sheep and pigs for the wages of the work and for the sake of killing them ?"
"I am not much of a sportsman myself," replied Sir Henry, "and must say that my fancy lies in the direction of encouraging and improving life rather than in the direction of taking it away. If my health would allow me to live in England, I would cultivate my old taste-the breeding of cattle, and the improvement of the stock of all the domestic animals that are useful to mankind."
"Ah!" said Mr. Rameses, "that is a worthy pursuit. The horses-the cattle-the sheep of England are superior to those of every other country, and all because of the care taken to improve the stock-just as the pears and plums of France excel those of all other parts of Europe! It is my belief that the race of man is quite as improvable by culture as the race of horses-or of roses and apples."
"No doubt!" interposed I, "but you must remember that the horses, and the bulls, and the sheep, and the roses,
are the slaves of man-and that man himself is free to indulge in vices and excesses, and to propagate his kind when he is drunk, insane or diseased!"
" Just so," replied Sir Henry, " and all ideas of improvement in the race of man, are idle as long as each man remains his own master. "What a blessing it would be if the diseased, the vicious, the deformed, the ugly, were prohibited from pairing, and left no successors."
"Aye! or could be controlled by the strong arm of a benevolent despotism," said Mr. Rameses. "The time was when this was done!"
"When and where ? "-enquired I.
"In the days before history!"
"If before history, how can you know ?" asked Sir Henry.

From my own experience," replied Mr. Rameses. "I have seer. it and known it."
"Cracked ?" suggested Sir Henry in a whisper to me"off his head, as they say?"

It had been raining persistently all the morning-and walking up to the window-opening it-and looking outby way of changing the subject, which began to alarm

Sir Henry-but which did not alarm me, except for the fact that my sister just then entered the room, and might have heard what we were speaking about, I suggested that as nothing could be done out of doors we might profitably adjourn to my study. The suggestion was adopted. Mr. Rameses no sooner entered the sanctum than he recommenced the examination of the Babylonian slabs-some of which he affirmed to form portions of the historical books of the Kings of Babylon-venerable secrets of little use unless the whole record could be discovered.
"That is tantalizing," said I. "The world thirsts for knowledge, and it would be of the highest interest to the present and future generations to be able to reveal the mysteries of all but obliterated history."
"If you earnestly desire to pierce into the mysteries," replied Mr. Rameses, "you can learn to read for yourself the arrow-headed records, of which you possess so many; though it will possibly take a longer lifetime than you or any man can expect, to piece the fragments togethereven if the-fragments exist. What a poor little mushroom thing history is! Soon grown-sooner perished-never completed! It is said that Truth endures for ever !

Bah! The Truth of history is unknown, but the Lies of history are imperishable!"
"Very true, and very sad," remarked Sir Henry. "But what's the good of complaining ?"
" Yes ; very true and very sad. But what's the good of anything ? Except sleep! That is glorious, and would be divine if there were no awakening."
"You are too young, Mr. Rameses," said I, " to indulge in such gloomy, misanthropical, God-denying ideas as these. Life is good, and all the beautiful universe is full of it."
"Too young! did you say? I am miserably old! But I don't want to infect either of you with my melancholy. Don't call me young ! I am old, very old! And the oldness of my head drives the youngness out of my heart."
"Excuse the abruptness of the question, Mr. Rameses," said I; "but it relates to youthfulness of heart. I make bold to ask, were you ever in love ?"
"Ever in love? I have been in love more deeply than I care to think of! I am in love now, with my twin soul —of whom I am in daily search, and whom I am compelled to seek all over the world, under the heavy penalty of daily
misery, until I make her mine. Then I shall be happy; and then the end will come!"
"Cracked, very much cracked!" said Sir Henry in a whisper to me, as he prepared to leave the room. "Excuse me to him. I have a horror of people who are not quite sane. There is no knowing when the insanity will boil over !" And then, in a louder voice, he said, as he gazed for a few moments out of the window, "There is a break in the clouds. I shall take my usual ride after all. Will either of you accompany me?"
"You know," I replied, "that I never trust myself on horseback. Walking's the exercise that suits me best."
"It suits me too," said Mr. Rameses. "I love to think as I go, and if a man on horseback thinks about anything but his horse, he is very likely to come to mischief."
"Good-bye, then," said Sir Henry, "my ride shall be solitary."

Sir Henry left us, glad to escape from Mr. Rameses.
Left alone with me, putting aside a slab as he spoke, Mr. Rameses said, "I am afraid that I have startled Sir Henry, and that he has taken it inso lis head that I an not
exactly in my right mind. He is welcome to think so if it pleases him, but I should not like you to share his opinion. I recognise in you a man in advance of his age, one who is not shocked at great ideas, even when they run counter to the preconceived opinions of the world, as I wish to confide to you the history of my life and my mind. Will you accept the confidence?"
"I shall be highly honoured. The greatest joy of my life is to learn, and I feel that I can learn a hundred times more from you than you are likely to learn from me."
"Well," he replied, "the story will be the story of a soul, as well as of a body, and may possibly make you sad. Will you be ready to hear it if I begin to-night?"
"Quite ready, and all attention."
"Tell me, first-Are you a believer in what is called spiritualism ?"
"A difficult question to answer. I believe in spirit or soul. And I believe that there is a sympathy-an attractive, an occult influence exercised by one living soul over another living soul in this world. I believe that friendship between man and man is a manifestation of spiritualism ; and that love between man and woman, if it be pure love, of the
soul as well as of the body, is the highest manifestation of spiritualism—you may call it electrcity if you will—that can exist in this world. But I do not believe that the living soul, that has departed from the body in this world, any longer exercises influence over a soul that still performs its own functions by means of its own temporary body. But this is not what the world calls spiritualism."
"No," said Mr. Rameses ; "this is not spiritualism. Spiritualism affirms that the disembodıed spirit is still an active power in our world of embodied spirits."
"I can't believe that," I replied. "All ghosts are of our own making, born out of a foolish or an excited imagination, and cannot turn tables, or write letters, or perform conjuring tricks. So if these performances, or others of a like nature, constitute spiritualism, I am not a spiritualist."
"I asked you the question for a reason. I do not, any more than you do, believe that spirit manifests itself in what is called spiritualism. But I believe (and I think I know) that spirit exerts itself in our living bodies with a power that is drawn from eternity, and that you and I, in this mortal life, are subject to the eternal experience of the spirit or soul that we hold for a time in the physical
embrace of our corporeal frame. Do you follow me ?"
"I follow you, but do not clearly understand you."
"You are willing to understand-I gather that from all you say; and if so, you will understand my story when I have told it you. The eternal nature of the soul, both before and after this present life-that is my theme, that is the secret of my history. To-night, if you will be a learner, I shall be proud to be your teacher. But you, and you only, are to be•my listener. You will perhaps find that as I am, and as I have been, you are also, and that your mind will be opened, as mine has been, to many things of high importance, that, as your poet Shakspeare says, 'Are caviare to the million.' "

Though not quite satisfied that Mr. Rameses was not the slave of a fancy, a hallucination, a crotchet, or whatever else an aberration from the common-place may be called, I was quite-convinced that if he were mad, it was with the madness of Hamlet, that his madness had much method in it, that he knew a hawk from a heronshaw-when the wind was in the proper quarter-and that I should derive instruction more or less valuable, or, at all events, intellec-
tual recreation, from what he had to tell me. He expressed his desire to take a solitary ramble, so we each betook ourselves our several ways, and I awaited the night by taking a good half-day's work in my garden, lamong the flowers and the cabbages.


## CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING TWIN SOULS.
The night that came did not bring Mr. Rameses along with it. But just as I was beginning to grow anxious on account of his non-appearance, little Jack Jonas, the son of one of my tenants, brought me a missive, written with a pencil on a scrap of paper torn out of a note-book, which informed me that the writer-Mr. Rameses-had been summoned to London on urgent business, that admitted of no delay, and that he would give me notification of his return. I wondered a little, not much, that his urgent business should have found him out in the neighbourhood of the Rookery, where he desired to remain unknown-but, as wonder was not of the slightest use, and no enlightenment could come of it, except by investigations and enquiries which I had no desire to make-I dismissed my wonder into the atmosphere, or into nonenity, if there be such a thingwhich, entre nous, critical reader, is an impossibility. Anyhow, I speedily forgot all about Mr. Rameses, quite
content to await his re-appearance to hear his promised story or his non-appearance, and speculated for a full half-hour or more on the singularity of his character, of on the doubtful point whether, like Hamlet, he was halfmad, wholly mad, or not mad at all. But I banished him from my mind as soon as possible, and buried myself, like a bee, deep in the petals of a book, from which I expected to draw wisdom, and from which I certainly drew amuse-ment-a book by a living author, whom I shall not name, lest I should excite the ire of other living authors, who will never acknowledge an author to be great until he be dead and past rivalry.

I heard no more of Mr. Rameses for three weeks. After that interval he called upon me in Park Lane. My daughter had returned a few days previously from her Italian holiday, and was sitting with me in the study when his card was brought. She had heard all about him, and perhaps more than all, from Lady de Glastonbury, who was afflicted with an epistolary cacoethes, to a degree more than usually violent. My daughter was naturally anxious to see a man of whom she had heard so much; but, at the announcement of his name, she fled precipitately, giving the
very feminine reason that she did not wish to appear before him in a deshabille that I thought showed her off to very great advantage, but which she declared made her look a "perfect fright." "Do invite him again to The Rookery," she said, as she imprinted a kiss upon my forehead, and drew her delicate taper fingers through my abundant hair (I have not the slightest tendency to baldness, having all my life avoided the use of tobacco), for I long to see him, after the description Aunt Margery has given me. Do, do, there's a dear!"

I promised compliance, as she glided like a sylph from the room just as the foot of Mr. Rameses was heard upon the stairs.
"You will have thought it strange," he said, after the customary salutations had been exchanged, "that I should have disappeared so suddenly from the quiet Rookery, in which I delight. I owe you an explanation. The truth is that I felt a malady, to which I am occasionally subject, coming upon me. On these rare occasions, I hate to be condoled with or pitied. What is more, I hate sick people, and myself most of all when I am in a state that threatens to make me burthensome and disagreeable to
anybody. So I went away, and got well by myself, as I always do. I sometimes think that if I were a poor man and desired to gain a large income, I would become a physician, and cure all my patients (for large fees, be it understood) by doing nothing and prescribing nothing, and by no other course of treatment than that of putting on a pleasant face, and uttering a hopeful prophecy upon everything, and trusting to all bountiful and all beneficent Nature to work a cure. There is only one malady that cannot be cured by hope and wholesome inattention to it, and that is old age, the incurable disease, not to be scientifically described except by Anno Domini, or, as some would prefer it, Anno Mundi. And now that the shadow has passed over, I am come to invite myself once more to The Rookery, if you will tolerate me for awhile."
"For as long as you please. When will you come?"
"In a week, if that will suit you."
"Perfectly."
"During this week I have two or three invitations from great people in London, not very great to me, but great to themselves and to the outer world of common Londoners. I have accepted two of them, with a view
of studying the manners of the English, I was going to say of amusing myself; but great gatherings do not amuse me, whether at dinners, evening parties, balls, or theatres. I go the day after to-morrow to the Earl of Stoney-Stratford's, who has three unmarried daughters ;lovely girls they say. I like to look at lovely girls, if they be sensible and modest and do not talk slang. Next day, a fascinating widow, of great popularity, greater ambition, and with a very small jointure, has made up a party, at an expense which I am afraid she cannot afford, to meet mea poor, mysterious, unknown Asiatic, who is reputed to be fabulously rich. Shall I go ?
"Why not? The proper study of mankind is man and woman. You may be amused."
" Possibly, though it takes a great deal to amuse me. My next invitation is from what in the slang of the day is called a professional beauty. I shall go, of course. 'Professional beauty' tickles my fancy; though a woman who gains notoriety, and loves it, by her charms, is not superior in my mind to a professional beauty, who turns her charms to profit and to pleasure in the harem of an Eastern potentate." "You love the sex, you say, or, at all events, you like
them, and it is your object, being an idle man, not too much addicted to abstruse philosophy, to study them, 'pour vous distraire,' as the French would say."
"I neither hate nor love the sex. Why should I? I seek my twin soul, and I like to look upon lovely woman, in the hope of finding her. It may be to-morrow, it may be a thousand years hence, or it may be never! But why do I say never ? There is no never! I shall find my counterpart soul some day. And then! Ah! then-what then ? Happiness-great happiness, unspeakable happiness-absorption, annihilation of self, and complete beatitude of spirit with spirit, never more to be associated with vile body."
"Vile body! Is not body as divine as soul?"
"Not quite. Is the violin on which you play as divine as the player? Is the eye superior to what it sees? Is the ear better than music? Is the tool superior to him who uses it? Is the perishable greater than the imperishable ?"

The belief of Mr. Rameses in the twin soul was his craze, his hobby, his eccentricity. I will not call it his madness. After all, what did it signify ? We are all mad, more or less, as ha; been said over and over again by wits, philosophers, and pozts ; and if I had asked my secret soul VOL. I.
about it, and my secret soul had replied truthfully, as the soul always does, I should have been informed by my soul, that I too might be afflicted with one per cent. of insanity ; that I live in a glass-house, and that I ought not to throw pebbles at the glass-house of Mr. Rameses.
"I see," continued he, noticing perhaps a slight shadow of doubt and perplexity on my face, "that you do not wholly share my ideas with regard to the twin soul that every man and woman in this world has to find, under heavy penalty-the penalty of being unhappy until the death of the body; unhappy, because soul and body are both incomplete until the meeting of the predestined pair, who, being a pair, are yet one. Too often they never meet. Hence the miserable marriages that are contracted every day by ill-assorted bodies, and still worse assorted souls; and hence the ill-favoured, imperfect, vicious and wicked children that come into the world that would be better without them."
"I do not see anything in your theory but a poetical dream, which, after all, means nothing but the necessity of sympathy in love and marriage. Without sympathy, love and true happmess are impossible."
"Very trite and old; excuse me for saying so," said Mr. Rameses. "Sympathy is common enough, just as antipathy is. There are many sympathies to enjoy in the world, and many antipathies to suffer ; but there is only one twin soul for every man and woman. And the twin souls are fated to meet sooner or later. If not in youth, in age ; if not in this stage of existence, in another ; if not in this poor little planet, the earth, in some other and greater member of the sidereal system ; if not in globular time, in infinite eternity. It is my fate to search for my twin soul, and I must continue the search till I either succeed or die -die in the body, to revive again in the soul elsewhere."
"I hope, Mr. Rameses," said I, "that when you look for the twin soul among the three daughters, for instance, of the Lord Stoney-Stratford, or at the house of the fascinating widow, or the professional beauty you speak of, you will not let them know what you are seeking, lest they should laugh."
"Well, if they laugh," replied Mr. Rameses, "I shall be spared the trouble of further search in their direction, as one who would laugh on so solemn a subject, cannot be my twin soul. Nevertheless, I shall not explain my philosophy to any woman whatever, or to any man, or any cynical
derider of mysteries ; and if I have explained it to you, it is because I think you are really a searcher after wisdom, and that you do not despise theories merely because they may appear to be extravagant, or because the densely respectable, and the still more densely stupid, people who boast of what they call their 'common-sense,' may agree to laugh at them. But I will not attempt to discuss the matter just now, or inflict my theories upon you in a hasty visit, when your mind may be pre-occupied. When we are alone together at The Rookery, amid your books, with the mummy in the corner, and we have exhausted the subject of the weather, and of the dreary politics of your nation-politics that savour more of the narrow-mindedness of a parish than of the broader interests of the wide world, of which that parish is but a small part-we may indulge in speculations on the unseen and the unknown. Such speculations, I must confess, have a singular fascination for my mind."

> "And for mine too, if not carried to excess. I some- times think, when I am tempted to let my imagination run away with my experience, that I am about as foolish as a gold-fish, imprisoned in a vase of water (to him and his comrades in captivity the only known world) would be if
he were to launch out into speculations about my library, about my country, about Europe, Asia, and America, or about the sun and the moon. Or, again, I often think that I am even more presumptuous in attempting to fathom infinitude and eternity than the animalcule in a drop of water would be, if he thought he were a philosopher or a metaphysician, a positivist or a Comtist, and began to speculate on the scheme of the Universe."
"The reflection is natural," said Mr. Rameses; "but suppose an animalcule, that has escaped from the drop of water, or a fish that has been liberated from the glass vase, and seen the world! $I$ am that animalcule! $I$ am that fish! I have been privileged to pass the boundaries. I have seen, and I have known."
"Ah!my friend," said I, "seeing is nothing. The eye is the greatest of deceivers. I have seen much, but I know nothing. To see is not necessarily to understand or to know. I have seen the moon, and the stars, but what do I know about them? Nothing ! nothing ! nothing!"

As we thus spoke, a letter, brought by special messenger, was delivered to me by my serving-maid, for I have no man-servant in the house, only a butler and a coachman,
who confine themselves, by my express desire, to their own special business. I prefer neat-handed Phillises in my household to men-scrvants. The missive conveyed an invitation to myself and Miss De Vere from Lord StoneyStratford to meet Mr. Rameses. Though the notice was short, I at once decided on accepting the invitation, to the apparent joy of my visitor, to whom I handed the letter.
"I hope I shall sit next to you at the dinner-table," he said; "I hate to be placed with a fair fool, or with a silent, a solemn, or an unknown man, on either side of me, with neither of whom I can converse, except about the weather, for fear if I talked on any other subject, I might tread on the theological, the political, the artistic, or perhaps the social coat-tails of my neighbour. Why, in the name of all that is wonderful, are large dinner-parties given to bring people together who may not have a single feeling in common? I like a dinner-party, not exceeding eight or nine people of both sexes, who know what to talk about, and who can accompany, by intellectual intercourse, the vulgar pleasure, or rather the necessity, of eating and drinking. I would as soon be a pig, and eat swill out of a trough, as eat my dinner without the civilising sauce of intel-
lectual conversation. If I cannot find other society at dinner, I will dine with a book, with the wisdom, the wit, or the poetry of which I can sympathise, and in which, if I do not altogether sympathise, I can find something or other to stir my thought by suggestion."
"My soul," said I, "is twin with yours as far as that idea is concerned."

And with this remark our conversation ended.


## CHAPTER VII.

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THE STONEY-STRATFORD FAMILY.
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The Earl of Stoney-Stratford was an old acquaintance of mine, an accomplished man-a good man after his kindand one that many, if not most, people would have envied, and with whom they would have been glad to exchange destinies-even if they had known of two little skeletons which he had in his cupboard. The skeletons were not very frightful, and ninety-nine people out of a hundred would not have considered them skeletons at all-or if they did, would have quietly locked the door upon them, or bricked it up hermetically. Skeleton the first was the complaint against Fate and Nature that had denied him a son, to whom he might transmit his title. He had, it is true, a son-who was not a son, in the eyes of the law-and of whom Lady Stoney-Stratford knew nothing, while the most ardent wish of his life was the possession of a son in whom Lady StoneyStratford should have as much right as himself. He had seven daughters, it is true, but in his eyes, much as he
loved and admired them-for they were comely, and even beautiful-a son would have been better than them all.

The other skeleton was an unappeasable greed for other men's acres, contiguous to his own ; acres of which he could not dispossess the owners, even by purchase at three times their value. Why he so coveted these acres-some of them barren, or scantily productive-was a mystery to all sensible people; but Lord Stoney-Stratford loved to accumulate acres for the sake of the acres-as some men love to accumulate books, pictures, snuff-boxes, walking-sticks, or old china; not for any good that these may yield to their owners, but for the mere sake of possessing them. Had he owned the acres, he might have been unhappy-but not owning the acres he was miserable, and life seemed to him scarcely tolerable. What was his title to him-what were his other acres-as long as the obstinate Jones and the equally obstinate Smith possessed the outlying fields, and would not or could not sell them? And why could he not buy a field as easily as he could buy a ship, a bale of cotton, or a leg of mutton? But he kept his griefs to himself as the Spartan boys kept their foxes-under their waistcoats,
defying the world to disbutton them and let out the prohibited animals.

According to public Rumour, who is the greatest of all possible liars, Lord Stoney-Stratford's affairs were in some embarrassment. "How," asked Rumour, "could it be otherwise-when he borrowed money at ten and sometimes twelve or fifteen per cent. from usurers, to invest in land that only paid him three per cent. ?" How, indeed, supposing that Rumour for once spoke truth. He who scorns arithmetic, be he lord or ploughman, man of genius or simpleton, must come to grief, if he lives long enough to allow fate to work out the dreadful problem of income and expenditure, when they are in disagreement.

Lord Stoney-Stratford's daughters were very costly articles-very beautiful, no doubt, and they knew it. Their tastes were very expensive, and if matrimony could provide the means for indulgence in them, they were not particular as to the age, height, health, character, colour or other personal condition of the matrimonial partnerprovided always that the prejudices or opinions of Society were not too flagrantly outraged. They were not at all romantic, though they loved romance in other people-
especially in the novels of women who scribble out of the gushing superabundance of their ignorance of life and of the rules of English composition-but for neither of them was love in a cottage a consummation to be looked upon except with contemptuous disfavour or positive repugnance. Lady Stoney-Stratford was an excellent manager, where her daughters were concerned, and had succeeded in getting four of them off his Lordship's hands and her own. She had married two of them to comparatively small fortunes and a title, and another two of them for much money and no title. Neither she nor her husband had cared to build upon other foundations than these; though both were equally anxious that their daughters should live respectably and not offend Mrs. Grundy. The dinner to meet Mr. Rameses was entirely due to her ladyship's good management. Mr. Rameses was more or less the hero of the London season-was indubitably handsome, and was almost indubitably rich. In addition to these advantages there was a halo of romance and mystery about him, which would not have encircled him with so much lustre if he had been an Englishman, but which, being a grand Asiatic, with a mixture of Scotch blood in his veins-who
might have had half a dozen wives in his time and whom he might have subjected to the bowstring, or the sack, or the scimitar-was of a nature to dazzle the eyes even to blindness of all the young lady devotees at the holy-super-holy-ever-holy shrine of the ineffable St. Mammon.

The Earl knew all his wife's manœuvres and sympathised in their object. If Maud, Ethel, or Gwendoline succeeded in being well married, and ceased to be a burthen on his resources, he might purchase a few more acres within sight of the windows of Stoney Court. It was reported that Mr. Rameses was a Parsee, a Jew, a Mahometan, a Buddhist, or worse-but what did it signify, if the marriage could be brought about with the consent of all parties? Maud, Ethel or Gwendoline, might become a Parsee or anything else if there were a million of money behind ; and perhaps Mr. Rameses himself was about as much of a Christian as other people in England ; and might embrace the faith to gain a wife after his fancy. "What will not woman when she loves ?" asks the old song. What will not man do when he lusts ? -might be asked with equal propriety.

There was a large party that night at the Earl of StoneyStratford's. There were several ladies, including dowagers
and comely married women, among the guests; but there were only four unmarried ones-the three Pierrepoints, daughters of the Earl, and Laura Brown De Vere, my daughter. Laura was invited on the suggestion of Lady Stoney-Stratford-who saw deep into social things and social folks-who had an idea in her diplomatic head, that if no young marriageable ladies but her own daughters were present, the ill-natured critics and criticasters might whisper and hint, louder than if they blew a bassoon, a bagpipe, or ten thousand trumpets, that the party had been arranged with no other purpose than to ensnare the millionaire into a marriage with one (no matter which) of the blooming Pierrepoints.

Mr. Rameses that evening made himself even more than usually agreeable, and adapted his conversation more to the supposed tastes of the ladies than to those of the gentlemen of the party. He was especially cordial in his manner to Lady Stoney-Stratford, which he certainly would not have been if he had suspected the real motive of her diplomacy. But the suspicion never entered his mind. All the ladies were fascinated by his manner. He was modest and unobtrusive, but not shy. He was handsome, and did not appear to be aware of the fact. He was elo-
quent, but did not talk too much, and showed no tendency to monopolise the conversation, or to thrust himself unduly forward. A slight shade passed over his face as Lady Gwendoline, the handsomest of the three daughters of her host, used the words "awfully jolly!" But it speedily passed away, to return, however, a few moments afterwards, when she declared that something or other was a "horrid bore." It was evident, from the expression which flashed into his eyes, that Mr. Rameses, even if he had been in search of the twin soul, would not have looked for it in Lady Gwendoline's direction.

After the ladies had retired, the conversation among the gentlemen happened to turn upon the scientific discoveries of the present time-notably upon the uses to which it was possible to turn the mysterious powers of electricity. On this point Lord Stoney-Stratford expressed his opinion that this age was far in advance of every other since the creation of the world, and that society was yet on the threshold of newer and still more important discoveries.

Mr. Rameses dissented. "I have studied this subject," he said, "with a care and a profundity that I am positiveall but positive-that no man living, whoever he may be,
has devoted to it, because I have had unrivalled opportunities. It is too much the fashion in the nineteenth century of the Christian era to look upon this particular century as the culmination of scientific wisdom. Ignorant conceit! The ancients knew far more than the moderns, though they did not spread their knowledge abroad, or proclaim it by sound of trumpets, and gabble of newspapers, in the highways and the by-ways. The grandest of modern discoveries are but re-discoveries of facts and principles known-not for the first time nineteen hundred years after the starting-point of the Christian era, but two or three thousand years before it."
"But," interposed the Honourable Augustus Smithersa portly man with a very bald head, and a very pompous manner-" are we not in advance of the ancients, say in the matter of railways and steam engines?"
"We travel faster than the ancients, undoubtedly," said Mr. Rameses; "a fact in which I see no particular advantage ; but the contrary. I see no good in fast travelling or in fast living. Does fast travelling increase the world's happiness, or that of the individual ? "

[^0]old coach and four was good enough for me, and for any body who could afford the expense. For those who could not afford it there was a choice of two pleasures, neither of them to be despised-that of walking or of staying at home. The last perhaps was the greater of the two."
"There is much to be said on both sides," said Mr. Bangles, a Queen's counsel and a member of Parliament, who was accustomed professionally to look at both sides of every possible question. "The great good that I see in railways and steam engines arises from the fact that they enable all the nations of the world to become acquainted with each other ; and from the smaller or less important fact that in our day cities have a tendency to grow too largemuch too large-for health, comfort, and amenity, and that railways enable people now and then to get out of them into the fresh air of the country."
"It is a large subject," replied Mr. Rameses; "but a dinner-table is not precisely the forum for its discussion, especially when the ladies are making music upstairs. inviting us to join them. Sweet music is better than argumentation."
"Let us rejoin the ladies," said Lord Stoney-Stratford,
passing the bottle to Mr. Rameses-who refrained from filling his glass-and then, rising, led the way to the draw-ing-room.

The ladies Maud and Ethel Pierrepoint were playing a duet from Mendelssohn as the gentlemen entered. "Do you greatly enjoy music, Mr. Rameses ? " asked Lady StoneyStratford, with a more than usually gracious smile to the millionaire, after he had been listening for a few minutes.
"More than I can tell," he answered. "Beethoven more especially awakens feelings, memories, and mysteries in me which I cannot describe or account for, and which seem to me to speak a language without words-' Lieder ohne worte,' as he expresses it-more full of meanings than any language that ever was spoken. But you will, perhaps, think me eccentric if I say that the simple melodies of Scotland and Ireland have a very great charm for me, and exercise a power over my sympathies which is unaccountable to me. I sometimes think as I have some Scottish blood in my veins which I have inherited from a remote ancestor that my mysterious and occult love for Scottish music becomes explicable. Do the Ladies Pierrepoint play or sing Scottish music?"
"I am afraid not," said Lady Stoney-Stratford ; "they prefer operatic airs-Italian, German, or French. We think in England that English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh music is rococo, vulgar ; much too 'tuny,' as we say."
"Tuny?" said Mr. Rameses. "I never heard the word before ; but shall make a note of it. Tuny! Music that is not 'tuny' is not to my taste. But can Miss De Vere, do you think, not sing a Scotch melody, let me call it a tune, in spite of your Ladyship's disapprobation. Mr. De Vere," he said to me, who had overheard the little colloquy, "does your daughter admire Scotch music?"
"She loves it," I replied; "and is no mean proficient either upon the instrument or with the voice. She is one of those true singers, who do not need to be asked twice, but who sing as the birds do, because singing is natural to them."

Laura consented immediately, with all the grace in the world. I could not help thinking that Lady Stoney-Stratford looked displeased at her cheerful willingness, as if she thought a wrong was done to her three daughters by the fact that any other young girl could do what they could not.
"Shall I sing a sad song or a merry one ?" asked Laura.
"Oh, a sad song-a melancholy song by all means," replied Mr. Rameses. "The Flowers of the Forest," or "Lochaber No More." To me there is a charm which defies analysis, in plaintive memories, in the minor key-
' Gay music makes me sad-so prithee, sweet, Sing me a doleful, melancholy song, Such as Ophelia, crazed, and scattering flowers, Sings in the play!

And she sang "The Flowers of the Forest," and "Lochaber No More," the melancholy wail of despondent patriotism, to the great delight of Mr. Rameses.
"These, I suppose, are Highland or Gaelic, and not Lowland Scotch, melodies?" said he to me, and also to Laura.
"The 'Flowers of the Forest' is a purely Highland air," I replied, "and is full of the peculiar pathos of the love songs of the Gael. I do not know whether 'Ye Banks and Braes ' is Highland or Lowland."
"It is neither, papa," said Laura; "but French, adopted and improved upon by the Scotch, and very likely was introduced into Scotland or composed by Châtelard, the unhappy admirer of Queen Mary."
"Would you kindly oblige me with another Scottish song ?" said Mr. Rameses. "I cannot explain to you or to myself the singular effect which such music has on my feelings. It breathes to me of the long, long ago, and sends me, as it were, up the stream of Time, as if I had first heard the sad and tender melodies thousands of years ago!"

Laura, though surprised at the mention of thousands of years, only thought it an exaggeration of musical enthusiasm, and at once consented. She was running over the prelude to the livelier air of the Jacobite song of Prince Charlie's welcome to Skye, when the pompous Mr. Smithers asked of the still more pompous Mr. Bangles, Q.C., what the young lady was singing so much for?
"Don't you know? " said Bangles, putting his glass to his eye with an impudent sneer. "She's singing for the million -à la Hullah!"
'The observation did not reach the ears of Mr. Rameses, but it reached mine, and those of the hostess.

Lady Stoney-Stratford smiled, as if she highly enjoyed the impertinence, while I experienced all over my frame a feeling of contempt for Mr. Bangles. The word snob dwelt unspoken on my lips, as I surveyed him from head to foot
in a manner which the French designate by the verb toiser, an expression for which the English have no exact equivalent.

That my lovely and pure-minded girl should be suspected even by a "snob" or a "cad" of displaying her gifts to please Mr. Kameses, or anybody else, for his money, was an offence to my delicacy and an insult to my daughter, meriting contempt, which I was glad to inflict upon Bangles, and which I extended in a minor degree to Lady Stoney-Stratford herself, for seeming to approve of it.

The Ladies Gwendoline, Maud and Ethel were more or less out of humour with Laura's performance, but when I asked Lady Gwendoline if she would sing an Italian or a German air, she replied, "Oh, yes! I hate Scotch musicbut, no, I don't hate it, I don't understand it. It is so awfully slow and old-fashioned-quite too entirely gone by. Would you like to hear Ciascun lo dice, Ciascun lo sa ! from 'La Figlia del Reggimento'? I think I could manage it."
"Oh, do!" said I, "it is awfully good; quite too tremendously beautiful, in fact."

The Lady Gwendoline saw no mockery either in my
words or on my face, and she sang it "quite too awfully badly," though apparently to the satisfaction of Smithers and Bangles, Q.C. These two were marked in the demonstration of their very quiet and restrained applause. Mr. Rameses made no sign, except in a faint sotto voce to me, "This is but shadow; the singing of your daughter is sunlight, moonlight, starlight. I like a song with a heart in it, though my heart, I am afraid, is very much like an extinct volcano."
"You have more heart, Mr. Rameses, than you care to acknowledge," said I. "All men of any culture now and then affect a cynicism which they do not feel. It acts upon their system, you see, like sauce to fish, or mustard to beef. I like cynicism if it be gracefully put on-like a mask, like a domino, as it were, with bright eyes and good features underneath it-unseen of the uninitiated."
"If anything," replied Mr. Rameses, "could convert the shadow of my cynicism into the substance it would be the Stoney-Stratford family."
"Then the twin soul is not to be sought in that direction?"
"The thought of the twin soul never enters my mind of
my own free will. It always comes unbidden, like a lightning flash-a divine prompting-a heavenly inspiration -and vanishes as suddenly, leaving its own memory and my regrets behind 1 t-perhaps not reappearing for a space of time that seems to me to be centuries, though they are only the hours and days of ordinary mortals."

The attentions lavished upon Mr. Rameses by his aristocratic entertainers seemed at first to weary, and finally to distress him. He was the first to take his departure, and I and Laura followed after an interval of about a quarter of an hour, during which his merits (no demerits were even so much as suggested) were freely discussed by the ladies of the company, with an occasional word thrown in by the gentlemen.
" Do you not think, Jocelyn," said Lady Stoney-Stratford to her husband, "that there is a singular beauty in his melancholy face? I do not think I cver saw a handsomer or nobler-looking man."
" Yes, rather good-looking," replied his lordship.
"If he be as rich as he is handsome," interposcd Lady Gwendoline, "and is as open to marriage, as if he were a Christian, what an awfully great sensation he will make
in Society this season. What do you think, Miss De Vere?"
"I don't know what to think," replied Laura, with a repetition of the word think, which pleased me, as betokening a sense of humour, "except that I think that ladies think a great deal too much of marriage now-a-days, and think that there is nothing else worth thinking about."
"Very good," said Lord Stoney-Stratford, "though I myself think it's very natural for girls to think on the subject that they think interests them most, especially if they cannot otherwise think at all."
"Hear my thought," said I, preparing to depart with Laura, "which is, that Mr. Rameses will prove a very hard man to please. It is not mere beauty that will captivate him, nor wit, nor accomplishments, nor wealth, and that he is just as likely, if he should ever fall in love at all, to fall in love for a mere caprice of his fancy, whether the caprice be fixed upon a duchess or a shop-girl."
"Shop-girl!" said Lady Gwendoline. "What a dreadful, horrid idea!"
"But he's a gentleman," said Lady Ethel, " and would never dream of such a thing ?"

Mr. Bangles, Q.C., expressed his opinion that there would be at least a thousand aspirants during the season for the honour of becoming Mrs. Rameses, if the tales of his wealth were true; even if he had only a quarter of the money which Rumour, always disposed to exaggerate, attributed to the handsome and mysterious personage.

And we separated with the conviction strong in my mind that, if there were to be a bride at all, Bangles, Q.C., had not greatly over-estimated the possible number of the candidates for the possession of the heart, the name, the diamonds and the ducats of Mr. Rameses.


## CHAPTER VIII.

## PHYSICAL SLAVERY AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM.

I SAw and heard nothing of Mr. Rameses for a fortnight after the dinner at Lord Stoney-Stratford's. He then wrote to say how wearied he was with London life, and how refreshing it would be to his mind and body if he could run down to the Rookery, to the groves and meadows-far away from the hot pavements, the stifling streets, and the still more stifling balls of the fashionable season. He could not find a soul in London, he said, with whom he could interchange ideas. There was talk and gossip, and babble all around, but no conversation except on inane subjects which he did not care to discuss. He wanted to bathe himself in sunshine and pure air, to tread the green grass under the blue sky, and to enjoy a little sympathy, which he thought he could enjoy in my study. Of course I pressed him to come, and he came. My mother did not seem particularly well pleased at the idea of the "Pagan" -so she called him-being installed in my house. She
had a misgiving that his presence in the Rookery would turn out, somehow or other, to be unlucky. My sister and family had taken their departure, but Sir Henry de Glastonbury and his wife still remained, and it was not necessary to consult them as to what visitors I should receive. Laura was somewhat awed at the mystery that enveloped the life and character of the handsome Oriental ; and rather hinted than openly expressed her opinion, that it might be well if she were allowed to remain in the background during his visit, and that she should not be called upon to entertain him in any way.

It was clear that she had not found in him a twin soul to her own, and that there was no mutual sympathy between her and hum. I told her that Mr. Rameses desired privacy-that he would pass the greater part of his time in my library, among my books, my Chaldean slabs, and my Egyptian papyri ; that very probably his hours would be absorbed in study, or in the unrolling of the mummy, so long waiting for its opportunity, in which grand ceremonial only he and myself would be permitted to share-and that the kindest course the ladies of my household could pursue towards him, would be to let him
alone, and not to expect him to associate with them, either at morning, noon or evening repasts, unless he expressed a decided wish to do so, which I did not think he would.

It was upon these conditions that he returned to and was accepted at the Rookery. He left strict orders at his London hotel, that no letters, papers, or telegrams should be forwarded to him ; obedience to which orders he took the precaution of securing, by refusing to give his address.
"Do you not think," enquired my daughter, "that Mr. Rameses broods too much over some secret sorrow, and that it would be wiser on his part not to shut himself up as a recluse, but to mix freely in society, which he seems so well qualified to adorn?"
"Perhaps you are right, my dear, but he is the best judge of his own mind, his own heart, his own likes and dislikes, his own pleasures, and his own work. And as for solitude, it has no terrors for a full mind. The full mind enjoys it-more especially when it is in its power to break loose into society, when solitude grows irksome."

Mr. Rameses looked fagged and weary when he arrived, and sat him down in the seat under the branching full-boled beech tree that stands opposite my study window-the glory
of the woodlands, and worth travelling a hundred miles to admire. Mr. Rameses fully appreciated its beauty and magnificence, and wished that it could speak to men-as it no doubt could speak (so he thought) to its fellow treesand that it might communicate to our unlearned ears, that have but seventy or eighty summers to live, the knowledge it had acquired of nature, though not perhaps of men and women, in the seven times seventy annual growths of its rings.
"Forgive me !" he said, " Mr. De Vere, if I come before you weary-life-weary, world-weary-weary of myself, and of all the miserable surroundings of this purgatory which we call the Earth."
"What is there to forgive?" said I. "Weariness is the result of over exertion. Night is the complement of Day; Up is the consequent of Down ; East is the twin sister of the West, North of South, and Sleep of Over-exertion. You as a philosopher understand that there is no such thing as a straight line, except the straight line of eternity. Here on the earth everything revolves, and we revolve of necessity. We go up, and then we go down. Que voulez zous? If you are weary, you have earned the privilege of rest.
"Oh, yes, my philosophical friend. Let me stretch myself on the grass. My weariness is not the weariness of the bones, the flesh, the blood, but the weariness of the soul. To-day the animal within me-or, more properly speaking, without me-seems a drag upon my spirit. The spirit is dissatisfied with itself, and with its physical husk, the body. I ask myself why I should be condemned to button and to unbutton? Why I should be under the necessity of rising up and lying down ? Why I should, like a galley slave, be condemned to dress and undress, to eat and drink, to sleep and wake, or perform any of the petty, miserable, degrading functions of animal life, which I share with the beasts? And, worse than all, why I should always be compelled to walk in one dull round of labour for life, like a donkey at a draw-well, or be doomed, like Sysiphus, to roll a stone up a steep hill and see it continually rolling down again to mock me? Life is not freedom. Even at its best it is nothing but a slavery to food and drink, to the elements, and to the law of gravitation."
"No doubt," I replied, "but it is a slavery that is very tolerable."
"Very intolerable," he said, "though, if it were not for
the needs of the body, it might in other worlds be delightful."
"But have you ever imagined the kind of world in which you would desire to live, if you cared to live at all ?"
"Many a time and oft I have dreamed of such a world, and thought that possibly, after suffering so much in this, I might be purified through deep sorrow and affiction, and become worthy to inhabit it. Shall I describe my idea of it ?'
"By all means."
"My beau ideal is non-existence, the Nirvana of the Buddhists, and absorption into the spirit of the Divinity of the Universe, which I believe is the ultimate end of all separate life. Meanwhile, there may be, and probably is, an intermediate state of comparative happiness-destined for the good, the just, and the wise-in which the body shall cease to be an encumbrance to and a tyrant over its superior, the soul. May there not be in one at least of the innumerable planets and suns that gem the Infinitude, a real home for immortal beings, purified, exalted, sublimated, in which life shall be really life, without the seeds of physical death in it, and in which that miserable abortion Time shall be unknown? Time! What is 'Time? The mere
twirling of a little ball round a greater one, in which the circumgyrations are measured by units instead of by myriads! In this great central sun or planet of which I dream, may there not be spiritual life without physical death? May not man, or the superior being who shall take his place in creation, be independent of the vulgar necessity of eating and drinking, and of killing his fellow-creaturean ox or sheep-to feed upon it? May not the atmosphere in that blessed planet be full of nutrition, and may not an inhalation of its glorious air be sufficient to feed the noble beings on sustenance no grosser than that which the beautiful trees and flowers of this poor world draw from the sky and the moisture?"
" I grant the possibility," said I, "and would like to believe in it."
"And then," said Mr. Rameses, " if there were no necessity for food in that divine world, there would be no necessity for clothing. The inhabitants would have no occasion to rob the sheep or the bear for their fleece or their skins, to protect themselves against the elements, or to despoil the poor silk-worms of their webs to make finery for their women. There is no impurity in Nature, Mr. De

Vere. It is clothes that suggest impurity, and the nude Divinity is diviner than a Divinity who is draped."
"A delightful picture," said I ; "but would there not be a dark side to it, if these careless, happy, beautiful beings had nothing to do? If they had no wants, might they not subside into stagnation, and be no better in their unblissful state of so-called happiness than if they were maggots in a cheese, or even senseless stones? Happy are the stones, if happiness is the absence of care and effort, and thoughts of to-morrow !"
"But," said Mr. Rameses, "it does not enter into my dream, which may be a reflex of undiscovered reality, to consider that in my beautiful planet the inhabitants should be idle. Their speech should be music better than Beethoven's; their occupation should be to acquire knowledge superior to Plato's and Aristotle's ; their pastime should be love-etherealised and perfected, holy and ever holy. In our poor imperfect organisation the soul has but five outlets from the poor, restricted, cabined, cribbed, confined and wretched body-outlets which we call the five senses, though they are but three-seeing, hearing, and fecling-for touching and smelling, which help to make up the five, are vol. I.
but varieties of feeling. But in my planet or central sun, I love to think that the senses may be numberless, and that instead of three or five, the spiritualised intelligence, embodied as I would have it embodicd, might have fifty-five hundred -five thousand-five million doors of sense, through which it might find its way into the infinitude! Why not ?" "Yes, indeed-why not? I think your dream is philosophic, and should rejoice to dream with you. As you say -why not?"
"And your suggestion," rémarked Mr. Rameses, half rising from the green sward on which he had thrown himself, and supporting himself on his elbow as he spoke, "that my people, the people of my planet, would be miserable because they had nothing to do, falls baseless. Nothing to do? When they would have infinite knowledge to explore, and find infinite joy in acquiring it. When they would have infinite love to occupy them-in default of the infinite knowledge-that could never pall upon them, but from which they might seek to emancipate themselves or a change of delight. Where could be the room for misery, for discontent, or even for the weariness that oppresses me now as I speak?"
"I grant you all this! But cui bono?"
"Cui bono ?" replied Mr. Rameses with a groan. "Yes, cui bono?-the old eternal question about everything, even to the Great Creator himself, as some presumptuous idiots have dared to do. It is, however, the cui bono of this world that perplexes me. Were it a question of the other world that exists in my imagination as a possibility of the future, I should be happy to sleep on for ever in the faith of my dream, a dream far better than any reality I have ever known in the course of more than one existence."

I did not say, but I thought, that Mr, Rameses had dreamed so often the very same dream of a previous existence, that it had become a reality to him, that he firmly believed in it, and that he had wrought out in his own mind-by the same process of invention that a great romancist writes a romance and creates characters that to him are living men and women, even while he knows that they are but the progeny of his fancy-and that he could if he would narrate to me all the feelings, emotions and experiences of a previous life that he never lived, with a coherence, a possibility, a sequence, and a general truth to nature and to possible fact, that would stand the test of
critical cxamination as strongly as if they had been history. And as for History, what is History? Who can tell whether it is truth or falschood, and if a mixture of both, what is the per-centage of the lie to the truth in the whole adulterated mixture? Thinking thus, I expressed no surprise at the halluciations, for such I deemed them, of Mr. Rameses, but resolved to study him with psychological curiosity, without any more references to or reliance upon the truth of his facts-or supposed facts-than would be necessary for the study of Shakspeare, or any other great writer who has built up fictions more enduring, and possibly more real, than any of the records of history-often blurred, and always more or less shadowy. Who for instance was King Arthur? What do we he know about him? Nothing! Who were Hamlet and Sir John Falstaff, and Bailie Nichol Jarvie? And what do we know about them ? Everything! They are our intimate friends, better known to us than Smith, or Brown, or Jones, or any other people that we meet at the club. On this principle I resolved to study Mr. Rameses, to take him for granted, and ask no questions of myself as to his bona fides, his sanity or his insanity.

## CHAPTER IX.

## LURULA.

'The twin soul, concerning which Mr. Rameses so often expatiated with great and often sorrowful enthusiasm, did not appear to me to be so extravagant an idea as the ladies of my household considered it. My mother said nothing, but looked as if she could have said much, if the matter had been worth her while to discuss ; while Lady De Glastonbury, more aggressive, was not only inclined to laugh, but did laugh in scorn. But scorn is a poor thing at best, and Lady De Glastonbury's scorn did not-as the Americans say-amount to much. I, being favourably inclined to study the idiosyncrasies of Mr. Rameses, as those of a commanding intellect, possibly out of the circle, thought that, whatever else there might be in the notion, there was no particular novelty in it.

What, for instance, is Love between a young man and a young woman, in the blossoming spring-time of their existence, but the search for the twin soul? The idea
of the twin body is of the flesh, fleshly, but that of the twin soul appeals to the most occult and sacred sympathies of that great outlying world of nature, which infinitely transcends the experiences of merely physical life, a life which we share with the flowers, and the trees, and the oysters. What, for instance, does it signify, and in what does it minister to our higher existence, even in this world, if a youth and a maiden love the same fruit, the same wine, the same amusement, the same physical joy? But if they are inspired to distinct emotion by the same strain of heavenly music, if they feel unspeakable but communicable delight in their hearts, in the beauty and the glory of the same landscape, of mountain, of wood and wild, and ocean-if they are inspired by the same noble thoughts, expressed in the noblest language; if the contemplation of the starry heavens on a clear night, when the overarching sphere is begemmed with rolling worlds, each, perhaps, more full of life, joy, and beauty and intelligence, than our own little grain of sand that lies sweltering on the shore of infinite immensity-if these delights fill them with thoughts that no language can express, that glances from eye to eye, that kindles from touch to touch, that travels from
smile to smile-is this unity and duality, and perfect sympathy of soul with soul a thing to be laughed at? Let the dreadful Mrs. Grundys who block up all the highways and byways of society, with their prejudices, their meannesses, their mountainous ignorance, their titanic commonness, and their all pervading spite and conceit, laugh if they will. Their dreary mirth is as natural to them as the bray is to the donkey, and the cackle to the goose. But I believe with Mr. Rameses in the ineffable bliss of the twin soul, though I must confess that the possibility of finding it stretches itself far away into the nebular infinitudes of Belief. But the twin soul is within the bounds of possibility, even in this world ; and if it can be found in marriage-then is marriage that brings the twins together, the nearest approach to Heaven which exists on this side of the celestial gates.

The day after the return of Mr. Rameses to the Rookery, the London carrier brought him a trunk, the arrival of which he seemed to expect with some anxiety. He informed me that it contained two sets of rich oriental apparel of ancient style and fashion, as used in the days of Belshazzar, one for a man and one for a woman, which he had caused to be made at a fashionable milliner's. He
had muen dificuicy, he said, in making the milliner and her people understand what he wanted them to produce for him ; but as soon as they were satisfied that he had money enough-even though the price they might demand were five hundred per cent. in excess of what it ought to be-the difficulties in the execution of his orders (which they greatly exaggerated) vanished, and his orders were executed with the utmost deference to his wishes and caprices, as the more caprices he had the more they were prepared to be delighted with him and to charge accordingly. I forbore to ask him what purpose these excecdingly rich dresses were intended to serve, but he informed me in the evening as we sat alone in the library in desultory chat, that he had found, soon after he had first made my acquaintance, that we two, under his immediate supervision, should, at the first convenient opportunity, proceed to the unrolling and unswaddling of one or more of my mummies.
" I should like," said he, "to proceed with this work, and if perchance we succeeded in revivifying the embalmed body and summoning a soul back to take possession of it, a physical garment would be necessary, if the returning
mortal should walk the earth again and be seen of mortal eyes. But there must be no interlopers, no spies, no eavesdroppers, and no incredulous fools lurking and prying and sneaking about, to interrupt-even by the opening of a door, or a sound out of season-the solemn work in which we shall be engaged. To bring a long-departed soul from the far infinitude in which it has been circling like a comet for two or three thousand years, and link it again to the physical body which once belonged to it, is a task which no incredulous person, with profanity in his thought or a sneer on his lips or in his eyes, can be permitted to witness. Possibly nothing may come of the experiment. The mummy which we shall unrol may be an utterly dead mummy, or the mummy of a fool unworthy of revival, and as incapable of second growth as an ear of mildewed corn, or its little soul undeveloped in its mortal life may have long since passed into the body of a mouse, a bird, a fish, or a mosquito, or even of a more vulgar insect, and even in that of an animalcule, floating about invisible in a drop of water, but living for all that, and eaten or being eaten as the great economy of nature may command."

[^1]the extremest possibility-the dried-up mummy of the dead body that has been reposing, if not rotting, in the bosom of the earth that knows it no longer, can ever again receive the quickenings of the immortal spirit?"
"You have heard, no doubt, of the grains of corn buried with a mummy, and replanted after three thousand years, when the mummy was exposed to the light of day, that sprouted and grew and reproduced themselves. And if a grain of corn, why not the human frame ?"
"But the grains of corn never actually died, their vitality only slept and hybernated, but the mummy from which they were taken was indubitably dead."
" I cannot say that I have any particular hopes of this particular mummy; but, believing as I do that intelligent and invisible souls pervade the atmosphere, and are ready to enter into any body that they may find vacant, whether the body of a child newly born, that requires a soul that it may prove that it is alive, or the shell, not utterly defunct, of a once sentient being such as the mummies provide, I cannot deny that a mummy may be made to live again."
"I do not altogether deny, but I very greatly doubt.

Who or what is man, that his dead form should be capable of re-animation, any more than that of the rose or the lily, which bloomed in their appointed season, quite as beautifully, perhaps more beautifully than he? If men can claim this privilege of revival, why not his dog, or even his cabbage ? All these live their time, and what more than our time can be expected for us, even though we may call ourselves lords of the creation and superior, while we live, to all other living creatures?"
"Aye," said Mr. Rameses mournfully, "but the rose and lily, cabbage and dog, expect no immortality."
"How do you know ? Did you ever talk to a rose, lily. a cabbage, or a dog, on this great subject ?"
" I grant you no. It is a pity that we cannot interchange ideas with animals and plants. If we could talk to them, and they to us, it is probable, and indeed certain, that we should learn of them many things that it would be important that we should know. Why are these barriers fixed between the different varieties of this poor miserable mortal life? I believe in perfect faith that I could learn something from a butterfly if the butterfly and I could understand each other."
"A very portentous 'if," said I, " and if from a butterfly, why not from a worm or a bee ?"
"Yes," replied Mr. Rameses, " and though these barriers exist between the living, do they exist between the deadthe revivable dead-the immortal spirits that once possessed bodies, and that may possess them yet again? When we talk of a dead body, and say it is the body of a great man departed, a thing left behind by its former possessor, do we not admit by the very phrase that the great man still lives, and was once the owner of the thrown-off covering of flesh and blood and bones, for which he had no further use, and that he still lives to provide himself, temporarily, and perhaps permanently, with another, and possibly a better, garment of blood and bones than that which he, still living, leaves to us, to do as we please with-to bury, to burn, to dissect? When I speak of my body-does not the ' $m e$ ' and the ' $m y$ ' affirm that ' $I$ ' differ from my 'body,' and that the thing is not me, but once belonged to me?"
"Indubitably," I replied. "You speak to me, through me, to my body and my physical organs of sight, feeling and intelligence, which, however, are not me, but things
that belong to me temporarily, and to use as long as they are servicable to me."
"Just so, and if the spirit that formerly inhabited the dried-up mummy-which we shall find with its case in yonder corner-should come back, saying, 'I am here, and this body belongs to me now, as it did three thousand years ago,' shall we not believe what the spirit says?"
"Yes, if it says anything, and if we do not cheat ourselves, by thinking or believing that the speech is extraneous to our own imagination, and not the phantom of our own disordered thoughts."
"Ay, there's the rub. We scarcely know what is within us, what is without us, what is far beyond us, so bewildered are we in the mist of our senses-which so lead us, and so mislead us, that we scarcely know the difference between the clear, bright sunlight that shines above, and the fog that enswathes us round about."

While he thus discoursed Mr. Rameses, carelessly and but half consciously, directed his notice to the smaller sarcophagus of the two that I possessed. Looking now at them through a powerful magnifying glass, such as merchants employ when they would test the fibre of textile
fabrics, he examined the lines of the ornamentation on the lid. Suddenly concentrating his attention on a portion of the design which I had often admired for its beautiful but complicated workmanship, he submitted it to a careful scrutiny through his glass. After a study of a few minutes, he pronounced it to be an inscription bearing the name, age, and date of death of the person enshrined within. "In the fifth year of the reign of Thoth, died Lurulà, priestess of Isis, in her twentieth summer." "Such," he said, turning to me, " is the record upon this sarcophagus. Is it not suggestive of youth and beauty prematurely removed from the earth? And Lurulà! What a noble name-the light, or treasure of the day! Three thousand years and more have the mortal remains of Lurulà lain within this husk and shell. Were it mine to aid in and accomplish their revival, to re-endow them with the soul which they have temporarily lost, what a glorious task and privilege it would be! What a delight it would be to behold Lurulà herself-to converse with her, bringing back, as she might do, the knowledge of which she died possessed. We might compare it-at least, you and I might-with that of our time, which we vain gloriously, and with superabundance of self-conceit, believe to be far in ad-
vance of all the wisdom of the days of Thoth, and all the other Pharaohs, and of the priests, prophets and philosophers of ages thousands of years anterior to the Pharaohs, who have left neither record nor name behind them. Pharaoh is not a name, but a title, as you know. This will be a great, a solemn, a holy experiment, my friend, to discover, or if not to discover, to attract the wandering and eternal soul of Lurulà, far up, perhaps, among the stars-circling blindly among the comets, may be-and attract it down to this dim spot, the earth-this small corner of the earth, where you and I live and breathe at this moment-and lead it back again into her long-neglected home."
"But," said I, with a sense of Euclid and the multiplication table strong upon me, with a faith or a superstition in the superiority of matter - at least in this material world -to spirit, where spirit is either not understood at all, or misunderstood, by people who think that they comprehend, and don't *** I had a whole cannonade of "buts" to discharge upon him, of which these two were the preludes, when he courteously interrupted me by deprecating the expression of any doubt, and requesting that there should be no further discussion during the experiment, even
though the experiment should seem odd in its inception, and strange and even absurd in its progress, and though it might extend over a much longer time than either he or I anticipated. All this was agreed upon, and, though utterly incredulous as to the re-animation of the mummy, I was content to be a student of the incomprehensible, and not to vex by vain questions the mind of the experimenter. Nothing further upon the subject was said that evening.


## CHAPTER X.

THE BUTLER AND THE GARDENER.
Next morning, as soon as I appeared in the breakfast-room-being, as usual, the first to descend to the morning meal-preparatory to a turn in the garden and the inhalation of the fresh air of early day, which I consider a medicine, the venerable-looking Mr. Binns, the butler, who had been up an hour before me, requested an audience. Of course it was granted, on the supposition that it referred to my wine-cellar. Binns met me on the gravel path, and with a solemn air, after a few awkward apologies and stammerings by way of introduction to the weighty matters that were to follow, gave me notice to quit.
"Oh, very well," said I, quite unconcerned, for I had known him for a long time to be dishonest, though I had no very ardent desire to be disembarrassed of him, lest I should get a worse in his place, "but what is your grievance?"
"Oh, nothing to speak of-at least, not until lately; but vol. I.
you see, sir, I am growing old, and I and my missus are going to set up a public."
" Very good. I wish you joy and prosperity. But what do you mean by saying you had no grievance to complain of until lately?"
"Well, sir, I didn't wish to speak of it, but since you ask me, I must say, sir, that I am a Christian."
"Who denies it? You are, I suppose, as much of a Christian as the rest of us."
"I don't pretend to be better than my neighbours, sir, but there are things no Christian can stand."
"Very likely. Don't you have enough to eat and drink? Don't you have the run of the larder and the cellar ?"
"Don't mention it," said Binns apologetically. "I have nothing to complain of on that score, especially on the score of the cellar. You trust me to judge of your wine, and I judge of it, and I take care to the best of my experience that your wine merchant shall not defraud you by sending you bad wine, and charging you for it as if it were first-rate. But it is not that, sir ! It's a case of conscience, and I make bold to say of our common Christianity, sir."

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"Is it possible, Binns, that there can be a question of what you call common Christianity between you and me?"
"No, sir, not between you and me, but between me and the foreign gentleman, and his valet and body servant or slave, or whatever else he may be called. Why, they are both of them heathen infidels, sir, and their goings on is shameful, and enough to bring down the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Rookery."
"In what way?"
"Why, this very morning, sir, only an hour ago, I saw both of them on their knees, clasping their hands, looking towards the sun, and praying to him as if he were God Almighty. I can't stand it, sir! I'm afeerd of the consequences!"
"Well, Binns, I won't argue the question with you. The faith of Mr. Rameses is not my faith, but I can respect it all the same!"
"Respect hydolatry sir! I can't ; neither can I stay in a house where such goings on is permitted, or, as I would say, winked at."
"Well, Binns, if the world is wide enough for Mr. Rameses and me, it ought to be wide enough for Mr.

Rameses and you. To what and to whom he prays is no business of yours or mine! Is your mind quite made up?" "Quite, sir. The hydolatry and praying to the sun, sir, is too much for me."
"Say no more-but if you determine for the remainder of your days to be as great an enemy of false doctrines, false pretences, and false speaking, and of all that is not fair, honest and above board, as you appear to be of idolatry and the worship of the sun, you will be a very cstimable member of society."

Binns appeared to be surprised, and as if he would gladly have continued the controversy, if controversy it were ; but I turned upon him so suddenly after delivering my shot at him, that he had not a chance to add a word before I was out of sight. Binns drank more of my wine than I did myself, be it understood, and was otherwise objectionable.

Sir Henry De Glastonbury was much amused. His wife inclined to sympathise with Binns, but my mother and daughter, quite irrespective of the religious question, were rather glad than otherwise to be rid of my venerable butler, whom they more than suspected to be a hypocrite, and who
moreover gave himself airs of such authority in the house as were not always agreeable.

The gardener was a man of another stamp. He knew all that had happened between Mr. Binns and myself, and the cause of it, and had ideas of his own about the butler, about the sun, and about sun worship, and as in the intercourse between us, I being my own head gardener and he but my deputy, we had often exchanged ideas, he was emboldened to speak his mind about what he called the "cantankerousness" of Binns in objecting to the religion of Mr. Rameses. "What's the odds," he said, " if you be a Christian, a Jew, a Chinaman, or a Parsee, such I think is the name of Mr. Rameses' religion, if you are true and good and scorn to tell a lie, or rob, and swindle, or murder, and love God and your fellow creatures? I think a Christian is as good as a Jew, perhaps better, and a Jew as good as a Christian. There are some Jews as is better than some Christians as I knows of, and have heard tell of."
"No doubt," I said, "that charity is the foundation of all religion, that of man to man, and of man to God. Charity, though not everything, goes a great way towards the sum total of our adoration."
"And where's the harm," said the gardener, wiping his forehead, " of thinking that the sun is God's right hand, as it were? Excuse me if I be too bold, I don't mean any offence, but when I see as sure as Spring comes round every year what the sun does (and what could be done without him ?), I think that the Parsees, as you call them, are not so very far wrong after all in believing him to be, I will not say God Almighty Himself, oh no! but God Almighty's prime minister, so to speak, in this world-that is as regards trees and flowers, and vegetables and fruits, and for the matter of that as regards men and women. Could we live at all-I am not a larned man, sir, as you know, but I make bold to ask could we live at all, any more than the trees and the yarbs (herbs the poor fellow meant)-without sunshine? I say no, sir !"

I do not wish to be too palpable and direct in attributing motives (especially bad and mean motives) to anyone, but I cannot help remembering, apropos of this conversation, that Mr. Rameses, greatly admiring the perfection to which Mr. Pipps had brought some varieties of roses in my garden, had tipped him with two sovereigns. This may not account, or it may, for the good opinion entertained by my gardener of the sun worship of Mr. Rameses. I don't think Mr. Rameses ever "tipped "Mr. Binns. He did not admire or drink the liquors which it was the province of Mr. Binns to take care of and dispense, a fact which may account for his forgetfulness or disinclination, whichever it might have been, to purchase the good opinion of my very Christian butler.

I told Mr. Rameses of the Binns incident. His first impulse was to absolve Binns from blame, and to depart, rather than there should be any difficulty, or a divergency of interest between me and a good old servant, whom it might be impossible adequately to replace. But I resolutely opposed the idea, and would not listen to any of the remonstrances which Mr. Rameses thought himself obliged to make to me upon the subject. At last he yielded on the point, with the less reluctance, after I let him know -as I did very emphatically-that I did not think the loss of Binns to be any loss at all, but rather a gain to my wine cellar, and to my comfort, in having no longer to be civil to a domestic who abused my confidence, and made a hypocritical pretence of piety as a cloak to his dishonesty.

## CHAPTER XI.

MODERN CIVILISATION.
I let Mr. Binns understand that, after his unnecessary assumption and ill-mannered display of superior theological wisdom, and his thereby implied attempt to dictate to me what religious company I should keep in my own house, his presence.had ceased to be agreeable to me, and that the sooner he packed up his effects, and took his departure, the better I should be pleased. The strong impression made upon the mind of Mr. Rameses by the incident seemed to be one of intense astonishment at the audacity of a person in the position of a butler in presuming to discharge himself from service for such a cause, which was about as absurd, he thought, as if one of my horses had discharged himself from the duty of drawing my carriage because of the objectionable morning prayers of a gentleman whom I chose to receive in my house as a guest and a friend. He brooded on the subject with as much wrath as a Carolinian or Virginian cotion planter, half a century ago,
might have displayed if one of his field negroes had given him notice of his intention to leave his servitude and establish himself in a shop in New York or Cincinnati, on account of a difference of opinion between himself and his master.

In the afternoon of that day, in a saunter through my garden and grounds, Mr. Rameses dwelt pertinaciously on the subject of the unsatisfactory relations between masters and servants, employers and employed, which was characteristic of modern civilisation. At last we rested for awhile on the rustic bench under the shadow of my beautiful beech tree, while he opened out the whole subject, and sought my opinion upon it.
"Modern civilisation," he said, "appears to me to be founded on a wrong system, on a base and unworthy philosophy, the love of self, and the presumed right of every man to do as he pleases, in virtue of his manhood, irrespective of his knowledge or his wisdom. In fact, the curse of the present day is too much liberty, too much license of individual action, and too little action, or power of action, for the conscience of the aggregate state as distinguished from the divergent consciences of the small men who form big nations ;-the growth, in fact, of the great
democratic idea that all men are wise, that the voice of the people is truly the voice of God, and that the majority of men-bad, silly, ignorant, self-willed, and wrong-headed as they may be, and often are-have the right, as they unluckily have the power when they are united in political parties, to impose their will upon and to govern the wise minority."
"I think with you," I replied, "that the tendency of modern civilisation is to establish an unwholesome despotism of the ignorant many over the enlightened few ; of the hewers of wood and the drawers of water over the thinkers and the planners; of the mere distributors over the producers and constructors; of the body of Society over its mind ; and of what may be called, of the leaves and branches of the great tree, over its sustaining roots and vivifying sap."
"Precisely so," said Mr. Rameses. "The civilisation which prevails in the West in the nineteenth century after the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, though said to surpass, does not even equal, that which existed in the East three thousand years before that event. If we come to think of it rationally, freedom in the mouths of the multitude is
like a word screeched by a parrot, used without thought or understanding. In point of fact and of reason, there is no such thing as absolute freedom-of thought, of will, or of action.
"Everything, animate or inanimate, in the Universe, is subject to fixed, inexorable laws, which must be obeyed under heavy penalties from which there is no escape.
"The stars and planets, and all the countless orbs of space, are not free to wander from their orbits, or to disobey any one of the laws that made them and uphold them in their appointed places.
"In the little earth on which men live and die, no man is free to do as he pleases. The physical, the intellectual, and the moral laws surround him, control him, coerce him, and compel him to obedience.
"When men agree to live together, liberty is only liberty by reason of its restriction. Freedom cannot be maintained unless a certain portion of it be renounced for the guarantee of the remainder.
"The liberty of any nation is of necessity a compromise, a chain of compromises, by which the few for the sake of the
many, or all for the sake of each, are restricted from flying out of the circle.
"Restricted freedom produces law and order; unrestricted freedom, were it possible to exist, would immediately produce anarchy and the destruction of Society.
"There are several varieties of freedom which in modern times are much discussed, ardently advocated, and to a certain extent, established. These are-free government, free land, free labour, free sexualism, free discussion, free thought, free trade. There is no freedom in any of these except in name. They are only reputed to be free by a careless fashion of speech, and an equally careless acceptance of words without a clearly defined meaning. There are but two out of the seven I have enumerated, namely, free discussion and free thought, which in a certain degree may be thought to be actually existent and accurately defined; but even these two are but partially free, within certain very narrow limits.
"In this disquisition of mine-precise and clear, and imbued with the wisdom derived from ancient intuition rather than from modern experience," continued Mr. Rameses, "I have laid bare the secret of the civilisation of past ages,
such as men knew it in the days when Nineveh, Babylon, Memphis, Thebes and Palmyra were the centres of knowledge, power and glory ; before such transient shows of civilisation as Greece and Rome arose in the world to supersede the government and the ideas of heroes and giants by those of cowards and pigmies."
"Your opinions, Mr. Rameses," replied I, "are based upon the supposed advantages of despotism over those of a free government."
" Doubtless," he replied, "the Divine Government of the world and of the universe is a despotism-uncontrolled and uncontrollable by the meddlesomeness of foolish men, who think themselves wiser than God. God's laws are always despotic, and may not and cannot be broken or impeded save at the cost and to the punishment of those who break and would thwart them. Can a man jump from the top of a high precipice, without paying the penalty decreed by the law of gravitation? Can he offer his body to the consuming fire without being burned? Can he abolish the immutable laws of geometry, and make a straight line crooked, while still preserving its straightness ? Can he call upon Annihilation to annihilate anything ? Can he de-
stroy even the smallest atom that God has created or reduce any something, however small, mean, and imperceptible, into nothing? He cannot. Despotic law, invariable, invincible law prevents him. We all say that in the Almighty Ruler of the universe there can be no change or shadow of turning, and concentrate the great idea in the phrase 'I am that I am, and ever must and shall be.' There is no absolute Liberty in the Universe, and there cannot be. Were there Liberty the whole microcosm might shiver itself into frag ments, to await the action of the mighty hand that should reconstruct them again into order and into beauty, and to the divine action of authority and law. 'Order,' as your poet says 'is Heaven's first law, and includes every other.' "
"You once hinted to me that you might be tempted to attempt to win a seat in the British Parliament. I suspect you would have no shadow of a chance, with your notions, of acquiring the favour of one voter out of ten thousand."
"If I did give such a hint," replied Mr. Rameses, "I must have been suffering from a temporary fit of madness. To be the nominee of a caucus ! Faugh! To be the so-called free slave of a thousand fools, would be unspeakable slavery, intolerable degradation-from which
my soul would revolt, if my body played my soul so false as to submit me to it! In public affairs, were I ever so foolish as to mix myself up with them, I would be 'aut Casar aut nitil,'-aut more than Cæsar, aut less than nothing."

Mr. Rameses and I never spoke of politics again. The subject was odious to him, and more or less alien to my tastes.


## CHAPTER XII.

## THE PALIMPSESTS.

Mr. Rameses, as we sat together under the shadow of my venerable tree, and for which I have a respect that is of a fervency approaching to enthusiasm, both on account of its beauty and longevity, unexpectedly enquired of me if I had ever thought on the subject of palimpsests and on the possible multiplicity of them that yet remain to be deciphered and explained?"
"No doubt," I answered, " there have been many that are now hopelessly lost. Ancient parchments are rare, and carelessly treated by ignorant and indifferent people, who do not know that under the modern writing traced upon them may lie concealed many treasures of knowledge of the bygone time. The monks in their religious zeal for the multiplication of the Gospel narratives, and in the scarcity of materials for books that existed before the invention of printing, were accustomed to write over with the blackest possible ink, the faintly legible but invaluable manuscripts
which were dimmed and nearly obliterated by time, neglect, and hard usage."
"And it has never struck you," he asked, " that the human brain partakes of the nature of a palimpsest? That the facts, the thoughts, and the experience of bygone days recorded upon it may remain indelible, though written over and temporarily effaced by the newer impressions it receives in the progress of time ?"
"Possibly," I replied, " if we did but know of, and could take advantage of, the old lamps, temporarily extinguished by the superior brilliancy cast by the new ones."
"And may not these palimpsests of the immortal mind be as truly indelible as the palimpsests that are to be perceptibly and carefully traced on the perishable papyrus or parchments of our remote ancestors, recoverable from the misty Past if circumstances, affinities, sympathies and the eternal harmonies and connections of all Time and Nature assist in the patient process? The human brain is like a sensitive musical instrument-silent, inert, irresponsive, and niggardly of its hidden wealth, until it is touched by the skilful fingers of some gifted musician, or by the lreath of the passing wind, that draws from the strings of vol. I.
the quiescent Eolian harp the wild weird melodies that slumber within it-melodies that may be near akin to the eternal harmony of the spheres."
"A fair subject for poetical fancy," I replied; "but one that will find few adherents, except, perhaps, among the Theosophists and Rosicrucians, or among the electricianswho have given us the telephone, and enabled us partially to become independent of Time and Space and set their trammels at defiance."
"Time," cjaculated Mr. Rameses, with a slightly contemptuous curl of his upper lip, "is an old impostor. We have conquered him in the future by electricity, and can girdle the earth in forty seconds, as Shakespeare's 'Ariel' asserted she could do, and made him actually of imperceptible account. We can also conquer him in the past, though to less useful purposes ; and we do so, to a great extent, when we look at the stars in the constellations of Orion and Andromeda-which we see, not as they now are, or may be to-day, but as they existed myriads of years ago, when their light first began to reach our melancholy orb. Even the Polar star, that shines so brilliantly in the midnight sky of our Northern latitudes, may have ceased to
exist ten, or a hundred thousand years ago, though it is still visible to our sight. To the eye of the immortal mind, the past is present, just as the present will become the past before we have ceased looking at it. I often bewilder and please myself by diving down into the mysteries of the bygone ages, and living such portions of them once again, as suits my waking-or possibly my dreaming-fancy. Only last night I wandered in imagination on the Plains of Shinar, and learned from Nimrod the secret motive of his great undertaking in raising the tower of Babel."
"And I dare say you thought," I remarked, "that he was no impious madman, as the world has supposed, but a great, natural philosopher, and far in advance of his age and people, and of the natural science of his time ?"
"He is supposed," continued Mr. Rameses, "to have lived about fiveithousand years ago, but the palimpsest which I fancy I have been able to decipher on the brain tablets of my memory, cleared of the mythological errors which have been inscribed on the original manuscript, shows me the real intention of his mind in building his mighty tower. It was not designed for any profane, or blasphemous, but for a highly scientific, purpose-in the midst of a barren plain,
on which no moisture fell, but which if fertilised by rain, as he thought it might be, would grow corn and fruit to feed the clamorous multitude, that increased too fast for the means of subsistence which the country afforded. He knew that a constant accumulation of heat on high places draws down to earth the superabundant water that floats in the clouds ; and his object in building his tower-not to reach Heaven itself, as the ignorant multitude supposed, but to overtop the clouds-would, if a fire of sufficient dimensions were kept perpetually burning on the summit, infallibly draw to the thirsty earth the beneficent life-producing rain. and cause the barren wilderness to smile with flowers and fruit, and the brown and barren ground to become green with succulent grass."
"The supposition is ingenious, and not by any means unphilosophical or unscientific," I replied, as Mr. Rameses warmed in the exposition of his imaginative theory, which I endeavoured to support by the citation of such modern facts in its corroboration as had fallen under my cognisance. "Do we not know," I asked, "from the experience of such great cities as London, Manchester, and Glasgow, that in consequence, it is to be fairly assumed, of the multitude of
tall chimneys that are continually pouring heat-which is electricity-into the atmosphere above them, a greater quantity of rain falls than in the adjacent thinly inhabited and fireless districts? After any tremendous battle has been fought, accompanied by the explosion of enormous quantities of gunpowder, rain is made to fall within a few hours, or even during the progress of the battle. Are we not also informed, on the indisputable authority of living witnesses, that a similar result invariably follows a great naval engagement upon the ocean ?
"Such facts as these, in reference to the action of heat upon the atmosphere, had been studied by the ancient fathers of the world more thoroughly perhaps than by the money-worshippers of this age, and shallow-minded children who expect philosophers to think for them, and never think for themselves, and if they do think, for the most part think wrongly. But they were wholly unknown to, and unsuspected by, the Jews, to whose tradition the story of Nimrod and his tower are traceable, whose vulgar and unworthy idea of the great Creator and Governor of the Universe was that he was fashioned like themselves, subject to the same infirmities and passions as they were, and that $h$
and his fellow-gods, of whom he was represented as continually jealous, were really afraid that Nimrod would succeed in building his tower, to reach the no longer safe altitude which was the supreme God's own appointed dwell-ing-place. Poor fools! not to have reflected that Nimrod might, if he had lived so long, have continued to build until the crack of doom, ere he had reached the upper strata of our atmosphere ; and that if material and patience endured, a hundred years' work would not have carried the crazy structure to the height of Chimborazo, or even of little Etna or Vesuvius !
"And then the folly of imagining that such a hopeless expedient as to confound their language, and render their speech unintelligible-to each other, was the only means to render impossible, or, at least, difficult, the consummation of their impossible project!"
"The confusion of tongues, so called," replied Mr. Rameses, "was indeed a confusion of voices, of which the modern world has every-day experience whenever men congregate and dispute. I believe that it consisted on the Plain of Shinar of nothing more wonderful than the angry vociferations of an excited multitude of discontented labourers who
had struck or resolved to strike work, either to compel their employer to increase their wages-a boon or a demand which Nimrod would not grant, or with which he was unable to comply. Or the mighty hubbub may have been produced by the utter want of faith on the part of the clamorous crowd in the alleged utility of the unremunerative undertaking, on which the tyranny of Nimrod lavished their wealth and wore out their bones. This is my reading of one of the palimpsests that Time has spared.
"But it is not the only one that has been buried alive in my memory, or covered by the dust of ages-not lost or wholly obliterated, but only encumbered, dimmed, and choked up by the ruins under which it lay hidden. My second palimpsest is a Babylonic one, and dates back for nearly six hundred years before the commencement of the Christian era, when the great Belzhazzar reigned and held his court.
"In the beautiful city in which I seem to remember that I served as a priest in the Temple of the Sun, I have an idea that I was present at the great festival which the King was engaged in celebrating, even when the conquering Medes and Persians were thundering at his gates. Belzhazzar, the meaning of whose name is 'the
servant of God,' assembled more than a thousand guests, most of them of the priestly order, to eat, drink, and be merry. Amongst them was the Hebrew Daniel, whom he had caused to be named Bel-Te-Shazzar, not the servant of the god Bel or Baal but a servant in the House of Baal-a distinction that marked his inferior rank in the hierarchy to which he had been admitted as a sign of especial favour. In the midst of the rejoicing-as the ancient Book records-a spectral hand appeared, luminous amid the surrounding gloom, and wrote upon the wall in letters of blazing light, in full view of the King on his lofty seat, with his loveliest queens and concubines around him, the mystic words, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin! The language was understood by the initiated priests alone, but was utterly incomprehensible to the Chaldean monarch, and to the greater portion of the joyous assembly. The inscription was accomplished through the agency of electricity, with all the secrets of which the priests of antiquity were as familiar as the scientific enquirers of the present day-perhaps even more so. The young, pleasureloving, and handsome King, as history and tradition record, was sorely puzzled and alarmed, and Daniel, having ac-
quired the highest reputation in Babylon as a soothsayer, magician and prophet, was called upon-as he doubtless expected to be-to explain the mysterious words-purposely hidden in a language unknown to the King and to the crowd, and only intelligible to the illuminati and the initiated. They are freely and somewhat loosely translated in the English Bible, ' Mene; God hath mumbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting. Peres; Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.' It is evident from the translation that the prophet amplified single words into sentences, and that these words were intended by their framers to say much in little, as was customary with the priests and prieste sses who presided ove the so-called oracles of the gods. Tekel, or Tekle, should more correctly have been rendered Teiche uile!' escape all of you'; and Upharsin, which appears in some of the versions to have been handed down to us as Peres, might more properly read, gu farsuin, or 'widely'; teiche uilegu farsuin, 'escape all, and scatter yourselves widely!' The Persians were at the gates in overwhelming numbers, and this advice was the best that the priests could have
tendered under the circumstances. The unhappy Belshazzar rushed out and perished in the endeavour to escape, with great numbers of his subjects. 'In that night,' says the Book of Daniel, 'was Belshazzar the King of the Chaldeans slain.' What became of the Jewish prophet, and whether he was arrayed by the conquerors in the scarlet robes and golden chain that had been promised him, I never enquired, but mingled with the flying crowd that took refuge in the lovely hanging gardens of the noblest city that ever perhaps was built. This also is a palimpsest."


## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE DREAM OF AMENOPHRA.

"I have reason to believe," said Mr. Rameses, "that of the two souls which once animated the two embalmed bodies which have been encased during so many centuries as mummies within the two sarcophagi wnich you have the good fortune to possess, one was doomed at the time of its departure from this earthly sphere to revisit its former dwelling-place, and in a new and possibly superior form to undergo a probation to fit it for a higher and purer life in the stars. The other, who had been less blameful and more pure in the conduct of its mortal life, was destined to ascend to its reward in the Heaven of Heavens-the Holy of Holies-to enjoy beatitude for ever. The name of the first soul, as I read it among the hieroglyphs on the lid of the sarcophagus, was Lurulà, as I have already made known to you, a priestess in the temple of Isis, and of the other, Amenophra, the daughter of Memphra, a Pharaoh who reigned over Egypt in the days of the Patriarch

Joseph, the fortunate Hebrew whom he made the steward of his household and the prime minister of his kingdom. Memphra, sometimes called Rameses, was one of the reputed builders of the pyramid of Cheops, that yet stands on the banks of the Nile to preach its mighty homilies on the vanity of human wishes and the immeasurable presumption and arrogance of mankind."

The soul of the priestess of Isis, according to the belief of Mr. Rameses, yet haunted the earth, ready to be re-embodied in female form, to play a part in the great comedy of human life, while that of the beautiful Amenophra floated in the region of the stars, and was still able to hold converse from the Empyrean with the souls of those whom it had left behind in this lower world. Strong in this faith, as a reverent worshipper of the great world spirit of which Amenophra, as well as himself, was an emanation, he believed that she was able to communicate to him a portion of the secrets of the universe.

For the purpose of studying the two sarcophagi, Mr. Rameses shut himself up in my study on the night of the full moon, that streamed brilliantly on my books and my busts, and on the pictures on the wall. By his earnest
desire I left him to his solitude-and his dreams on this occasion-to read by the full radiance of the unclouded orb which sailed placidly over the clear blue sky, a written Arabian manuscript, familiar to him, though unintelligible to me, who was unable to decipher a single one of the beautifully-flowing characters in which it was written, although I knew several words of Arabic picked up from books in the Roman character. He required, he said, to study a few directions for the careful unrolling of one of the two mummies, which he expected to find either in the Arabic MS. or the hieroglyphs so copiously pourtrayed upon the lids of the sarcophagi.

For this purpose he remained during the whole night in my solitary library, alone with the books, the mummies, his thoughts and his dreams ; and when I entered the room in the early dawn of the following morning, I found him asleep on the comfortable arm-chair in which I had left him. On my entrance he greeted me with a placid and happy smile, and beckened me with a wave of his delicate white hand to sit down beside him. "I have had a dream," said he, "' which was not all a dream,' a revelation of mysteries that are not all quite such mysteries as are supposed, and
have held converse with a soul, in the soul's language, and been told of things which, in the words of your great poet, Milton, were 'never heard in tale or song from old or modern bard, in hall or bower,-unattainable by the gross and carnal multitude, but partially attainable by the earnest truth-seekers, who know and feel, as Shakespeare says, that there are more things in Heaven and Earth, than are dreamt of in our philosophy. Shall I tell you my dream? It was as vivid to my mind as a reality ; more real, perhaps, than many of the vulgar palpabilities with which we are surrounded from our cradles to our graves, and which are the unsubstantial shadows of unimagined realities."
"Go on! Dream or no dream, I hope to be edified by it."
"By the aid of charms and spells, and incantationsall of the simplest kind-which I derived from the lore of the Magi and the -Rosicrucians, and the prophets and seers of a more earnest and a more reverential time than the present, all based upon the magnetic influence that pervades all nature, I summoned the spirit of Amenophra from the upper spheres, where it circulates among the countless happy and eternal emanations of the

Great Father of the Universe. The star Ione, which Amenophra inhabits, is one of the orbs which revolve around the sun of our system, and seems to be the magnificent planet with its four attendant moons which we call Jupiter, compared with which our little Earth is in bulk no larger than a pebble on the beach when measured against an island. In that mighty world, the abode of myriads of happy spirits that once endured the bondage of flesh, the great curse that afflicts humanity is unknown-the cruel necessity that compels us to fight against the penalty of daily death, and to procreate creatures as miserable as ourselves, by eating, drinking and digesting. The wholesome atmosphere supplies all the nutriment the ethereal body requires for continuous life and happiness. The inhabitants of Jupiter inhale it in every breath and exhale it pure and perfect as they receive it. Pain and diseases are unknown to them. They do not thrust poisons into their delicate frames, or contaminate their life-currents by rebellious liquors. They are, moreover, endowed with a greater number of senses than we poor earth grovellers; and are not confined as we are to five doors and windows of sense, as outlets or inlets to the wonders that surround them.

Men's five senses are resolvable into the one sense of feeling. The eye feels the light, and we call that operation seeing ; the ear feels the sound, and we call that result hearing ; the nose and the palate feel, and we smell and taste accordingly. Our flesh feels the contact with matter, and we call touch a sense. The senses of the inhabitants of Jupiter are not so restricted, but are as innumerable as their thoughts, and every one of them administers to their ease, their pleasure, or their delight. Their eyes are both microscopic and telescopic ; they can pry into and examine the great and the small, the near and the remote, and can appreciate the magnificence of littleness and measure exactly the pettiness of immensity. To their fine ears all sounds are musical; the flow of waters is a perpetual melody; the quivering of the leaves on the forest trees is a chorus of gladness; the voice of the cataract and the roar of the ocean are like holy psalms or resounding anthems, singing praises to the great God of the stars and of the happy creatures that inhabit them.
"All that live and move on this beautiful planet are their fellow-creatures, with whom they can hold pleasant converse. They can hearthe flowers talk and make love to each other.

The birds of the air tell their secrets to them. All created things of a nature lower than their own, confide in them and love them.
"Their fairy bodies are so light, so flexible, and so strong, and are endowed with such capability of rapid movement, that locomotion is as easy as thinking, and they can float on the waters and in the air with as much facility as sound can travel through space ; the exercise of their volition being all-that they require to surpass the swiftness of the eagle in its flight. They need no dull mechanical aid of wind or tide, or of wings, to bear them wherever they list to go. The four fair moons that shed a mild radiance on their balnyy nights, are not forbidden to their visits. Distance to them is in reality as non-existent as on the earth and ocean, when the electric current virtually abolishes it by speeding over the telegraphic wires to carry the thoughts, the needs, and the desires of the long-estranged nations of the earth to each other.
"And not the least of the many blessings which the inhabitants of Jupiter enjoy, in a world where eating, drinking, and garments are unknown and unnecessary, is that there is no grinding, grovelling selfish trade, no systematic vol. I.
robbery, no warfare of the strong against the weak for the means of sustaining life; no false weights and measures, no adulteration and poisoning of commodities ; no lawyers, no doctors, no malefactors, no sick people ; no rich, no poor. All the inhabitants are happy, and industriously intent upon acquiring the knowledge which opens its illimitable stores before them and satisfies and fills their lives with perpetually recurring joys, each joy greater than the joy which preceded it, and all conducing to adoration of the great Creator of the Universe, at the threshold of whose bright abode they stand, with permission to enter into the boundless Paradise of which their temporary home is but the vestibule.
"Amenophra unfolded all these mysteries to me-every one of them within her own glad experience since she left this earth four thousand years ago."
"And do Amenophra and the inhabitants of Jupiter never sleep ?" I interrupted Mr. Rameses by asking. "And if they sleep, when, where, and how does the divine forgetfulness fall upon them ?"
"They sleep at will, untroubled by a dream, on the leares of the great water-lilies that grow in the clear waters
of the lakes and rivers, or they float quiescently upon the fleecy clouds that adorn the blue sky, and prevent the monotonous beauty of the expanse from palling upon their sight."
"Your description of the happiness of Amenophra tempts me to long for the death of the earthly body, and inspires my mortality with a passionate longing to put on immortality. I think the ideas with which she has inspired you of the abodes of the just are infinitely more worthy of contemplation than the Mahomedan Heaven resplendent with lovely houris and teeming with physical delights, or than the Christian Heaven with its golden pavements, its gates of pearl, and its superabundance of priceless jewellery, such as our common-place preachers in synagogues and conventicles amuse themselves by imagining. But all possible descriptions of the possibilities of Heaven fall short in beauty of the description of the great Scottish preacher, Dr. Chalmers, who affirmed that Heaven was not a place, but a state of mind. Herein lay wisdom, philosophy, poetry, and imagination, and nothing can surpass it in truth and beauty."
"Granted," said Mr. Rameses, " to its fullest extent. It
is the state of mind which, according to the spirit of Amenophra, exists in Jupiter. Heaven is truly a state of mind, as Hell must be, whether the Heaven or Hell exists in Jupiter or on this earth."
"Very poor and mean are man's notions of Heaven," continued Mr. Rameses, "but quite consistent in their littleness with the narrow intelligence vouchsafed to him, and with the vulgar physical delights which are all he can appreciate in a vulgarly physical world, where eating and drinking are the acme of his enjoyments, and the penalties entailed upon eating and drinking are the acme of his sufferings. Truly considered this earth is but a purgatory, a reformatory, a prison for the peccant soul to be furnished with a body-though, happily, not to be enslaved to it for ever."

## CHAPTER XIV.

## REVERIES OF A STORMY NIGHT.

Some days after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, the subject of the priestess of Isis, Lurulà-dearer to his fancy than her sister Amenophra-was renewed between Mr. Rameses and myself. "Is it really your belief," I enquired of him, as we sat alone in my study, surrounded by sarcophagi, by rolls of papyrus, and by ancient slabs inscribed and indented by hierographs, in cuneiform characters, "that it is the hard fate of the priestess of Isisyour well-beloved Lurulà-to endure again the bonds from which Death released her? And in her second state is the memory of her first to remain fresh in her immortal mind? And can she, and will she, if you succeed in establishing relations with her, recall the circumstances in which she played a part in the childhood of the world ?"

Mr. Rameses replied sorrowfully :
"I dream of her as my twin-soul, and I know that my dream is true, from the infallible indications of electric sym-
pathy which possess me when I think of her, and strive to trace her earthly progress since our fates were separated. I cannot tell if we shall ever meet on this side of eternity. All is drear and dark, and the palimpsests of my memory are not susceptible of complete restoration in this world. She may have passed through many gradations of existence, since she ministered in the Temple of Isis-gradations of being, doing, suffering, remembering and forgetting, loving and hating-if such a divine soul as hers is capable of hating-or of living and dying. But I have had a dream of her, as I have had of Amenophra-a dream of her sorrow, almost of her despair ; a dream of her unfulfilled desire and of her weary wandering through the wilderness of this lower earth-in the as yet fruitless quest of her twin soul.
"Last night the wind howled dismally through the trees of the Rookery, though you, perhaps in sound sleep, did not hear it. But I heard it as I lay dolefully awake. It piped amid the dark branches of the yew and the cypress, and amid the fresh green boughs and leaves of the oaks, the beeches, the birches, the lindens, and the elms ; and my vagrant imagination distinguished a rhythm, a coronach, a rune, a wail, as of the priestess of Isis lamenting her doubt
and her desolation which seemed to say in the words of a poem that has long lingered in my memory-
' Merciful Mother Isis, take me back into thy bosom.
Take me back! oh, take me back! I have wandered from thee long, I have strayed in doubt and sorrow through a wilderness of darkness, Ever searching for the right, ever lapsing to the wrong.
Take me back! oh, take me back! repentant and heart humbled, To the high embattled fortress of thy love that cannot fail ; For I'm weary, very weary, and I long to rest my spirit In the shadow of the glory of thy never lifted veil.'
"This chant-for such it seemed to me—of a despairing spirit, was faintly familiar to me-as if I had heard it in a previous state of existence, and vaguely and but half remembered it. It passed and re-passed through my brain in the long night watches, in spite of my will, and of my strong determination to banish it from my mind.
"I slept fitfully, and, in my dreams, seemed to remember that in the first flush of my early and passionate manhood I was a priest in the temple of Isis, in the city of Thebes. The pyramids, at that early period, were reputed to be of venerable antiquity. Their purpose, their utility, and their origin were surmised, but not known. I was devoted to the priesthood from my boyhood, and became an exponent, as far as I was able, of the inner
mysteries, and of the awful words inscribed upon the portico of the temple-'I am all that is, all that ever was, and all that ever shall be ; no mortal has ever lifted my veil.' The countless worshippers of the goddess believed in her with unquestioning faith, and considered her to be the arbitress of human destiny; the bride and sister of the Sun, who was the fountain of life, knowledge, and happiness, the ruler of the seasons, the source of all possible fertility in man and nature ; without whose aid the propagation of all plants, and animals, and every form of life, in the heavens and the earth, and in the waters, was impossible; who regulated the motions of the planets, and maintained the stability of the Universe. As my contemporaries believed, I believed also. Of Isis, and the Sun, her lord paramount, I was the minister and the slave. So entirely were my mind, my body, and my soul, to be devoted to the service of the Temple that all human affection-if I indulged it even by a thought, a word, or a look-was considered a crime against the all-powerful hierarchy of which I was a member-an act of treason against the Majesty of Heaven. The punishment decreed against such weakness of the flesh, was not alone the solemn and ignominious degrada-
tion from the ranks of the priesthood, which was invariably inflicted upon it, but the loss of life itself, as far as life could be lost in the eternal universe, by the laws of which death was impossible. But, alas ! for me! The Divine electricity that throbs in uncontrollable pulsations through all space and time, and animates every created thing, and compels the union of body, as well as of soul, in all that live and breathe, and more particularly in man and woman, made me feel that I was a man, and drew my soul to a radiant woman of unspeakable beauty, who was a priestess at the shrine. I knew it to be written in the records of eternity that I should love her as man has always loved woman, and, priest as I was, I yielded to the pleasant destiny that seemed opening out before me.
"But the young priestess received my silent homage as unconsciously as the sun received the homage of the lotus that grew on the banks of the Nile, and opened its leaves to the kindly beam of the noonday sun, and responded not to it.
"But for having dared to aspire to her, and broken in my heart the vows of celibacy which I had taken on entering the Temple, I was sentenced to death by the High Priest
of Isis. I suffered the penalty-with perfect resignation to the will of Destiny-without pain, quietly, as if sinking into sleep, dreaming a pleasant dream, and cherishing the consoling hope that, as Death was but the door that opened into eternity, I should meet again the beautiful object of my earthly adoration, and wander with her through the gardens of Paradise, no more to be separated from her, but living in perfect unison with her for ever and ever. Such was my dream. Was it not a palimpsest and a revelation?"
" I think not," replied I ; "only the result of a disordered nervous system, and of too much brooding over one allengrossing subject that had too long held possession of you. A long walk, followed by a warm bath, will restore the equilibrium of your mind. Try these remedies."

Mr. Rameses, while retaining his idea, said he would act upon my advice. He did so, and the subject was not again renewed between us; though I cannot doubt but that he still clung to the truth of his thought, and nursed his spirit in it.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE MILLIONAIRE IN LONDON.

In the spring of 188 -, the following paragraph appeared in what are called the "Society papers," that administer to the high and low bred gossip-mongers of London, the pabulum on which they love to regale themselves:


#### Abstract

" We learn, on the best authority, that the celebrated Parsee or Hindoo millionaire, Mr. Rameses, has purchased, at an almost fabulous price, one of the most superb mansions in South Kensington, which he has just completed furnishing in a style of princely magnificence. He intends, during the approaching season, to give a series of entertainments, including dinners, garden parties, balls, concerts, al fresco theatricals, and masquerades, to which only the elite of the very élite will be invited. He has secured the services of a distinguished cordon bleu-one of the most famous gastronomes in Europe-formerly in the service of a Royal personage, and has engaged to pay him the highest salary ever yet paid to a cook, and a stylish brougham for his exclusive use. The income of this Asiatic potentate is said to amount to at least $£ 150,000$ per annum, so that the sinews of war will not be wanting to keep up the splendour of his avatar in London.'


Whether the writer-a fair and aristocratic penny-a-liner moving in aristocratic circles-knew the meaning of the imposing word az'atar, it is not necessary to enquire.

Another journal, of the same class, announced during the
following week, also on the " best authority," that there was no foundation for the current rumour that-


#### Abstract

" An Indian millionaire, at whom countless farr widows and still fairer spinsters are setting their caps, presumably in vain, is about to put an end to all these silly reports, by joining his hand in holy matrimony to that of the lovely and accomplished daughter of a noble house-the fairest of the three remaining unmarried daughters out of a family of seven, all happily -and, indeed, splendidly mated."


It needed far less knowledge of the great world of London -its doings, its jealousies, and its intrigues-than that possessed by Lady Stoney-Stratford, to convince that clever personage that the paragraph referred to one of her daughters-though to which of them she was unable to say. But the announcement set her ladyship thinking of a thing that was not, but that might possibly be, at no distant date, if she played her cards properly. The prize to be striven for was great and splendid, and fairly accessible to what the great revolutionist, Danton, called, "de l'audace, de l'audace, toujours de l'audace!" Some envious people call this valuable quality, "skilful management"; though mere skilfulness sometimes fails, when audacity is not audacious enough. Lady Stoney-Stratford was not deficient in either quality, as the great world of London, especially that small
portion of it called "Society," well knew ; and although it sneered at her more or less persistently for the reputation she had thereby acquired, admired her all the same, and recognised her as a notable match-maker, and a very superior woman.

Lady Stoney-Stratford's opinion of the possible bridegroom that might, if all went well, be secured for Maud, Ethel, or Gwendoline Pierrepoint-she hoped it might be for Gwendoline-was somewhat dubious of his sanity. All the world admitted that he had strange notions about a "twin soul," and the felicity of the life to come; but after all, she thought, such notions were harmless, and as for sanity, what was sanity? She could not tell exactly. Even her husband was accused by the malevolent world of not being perfectly sane, because he borrowed money at ten, twelve, and sometimes fifteen or twenty per cent. per annum to invest it in acres that did not yield a third or a quarter of the amount, and-whatever truth there might be in the charge-no man living, or woman either, was perfectly sane on all points. Had not the French poet, Boileau, of whose writings she was a professed admirer, said that all men were mad, and only differed from one another in the
degree? And had not a still greater poet, Dryden, intimated that it was rather an honour than otherwise to be mad, inasmuch as great wit was nearly allied to madness, and only divided from it by thin partitions? The "fad" of Mr. Rameses, as she called it, about the "twin soul," was a romantic and rather praiseworthy fancy, and she sincerely hoped the estimable millionaire might find the anticipated twin in the bosom of one of the Pierrepoint family, to share his thoughts, his love, his sorrows, and his millions.

It was one of the greatest consolations of Lady StoneyStratford's life that all her daughters were "good" girlsthat is to say, they never set their fancies, their caprices, their whims, or their predilections, in opposition to those of their mother when marriage, or the possibilities of marriage, were concerned. In fact, they were all as docile as French girls before the event of marriage, and during the progress of the negotiations that led to it ; and understood as well as any French mademoiselle the conditions of the "absolute monarchy of the mother," to which they had to submit in their apprenticeship to the trade of life, a temporary maternal despotism that was to be followed by the pleasures
and unrestricted liberty of a democratic republic, as soon as they became " one and indivisible" with a legal proprietor.

The Countess, it must be said, was not altogether easy in her mind with regard to the manageableness of Lady Gwendoline, who was more skittish than any of her sistersa skittishness resulting from her too great familiarity with horses, and the life, language, and manners of the stablethough the mother was reconciled to the comparative waywardness of her daughter by the knowledge of her overpowering love of money, and of the horses, the carriages, the grooms, the coachmen, the diamonds, and the amusements, that money could purchase. Her indulgence in slang was, as her mother rightly thought, a convincing proof of her high appreciation of money, and of all the coarser joys it could bring her; so that, all things considered, she relied upon Lady Gwendoline's docility, patience, and skill, when she was told to angle for Mr. Rameses in the stream of Society, where there are very few fish of his dimensions to be caught.

Whatever Mr. Rameses did, it was his pleasure to do thoroughly; and in resolving to play the part of a leader of fashion in London society, during, at least, one season, it was his intention to eclipse in taste and splendour, if it
were possible to do so, all other leaders of fashion, from the Prince of Wales downwards to the most successful railway contractor, or owner of silver mines in Nevada, or diamond fields in South Africa. He had the will, the means, and the recklessness to do as his inclination dictated, and though he anticipated no enjoyment-except that of having his own way, which neither he nor any other human being was ever known to revolt against-from the heavy labours he knew that he was assuming, he hoped, at least, to have the advantage of taking a lesson in life's hard school, and of making the acquaintance of some of his school-fellows, and of learning much that was good, or at least useful, for him to know, both in the playground and the study.

In his desperate plunge into the vortex, to make a figure in London society, and to spend his money like a prince, he was determined to have his money's worth in experience of all that Society could offer him—in splendour, in excitement, and in what is called "sensation "-so that when the brief period of his cometary life expired, he might be remembered as long as Society could remember anything, and be looked upon as a wonder for one day more than the customary nine which the fates allow to all abnormal
celebrities. In the ideal world of London Society, Mr. Rameses had a vague kind of feeling that amid its eddies the "twin soul," of which he could not prevent himself from dreaming, might appear when least expected, not necessarily upon the surface of the great stream, or on its banks, or even in its depths, nor on the highways or by-ways of the much trodden thoroughfares of the mighty city. He did not trouble himself to think whether the " twin soul" would appear in the shape of a young, artless, and radiant member of the aristocracy, or of a daughter of the middle classes,

> "Poor, perchance, But rich in native elegance,"
or of a village maiden, gathering primroses in the fields to adorn the bosoms of the true believers in the faith according to St. Beaconsfield, or even of a lower grade-a flower girl standing at a street crossing, offering to the passers-by her innocent wares-as innocent as their wares, to all outward seeming. To him, amid the clouds and vapours in which he lived, moved, and had his being-all gifts of rank and fortune, all endowments of worldly goods, all personal graces and accomplishments, were alike unconsidered and inconsiderable, if not infinitesimal, compared with the great VOL. I.
and predominant idea which had taken possession of his dreaming fancy, that of discovering the "twin soul," if such a soul existed either on the earth, or in the planetary spheres, from which it could be summoned at his bidding.

Of such "twin souls," he maintained that the records of history, as well as the traditions of Romance, Poetry, and Mythology, were full. Was not, he asked himself, the fair Hero the twin soul of Leander ? Heloise of Abelard? the Beggar-maid of King Cophetua ? Laura of Petrarch ? Juliet of Romeo? Ophelia of Hamlet? Cleopatra of Antony? And in a much lower scale of intellect-Nell Gywnne of Charles II.? Josephine of Napoleon Buonaparte ? Madame de Maintenon of Louis Quatorze? Mrs. Fitzherbert of George IV. ? and Mrs. Jordan of William IV. ? And was the twin soul of Mr. Rameses non-existent? He could not think so; she might be Lurulà, or a prima donna in a London or Paris theatre, or even a ballet girl unknown to fame or the footlights. He might be destined to find her, or he might not ; but still, though undiscoverable in Time, she might be discovered in Eternity.

The hypothesis of a twin soul, as necessary to the felicity of married life, was, according to Mr. Rameses, not
an idle fancy, or a fond aspiration after the unattainable, as the thoughtless are apt to suppose, but a life based upon nature and necessity. It was his firm belief that souls emanate from the giver of all life in twins. Positive and negative electricity, light and darkness, up and down, attractive and repulsive, are twin-born, and exist from all eternity. The one is the completion and the corollary of the other, the perfect chord in the heavenly harmony, without which music would be but a clash of jarring dissonances. Who finds the twin soul and is happily united with it, finds as much of heavenly bliss as it is permitted to mortals to enjoy, and remains in perfect union with nature and his kind, and with the whole surrounding universe. In perfect alliance with the twin soul, there is no such thing as discordance of taste, temper, or aspiration. To think the same thoughts, to feel the same joys, to be affected by the same sorrows, to be moved by the same impulses and passions, or even to be stirred to exertion or melted to softness by the same breath of melody and music; or to feel the same sympathetic currents coursing through one's veins, and sparkling in one's eyes; to love what the twin soul loves, to hate
what the twin soul hates, if hate be possible to the immortal spirit-this is to know what happiness really means in a world where antagonisms are the rule, and accordances are the exception. 'Those who find the twin soul, and are made one with it, need not dream of Paradise, for they have passed its portals, and the angels have welcomed them into the blessed domain, from whence expulsion is impossible in time or eternity.

All the members of the Pierrepoint family had full knowledge of the "fad," the "craze," the "hallucination," the "fancy" or the "crotchet" of Mr. Rameses-for by these several epithets they called it-and looked with more or less indulgence upon it, as not so very heinous an offence against the respectabilities, the bienséances, or the stereotyped ideas of the Nineteenth Century, as it might be ignorantly or maliciously considered. Lady Ethel, far more than Lady Gwendoline, sympathised with it, and thought it sweetly poetical, and not by any means to be ridiculed. Lady Maud was neutral-had not, in fact, thought much upon the subject-but was fully prepared to excuse the apparent eccentricity, most pardonable in a man with a hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year, who, if he married
at all-which she did not think he would do-would marry for love, having no occasion to marry for money, or even for rank. Was not money, she thought, more than rank ? And was Mr. Rameses not the reputed son of a Begum, or Queen, the Maharance of Nirvanabad, and, therefore, if he chose to call himself a Serene, or, possibly, a Royal Highness, could he not do so ?

Lady Gwendoline scoffed irreverently at the idea of his having a Begum for a mother, and, in her customary slang, with a woful attempt at wit, asserted-not wishing that her words should be taken au serieux-that the son of a Begum was, of necessity, a Big-humbug. Her wit, if such a strong word could be fairly applied to so feeble a vulgarism, was not to the taste of the Earl of Stoney-Stratford, who had the very highest and deepest respect for a man in the position of Mr. Rameses, one who could purchase thousands of acres without being reduced to the ignoble necessity of borrowing-at an exorbitant rate of interest-thousands of pounds sterling to pay for them, and whose acquaintance and friendship he was determined to cultivate. He flattered himself that it was from no desire to worship the great Saint Mammon, but from the conviction that it was
better to cultivate the acquaintance of the rich than of the poor-especially if the rich were very rich, and were never guilty of the folly, the sin, or the crime, or whichever it might be, of hoarding up their money, and making no beneficial use of it either for themselves or their neighbours. In this respect calumny could prefer no accusation against Mr. Rameses. His gold fell upon barren places like a refreshing shower, and his generosity was like sunshine wherever it penetrated.

The reputation thus acquired by Mr. Rameses was dearly bought, and became a source of constant annoyance. Though an Asiatic and a sun-worshipper, he was expected to contribute towards the building and endowment of Christian churches and chapels without number, to the outfit of Colonial bishops and a whole army of missionaries, to the maintenance of every London hospital and charitable institution, to countless societies-malignant or benignant, as the case might be-for the propagation or abolition of everything, to associations of strong-minded women and weak-minded men for the encouragement or discouragement of anything of which they did not approve, or for the support of measures to be taken in seaport or
garrison towns for the dissemination or at all events for the non-prevention of shameful contagious diseases, for the evangelisation of Thibet, Japan, and China, and for innumerable other bubblings up in the great, thick, slabby cauldron of restless and unreasonable philanthropy.

Then there were the Joint Stock Companies, of which the name was legion, or a hundred legions, of which the avowed objects were ten per cent. to the enterprising shareholders, and enormous gains to the contractors. Direct lines to Kamschatka through the snowy wastes of Siberia, or to the Indian Ocean through the heart of Central Africa; for the exploitation of gold mines in Nova Zembla, Ultima Thule, and Spitzbergen ; for aërial communication with the North Pole; or great national schemes for rendering the gas and water supply of every city, town, and village in the empire as free as the air breathed by the inhabitants; and for turning all the wheels of the world's machinery by the power of the wind, the waves, and the water-currents, from mighty Niagara to the tiniest brooklet that winds its devious way through the meadows.

The very capacious waste-paper basket of Mr. Rameses, and the still more capacious fiery furnace of his great new
mansion in South Kensington, received such cart-loads of letters, circulars, lists of directors, and speeches at public meetings, as would, if ground down and reduced into their original pulp in the paper-mills, have provided new material out of old for the imprint of "shilling dreadfuls," or "horrible pennyworths " of the lives of brigands, pirates, and burglars, and other pestiferous literature for growing boys, as well as broad sheets for the dissemination on the desecrated and disfigured walls of the Metropolis, of quack advertisements, and hair-restorers, and the sweet syrups of Mrs. Festina Lente, for the painless extinction of the too numerous infant progeny of the British Isles, and preventing them from adorning the twentieth century with their genius or their beauty. Mr. Rameses sometimes thought he would be compelled to engage a private secretary to answer all these letters; but in the meanwhile came to the conclusion that a letter burned was almost as good as a letter answered, and that a fire in the grate was the best remedy for ninetynine per cent. of the evil. So he prudently offered the greater part of his correspondence to Moloch.

The question of the private secretary was nevertheless a pressing one, and if Mr. Rameses was to play his part in the
great comedy of life-as it unravelled itself to a millionaire in all its mazy complications-he could not afford, with any regard to his own dignity, to leave his letters entirely unanswered. His trouble was to find, to approve, and engage a trustworthy and gentlemanly person to fill the office, and vicariously to save him from seeing too much of the worst side of human nature in the multifarious demands that were made upon his purse by the impecuniously servile, or the really impecuniously unfortunate.

For this purpose he was advised to insert advertisements in the Times, the Daily Telegraph, and the Standard. He did so accordingly, offering a salary of $£ 300$ per annum to the fortunate candidate. The magnitude of the result bewildered and surprised him. The letters received in reply amounted to upwards of fifteen hundred. Among the applicants were retired officers in the army and navy, from major-generals and admirals down to simple lieutenants ; from briefless barristers too numerous to count ; from Oxford and Cambridge graduates; from the younger sons and brothers of peers-all entitled to write "honourable" before their names; from disappointed and returned colonists, who found, as they said, that there was no place like home;
from the penniless sons of penniless curates, who had been too uxorious in their early manhood, and had brought families into the world without the means to maintain them from men who were too proud to dig, and who looked upon manual labour, except with the pen, as a disgrace ; from broken-down attorneys and attorneys' clerks; from third and fourth rate journalists; from promoters and secretaries of public companies, to whom a rise of salary from $£$ roo to $£ 300$ was an object of ambition; and from the residuum of all the learned professions, elbowed out of the chance of gaining a subsistence in the hard scramble, tuzzle, and tumble of life. Among these were large numbers of what the Scotch call "stickit ministers," willing to preach commonplace and drowsy sermons, but finding no pulpits to preach from, and no congregations to weary with their platitudes. Mr. Rameses, on surveying the pile of letters that arrived from day to day, and from hour to hour, accompanied by still greater piles of printed testimonials, and in many instances by the photographic portraits of the candidates, dreaded that a temporary private secretary would be necessary before he could deal with the claims of the expectant permanent ones. On endeavouring to
sort the letters as well as he was able, he discovered to his surprise that at least one-third of them were from ladies. Perhaps the "twin soul" might be among them! The thought distressed him for awhile, lest in rejecting her for his private secretary, as he could not choose but do-being an unmarried man with the fear more or less developed of the formidable Mrs. Grundy, autocrat of the English world, before his eyes-he should have banished from his presence the bright particular star of which he was in quest. But he took comfort in the thought that Fate was Fate-that he could not escape it, wherever or whatever it might be-and that the star of his destiny was much more likely to descend from the Empyrean, than to be found among the impecunious and multitudinous daughters of the middle classes of England.

And Destiny found him a private secretary beyond the limits of the fifteen hundred, in a totally unexpected quarter, in the person of a young gentleman privately recommended to him by his old friend and correspondent, Monsieur Palliasse, of Paris, as an art student, a philologist, the son of an English father born in Benares, and deeply imbued with all the learning of the East, untrammelled by the superstitions
either of the East or the West, and a searcher after Truth, wherever the Truth might lead him, "convinced," he said, "that no one truth could possibly misfit with or contradict any other." To these qualifications, such as they were, he added, those of being young and handsome, a thorough man of business, an accomplished vocalist and instrumentalist, and without any obvious personal vices or prominent religious prejudices. His name was Melville, and after sufficient inquiry he was duly installed in the responsible post of private secretary to the great millionaire, and the confidential distributor of his charities. The fifteen hundred candidates, military, naval, legal, clerical, literary and Bohemian, living upon their scanty wits, of whom, perhaps, not above half-a-dozen had ever imagined that they had the remotest chance of the appointment, severally came to the conclusion that the world was a very hard world to live in, and that merit, industry, and high character were of little or no value in the struggle for existence. None of these people could do anything but write letters-not always grammati-cally-and cast accounts-not always correctly. They were all too proud to do manual work, though they were not exactly ashamed to beg, but found that mendicancy was an unpro-
fitable and sometimes a dangerous trade. The women could read, and some of them could write-or fancied they could write novels and verses, and all of them could play the pianoforte ; but not one of them knew how to cook an egg, a potato, or a mutton chop. All the fifteen hundred aspired to rank as gentlemen or ladies, and many of them were so, although without the means to maintain their position, or the spirit to seek new homes in Canada or the Antipodes, where strong and willing hands were wanted. But Mr. Melville had the coveted place, and was not at all elated that he had secured it.


## CHAPTER XVI.

## NEW SCENES AND NEW CHARACTERS.

Every sane man may be said to lead a double life in his progress through the world, and his intercourse with his fellow-creatures. Doubtless some insane men also lead double lives, and not only double, but multiple ones. The notorious burglar, Peace, Pease, or Pace, whatever was his name, who reduced burglary to a system, as deftly conducted as that of a General Provider or a wholesale linendrapery, was a burglar by night, while by day he figured as a respectable tax-paying householder, a musical adept, and a not illiberal contributor to the charities of the town or village in which he resided. Old Patch, the equally notorious forger of Bank of England notes, who flourished at the end of the last century, passed himself off to, and was accepted by, his neighbours as a quiet, but somewhat humdrum and prosy country clergyman, and sometimes as a well-to-do dealer in beeves and sheep and agricultural produce. Dr. Dodd, who was made by the

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and end their career as vestrymen, churchwardens, justices of the peace, and even in rare cases as members of the great Imperial Parliament, that rules a nobler empire than ever fell to the lot of Darius, Xerxes, Aurungzebe, Alexander, Cæsar, or Charlemagne.

Idiots alone are single-minded in this best of all possible worlds-that is if they have any minds at all-which is doubtful. Mr. Rameses, as a man of great though irregular intellect, one who was afflicted by crazes, crotchets, fads, and wayward fancies, was of necessity many-minded, but, as was written by Oliver Goldsmith of another person, "e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side." Though he was a man of impulse, he never allowed himself to ride Mazeppa-like on the back of a wild horse through the wilderness, and never lost the reins of his impulse if it threatened to run away with him. Though a hot enthusiast, he could if he pleased be a cold reasoner. He was a man of action as well as of thought, a materialist as well as a spiritualist, a wise man in most things, a foolish man in many things ; one who performed the most generous acts when the fancy seized him, but who was sometimes parsimonious or what the world persisted in calling "mean"; one, in fact, who would cheerfully disburse ten thousand pounds on a caprice, and begrudge a shilling for a necessity. The idea of the "twin soul," which he expected to discover either in the highways or the byways of his life, was not an all-absorbing passion, but a calm anticipation of a possibility that might become a reality ; and if the world sneered, and was respectfully doubtful, what did the sneer or the doubt signify to a man who had a hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year, and loved his hobbies the more affectionately the more the world laughed at them ?

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[Here the narrative of Mr. De Vere comes abruptly to a close, and is continued by another hand ; a man who had less sympathy with Mr. Rameses in his peculiar notions of this world and the next, but was open to conviction on any point that did not conflict too violently with his somewhat sturdy and obstinate prejudices. The new chronicler of this veracious history was inclined, as will be seen, to be tolerant to other people's eccentricities if they did not take the shape of antagonism to the Decalogue. Unlike Mr. De Vere, he was fond of society and of a town life. The great maelstrom of London life, into which Mr. Rameses
had plunged head-foremost, was to his taste, though not at all to that of Mr. De Verc. The pensive and philosophic recluse of the Rookery returned, therefore, to his books, his manuscripts, his mummies and his beloved garden, to cultivate his roses, his strawberries, and his drumhead cabbages-as dear to him as they were to the Emperor Diocletian, who much preferred the quiet cultivation of those magnificent vegetables to the unquiet cultivation of the votes and goodwill of the turbulent multitude of Rome.]

Mr. Rameses had requested of Mr. De Vere, as a particular personal favour, that the mummy of the Egyptian lady, whom he called Lurulà, and supposed to be that of a priestess of Isis, should be transported to his new house in Kensington. He promised that the most reverent care should be taken of the priceless relic, until the day of its solemn unrolling in the presence of and by the aid of the most eminent experts and practical philosophers, Egyptologists and cognoscenti in Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, whom he intended to invite for the purpose. He also proposed to give them a magnificent dinner at the conclusion of the cercmony, to be attended by His Royal

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Highness the Prince of Wales, and as many of the members of the upper and lower branches of the legislature as could possibly be induced to be present. He also proposed to organise a grand concert of Egyptian music, such $a^{s}$ Nebuchadnezzar the king delighted in, and at which the instruments employed were the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sackbut, the psaltery, and the dulcimer. The cornet was, it is to be supposed, the shawm or trumpet ; the sackbut the bag-pipe-which the Germans call dudel-sack, and the French with less propriety the cornemuse; -the psaltery was a stringed instrument akin to the lyre, the lute, and the harp, though doubtless of different construction. Possibly the dulcimer was no other than our familiar friend the violin. All Nebuchadnezzar's instruments were proofs of the civilisation of the people who invented them or adopted them, and included no such barbarous contrivances as the drum, the gong, the bell, the delight of children and of all savage and of some cultivated nations to whom all noise is more or less musical.

The palace of Mr. Rameses, for such it might be deemed, was due to the taste and ostentation of a great railway potentate, a princely "navvy" and employer of navries,
who had accumulated a large fortune out of the labour of the multitude, and exhausted, or endeavoured to exhaust all the resources of ancient and modern art in the construction and luxurious decoration of his dwelling-place. His breakfast-rooms, his dining-rooms, his smokc-rooms, his bath-rooms, his billiard-rooms, his library, his picture and sculpture galleries, his boudoirs, his reception-rooms, and his bed-rooms, were the admiration of all who, as a great privilege, were admitted to visit them, and were the talk and the envy of London. The lucky proprietor, for so the world persisted in designating him, built this magnificent abode, and lived in it but for three weeks, when Death, who, as we all know-though we never seek to profit by the knowledge-has no respect whatever for money-bags, sat down one day at the rich man's table uninvited, and maliciously smote him with apoplexy. He had summoned his butler to his awful presence, to remonstrate with him on his carelessness in sending up a bottle of Clos Vougeot which had been for twelve years less time in bottle than the Clos Vougeot which he had ordered. He had worked himself up into a state of excitement over the mistake which had made him look foolish in the eyes of his guests, to

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whom he had been vaunting the superior excellence of the liquor, honestly worth five guineas a bottle, as, in an outburst of innate vulgarity, he had taken care to inform them. The stroke was what the French designate as one of apoplexie foudroyante, or coup de foudre, and the poor rich man died at the table before the affrighted guests. The butler sought to bathe his temples and support his head, but the poor wretch never spoke or opened his eyes, and was removed in the arms of the butler and the footman. The awful event elicited from a fashionable physician who was present the safe observation, that it was exceedingly wrong of any one who valued his health to give way to anger at the dinner-table. This was a piece of professional advice which, if tendered to the unhappy millionaire before the catastrophe, might have prevented it altogether, and been well worth the fee that might have been paid for it to the Esculapian baronet.

Mr. Rameses bought this mansion of thelexecutors of the deceased "navvy," after a vain attempt on their part to let it at the enormous rent demanded for it. But he refused to buy the library or the picture gallery, preferring
to be surrounded by his own books and paintings, all chosen in consonance with his own refined taste in literature and art, and dear companions and friends of an otherwise lonely existence.

The mummy of Lurulà was duly installed in the library on its arrival, placed under a canopy of purple velvet, in a darkened recess lit up day and night by a Rosicrucian lamp, of antique workmanship, to which its possessor attributed the quality of perpetual electric illumination. Beside the richly embroidered couch on which the sarcophagus had been placed, stood an ancient Egyptian harp, with ten strings, such as is represented in the tomb of Rameses III., and pourtrayed in Mr. Chappell's erudite History of Music. This was an instrument on which Mr. Rameses looked with peculiar veneration, and to which he attributed an antiquity co-eval with that of the Pyramids. It was certainly a very old harp, but not so old by twenty-five or thirty centuries as its gratified possessor believed it to be. But he found so much pleasure in the thought that Rameses III., from whom he was possibly descended, might hinself have drawn music from its trembling strings, that it would have been cruel to hint a doubt as to its genuineness ;

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and I therefore refrained from doing so, though some. times sorely tempted to air my incredulity and my superior knowledge.

Mr. Rameses, who had taken his young secretary, Mr. Melville-half of European, half of Asiatic, birth and educa-tion-not only into his confidence, but into his friendship and affection, and seldom suffered him to be absent from his councils or his amusements-asked and obtained the permission of Lord Stoney-Stratford to bring him to the great dinner-party. Lord Stoney-Stratford had expressed the pleasure he would have in making the acquaintance of the young gentleman, and the matter was arranged accordingly.

A frequent guest at Lord Stoney-Stratford's table was a person whom Lord Stoney-Stratford was often blamed by the world for receiving with so much honour ; an offence, however, which the censorious world was ready to pardon, when it reflected that Lord Stoney-Stratford was not a very rich man, and that the guest he favoured was blessed with an abundant fortune. The person in question was Mr. Algernon Pigram-two incongruous names, that ought never to have been linked together. Mr. Pigram made a figure in
the second stratum of fashionable, or quasi-fashionable, society in London, and was sometimes invited to a few aristocratic houses in the first stratum, because he was rich and a bachelor, or, if not exactly a bachelor, a widower. Here he occasionally mixed with gentlemen and ladies in circles which might have been closed against him, had not these two accidents-wealth and single blessedness-been in his favour. He was old, ill-favoured, vulgar, dropped his aspirates where they were imperatively needed, and picked them up and used them when they were wholly unnecessary. His personal character-though not tainted with positive dishonesty-was what is more significantly than elegantly called "shady." He seemed, like Midas, to turn everything he touched into gold, and, like Midas, was known to all men in his true character, in spite of his gold, by the long, soft ears, hairy and flexible, comparable to those of Bottom, the Weaver, in Shakespeare's inimitable play, which Fate had condemned him to wear. He had played many parts in his life, and succeeded, more or less, in them all ; but his crowning piece of audacity, accompanied by his customary good fortune, was the concoction of a pill, for the assurance of long life and health to all who would

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spirited and needy supporters of his government who sought for them, and was heard to speak of Pigram as a pig both by name and nature. The great minister was accustomed to say that he wished it was as easy to make gentlemen as it was to make Baronets, Viscounts, and Dukes. "A true gentleman," said he, in that democratic groove in which his thoughts were accustomed to run, though he was a born patrician and proud of being one, " is rarer than a king, and I have known kings and princes in my time who have been veritable snobs-sows' ears, in fact, like Mr. Pigram, and not silk purses." But, fortunately for the peace of mind of Mr. Pigram, if he had a mind, this whiff of ministerial disfavour was never blown into his nostrils, and he was content to dream of the Baronetcy or the Viscountcy as certain to be his some day, and to be an enhancement of his matrimonial chances in the eyes of some fair aristocratic spinster or widow, who might condescend to share either of those titles with him. The spinster on whom he had cast his eyes-not his affections, for he had none-was Lady Gwendoline Pierrepoint. That splendid young woman-for splendid she was in physical beauty-though she loved money much, for the indulgences and luxuries
it would bring her-had no favour to bestow upon any ugly, elderly man, who had nothing but money to recommend him. It must be stated, too, that her mind was preoccupied, and had no room for Pigram, when she remembered the handsome form, the noble features, the princely bearing of Mr. Rameses. If Mr. Pigram had had double the wealth of that princely gentleman, or if Mr. Rameses had had but half the wealth of Mr. Pigram, much as she loved money, she would greatly have preferred the poorer man to the richer "duffer," such was her word, and reconciled herself to the possession of fifty thousand per annum in lieu of one hundred and fifty thousand. After all, as she said to herself, money was not everything, and a pleasant face to look at, night and morning, was well worth a little sacrifice of ready cash. Besides, to be outraged daily by the reckless dropping of the aspirates, which was the great characteristic of Mr. Pigram's conversation, was intolerable, especially before company, all the females, and most of the male, members of which would have thought she had sacrificed herself for money, which might be truc, but which, nevertheless, was not to be urged against her, even in the thoughts of her dearest friends, who blamed her, but who
would probably have married a still greater "duffer " than Mr. Pigram, for the same advantages.

Mr. Rameses knew nothing of the high favour in which he stood with the bright Lady Gwendoline, nor did that beaming damsel care to consider too seriously the fact that Mr. Rameses was a Pagan, a sun-worshipper, and one who had no faith in the holy religion in the doctrines of which she and all her family had been nurtured. But these matters sat but lightly on the mind of the lady, and scarcely ever entered into her thoughts. And if they did at times find an entrance into her solitary meditations, she imagined that the faith of Mr. Rameses might sit as easly on his conscience as her faith did on hers. Indeed, she thought that all religions were more or less the same, if they taught people to believe in God, to be good, to avoid doing wrong to one's neighbours, or to anybody else, and that there was no difference, except in the form, between a Parsee and a Christian. Thus it will be seen that the Mammon-adoring lady took spiritual things easily, thought much of the efficacy of good works, and little of the saving influence of strong, or even of weak, faith, in obtaining entry into Paradise. But she seldom thought of Paradise at all, ex-
cept as a place reserved for such portions of good "Society" as had money to spare, and liberally spared it for the building of churches, the civilization of savages, and the disseminating of the Gospel among Jews and Heathens. But these things did not half so much trouble Lady Gwendoline as the extortionate bills of her dress-maker, her presentation to Queen Victoria at the approaching Drawing Room, and her appearance at an exceptionally grand State Ball or Concert.

Lord Stoney-Stratford, in blissful ignorance of the state of Mr. Pigram's mind and that of Mr. Rameses with regard to his eldest unmarried daughter, invited both these persons (I was going to say gentlemen, without reflecting that the word did not apply to the concocter of the Methuselah pill) to dine with him in company with Mr. De Vere and myself, at his house in Stanhope Street, May Fair. It was shortly after Mr. Rameses had taken possession of his mansion in South Kensington, and his first appearance in London Society in the full blown lustre and renown of his millions. In a tête-à-tête "conversation with Lady Stoney-Stratford, that strong-minded, but womanly woman, Mr. Rameses endeavoured to clear himself from the imputation of being a
dreamer of dreams, or an idle visionary, wandering through life in pursuit of a chimera, and losing his hold upon the realities of life, and with his hold upon it losing all interest in the great conflict of humanity. He desired to stand well in Lady Stoney-Stratford's opinion, though for what purpose it would have puzzled him to explain; while, on her part, Lady Stoney-Stratford was only too anxious for the sake of either one of her daughters-she did not care which-to encourage the most friendly relations with so powerful and wealthy a nabob as Mr. Rameses was considered to be.
"You are very eloquent, Mr. Rameses," said Lady Stoney-Stratford, "on the subject of the twin soul, but I would ask you how you know that the twin soul is in existence, and can be discovered either in time or in eternity ?"
"Because," replied Mr. Rameses, "human souls proceed from the soul of the universe, which is God, in inseparable pairs, male and female, like all Nature one and indivisible -of the same essence, the same design, the same aim and object, the same in life, and in what we poor midges of a summer day call death, without the slightest knowledge of the meaning of the word which we use so commonly -instead of change, progression and enlargement."
"I grant the possibility of the twin soul," said Lady Stoney-Stratford, with a deep sigh, " in the next world, but not in this, and envy the happiness of him or her who discovers it. But this is a world of contradictions and not of resemblances, of antipathies rather than of sympa-thies-a gross world at the best, in which we and all of us are slaves to physical surroundings, and the ignoble necessities of the animal rather than of the spiritual life. I wish the twin soul had fallen to my lot, and that it may fall to yours, but I must own that I despair of it, either for myself, or for you, or any living creature. The happiness would be too great for mortal to bear, and I resign myself as in duty bound to the want of it. And, after all, the loss of what one never had or enjoyed cannot be very great. So you see I am a philosopher after a fashion, and do not trouble myself by sighing after the unattainable."
"But," said Mr. Rameses somewhat abruptly, for which he was rather sorry afterwards, "you could not have thought that bliss unattainable when you married Lord Stoney-Stratford, or you would not have marricd at all. If
the twin soul is not found in the marriage state, it cannot, one would think, be found anywhere on this side of eternity."

Lady Stoney-Stratford heaved another sigh. "'Tis a painful subject, Mr. Rameses," she said, "and we will leave it if you please until, as Mr. Carlyle might have said, the 'Ineffable Eternities,' -as one too great and incomprehensible in this hard world of antipathies, self-seekings, animosities and divergencies. Possibly, however, to Lord StoneyStratford may belong the triumph of having found his twin soul in the person of one Mr. Pigram, the proprietor of a wonder-working pill, a man after his own heart, whose land abuts upon our own, and who is willing to dispose of it at a fairly reasonable price to his Lordship, for the honour of the thing, as he says, and not for vulgar personal advantage. I should like you to meet him, and expound to him your sublime theories."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE DEER FOREST.

Mr. Rameses confided to me the fact that he greatly disliked to be present at ceremonious dinners, especially if the company were numerous, and that his beau ideal of a dinnerparty was a partic carrée of four persons, who knew and understood each other's minds and idiosyncracies, and who could find something else to talk about than the weather, the fashion, the last new or old scandal, or the dreary, and too often acrimonious, polemics and politics of the hour. He consented to meet Mr. Algernon Pigram, solely to please Lord and Lady Stoney-Stratford. With Mr. De Vere he was more at home, and always looked forward with pleasure to the interchange of ideas with that gentleman, who was in all respects a man after his own heart, with whom he could converse on "Foreknowledge,Free-will, and Fate," and grope darkly, but still pleasantly, in the misty by-ways of occult philosophy, not to be traversed at dinner-tables, or in the company of ladies, but in the sacred solitudes of the VOL. I.
study or the library, or in woodland rambles, where the mind was not occupied with the purely animal necessities of eating and drinking.

Lord Stoney-Stratford did not care for the conversation of Mr. Pigram, which was more monosyllabic than was agreeable to him as a man of the world, and savoured largely of the Scriptural "yea" and "nay," which, contrary to the Scriptural dictum, he believed to be evil, inasmuch as they prevented the flow of rational ideas, and acted as dampers upon polite and mutually pleasant interchange of thoughts.

Mr. Pigram, on this occasion, was in the highest of high spirits, and, in his abounding satisfaction with himself and fate, diffused his aspirates over the room with a prodigality and profusion that jarred upon the sensitive ears, and disgusted the refined taste, of his aristocratic friends. But he was unconscious of the offence he gave, and it was all atoned for and forgiven when he announced that on the previous day he had brought to a successful conclusion a long-pending negotiation for the lease, at a large rental, of a deer forest in the Highlands of Scotland, extending almost from sea to sea, and comprising an extent of many hundreds of thousands of
acres of mountain and moorland, where grouse and red deer were alike abundant, and where man, with the sole exception of gillies and game-keepers, was a stranger, an interloper, and an encumbrance to be jealously excluded, lest his footfall in the wilderness should scare the sacred animals that Pigram kept for the sport of such good friends as Lord Stoney-Stratford. Lord Stoney-Stratford had been, in his youth, a deer-stalker, and an inveterate slayer of grouse and ptarmigan, as well as a patient and devoted angler for trout and salmon in the Spey, the Tweed, and the Findhorn, and accepted with delight the invitation of Mr. Pigram to pass a month of slaughter on the Moors. He extended the hospitable invitation to the whole of the assembled party, promising the ladies the full monopoly of the rivers, and to the gentlemen the monopoly of the glens, the corries, and the hill-tops, that they might supply the poulterers of London and the great cities with grouse. In our day, grouse is not to be given away as of old-when a gentleman would have considered it derogatory to have acted the part of a poulterer's assistant, or to have condescended to sell the birds which he had bagged-when sport was sport, and not a trade, or a business, carried on with a view to profit.

Mr. Rameses and Mr. De Vere declined the honour of shooting the grouse and the deer of Mr. Pigram ; but the guests of the evening accepted the invitation with gladness and a profusion of thanks, that were evidently grateful to their recipient. Mr. Rameses, contrary to his wont, commenced an argument with the compounder of the Methuselah pills and the lessee of the deer forest, on the iniquity of depopulating whole counties, once the home of brave men, to create a wilderness for the fere natura, and outraging what he called the right of the people to live upon the soil, on which they were born, and which their fathers had cultivated. "The owners of the English soil," said Mr. Rameses, running the risk of offending Lord StoneyStratford, "have no more natural right to the exclusive use of the land than they have to the exclusive enjoyment of the sunlight ; and would doubtless, if they were able to do so, divide the ocean itself into farms and allotments, and demand rent for them."
"I am a land-owner myself, in a small way," said Mr. De Vere; "but as my ancestors bought the acres in hard cash from the then legitimate possessors, I do not consider that they wrongfully acquired it, and that $I$ wrongfully hold
it as their representative. But, nevertheless, I cannot avoid thinking that the present possessors of large landed estates, the representatives of families to whom the land was granted by the bygone kings who owned it on behalf of the people, upon consideration of the performance of certain duties, which they have failed to accomplish, have become usurpers, and are in illegal possession of the property of the State. The lands were granted to these adventurers-for such they were originally-on the tenure of military service, and on the express undertaking for themselves, their heirs, successors, and assigns, of defending the country against foreign invaders. Consequently, the great landlords of the British Isles bound themselves to maintain a force sufficient for that purpose, and to pay and equip all the military forces of the kingdom. This contract has not been fulfilled. They have shifted the burden, by Parliamentary agencies, which they themselves manœuvred and controlled, on the shoulders of the general public, and of the landless inhabitants of the towns. Thus have they escaped, during successive generations, the annual payment of many millions of money, and the whole cost of the national defence. By the system of deer forests, prevalent in the Highlands of

Scotland, the land has been deprived of the strong arms of the peasantry, who, in case of need, would have been ready and proud to defend the homesteads of which they have been dispossessed by the deer and grouse of the sportsmen."
"A very revolutionary idea," said Mr. Pigran, "the realisation of which would throw the whole country back into barbarism."
"I merely state the question," replied Mr. De Vere. "I have not the slightest intention of arguing it, especially in the presence of ladies, to whom political and social economy are necessarily distasteful."
"There would be much to be said in favour of the principle," remarked Lord Stoney-Stratford, "if we cou!d begin afresh, at the point from which we started eight hundred years ago ; but the world is not, and cannot be, governed by obsolete principles and ideas, however originally good and unassailable."
"But true principles are never obsolete," said Mr. Rameses; "or civilization itself would be impossible. Not that I think much of civilization, as the world now interprets it-a civilization of which the leading maxim is, each man for himself-a maxim which, to my mind, seems
to be utterly subservient of Christianity. Each man for all other men, and the great God of the Universe for all humanity, even for the lowest member of it, would be the foundation of a far better religion. The land belongs to the people just the same as the sea does, and the sunlight does, and the love of God does-and not to the few who monopolize it, because they have the power to do so, while the sea, the sunlight, and the love of God are beyond the reach of monopoly."

The discussion, contrary to the intention of Mr. Rameses, would have possibly waxed warm, or branched off into innumerable unconnected and incongruous ramifications, had not Lady Stoney-Stratford, who had been watching the opportunity to withdraw, given the expected signal to her daughters, who all gracefully retired, and left the philosophers to their philosophy, such as it was. Mr. Rameses was the first to follow the ladies to the drawing-room, anxious to hear sung some of the melodies of Scotland, which acted on his mind and fancy-and perhaps on his dim remembrances of a remote past-with a weird and powerful fascination.

He had no sooner left the table than Mr. Pigram, finding
himself alone with the young secretary, Lord Stoney-Stratford, and myself, expressed a strong opinion, minus all the aspirates, which he could not help eliminating in his excitement, that Mr. Rameses was no better than a Nihilist, a Socialist, a Communist, or a Fenian, in entertaining the opinions which he did about the land, and especially about the Deer Forests, which were, in his estimation, one of the greatest proofs of the high state of civilization to which Great Britain had arrived-the indirect means, as they undoubtedly were, of clearing off the surplus population from the land where their presence was an unmitigated evil, and consigning them to the abounding acres of Manitoba, Australia, and New Zealand, where men were so urgently required. Lord Stoney-Stratford partially agreed with the plebeian plutocrat, but prudently reserved his opinions, as a member of the Upper House of Parliament, where they might, for all he knew to the contrary, be some day or other cited against him. Young Mr. Melville was anxious to take up the argument in defence of Mr. Rameses, but his youth made him reticent, and he held his peace, contenting himself meanwhile with nursing his wrath against the proprietor of the Methuselah pill.

Lord Stoney-Stratford maintained a good understanding with Mr. Pigram on the subject of the land which the latter was ready to bring into the market, and the purchase of which, on easy terms, was an object of great desire on the part of the territorial peer, whose greed for acres it was impossible to satisfy while an acre remained for sale within the radius of a day's walk from the country mansion of his ancestors.


## CHAPTER XVIII.

## MATRIMONIAL TRAPS.

Lady Stoney-Stratford, as already observed, was anxious that Mr. Rameses should espouse one of her three unmarried daughters-she was not particular which, though she would have preferred that his choice should fall upon Lady Gwendoline. Mr. Rameses was quite unaware of the hopes he had excited in the breast of the scheming mother of these three Graces, and had not been greatly attracted by the charms of either of them, least of all by those of Lady Gwendoline, who talked slang to an extent that, to his mind, was more than disagreeable. He had not the pre-eminent love of the horse which is entertained by so many rich and fashionable English men and women. He disliked especially to see a woman on horseback, and had a positive detestation, if not abhorrence, of the sight of a beautiful young woman, or of an unbeautiful old one, in the hunting-field, in pursuit of a stag, a hare, or a fox. He considered hunting to be an amusement essentially barbarous,
or as an avocation only to be justified by the fact that the huntsman or huntswoman was in pursuit of natural prey, like the eagle in the air, the shark in the sea, or the lion in the desert, in search of the food that is necessary to their existence. For these reasons the charms of the fair Lady Gwendoline had no attraction for him, when he thought of her as a horsewoman-if he ever thought of her at all when he was not in her society. The softer charms of Lady Maud were more to his fancy, especially when he sat an enraptured listener as she sang the pathetic and tender melodies of Scotland, in a clear, soprano voice, which might have made her fortune in the concert-room or on the operatic stage. She had inherited her love for, and partly her proficiency in, Scottish music, from her mother-a member of one of the most powerful clans in the Scottish Highlands. She boasted of her descent from Malcolm Canmore, who was a king when the founder of the Stuart family was nothing more than the major domo, or superintendent, of the Royal household. Mr. Pigram had no ear for music, but he had a great admiration and love for horses, and was not averse from betting on their speed, or their chances, at Epsom or Newmarket, and preferred the language of Lady

Gwendoline to the more correct language spoken by her sisters and by the elders of the family. Between the money-hunting young lady and the money-possessing old man there was no antipathy on that score : and such antipathy as existed, was the result of difference of age, social position, antecedents, education and manners, and was not shared by the comparatively ancient person who was most interested.

The match between the two was proposed to her daughter by Lady Stoney-Stratford, who, though slow to convince herself of the impossibility of effecting a union between Mr. Rameses and Lady Gwendoline, on which she had fixed her heart, and on which she had reared a whole pile of calculations, was not slow to conceive the great advantage of a match between the rich-and she might imagine generous-proprietor of the Methuselah pills and her penniless daughter. Lady Gwendoline, on her part, was more reluctant, even obstinate, than her mother expected she would be, and brought a powerful force of her aristocratic prejudices to open a deadly fire against the alliance with the vulgar plebeian, whose only merit in her eyes-though a very great one-was his money. She even borrowed
some shafts of resistance from the armoury of her mother, and maintained that a descendant of Malcolm Canmorewould commit the great crime of mesalliance, worse even that of lèse majesté in condescending to share the ducats of a parvenu millionaire. But the hideous idea grew less hideous to her mind the more she familiarized herself with it. To the ducats-still more plentiful-of Mr. Rameses no such objections attached, even though they were not the ducats of a Christian. Possibly, he was as much of a Christian, if judged by his conduct, as Mr. Pigram was ; but then Mr. Rameses was not a suitor for her hand, and his money was not within the reach of her aspirations. And, moreover, she was fully aware that her soul was by no means the twin soul of Mr. Pigram, and that the mysterious electricity that attracts kindred spirits to each other, or that repels those which are not of kin, was in her case a repellant. Besides, how could she link her fate with a man of the name of Pigram ? The name was odious to her mind, and she would not, she thought, be called Lady Gwendoline Pigram, or even Pogram, for all his wealth, were it ten times greater. Her mother was fully aware of her feelings in this respect, and did not like to con-
sider it prejudice, though half afraid that it was no other, and would have been better pleased if the proprietor of the Methuselah pills had been simply named Brown, Green, Jones, or Smith. In fact she was fully convinced that the rose of Pigram would have smelled sweeter if it had been called Howard, Montgomery, Cavendish, or Grosvenor.

Lord Stoney-Stratford made light of the difficulty, and undertook to remove it in a confidential tête-à-tête conversation with the owner of the peccant patronymic. At least, he would endeavour to do so, and flattered himself that he should be able to succeed in it with a little management. He was of opinion that he conld prove to the satisfaction of the plebeian Pigram that an alliance with the patrician house of Pierrepoint would be cheaply purchased by the sacrifice of the surname which he had inherited from his ancestorsalways supposing that he had any ancestors, or could trace them further back than to his father.

As a prelude to the delicate negotiation, his Lordship invited Mr. Pigram to dinner at his club, in order that the matter might be amicably discussed between them. Mr. Pigram was nothing loth to enter into the question, but asserted, as a preliminary, that he was not ashamed of his
name, but was, nevertheless, not so obstinately attached to it as to prefer it to any other. If the wife took the husband's name on her marriage, he, for one, did not see why the husband should not take the name of the wife, if sufficient reasons existed for the change, as, in fact, was sometimes done, and as had been done lately, and Mr. Algernon Pierrepoint was a name that would look well in the Court Directory or on a visiting card. Lord Stoney-Stratford did not see any sufficient necessity for this, and somewhat curtly dismissed the suggestion. He added that no man had any exclusive property in his surname, but might change it as often as he pleased, provided always that he did not change it for any fraudulent purpose, or to hide from his creditors, or to avoid legal process in a civil or criminal court. "I remember," said his Lordship, "hearing the law on the subject very lucidly laid down by one of the most eminent judges that ever adorned the English bench -the late Sir Nicholas Conyngham Tindal, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. I was summoned as a witness in that Court, and examined by Mr. Serjeant Wilde, a blatant and, I must add, impudent advocate, afterwards elevated to the Lord Chancellorship, with the title of Baron Truro,
and who married into the Royal Family of England in the person of Lady Augusta D'Este, the legitimate but unrecognised daughter of the Duke of Sussex, the uncle of her present Majesty. On that occasion, the Lord Chief Justice explained the whole law on the subject of surnames, declaring that all surnames were purely arbitrary, and that every man was at full liberty to assume whatever name he pleased, provided that he duly notified the fact of the change to any and every one who might be interested in it."
"Possibly," said Mr. Pigram, "if he obtained the permission of the Sovereign, and notified it through the Heralds' College, who would demand a large fee for its agency in the matter!"
"Quite a mistake," replied Lord Stoney-Stratford. "The permission of the Sovereign, though sometimes asked, is wholly unnecessary, and is only valuable as an advertisement. The Heralds' College is, of icourse, glad to clutch at all the fees it can get ; and if fools choose to pay them, so much the worse for the fools, and so much the better for the officials of the College."
"But is no formality necessary ?" enquired Mr. Pigram dubiously.
"None whatever !" said Lord Stoney-Stratford. "Nothing but an advertisement in the newspapers, or a circular addressed to all the friends and acquaintances of the Smith who wants to become Smythe, or the Brown who desires to make hımself Green, or the Huggins who thinks that Fitz Hugh is a better name, and a request to them that he, for the future, be addressed by the new name to which he has taken a fancy. I knew a very handsome young gentleman of the name of Catt, who was enamoured of a lovely woman, and whom the lovely woman was more than willing to marry, except for her invincible dislike to be called Mrs. Catt. 'It would be very disagreeable,' she said, ' to be asked by my friends, after two or three years of married life, how the little kittens were, and if they had got the measles, or the whooping cough, or had been duly vaccinated. Upon that hint, Mr. Catt made up his mind to change his respect-able-but not sufficiently respectable-patronymic, and became either Mr. Cathcart or Mr. Fitzwygram, I forget which. The lady of his love was delighted, and made Mr. Catt happy forthwith by accepting his hand and his new name at the altar."

Mr. Pigram appeared to be much impressed with the vol. I.
argument, and the facts with which Lord Stoney-Stratford supported it ; but took time to consider the subject, and also to satisfy himself that Lady Gwendoline would accept his hand, if he really consented to the sacrifice demanded of him-for a sacrifice he could not help considering it. He had, he thought, done nothing to disgrace the name of Pigram, which never, it must be said, appeared in the public notifications of the Methuselah pills, nor had he any right to cast a slur upon the name of his father-who had not been a farm-labourer as Lord Stoney-Stratford supposed, but a well-to-do tradesman in the county town where he first drew breath. Would not the name of Pogram, he enquired of himself, be a good substitute for that of Pigram, if he were compelled to change, and not too violent a departure from the original ? Or, better still, if any alteration had to be made in deference to the aristocratic pride of the Pierrepoints, would not Montmorency, Montgomery, Trevor, De Clifford, or Fitzgerald, be acceptable to the young lady? After due cogitation he resolved, though reluctantly, to adopt, or rather to take violent possession of, the name of Fitzgerald, which, coupled with the title of a Baronet-which he hoped to acquire per favour of Mr. Gladstone-would look
well, sound well, read well, and be entirely to the taste of the Pierrepoints.

In less than three months after Mr. Pigram had come to this momentous decision, an announcement appeared in the Morning Post that a marriage had been solemnized between Mr. Algernon Fitzgerald, M.P., and the beautiful Lady Gwendoline Pierrepoint, daughter of Lord and Lady Stoney-Stratford, and that the happy bride and bridegroom had gone to Fitzgerald's "place" at Pigram Abbey to pass the honeymoon.


## CHAP'TER XIX.

## ON THE FULL TIDE OF FASHION.

Mr. Rameses and his entourage is now launched upon the full tide of London life and the London season-a magnificent argosy, with all sails set, banners floating in the wind, a merry company on board, and crowds of enthusiastic spectators on the shore, cheering the full-freighted vessel as she proceeds on her voyage to the unknown shore of happiness-the new world which she hopes to discover. All eyes watch her. All pens record her splendour ; all printing presses in a press-ridden land record her triumphs, and inform the expectant world of the speed at which she travels, and of the number of knots which she measures in an hour. But the sad captain sits in the cabin alone with his melancholy thoughts, coming from time to time on deck to confer with his chief mate, Mr. Melville, and to exchange courtesies with the numerous passengers of both sexes, gaily dressed, exultant and jubilant, who throng around, happy to have speech of
him, and to sun themselves in the light of his countenance. The weather is calm and fair, a light, healthful breeze is blowing, and the sun shines brightly overhead.

Music and rejoicing follow on the way; the spacious deck has ample room for the dance, that fair women love to organize, and that brave men love to assist in-not for the pleasures of the movement, but for the enjoyment it affords of close physical contact with the opposite sex, the unrestrained liberty of touch on the luxurious and suggestive waist of beauty, and the electric darts that shoot from her sparkling eyes into the susceptible and inflammable bosoms of adolescent and maturing manhood. The sad captain sees all, but enjoys nothing. His mind is far away in the ideal and the unattainable. He is as greedy of delight as Tantalus was of water ; but the delight is so distant from his grasp and taste, as to be only existent in his imagination, or sparkling with faint lustre in the future that may never dawn on this side of eternity.

His argosy is no sooner afloat in the full sight of the vociferous crowd, than he begins to feel the penalties of the full freight with which she is laden. Property, it has been said, has its duties as well as its rights ; but it may be said,
with equal truth, that wealth has its penalties and persecutions, as well as its enjoyments. Mr. Rameses discovered the fact very speedily. His income, reported by the loud and quickly-wagging tongues of rumour to be of fabulous amount, loomed in the eyes of the philanthropic locusts who longed to eat it up, as large as the fair fields of Britain loomed in the eyes of the greedy Norman robbers who pounced down upon it in the time of William the Conqueror. First and foremost among the hungry swarms of devastating plagues that buzzed and hummed around him, anxious to dip their greedy antennæ into the honey of his stores, were the zealots who pretended a desire to Christianize all the heathen nations of the wide world, and who maintained in ease and comfort a dozen secretaries, clerks, and underlings, for every single heathen who pretended to be converted to the true faith, as taught by Jesus of Nazareth. Secondly came the enthusiastic would-be builders of new cathedrals, churches and chapels, tabernacles and conventicles, for the expounding of the faith to those who already believed, or pretended to believe, because they conformed to it. This numerous body of supplicants he endeavoured, and not wholly in vain, to reduce to silence and acquiescence
in the status quo of ecclesiastical accommodation for the faithful, by offering to contribute the large sum of one hundred thousand pounds to a fund for the erection of a huge Metropolitan Cathedral, upon the condition that it should be devoted to the worship of the God of the Universe, wholly irrespective of creeds and formulas, and that the public would subscribe thrice that amount to the fund. The offer was as safe to be unaccepted as Mr. Rameses surmised it would be, and the various devotees of the creeds to be accommodated in the place of worship common to them all, never contributed sixpence to the fund, the conditions of which, when promulgated, drew down upon the head of the "infidel" Mr. Rameses a perfect whirlwind of sneers and maledictions. Next in number of the claimants of his bounty were the spiteful humanitarians, whose name was legion and who all had schemes for the improvement of the world and for the means of livelihood to be provided for the secretaries of the various societies, whose ostensible business it would be to bring the schemes to completion. Men, women, dogs, horses, birds, and cven insects, were the objects of the regard of these busy searchers after something or somebody to take care of ; and Mr. Rameses, who had a tender heart for
the whole animal creation, subscribed largely to the funds of such among the rival societies as recommended themselves either to his philanthropy, his mercy, or his judgment.

But the promoters of projects of so-called benevolence were not the only besiegers of his banking account. Benevolence may be a power in the world, but a greater power in governing the actions of mankind is the love of gain to be acquired without working for it, a love that controls the conduct of the rich quite as powerfully as it controls the conduct of the poor, a love that exists in the minds of plutocrats as well as in those of demi-semi-paupers and beggars, and that builds up joint stock companies, limited liability companies, for the digging of docks and canals at Panama, constructs railways, converts inland cities into seaports, distils sunshine out of cucumbers, brings the waters of the Atlantic into the deserts of Sahara, hoists a flag on the North Pole, converts Irish Fenians and dynamiters into gentlemen and peaceable citizens, and makes gloves out of the fine skins of paupers and criminals, that are now allowed to rot uselessly in the grave ; and would render gout and rheumatism impossible by the compulsory observance of a vegetable and farinaceous diet, and by the
enactment of a law rendering the killing of sheep, oxen, and other animals for food not only a misdemeanour, but, if persisted in, a felony. All these schemes found adherents among the well-meaning people who laid siege to the ducats of Mr. Rameses, who found more than enough to occupy his whole time in instructing his secretary to refuse on his part to contribute a sixpence to any of them.

Nor were these the only persons who endeavoured to establish claims upon his liberality, not, however, with a view to his possible pecuniary advantage, but to their own. His name of Rameses suggested to many estimable people of Scottish blood, whose ancestors had borne the honourable name of Ramsay, that the great new millionaire was of their race and lineage, a cousin of theirs at the very least, perhaps a cousin forty or fifty times removed, but still indubitably a cousin. On the principle that blood was thicker than water, these people, on the strength of their name and relationship, wrote to him requesting loans or gifts to set them up in business, to save themselves from the workhouse, the gaol, or the hospital, to enable them to emigrate, to establish a newspaper, or carry to profitable com-
pletion some marvellous invention that would revolutionise the trade, the manufactures, or the intercourse of the world. Mr. Melville, knowing the mind of his employer, did not trouble him with a fiftieth part of these and other applications, and returned to the remainder such answers as promised nothing, expressed no opinions, and dexterously precluded all further correspondence.

But while Mr. Rameses acted upon the principle that he would rather give away a thousand pounds of his own free will and bounty than he would be swindled of a single fivepound note, or even a solitary shilling, he was open as the day to melting charity, and devoted a large portion of his income to deeds of benevolence. As his almoner, Mr. Melville took all delicate pains, and spared no trouble, to investigate any claim that was made on his justice, his pity, or his generosity ; and the widow and the fatherless, and those who had none other to help them, received kindly relief and support from the Parsee millionaire, and found milk and honey where they had previously found nothing but hard black bread and bitter tears, and roses and lilies in the pathways where nothing had grown but thorns and thistles. None but Mr. Melville and himself knew the
amount of his silent benefactions, and not even they knew the number of grateful prayers that night and morning ascended to Heaven for blessings upon the head of the unseen, and often unknown, reliever of their wants and sympathiser in their sorrows.

But the great beneficent giver was himself among the most unhappy of men. He was alone in the world-all alone-without a companion, without a mate, without the twin soul, to share his joys, his sorrows, his aspirations, and his wealth. There were perhaps thousands of lovely creatures-lovely in form, though possibly not altogether lovely in mind-who would have been willing to share his joys, and the wealth of which he was indubitably possessed, and not unwilling, perhaps, to share his sorrows, his hopes, and his aspirations ; but who could not share them to the divine extent which alone would have satisfied his sensitive being, for lack of the inexpressible, the celestial sympathy of soul with soul, spirit with spirit, which was necessary to the perfect harmony and roundness of his life. All the womankind of the upper galaxies of Society pitied him exceedingly, or even blamed him exceedingly, for wasting his days and his money in single blessedness, and deplored
his infatuation-almost amounting to lunacy, in their estimation-in inhabiting a splendid palace, filled with every luxury of furniture, except the one piece of priceless furniture-a wife. And that that one indispensable article should be provided to grace the lordly mansion of the lonely hermit, was the sole object of the thoughts of possibly hundreds, but certainly scores of them. Possibly, too, some of these fair syrens were uncharitable enough to believe the unnatural state of isolation in which the prosperous gentleman was contented to live, or at least in which he lived, whether he was contented or not, might be due to the fact that he was too much married-that he had left a harem behind him in India-and that a surfeit of marriage had not only caused the holy institution to become distasteful to him, but had rendered him incapable of contracting the obligation in a Christian community. But these ill-natured sceptics were in the minority, though a still smaller minority among them were not indisposed to believe that a still stronger reason for the solitary state in which the lord of so large a fortune seemed to live, might be traceable to the fact that there was a Fair Rosamond in his bower-a fascinating Amy Robsart in his castle-and
that King Cophetua was secretly espoused to some lovely beggar-maid, whom he was ashamed to introduce into the world of which he was so brilliant an ornament. But these rumours never reached the knowledge of poor Crœesus himself. And it was well, or they might have had the effect of inclining his thoughts towards cynicism or misanthropy, which was alien to his generous nature.

But the current of the aspirations, calculations and schemes of the fashionable world, as regarded Mr. Rameses, was deflected from its usual course into new channels scooped out by the holiday season and the near approach of the vagabond month of August, when foreign travel, the sea-shore, and the mountains and moors of Scotland tempted every one with money and leisure at command to leave home in search of health, excitement, or mere change of scenery and surroundings. Mr. Rameses had consented, though not without misgivings that he should fail to enjoy himself, to pass a month in the Highlands of Scotland, and to study life and nature in a deer forest, under the auspices, though not in the society, of Mr. Algernon Fitzgerald.

## CHAPTER XX.

TO THE HIGHLANDS BOUND.
The multitudinous passengers that sailed from the Broomielaw, Glasgow, by the favourite steamer Iona, included Mr. Algernon and Lady Gwendoline Fitzgerald-bound for the Highland deer forest ; hired at great expense by the proprietor of the Methuselah Life Pills. Among the guests whom he had especially invited to visit him, and who were passengers by the same boat, were Lord and Lady StoneyStratford, the Ladies Maud and Ethel Pierrepoint, Mr. De Vere, Sir Henry and Lady de Glastonbury, Mr. Rameses, and his secretary, Mr. Melville. The mansion attached to the extensive domain was large enough to accommodate all these visitors, and more if occasion had demanded, and Mr. Fitzgerald had resolved to loosen his purse-strings in honour of the great occasion, and to do his best to procure sport and recreation for the somewhat incongruous assemblage of people whom he had invited to pass the autumnal months in the hospitable wilderness. The company on board the
steamer consisted of tourists, holiday-makers and sportsmen, with a large percentage among them of Glasgow "bodies," as they are irreverently called, apparently because they are supposed to have no souls, who were going "doun the watter," as the phrase is, to their pleasant country quarters in the estuary of the Clyde, at Greenock, Gourock, Wemyss Bay, Rothesay, Dunoon, Kilmun, Strone, Tigh-na-Bruaich, and Ardrishaig. Some of the English travellers had arrayed themselves in the Highland costume, with the egregious Cockney idea, that the garb was customary on the mountains, and that it was obligatory upon any one who aspired to be considered a gentleman. Others, equally preposterous in their notions, had provided themselves with alpenstocks, as if there were a Mont Blanc or a Matterhorn and countless glaciers in Inverness-shire and Ross-shire, where such conveniences for clambering into or over dangerous crags and crevasses would be useful. And others, again, who would not on any account have made such fools of themselves in Piccadilly or Pall Mall, had donned the convenient knickerbocker suit, while they had rendered their lower limbs ridiculous by wearing a red stocking on one stalwart calf and al green one on the other.

One man, with a bundle of alpenstocks in one hand and a brace of fishing-rods in the other, had attired himself in a complete suit of pea-green ; a pea-green hat, a pea-green feather, a pea-green coat and nether garments, pea-green hose, and, to be quite in keeping, pea-green boots. His appearance, of which he was evidently proud, procured him among the passengers the sobriquet of "the pea-green snob." He was a tall, handsome fellow, the observed of all observers ; and doubtless mistook the mock admiration extorted by his fantastic garb, for real admiration excited by his good looks and comely proportions.

The succession of some of the grandest scenery in the world, that stretched in ever-varying magnificence all the way from Glasgow to Inverness, through the Estuary of the Clyde, the Kyles of Bute, Loch Fyne, the Crinan Canal, to the lovely rock-bound shores of the Island of Mull, within sight of Iona, Staffa, and the Treshnish Isles, by Kerrera to Oban, and from beautiful Oban to still wilder sublimities-to Ballahulish and Bannavie, and thence through the chain of glorious lakes, prosaically called the Caledonian Canal-has attracted the admiration of millions of travellers during the last half-century. The fairy region
has often been described, but never yet had justice done to it by pen or pencil, and never will have; for words are weak, and art is tame, when the grander aspects of Nature have to be pourtrayed. The whole land is grand and beautiful, and as full of memories and traditions as it is of physical loveliness.

> " For over all the hazy realm is spread A halo of sad memories of the dead, Of mournful love tales; of old tragedies Filling the heart with pity and the eyes With tears at bare remembrance; and old songs Of love's endurance, love's despair, love's wrongs, And triumph o'er all obstacles at last, And all the grief and passion of the past.

There is no district of the same extent in any part of the known world, with which so many historical and legendary incidents of romantic and never-failing interest are associated ; and, as Dr. Johnson says of one of the most remarkable islands of the many that gem the Atlantic on the western shores of Scotland, the heart is cold and dead, the imagination torpid and insensible, that can pass among them, and can behold them, unmoved by the tenderest human sympathy.
"It will always be a matter of regret," said Mr. De Vere, "that Sir Walter Scott, when he made the circuit of Scotland
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in the steamboat of the Fishery Commissioners, did not sail up the Caledonian Canal, through the grand scenery of Loch Ness. What noble materials for a romance he might have found in the ruins of Urquhart Castle, on a projecting crag of the lovely lake!"
" I forget the legends, if any, connected with it," replied Lady Stoney-Stratford, "and should be pleased to be reminded of them."
"In the first place," said Mr. De Vere, "the vaults of the castle are supposed to contain-deep buried in the earth-two great iron coffers, the same in size and in appearance, with not a mark or vestige to distinguish the one from the other, which have been concealed therein for centuries. They have been saved from the desecrating shovels of the 'Dry-as-dusts' of antiquarianism, and from the still more desecrating touch of the seeker for hidden gold, by the legend that one contains the 'Plague,' and the other an enormous amount of treasure in gold and silver and precious stones, and that if any mistake were made, and the wrong coffer were opened, so devastating a plague would overspread all Scotland-and even England-that the whole island would be depopulated."
"A fruitful idea for the genius of the 'great Wizard' to operate upon," said Lady Stoney-Stratford ; " and more especially," she added, "if what was supposed to be the right coffer should have been found to contain, when opened, nothing but stones and rubble, or sand from the shores of the lake!"
"Yes, indeed," replied Mr. De Vere ; and a splendid homily on the old story of the vanity of human wishes he would have made upon it. But of more value, and more novelty in his experienced hands, would have been the fact that Castle Urquhart was originally built and utilized by a colony of Knights Templars, or Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. The relations existing between these chivalrous soldiers of the Cross and the wild and lawless, but picturesque Highlanders, would have afforded him scope for a romance of more interest even than 'Rob Roy,' or the 'Talisman,' or any other of his matchless fictions."

The young ladies of the party, who, however, confessed to a better acquaintance with the writings of "Ouida," and Miss Braddon, and Maric Corelli, greater and purer than either of them, than with those of Sir Walter Scott, of which they knew something, though not very much - as they
considered him to be no longer fashionable-agreed in Mr. De Vere's and their mother's opinion ; and Lady Gwendoline even thought it an "awful pity" that Sir Walter had not penetrated the wilds of this "charming" region. How "dreadfully" dull it must have been for the Templars, who had a "sweetly beautiful" place of their own in "dear old London," somewhere in Fleet Street, in the very centre of fashionable society. "Poor creatures! But I suppose they hunted and fished, and stalked the deer on the mountains to amuse themselves?"
"Or chanted Latin hymms in the cloisters of the castle," said Lady Maud; "or made war against the wild cattlestealers, that were the only inhabitants ; or perhaps endeavoured to convert them to Christianity! They must have had plenty of society."

Mr. De Vere suddenly, if not impatiently, left the ladies to their prattle, and sought Mr. Rameses, who was seated alone at the further end of the steamer, drinking in with delight the manifold beauties of the gorgeous panorama of lake and mountain, watching the progress of a storm that was evidently impending. It burst at last, while they stood together, protected from the rain in the lee of the funnel,
and enjosing the grandeur of the scene too intensely to seek shelter in the cabin below, whither the remainder of the company had made all haste to retire.

> "For lo! the gusty rain with fitful whirl Beats in their faces, and the lightning flash, Illumines Heaven with glare blue venomous, And drags behind it, in its fiery car, The obedient thunder. Lifting up its voice, It speaks to all the hills, which answer back."
"It is a strange and powerful fascination that the lightning has over my imagination," said Mr. Rameses; " and with what an eloquent voice the thunder seems to discourse to my soul, and hint, rather than proclaim, the profoundest secrets of mighty Mother Nature. The old Asiatic belief, that is prevalent even in Europe, that thunder is the voice of God speaking in wrath to the wicked, and calling upon them to repent of the evil of their ways, does not appear to me to be superstitious, or to express anything else than the solemn truth. God is always speaking to the wicked, if not by the thunder of His heavens, by the still small voice of conscience, heard alike in the wildest commotions of the elements and in the quietest repose of the mind. I have often thought, though perhaps I may be wrong, that those who feel a coward fear in a thunderstorm, are self-con-
demned by the very fact of the abjectness of their terror!"
"I share your love of the storm," replied Mr. De Vere; "but not the reasoning which you build upon it; and while thoroughly agreeing with the great poet, that our philosophy is weak and limited, even in its wildest and widest flights, I hesitate to confound the merely personal cowardice of the weak and timid with the consciousness of guilt."
"The question is not to be discussed," replied Mr. Rameses, " though I strongly incline to the belief that more can be said for it than is likely to find favour in a mechanical and prosaic age ; but what an instructive volume might be written, or perhaps has already been written, on the latent truths concealed in what a world of wiseacres considers to be the delusions of the vulgar! And what a hold many ideas which ultra-realists maintain to be superstitions have acquired over the mind and habits of some of the very wisest of mankind! Signs, portents and auguries are veritable powers in the government of the world, and have been so from the earliest ages of history and tradition. Rainbows and comets have been pressed into the service;
even the stars in their eternal sublimity have been degraded into fortune-telling diagrams and puzzles, and made to answer the purpose of riddles and conundrums. The idea of the voice of God speaking to the wicked in thunder, is a far nobler, and may be a truer, conception of the might and majesty of the Creator, than nine-tenths of the idle fancies that have hitherto led men astray, and filled them with false hopes or groundless terrors."

It was while indulging in such semi-philosophical discourse as this, that the two travellers and their less philosophical companions arrived at Inverness, where they were to pass the next day-unprepared for the gloomy monotony of a Scottish Sunday, but resolved, nevertheless, to make it a day of rest, as its Jewish name of the Sabbath proclaimed that it should be.

## CHAPTER XXI.

PLATONIC ONLY.
A somewhat close though not intimate relationship had gradually established itself between the lovely and enthusiastic Laura de Vere, and the dreamy, calm, and philosophical Mr. Rameses. They were often thrown together while exploring the beautiful scenery of the Bens and glens, the streams and rivers, of the Highlands. They had many sympathies with each other, and they indulged in the same unfashionable and unpopular antipathies ; and these very antipathies became links of sympathy. Miss De Vere had been strongly urged by the ladies of the Pierrepoint family to join them in fishing for trout and salmon in the lovely waters of the Spey, or in the broad expanse of Loch Awe, or Loch Etive, but she had a great repugnance to the sport, which she deemed to be cruel. So had Mr. Rameses. Both of them looked with the same repugnance upon the slaughter of grouse on the moors, and of ptarmigan on the crests of the mountains, and Miss De Vere was uncourtly
enough to think that the Prince of Wales condescended to act the part of a poulterer's provider, or assistant, when he shot helpless doves by scores at a time in the preserves of Hurlingham, and looked upon the easy slaughter as an amusement. Mr. Rameses and the gentle Laura had nothing but animadversions to bestow upon what Mr. Rameses called the malicious patience and perseverance of the deer-stalking in which Mr. Fitzgerald and Lord StoneyStratford took such delight. The two had many other antipathies and dislikes in common, but in minor matters they differed but slightly-or agreed to differ-without preliminary consultation. Miss De Vere was of a practical, Mr. Rameses of a theoretical, tendency of mind ; the one looked upon the world as it was, the other looked upon it as he imagined it ought to be; the one relied upon experience as a sure staff and support, the other upon hope as a guiding star.

And yet, with all their divergencies, each had a powerful attraction for the other, and were irresistibly drawn into companionship among the solitary wilds of the beautiful and romantic country in which their lot was temporarily cast. The scenery almost scemed to realise, in the
mind of Mr. Rameses, his favourite idea of the twin-soul ; one, yet divided; twin-forces, functions and intelligences working together, though they knew not how or wherefore, to the same ends. The twin-souls, about the vision of which he so dearly loved to speculate and to dream, were like two rivers that flowed into the same ocean; two eyes that looked with delight upon the same object; two hands that were engaged in the same labour ; two feet that travelled on the same road; two lips that breathed the same word; the two breasts of a young mother that yielded the same nourishment to a beautiful infant ; two nostrils partaking of the same odour, and two ears listening to the same divine melody.

Lady Stoney-Stratford noticed with disappointment, not to say displeasure, the growth and progress of a companionship that interfered more or less with the realisation of a project that she had formed in her own mind. Ever since the ill-omened marriage of Lady Gwendoline with Mr. Fitzgerald-for ill-omened, if not degrading to the house of Pierrepoint, she could not choose but consider it, in spite of her lord's personal and pecuniary reasons for looking favourably upon the alliance-she had cherished the hope that
either Lady Maud or Lady Ethel would, with a little dexterous management on hel part, win a place in the affections of the noble and wealthy Indian Nabob, and be led triumphantly to the altar, to share in the magnificent income of $£ 150,000$ per annum ; a sum that would almost purchase the fee-simple of the Pierrepoint estates. The young ladies themselves were not so simple as not to suspect, and indeed to know, that such was the worthy woman's design in their interest, though each of themthough not caring very greatly about the matter-would have been better pleased if she, and not her sister, had been considered the magnet that was certain to attract to herself the as yet undecided fancy of the millionaire.

Had Lady Stoney-Stratford known all, and had she been in the confidence of her youngest daughter, she would have concentrated her anxieties upon Lady Ethel. But she knew nothing, and suspected nothing, of a possible mesalliance, more fearful than that which had been already consummated between the proud Lady Geraldine and therich proprietor of the Methuselah pills. And it was well for her peace of mind that she did not, for her temporary ignorance was real bliss while it lasted. Lady Maud was the
youngling of the flock, the only one among them that had a particle of romance in her composition. She was musical, literary, and unmercenary, unworldly, and scorned to turn up her pretty little nose at the idea of love in a cottage, which she thought was rather a good thing than a bad one-with all the greater cogency, perhaps, because her flowery destiny had never brought her within sight of it.

In the very worldly mind of Lady Stoney-Stratford, the doubt whether either of her daughters would consent to marry a good man, who, however good he might be, was not a Christian, was a source of constantly-recurring anxiety. In fact, the doubt, and the many difficulties that sprung from it, filled her otherwise tranquil existence with a trouble that she did not even confide to her husband, from the fear and almost the certainty that he would not sympathise with it. All his desire was to add barn to barn, acre to acre, field to field, domain to domain, that he might be the greatest landed proprietor in the county. For this darling object he had consented to waive his objections to an alliance with "Methuselah," as he delighted with grim jocosity to call his son-in-law ; and for this object he would have waived his objections, were they thrice as great as
they were, to an alliance with so great and wealthy a potentate as Mr. Rameses. And when his lady on rare occasions poured her doubts and fears into his inattentive ear, he gave the question the go-by with the easiest possible nonchalance, or with a passing suggestion that the faith of the Oriental magnifico might not sit very heavily on his conscience, and that if he made his home in England, as it seemed most probable he would do, he would conform to the ways of the country, and go to church on Sundays as regularly as other professing-but possibly not more real Christians than he was-were in the habit of doing. Lady Stoney-Stratford was partly of the same opinion, not understanding the deep earnestness of character, and the firmly-rooted faith of the Eastern philosopher, who had studied for himself the doctrines of all the ancient and modern religions that had hitherto found acceptance in the world. If Mr. Rameses would but conform outwardly to the faith of the English people, she did not consider his inward conformity to be of much or of any importance. And she thought that Lady Ethel would not be harder to please in this respect than she herself was, though she was not quite so sure of the sentiments of Lady Maud.

It happened one day that Lord Stoney-Stratford was confined to the house by an attack of his ancient enemy the gout, and was thereby unable to accompany Mr. Fitzgerald and Sir Henry de Glastonbury on a deer-stalking expedition in the forests of Monaliadh, or the Grey Mountains. The young ladies of the household had also been imprisoned in their rooms by a temporary tyrant quite as imperious as the gout-the tyrant Fashion, and its prime minister the Toilette-absolute ruler of the female world. Mr. Rameses found himself in conse juence, though quite accidentally, alone for a full hour in the company of Lord and Lady Stoney-Stratford. The conversation was artfully, but delicately and diplomatically,led by Lady Stoney-Stratford to the subject of Christianity in India, and to the possibility of its extension among the Hindoo and Mahometan population. Neither Mr. Rameses nor Lord Stoney-Stratford had any great hopes that it would make any sensible progress for many generations, if it ever made any at all. "What can you expect?" said Mr. Rameses; "the religion of Mahomet, though that of the minority in India, appeals strongly to the passions of a pleasure-loving people, and promises the
joys of a carnal and lascivious heaven to a carnal-minded and lascivious race, as the rewards of a short struggle with the cares and anxieties of a world that is but a dark and tearful world at the best. Brahminism and Buddhism, that were established long anterior to Christianity, have a firm hold upon the affections and prejudices of the people, and more than that, teach a doctrine near akin to, if not the same, as Christianism in all its essential points."
"How so ?" said Lady Stoney-Stratford, to whom the statement seemed as new as it was startling.
"They both teach adoration and love of the Supreme Being, and the paramount duty of loving your neighbour as yourself. They also teach the immortality of the soul."
"But not the equality and brotherhood of all mankind," interrupted Lord Stoney-Stratford, "or the return of benefits for injuries, which lies at the very foundation of the Christian dogma."
"Do Christians themselves believe it?" answered Mr. Rameses. "Do they ever act, have they ever acted, on that divine principle? If they have done so, whence arise war and slavery, and the persecutions and martyrdoms of heretics? Whence come the insurrections and
the revolutions-the robberies-the spoliations-the murders and the assassinations-that have disgraced humanity from the creation of the world downwards? Does a rich Christian renounce his riches for equitable distribution among the poor ? Do Christians hold all the good things of the world in common? Does the devoutest Christian turn his second cheek to the smiter, after the first has received the insulting blow?"
"I grant Christianity has not yet reached that high ideal," said the lady, " but it is travelling towards it, and will reach it in God's appointed time."
"Meanwhile," said Lord Stoney-Stratford, " it has renounced idolatry, and believes but in one God, the creator, the preserver, and the redeemer. It worships neither images, nor even the heavenly bodies, as some nations do and have done. The worship of the sun and the stars is not even yet extinct in India."
" Pardon me," replied Mr. Rameses, " it is extinct, if the word can be applied to that which never existed."
" Never existed," ejaculated Lord Stoney-Stratford, with great surprise. "Not even among the disciples of Zoroaster ?"
"Not even among the disciples of Zoroaster-or the Parsees, my ancestors," replied Mr. Rameses, with unusual animation. "The Zoroastians never worshipped, never adored the Sun-never acknowledged him as God-but recognised him only as the sublime and beneficent manifestation of God's power and glory-the source of life and beauty -the upholder of the planetary system-which, but for his mighty and sustaining power, would be hurled into chaos. There needs no holy books-no Vedas-no Korans-no Bible of the Jews-no Evangel of the Christians-to prove to the world that, without the light and heat of the Sun, all life in the world would be impossible ; and the Zoroastians in acknowledging the fact, ard being grateful for it, did not become idolators, and accept the shadow of the Divinity -which the Sun is-for the Divinity himself."

Lady Stoney-Stratford winced, as if in sore perplexity, and more than half inclined to relinquish all further controversy. Mr. Rameses—seeing her pain-came to the rescue. "I would not be misunderstood, my lady;" he said, "or cause you even a moment's anxicty on my account. All things considered, I claim to be as good and true a Christian, in heart, as the Pope-or the Archbishop of Canterbury-or VOL. 1.
as any martyr that ever went to the stake to seal his faith with his blood. I acknowledge God, and worship him. I obey his laws as far as I am able, and love my fellow-man and my neighbour as myself."
"I have nothing more to argue about," said Lord StoneyStratford. "Nor I," added his wife. "The heart and the conscience are the guides, and, if they are satisfied, what right have we to make objections if the life be blameless?"

Here the subject dropped, and would not have been renewed, even if the young ladies, having finished their devotions at the shrine of the great goddess, Fashion, had not entered at the moment, and rendered all further discussion inexpedient and improper.

Lady Stoney-Stratford afterwards made her daughters acquainted with the discourse that had been held with the Oriental philosopher, and both the young ladies agreed that Mr. Rameses could never expect that a Christian girl would marry him.

Lady Stoney-Stratford was convinced after this that her dream of an alliance of the Parsee with one of her daughters was at an end-and resigned herself to the inevitable, like a wise woman as she was.

Next day, Mr. Rameses, as if to prove to himself that his heart was in the right, and that he held his wealth in trust for the benefit of his suffering fellow creatures-signed cheques of large amount towards the support of every hospital in London. He did not even let his secretary know what he had done; and, moreover, imposed it as a command upon the several secretaries of the institutions which he had benefited, that his contributions should be only acknowledged in their archives as the benefactions of an anonymous donor. "This," he thought to himself, " may not be Christianity, nor love to God, but it may be love to man."


## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTAIN.

Mr. Rameses, with Mr. Melville, and Mr. De Vere and his fair daughter, were by no means sorry to leave the solitude of the Highland hills-for to them it appeared more than solitary for want of the congenial studies and occupations to which they were accustomed. The society and pursuits of Mr. Fitzgerald afforded them no inducements to prolong their stay. Mr. de Vere longed to be once again among his books, and Mr. Rameses among his Egyptian papyri and sarcophagi, and to be free of venal and vulgar companionship. While Mr. de Vere and his daughter made the best of their way to London, and Lord Stoney-Stratford remained on the moors-to slay grouse and deer-Mr. Rameses, accompanied by Mr. Melville, made a detour from Ross-shire and Inverness-shire into beautiful Perthshire, in order that the former might gratify a long-cherished desire to make his ascent of the noble Ben Ledi-that overlooks the village of Callander. To his mind
the whole region was hallowed ground, trodden as it had been, during successive ages of what is called semi-barbarism -but as he thought of real piety and devotion-by millions of feet, who, on May mornings, or "Beltain'Eens," of many recurring centuries, had made pilgrimages in long procession to the summit of this hill to kindle a fire-direct from the rays of the sun-between dawn and noon on that memorable anniversary.

Callander is now but a miserable village, but, to the mind of the Oriental philosopher, all the remembrances of the spot were sacred, not alone from their immense antiquity, but from their intimate associations with the earliest religion of the world-whether called Sabæanism, Sun-worship, or Fireworship. His secretary having, like himself, a strain of Asiatic blood in his veins, sympathised in a great degree in his love. for the antediluvian faith of the earth's earliest fathers, and looked forward with curiosity and interest to the imposing ceremonial that Mr. Rameses proposed to perform on a magnificent scale. His purpose was to draw fire from the direct rays of the sun, and to kindle a beacon that should light up the whole range of the Grampians, and the hoary summits of Ben Nevis, Schehallion, Cairngorm,
and Ben Cruachan, and their gigantic brothers Ben Lomond, Ben Lawers, Ben Venue and Ben Goil. It was a fascinating idea to both of their minds, and associated with venerable and awe-inspiring traditions.

The fact that September had arrived, and that May morning was the orthodox anniversary of the Druidical celebration, did not cause Mr. Rameses to change his plan or diminish the interest with which he looked forward to its fulfiment. Mr. Rameses was particularly gratified to find on his arrival at Callander that the pilgrims of a long-past age had left their traces behind them upon the mountain, and that the broad pathway which their pious feet had trodden, from the base to the summit, was unmistakably marked by a broad belt of grass, amid the heather that fringed it upon either side. To a mind so richly stored as was that of Mr. Rameses, with the antique lore and traditions of the almost immeasurable past, it was not difficult to recall in fancy the long procession of Priests, Bards, and Prophets chanting in full accord their deep-voiced anthems to the Lord of Life and Light-and through him to the Great Creator, of whom, and of whose majesty, he was the most glorious reflection and representative on this poor ignorant Earth.

Filled with such thoughts as these, Mr. Rameses and his companion reached the summit of the Ben. Scarcely noticing, in their intense pre-occupation, the splendour of the landscape that gradually unfolded itself before them, they suddenly discovered that they were not alone on the hill, and noticed, with surprise and wonder, that, leaning with her arm upon the cairn that had been erected upon the summit, stood the graceful figure of a young woman, who seemed to be completely unconscious of their approach. She was clad in a long loose garment of pale amber, bound at the waist with a sash of golden fringe. On her head she wore, like a turban, a rose-coloured muslin cloth, twisted above her brow-but which allowed a few straggling locks of her raven-black hair to escape from the ligature that strove in vain to hide its abundant beauty. Her long dark eye-lashes concealed the brightness of the twin orbs, that were bent upon the ground, as if she were lost in deep thought and meditation. Her features were of an unmistakably Oriental cast, a pale brown, but beautiful tint, proclaiming her to be, as she undoubtedly was, a daughter of the East, whose ancestors had transmitted to her frame and face the colours of her clime. When she
at last raised her eyes, and, with a slight exclamation of surprise, though not by any means of terror, became suddenly aware of the presence of strangers, Mr. Rameses thought he had never before beheld a vision of such transcendant oveliness as that which was suddenly disclosed to his sight.

When verbal intercourse had once been established between the three persons thus brought unexpectedly together, it was soon ascertained that the fair and mysterious stranger had but a limited knowledge of the English language. Mr. Melville, who was an admirable linguist, endeavoured to come to the rescue by addressing the lady in Persian-but of this language she was ignorant. Mr. Rameses next addressed her in Hindustani, which he spoke perfectly, as did she also. By this means he learned that she was the sister of the Hindoo wife of a Scottish baronet, who had been engaged in some high administrative capacity in the service of a late Viceroy or Governor-General of India, and that she had come to Europe with her sister. She did not feel quite at home either in London, which was the usual residence of the family, and still less in the Highlands, where they had resided for the summer and autumn for the bencfit of the mountain air, considered necessary for the
failing health of the head of the family, who had drawn his first breath among the hills, and into whose debilitated frame every breath of the native elixir seemed to infuse new life and vigour. To this extent she was frank in answer to the questions that were politely but curiously put, and not pressed unduly upon her. In return for the information thus given she learned, to her evident pleasure, that both of her interlocutors were of Eastern birth and origin, and considered their accidental meeting to be of happy augury.

It happened-and the circumstance seemed to Mr. Rameses to be not only strangely sympathetic but highly propitious-that the object of the fair Oriental maiden, whose name was Niona, was like that of Mr. Rameses and his companion, to kindle a fire direct from the sun's rays, on the mountain top, in honour of the antique religion of Asia -if not of the whole world. Towards the accomplishment of this pious object, Niona, who had been on the summit from an early hour after dawn, had gathered together all the dry sprigs of heather and branches of gorse that she could find on the slopes. To these she had added such handfuls of the feathers of ptarmigan and grouse as she could collect -sole remnants of the feasts of the ravenous eagles, whose
inaccessible eyries were on the neighbouring crags-until all these waifs and strays formed a respectable heap to aliment the expected blaze of the Beltain fire. But they were not sufficient for the mighty beacon that Mr. Rameses desired to enkindle. Mr. Melville was therefore deputed to forage among the lower levels and overhanging precipices, to gather bracken, roots of decayed heather, and, perchance, the scorched and lightning-smitten branches of lareh, pine, and rowan, so as to build up a pyre worthy of such a great occasion as Mr. Rameses had imagined. His search was more successful than he had anticipated, and he reached the hill-top once again, suggesting to Mr. Rameses the pictures he had seen of the Man in the Moon, laden with sticks and faggots, which he bore in expiation of his supposed crime of Sabbath-breaking.

When the pyre had been duly constructed a little difficulty was experienced for want of paper to aid the effort of the fuel to burst into a flame. The difficulty was speedily surmounted by the production from the pockets of Mr. Melville of a quantity of letters and printed eirculars, setting forth the merits of many proposed Limited Liability Companies, which had either been answered by the indus-
trious private secretary, or required no answer. Mr. Rameses produced a powerful burning glass, and a handful of cotton wool. There was fortunately not a cloud in the clear blue sky, and, after a few minutes of patient expectation, during which the lovely Niona looked on with intense curiosity, the wished-for flame was produced-the dry twigs and bracken crackled merrily, the pine boughs yielded to the irresistible necessity that enveloped them, the blue smoke curled in beautiful wreathlets to the sky-and Niona knelt down devoutly in presence of the fire from Heaven. Mr. Rameses was scarcely less affected by the solemnity of the occasion-while on Mr. Melville devolved the self-imposed duty of keeping the straggling embers well together, and of feeding the flames with the, as yet, unconsumed branches and twigs that he had held in reserve.

The three lingered around the fire, and Niona-as if by a sudden and irrepressible impulse-broke out into a joyous chant, with a clear resonant voice of great power and sweetness. Neither of her companions understood the words of the song, though fully cognizant of its occult meaning. Gradually the jubilant and triumphant strain subdued itself into a soft lament, as the flames burned lower and lower,
and finally dwindled into a melancholy moan and dirge, as the last spark flickered faintly and expired in the wood ashes.

The chant ended, Niona, without saying a word, turned slowly round and began the descent of the mountain. Her two companions followed silently and reverently down the grassy slope, without a word spoken on either side till they reached the entrance to the village.
" We part not thus," said Mr. Rameses, in Hindustani, "we must meet again in London."
" You will know where to find me," replied Niona, with a soft smile and a gentle wave of her hand, as she entered the villa of her sister's husband. And thus they parted. A deeper impression of the incidents was left upon the mind of Mr. Rameses than he would have deemed it possible that so casual a meeting, with one wholly unknown to him a day previously, could have produced even upon his imaginative nature.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## RETURN TO LONDON.

Mr. Rameses, after his short and unsatisfactory wanderings in the Highlands-of which the only pleasant remembrance that he retained was his meeting with Niona-is again installed in his palatial residence in Kensington Palace Gardens. London was said to be empty, though there were only about four millions of people left in it-all nobodies in the estimation of the small circle of that which is called "Society," but each a somebody, and, perhaps, a great somebody, in his own. Mr. De Vere and his daughter had returned to the Rookery-Sir Henry and Lady De Glastonbury had gone home ; the few philosophers, geologists, astronomers, Egyptologists and antiquaries, with whom Mr. Rameses had a personal acquaintance, had betaken themselves, some to America, some to the continent of Europe, some to the sylvan solitudes of the beautiful English shires, and some few to ducal or other aristocratic mansions-to figure as great lions among the smaller ferce
nature of the fashionable world. After a fortnight's sojourn in the comparative seclusion of his Kensington home, Mr. Rameses had accepted the pressing invitation of his well-beloved friend, Mr. De Vere, to pass as short or as long a time as it pleased him in the Rookery, in companionship with the well-stocked library and museum of that pleasant abode-to muse, perhaps, upon the mysterious memories of Lurula and Amenophra, and the splendid beauty of the living Niona-or to dream and speculate upon the seen and the unseen-upon Life, Time, and Eternity, and the boundless possibilities of the Infinitude. In these and kindred speculations, and in the congenial society of his friend, enlivened by the occasional society of his friend's daughter, the hours of Mr. Rameses-like those of Thalaba-"flowed pleasantly by," varied by occasional visits to the Metropolis, accompanied by his faithful secretary, for the transaction of his inevitable business-of which rich men have a fuller share than the poor, though the poor are often unaware of, and loth to acknowledge, the fact.

As the month of February approached, and the wandering English of the upper classes winged their flight from the remotest regions of the globe to the great central heart of
the world's business and pleasure, the thoughts of Mr. Rameses turned towards the long-previously announced succession of splendid dinners which, in an evil hour for his peace of mind, he had consented to give. Though modest in character, and frugal in his habits, he was not averse from occasional displays of magnificent hospitality. He was no lover of money for its own sake. He had no ideas of hoarding it, and was pleased to possess it in super-abundance-not alone for the good it enabled him to do, and the well-being it was the means of diffusing, like sunshine and fertilizing rain, over a large surface-not for the power over his fellow-creatures which it placed in his hands, or for the sense of superiority, dear to the hearts of thousands of good people, who are not aware that they encourage it. He was philosopher enough to feel that he could have endured poverty without murmuring against the seemingly hard Fate that yoked him to it-but also to know and to act wisely upon the knowledge that wealth was good, when employed to goodly purpose, and that the best of all rich men were but trustees for the poor, and for the benefit of those without whose labour it could not have been called into profitable existence.

Preparatory to coming to any decision on the choice of the notable persons who should be asked to partake of the hospitalities which he intended to dispense on a princely scale, Mr. Rameses invited Mr. De Vere and his daughter to pass a fortnight with him in Kensington-partly that he might have the advice of Mr. De Vere, and partly that he migth enjoy the society of his daughter ; partly, also, that he might bring about an interview between them and the lovely Asiatic maiden whose acquaintance he had made on the summit of Ben Ledi.

He could not account for the fascination which, in spite of his will, the ideas of Amenophra, Lurulà, and Niona were linked in his mind by so many and such occult threads of sympathy, that he strove in vain to rend them asunder, and resigned himself to the dreamy hallucinations without any attempt to break loose from them. He did not confide his fancies to Mr. De Vere, or even to his private secretary, from whom he had few secrets-but hid them under his waistcoat, as the Spartan boys did the foxes-lest a too prying world should discover them, and sneer at his infatuation.

Mr. Rameses was one of those happily constituted men
"who are never less alone than when alone." The feasting on his own thoughts was a perpetual luxury. The dearest and most intimate companion of his thoughts was musicthe music that his deft fingers drew from the great organ, on which he was an enthusiastic, though but little instructed, performer. Between the instrument and himself there seemed, in his own mind, to be a perfect sympathy. He talked to it-he played with it-he confided to it his hopes, his aspirations, his wildest fancies, and felt through all his frame the pulsation of electric waves, as the full, deep notes succeeded each other in unspoken hymns of praise, love, adoration, and exultation of spirit. He thought that the first music that sounded in the ears of human kind was heard by Eve as she walked in the gardens of Paradise and heard the Angels whisper together among the trees; that the music of the.spheres was no idle dream of ancient or modern poets, but a physical and mental reality, audible to every human soul that was attuned to the all-pervading melodies and harmonies of Nature. Music, he said and thought, was a divine voice that was powerless to utter evil. It only spoke praise, love, adoration, cheerfulness, joy, and sympathetic exultation of mind. Discords might interrupt vol. I.
the concords that sounded from the seven strings of the lyre of Heaven-but they were alien, and antagonistic, and doomed to speedy extinction in the mighty diapason and full choral symphony of the Universe. Fear, Terror, and Wrath, might be imaginable in the sudden cessation of the harmony ; but envy, scorn, malice, falsehood, jealousy, hatred, and all the ignoble passions and propensities of the perishing flesh, could find no voice in the angelic language of the spheres-in the voice of God, speaking from Eternity to Eternity-and regulating the march of suns, planets, and systems throughout the infinitude. Mr. Rameses found a sympathetic listener to his poetical rhapsodies on this subject in Laura De Vere-and in a lesser degree in the more prosaic, but still poetic, mind of her father. She was herself a performer on the instrument -and often attended on week days in the parish church of her native village, to make and enjoy a grander music than she could draw from the superb grand pianoforte which she possessed in her own home-and sometimes found her services in much request on the special occasions when the ricar, on the more solemn festivals of the Church, desired to impress the minds of his parishioners with a
holier rapture than that to which they were capable of being lifted on more ordinary and frequently occurring occasions. Mr. De Vere himself was of opinion-which he often expressed to the Vicar in friendly converse after dinner-that the Protestant Churches of Europe, more especially the Presbyterian and Calvinistic, ignorantly and perversely neglected one of the noblest aids and incentives to devotion when they banished all music except that of the untrained, and too often harsh and discordant, voices of the congregation and the school-children, from their Sunday services. "In fact," said Mr. Vere (and the Vicar in his heart agreed with him, though he had not the courage to avow it too openly, lest he should be suspected and accused of Ritualism, and even of Roman Catholicism), " all the fine arts ought to be pressed into the service of Religious worship-not only music, but painting and sculpture ; not only flowers, incense, stained glass, drapery, but white embroidered robes and flowing garments for the ministrants at the shrine and the altar. Nor should the music of the organ and the human voice, grand as these were, be confined," he thought "to the service of the churches, but all, or more than all, of the instruments in favour with Nebuchadnezzar
which he commanded to be played in the service of Baalthe only God whom he recognised to be a God-(though Baal was only one of the names given to the Sun by the ancient natives of the East)-sackbut, psaltery, timbrel, harp, dulcimer, flute, lyre, and even the tabor and tambourine. All these were but the ministrants of sound, and sound was the gift of God, which, were it withheld from human ears, would render the earth uninhabitable." The Vicar, in the estimation of his principal parishioners, was thought to be somewhat wild and eccentric in his ideas on the subject, but all forbore to argue with him, for several reasons, the first of which was that no one among them felt himself quite able to controvert him, and was not disposed to enter upon so large a question.

It was decided by Mr. Rameses, who was warmly supported in the idea by Mr. De Vere, that to all of the grand dinners which he intended to give in the season, there should be a musical accompaniment-instrumental during the repast, and vocal during the dessert-when no clatter of knives and forks, the removal of dishes, or the passing to and fro of waiters, should distract attention from
the sweet strains of the singers and choristers. Miss De Vere gladly undertook the management of all the details of this department of the festivals. She knew exactly where and to whom to apply both for instrumentalists and vocalists, and especially where she could obtain a well-trained choir of boys, whose voices she, with all other competent judges of music, held to be unsurpassable for clear and powerful melody. She also knew where to find most of the demigoddesses of song, whose services were not monopolised by Paris, New York, Berlin and St. Petersburg-and who did not require a reward for administering to the enjoyment of an hour, as much as a year's wages of a dozen hard-working men.

Mr. De Vere recommended, if Mr. Rameses desired celebrity for his "symposia," that his guests should not be exclusively selected from the circle of fashionable life, but that they should consist of representatives of all the professionally intellectual classes, and should include-as opportunity served-patricians and plebeians, bishops and judges, generals and admirals, doctors and lawyers, authors and painters, bankers and merchants, and scientific philosophers of every class and kind-a perfect menagerie, in fact, of
notabilities, more or less deserving of the eminence assigned to them in the small world that called itself, and was called "Society." But how to make a good choice amid such a multitude was the difficulty that beset both Mr. Rameses and his adviser. And then there were the ladies to be considered. But their claims Mr. De Vere thought might be easily disposed of by the invaluable aid of Lady Stoney-Stratford, and by garden parties in the beautiful grounds, and by balls in the splendid salons of the mansion. Thus, with dinners, concerts, garden parties and balls, the hospitalities of the rich Hindoo would indubitably become a nine days' wonder in the great metropolis, and sources of envy, ill-feeling, spite, and scandal on the part of all the non-invited who were above the social rank of shopkeepers. Mr. Rameses, in the face of the complications and hard work which he foresaw would be his lot in organizing these pretentious displays, was at times more than half disposed to abandon the idea of giving them. After all, as he thought, what would be the good of them ? beyond the spreading abroad of money that he did not value, to fill the greedy pockets of an extortionate crowd of harpies, who picked the pockets of the poor and committed
wholesale robberies of the rich. But he had gone too far to retract. All the noble mothers of unmarried daughters in London were on the alert, with Lady StoneyStratford in the foreground, to turn this great occasion to advantage in the matrimonial market ; and, besides, even the philosophic giver of the festival had a vague notion, that he never expressed in words to anybody, that possibly, amid the crowd of beautiful women that would congregate around him on the occasion, the guiding-star of his life might be discoverable. The idea maintained its hold upon his mind, as he thought of Niona, the nearest approach to the bright "twin soul," that was seldom absent from his waking or dreaming fancy.


## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GRAND Symposium.
The advice given by Mr. De Vere was not exactly suited at the moment to the fancy of Mr. Rameses. The first of his series of dinners was not given to dukes, marquises, earls or bishops, but to philosophers and students of the wonders and mysteries of Nature. There was not a lord among the guests, except two, who were invited, not because they were lords, but because they were men who had sought Knowledge in her secret and remotest haunts, held communion with her, and given up their whole hearts to the fascination of her teaching-who had learned wisdom from the earth and from the stars, from the infinitely little as well as from the infinitely great. And these men were not staid and dull, and devoid of brilliant conversation-as the multitude are apt to suppose that men of high intellectual attainments too commonly are-but full of anecdote, wit, repartee and joyous elasticity. They were not expected to say good things, just as the flint and steel
when quiescent are not expected to cmit flashes of fire, but which never fail to emit them when properly handled.

Mr. Rameses was not only temperate but abstemious. His food consisted principally of grain and fruits, and his drink was water. He was by no means an anchorite or an ascetic in his hospitalities, but especially liberal in placing before his guests wines of the choicest vintages, in the excellence and virtues of which he was well initiated. He held-with the Apostle Paul, with Noah and Solomon, and with all the sages of ancient and modern times-that good wine was one of the choicest gifts bestowed upon mankind by all-bounteous, beneficent and benevolent Mother Nature. He was learned, and had been in his youthful-time experienced, in the merits of Chateau Lafitte, Chateau Margaux, Clos Vougeot, Chambertin, Chateau Yquem, Romanée Conti, Marcobrunner, Rudesheimer, Tokay and Catawba, and was not to be imposed upon either by retail or wholesale merchants. He dealt directly with the vintagers and proprietors of Bordeaux, Burgundy and the Rhincland, and allowed the virtuous liquors to increase in virtuc by agefor years after they had left the vines which gave them birth -and to mature in excellence as they matured in ycars.

And though, in this age of fads and isms, crazes and crotchets, the fact may be denied or not very cheerfully recognised, good wine is as powerful a magnet to attract good company, as good wit or the most sparkling conversation of the beaux esprits of society. The fame of the wine cellar of Mr. Rameses, the water drinker, was as widely extended as that of his wealth.

The accessories of a feast are better than the feast itself, or ought to be so. The coarse tastes of the palate are not the most refined of all the tastes that should administer to the luxurious charms of a sumptuous entertainment. The pleasures of the eye, of the olfactory nerves, of the touch, of the ear, and, more than all, of the imagination, are necessary to the completeness of the harmonies that should pervade every truly artistic banquet. The nectar of the gods would not taste like nectar if it were presented in a pipkin, and ambrosia would cease to be ambrosial if served from a coffee-pot. Who could sup Chateau Margaux with a spoon out of a soup-plate? Or Clos Vougeot out of a porridge pot? Plates of Sèvres and of Dresden ware add-though ravenously hungry and prosaic feeders may not be aware of it-to the flavour and zest of the delicacies
that are provided in them; and the perfume of flowers, and the sweet strains of music, sounding amid the leaves and spreading branches of the choicest tropical palms and evergreens, enhance all the pleasures of sense, and prove with a somewhat different shade of meaning the wisdom of the words of Solomon when he declared, "that a dinner of herbs and love therewith " was better than the most sumptuous feast without that divine condiment. Silver and golden candelabra, cut glass, sparkling like diamonds, emeralds and rubies, and mirrors, refiecting a myriad lights, are all enhancements of the pleasure derivable from the gratification of the vulgar, and more or less degrading, appetite for mere food-which is the pabulum of the perishable body, but is no satisfaction to the imperishable mind, except in so far as in this purely physical world the mind is dependent upon the body for its power of communication with the material universe. Mr. Rameses had studied these things, and made use of his abundant riches to afford the fullest scope and play to his ideas.

All the great dinners that he gave during the season were social successes, and as such were duly recognised in the prevalent gossip of the time, blazoned abroad by all the
usual organs of publicity-of which the tongues of the women, young and old, and of the quidnuncs of the clubs were not the least important. To the dinners were invited the leaders of the world of intellect and fashion-not without a sotto z'oce accompaniment of wonder that Mr. Rameses should give himself so much trouble about, and spend so much money upon, a world from which he expected and could obtain nothing in the way of advantage. But it was his whim, and had he not the means of indulging it ? His hobby-and had he not the skill of riding it? But the success of the dimners, great as it was, was as nothing to be compared with the success of his garden parties. These were pronounced, by all the glibbest utterances of the great little world in which the utterers whirled about like lively animalculæ in a crystal vase, sparkling in the sunshine or the window of a drawing room-to be the only events of the season that were worthy of remembrancesuperior even in claims to the great annual Exhibition at South Kensington ; that would be all very well in their estimation if the oi polloi, with their shillings, and the occupants of the Bath-chairs, wheeling about in everybody's way, were not admitted.

At these gatherings the beauty of all the beauties, whose loveliness was recognised by the men, and about whom the opinions of the ladies were divided into a small minority of admirers and a very large majority of dissentients from the popular verdict, was Niona Lal, who was accompanied by her sister, Lady MacTavish, and her sister's husband, Sir Hector MacTavish, knight of the Bath and of the Star of India. The next fair one who received the popular homage without claiming it, was Laura De Vere. The two young women were mutually attractive-the one fair as a summer morning, the other dusky, but beautiful as an autumnal evening, when the western sky is all aglow with manytinted clouds, 'ere yet the moon has risen, or any other than the evening star-has put in an appearance in the sky. An idea spread abroad at these gatherings, from not one of which the dark beauty or the fair were ever absent, that Mr. Rameses, owing to the marked attentions which he showed to both of them, was like a moth hovering between two flames, uncertain in which of the two he should scorch his gauzy wings prior to the final immolation which the Ladies Pierrepoint thought to be inevitable. Lady StoneyStratford, however, was not without a faintly lingering hope
that the flames in the bright eyes of either Lady Ethel or Lady Maud would yet prove of superior efficacy in attracting the golden moth, although the young ladies themselves had renounced all ideas upon the subject, and looked upon the Paganism of Mr. Rameses as a fatal objection. But Lady Stoney-Stratford was a truly British General, and when she thought herself likely to conquer never acknowledged defeat or the possibility of it. Besides, she knew that gold was great, and that the "No," of a young lady might be changed into "Yes," if pertinaciously ignored or controverted. Mr. Rameses, the person most interested, thought no more of the supposed danger which he ran, than the moth, with which he was ideally compared, thought of the dangers of the blaze which dazzled and fascinated it. The lovely Niona was wholly unconscious of the fancies that had taken root in the minds of the wealth-hunting English maidens of aristocratic birth-but Laura De Vere, though the most unmercenary of her sex, knew full well that Mr. Rameses was not an utter stranger to the kindly and even tender feeling with which she had almost unconsciously inspired him. She had no love of money, or of displayher father was wealthy enough to provide liberally for all
her wants, whether she remained single, or found a husband in any station of life-and she would have hated herself if she could bave indulged in any scheme, or in any hope of an alliance with one whom she no doubt esteemed and respected, but for whom she had never entertained an affection of a nature different from that which she felt for her father.

Between her and Niona, with whom she had no thoughts of rivalry, the latent germ of a sisterly affection had gradually grown into an overshadowing tree. It had been to Laura a source of regret that she had no brother, and, above all, no sister who could sympathise in her joys, her sorrows, her studies and her amusements. She had unexpectedly found in Niona the friend, the companion, the sister she had dreamed of ; and every day that they passed together served to increase the tenderness of the tie that bound them. Mr. De Vere watched the progress of the attachment with pleasurable solicitude, hoping that it might be strengthened as time wore on. Mr. Rameses also was a highly interested observer of the girlish lore that had grown up in the sympathetic hearts of the two maidens-who had come into the world under such
different circumstances, and been nurtured upon such different mental food. Greatly as he admired, and strongly as he was attracted towards, Laura De Vere, he more greatly admired, and was still more forcibly attracted by the inexplicable witchery exercised over his mind by Niona. "Blood," as has been often said, "is thicker than water," and the Asiatic blood that coursed through his own veins acted with a magnetic influence, which caused their pulses to throb in unison, when the thoughts of either of them turned towards the land of their birthwhich became more than ever the land of their love, the further they were removed from it. The fancied resemblance which Niona bore to the image he had formed in his mind of the long-lost priestess of Isis-the beloved Lurulà of his dreams-drew his sympathies more and more towards her, and withdrew them in a corresponding degree from Laura De Vere, who, on her part, gradually ceased to be conscious of exercising any greater influence upon his mind than that of the mild and equable influence of friendly sympathy and intellectual companionship.

Lady Mac'Tavish was not happy in her married life, and

Niona partook, as she could not fail to do, of the discomfort of her position. Sir Hector was a specimen and a rem-nant-perhaps the last-of the old Highland gentleman of a bygone era. He had all the arbitrary notions of a feudal chief, longed for the restoration of the ancient privilege of pit and gallows, to be exercised at will against his refractory vassals, and treated his docile spouse after the fashion of the Eastern potentates, who looked upon women as chattels or toys, slaves to their will, and bound to render unresisting and uncomplaining obedience to their slightest caprices. In daily intercourse with such a tyrant-to whom she was only bound by the sisterly, or half-sisterly, tie of relationship-it was not to be wondered at that Niona should look with pleasure and favour upon the graceful courtesy, the delicate attention, the deferential respect exhibited towards her by one of her own race, who had discarded the Asiatic notions of women, and moulded his thoughts, his character, and his conduct upon those of Europeans towards the female sex. Mr. Rameses was in his whole mind, bearing and behaviour, a thorough English gentleman, of what is improperly called the old school-but which is neither new nor old-but perennial VOL. 1.
and perpetual, and likely to remain so. Under these circumstances, so novel in the experience of the fair Niona, the intimacy between her and Mr. Rameses grew more cordial as the days wore on, and gave additional strength to the rumours which floated about in Society, that all the wiles and snares and delicate manœuvres employed by the match-making mothers and match-desiring daughters of the fashionable world, who had set their hearts upon sharing the comfortable millions of Mr. Rameses, were likely to be exerted in vain, unless a change should come over the minds of either of the two interesting Indiansa change which, to lynx-eyed observers, did not seem possible on the lady's part, or probable on that of the gentleman's. And consequently, the secret war against the rupees of the millionaire languished a little, though it did not cease in the higher circles of the aristocracy. But Lady Stoney-Stratford remained alert and watchfulreposed a little, but did not shut her eyes against the chances and possibilities of the future.

## THE TWIN SOUL

OR,
THE STRANGE EXPERIENCES
OF
MR. RAMESES.

## E $\mathbb{A}$ sucbological and Realistic <br> Romance.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II
" Fay que mon âme à la tienne s'assemble,
Range nos cœurs et nos esprits ensemble,
L'amour l'entend ainsi ;
Tu es mon feu, je dois être ta flamme,
Et dois encor puisque je suis ton âme
Etre la mienne aussi! '
-Philippes Des Portes, 1575.

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## THE TWIN SOUL.

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## CHAPTER I.

PARLIAMENTARY HONOURS.
By an unexpected combination of circumstances, Sir Hector MacTavish and Mr. Rameses were both invited to become candidates for the representation in Parliament of a Metropolitan borough. This particular borough happened to be blessed or cursed, as the reader may choose to consider it, with two Caucuses-or two Cauci, if that be the better word-who considered it to be their duty to guide the political sheep of the district into such pastures as pleased them. These caucuses grew like warts or wens upon the necks of the Radical and Conservative parties, the one being of opinion that Great Britain ought to occupy herself exclusively with her own affairs, and leave all the rest of the world to take care of itself; the other vol. il.
that Great Britain ought to maintain herself as a Greater Britain, and that, as her Empire was world-wide, so ought her duties and responsibilities to be, and that not a hostile gun should be discharged in either hemisphere without her sanction or permission. Upon the great question of India, the policies they approved were diametrically opposed to each other. The Radicals were for letting India drift into self-government. The Conservatives, on the contrary, were for continuing the beneficent hold which the genius of the greatest of English statesmen and administrators had established over that vast country. Neither of these parties knew anything about India, except that it was large, populous, and rich ; but both had an idea, born of conceit, ignorance, and presumption, that it was their duty to send into Parliament a man to expound their views, as far as they were expoundable. Mr. Rameses was a persona grata to the mole-eyed Radicals, because he was a native of India, and was thought to sympathise with the Indian people. Sir Hector was a persona grata to the Conservatives, because he had once governed a portion of India on English principles, and was in all probability ready to do so again if called upon, or at all events to support in Parlia-
ment the existing policy of British statesmanship. But the Radicals misunderstood the character of Mr. Rameses, as they very soon discovered on approaching him with their proposals. He would not be dictated to ; he would not be a delegate or an echo; he would not be the mouthpiece of the opinions of shopkeepers, butchers, bakers, tailors, fishmongers, or even attorneys, or do that which he was bidden to do by people not half so well informed as himself, or not informed at all. He would neither whisper nor roar, nor laugh nor sigh, by dictation, but would be true to his own soul, and assert himself, per fas or ne fas, careless whom he might please or whom he might offend by so doing. The political admirers of Sir Hector Mac'Tavish were a different kind of people. They chose their man because they knew what he meant, and because they were assured of his thorough independence of mind, character, and conduct ; because they knew that he knew what they didn't know, and that he would not be driven or led from his purpose by fear or favour, by cajolery or force, or by the prizes that might be dangled before the eyes of his ambition and self-seeking. Sir Hector accepted the invitation to represent his party. Mr. Rameses
refused absolutely even to listen to the persuasions or representations of any party, least of all a party with which he had not a particle of sympathy; but went so far as to recommend them, if they required a native-born Indian to speak the truth for them, as the truth existed in his mind, to ask his secretary, Mr. Melville, whether the office would be agreeable to him. Mr. Melville was young and aspiring, and consented willingly, even eagerly. He had a sufficiency of British blood in his veins to appreciate fully the dignity conferred upon all who had the privilege of having their letters addressed with the magic letters "M.P." added to their names; and, apart from this knowledge, he had the conviction that he might be useful in Parliament, and possibly be enabled to carve out for himself an honourable if not a distinguished career. The caucus that selected him were gratified with his acquiescence, though their gratification was somewhat diminished and their pride in their own power and importance very greatly incensed, when an unexpected candidate presented himself, who had not asked their consent to solicit the suffrage of the "independent" electors, who were not to be treated in any respect as independent by the self-installed oligarchy of
busy-bodies, who thought they had as much right to the votes of the inhabitants as they had to the adulterated groceries and drugs in their shops, and to other commodities which they retailed to a confiding and defrauded public by short weight and measure. The candidate who dared to set the caucus at defiance was no other than our old friend Mr. Pigram—Fitzgerald—or "Old Methuselah," as the caucus speedily learned to call him-who came before the borough with a long purse, an unblushing amount of self-assurance or impudence, and a flavour of aristocratic affluence derived from the Stoney-Stratfords. Mr. Pigram Fitzgerald, as already stated, had indulged himself for a long time in visions of a baronetcy, as a reward to be obtained by political subserviency, or even of a peerage, for he was by no means modest or disposed to set a small value upon himself. He had even gone so far in dreams of his future greatnesslike Alnaschar in the "Arabian Nights"-as to have fixed upon the title he would assume, either as baron or as viscount, when a grateful Prime Minister should reward his services. He discovered, or thought he had discovered (was it not the same thing ?), that the original Pigrams, like the Browns and the Snookses, had come over with William the

Conqueror ; that the true name of the family was Bigraime, and that he was the direct descendant of Hugo de Bigraime, who had been rewarded for his knightly support by lands in the fen country, and with the old ancestral manorhouse of Bigraime Abbey.

The name of Mr. Pigram, now Mr. Fitzgerald, was no sooner announced in the newspapers as a candidate for the Metropolitan borough of Great Swindleton than the blank walls, hoardings, and vacant gable-ends of all the available houses in the said borough, together with the sides of the omnibuses and the cabs, were covered with bills, posters, and placards calling upon the electors to support by their votes the pretensions of "Old Methuselah " to represent them. These tactics produced a rebellion, a mutiny, or at least a schism in the ranks of the caucus ; the one section resenting the unauthorised candidature of one who had presumed to offer himself without their sanction, the other party feeling it bad policy to resist the pretensions of a man who had money to spend, and who they thought had as much right to make a disreputable fortune by the Methuselah Life Pills as others had to make it by Aunt Mary's Soothing Elixir, warranted to send troublesome
babies to sleep in the grave, or at the very least to render them idiotic ; or by Professor Quackenbosch's Infallible Hair Restorer, warranted to force the incipient moustache to grow on the upper lip of every smoking boy of fourteen, or even of twelve, if the smoking boy of that age considered that he was a man ; or even to endow a slop-basin with hirsute honours. But the original caucus bore down all opposition, and by strenuous efforts succeeded in returning Mr. Melville by a small but sufficient majority. Thus faded, perished, grew dim and died, the hopes of a baronetcy or a peerage that had cheered the heart of the last descendant of the Bigraimes who came over with the Conqueror.

The discomfiture of Mr. Fitzgerald was not taken very greatly to heart by any of the Stoney-Stratford familyby Lady Gwendoline perhaps least of all. Her patrician pride was great enough to look without much disappointment on so small a rebuff as her husband - not by any means her lord and master - had experienced, and Lord Stoney-Stratford was rather glad than otherwise at what he called the "pull down" of a would-be upstart. But "Methuselah" himself was far from being disheartened.
"Was it not?" he asked Lady Gwendoline, who, however, did not think it necessary to answer the question, "the fate of the greatest statesmen to be sometimes rejected by popular constituencies? Were not the electors and non-electors of all boroughs, and, indeed, the whole population of Great Britain and Ireland, mostly fools, as an eminent authority declared them to be? And would not his hour come, in the fulness of the appointed time, if he only knew how to wait, and was clever enough to take advantage of his opportunities? Had not the famous Macaulay, the orator, the poet and the statesman, been rejected by Edinburgh in favour of a local tradesman?" He would bide his time, and sit. in the House of Commons yet, if he did not sit in the House of Lords.

Finding no sympathy in his wife in these aspirations, he indulged then in solitude-over a bottle of choice old port at one of the clubs of which he was a member.

Mr. Melville bore his honours meekly. He was not elated at his success, though quietly resolved in his own mind to turn it to good account in the councils of the Legislature - especially upon Indian affairs. Mr. Rameses, in order to render his position secure, and
make him thoroughly independent of the caprices of fortune, settled a handsome annuity upon him.

The first person to whom Mr. Melville hastened to announce the news of his success was not his best friend, Mr. Rameses, but to one who was nearer to his heart. It was Lady Ethel Pierrepoint!


## CHAP'TER II.

DREAMS AND PRESENTIMENTS.
"Whence come our presentiments of good or evil?" enquired Mr. Rameses of Mr. De Vere, as they sat alone in the study of the great house in Kensington. "I knew this morning at breakfast-time that I should see you to-day, though I had no reason to expect your coming, and no notification of its probability. Can it be true, as Thomas Campbell says, in a poem that seems to me to be unrivalled in its simple grandeur, 'That coming events cast their shadows before' ?"
"Presentiments," replied Mr. De Vere, "are not easily to be accounted for, and I shall not attempt to pry into the causes. The search would be idle."
"Calculations of probabilities, perhaps?" said Mr. Rameses.
"Not so," replied his friend, "or not invariably so. What are called predictions and prophecies are very often the result-as easily to be foreseen by attentive ob-
servers, who study the moves on the great chess-board of what we call Fate, as the corresponding moves of the pawns, the bishops, the knights, and the other pieces with which the world's game is played. It needs no gift of prophecy to foretell that if a man leaps from the top of a high building to the ground, or discharges a bullet from a pistol into his brain, that death will ensue. But presentiments are not to be traced to calculations, and do not depend upon them. For instance, I take my walk in the streets of a crowded city, and suddenly think, I know not why, of a man whom I have not seen or heard of, perhaps, for a quarter of a century, and five minutes afterwards I meet that very man face to face (a circumstance that has happened to me more than once). How am I to account for its occurrence? And if the news of a great battle, or other decisive event, is known and promulgated at a distance to which the ordinary physical agencies could not by any possibility have conveyed it (I speak, of course, of the days before science put a girdle, by means of electricity, around the globe in forty minutes) how is the fact to be accounted for by any known material or physical laws?"
"How, indeed ?" rejoined Mr. Rameses.
"And by the same mysterious agencies, whatever they may be, are not the strange premonitions afforded to us in dreams to be received and respected as messages from the unseen world, not transmissible to our vulgar senses, but not altogether unintelligible to that power within us, which exists, acts and is acted upon irrespective of our bodily perceptions? For instance, I once received what I must now consider to have been a message from Australia, from the disembodied soul of a dear friend, who I did not know had thrown off the garb of mortality to assume immortality. The message came to me in the dead of the night, when I lay, half-sleeping and half-waking, tossing about uneasily on my pillow, and having no reason to think of him or anybody else. A fortnight afterwards the news reached me by letter that on the very instant when the sudden fancy took possession of me that all was not well with him in this sub-solar sphere, he had been drowned at sea, when out on an excursion of pleasure. I learned on the following day that at the identical moment when his soul had left his body, a strange bird had perched upon the great tower of the parish
church of the ancient borough which he represented in Parliament."
"Poor bird!" interrupted Mr. Rameses.
"Yes, for, with the abominable habit peculiar to the English, of the lower as well as the upper classes, the beadle of the parish, noticing the appearance of the unusual visitor, rushed into his house close by, and bringing out his gun, took deliberate aim at the unoffending stranger, and had the diabolical satisfaction- $I$ call it diabolical, with a proper consideration of the meaning of the word-of seeing it fall dead at his feet."
"You thought it, probably, a case of the metempsychosis ?"
"Yes, and I think so still," said Mr. De Vere. "Our great Shakespear, who left scarcely anything untouched, and who, as was less truly said of a far inferior man, touched nothing that he did not adorn, alludes in one of his sonnets to the rapidity of our thoughts, and their utter scorn of distance, which he had intimated to the unobservant world in the finely poetic play of the Tempest in the little speech of his 'dainty Ariel.'

> ' If the dull substance of my flesh were thought, Injurious distance should not stop myy way, For then, despite of space I would be brought, From limits far remote, where thou dost stay. No matter then, although my foot did stand Upon the furthest Earth removed from thee, For nimble thought can jump both sea and land, As soon as think the place where he would be.'
"I have thought of these matters earnestly and long," said Mr. Rameses, with a sigh, "and have come to a conclusion which satisfies my own mind-though it may not satisfy the precise mind of a geometrician, or the dense mind of a materialist-if such words as precise or dense can be applied to mind in the abstract. Thought is the result of spiritual and not of mere mechanical action-else a watch or a steam-engine might be made to think ; and thought or spirit, though it exist in the body, is not the result of body, nor confined to the body. We know that spirit is, but we do not know what it is; and he who would confine it to the body, would circumscribe the uncircumscribable, limit the limitless, render finite the infinite, and bend the interminable straight line of God's purpose into a circle. What we consent to call spirit is not confined in what we consent to call our mortal life-within the bounds of
the mortal frame-but, even when attached to andlinked with it, has the faculty of indefinite expansion. It is like a light, that is not imprisoned in the burning substance on which it feeds, but spreads afar out into the surrounding darkness. Do you gather my meaning ?"
"I think I do-nay I am sure I do. Go on !"
"So the light of the spirit extends beyond the wick that it consumes, and goes before it into the apparent void. Thus, when this morning I had a presentiment that I should speedily be aware of your presence in the flesh-it was the effusive and diffusive light of my spiritual essence meeting and commingling with the corresponding light of your spirit ; that produced the presentiment which has led to this (not I hope useless) discussion that has grown up between us."
"If the theory could be accepted," said Mr. De Vere, "it would account for some of the phenomena of dreams."
"For all of them, if conjoined with what I must consider the possible renewals of past impressions upon the tablets of the brain, to be sometimes deciphered in clear moments by the cunning reader."
"You remind me of what was said by another poet, who cultivated the fruitage of a mighty mind in the solitudes of the mountains, and did not waste his energies amid the vain babble of fashionable Society-I mean Wordsworth :-

> " ' Hence in a season of calm weather, Though inland far we be, Our thoughts have sight of that immortal sea, Which brought us hither, Can in a moment travel thither, And see the children sport upon the shore, And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.' "
"Beautiful, exceedingly!" ejaculated Mr. Rameses.
"Yes, beautiful exceedingly, whether we apply the poet's deep insight into the inner faculties of our souls to our waking reveries and presentiments, or to the dreams that come unbidden to the mind when the body sleeps, and the immortal mind revels in unrestrained liberty. I am not a poet, I am not a musician, I am not an architect, I am not an orator-and could not be either, if I tried ever so ardently to develop myself in these capacities. But I have been a poet in my dreams-an inspired improvisatore (I use the the word inspired deliberately and with a full sense of its meaning)-and have poured forth joyous lyrics
with all the spontaneity of a skylark singing a hymn to the morning, or, with equal spontaneity, a river of melancholy lyrics, such as the nightingale sings to the evening star, or the moon, or the listening forest. I have systematically repeated them in my dreams, because I earnestly wished to remember them when I wakened. But the waking mind was a blank. I could not recall a word, or a thought, of any of my lyrical outbursts."
"The soul spoke in you, and displayed its infinite superiority to the clay that oppressed it."
"In like manner, though I love music as fervently as I love poetry, I can no more compose a melody in my waking hours, than I can fly-but in my sleep I can rival Mozart and Beethoven, and put Wagner to shame. I can, while in the same state of cerebral exaltation-and utterly defiant of physical trammels-imagine palaces, cathedrals, towers and temples, of an architecture that neither Sir Christopher Wren, nor Inigo Jones, nor Vanbrugh, nor Vitruvius, nor the builders of Greece, Rome, Babylon, Nineveh or Egypt, could equal for proportion, for novelty, for magnificence of bulk, or for elegance of outline. Any one of them, if I could but have traced its plan upon paper, VOL. II.
would have enrolled my name among those of the greatest builders that the world has seen ; but the designs perished in my brain, as soon as they were pictured in my thought, and left no more trace behind them than the soap bubbles blown by an idle child on a summer morning. So also, though the ideas always fail me, as well as the words with which I would clothe them, whenever I seek to address a large assemblage of my fellow-creatures. I can in my dreams be as verbose as the great Mr. Wordy Rattlestone or any other Prime Minister who darkens counsel with vain words, and far more eloquent than any one who in our day subdues a listening senate into compulsory admiration. But on waking, all the fire and glow have departed ; the ideas which, a few minutes before, were strong and clear have become vague, shadowy and indistinct ; the words, if I strive to recall them, as I often do, refuse to obey the intelligence that would command them ; the words halt and, stumble like blind cripples that have no one to guide them, and the body becomes the temporary master and tyrant of the soul."
"And yet you, oh my friend, who confess to these experiences, received with gentle scepticism my cherished
dreams of the happiness of Amenophra and Lurulà, and the possible connection of these fair creatures with my mortal destiny."
"Not exactly with scepticism," replied Mr. De Vere, "but with what I may call ignoration."

And, saying this, the philosopher of the Rookery approached a large vase that stood on a pedestal in the sunlight of the open window, in which three or four gold fish were disporting themselves.
"These are subjects," he continued, "on which we can speculate till the brain grows dizzy with multitudinous perplexities, but on which we can never arrive at any convincing conclusion, and of which it is impossible in this little glass vase-the world-in which we move about for seventy years, or less or more, that we can ever know anything of the great Universe beyond its little circumference. What know these fishes of you or me? What can they know? And what can we know of the illimitable world in which our lot is cast? What knows the noonday midge of yesterday or to-morrow? What does it know even of to-day?"
"Too true," sighed Mr. Rameses. "We know nothing,
but we feel much. And when I say we know nothing, I am wrong. We know more than in our temporary ignorance we think we know. I have read your great poet Wordsworth, and agree with him in believing that :

> "' Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting, The soul that rises with us-our life's star, Hath had elsewhere its setting, And cometh from afar. Not in entire forgetfulness, And not in utter nakedness, But trailing clouds of glory doth it come, From God who is our home!'

When the two friends parted after this interchange of their not very conflicting ideas, Mr. De Vere returned to his books and his garden at his well-beloved Rookery ; and Mr. Rameses paid a long-promised visit to Sir Hector and Lady MacTavish—and the beautiful Niona.


## CHAPTER III.

## HESITANCY.

Mr. Rameses was in love, but, having outlived the sprouting and budding period of adolescence, was no longer governed by the feelings that had played the tyrant over his mind and body, when every beautiful new face became a new enslaver. He had reached the " mezza cammin" and summer of life, and the romantic fancies of the spring of his early manhood had ceased to run hot in his blood. A serene philosophy had taken the place once occupied by the passions of the purely animal life. But if "Love laughs at locksmiths," as the old proverb says, it laughs at Philosophy. Should a struggle arise between the two, and Philosophy acts as the challenger, Love is very likely to gain the victory. So Mr. Rameses found, whenever the image of Niona arose in his mind, or presented itself before his eyes in the living reality of her faultless form, her soulspeaking eyes, her sunny smile, and when he heard the delicious music of her voice. The charm, the fascination,
the glamour and the witchery were so irresistible, that he yielded himself a willing captive to the might of her gentleness. And yet a spiritual philosophy mingled with the physical passion that possessed and governed him. In the "hidden chambers of his brain" there was linked with the living and present image of the visible Niona the invisible image of the dead and departed Lurulà so indissolubly that he would have striven in vain to separate them, even if he had endeavoured to do so. But so far from making the futile attempt, he encouraged and strengthened in thoughts, and dreams, and theories, and speculations, the beloved idea that had gradually become a part of his intellectual and physical nature. The "twin soul," which Lady Stoney-Stratford would have rejoiced to know that he had found-or imagined that he had found-in one of her daughters, although in her heart she held the idea to be more the work of an eccentric boy than of a staid middle-aged philosopher, seemed to the pre-occupied imagination of Mr. Rameses to have been discovered in the lovely mortal frame of Niona. The innocent unselfishness of her character lent her a peculiar charm, and the differences in their mental qualities and idiosyncrasies seemed
to the fascinated eyes of Mr. Rameses to be no more than the differences in his own mortal frame, between the right hand and the left, necessary, however, to the completion of the structure, or as that between the light of morning and the darkness of night, both of which went to the formation of the complete circle of the day. When people speak of past or present days, they include past or present nights, and when he spoke of Niona to his own enamoured mind, he thought of her as a part of himself, he fondly hoped that she was destined to be (to use the sacred formula) bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, as she was already heart of his heart, mind of his mind, and soul of his soul -now and for evermore.

The love of precious stones which Niona shared with nearly all her sex, was not distasteful to Mr. Rameses. On the contrary, it was pleasant to him to think of her as adorned with such costly diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and pearls as Queens might envy-and strive in vain to possess-all of them to be provided at his expense, not only as a gratification to her, but as double, triple, and even centuple gratification to him to see her wear them.

The luxury of giving was to the mind of Mr. Rameses the greatest of all luxuries that pertained to great wealth, a luxury truly divine, he thought, and which he enjoyed with an enjoyment as full and complete as the lark and the nightingale enjoy in singing, or as the great Sun himself enjoys in shining.

He and Niona were of the same race and faith, believed in the same Great Spirit of the Universe, of which their own spirits were the immortal and eternal emanations. He and she held that it was not chance, but something far greater and diviner, that had drawn them together on the summit of Ben Ledi, to render their homage to the vivifying, purifying, ennobling fire, that was the representative and agent of God in the maintenance of that infinitesimal corner of the universe in which their lot was cast, during the brief day or hour of their mortal existence.

Mr. Rameses lacked the resolution, not only to declare the love he felt for Niona, but to take the more decisive step of asking her to go through the ceremony of marriage with him. He considered that their souls had been espoused from all eternity, and that the marriage of the body, however respectable and necessary it might be in
this world, was clearly supererogatory as regarded that holier union which had been consummated ere this world existed. But the question remained, was Niona herself, in her womanly capacity, and with the purely womanly intelligence, prepared to admit this heavenly marriage as an indisputable fact? While this spiritual and celestial question remained unsolved and insoluble, the physical and worldly question was as vulgar and commonplace as it would have been between Mary the Cook and Thomas the Policeman, or any other pair of men and women, in high or low life. To the mind of Mr. Rameses, the human marriage, considered in this light, was a derogation from the mystic beauty of the eternal sacrament, that merely gave the sanction of what is called Society to that which had not only been already sanctioned, but irrevocably decreed by God and Nature. Nevertheless, Mr. Rameses felt that, in deference and obedience to the law, custom, and binding obligations of all civilized life on this planet, the consent of Niona must be obtained to this earthly union, and duly proclaimed from the house-tops of publicity, so that the door-keepers of the great temple of Fashion, and the worshippers at the shrine, might have full
knowledge of the relationship which these two persons were to bear to the world in which they lived, and especially to the society in which they moved.

Niona, when they met alone in the conservatory of Sir Hector's house in Grosvenor Place, was aware by observing a something in his air and manner, in the expression of his face, in the light in his eloquent eyes, and in his hesitancy while addressing the few sentences that were drawn from his lips by the ordinary courtesies of friendly intercourse, that he had something of more than usual importance to say to her. The inopportune arrival of the Ladies Maud and Ethel Pierrepoint at the very moment when an avowal and a proposal were trembling for utterance on his tongue, put a stop to the imminent disclosure for a time. Mr. Rameses was not sorry for the temporary interruption; it gave him time to collect his thoughts, and strengthened him in the half-formed resolution of taking counsel on the subject with Sir Hector, the natural guardian of the fair Niona, in the strange country to which he had brought her.

The half reformed resolution attained full growth and maturity in the time occupied by one swing of the pendulum.

The question, plainly put, was plainly answered. Sir Hector would have been delighted-if the state of his liver had permitted him to be delighted at anything-when Mr. Rameses unfolded to him his design of marrying the gentle, dreamy, docile, beautiful and intelligent Niona, if she would accept him. "I cannot answer for Niona, or any other woman," said Sir Hector, "but I have no doubt whatever but that her heart has long inclined towards you, and that she will think herself a happy and an honoured woman in becoming the wife of one whom she esteems so highly, and with whom she has so many feelings, ideas, and sympathies in common. You are both of the same religion, or the same faith, which is a word I like better. This is a great advantage in matrimony. Fortunately for me, before I married her sister, I had taken care that no dispute or divergency of opinion on the merits or truth of Sun-worship and Christianity should ever arise between us. She became a Christian because I wished her to become one, or at all events she conformed to the ritual and doctrine of the Established Church of England. She has behaved herself ever since as a good Christian, or a good Buddhist, should do-worshipping God, loving her neighbour as much as she
can, on the great Christian principle that I strive to instil into her mind, that love to God includes the love of her fellow creatures, the giving of alms according to her means, the speaking ill of no one, the visiting of the widows and the fatherless in their distress. She is contented with good works, for which, according to some who call themselves ultra-orthodox Christians, she will be damned to all eternity. But she has not heard this cruel doctrine preached, and would not, I think, be frightened by it if she did. But have you thought in what manner, and with what religious rites, if any, you will be married ?" asked Sir Hector.
" I have thought of it seriously," replied Mr. Rameses. " Being in Rome, as it were, I must do as the Romans do. Being in England, I must, on so solemn an occasion as marriage, act as if I were an Englishman. Being in a Christian land, I must, if I do no violence to my own conscience, satisfy the opinions of Christian Society. I am not a Jew, or I might, without offence to Society or its opinions be married in the Jewish manner ; but being a believer in the faith of Jesus, as taught by Him, though not in the legends that have gathered around His great name, I have qualified myself for admission at the

Roman Catholic Church by submitting to the mystic ceremony of baptism by water-not by fire."
" But why Roman Catholic ?" enquired Sir Hector, "and not the Protestant faith ?"
" Because," replied Mr. Rameses, " the word Protestant is a denial of some part of the original faith. Faith is the very essence and quintessence of all Religion, and if a protest against any part of the faith can be allowed, there is no logical limit to be put to a second, or third, or any number of protests, until, in commercial language, ninetynine per cent. of the faith may be protested against. My heart is Christian, and, if the love of God and my neighbour, and the desire to do good to my fellows, and to obey the immutable and divine laws of the Creator, can avail, my conduct is Christian also."
"Christian, with a reservation, is what you claim to be?" said Sir Hector. "Well, I suppose the majority of Christians have reservations also. But, Niona? She must be baptized, if a marriage between you is to be celebrated by a Christian priest ?"
"All has been foreseen," replied Mr. Rameses. "As I have determined to make England my future home, I
desire to stand well, for my wife's sake as well as for my own, in the opinion of the English people. My right hand is not to know what my left hand has done, or I might enlighten you on the number and amount of my benefactions to the Catholic Church; not only of those which I have contributed in my own name, but of those which I have contributed in the name of Niona."
'The colloquy might have continued much longer on the knotty point of seeming conformity thus involved, if Mr. Rameses had not diverted the discussion from the subject of conformity into that of religious belief in general. "In my progress through the world," he said, "I have observed that people are always apt to glorify themselves for their adherence to what they call the true faith. But the true faith, as they call it, is invariably that of the country in which they happen to have been born. Religions, like morality, are of geographical growth, much the same as the 'fauna' and 'flora' of the regions in which they flourish. The same great idea pervades and underlies them all. I can quite understand that a Mahometan, a Buddhist, or a Red Indian, who believes in the Great Spirit Manitou, or a Negro who believes in Mumbo Jumbo ; or a South Sea

Islander, who thinks it a religious duty to put his feeble old grandfather to death when the grandfather's age and infirmities render life a trouble to himself and a painful spectacle to his descendants-pride themselves, one and all, on their superior merits in clinging to the faith and worship of their country and their ancestors, and arrogate to themselves a superiority over other nations, the people of which do not think as they think, observe as they observe, and pray as they pray.
"I do not believe that men speak correctly when they say of another that he has changed his religion. The spirit of religion is of the same essence all over the world, and has been so in all times. It is only the form and ceremonial that differ. The ancient Greeks and Romans did not, as it appears to me, worship several gods-as it is commonly and ignorantly supposed they did-but recognised only one God, under several names, just as the Jews knew one great and supreme God as El Shaddai, Elohim, Jehovah, the Lord, and the Almighty, and as the English recognize and worship the one God, as God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Heaven, and Providence. They also recognize and worship Him by the•name which Christianity inherited and
adopted from Judaism-in what appears to me to be the futile and most unhappy attempt to engraft the old religion of Vengeance, Fear, and Terror upon the new religion of Peace, Goodwill, and Love, which the Western nations adopted nearly twenty centuries ago. Jupiter, Jove, and Apollo, were but one divine Being, and all the minor names of the deities of ancient mythology, whether male or female, were only used to describe the functions and attributes of the sole God and Creator of the Universe. Faith is not sectional and local, but universal. 'The true worshipper and believer sits in the portico of the Great Temple of Knowledge, to receive and welcome every truth that enters. No truth is alien or unrelated to any other truth; and every truth, great or small, is a link in one eternal and infinite chain, and cannot possibly misfit with or contradict any other."
"Precisely so," said Sir Hector. "The various attributes of the great God were made into little gods by priests, for the benefit of their craft. Did you ever hear of the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, who was accused of Atheism, and denounced and anathematized by the professional dealers in doctrine and dogma, for having dared to promulgate, in
a philosophical book, that the dearest wish of his heart was
' to maximize religion, and minimize priestcraft '?"
" I never heard his name," replied Mr. Rameses, " but I shall honour his memory from this time forth, and rank him as high as the Chinese philosopher, 'Kong-Fut-Ze,' whom Latin pedants-writing in the same unnatural style as your friend Bentham did in the wise phrase you have just cited-agree to call Confucius. But to return to the subject of the beautiful Niona, from which we have wandered, may I consider that I have your approbation in the proposal that I have resolved to make, that she unite her destiny to mine, solemnly, publicly, according to the rites of the Christian Church ?"
"Certainly," replied Sir Hector, grasping Mr. Rameses by the hand, with a grip that almost brought the moisture to his eyes, " my approbation and my blessing along with it."

Mr. Rameses took his departure, satisfied with Sir Hector, with himself, and with his prospects of acceptance by Niona. But he still hesitated to take the final plunge into the deep sea of uncertainty, and deferred until the morrow -or possibly until a later time-the decision on which his happiness in this world depended.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FINAL DECLARATION.

The declaration of Mr. Rameses, which he had resolved to make personally rather than by letter, was received by Niona with a joy that was none the less deeply felt because it was not manifested by outward rapture. A look of her eloquent eyes, an affectionate pressure of her dainty little hand, spoke from her heart to his, and from his back again to hers, and gave greater assurance than any mere words could have given that all was right between them. Love's most sympathetic revealings find expression in the fewest words-

> "s Language can but hint Darkly and vaguely what the spirit feels."

And it so happened, in this instance, between these two exatic existences of Asiatic origin, that had lost none of their native ardour by their transplantation to a colder clime. They were both, as the poet of the "Night Thoughts" says in a now forgotten tragedy-

[^2]believers in Destiny, and in the great consoling doctrine -that finds more favour in the fairer Eastern clime from which they came, than in the frigid North-that whatever is is right. Mr. Rameses felt an all-pervading happiness in this assurance, strengthened by the indissoluble love -for such he felt it would be, and must be-of Niona. The doctrines of the Sun-worshippers were inextricably mingled with those of Budha in the mind of Mr. Rameses. Believing as he did in the past eternity-past only as regards the earth-and in the immortal spirit in all its countless manifestations of the metempsychosis, he cherished the idea that he and Niona had met in the bygone ages, that she was the re-imbodiment of his dream-love, Lurulà, and as such would be made known to him in the day when their fates should be once again united in the mystic bonds of the marriage of souls-that had dwelt bodily apart, but had never been actually separated.

When the news of the engagement of Mr. Rameses to the fair Niona reached the ears of Lady Stoney-Stratford and the members of her family, as it speedily did, the mind of the match-making mother was greatly perturbed. She affected to think, and strove to persuade her husband to
agree in her opinion, that Mr. Rameses was indubitably crazy, and that Lady Maud, or Lady Ethel, on whichever of the two the choice of the princely millionaire might ultimately have fallen, had had a lucky escape. That either of her daughters should have married one whom she considered to be a lunatic, however harmless the craze of the lunatic might be, was a consummation not to be thought of without paint; though, possibly, if the wealth of the supposed lunatic could have been shared with one of her daughters, and the supposed lunatic himself were safely locked up in an asylum, or otherwise taken care of, the consummation would not have been considered so very dreadful. But she did not confide these thoughts even to her husband, and contented herself with expressing to him and to her daughters, as well as to her most intimate friends, that Lady Maud, the one whom she had more particularly designated as the future Lady Maid Rameses, had had a very fortunate deliverance from an awkward entanglement. But this by-play did not deceive the world in which she moved like a star of the second magnitude, and did not even deceive herself ; and she could not but envy the good fortune of the Indian lady, and even condescended to hate
her for the good fortune which had settled in the hands of one who, she thought, was not fitted to prize it. The Earl himself, though mercenary, was not so ultra-mercenary as his wife, and had no taste or genius for match-making, or desire for the marriage of his two remaining daughters. Next to the possession of many acres, in addition to those of which he was already the lord, he prized the love and society of his daughters, and would have felt better pleased if Lady Gwendoline had escaped Mr. Pigram Fitzgerald, even if she had not been the fortunate means of a more honourable alliance with Mr. Rameses. The marriage with Mr. Fitzgerald, though it had enabled him to borrow money of that financial potentate, had not added to his own domestic happiness, and had certainly been the cause of unhappiness to his daughter. The union of the proud patrician gentlewoman with the vulgar and proud plebeian, who was not, and could not become a gentleman-though he might aspire to become a baronet or a baron-was by no means a fortunate one. It was unhappy in its inception and in its progress, and threatened to become intolerable to the lady, who had sold her youth and beauty for the gold acquired by the Methuselah Pills,
of which she could not think without loathing. By degrees the loathing fastened upon her husband, and the pride of the one at fierce war with the equal pride of the other, produced a state of mutual exasperation. This growing antipathy of Lady Gwendoline threatened every day to become explosive, and to scandalize the upper and mid-upper circles of tashionable Society, and to increase the sale of the scandalmongering newspapers that pander to the curiosity of the vulgar. High and low, in ever increasing numbers, gloat over the details of matrimonial infelicity that come before the law courts, after having percolated through the unretentive sieves of dinner and tea parties. People who have few ideas in their heads, love to hear or to read of the quarrels of married people, and the illicit pleasures and divergencies from the right path of dissolute unmarried women. The similar divergencies of unmarried, or even of married, men, excite no particular curiosity, and are held to be matters of such trivial import as to be unworthy of prolonged and serious notice. Such, unfortunately, are the notions of modern Society.

Mr. Rameses was a connoisseur in diamonds and other precious stones. He possessed a store of them which
had been worn by the Begum, his mother, and which he had inherited. He seldom looked at them, except to satisfy himself that they were still safe in his possession. He did not prize them for their intrinsic value-as estimated by pounds sterling-but admired them for their lustre and beauty, which he thought they derived immediately from the concentration of the sun's rays. He believed that every diamond was, in fact, a quintessence of the solar light that had been poured into it during countless ages, ere the dry land of the globe assumed its present forms and ere the engulphing ocean swept over the dead and buried civilizations that existed on the planet, for hundreds for thousands of years, before the plains of his native India became habitable ; and when, perhaps, a superior, or it might be an inferior, race of human beings lived to propagate their kind-to $\sin$, to suffer, and to die-and to be succeeded by countless generations, neither better nor worse than themselves. Holding these notions, he looked upon diamonds with an almost religious reverence-not for their beauty and -scarcity alone, but for what he considered to be their sanctity.

In like manner emeralds, sapphires, and rubies (green,
blue and red), derived in his mind all their lustre, all their virtue, all their glory of substance and colour, from the beneficent and creative light of the orb that gives and maintains life to tree, to flower, to bird, to beast, and to man. They were, in his estimation, less perfect and less lovely than the diamond-which, like the rainbow, contained all colours within its arch-and severally imbibed and assimilated but one of the prismatic hues, of which the purest and most perfect light was a heavenly compound. He did not wonder at the enormous value that men placed upon these gems, though the value was estimated by gross commercial calculations of the amount of gold and silver which they commanded in the markets of the world, and bore reference only to their scarcity, and not in any degree to the sanctity with which he invested them. He also considered diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, and rubies as moral and psychical emblems of the best emotions of the human mind. Emeralds he considered as the representatives and inspirers of Hope-greener than the first leaves of the Spring, that gave promise and certainty of the Summer bloom and the Autumnal fruit ; Sapphires-blue as the skies of the tropics -as the emblems of Faith ; and Rubies-red as the sympa-
thetic blood or the heart of innocence-as emblems of Charity; but Diamonds-as concentrating within them all the colours that formed the divine light of the sun-as the emblems of true Religion.

With all these fancies in possession of his mind, he proceeded, on the evening of the day when he became fully assured that the beautiful Niona returned the love he bore her, to examine the contents of the strong box in which his mother's jewels were carefully and securely deposited. No one-not even his private secretary, or his intimate friend Mr. De Vere-knew or suspected the existence of this treasure, and not Mr. Rameses himself knew its pecuniary worth. His design was to make a selection of the most beautiful and costly of the gems, to present to his bride elect, in addition to the comparatively valueless engagement ring, of which custom and fashion exact the gift from all upper and middle-class bridegrooms. Most men, whether rich or poor, and possibly all women without exception of the strongest-minded, have been dazzled with the splendour of diamonds. Their principal value, however, in the philosophic eyes of Mr. Rameses was that these gems had belonged to and adorned the person of his
mother, and that they were to be his love-gift to his bride.

Having made his selection, Mr. Rameses put the valuable articles into a common travelling-bag, and having ordered his carriage, proceeded to the house of Sir Hector MacTavish, to seek an interview with Niona. He found her alone, sitting before a harp, amid the strings of which her fairy fingers had been idly wandering, without purpose of melody or harmony, but producing both, in wild, weird, and fitful snatches of sweet sound.

She was a skilful and accomplished performer on that graceful instrument, which is far too much neglected by the ladies of the present day, who prefer the pianoforte as less trying to the touch of their nimble fingers. The echoes of the last notes of the chords which she had unconsciously struck still sounded on his ears as he entered the apartment. He bore in his hand a packet, which, wrapped in paper, he had taken from the travelling bag, and placed it on a little table, with a small vase of flowers upon it, that stood within reach of her hand. "I have come," he said, as she rose gracefully from her seat and advanced to meet him, "to ask your acceptance of a
trinket or two, which I hope you will do me the honour of wearing, for the adornment of your fair brow and bosom in token and earnest of the faith we have plighted to each other-by our eyes, by our silence, by the pressure of our hands, and by the sympathy which envelopes and possesses us both." And as he spoke he undid the loosely-fastened packet, and took out an oblong case of finely-carved ivory, tastefully inlaid with gold, which he opened, and disclosed a superb necklace of large emeralds of the purest lustre, and held it out for the inspection of Niona. Her dark eyes sparkled at the sight, and his, as if catching the contagion of admiration, glowed momentarily with a light which gems of any kind had never before kindled in them.
"Wear this," he said; "it is the emblem of Hope-of hope to cheer your spirits should they be depressed, as I, in beholding it, hope that they never will be during our earthly union, and which they cannot be in that immortal union which shall be yours and mine, as we mount and mount, and fly and fly to the eternal beatitudes of Amrita."

And next, opening an ivory case of similar material and workmanship to the first, he displayed a still finer necklace
of the purest sapphires, worth a monarch's ransom. "Wear this, if doubt of God's goodness should ever throw a shadow over thy soul. It is the emblem of Faith-of Faith in thyself, in thy fellow-creatures, and in the Divine Ruler and Creator of the Universe." And, scarcely giving her time for admiration or for reply, he produced the third necklace for her acceptance-the necklace of rubies. "These rare gems," he said, placing it in her hands, "are the emblems of Charity. To look at them inspires sympathy with erring and suffering humanity, and a desire to remove sorrow from the hearts of the sorrowful, to feed the hungry, to console the sad, to help the feeble, and to think well of the world and of all the creatures that inhabit itfrom man who calls himself the lord of it, down to the fishes in the seas and rivers, and to the four-footed, the winged, and the crawling creatures of the land, who are as much the children of God as he claims to be. Last of all," he continued, opening a still larger casket, and displaying a diadem of brilliants, such as the Queen of Sheba or Cleopatra of Egypt would have thought herself rich in possess-ing-"this," he said, in more serious and solemn tones than when he spoke of the occult virtues of his previous gifts,
" is the emblem of the rivifying rays of the Sun, through whom you and I worship the great God, whose visible agent he is in this poor little world in which we are temporarily imprisoned, and to all the mightier orbs that revolve around and receive light, health, and beauty from his beams. It was holy in the estimation of my mother, from whom I received it, and is holy to me, its present possessor. Let it be holy to you, to whom I consign it in sanctification of our union, and may it bring you, oh! my love, joy in this world, peace and joy in other worlds, for ever and evermore !"

Niona gazed with speechless admiration at all these treasures as they were severally disclosed to her sight, and listened at first with almost breathless attention to the fervent eulogies of their supposed virtues rather than of their real beauty, which Mr. Rameses, in the heat of his enthusiasm, addressed to her. When at last she found words to express the crowd of emotions and thoughts that struggled upon her tongue for utterance, her words-grouping themselves into half-formed sentences-were more eloquent in the effect they produced upon the mind of Mr. Rameses than his far more eloquent words had impressed upon her.

She was bewildered, but he was calm and collected, as it needed not words, but only looks, to convey to the sympathetic intelligence of his mind meanings of even more divine, though occult import, than human language could command.
"Let me," said Mr. Rameses, taking the superb diadem in his hand, and bringing it nearer to the upturned face of Niona, " place this upon your head, as a symbol alike of our faith to each other and to God, that I may see how well it becomes you."

Niona bent her head reverently down while Mr. Rameses, waving aside the abundant tresses of her jetblack hair, adjusted the jewel around her brow. Then, stepping back a couple of paces, that he might better contemplate the effect, he whispered his fervent admiration for herself rather than for the bauble with which he had adorned her, the two words, "Divinely beautiful!" "Will you not judge for yourself ?" he added. Taking her unreluctant hand, he guided her to a large mirror-a piece of furniture indispensable to every well-ordered boudoir and drawing-room in Europe-that Niona might herself see how like a Queen of Beauty she looked. At that moment
the full sunshine suddenly burst from the sky-which had till then been overclouded-and fell full upon her form and face. The effect was all but magical to the enamoured eyes of Mr. Rameses.
"It is of good omen, my beloved," he said. "The sun himself sheds his radiance on his most beautiful child, and blesses you now and for ever."

He added in a lower tone, "And blesses-me along with you."

At this juncture Sir Hector MacTavish entered the room, and catching sight of the diadem on his sister-inlaw's forehead, said, with an objurgation-one of many of similar force and profanity which were but too common in his mouth, and which it is unnecessary to repeat"Splendid! and fit for an empress! The Empress of India herself has nothing to equal it. Even the pious builder of the Taj Mahal, the model of wifehood and womanhood, and of sovereign princesses, might have been proud to possess it. Perhaps it belonged to her ?"
"It belonged to my mother," said Mr. Rameses, "and now it belongs to my bride and wife."
"Long may she live to wear it!" replied Sir Hector.
"She is a good girl, and deserves good fortune. Go and show your sister how well you look in the gaud," he added. Niona, nothing loth, retired from the room for that purpose and Mr. Rameses, taking advantage of the tête-àtête with Sir Hector, informed him that within a month, all parties being agreeable, the marriage between him and Niona was to be celebrated according to the rites of the Christian church ; but only as a preliminary to its celebration with the more sacred ceremonial (more sacred to his mind, at least) of the Zoroastian worship, and in the presence of the noonday sun.

Sir Hector started no objection; so the matter was arranged, and Mr. Rameses took his departure with the diminished•remnant of his precious gems, a portion of which he reserved for presentation to Lady MacTavish on a future occasion.

## CHAPTER V.

A GREAT DOWNFALL.
Mr. Bigraime de Fitzgerald (such was the name he preferred) took in evil part his failure to secure a seat in Parliament. His mental constitution had been to all appearance strong from his youth upwards. He had courage which was all the stouter because he had no conscience. The positive combined with the negative quality pointed him out to all with whom he had social or commercial intercourse as a man well-fitted to hold his own in the more obstinate struggles and the deeper laid schemes of a busy life. But the man who invented the Methuselah Pill, and built up a considerable fortune upon that dishonest foundation, though as strong in fraud and manceuvre as Achilles was in battle, had, like Achilles, a vulnerable point in his heel. That point was ambition. He was greedy to ally himself with the aristocracy-to be admitted to the more exclusive circles of society-and above all to enter Parliament-a door by which he thought he would be
enabled, ex-officio, to enter any other society that he pleased. He had missed this chance for the time, and though he endeavoured to reconcile himself to the disappointment by the expectation that on another trial, which he resolved to make on the first opportunity, he felt keenly, nevertheless, the temporary frustration of his hopes. It is true that he had made himself the son-in-law of a peer of ancient lineage, whom he had placed under a load of pecuniary obligation, which would not be easily or speedily discharged. These two advantages he highly prized ; but the cup of success had the bitter drop of Methuselah in it, which kept him out of the society which his pride, his vanity, and his conceit-whichever it might be-impelled him to enter, under the penalty of permanent discontent or unhappiness.

Nor was this the only sorrow that clouded the apparently brilliant afternoon of his prosperous life. He was rich, and desired to be richer. Like Midas, all he touched seemed to turn into gold, but the gold, when too closely examined, often turned out to be brass or stone. Anxious to make cent. per cent. of his gains, he rushed into rotten and illusory 'speculations, and, losing his investments, lost
along with them his self-control, his temper, and his peace of mind. He could not keep his ill-humour under decent restraint, but discharged it in a flood upon the unoffending Lady Gwendoline, who had never loved, and speedily learned to hate him. The loss of $£ 170,000$ in one venture by which he had hoped to convert the sum into $£ 270,000$ at least, was the climax of several other minor miseries of a similar kind. Like too many other men and women, without mental power, or any reliance on the aid to be derived from philosophy, or the consolations of religion, he resorted to the dearly-purchased support of alcoholic stimulant, and too often came back late at night to his luxuriously-furnished home in a state of brutal intoxication. Brutal is not the proper epithet to employ, and must be retracted, and it is retracted accordingly, for the brutes are temperate and drink water, and revolt indignantly, even lin a state of bondage, when men would teach them-as they sometimes endeavour to do-to imbibe fermented and alcoholic liquors. When seen in this state he exhibited the natural vulgarity and coarseness of his nature, and rendered himself more inexpressibly odious to his tenderly-nurtured and fastidious spouse than

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he had become in his sober moments. As time wore on, matters gradually grew worse between the husband and the wife, until, disgusted and goaded beyond endurance, Lady Gwendoline resolved to take refuge in her father's house, with a firm determination to return no more to that of the self-degraded man whose fortunes she had unhappily promised at the altar to share for better or for worse. Lady Gwendoline thought herself that although she had shared them for the "worse," she had not undertaken to share them for the "worst." Insanity brought upon him in the course of nature she could have pitied, and done her best to alleviate ; but insanity wilfully and wickedly caused and fomented by his own act she could neither pity nor endure, all the more because the premonitory symptoms of delirium tremens rendered her alarmed for her personal safety. One day, as he lay insensible upon the floor of his sumptuously-appointed dining-room, having consumed at one sitting half a bottle of brandy, she called for her carriage, and left the house, never to return to it.

On his revival into consciousness on the following day, he resolved that if Lady Gwendoline should finally abandon his house, he would have recourse to the law for the
restitution of his conjugal rights. For a full month, during which he was every day more or less under the influence of alcoholic stimulant, sometimes semi-sober, but more often wildly or stupidly intoxicated, wishing alike in his sane and insane moments for the return of his beautiful wife, and writing to her from time to time letters that were humbly meant, but that were intermingled with threatening innuendoes that escaped him almost involuntarily, urging her in order to prevent public scandal, if not from regard to her duty as a wife, to return to her home. He promised in the most abject terms to abstain from all beverages that were more potent than water, milk, or tea, and to take the pledge of total abstinence if he could please her by so doing.

Mr. Fitzgerald was of the number of those who always remember an injury-who adopt it, make it their child, pet it, cuddle it, clothe it in purple and fine linen, and adorn it with jewels, who never lose sight of it, and who worship it as they worship themselves. By strict adherence to these self-imposed rules of conduct, they succeed in making themselves miserable, and all who are related to them, either by natural ties, or social and commercial
intercourse. The unyielding determination of Lady Gwendoline never again to return to her allegiance and her husband's home, which neither threats nor entreaties could force or persuade her to modify or abandon, constituted a grievance which he could neither forget nor forgive, and which assumed larger proportions the more he thought of it in his sober moments, and which filled his hard heart with a hatred that would have often manifested itself in blows, rather than in words, on the too frequent occasions when the drink demon was in full possession of such mind as was left to him in his paroxysms. To his threats of an action for restitution of conjugal rights, Lady Geraldine responded by a counter threat of a writ "de lunatico inquirendo." And thus the war between them was protracted and intensified until peace became more improbable from day to day, and threatened speedily to become impossible. Meanwhile, the unhappy man, losing the calm judgment and wholesome control over the business qualities which he once possessed, before disappointments drove him to the treacherous aid of the bottle, suffered a succession of severe pecuniary losses, which cast over his mind, in the rare moments when he
was able to reflect upon the future, the dark presentiment of possible bankruptcy.

Lord Stoney-Stratford had strong pecuniary reasons for keeping on good terms with " old Methuselah," for such he always called him when he had occasion to speak of him to the wife of his bosom, though he never used the epithet in the presence of, or in the hearing of, his daughter, Lady Gwendoline. Deploring the feud that had broken out between the couple, and deploring at the same time the part that he and Lady Stoney-Stratford had taken in persuading the reluctant Lady Gwendoline to give her hand, for the sake of money, to a man to whom she never could give her heart, he endeavoured, as far as it lay in his power, to induce his daughter to listen more favourably to the overtures of reconciliation made from time to time by her husband when he was sober, and to his promises of amendment. Lady Stoney-Stratford, who dreaded scandal in the Society papers above all things, and the wagging of spiteful and envious tongues at the expense of her and her family, united her efforts to those of her lord. But all argument, persuasion, and attempted cajolery, were in vain. Lady Gwendoline knew her own mind, and was
obstinate in her refusal to listen to terms of accommodation, and to surrender what she considered to be her inalienable right to separate herself from a yoke-fellow whom she despised when he was sober, and whom she detested when he was drunk. When hard pressed upon this disagreeable topic, she declared her intention to sue for a divorce $\grave{a}$ vinculo matrimonii, that she might obtain the liberty of which she declared she had been defrauded. She asserted that she was a wife only in name, that the intimate and sacred relationship that should naturally exist between married people who were united by love as well as by law, had never existed, and never could exist between her and her husband ; and that nothing less than a complete divorce could do her justice, or restore to her mind the happiness she had lost. Her father represented to her that in England, misconduct, drunkenness, felony, madness itself, afforded no ground for such a divorce as she desired.

Lady Gwendoline, to whom this revelation of the law was a painful surprise, became indignant when she fully understood it. Her father went on to explain to her that under the circumstances, the only relief that the law
could afford her was a divorce $\grave{a}$ mensa et thoro, from bed and board, a relief which she had already taken into her own hands.
"Yes," said Lady Gwendoline bitterly, "a relief of which he threatens io deprive me by a suit for the restitution of what he calls 'conjugal rights,' which I would rather die than submit to. Were I compelled by the law, and by physical force, to return to the awful, the horrible, bondage which I have suffered ever since my marriage, I feel I have courage within me to take either his life or my own, if this was the only means of escape from the pollution of his presence."

Lord Stoney-Stratford was surprised at the violence of his daughter. He had known her only as a somewhat wayward girl, rather "fast," as it is the fashion to call young women who catch, more or less, the contagion of masculine speech and manners from the betting, racing, sporting, horse-loving, slang-discoursing young men of the day, and had never suspected that under the apparent haze, or smoke, or froth or scum of her disposition, there lay concealed the slumbering fires of a volcano of passion. He was alarmed at her present temper of mind, and forbore to
exasperate a wrath and hate which he saw it was impossible to reason with, and judiciously reserved, till a more favourable occasion, the arguments which he thought he could employ to establish a truce between the belligerent spouses. What the result was, must be told hereafter.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE DESPOTISM OF WORDS.

There had been a quiet little dinner party in the library of the great house in Kensington, given by Mr. Rameses to his most intimate friend, Mr. De Vere, and his long intimate friends, Sir Henry de Glastonbury, Sir Hector Mac Tavish, and the Anglo-Indian, Mr. Melville. The party, after the conclusion of the repast, had adjourned to a smaller apartment, the particular favourite of the master of the house, when he wished to be alone with his thoughts, or a book, or a scroll of papyrus. Three of the company, Sir Henry de Glastonbury, Sir Hector Mac Tavish, and Mr. Melville, were, more or less, slaves to tobacco, at certain hours of the day especially. After dinner Mr. Rameses, and the philosophic Mr. De Vere, were too tolerant to object entirely to the practice, and usually endured the infliction of the odious fumes with what equanimity they could command. Their friends
did not often put their patience to the test of a longer time than was requisite for the enjoyment of one, or, at the most, a couple of cigars. The luxury seemed to loosen their tongues, to clarify their thoughts, to unlock the stores of their fancy and their memory, and to promote the flow of their ideas. Upon this particular occasion, the conversation had, for a time, taken a commonplace and desultory turn until Sir Henry de Glastonbury, who had learned for the first time the solemn engagement that had been formed between Mr. Rameses and the fair Niona, ventured to congratulate that gentleman on the singular and happy "accident" which had brought them together on the summit of Ben Ledi.
"Accident!" ejaculated Mr. Rameses, on whom the word seemed to act like a spark upon gunpowder. "It was no accident! There are no accidents in this world, or in any other. All that happens is pre-ordained by Fate or Necessity, and could not happen otherwise. My steps were led to the remote Highlands of Scotland, and to the top of Ben Ledi, by fore-ordainment from all eternity, and Niona was bound to be there to meet me by invincible and uncontrollable Destiny."
"Is there no such thing as free will, in your opinion, then ?" asked Sir Henry.
"We think there is free will," replied Mr. Rameses, "but in so thinking we. deceive ourselves. Appearances favour the deception. We flatter ourselves that we are free to act in such or such a manner, in the great or small affairs of our lives ; and when two, three or more courses of conduct seem open to us, and we reflect upon each in its turn, and deliberately make choice of the one that most strongly impresses itself upon our minds as the best, most agreeable and most advantageous to adopt, we delude ourselves with the idea that we are acting as free agents."
"No doubt," interposed MacTavish, "the quality of mind-the capacity of forming the judgment, which in the particular case we may have formed for our guidance, are the result of all the thoughts, knowledge and training and experience of our bygone years. 'Tis these that have made us what we are, and that compel us to decide as we have decided, and render it impossible for us to have decided otherwise."
"This is called fatalism," said Mr. De Vere, "fatalism with a sinister interpretation. But when we come to con-
sider the inherent meaning of the word, it is but synonymous with the expression that people, who would object to be called fatalists, make use of when they speak of an 'overruling Providence'!"
"We are the slaves of words," said Mr. Rameses, "and words, after all, are but poor tools, though they are the best at our command to express our thoughts. Take the words 'miracles,' 'morality,' 'virtue,' and 'religion,' to which the world has assigned meanings that do not rightly belong to them. What for instance was miracle in the original conception of the word? It signified something to be greatly wondered at, because the reason of its existence was not understood by man's limited intelligence. A blade of grass, a daisy, a rose, a tree, a worm, a bird, any living creature, from an animacule up to a man, from an atom to a planet, are miracles, if we reverently study and strive to comprehend the mystery of their being. All creation in this sense is a miracle. But by perversion and misuse of the word, a miracle has been made to signify something that is supposed to happen out of the course of nature, land in contravention of the laws that govern and uphold the Universe. In this sense there never has been and
never will be a miracle. The laws of God and Nature are immutable. God would contradict Himself, if He contravened His own laws, and wrought what we ignorantly and profanely call a miracle."
"I quite agree with you," said Mr. De Vere. "The word 'morality' offers another, though perhaps a less flagrant example of the poverty of human speech, and its perversion by 'civilisation'-which, by the way, I may observe, is but 'town life' as distinguished from rural life, when traced to its origin from civis-a citizen. Man is said to be the only animal that has the slightest idea of morality, or makes it the rule of his conduct. But when we come to consider what 'morality' is, and what it means, we find that it is conformity to the 'mores' manners, customs or social observances of the country in which we live, and that it is a geographical virtue-a local and not a general virtue. It is not moral in England to have more than one wife-or to imitate the example of the Eastern nations in keeping concubines. Abraham, the favourite of God, and David the man after 'God's own heart'-according to the Jewswould not be considered 'moral' if they lived in England in the nineteenth century. The cannibals, a fast disappear-
ing race, who cook and eat their enemies-are guilty of no immorality in their own country. The savages, who solemnly and as a religious duty kill their hopelessly infirm grandfathers and grandmothers, are not immoral in the estimation of their tribes-of whom the young and strong men look forward with equanimity to undergo the same fate when extreme old age and infirmity come upon them. These poor people are consequently not immoral in the estimation of their fellows."
"True," said Mr. Melville, who had not as yet taken part in the discussion. "Jesting Pilate, as he has been called-though he meant no jest-asked what was Truth? And what, we may ask in our day, is Virtue? As applied to women it means chastity ; but as applied to men, it means what we call integrity, benevolence, and exemplary life. It originally signified manliness, strength, courage; and the man who possessed these qualities, though he were a robber and a murderer, was a virtuous man."
"Yes," said Sir Hector, "we deceive ourselves with words, and pass bad money instead of good as the coins of thought and conversation. Take 'Religion' and 'Education' as examples of what I mean. Religion is that which
binds or rebinds-a very inadequate rendering of what we feel in our hearts when we acknowledge and worship the Supreme Being. 'Education,' means the drawing out of the mental or physical facultie;, and nothing more, and ought properly to be called instruction. The infant begins to educate itself as soon as its eyes can distinguish objects, and when the uses of his hands, feet and legs become obvious to his nascent intelligence. The savage in the woods, who can neither read nor write, and whose only access to history, real or fabulous, is limited to the traditions of his tribe or nation, is often a better educated man than the boozy, brutal, ignorant, half-civilised savage or "rough" who rots and breeds at the bottom of the social scale in most European communities. The savage, so called, educates himself by familiarity with wild nature, by confronting and conquering physical danger, by conflicts with hunger and thirst, by stoical endurance of the ills that he cannot foresee or guard against, and by resignation to the will of the 'Great Spirit' among some tribes, or to the great ' Mumbo Jumbo' in others. In these mental qualities he often rises superior to the vile tramps and mendicants, and the equally vile tradesmen and shopkeepers of our VOL. II.
civilized cities, who cheat and lie and adulterate or poison the commodities which they retail to the poor. It is an abuse of terms to say of any one-male or female-that he or she has completed his or her education. A man who says his education is finished-or, in other words, that all his faculties are drawn out or educed-is a fool, and confesses himself to be one."
"Agreed!" said Mr. De Vere. "I consider that every year, and indeed every day, in which I do not carry my education a little-though if ever so little-farther, is a year or a day wasted."
"But of all the words," said Mr. Rameses, "that most people use, without possessing any clearer notions of their meaning than if they were parrots or mocking birds, are the words that lie at the foundation of all our ideas of religion, whatever our religion may be. They are 'Infinitude' and 'Eternity.' We utter them mechanically, without in reality understanding them, except in so far that we cannot understand either the beginning or the ending of the Universe, though we may understand that the human race had a beginning in this world, and that it will probably have an end in it. Infinite in space, eternal in
duration, such must be what we call the Universe, for want of a better word. Matter and spirit are alike infinite and eternal, though matter as we see it continually changes its forms and its manifestations-rapidly in the living creatures that are born and die, in the countless planets and worlds that sparkle in the heavens, seen or unseen by mortal eyes, and more slowly in the structure and physical vitality of those glorious orbs themselves, whose existences are possibly to be calculated-if we could calculate them-by millenniums of millenniums. Man, the Earth, Time, and the Stars are all finite. God, who animates all, and from whom all proceed, is alone infinite, universal, all-pervading, and eternal. Man's spirit is an infinitesimal portion of His essence, and-like God, of whom it is an emanation -it must endure, and has endured for ever, though it manifests itself in material forms, that resolve themselves into their original elements at the appointed time."
"Past and future eternity are but words," said Mr. De Vere, "which imperfect human intelligence employs to express the vague ideas which alone it is capable of forming on such a transcendant subject. Rightly considered, Eternity, in the mind of God, can have neither
past nor future, which are mere measures of Time ; but should be treated of by our finite earthly understandings, if we attempt to reason upon it, as one eternal Now."
"But is the spirit of Man, which emanates from the spirit of God, as you allege," said Mr. Melville, "conscious of its existence in the past, before it entered the mortal frame? Our memory does not even extend to our birth and entrance into the world, and has no knowledge whatever of the first months after the immortal spirit put on the garb of mortality."
"The body is a clog and obstruction to the spirit," replied Mr. Rameses. "It allows us a certain amount of mental liberty, fettered by the material organs and conditions by which alone it can manifest itself in its state of temporary captivity; but once freed from the body by the kindly agencies of what we call Death, it resumes the heavenly faculties that slumbered, or were in abeyance, and sees the whole Past, though it can neither see nor guess the Future until it shall again become allied with matter into a portion of the infinite and eternal Now."
"Have you ever reflected," said Sir Henry de Glastonbury, "that the association of soul with body may be what
one diviston of the Christian world calls Purgatory, akin to what the ancient Greeks called Hades. A state of probation in fact, to fit us for higher material development in its next manifestation in the physical world-in which it shall enjoy greater privileges-be endowed with keener and more numerous senses, and be thus enabled to acquire more extended knowledge, more perfect happiness, and to experience purer and completer love, than was possible to it during its probationary state."
"Such has always been my faith, ever since the gyves and impediments of the flesh permitted me to have any faith whatever," replied Mr. Rameses.
"We are evidently on the threshold of mighty discoveries as regards the operations of the spiritual medium that links all things animate and inanimate together in this world," interposed Mr. De Vere. "What we ignorantly call electricity, for want of a better word, which enables us to conquer time and space in the expression of our wants and feelings, has power over our mind and conduct of which most men are wholly unaware, and which but a few suspect vaguely and darkly. The love of the sexes, for instance, is the result of electric force. Sympathy
for some persons and things, and antipathy to others, that are independent of our will, and compel us to act in certain modes, instinctively, as it were, and in spite of our reason, which is not consulted on the subject, and which if it were consulted would possibly, and, indeed, probably, advise us to disregard and struggle against what it would call our prejudices. For myself, I can truly say that I never felt an unconquerable antipathy to any person, which I have done sometimes, though not very often, without having proof that the antipathy was justified by the character and behaviour of the individual male or female-against whom the silent warning was given to me, by a power superior to my own. Vice versa, whenever I felt instinctively attracted to a person, the attraction was explained and justified by qualities, sentiments, and feelings akin to my own. In this sense marriages are made in heaven."
"Some marriages may be so considered," said Sir Hector. "Marriages that are effected by what you would call electric affinity, generally result in happiness to the married pair. Happiness is not to be expected if this electric affinity does not exist, as in the cases of people who marry for
money or for social ambition, as in the mournful case of Mr. Bigraime Fitzgerald and the unhappy Lady Gwendoline, neither of whom had one feeling in common with the other."
"Yet marriages that are originally made in heaven, as the phrase goes," said Mr. De Vere, "do not always end well. The husband or the wife, or, perhaps, both of them, impair the force of the divine electricity that brought them together, by contact with the selfish vices and contaminations of the society with which they mingle. One or the other may become corrupted by selfishness, by ambition, by covetousness, by intemperance, and may thus impair the purity and healthfulness of the frame, by which the immortal spirit can alone manifest itself through the senses, while it is burthened with a body. Thus the original sympathy and electric affinity which made the marriage happy is lessened, and may be altogether destroyed ; and happiness along with it. It is true that our souls are immortal, but it is also true that the body has power over the soul in this world, and when its end comes may liberate into eternity a soul less fitted to inhabit a higher organism than that in which it dwelt during its period of probation.

Hence our future rank in the ultimate scale of God's creation, may be high or low, as we make it in the body. We may sink into the animal or the animalcule, as Pythagoras and other ancient sages taught, or we may ascend to heights unimagined by philosophy or in the dreams of poets."
"Be it ours to ascend, for ever and ever," said Mr. Rameses, "commencing with Heaven, while we are still on the earth; material yet ethereal, body yet spirit, and qualifying ourselves for the possession of the glorified bodies, which we are to inhabit through countless ages, until we became wholly spiritualized, and pass through Amritsi into Nirvana-made one with the Divinity."
"I should like to know something of your Oriental ideas of Amritsi and Nirvana," said Sir Henry De Glastonbury. "To me, they are words, and words only."
"There are more things in the religions of Asia than Europe is aware of," replied Mr. Rameses. "Things of deeper spiritual import than European philosophy, except in the case of a few advanced minds, has condescended to study, and that were all familiar to Eastern sages thousands of years before the Christian era. It is a question whether the powers and uses of electricity, of the discovery
and application of which modern science is so proud, was not a re-discovery of secrets known to the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, and to the priests of religions of a still earlier time than the rise or fall of these nations. Belshazzar was but the dupe of cunning electricians, and the priests of Baal were the dupers."
"Connu! connu! as the French ejaculate when an old and well-known story is repeated," said Sir Hector.
"The tricks of false priests, in support of their superstitions," remarked Mr. De Vere, " would, if truly recorded, fill many instructive volumes. Doubtless, however, few would read them, or believe them if they did. 'Magna est veritas et prevalebit,' is a very trite, but a very wise saying ; though falsehood unhappily is still greater, and prevails more largely. Owing to man's ignorance and credulity, big lies rule the world-have always ruled it-and will, it is to be feared, rule it for ever."

Mr. De Vere was the last of the philosopher's friends who rose to depart, after this conversation upon the occult mysteries of Time, Fate, Life, Death, and Eternity. When left alone with Mr. Rameses, he took the opportunity to congratulate him warmly upon his approaching marriage to

Niona, and to wish him happiness with the woman of his choice.
"My choice, my fate, my destiny, my blessing, all in one."

And with these words the friends parted.


## CHAPTER VII.

## a matrimonial thunderstorm.

The ill-omened and ill-assorted marriage of Lady Gwendoline Pierrepoint, was certainly not made in heaven, if judged by its results-but in that other place, not usually mentioned to 'ears polite.' Even if it had not been for that deplorable vice to which the husband had addicted himself, under the stress of pecuniary calamity-which he had brought upon himself by his undue haste to make himself richer than he was-the current of their wedded life would not have run by any means smoothly. They had not a thought in common ; and weariness, satiety, and daily increasing disgust, were the speedy results of their intercourse. Matters had not improved since Lord StoneyStratford had vainly endeavoured to restore peace, and the husband had hastened the crisis by invoking the aid of the law to compel his unwilling partner to return to a home to which her presence could bring neither pleasure nor comfort, except such wicked pleasure as he could derive from
the sense of mastery and victory, and such proprietorship over a proud human being as a brutal owner of a valuable animal might exercise over his chattel. Lady Gwendoline, true to her determination to meet his attack upon her liberty of action by a counter-attack upon his personal freedom, had summoned to her aid the legal adviser and man of business of the Pierrepoint family, in the person of Mr. Magnus Littledale-the senior partner of an oldestablished firm of solicitors, who had grown rich in the service of many great families, that of the Pierrepoints among the number.

The object of Lady Gwendoline was to have her husband placed under restraint, as a dangerous lunatic in the first place, and to procure a divorce from him in the second. The first was a difficult task, as the experienced lawyer soon made her understand; the second, in the existing state of the English law, was impossible.
"What," asked the prosaic and calm Mr. Littledale, to his excited and impassioned client, "is lunacy or insanity, madness or craziness, whatever we may call it? Madness has been defined as a constant or occasional departure from reason. But what is reason? There are people who
reason that the earth is flat, because it appears to be so to their eyes. Some people are stupid enough to believe that the end of the world is fast approaching, and will happen in a few years from the present time. These are considered mad-as they certainly are in my opinion-as far as that particular point is concerned, though on all others they may be as sane as people generally are who acknowledge that two and two are four, and that a sovereign consists of twenty shillings. Great numbers of people who are, in all respects, competent to take care of themselves, to manage their own affairs properly, to do justice to themselves and to all their fellow-creatures, and who are sane on every point but one-but on that particular point, however absurd, ridiculous, fantastic, and irrational it may happen to be, who become frantic when contradicted upon it-are deemed to be mad.
"I have heard of harmless people, sane enough in the main, who think themselves brittle as glass or crockery, and are often afraid to move, lest they should break themselves. The world is not agreed on the criteria of madness. The great George Stephenson-to whom the world mainly owes the railway system, which has helped to revolutionize the
modern world-was accused of being mad, for maintaining that locomotives could be propelled by steam at the rate of fifteen or twenty miles an hour. Dr. Lardner thought every one to be mad who believed that steam vessels could cross the Atlantic. The late Lord Melbourne asserted that the repeal of the Corn Laws would be an act of madness. Descending from great things to small, I myself was once accused of being mad while travelling in Austria, when I objected to an item in a dinner bill at Vienna, because I objected to pay for mustard as a separate dish, just as if it had been an extra bottle of wine, or an extra plat of fish or venison. The same charge was brought against me at Boston, in Massachusets, because, during my stay in that city, I made it a rule, from which I never departed, to walk six or seven miles every day before sitting down to my dinner."
"All this may be true," said Lady Gwendoline, losing patience at the elderly lawyer's prosiness; "but surely there can be no doubt that a man is mad who maddens himself every day by drinking a bottle of brandy, and suffers from delirium tremens?"
"Temporarily mad, no doubt, my dear Lady, but not
so mad, in the eyes of the law, as to justify his friends or foes for having him locked up in a lunatic asylum. He may reform, you know, take the pledge, as it is called, and turn from the evil of his ways; and, when the mad fit has passed over, may enjoy as clear a mind, and be as capable of managing his own affairs as ever he was, and incapable of harbouring an evil thought against himself or his neighbour. If you fear violence at the hands of your husband, and have reasonable grounds for such a belief, the law, if appealed to, will protect you. The separation, which of your own will and action you have already resolved upon and enforced up to this time, may be rendered legal and permanent, with all the securities that the laws of the country provide. Beyond this I cannot go on your behalf, nor can you go on your own."

Lady Gwendoline bit her lip with vexation, to hear the staid, and, as she thought, the stolid, lawyer express himself so calmly. But the lawyer, taking no heed of the lady's irritation, went on to say, with his customary calmness : "The case of your husband-if you wish to prove him to be insane-is not a case for the lawyers, but for the doctors. You must get two or three mad doctors-so-called,
possibly, because they are as mad as the persons upon whose condition of mind they are called to pronounce-to examine him, without letting him suspect that he is being examined. They must know his bodily state, and his mental state-his likes and his dislikes, his whims, crotchets, caprices, and idiosyncrasies ; and whether any or all of them are reasonable or unreasonable, benevolent or malevolent, conformable with, or in contradiction to, natural laws ; whether his eccentricities and aberrations are transitory or permanent, harmless or dangerous; whether they spring from a disordered stomach, or a diseased brain ; and, if they should prove to be from the latter source, whether the derangement of the mental functions is curable or incurable. If after examination of the patient-or victim, as he may turn out to be-two medical practitioners, duly qualified, agree that he is insane, and testify to that effect by their signatures, the supposed or real madman may be confined for an indefinite period, perhaps for life, either as a pauper, or at the expense of his friends, if he have any who are able and willing to support him, in a private lunatic asylum. Do you wish, Lady Gwendoline, to push matters to that extremity?"

[^3]the ill-treatment and the brutality of that awful, that horrible, man. I go in fear of my life from his violence !"
"Will you depose to that on your oath, Lady Gwendoline? If you can do so, his attempt-if he make it-to compel you to return to his bed and board will fail, and we can defeat it easily."
"Bed and board," said she bitterly. "I never shared his bed; and, if I shared his board, it was in spite of my disgust. I would as soon partake of the bed and board of a dog or a horse, as of Mr. Fitzgerald's, or Mr. Pigram's. His real name suits him better than his assumed one."
"Humph !" said Mr. Littledale, taking a pinch of snuff. He was of the old school, and used tobacco in that form, as his father had done before him. "Has he ever offered you violence ?"
"Yes, he has, the unmanly coward! He has threatened to shoot me-though he has not the courage to do so, for fear of the gallows-but he struck me a blow with his great coarse fist upon my bosom!"
"Enough," said the lawyer. "We shall rid you of hm without resorting to the writ de lunatico inquirendo." VOL. II.
"And the divorce," said Lady Gwendoline, in piteous accents ; "can I not obtain that?"
"Yes, easily; the divorce $\grave{a}$ mensà et thoro, but not the divorce $\hat{a}$ vinculo matrimoniz, as I have already explained to you. The law can and will free you of his company, if you wish it, but will not free you of your matrimonial fetters and enable you to marry again."
" Marry again!" said the Lady Gwendoline, her fine eager eyes flashing with the light of passionate hatred, "I would not marry the handsomest, the richest, man in Europe, or in the world, however fair his pretensions might seem, lest after marriage he should develop into a Pigram ! No, I thank you, Mr. Littledale-once bitten, always shy. If again free, I should remain so till the miserable beauty that tempts the eye and the lust of men without touching their hearts, if they have any, shall be dried and shrivelled up. No, no! I say, with the French, vive la liberté, as something too awfully good to be lightly exchanged for slavery!"

Mr. Magnus Littledale, before the interview came to a close, succeeded in convincing his fair client that she had nothing to fear from Mr. Fitzgerald's efforts to enforce cohabitation; that it would be needless to attempt to prove
his insanity, merely because he had become a drunkard and had renounced the slight pretensions to the character and status of a gentleman which he once possessed ; and that she was free to live and enjoy herself how and wherever she pleased.

As a complete divorce was unobtainable she resigned herself to her fate, all the easier for her to do because her heart was free from all the entanglements of youthful passion, or even of fancy, and she thought she had more love for the horses she rode or drove, than for any admirer or possible wooer that walked the earth. She determined to resume her maiden name of Pierrepoint, and, as she heard nothing of the half-pitying, half-sneering comments of the Society in which she moved on her altered position, and did not seek to hear or know of them, the armour of indifference in which she encased herself protected her from being annoyed by any little pellets of censoriousness that might have rattled against her had she been of a more sensitive nature.

Lady Stoney-Stratford was scandalized, as well as deeply grieved, at the unhappy result of her match-making in the case of Lady Gwendoline, and resolved to profit by her dearly-bought experience whenever it became a question of
the marrage of her two remaining daughters. Her three eldest had married respectively a peer, a baronet, and an untitled gentleman of good estate, and though neither of the three husbands was half as rich as the proprietor of the Methuselah Life Pills, the marriage of each was happier than mere money could have made it. She trusted that her other daughters would marry gentlemen, rich and wellto do, if possible. Better a comparatively poor gentleman, with mind and manners, than a rich boor without either. Lord Stoney-Stratford agreed entirely in his wife's opinion. He was opposed on principle to the match-making craze in which so many middle-aged and elderly women take delight, and thought that love-making should be left to the fancy of the young, and that the old should confine themselves to warning when the young showed a determination to go wrong, and not interfere otherwise.

While he was the subject of these debates in the house of his noble connections, Mr. De Fitzgerald himself, whose peculiar temper and habits did not qualify him to bear either pecuniary loss or contradiction with equanimity, sulked in solitude, or sought relief from unhappy thought in efforts to retrieve his monetary ill-luck by Stock Ex-
change speculations, or equally factitious support and consolation in copious libations. He indulged in them to such an extent at the Hippopotamus Club as to draw upon himself the censure of the committee, containing a scarcely veiled threat that a repetition of the display which he had made of himself in the dining-room would lead to his expulsion, if he did not think it wiser to avoid the catastrophe by resignation of his membership. He was not amusing in his cups, neither was he stolid or sleepy, or languidly quiescent, as some are, but noisy and quarrelsome. The warnings he had received were unheeded, and an altercation which he provoked with an unoffending member, who was quietly dining, led in due course to his ignominious expulsion. This fact, when reported to Lord Stoney-Stratford, increased the repugnance with which the offender was regarded by every member of the Pierrepoint family, and filled the mind of Lady Gwendoline more especially with shame and humiliation, that she should have linked her fate and her name with such a disgrace to manhood as she felt her unfortunate husband to be.

But the end was not yet, and came in a manner that was painful as it was unexpected.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## FALLING IN LOVE.

Money-hunger, as has already been recorded in these pages, was the cause of the unfortunate marriage of lively Lady Gwendoline Pierrepoint with the dull and stolid Mr. Bigraime de Fitzgerald. The natural impulse that draws the one sex to the other was the irresistible power that inspired and caused the expected nuptials of Mr . Rameses and the beautiful Niona. The first of these two forces is peculiar to men and women, the second prevails throughout all the rest of God's creation, whether in animal or vegetable life. This mysterious force is the irresistible provocative of marriage and union of the sexes in all times and in all countries. The sympathies and affinities that grow out of it are the sole cause of the passion that civilised people call Love, and are akin to, if not identical with, the occult force which attracts the iron to the magnet. It was this compulsion, and not the ignoble greed of possible wealth or worldly position, that drew the thoughts of the young private secretary of Mr. Rameses towards the person of a
beautiful young woman, whose charms had captivated his fancy, caused him entirely to forget the Lady Ethel Pierrepoint, and led him to bel:eve that another and superior beauty was the light of his existence, and that the world would be utterly dark without her.

Mr. Melville was shy, for many reasons, in confiding the fact of his entanglement to his friend and patron, and when, at last, after many delays and struggles with his timidity, he mustered courage enough to unburthen his mind, he happened inadvertently to make use of a current colloquialism that grated harshly upon the sensitive ear of the transcendental philosopher, to whom he was bound by so many ties of interest and affection.
"You have fallen in love, you say, my young friend! But why fallen? Love is not a fall, but a flight-a soaring-an abandonment of the dull earth for the empyrean beyond and far above the clouds that overshadow us in our mortal state. It is a flame that mounts upwards for ever! No people, except the English, use the vulgar phrase. An Italian would laugh, or be unable to understand what you meant, if you said to him 'son caduto in amore' ; and a Frenchman would grin politely,
if you told him that you had 'tombé en amour' ; a German of a practical turn of mind would be inclined to ask you-if you had tumbled into love, and, if so, whether you had escaped .without broken bones!"
"Pardon me, oh, my master in wisdom and knowledge! for the wrong word that I have employed. But language is as contagious as scarlet fever, and we all of us carelessly repeat, like mocking birds, the sounds that are familiar to us."
"Be assured," said Mr. Rameses, in continuation of his theme, "that the love which falls is only love in seeminga smouldering heat, born of earthly subterranean fire and corruption-not the divine flame that emanates from Heaven and returns to it. Marriage may, in certain circumstances, be considered a fall, but not so the love which, if it be true, ought to precede marriage, and endure beyond it, through all time and eternity. Love is Heavenly -marriage without love may be, and most frequently is, Purgatory. Marriage without love, or love that has no other foundation than the gratification of a selfish animal passion, is but a base partnership in the commercial business of life, a traffic in lust, an exchange for worldly
pleasure, for fine clothes, splendid adornments, luxurious living, and lazy enjoyment."
"Very true," interposed Melville, timidly, " but the commercial aspect of matrimony, base though it may seem in comparison with the love that ought to underlie it, must not be neglected, unless love and beggary are to go through the world together."
"We must, in this physical world," replied Mr. Rameses, "be subjected to the inexorable physical law ; we must eat and drink, have raiment to cover us, though that is not always necessary in some happy climates. We must also have places whereon to lay our weary heads, but we are not on that account to consider these bodily comforts as the sole ends of our existence. No doubt you will think it a mockery in a man so unfortunately and so unmeritedly rich as I am, to talk with such contempt of worldly wealth, but worldly wealth is no essential blessing, except in so far as it confers the power of doing good to our fellow-creatures. The richest man can but eat with wholesome appetite, which he does not derive from his gold ; drink with relish until he is refreshed ; and sleep until nature, exhausted by toil or struggle, or the mere effort of living and
waking, requires to be re-vitalized by rest. Food, drink and sleep are as truly the pleasures of the beggar as of the king. The richest man in the world can but enjoy a good dinner, a good drink and a peaceful and comfortable rest, and the poorest man, if in sound health, can do the same! ' Man wants but little here below,' as was said by the Persian poet Hafiz long ago, and as has been repeated by English poets of recent times. It may be objected that man's factitious wants are too ofter inordinate, but that the real needs of his life are, after all, as circumscribed as those of any other animal. The hungry cock that scraped up a diamond on a dung-hill did not need it. A grain of corn, or its equivalent, is needed, of course, in the married state, but the diamond is mere useless adornment in itself, good only for silly ostentation, and only valuable in exchange for food, clothing, lodging, or other physical needs. And, if it be not a secret with you, confide to me as a friend the name and condition of the powerful magnet that attracts you towards her, and whether you feel the attraction to be mutual? Is it one of the Pierrepoint family ?"

Mr. Melville blushed to be interrogated on the subject, even by his best friend, but when the question was asked
point blank, he answered point blank, and very emphatically: "It is not one of that family. I have no feelings in common with any member of it."
"I am glad to hear it," replied Mr. Rameses. "They are a selfish race, money worshippers, with whom gold is God. The Lord Stoney-Stratford enjoys gold for the sake of power, as most, if not all men do, but he understands nothing whatever of the duties with which great wealth burthens its possessor. To Lady Stoney-Stratford gold is more precious than love ; she is a miserable slave to it, and draws her cupidity along with her, as the convict in the galleys of France drags the cannon ball that is attached to his leg as a sign of his degradation. She has taught her daughters to expect to marry an Earl, a Marquis, or a Duke if they are rich, and if not one of such rank, a man who, if Earldoms, Marquisates, and Dukedoms were for sale in England, could afford to buy one."
"She has, however," said Mr. Melville, "had a painful disappointment in her favourite diversion of match-making, and believes more in love and less in money than she did when she promoted the marriage of Lady Gwendolyne with Mr. Fitzgerald. The thought of the quack medicine which enriched him is painful to ker. She no longer holds with
the Roman Emperor that nummus non olet, from whatever foul source it may be derived. She has changed her mind, and is nauseated with the evil odours that have offended her nostrils, ever since she began to reflect on the degradation attendant on all who profit by the fraudulent concoction and sale of the Methuselah pills. It is a commerce which she rightly judges-especially since the man has turned out so badly-from which peers and peeresses, and peers' daughters ought to be ashamed to derive pecuniary advantage."

The secret of Mr. Melville's love affair remained undisclosed, notwithstanding the slight effort of Mr. Rameses to discover it. Doubtless Mr. Melville would disclose it when the hour was ripe, or the humour was upon him. Meanwhile, Mr. Rameses dismissed the subject from his mind, as a matter with which he had no concern, or which did not greatly interest him. Possibly, however, Mr. Melville himself was less engrossed with the subject than he at times imagined himself to be, and love did not so wholly engross his mind as the day's duties and the schemes and ambitions of the morrow. We shall see hereafter. Meanwhile fate runs its course, for good or for evil, alike with him and with all the personages of our story.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A CATASTROPHE.

Call no man happy until you know the end of him, is an ancient maxim, of which the perennial truth receives many tragical exemplifications, in our own and in every other time. Fortune, though for awhile it seems to favour the bold-to load them with gifts, to anticipate and surpass their wishes, to turn their seeming calamities into real benefits, to build palaces for their accommodation out of mole hills, and convert acorns into forests, for their advantage and recreation-is apt to trip up their heels at last, to turn their shiny gold into dull pebbles, and to make their apparent successes the "whips to scourge them." So it happened with "Old Methuselah," as his familiars always called him among themselves, though they took care never to utter the obnoxious word in his hearing. With an impatient unreasonableness similar to that of the French gentleman, in perfect health, who took medicine to make himself better, he was rich and, wanting to be richer, he
indulged in over-doses of speculation, till the result was impending bankruptcy-remote perhaps, but inevitable :-

> J'étais riche Dieu Merci ! Pour être plus riche, Me voici!

The hale fool brought himself to the grave by medicine, the rich fool brought himself to ruin and beggary by greed; the first left friendi behind him to lament his fate, the second found none to sympathise with him in the self-inflicted collapse of his fortunes.

He had but one apparent friend, in the shape of a real and formidable enemy. That enemy soothed him in his domestic miseries, rendered him temporarily indifferent to the gold which in his cool moments he worshipped. That insidious friend was the Brandy Bottle, the enemy in his mouth "which stole away his brains," made the worse appear the better reason, and converted the grain of the angelic which, perhaps, was originally in him to a mountainous demon-his foe, his comforter, his evil genius, his intimate fiend, who sometimes led, and oftener goaded him to the brink of the precipice that separates quiet insanity from raging madness.

In his quiet-insanity, when the alcohol steeped his senses in quasi forgetfulness of the world and its sorrows, he imagined, in his comparatively harmless hallucination, that he was still one of the richest men in London, that he could control all the money markets of Europe, convert the most desperate financial enterprises into magnificent fortunes, find the means to tunnel the Pyrenees, bridge the Straits of Dover, carry to completion the Panama Canal, or construct a direct line of Railway to China, anything in fact which engineering could or could not accomplish, and for which illimitable money and illimitable credulity were required. But in his furious fits, which became more and more frequent as his paroxysms of intemperance increased in number, he became not only dangerous to himself, but to all who approached him. The language that fell from his lips in his rage was blasphemous and disgusting. During these fits his wrath vented itself in foul anathemas against his wife, which were duly reported to her by the alarmed attendants, only to inflame the dislike which she had always entertained for the man with whom, for the sake of his money, she had consented to link her fate. Her regret was aggravated day after day when she
reflected, as she could not avoid doing, that the law did not permit her the privilege and luxury of a divorce, to which she thought she was entitled by a higher law than that of England-the law of Eternal Equity.

In one of his lucid intervals, with the fear of beggary looming darkly before his eyes, Mr. Fitzgerald bethought himself that money enough to relieve him from temporary difficulty might be made by the sale of his interest in the Methuselah Pills-an interest amounting to three-fourths of the annual profit derivable from the speculation. For that purpose he consulted his partner-the proprietor of the remaining fourth-an operative chemist named "Chicory Doo," who was alone in the secret of this composition, and duly mixed the simple ingredients of which they were manufactured, and who, in conjunction with himself, transacted all the business connected with the advertising, the puffing, and the sale of the popular article. Mr. Chicory Doo was a little prim, precise man, with a round head, a pair of large cheeks, a clean-shaven face, a stubbly crop of thick grey hair, a pair of sparkling eyes, and a nose of which the nostrils were much too conspicuous. His manner was quick and jerky, and the sly and malicious expression
of his face, conveyed the idea to all who had financial or other dealings with him, that, though he could cheat as well as anybody, he was not to be cheated by the astutest of sharp practitioners in the art and mystery of roguery. When shown into the presence of his partner-upon whom he looked with some slight degree of respect as the original parent and founder of the Methuselah Pill, not unmingled with a certain amount of the opposite feeling, for what he considered the coarse vulgarity of his character-he could not but entertain some sympathy for the havoc which, in a short space of time, his partner's excessive indulgence in strong liquors had wrought in him. Both of these men prided themselves on their skill in driving a bargain-both entertained the idea that no one could by any possibility overreach them-both had an utter disregard of conscience and moral feeling, and an abiding faith in the folly and gullibility of the great multitude, who suffered from dyspepsia and its concomitant ills, and who imagined that every quack was a worker of miracles, who could control nature-make old men and women young again-and counteract the operations of time and decay by infallible nostrums. Mr. Chicory Doo knew perfectly well the net pecuniary value VOL II.
of the pill he compounded under Mr. Fitzgerald's auspices -but, as is natural to all persons who are asked to buy anything whatever by a vendor who has not tact or cunning enough to conceal his eagerness to sell, he grossly under-estimated the worth of the article which he ardently desired to possess. But Mr. Fitzgerald knew quite as well as his partner the yield of the gold mine which he wanted to dispose of, and fixed upon a sum for the transfer of his rights which was high, but not inordinate-though treated as both by the hesitating purchaser. Mr. Chicory Dooaffecting to be surprised at the estimate put by his confederate on his share of the speculation-hinted that the "Methuselah" pill, popular as it might be, was not safe from opposition and rivalry, and that he, Chicory Doo, was quite capable of compounding a pill that would supersede the "Methuselah."
"You cannot do it," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "You may, it is true, compound as efficacious a pill, but you cannot call it the ' Methuselah.' The name is copyright, and will be strictly protected."
"But there are other names as good," said Mr. Doo, with a smile, "such for instance as the Patriarchal Pill. Methu-
selah was not the only patriarch who was blessed with long life. There are Elijah and Enoch, for example, and Noah, and Melchizedek. The 'Enoch Pill' would be a certain success with the English public. With the Methuselah Pill you secure the fools long life-so they think-but the 'Enoch Pill' would absolve them from death altogether, if they believed in it. Enoch, as you may be aware, never knew death, and all on account of his daily taking three or four of the incomparable medicine that I should name after him. By heavens, it is a grand idea, with several fortunes in it ! I think, however, that the Melchizedek Pill would be likely to prove more successful. The name runs glibly off the tongue and would insinuate itself more pleasantly into the ear and the imagination of the gentle-and-(don't repeat the word-the credulous and gullible) public. I can and will try the Melchizedek Pill, if you insist upon too large a price for the Methuselah."
"'Tis all very fine," said Mr. Fitzgerald, with a look and tone of triumph-as if he anticipated no possible reply to the climax of his argument, "but you forget, my very good friend, how largely the ingredient, or I may say, the element, of faith enters into the favour which the Methuselah

Pill enjoys in the estimation of the public. Melch:zedekwithout faith to back it-would have no chance against Methuselah, with a faith behind it that has flourished and been strengthened during a quarter of a century. Faith, as you have heard-and ought to know-removes mountains; mountains of incredulity and opposition. I value the faith of the public in the unfailing efficacy of the Methuselah Pill at a hundred thousand pounds at the very least."
"A hundred thousand fiddle-sticks," replied Mr. Doo irreverently, with a loud chuckle. "If your notions are so extravagant, I calculate, as the Americans say, that we should leave well alone, and that you should refuse to sell, as I most decidedly refuse to buy on any such terms. There is no need for further discussion on the subject. My mind is quite made up. The pill is only worth two or three years' purchase, and I will give no more for it. Popularity is not to be depended upon. Tastes alter-a successful rivalry is always to be feared, because it is always possible-and we live in an age of intense and cruel competition, in which the rule is 'the Devil take the hindmost.' "

Upon this understanding-or perhaps misunderstanding -the negotiations between the two partners came to an
abrupt conclusion. Mr. Fitzgerald was disappointed, but not disheartened. "Mr. Chicory Doo," he said to himself, "is not everybody. There are other fools in the world, though I do not consider them to be strictly and utterly fools-not by any means-but only enterprising tradesmen, ready to risk a little to gain much, and to make their fortunes by bold but safe speculation. The secret and the fame of the Methuselah Pill are not to be lightly parted with, merely because I am in temporary want of money. I shall advertise my commodity, and the devil's in it if I do not sooner or later find a purchaser, and defy the selfish, and, under the circumstances, the dishonest and suicidal, competition which Mr. Chicory Doo hints at. I made him what he is, and by Heaven I will unmake him, if he forces me to it ! Instead of allowing him to buy me out, I will buy him out, and reduce him to his original trade of selling soaps, combs, hair-wash and tooth-brushes, epsom salts and ipecacuanha, to servant girls, and depending upon the glare of the red and green lights in his shop window for the only custom he is likely to get."

So saying, Mr. Fitzgerald unlocked a secret drawer in his writing-table, and drew out a small bottle of brandy, which
he emptied at one gulp. Under the stimulus he felt himself strong enough, for a few minutes, to attempt to do any wickedness. It was his armour against Fate-and he felt himself invulnerable while under its protection.

Whenever he was in this state of aggressive exaltation, from the fumes of alcohol in his disordered brain, his thoughts reverted to his favourite grievance-the desertion of Lady Gwendoline. Not that he cared for Lady Gwendoline herself, or found the slightest pleasure in her society, but that his pride was wounded by her scorn, and that he desired, above all things in the world, to be able to punish and to persecute her-to make her feel that her noble blood was of no more account in his eyes than his own, which had, in all probability, "run through scoundrels ever since the flood," and that the higher the rank on which she prided herself, the greater his delight would be in humiliating it, insulting it, ignoring it, oppressing it, and treading it under the iron heel of his brutality. When this fit of virulent hatred came over him, he encouraged it by extra potations from the private stores of brandy which he managed to secrete from his servants and attendants, and kept carefully locked up amid his business papers, in close contiguity to
his check book and banking account, safe from all prying eyes and unauthorised interference.

The non-success of his attempted negotiation with Mr. Doo, annoyed him more than he had expected, and, had it not been for the treacherous aid of the brandy bottle, would have preyed still more heavily on his mind than it had done. For fully three weeks after his fruitless interview with his scheming partner, he had not been sober for a single day. His German valet, Fritz, who was accustomed to his violent fits of inebriation, and usually treated them as matters of course, that required only sleep on his master's part, and unobservant neglect and non-interference on his own, to pass over without harm to anybody, became seriously alarmed at the long continuance of this particular "bout," as he called it, and took the liberty of sending for the family physician, in case that Mr. Fitzgerald, in one of his fits, should do violence either to himself or to some one else. Fritz judged it necessary that the physician should appear to have called on a friendly, and not on a professional visit, lest the patient should take alarm, and revolt at the unauthorised intrusion ; and this was managed accordingly. The doctor was fore-warned and fore-armed, and
duly informed of all the particulars of the case before he was ushered into the presence of his patient, who was not allowed to suspect that the visit of Doctor Ignatius Druggit was any other than one of politeness. The doctor was an old and experienced practitioner, and speedily made up his mind that the utmost care and the strictest vigilance were necessary, not only to guard against the effects of delirium tremens, but to prevent scandal and calamity. He knew all the circumstances connected with the matrimonial disagreements between Mr. Fitzgerald and his high-born spouse, and all his sympathies were enlisted on the side of the lady. It was, he thought, a hopeless case of mania à potu, for which there was no remedy except restraint and enforced abstinence, at a water-cure establishment, or in a lunatic asylum. Fritz doubted the feasibility of persuading his master to submit to the discipline of the water-cure, which, if he had sufficient strength of will, he might impose upon himself, and was decidedly of opinion that the stronger arm of physical coercion, imposed by a couple of stalwart keepers in his own house-or better still, in a recognised asylum for hopeless inebriates or other maniacs-would be the only proper remedy to apply to the case. In this
opinion, the courtly and polite doctor acquiesced, and undertook to convey to Lady Gwendoline his concurrence in the views expressed by the valet, and his willingness to co-operate in the necessary measures to be taken for the restraint and possible cure of the patient.

Lady Gwendoline received the intelligence without surprise. She had long been prepared for it, and only regretted that the lunacy of her husband was only considered to be temporary, and could not be declared permanent and incurable, so that she might be rid of him for life. She did not know, did not suspect, did not dare to hope, or, at all events, to express the hope, or to indulge in it, except in the secrecy of her own mind, that a far greater physician than Doctor Ignatius Druggit would present him-self-a doctor named Death-to whom all diseases are equally easy of treatment, and who cures them when all human skill has been tried in vain. But that great doctor does not always respond to the wishes of those who believe in him. On the morning of the next day after Dr. Druggit had paid him his friendly visit of observation, Mr. Fitzgerald dressed himself with unusual care and neatness, and, having caused Fritz to call a hansom cab, ordered himself
to be driven to the house of Lord Stoney-Stratford, where his wife had taken refuge. No orders had been given to the servants to refuse him admittance. The pompous flunkey, with nether garments of red plush, silk stockings, and a well-powdered head of hair, was at a loss how to act when Mr. Fitzgerald made his appearance so unexpectedly, and desired to be shown into the presence of his wife. The gorgeous domestic ushered him into the reception-room, leading from the hall, and went upstairs to announce to the family the arrival of the unwelcome visitor. Lady Gwendoline was not within; she had gone out in the carriage with her two sisters on a shopping excursion half an hour previously. Lady Stoney-Stratford did not feel disposed, under the circumstances, to grant an interview to her daughter's husband, who, she imagined, would be in a disagreeable if not in an angry mood, and deputed Lord Stoney-Stratford to act as the representative of the family. His lordship undertook the task with extreme reluctance, and debated earnestly with himself for a few minutes whether it would be prudent to trust himself without witnesses in the presence of a violent man with a grievance. But, as he had borrowed money of him, his lordship though
it best to be polite, even if he could not be cordial, and prepared himself with as much equanimity as he could assume for an interview from which he would gladly have been excused. Mr. Fitzgerald rose from his seat as Lord Stoney-Stratford entered the room, and, advancing slightly towards him, said abruptly, "Do not be afraid of me, my lord, though your people give out, and try to make you believe, that I am never sober. But I am quite sober now. In fact, I have renounced the brandy bottle for ever. I know it does me mischief, and I have resolved to abandon it, once for all. I am, however, compelled to indulge myself medicinally in a little soothing elixir to calm my brain when I get excited, as I sometimes do when I think upon my misfortunes. Excuse me if I take a little of it now to steady my head, and to tranquillize my nervous system." He said this very slowly and deliberately, and drew from his waistcoat pocket a small phial, from which he calmly drew the cork. Applying the phial to his mouth, he drank off the contents in one gulp. "I wish your lordship good health," he said, "and that you will be kind enough to tell your daughter that I detest her." He had scarcely uttered the words when he staggered forward, and
fell heavily upon the floor. His lordship, alarmed and horrified, rang the bell for assistance. The powdered domestic in red plush responded almost immediately to the summons, helped his master to raise Mr. Fitzgerald from the floor, and with difficulty placed him again in the chair from which he had so lately risen. He breathed almost imperceptibly for a few seconds, when the machine of life stopped, and all that remained of the strong man of an hour previously was a senseless corpse. His lordship took the little phial from the hand which still held it, and found a label on it marked "Prussic Acid." It had contained enough of the fatal liquid-it was afterwards ascertainedto have poisoned half a dozen men.

Such was the end of the prosperous man, of the vulgar favourite of capricious fortune, of him who was reported to have touched nothing that he did not convert into success; of one who was greatly maligned, but still more greatly envied ; and who was continually cited as an example to all the youth of the little town in which he first saw the light, worthy of all imitation by those who aspired to rise in the world, and were not over particular as to the means by which the rise could be effected.

Lord Stoney-Stratford was greatly shocked and horrified ; Lady Stoney-Stratford and the Ladies Pierrepoint were shocked and scandalized; all who were acquainted with the unfortunate man were, more or less, painfully affected for a day or two, when they managed to forget the tragedy and all about it. Lady Gwendoline Fitzgerald, or, as she preferred to be called, Lady Gwendoline Pierrepoint, was greatly affected, greatly scandalized, and, if all the truth must be told, somewhat comforted. It might be an exaggeration of her comfortable feelings to say that she was pleased by the sudden light of freedom that had dawned upon the darkness of her youth and beauty; but if it were not pleasure, it was certainly a near approach to satisfaction, though she could have wished that the man had had the decency to die in his own house, without creating scandal in the newspapers. She assumed the customary weeds of widowhood with a graceful coquetry, that set off her healthful charms to the greatest advantage, and positively thought that the weeds became her much better than the ordinary finery in which she had delighted to array herself, as long as she could remember her own beauty, which was for two or three years before she had
entered upon her teens. Lady Stoney-Stratford, though greatly annoyed that he had insulted the Pierrepoint family by committing suicide in their family mansion, did not pretend to any grief or even regret at the fate of her son-inlaw; for though she was a great schemer, she was not a hypocrite, unless something was to be got by hypocrisy, and there was nothing to be got by tears or sighs for the untimely end of poor "Methuselah."


## CHAPTER X.

sadd ben ahmed.
A Card was one morning left at the mansion of Mr. Rameses in Kensington Palace Gardens, bearing the name of Saadi Ben Ahmed. Mr. Rameses was more affected than he usually was with anything, when, on his return from a visit to Niona, he was informed by his attentive secretary that the card had been left by a stately person of apparently between forty and fifty years of age, who had signified his intention of calling again in the course of the day.
"The friend of my youth, my more than brother, the man whom, of all men living, I most love and esteem," said Mr. Rameses. "The wisest and most virtuous man that it was ever my privilege to know."

Even as he thus spoke the welcome visitor was announced ; and in a few minutes the two friends were locked in a warm fraternal embrace. In a few more, Saądi Ben Ahmed had accepted the cordially offered hospitality of

Mr. Rameses, to share his home during the whole period, long or short, whatever it might be, of his stay in England. They had not met for seven years, during which Saadi Ben Ahmed had occupied himself in studying men, manners, religion, philosophy, and systems of government in every quarter of the globe. He had visited and resided in every civilized country of the world, and in some uncivilized ones. He had become, he said, a cosmopolitan. He had been a Frenchman in France, a German in Germany, an Italian in Italy, a Spaniard in Spain, a Greek in Athens, a Russian in St. Petersburg, a Turk in Constantinople, an African in Egypt, an American in the United States, a Mexican in Mexico, an Australian in Australia and New Zealand, and an Englishman in England. In all these countries he had mixed with the people and lived the life they did, often concealing his own nationality for the sake of acquiring more intimate knowledge than is usually within the reach of the passing stranger, however observant he may be. He had, during all that time been absent from India, the land of his birth, his ancestors, and his affections, intent upon the acquisition of a wider basis for his philosophy than that ancient civilisa-
tion afforded. He had now come to pass the remainder of the time at his disposal in London ; to enquire into the present state and future prospects of the greatest and most magnificent Empire in the modern world, and to forecast, if it were possible to do so, the chances that it would be able to hold its own amid the keen enmities and keener rivalries that its prosperous career had excited among the slower nationalities coeval with itself, and the more vigorous nationalities that had grown up since the discovery of the western hemisphere, and those equally vigorous ones that were expanding in the sunny and fruitful regions at the Antipodes.
"A noble and comprehensive object of inquiry," said Mr. Rameses, as Saadi Ben Ahmed unfolded his purpose to his friend, "in the elucidation of which you will doubtless find as much to condemn, as to approve in the new civilisation of the European races that are the present masters of the world, and possibly even more to approve in the ancient and still enduring civilisations of our Asiatic races than modern thinkers are willing to confess."

Saadi Ben Ahmed was provided with letters to the leading statesmen, literati, and the social and financial magnates VOL. II.
of the British Isles, but was in no hurry to avail himself of them, contented to remain for awhile in the comparative privacy of the household of his friend, with whom he had had since the days of his early manhood so many ideas and sympathies in common. Mr. Rameses promised himself the highest possible intellectual gratification from the conversation of the accomplished and experienced traveller. And he was not disappointed. In order that he might enjoy it still more, he was desirous that the Englishman in whose society he most delighted, the philosophical and kindly Mr. De Vere, should partake with him the advantage of drinking at the well of knowledge, which had so unexpectedly began to pour out its refreshing waters at his very feet, and for that purpose dispatched a message to the Rookery inviting that quiet and retiring philosopher to abandon his rural solitude and his darling books, and pass a week or ten days in the great metropolis, in the society that he was certain would be congenial to his enquiring mind, and to his daily enlarging ideas of the divine government of the world. The invitation was readily accepted, and Mr. De Vere, accompanied by his daughter, was, on the second day after it
reached them, duly installed in the luxurious home of Mr. Rameses.

Saadi Ben Ahmed spoke English elegantly and perfectly, without the slightest foreign accent. When dressed in his usual unassuming garb of an English gentleman, which he always wore, except on the rare occasions when he thought it necessary to appear at a foreign court in the costume of his native India, no one could have suspected from his speech or his manner that he was not an Englishman. His complexion was not so dark as that of an Asiatic, though slightly darker than that of most, though not of all, Englishman. His language only differed from that of cultivated English gentlemen, in being perhaps more classical in its phraseology and choice of words than that used in the last half of the nineteenth century, both in ordinary conversation and in books, and freer from all taint, however slight, of slang, or " fast" words, which, in the ordinary friction of society, and intercourse with various classes of the people, too commonly permeates the talk, even of the most refined, and which is not always absent from literature.

The social and intellectual dinner-parties of Mr. Rameses
never included more than seven or eight, or at most nine persons, all seated at a round table, and comprising persons already known to or desirous of being known to each other-persons who had something to say, who could say it well, and who could listen as intelligently as they could talk. No habitual "funsters" or punsters, or professional wits, and no "wet blankets," were admitted to his symposia, but only people who were willing to teach or to be taught, to imbibe knowledge gratefully, or to impart it cheerfully and unpretentiously, and even un-consciously-to converse, not to preach or lecture. Acting upon this principle, he took an early opportunity after the arrival of his friend Saadi Ben Ahmed to invite four friends to meet him and De Vere, who would all, he thought, be interested in hearing the opinions of so observant and thoughtful a student of mankind in all quarters of the globe. These were Lord Stoney-Stratford, Sir Henry de Glastonbury, Sir Hector MacTavish, and General Jefferson Trelawny, a Virginian gentleman who had fought as a private soldier in General Lee's army during the American Civil War from 1863 to 1865, and was one of the few Southern gentlemen who had escaped
without absolute pecuniary ruin on the collapse of that cause in 1865 . To these were added Mr. Melville, the private secretary, making eight in all. General Trelawny was a comparatively recent acquaintance of Mr. Rameses, and a very favourable specimen of what is called in the United States the "chivalry of the South "-a man without any strongly-defined American prejudices, and who prided himself on his purely English ancestry, without any admixture of Irish, German, or even of New England, or what he persisted in calling "Yankee," blood.

The two Asiatics were philosophers, but each had a different bent of mind. Mr. Rameses dwelt upon spiritual matters, and strove to fathom unfathomable mysteries of this life and the next. Saadi Ben Ahmed, on the contrary, was of a practical turn, and studied the things of this world, as well as he was able, and was a keenly intelligent observer of human nature, both in the individual man, and in the aggregation of men of which nations and races are composed, and loved to speculate upon the probable course of the future by the study of the past. Yet each displayed a vivid interest in the speculations of the other. Their
opinions took divergent courses, but were not antagonistic. As a great painter may delight in the strains of a great musician, without being able to rival him in their production, so Saadi Ben Ahmed took a sincere pleasure in the sublime dream of the infinite progress and development of the soul in the inscrutable hereafter, in which Mr. Rameses indulged; and Mr. Rameses, while fascinated by his faith in the future life, was not utterly insensible to the demands made upon his time and thought by the more prosaic interests of the present life. The one was a mystic -the other was a realist ; but they did not hate each other on that account, as they might possibly have done had they been jealous devotees of antagonistic, or even of slightly different, religious creeds-a species of hatred not quite unknown even to the present comparatively tolerant generation, but which was not considered hatred at all, but a high degree of Christian love and charity, by our super-eminently Christian ancestors.

A friendly discussion arose among the friends and guests of Mr. Rameses, on their first meeting with Saadi Ben Ahmed at the hospitable board of their entertainer, with the object of eliciting the opinions of that intelligent and
observant traveller on the present state and prospects of the civilized world. The choice viands and choicer wines had been duly and leisurely partaken of, flavoured by pleasant desultory conversation, which had made the convives known more or less to each other. Though it may be humiliating to the pride of a spiritual and transcendental philosopher to admit the fact, it must be confessed that nothing conduces more readily and happily among men to open the fountains of mutual confidenceto unloose "the hinges of the tongue"-than the genial conviviality of the dinner-table, where the guests are all intelligent and well-met, and where the surroundings are such as to please, not only the palate, but the eye and the fancy. A chance word spoken without purpose may in such company prove to be a key to open up the closed receptacles of thought, or to roll off the imprisoning stone from the well of knowledge, and that word was spoken by General Jefferson Trelawny, a representative of the best class of American statesmen and gentlemen. "We have a great deal too much liberty in America," said he ; "we allow ignorant negroes, and equally ignorant white blackguards, to share in the government of the country by means
of the political power which they exercise by their votes for the legislature, and for the choice of the President."
"That is not liberty," said Saadi Ben Ahmed, "but an abuse of liberty. No word except religion is so little understood in the modern world as liberty. Of liberty, in the true sense of the word, the liberty to live, to labour and to enjoy-the fruits of labour, without coercion, or oppression, or injustice from any quarter, there cannot be too much. But of the liberty accorded to the ignorant many to govern the intelligent few, there cannot be too little. It is this kind of liberty, falsely so-called, that is the curse of America, of Great Britain, of France, and of all ultra-democratic countries. There must be restrictions upon liberty, if true liberty is to exist."
"Exactly so!" said Sir Hector MacTavish. "Liberty given to the selfish and grovelling mob to govern the select body of thinkers is an oppression and a tyranny. It is a mistake altogether, and operates to the disadvantage and degradation of society. We might as well permit the votes of children in the nursery to be given in the selection of those who are to rule them for their good, as to give the privilege of voting for the statesmen and legislators who
are to govern a great nation, to the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, who have not an idea in their heads unconnected with their vulgarest physical necessities. Enough for them to have liberty to live and thrive, without endowing them with the privilege of governing their superiors.'
"The world in our day is in all its political relations," remarked Mr. De Vere, "but one great city, of which the various countries and nationalities are but streets, or parishes, of varying sizes and importance. In these streets or parishes, the majority of the inhabitants-engrossed in the daily struggle for subsistence-do not know, or do not care to examine, whether the little portion of the city, or the world, in which they are primarily interestedwhether the conflagration raging in the next street may not extend to their own shops, and affect their property, their business, and even their lives, who turn a deaf ear to the entreaties and remonstrances of the wiser few who know and would guard against the danger, lest any effort they might make with the fire-engines would take them from their shops, or render them liable to a tax of a shilling in the pound on their incomes."

[^4]tion of the once great English nation under the regime of the multitude, who have governed England since Mr. Gladstone's malignant Reform Bill came into operation ; and will continue to govern it, until England is reduced to a thirdrate power, and the sceptre of her supremacy is snatched from her hands by the United States, or by her own giant colonies. This old lion has become toothless, as I once heard an American orator say, and has not the courage to wag his mangey tail in anger, lest it should drop off!"
"Not a true or representative American," said General Trelawny, "but a 'Yankee'-a veritable, unmistakable Yankee, whose vulgarity, conceit, ignorance, and presumption bring our country into discredit."
"An irreverent joke, with only too much truth to support it," interposed Lord Stoney-Stratford.
"What I have observed in England and in America," said Saadi Ben Ahmed, "as the deleterious and uncomfortable concomitant of the false notions of liberty inculcated into the minds of ignorant people, is the craze for what is falsely called 'equality.' I have nothing to say against the equality of all men and women in the sight of God and the Law. The law, in all civilised countries of modern
times-though not, I regret to confess, in ancient times-is bound to treat, and does treat, the poorest and humblest with the same strict justice as it does the highest and richest."
"But Law," interposed Mr. De Vere, "is much too costly, and weighs more heavily on the poor than on the rich-so heavily on the former as virtually to amount to a denial of justice."
"This is doubtless a misfortune," replied Saadi Ben Ahmed; "but where is the remedy, if lawyers expect to live by their profession? The costliness of law, however, (affects the question of the recognised equality of all men efore it. But the mischief is, in such ultra-democratic countries as Great Britain and the United States and the colonies of Great Britain, that legal equality is held to include social equality, which is a very different thing. Legal equality is of possible establishment; but social equality is impossible. The fool is not the social equal of the wise man, the robber and brigand of the honest man, the servant of him who pays for service and exacts it, nor the ignorant and brutal boor of the educated and refined gentleman."

> "In England," said Lord Stoney-Stratford, "the excess
of what is falsely called liberty-which is the curse of the country, as it is of America-fills the minds of the vulgar with conceit and arrogance, that would be considered amusing if they were not disgusting. The coarsest kitchen drab and scullion considers herself affronted if people of her own rank and station do not address her as a 'lady.' If she receives a letter she must be addressed as 'Miss.' Shop-girls are no longer existent-they are shop-ladies. Drapers' assistants, or counter-jumpers, are 'gentlemen.' There are no longer 'men' or 'women' in the language of the ultra-democracy, but 'gentlemen' and 'ladies.' Even the good, honest, noble word of 'wife' is superseded, on the tongues of the superfine vulgar, by 'lady' or 'Missus.' 'Workman' is considered a title of disrespect, and has mostly given place to 'operative,' as more 'genteel' and ' respectable.' The title of 'Mr.,' instead of 'Esquire,' on a letter, is held to be an affront by proud shopkeepers who receive it, and meant as such by him who sends it. Domestic servants scorn to wear the plain garments that were good enough for their ancestors, and array themselves in cheap, tawdry, and flimsy finery, of the fashion of that worn by their mistresses, so that when they walk abroad
they may not appear to be what they are, but as the equals in rank to their mistresses, whose style and manner 'they imitate so abominably'-daws in the plumage of a peacock, asses in the hide of the lion, unable to conceal their long ears, or to make other utterance than a braying whenever they open their mouths."
"All these things," said Saadi Ben Ahmed, "are of minor importance compared with the pretension of those vulgar and ignorant people, male and female, who think that, because personal freedom is their right, they have a right to govern, or help to govern, others. This imaginary right has no more foundation in Nature and reason than the right of young children to govern their fathers and mothers, and to share in the government of great states, and of the world, of which all states and empires form a part. Yet it is foolishly conceded and acted upon by the shallow empirics, who think that the voice of the people is the voice of God, and who appeal to the multitude to decide questions which the multitude cannot and never will be able to understand. The ultrademocrats who think themselves wise, are in reality the greatest of political fools. They do not know that liberty
rests upon restrictions. Every right has its limitations, and must have them. Every man and woman has a right to dress as he or she pleases, but no man or woman has a right, in our present state of civilization, to walk naked in the streets. Every man has a right to his own life, if he can maintain it by his labour or skill, or usefulness to society, but he has no right to take the life of another. Every one has the natural right to govern himself, but no natural right to govern anybody else. Modern political empirics and defenders of an abstract but impossible liberty, think the contrary, and in Great Britain and Ireland, France, the United States, and the British Colonies, have given the privilege, which they wrongfully call and consider a right, to the government of his fellowsinferiors, it may be, but more often superior to himself-to every one who has a fixed abode, though it may be but a hut or a wigwam. The result is the government of a large portion of the modern world by the necessarily uninstructed, toiling, and unintellectual multitude, living by their daily work, and having neither time nor mind to study and understand the mighty issues of national weal or woe, glory or shame, which may depend on their suffrages."
"It is the greatest mistake of modern times," said Mr. De Vere, "to cons:der the electoral suffrage as a right, and as a necessary consequence to extend it, until within the now more or less restricted circle shall be included children, and paupers, if not felons and lunatics. The privilege-I will not outrage my conscience by calling it right-having been granted, with the restrictions I have enumerated, the question for the future consideration of wise and far-seeing statesmen will be that of restricting it without, however, going so far as to abolish it, which is now impossible; allowing household suffrage to prevail, and even extending it if need be, to manhood and womanhood suffrage. I would restrict it very considerably."
"To restrict the suffrage now, after Mr. Gladstone's illjudged, though apparently necessary, extension of it," said Sir Henry De Glastonbury, "would be perilous-even if it were possible."
"Neither perilous nor impossible," replied Mr. De Vere, "nor even unpopular, if cleverly managed. Allowing the right-if the multitude so consider it-to remain, what would be more easy than to purify its exercise by exclusion from the privilege of enjoying it, not only of the criminals
undergoing penal sentences of imprisonment, but of those minor offenders against the well-being of society whose offences do not amount to felony? For instance, I would deprive of the suffrage every shopkeeper legally convicted of adulterating the food, the drink, or the medicines which he retails to the public. This would act very beneficially if the penalty of disfranchisement extended for a term of years, say three or seven, after legal conviction of such offences. I would apply the same rule to all traders who should be convicted of selling by false weights and measures."
"Would you not extend it to persons convicted of cruelty to children and wife-beating, if sentenced for these offences by a magistrate?" enquired General Trelawny.
"Undoubtedly I would," replied Mr. De Vere, "and to swindlers, robbers, forgers, and all felons whatsoever, for at least seven years after the expiry of their ordinary terms of punishment."
"What a revolution and a purification that would be!" said Lord Stoney-Stratford. "And so cunningly devised, moreover, that the sticklers for an extended suffrage could not object that it was hostile to their darling principle. It would reduce the electoral lists of the whole country,
urban and rural, by at least twenty-five per cent., and from every four million of 'free and independent electors' strike off one million as disqualified to have a voice in the government of honest men."
"I think we are all pretty well agreed upon the question. But I will go further than most of you," said Saadi Ben Ahmed. "I express a decided opinion that the privilege of a share in the government of a nation, as far as the vote of the individual is concerned, is not only of evil effect on the government, but on the true happiness and wellbeing of the voter, unless he be a person of cultivated intelligence and independent honesty. The possession of a vote by the ignorant, the idle and the dishonest, fosters not only arrogance and conceit in their minds, but encourages in them an unreasonable dissatisfaction with their lot. The great bulk of mankind in all countries, whether highly civilized or comparatively barbarous, require to be governed-wisely and firmly, no doubt, but still to be governed-by intelligence superior to their own. Left to themselves, without restraining power over them, their liberty always does, and always must, degenerate into licence. Licence grows into anarchy, which, in its turn, pro-
duces despotism, in order that any kind of liberty, guarded by restraint, may possibly exist. Men are naturally dissatisfied with their condition, whatever it may be, and as naturally desire a larger portion of the good things of the world than can fall to their share in their wild and selfish competition with each other, and the pressure of their own numbers upon the resources at the command of the whole community. In the dissatisfaction which grows out of their struggles to live, they are led astray by the specious oratory which they mistake for eloquence. Passion is easily excited, while reason, among the ignorant and prejudiced, is not easily to be convinced. The shallowest of men, if they appeal to passion, can make brilliant speeches, can darken counsel with vain words, make the worse appear the better reason, tickle the long ears of the multitude by empty, but high-sounding declamation, destitute of pith or substance ;-unsubstantial rubbish, unstable as water or mist, on which nothing can be erected. The 'gift of the gab,' as it is vulgarly called, threatens to become, if it has not already become, the greatest power in the government of the European nations•and of all democracies whatsoever."
"A result," remarked Mr. De Vere, "which is in a great degree owing to the Press, which reports the vapid trash spoken by the vain people of inferior intellectual capacity, who love to see themselves in print."
"As yet," said Saadi Ben Ahmed, "the happiness of the multitude has not been the result of European civilization and the democratic liberty which it has engendered. Turn where we will we see the upheaval of the lower against the upper strata of society, which threatens a social earthquake, fiercer and more destructive than the world has yet seen. 'Socialism,' or the doctrine of the community of goods, share and share alike-by the "haves" and the "have nots," by the idle and the industrious, by the ignorant and the intelligent, by the fools and the wise men-looms largely upon the horizon, and aspires to be the religion of the future. All the religions of the last two thousand years have been established and cemented by blood and misery. If Socialism is to be the new religion, it is likely, in my opinion, to be productive of far more bloodshed than any that have preceded it."
"Après nous le deluge," said Mr. Rameses, "but, enough of this for the present ; let us join the ladies upstairs and enjoy a little music."

## CHAPTER XI.

## A LITTLE LOVE AFFAIR, OR WHAT SEEMS TO BE SO.

Mr. Melville, though not more bashful than other young men, even if he were bashful at all, which was a moot point in his own mind, as well as in that of others (if, indeed, others had ever considered the question, which his friend and patron Mr. Rameses had certainly not done), was extremely reluctant to disclose to any one, especially to Mr. Rameses, the secret of the love passion with which he had become afflicted. He was not ashamed of his love, neither was he proud of it, though, after a vigorous cross-examination of himself, he was convinced that he felt rather more inclined to conceal than to avow it. He had struggled with his more or less oppressive secret for several months, and had at last come to the resolution of continuing to struggle with it, rather than risk the condemnation with which he feared Mr. Rameses and all his other friends might regard it. He was not impelled to any hasty course
of action as long as he could sun himself in the warmth and light of love, not the less ardent because it was secret from all eyes and knowledge but those of the fair captivatress of his heart. He was not, he thought, too young to run riot in the romantic fancies of amorous passion, but he reflected that he was too young to marry, too poor, and too uncertain of the future possession of an income sufficient to maintain a wife in the worldly position in which he aspired to move. While in this state of fascinated irresolution, swayed in opposite directions by glowing fancy, and hard, dry fact, and while he felt that his love was strong and his purpose weak, he bethought himself that he might prepare the way for the avowal which he longed, yet feared to make, if he engaged Mr. Rameses in a discussion upon the faith entertained by that gentleman, that the occult but irresistible action of spiritual and physical electricity was the true and only cause of all our loves and all our hates, and that poor mortal creatures were as impotent to resist the divine attraction as the steel is to resist the magnet, or the earth to resist the mysterious and all-pervading law of gravitation. Was not that law, according to Mr. Rameses, the law which governs the life and
the motion of all the planets that circulate round the sun, of the sun himself, and of all the countless and more majestic suns that exist in the infinite space where the weak imagination, and the still weaker intelligence, of man cannot follow them?

The result of the discussion, which he knew was a favourite one with Mr. Rameses, was a reiteration on the part of that philosopher that all the phenomena of creation were the result of positive and negative electricity, and that they accounted, as far as limited human wit could account for anything, for what are called up and down, right and wrong, life and death, love and hate, finitude and infinitude, time and eternity. "They explain," he said, " the Ormuzd and Ahrimanes of the Zoroastrian philosophy, the representative deities of good and evil, the one of which could not exist or be comprehensible without the other, and which are both absolutely necessary to the government of the mighty worlds in which they obey the irresistible behests and commands of Ananke or Necessity, the supreme Lord of the Universe, alike the creator, the preserver and the renovator of all that ever is, ever was, or ever will be.

The ideas of Necessity, and irresistible gravitation, and all-pervasive electricity, as insisted upon by Mr. Rameses, were highly comforting to Mr. Melville. He thought them the very perfection of wisdom, principally because they tended to confirm him in his own foregone conclusions, and encouraged him to yield to the passion that temporarily governed his thoughts and moulded his desires. No man seems to any of us to be so wise as the man whose opinion coincides with our own, and whose prejudices coalesce and harmonize in every particular with those which we have come to consider either as intuitions, or as the results of study, reflection and experience. Mr. Melville, like most or all warm-blooded and imaginative young men, in the ages from seventeen to five-and-twenty or thirty, had been in love, or fancied that he had been in love, very many times. He had jilted or been jilted by most of these temporary charmers, and fancied himself heart-broken more than once by the fickleness of grey-eyed, blue-eyed, and black-eyed sirens, to whom he had expressed his homage by letters, by sonnets, and occasionally by bouquets or "posies"; and was no sooner well out of the entanglements-not
very difficult to break through - than he was in with another.

But all these were merely taps, not wounds or even scratches, upon his heart, and were as evanescent in their effects, though as beautifnl while they lasted, as the soap bubbles blown by a child from the bowl of a tobaccopipe. One of the latest attacks of the love measles from which he suffered, was caused by the charms of Lady Ethel Pierrepoint. But the malady was not serious, and was viewed with the most complete indifference oy the very aristocratic young lady from whom he had caught it. The next was a little more serious in its duration, though not in its effects, and was kindled by the classic and thoughtful beauty of the quiet daughter of Mr. De Vere. It met with no encouragement, however, and created a disappointment that might have been much more severe than it was, had not the too susceptible heart, or too inflammable fancy of the young man been suddenly and much more strongly impressed than it had ever been before by the overpowering attractions of the new enslaver, who is now to be introduced to the reader, though her existence was as yet kept secret from

Mr. Rameses, for reasons that were satisfactory for the time to the mind of Mr. Melville.

It was a beautifully calm, cloudless, and fragrant summer morning towards the end of June, when Mr. Melville arose from his slumbers, to indulge himself in one of his usual walks before breakfast, in the pleasant wooded avenues of Kensington Gardens. It was but an hour after sunrise, and "all the mighty heart of London was still asleep," except a few early labourers proceeding to their work, and a stray policeman here and there, who had neither a cook nor a housemaid, in all that aristocratic region, with whom to exchange a nod or other more demonstrative salutation. The beautiful gardens were as yet ungladdened by human life, but were vocal with the joyous songs of the early birds that dwelt amid the leafy branches, especially the blackbird and thrush, the "merle and the mavis" of our ancient poetical speech. The well-kept and pleasant "Flower Walk" was as yet free from the presence of the bonnie wee maidens and sturdy little boys, the wives and mothers, and scheming merchants, hard-working professional men, or perchance the lazy loafers of the twentieth century;-a century approaching with
rapid pace to put the nineteenth out of life and countenance, though not out of memory for the glorious deeds it has accomplished, and the still more glorious and beneficent discoveries it has made in the wide and daily expanding domains of science. The paths were as yet unincumbered with the "pesky" perambulators-the lazy nursemaids' delight, and the pedestrians' plague and sorrow. The contiguous, but less lovely lawns, meadows, and grand walks of Hyde Park, were equally and even more solitary, because unenlivened by the cheery and tender music of the birds, with which Kensington Gardens were vocal, and Rotten Row was as silent and untrodden as a Scottish moorland.

Briskly walking in the fresh free pathways, as free from companionship or observers, as if he had been in a wilderness, remote from a great city, Mr. Melville was surprised to come suddenly almost face to face with a young and beautiful woman, seated alone upon a bench, beneath the well-known overarching bower in the "Flower Walk." The fair stranger seemed to be reading a book, and looked up at him as he passed. He noticed that she was tastefully and fashionably, but not showily, dressed, that she appeared to
be about twenty years of age, that she had delicate little feet and dainty boots, small hands, one of which was un-gloved-the better to enable her to turn the leaves of the book which she was reading-that her large languishing eyes were blue and lustrous, and that her abundant hair was of a golden yellow, evidently natural, that her lips were rosy red, and her cheeks also, though not of the too decided crimson that chemists and perfumers know how to produce, and that her whole pose and attitude were easy and elegant. A searching though unobtrusive glance enabled him to observe all this, as he passed on, wondering who the lady could be that ventured abroad so early, and impelling him against his will to gratify his curiosity by another look at the unexpected vision. He retraced his steps accordingly, after walking forward for about five minutes, and found her still seated in the same place. She looked up placidly and, as he thought, enquiringly at him as he again went on his way. The impulse was still strong upon him to see more of her, and after a second interval of a few minutes he again passed, and emboldened this time by her quiescence, he took a seat at the extreme end of the bench, debating within his own mind, in what manner he
should attempt-if he made the attempt at all-to begin a conversation with her. The state of the weather was of course the unfailing topic to which most people have recourse on similiar occasions, and it came to the aid of his hesitation.
"A splendid morning, madame," he said, "and as yet nobody to enjoy it, but you and I and the little birds! How delightful it is to hear them ?"
"Yes," she replied in a soft, sweet, musical voice, that did him good to listen to, "the dear little things! I often think I should like to be a bird myself. Je volerais, vite, vite, vite ; si j'étais petit oiseau!"
"I see you have read Beranger, madame. So have I, and I admire him in many things. But he is too French in his ideas to be altogether to my taste, or that of the English in general."
"I am French myself," she replied in excellent English, though with a sweet little foreign accent, "and you, sir, you are not quite English, I think ?"
"No, not quite, I am partly Asiatic and more than half Scotch."

The conversation, after this first breaking of the ice,
became more general, and branched off into a variety of topics, all naturally springing out of each other. Mr. Melville was fascinated, and took no heed of the rapidly passing time-not even of the warning reverberations of the church clocks of the neighbourhood, or of those more sonorous of the cavalry barracks, that told that it was nine o'clock. A few successive troops of boarding-school girls, and of stray pedestrians of more advanced age, taking exercise after breakfast, were more successful in arousing his attention to the flight of time, and in making him aware that his solitude was invaded by a more or less curious and observant public. The fair lady was the first to notice that the solitude had become less solitary than it had been, and, rising from her seat, showed an evident intention of bringing their colloquy to a close. His first impulse was to offer to accompany her in her walk, but he resisted the temptation, fearing that he might give offence. He was bold enough, however, to say au revoir!-encouraged to do so by the gracious farewell which she bestowed upon him from her eyes, accompanied by a slight wave of her ungloved hand, gleaming in the morning light like a little snow-wreath, its whiteness rendered more
conspicuous by the flash of a diamond ring upon her finger.

The parting seemed to Mr. Melville like an invitation and an incentive to a future meeting. In that light he regarded it when he repaired on the following morning, early as before, to the shady and flowery avenue where they had first met. He was not very much surprised to see her in the same seat, all alone, with a book in her hand, which she was not reading, and to receive from her a sunny smile of recognition as he approached. He would have passed her had her recognition been less pleasant than it was, but-being young, impressionable, and more than half-expectant of what would probably occur-he took his place on the bench alongside of her, and offered her without scruple the ordinary salutations of polite, if not cordial, intercourse. The cordiality was yet in the early bud, and was to grow in due time into that full bloom to which it usually expands among susceptible young people of opposite sexes who are not disagreeable to each other. At their third meeting their mutual confidences had so far been exchanged that Mr. Melville had given her his card, and his address, and she
had declared herself to be Rose Adele, widow of the Count di Molinari, an Italian nobleman, who had died in Paris a year previously.

The acquaintanceship thus commenced was not allowed to languish, and was speedily followed by visits to exhibitions, little tête-c̀-tête dinners at fashionable restaurants, and excursions into the country, with walks in the glades of Richmond Park, Burnham Beeches, Windsor Forest, and other popular resorts. The fascination, the glamour, the love delirium of the young man, grew in intensity from day to day, colouring his life, shaping his purpose, and moulding his destiny for good or for evil. The world for him was robed in the roseate light of the beauty of the Countess di Molinari, and the full force of the divine electricity that governs all life in the universe, as believed by Mr. Rameses, so pervaded his whole being as to render him as passive as the straw that floats upon the billows of the ocean, and as little able to resist its power as the tide is to resist the moon, or the stars to run counter to the courses appointed around the sun. But she? Was she governed by the same mighty impulses? Was there any electricity in her nature? If there were, was it positive
or negative, or dormant? Could she love, or hate ? or was she quiescent and indifferent, or merely playing a part ? Mr. Melville did not enquire. He was whirled about on the vortex of a growing passion, in a pleasant delirium that possessed his mind and brain and whole being, and dazzled him in daily reveries and mighty visions, with the foretaste and anticipation of future beatitude. But, tôt ou tard, tout se sait, and what revelations of the real and actual life of which he had become a part were made or discovered by him, will appear in due course.


## CHAPTER XII.

## UNEXPECTED REVELATIONS.

Leaving young Mr. Melville to his youthful dream, and the fair Countess di Molinari to feed his fancy with the contemplation of her manifold charms, the arrival in London must be announced of one of the earliest friends of Mr. Rameses, the Vicomte Anatole du Trianon, of Paris, who proposed to make a considerable stay in England. The Vicomte had been in his time what the ladies of a certain class in Paris had called a petit crêvé or gommeux, and other pet names of more offensive familiarity than respect, and in the sunny afternoon or shady evening of his life he, in the estimate of his friends and intimates, had sobered down into a more or less steady and respectable member of the upper class of Society in that easy-going and brilliant capital. He knew everything and everybody, or was reputed to know, which amounted to really the same thing in the estimation of the world in which he moved. He was a member of several exclusive cercles in Par:s, among VOL. II.
the rest of the "Jockey Club," and was noted for his unconquerable addiction to the use of English words in his customary conversation, when French words would have been far better. He patronised what he called "le sport," sometimes swore "by Jingo," and still oftener "by Jove"; had all his clothes made by London tailors, and sometimes told his acquaintances of the Boulevards qu'il allait five o'cloquer chez Madame de Trois Etoiles or Mademoiselle De Labanlieu. He was not an obtrusive politician, but allowed it to be known on occasion that he had no love for the Republic, and did not believe in it ; that he thought Buonapartism was defunct, beyond chance of resuscitation ; that the French people required above all things a reasonable assurance of a firm and stable government, that they might work and thrive in peace, and that the only possible hope of the attainment of this blessing lay in the re-establishment of the monarchy in the person of the Count de Paris. For the rest he was a brilliant conversationalist and table companion, and was what diplomatists call a persona grata to Mr. Brown de Vere and to Mr. Rameses, who knew nothing of his private life, as well as to Englishmen generally ; though he was scarcely so popular among
his own countrymen, with whose opinions he had little sympathy.

One day at dinner the name of the fascinating young widow, the Countess di Molinari, happened to be mentioned in connection with some of the fashionable celebrities of Paris.
"Ah," said the Vicomte, with a significant shrug of his shoulders, " the charming Rose Adèle, more commonly known as Fifine, who set the hearts of all the gay young men of Paris on fire two years ago!"

Arthur Melville pricked up his ears, and felt a hot flush upon his cheek, at this unexpected and unwelcome revelation, and longed to enquire further. But there was no need, for the Vicomte went on to say, "She was all the rage while her reign lasted, and half-a-dozen duels, at least, were fought on her account; for the cocotte was coquette, and her favours, or what seemed to be her favours, were as liberally bestowed as the sunshine."
"Was not this the slander of Paris-the baseless slander ?" enquired Melville, with a gasping in his throat and an angry sparkle in his eye, as he heard the woman that he loved, so slightingly spoken of.
"Qui sait?" replied the Vicomte. "Paris is not very reticent of its slanders when pretty women who make themselves fashionable or notorious are concerned. I do not answer for the truth of the story, and perhaps I have no right to repeat it."
"Go on," said Mr. Melville, "I have particular reasons for being interested. Was there ever such a person as the Count di Molinari ?"
"There was such a person, but whether he was a count or not, is a question that I cannot answer. He who called himself the count was a very handsome fellow-a beau garçon-like Antinous of old days, or D'Orsay of our times, but nevertheless it was reported that he had been a billiardmarker, or a waiter in the Café Riche. He was also a speculator on the Bourse, and was believed to have made some money before he came out full-fledged in all the glory of his countship. We don't believe much in counts in Paris, unless we can trace their genealogy, and know them to be of the blue blood of the ancienne noblesse."
"Is he still living ?" inquired Melville.
"I cannot tell. He has disappeared from Paris, unless he has returned to his original obscurity as a waiter or a
billiard-marker, or survives in the penal settlement of New Caledonia or in the galleys at Toulon."
"And was the Countess di Molinari this man's wife?" asked poor Mr. Melville.
"Perhaps she was-perhaps she was not. It is difficult in such cases as these, to know the truth-even if the truth be worth knowing. Permit me to ask you if you have met the fair enchantress? for she is fair, and a veritable enchantress of her kind and degree. All the world allows her to be beautiful. Even the women who were her rivals admit that much-though with the qualifications usual among beauties who tolerate no rivalry near their own particular thrones, or what they imagine to be such."

The mind of Mr. Melville was in a painful conflict of emotions. The prevailing emotion-or passion rather-was to treat the whole story as a vile and cowardly invention, a calumny, a slander, a tissue of lies, to be utterly disbeliered and resented. But this indignation did not acquire full possession of his mind. It was accompanied by the shadow of a doubt, that seemed to assume more the appearance and shape of a reality, as he weighed and compared all the alleged particulars of the story of shame and degradation
that the Vicomte du Trianon had accidentally unfolded. It seemed to him something like treason, if not positive blasphemy, to link the name of his idol-none the less warmly and madly idolised, because she had been so lately elevated to that height in his heart. Even if all he had heard in her disparagement should prove to be true-which he could not bring himself to believe-he felt that he should be constrained to adhere to her through evil report as well as through good, and to cling to her fervently and fondly in spite of Fate, Fortune, and the world's contumely. But how was he to ascertain either the truth or the falsehood of the story repeated by the Vicomte du Trianon, who he. voutly wished had never crossed his path, to disturb the equanimity of his soul by his ill-omened and mischievous tittle-tattle. How to proceed in the circumstances he knew not. He longed to ascertain the truth-though determined, even if the truth were made manifest, that he would not believe it.

There was no one of whom he could ask information, or from whom he could obtain any hints that could guide him to it-except the incriminated lady herself, and the French Vicomte, who had possibly only repeated parrot-like what he had heard, and had taken no thought or
pains to be certain of his facts-that might be no factsbefore he retailed them. Saadi Ben Ahmed, he learned accidentally, had mixed much in the Society of Paris, and was almost as intimately acquainted with it as the Vicomte. Without appearing to be particularly interested in what he might learn he asked that gentleman if he had ever heard of the Countess di Molinari, once a noted beauty of that capital.
"Yes," replied the Eastern sage, "but I don't really know much about her ; and the little I do know, or that I may have heard, may not be true, or even correctly fixed in my memory. There was a talk among the libertines of that great sink of iniquity of a fair young woman-who passed as a countess, and who had been originally, if I recollect rightly, a 'blanchisseuse de fin' or getter-up of fine linenwho had turned the empty heads and still emptier hearts of the young men, and possibly of some old ones, in admiration of her remarkable beauty, and one of whom had rescued her from her low estate, and lavished his gold upon her for a time. Perhaps she was the countess of whom you enquire. She was generally known in my day by the slanderous jeunesse dorée or gilded youth of the Boulevards as La Belle Couleu're, the 'Fair Snake,' or 'beautiful
serpent'! I saw her but once, and certainly thought that the adjective was not misapplied, though the noun might have been. There was nothing in her looks or demeanour that to my mind, suggested the serpent. She was certainly very beautiful, with a face that beamed with intelligence and good humour. A sculptor might well have taken her for his model, if he wanted to represent Hebe, or Euphrosyne, or Venus herself in her first artlessness, before she had learned wickedness in the world of the libidinous gods of Greece and Rome. I suppose, like all young women of her class, she led a brilliant life while it lasted-perhaps it lasts still. I don't know, never heard, and never cared to enquire ; though it either has been or will be a repetition of the old story. Fair flowers like her soon lose their charm and fragrance in the gay city. Worn one day on the bosom or in the button-hole of a dissolute man of so-called pleasure, the next thrown down to the pavement, to be trodden under foot, or swept out of sight by the besom of the scavenger."
"La Belle Couleuvre," interrupted the Vicomte, "did not enjoy so short a reign, to my certain knowledge. She is still in the very flush of her womanly beauty, and will, I doubt not, yet break many hearts, or at all events impair
and diminish many fortunes, before the final catastrophe of old age and ugliness overtakes her-if ugliness be possible to a creature so resplendent. She has gained many victories in her time, and other conquests are certain to await her."
" Did she not achieve, some months ago, an unenviable notoriety," enquired Saadi Ben Ahmed, "by nearly killing one of her numerous admirers, in a fit of jealousy, by discharging a revolver at him on the Boulevards ?"
"I think she did," replied the Vicomte, "but the affair speedily blew over, and has not since been heard of. The false inamorato was not touched in any vital part, and, though the fair one took aim at his head, the ball only grazed his ear. And moreover he was not vindictive-bore no malice-and took the slight punishment as a reminder of his error, and a warning to him to behave himself better in the future, or possibly to ibeware of demi-mondaines altogether. His revengeful inamorata was allowed to walk away without molestation from the bystanders or from the 'police des mours.' She escaped punishment for her attempt to murder the man who had outraged her feelings by showing attentions to another woman. Such is the 'mode de Paris,' that has not yet set an example to the world in these re-
spects, but possibly will do so, in the natural evolution of our remarkable civilisation."

Young Melville listened with intense indignation to this recital-not against the "belle couleuvre," but against what he considered the scandal-mongers and heartless gossips, who had either invented the tale, or grossly exaggerated it, to the injury of the enchanting creature who was its heroine and its victim. He had a firm, fixed, and obstinate faith, not to be shaken, in his passionate worship of the idol whom he had made for himself, and an unalterable purpose, growing more and more firmly rooted in his mind, the more it was assailed by the mendacious tongues of society. The fire that was burning in his mind fed upon obstruction as upon fuel, and what might have been but a little spark, if left to itself, expanded into a blaze that might be called a conflagration, so fiercely did it possess his whole being.

It was with such thoughts and feelings in his mind that, on the day succeeding these conversations with his new Parisian acquaintance, he sought the fair Countess, to keep an appointment which he had made with her to accompany her in a drive to Richmond and through the Park, and dine with her afterwards, tête-à-tête, in his favourite hostelry, the "Star and Garter."

## CHAPTER XIII.

## IN RICHMOND PARK.

A lovely day in Richmond Park. It is the middle of the jocund month of May. The hawthorn trees and bushes are in the full delicious radiance and fragrance of their early bloom; half a dozen sky-larks are hovering-scarcely seen, but loudly heard-in "the forehead of the sky," over which sail whole argosies of snow-white clouds, flecking the deep blue of the heavens with their fantastic or graceful masses of welcome colour. Nor have the skies and clouds all the music to themselves. From the low bushes and tall trees of the fairy-like woodland come the songs of the merle and the mavis, whose sweet old names the modern English have vulgarised into " blackbird "and "thrush," -as if the names that were known and used by Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, were not good enough for the people of the nineteenth century, and for the money-grubs who think that all verse is poetry, and that all poetry is bosh, which is their slang synonym for nonsense. The
deer, so great an ornament to that and every other park in which they are permitted to roam, were browsing in graceful groups, undisturbed by the holiday-makers of the great metropolis, and Mr. Melville and the fair Molinari, the deer and the singing birds, had all the rural scene to themselves.

Perhaps the human lovers, notwithstanding the temporary cloud that had come over the serenity of Mr. Melville's mind, were as happy in the delicious solitude as the birds that enlivened it. Whatever may have been the case with the gentleman, the lady, if not happy in the strictest sense of the word (who is, except in sleep and in forgetfulness?), floated on the full tide of youthful enjoyment of the passing hour, drinking in the admiration that beamed upon her from the eyes of her passionate lover, careless of the morrow that she neither feared nor hoped for, as wholly absorbed in the present as the happy birds that sang aloft in the blue sky. Mr. Melville was not quite so careless. The dark shadow, in spite of himself, came across his mental vision. He believed in his fair countess-whether she was a countess or not-and yet disbelieved in her, trusted yet mistrusted her, longed to know the whole truth with regard to her, whatever it might prove to be, but
obstinately determined to give it no welcome, even if it came upon his mind with the force of a mathematical demonstration. Those lovely eyes! There could be no falsehood or treachery in them, and never could have been any! Those delicate white fingers could never have grasped a revolver, except in playfulness! That softlysounding musical voice, that prettily prattling tongue, could never have feigned the love that the heart did not feel! And those youthful charms, so innocently artless to his eyes, could never have been sold to the highest bidder for money and diamonds, or any other form of temporary and worldly splendour! The thought was a desecration of the pure shrine of his divinity-profanation, blasphemy, and madness! To look at her was to look at purity, on which there was and could not possibly be a stain ; and the evil tongues that spoke in her dispraise, or even so much as hinted that there could be a flaw in her conduct or demeanour, or the shadow of a fleck upon her immaculate brightness, were worse in his estimation than Atheists !

[^5]bliss unspeakable, until the hour of awaking from the dream, the trance, the hallucination, whatever it may be, which, in its soporific balm, steeps the gross carnal senses in divine ignoration and oblivion of the evil world, and all its unhappy realities.

At last, amid many doubts and fears as to the propriety of his taking a step so decided, Melville mustered up courage enough to ask the lovely object of his affections, who sat tranquilly beside him, whether she knew or had ever heard in Paris of a certain Vicomte Du Trianon? The question seemed to annoy her, and brought a flush to her fair cheek and a light to her brilliant eyes, that had not flashed in them a moment before. But these slight perturbations were momentary ; and, passing away, left her as apparently impassive as before. "I have heard of him," she replied, her musical voice slightly trembling with what might have been contempt, and perhaps nothing more than surprise, as she spoke; "Heard of and seen him, without having the doubtful honour of his acquaintance. He was or is one of the yellow wasps or hornets of Paris, buzzing in the ears of women, and stinging them -if they will permit them to come close enough, and deriving
their whole consequence in the society in which they move from being seen in the company of the gay butterflies of fashion."

This was said with so much scorn on the tip of her pretty little nose, that Melville was delighted with the spirit so unexpectedly displayed-a spirit that seemed to confirm her in the rank of a virtuous woman, to which, in spite of the Vicomte's innuendoes to the contrary, he believed her to belong. "The Vicomte, I have no doubt," said Mr. Melville, who had taken a strong dislike to him for having circulated and given credence to a story that threw discredit upon the antecedents of one in whom he was so passionately interested, "is one of the fellows that take away the characters of women both by word and deed ; boast of their favours, real or imaginary ; and amuse themselves by retailing and inventing stories to their discredit. 'Oh ! for a whip,' as Shakespeare says, 'to lash such scoundrels naked through the world.' But you have never read Shakespeare, perhaps," he added, " and I do wrong to quote him ?"
"Oh, I have read him a little," she answered, with a sweet smile, " and wish I could understand him better. But he is above the comprehension of us poor French
people. Too grand, you know! But I quite understand and agree with what he says about the idle fellows who amuse themselves by slandering us poor women, never believing any good of us, and thinking we are all as bad as they themselves are and mean to be. They wouldn't be better even if they could. There are hundreds of such men in Paris, perhaps in London also, who look upon pretty women with as much favour as they do upon their horses, perhaps with not so much. But the horses, fortunately, sometimes kick, and rear, and plunge, and throw their riders on to the hard stones and break their necks."
"And serve them right," said Mr. Melville. "Fortunately, the pretty young women for whom they make fools of themselves, are more than a match for them in cunning and in wickedness, and, if they do not actually cause them to break their necks, contrive to ruin them, not only in health and reputation, but in fortune. Nemesis! Nemesis!"
"What is Nemesis?" said the blooming Countess.
"Fate—Justice—Retribution!" said Mr. Melville, " the lord and governor of all human affairs. The predestined end of all things; the righting of the wrong ; the readjustment of the complicated ; the final defeat of the Devil."

The Countess smiled. "Your words are too grand for my little comprehension. I suppose you only mean that Nemesis is vengeance?"
" There is no such thing as vengeance in the decrees of God," replied Mr. Melville, " but only justice."
"For small offences as well as for great crimes?" asked the lady.
"For all offences, great or small," answered Mr. Melville. "Crime and punishment fly on the same arrow, and never are, or can be, separated -
' If wrong we do, if false we play,
In summer among the flowers ; We shall atone, we must repay,

In winter among the showers.' "
The young Countess sighed ; a shadow passed over her face, and a tear stood in each of her bright eyes, and made its way to her cheek. But she dashed the drops of tell-tale moisture away with her hand, and smiled like a rainbow amidst the storm. Turning to Mr. Melville she asked him, in her gentle voice, to pardon her weakness. "It is a hard world," she said, " if there is no forgiveness in it."
"'Tis a just world, after all," replied Mr. Melville, " and governed by immutable law. If one jumps from a high prevol. in.
cipice on to the hard and stony earth, he must be dashed to pieces by the fall. Impunity cannot accompany him, either midway or at the end. But these are not pleasant things to discuss, though they are true. We have more agreeable topics to talk about. The world is a beautiful world, after all, for Love is in it, and governs it, or it would cease to exist." Mr. Melville had never yet declared his passion by his words, though his eyes, more eloquent than his tongue, had long ago divulged it to the bright young woman who inspired it and maintained it. But the long pent-up torrent of his feelings suddenly burst its bounds, and swept away all the impediments that had been imposed upon it by worldly considerations, and compelled him, in spite of himself, to offer her his hand, as he had already given her his heart, in the fullest and fondest belief that she was a goddess or an angel, and not a mere woman, and that life would be altogether valueless to him if it were not cheered by her smile, and fortified by her support. The pressure of their hands, and the glances of their eyes, were more eloquent than words to both of them ; and neither of them thought of the anti-climax it was to their amorous imaginings, to sit down quietly to a tête-d̀-tête dinner at the Star and

Garter. But it was an anti-climax, nevertheless. The physical nature commands the intellectual ; the real exercises a mastery over the ideal ; and in libations of delicate Ai Mousseux, which had attractions, not too flagrant or too pronounced, for the palate and fancy of the lovely "Countess." She lived but for the present ; thought not of the obstructions that the record of her past life-certain to be divulged sooner or later-might place in the way of her future happiness, rising up like frowning precipices on the flowery paths that she hoped to tread. They were now, both of them, delighted wanderers in the enchanted land, though the shadow of doubt lay more or less palpably on his mind, and the shadow of a guilty conscience upon hers.

Mr. Melville, sitting placidly in the sunshine, looking over the lovely landscape and the winding river-visible from the open windows of the great dining saloon in the Star and Garter-sipping his champagne, basking in the smile of beauty, contented, and far more than contented, positively happy in the present enjoyment, and never dreaming that it can come to an end, does not yet know or suspect-the slight suspicions that he may have once entertained having vanished for ever, as he thinks, in the full 28*
and glorious certainty he has acquired in his easily satisfied mind, of the truth and purity of the woman that he loves -that the tales told by the Vicomte du Trianon of the sweetly smiling Countess of Molinari, so innocent-looking, so mildly angelic in mien and manner, fall far short of the truth-that she is no Countess at all, but a nameless adventuress, who has led an immoral if not a criminal life, and has been consequently shut out from all decent society; that, lovely and fascinating as she is, her touch is pollution, and that the sobriquet applied to her in that Paris that knows all about her, of 'La belle couleuvre,' but too truly describes her. But he will know it all to-morrow, and more than all. Perhaps the knowledge will break his heart, if he have a heart to be broken. But perhaps not !

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The morrow has come. Mr. Melville has been told all. It has been revealed to him clear as day, but he is not convinced. He defies proof, holds it in scorn-rises superior to it ; at least, he thinks so. Shall the dead truths of yesterday, he asks himself, if they are truths, which he denies, be permitted to efface the living truths of to-day and to-morrow? Shall the present love be slain by the
mere remembrance of the dead loves of yesterday? Is not every thing that happens or can happen pre-ordained, decreed from all Time and Eternity? Whatever the lovely being that holds him in thrall may have been, and he refuses to believe any evil of her, she and he have become one for ever and ever-linked together by bonds that are strong as the electrical life that throbs through the Universe, and therefore stronger than death or the world. To Mr. Rameses, his friend, his guide, his counsellor, he will open his whole heart, and endeavour to strengthen himself in the foregone conclusion to which his overpowering passion has led him. He will not believe anything wrong-or if there have been a shadow of wrong, it has assumed a false shape, in the slanders of jealous rivals. He feels that he is already wedded in soul to the object set apart for him from all eternity by Fate-the grand, the impenetrable, the irresistible-and his weak body and her weak body must jield to the strong spirit that controls and governs both. Thus he has argued with himself, and determined that all possible opposition in man, nature, hell itself, must give way before him. His resolution thrives on difficulties, and
triumphs over all obstacles. If marriages are made in Heaven, as he thinks-how shall foul Slander and Hell prevail against them?-unless the Hell exists in his own bosom? There, however, for the present, he holds all Heaven, in holding the fallen angel-beautiful, even though fallen-whom he calls Molinari.


## CHAPTER XIV.

THE KNOT IS TIED-AND LOOSENED.
'Tis a fine bright morning in June, and a marriage is about to be celebrated in London. One ? perhaps one hundredor, in all the compass of the British Isles, perhaps a thousand or two thousand of these ceremonies-fateful for good or for evil to the trusting hearts or the calculating heads of the people who ask and receive the sanction of the law to the binding contracts into which they enter. But of these multitudinous happy, or, as they may turn out to be, woeful engagements, there is but one in which the readers of these pages have any immediate interest. It is a small and humble marriage, plain and unpretentious in all its incidents and accessories, and takes place in a Registry-office, before an attorney-like functionary and his clerk. The two witnesses are all but unknown to the bridegroom and the bride, casual acquaintances, in fact, who take but the slightest and most perfunctory interest in the shabby ceremonial. The ring has
been put on the finger of the bride by the bridegroom, both have signed their names in the register in the presence of the prosaic officials and the witnesses, the moderate fee has been paid, and the ceremony is concluded. The bridegroom has signed his name, Arthur Melville, aged 23, of Kensington, gentleman, and the bride, Adèle Dubois, spinster, aged 20, of the Rue de Breda, Paris. By this name (Rose, or Fifine, privately claiming to be the Countess di Molinari) thinks it prudent to describe herself, lest if she assume a designation to which she is not legally or even socially entitled, her marriage may afterwards be invalidated.

There is no wedding-breakfast, no display of wedding-gifts-no stupid throwing of rice, or of slippers-scarcely even the utterance of good wishes, from the registrar, his clerk, or from the uninterested and formal witnesses. The marriage is intended to be private, if not secret, and is quite as secret as the law permits it to be. The bride and bridegroom depart from the sordid office and the dingy unlovely street in a hansom-cab, and disappear unobserved in the whirling wilderness of London; no one knows or cares whither.

Three days afterwards, on the expiry of a week's leave of absence which he had obtained from his customary attendance upon Mr. Rameses, on the plea of urgent private business, Mr. Melville was surprised, on presenting himself before that gentleman, to learn that he had made arrangements to make a holiday trip in his yacht-the Niona, which he had recently purchased-accompanied by his friends, Sir Hector, and Lady MacTarish, and his affianced bride. They proposed proceeding to Egypt, and to be absent for two months. It was his wish that Mr Melville should accompany him on the journey. The secretary received with dismay the summons to travel, and devoutly wished that he had had courage enough to take his employer into his confidence before linking his fate with that of the fair Molinari. That he should be separated from her after three days of marriage, was not to be thought of, and Mr. Rameses, he knew, would not ask him to make such a sacrifice of his feelings, if the fact of his marriage were divulged. So the perplexed secretary, with much reluctance and many sore misgivings, made a virtue of nece ;sity, and confessed the fact.

Mr. Rameses was not offended, though he was sur-
prised at the suddenness and the secrecy of the step which the young secretary had taken. He inclined to augur unfavourably of it from the want of confidence which had been displayed. Mr. Melville could not venture to give any further information on the subject than was conveyed in the assertions not uncommonly made by young and ardent lovers when at a loss for reasons to account for the fine madness with which their passions have inspired them-that the lady was ravishingly beautiful, that he loved her to distraction, and had found that he could not live without her-all familiar asseverations in the mouths of boys whose trust transcends their reason. That she had no fortune, he admitted, but what signified the absence of fortune to one who, like himself, was strong, full of hope, energy and courage ?
"'Twas a bold step for one in your position to take," said Mr. Rameses. "And who may your enchantress be? Is she of good family ?"
"All men and women are of one family," replied the love-smitten secretary, to whom the question was a difficulty, "good families and bad families are all God's children, and receive God's blessings only if they deserve them."

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" Yes, yes, we all know that, or ought to know it," said Mr. Rameses very gravely.
"Love," replied the secretary, "if it be true love, takes no account of worldly conditions. It is the result, as you, sir, in the sublime philosophy with which you have indoctrinated me, of a magnetic force, that pervades and produces all life in this world, and in every other, and that governs the animalcule as well as the planet!"
"Doubtless, my young friend. But when you talk of magnetism, you must remember that there is a magnetism that creates and a magnetism that destroys, a magnetism of Ahrimanes the evil, as well as of Ormuzd the good. And all is not electric power that seems to be so. Our fancies and whims are not electrical. Being mere fancies and vapid caprices, they possess no creative force, and produce nothing that has more vitality or substance than a soap-bubble."
"But the love which possesses me," replied the secretary, greatly excited, "springs from divine, overpowering, irresistible necessity! It gives me new life, new vigour, new hope, and certainty of immortality with her, whom it has
made one with me, indivisible in soul-now, henceforth, and for ever !"

Mr. Rameses smiled at the young man's fervour-and the hard, practical element that was latent in his character, asserted itself at the expense of the visionary faculty which so largely predominated.
"The faith you hold may be good for the next world, but how will it serve you in your hard struggle through your present stage of existence? Say, for instance, during the next twenty or thirty years? I gather from your reticence-pardon me if I draw a wrong conclusion from it -that you do not wish to make her known to me, for reasons that are doubtless satisfactory to your own mind. If this be so, and the same reasons apply to the society in which you are accustomed to move, I must perforce conclude that the lady, however beautiful she may be, however angelic in her disposition, is not presentable to your friends ? If this be so, I am extremely sorry for you ; but do not wish to extort your confidence if you desire to withhold it."
"She has been vilely slandered," replied the secretary, with flashing eyes, burning cheeks, and rapid and indignant utterance, that caused his words to fall from his lips as if

THE KNOT IS TIED-AND LOOSENED. 173 they were red-hot embers of a smouldering fire. "Until I can refute the calumny, and dispel it for ever, I prefer that she should remain unknown to all the world-except to me, and to my heart of hearts. She shall not be looked down upon by any one who is or ever has been dear to me, or ever known to me. She is as guiltless in my sight as the angels in Heaven, although she is human."
"This world," replied Mr. Rameses, " is a practical world -full of peccant souls doing penance, and narrow-minded and prejudiced people, against whose opinions, even if they be such as we cannot conform to, we must not revolt against too violently, if we would live peaceably or without irritating friction. I will not seek to penetrate into your secret. Under the circumstances, I cannot expect the advantage or pleasure of your company on the journey I am about to take. Neither can I expect that you will continue to be an inmate of my house for the future ; though it is doubtless large enough to accommodate you, and you have been both a pleasant and useful inhabitant of it since we have been connected with each other. I shall require but a slight portion of your time and services during my absence ; and hope sincerely that on my return the slanders
you mention to me, without telling me of what they consist, against the reputation of the unknown lady with whom you have linked your fate, will be set at rest for ever, and that the sunshine of your days will no longer be over-clouded. I leave to-morrow, and shall not see you again until my return. Meanwhile, farewell ; and may all good angels guard you!"

The two philosophers-the master and the pupil-shook hands. The young bridegroom took his way sadly, yet hopefully, to his young and fascinating bride ; and Mr. Rameses retired to his books and his sarcophagi, and the society of Saadi Ben Ahmed, somewhat doubtful whether Ormuzd or Ahrimanes was the wielder of the magnetic or anti-magnetic power that had brought his impulsive secretary under its thraldom-whether it were animal, and of the earth earthy, or whether it were intellectual, and of the heavens heavenly.

Before accompanying Mr. Rameses and his companions to Egypt in his yacht, and narrating what befell them there, let us follow the rapidly-changing incidents in the career of Arthur Melville and his lovely bride, with whom he became more enamoured, in the obstinacy of his passion, the more the story told of her by the Vicomte du Trianon clamoured for acceptance, supported by all the laws of evidence. His heart revolted against the evidence, and strove hard to bring his head to the same side. But what is head against heart? What is reason against passion ? What is all that we ought to believe against what we wish to believe? What is proof, that we may reject, against the prejudice to which we cling ? What is unwelcome truth against ever-welcome error, if the error flatters our self-love, or ministers to our darling sensual enjoyment? What are the cruel possibilities or probabilities of to-morrow against the fascination and pleasant realities of to-day ? Nothing! nothing! Arthur Melville was in love sensually, and was a slave to animal passion, though he would have been deeply offended with any one who would have given that degrading name to the all-absorbing passion that possessed him.

The sensual impulse was not as sensually returned. The enchanting Molinari was as cold as her slave was impassioned. She froze while he burned. There was no reciprocity, no mutuality of purely animal feeling between them, and intellectual sympathy was totally absent. Why the Molinari married she could not clearly explain to herself,
unless it were to attain the social status in a foreign country which she had forfeited in her own. But if this object were attainable-of which there was little prospectshe had failed to reach it. And if she were cold, she was at the same time fickle; and she had grown weary of the raptures of Melville, which she could not share, and, unaccountably even to herself-except on the principle of the old French proverb, "L'on revient toujours à ses premiers amours"-she remembered the happy days she had spent with her very handsome and rich lover, who had first discovered her in her low estate, as a "blanchisseuse de fin," and raised her to the glittering but evanescent rank of a fashionable beauty, in the gaily immoral circles of the French metropolis. As the ill-luck, or, it may, perhaps, have been the good luck, of her new husband-Chance, Fate, Fortune, or Destiny, threw her in London in the way of that very person, who was no other than the Vicomte du Trianon him self, who, in a sudden access of truthfulness, had divulged to Mr. Melville the antecedents of the fair flower that he had plucked from its stalk, worn upon his bosom for a time, and then discarded it to replace it by another flower equally tempting and beautiful-a lily, a camelia, an orchis, a gar-

THE KNOT IS TIED-AND LOOSENED. 177 denia, or whatever else she might be compared to. They met in the streets, and the impressionable and inconstant Vicomte, smitten with a momentary return of the ancient flame, that he thought had been quite extinguished, and feeling no other electric fire in his frame at the time, yielded to the sudden impulse of speaking to her. He did not know that she had recently married, and she did not inform him of the fact, which might not have made a difference in the behaviour of the too gallant Vicomte.

A few days after this chance meeting, the fair and false Molinari packed up her valuables, and started for Paris with her old lover. She left a short note for Melville, bidding him farewell, recommending him not to make any attempt to trace her, informing him at the same time that his search, even if successful, would be useless. She added the startling postscript that she had a previous husband living, and that consequently, if Mr. Melville chose to consider it in that light, her marriage to him at the Registry Office was null and void.

On opening this missive, Melville turned pale with consternation, which was shortly succeeded by fury, and by actual-not merely by metaphorical-gnashing of teeth. His YOL. II.
first impulse was to follow her to Paris, whither he felt sure that she had gone-to discover with whom she had gone, for he was confident she had not gone alone ; to take vengeance upon the partner of her flight in the first instance, and next upon her, if she would not return to him ; for he still, amid the hatred which surged in his heart, and throbbed in his veins, felt that he might possibly forgive the treason-the worse than treason to the majesty of true love-of which she had been guilty, if she would crave forgiveness, fall upon his neck with tears, look straight into his eyes with those glorious orbs of hers, and vow once again to love him. His resolution was speedily taken. He took the train for Dover the same evening, and before noon the next day found himself at Paris, in search of the guilty wanderer, who had done her worst to blight his life by her falsehood and ingratitude.

His first object was to enquire for the Vicomte du Trianon, whose complicity in the flight of the Countess was not known to or even suspected by him. He did not find him at the Jockey Club, of which he was a member, and could gain no intelligence of him, except that he had gone to London some weeks previously. He next applied to

THE KNOT IS TIED-AND LOOSENED. 179 the Police, and on giving the name of the Countess di Molinari, though he failed to obtain the information which he so much needed, he acquired knowledge of the antecedents of the lady-that were anything but agreeablethat filled his mind with grief and humiliation-but that, nevertheless, did not cure him of the infatuated passion that possessed him for the too enchanting siren that had made a wreck of his happiness.

He lingered for a week in Paris, hoping, though almost hopeless, that the ubiquitous and prying police of the grossly immoral capital would be able to give him some information of his lost diamond-with a fatal flaw in it, but still in his fascinated eyes a diamond. Chance did more for him than the police, and just as he was seriously meditating a return to his duties in London, leaving in the hands of the detectives the task, to be well rewarded if successful, of discovering the runaway, he saw in the Bois du Boulogne, where he was sauntering objectless, an open carriage drive slowly past him. He recognized the Vicomte du Trianon at a glance, as one of its two occupants, and to his rage and horror discovered in Ithe other "La belle couleuvre" herself, radiant as the summer morn, laughing
at some remark, witty or otherwise, of her companion, showing her lovely white teeth, fringed by her rosy lips, and hearing distinctly as the carriage swept by, her tinkling laugh, that, notwithstanding his anger, sounded like sweet music in his ears. "The traitorous villain has stolen my wife," he said, or at least thought, and added to the assertion another, still more emphatic, that he would be revenged, and would shoot him-not murder him, but kill him in fair fight in a duel, if his aim were good enough. Melville was unable to follow on foot the carriage which contained the guilty pair, but, as he calculated that the Vicomte was merely taking a drive in the Bois, and that he would return again to Paris, he engaged a passing vehicle, got into it, and told the driver to wait until he gave the signal to drive through the Champ Elysées to Paris, in the rear of an open calèche which he expected to pass shortly. His manifest object was either to trace his wife and the Vicomte to Paris, or to stop them en route, accuse them to their faces of the crime they had committed, and there and then to demand satisfaction of the Vicomte.

He had upwards of half an hour to wait, and as soon as the unsuspecting Vicomte's carriage came abreast of

THE KNOOT IS TIED-AND LOOSENED. 18ı the spot at which he was stationed, gave the signal to his own driver to follow closely behind. Little did the Vicomte and "La belle couleur're," know that they were followed, and even had they been aware that a carriage was behind them, still less would they have suspected that the solitary occupant inside of the vehicle was a betrayed, injured, and madly wrathful man, athirst for vengeance against them both.

The carriage stopped at the famous restaurant the Café Anglais on the Boulevards, and the Vicomte du Trianon descended first, and gallantly helped the "fair snake" to alight, which she did in the most graceful manner, showing her dainty little foot and ancle, and her dainty well-formed leg, enclosed in pink silk, to a height towards the knee that excited the obscene admiration of the idle passers-by, who stopped to gaze at the fashionable little woman. Two minutes after they had entered the Café, and before they had had time to seat themselves comfortably at one of the little tables to order their repast, Melville, pale with suppressed rage, confronted them. The Vicomte looked surprised, as indeed he was, for though he was acquainted with Melville, he was not
acquainted with the relationship in which that gentleman stood to his fair companion, who, on her part, exhibited most remarkable self-possession.
"I do not wish to make a scene here," said Melville, speaking in French to the Vicomte, " will you step with me into the street for a few minutes?"
"Sit down," said the Vicomte, "and calm yourself. Is your business very urgent-and unfit to be discussed before a lady ?"
"Not to be-discussed before this lady, who is my wife," replied Melville in a semi-whisper, clenching his right hand with a violent effort, his eyes sparkling, his lips quivering, his veins throbbing with rage.
"Your wife ?" said the Vicomte with genuine surprise, "I did not know you were married." And then, turning to his companion, he asked her, "Can you explain this, ma chère. Do you know this gentleman?"
"I do not!" she said with the greatest composure. "I never saw him before, to my knowledge. But you know him, it appears-What is his name?"
"Melville," replied the Vicomte.
"Melville!" repeated she. " Monsieur Melville, you have
made a strange mistake. I suppose I must bear a striking resemblance to some one you have not seen for a long time, and of whom you have but a faint recollection?"
"I have made no mistake, no-Madame di Molinari, that you once called yourself, now Mrs. Melville as I have the right to call you-I have made no mistake, except the fatal mistake of having once so far believed in you as to marry you! You, Monsieur Le Vicomte, you are a traitor, a seducer, a hypocrite, a villain! One of us two shall not survive the injury you have done me !" And so saying he walked out of the Café, taking no heed of the astonished waiters, who had gathered gaping around him as soon as they became aware of the serious nature of the conversation that was going on, and left the Vicomte and his imperturbable companion to their dinner.

The Vicomte, who heard for the first time the relationship in which his fair friend stood to the outraged Melville, was bewildered a little by the accusation which had been made against the lady, and by the cool firm denial with which she had met it.
"Tell me the truth, ma chère," he said at last, "that I may know how I stand with this mad Englishman. I shall
have to fight him whether or no, but I should like to know whether he has any real cause of quarrel with me, as he evidently supposes."
"He is a jealous fool," she replied. "Possibly he labours under the delusion that I am his wife, but Dieu Merci, I am not! and if I were, I would run away from him. Il est bête, tres bête, affreusement bête! Shall you be obliged to fight him if he challenges you ?"
"Noblesse oblige," said the Vicomte, "and honour also, but I shall not kill him. Perhaps, however, he will find out the mistake he has made with respect to you, and apologise. But we shall see. Meanwhile we must dine. I have ordered a choice little dinner, and a bottle of Chateau Margaux, old, and of the first quality, of the vintage of the 'comet.' You would perhaps prefer Champagne? Ai Mousseux ?"
"I would," said she, and the Vicomte proceeded to fill her glass, which she raised to her lips, red rosy lips, with a smile on her beaming eyes, and the mellifluous wish " $\dot{a} t a$ santè, mon cher."

The Vicomte, notwithstanding the coolness, the admirable self possession and ineffable indifference of the

THE KNOT IS TIED-AND LOOSENED. 185 "Countess," beliered that there might be some foundation, more or less solid, for the strange behaviour of Mr . Melville. But he said no more on the subject to his brilliant companion, enjoyed his dinner, and afterwards escorted her to a theatre on the Boulevards to pass the evening. Further this history declines to follow themuntil the morrow.


## CHAPTER XV.

THE DUEL.
The merely animal passion that too often assumes the high and holy name of love, if stung by ingratitude, unworthy treatment, and perfidy, sometimes degenerates into the bitterest hatred. Such-for a short time, if not perma-nently-was the result in the mind of Arthur Melville, occasioned by the treachery and the well-nigh incredible insolence so unblushingly displayed by the lady whose Parisian cognomen of La belle couleuvre seemed to him, at last, to be well bestowed and thoroughly well deserved. He felt that, though he hated the Vicomte du Trianon, he hated the partner of his guilt still more intensely, and debated within himself whether it would not be better that his vengeance should be wreaked upon her rather than upon him. To shoot her in a paroxysm of rage would be murder, but to kill the Vicomte in fair fight would, according to the Parisian code of honour and of morality, only amount to justifiable-and, in fact, to meri-torious-homicide. With these conflicting emotions opera-
ting in his mind, he sought out, on the following morning, M. de Palliasse, whom he knew to be a friend of Mr. Rameses, and who had been the means of making him known to Mr. De Vere. M. de Palliasse was confined to his bed by indisposition, and consequently unable to act the part of a second in the duel-a part which, had he been able to perform it, would have been by no means disagreeable to him, or to any other Parisian of similar social standing. He did the best he could under the circumstances, by giving him a letter to his particular friend, M. Victor Raboche-a fire-eating journalist, and one of the editors of the Ca-ira. M. Raboche was a politician of extreme views; a young man who, though arrived at the legal years of discretion, seemed, for all that was known and could be reasonably predicted of him, as if he never would or could arrive at discretion or moderation. When made acquainted with all the circumstances, he expressed his readiness to act as second, and dropped unmistakable hints that, if the case were his own, he would not be contented unless he killed, or maimed his antagonist for life.
M. Raboche delivered the cartel to the Vicomte du

Trianon, who, on his part, had recourse to another journalist to act as-his friend-for the journalists of Paris all seem to consider that liability to fight duels and to act as seconds in their usually harmless, though not always bloodless, encounters is a part of the qualification necessary to the successful exercise of their profession. The second chosen by M. du Trianon was one Felix Cartigny, a noted writer of realistically-obscene but highly-popular novels, as well as an ill-conditioned newspaper critic. The duel was arranged between them to be fought on the following morning, with pistols, in the Bois de Vincennes.

The morning dawned dull and misty, under the depressing influence of what the French who inhabit the sunnier regions of Bordeaux and Marseilles call "les affreux brouil, lards de la Seine." The state of the atmosphere was thus unpropitious for the combatants to take good aim at each other, even if they wished to do so. M. du Trianon did not wish to do Mr. Melville any injury, even to the slight extent of wounding him in the fleshy part of the arm or thigh. Mr. Melville had more vengeful ideas, and though possibly he did not wish to kill his adversary, would have been gratified rather than otherwise to maim him for
life. The challenged man took careless aim ; the challenger a more deliberate one. Both fired simultaneously. Melville was unhurt, but his opponent staggered and fell heavily to the ground. A sudden shriek from a female voice was heard, and from behind a tree that had hitherto concealed her from the belligerents a young woman rushed forth, with hair dishevelled and frantic gestures, whom Melville immediately recognised as La belle couleurre. She threw herself hysterically upon the body of her fallen lover, with loud cries and lamentations. The surgeon in attendance found that Melville's ball had entered the right side of his antagonist, inflicting a serious wound. As the injured man was lifted carefully into the carriage by the doctor and the seconds, the Couleutre, darting a look of fury at Melville as she also stepped into the vehicle, hissed, rather than spoke: "Imbecile! je te maudis!"
"Beware of her," said Raboche; "the Vicomte is said to have been her first lover-though, perhaps, he was neither the first nor the second, nor even the twentieth! Anyhow, he will be properly taken care of-and you, also, should take care of yourself, lest justice should open its eyes and stretch forth its hand to inconvenience you."

Melville took the hint. He had nothing further to detain him in Paris, not even to wreak vengeance upon the woman to whose wiles and perfidy he had fallen a victim, though somewhat sorely tempted to do so. Taking the first train to Boulogne, he was soon on his way to London.

Thus ended his dream of romance, and with it all his lingering and cherished belief in the Heaven-directed and Heaven-inspired magnetic and electric force, as the irresistible power that compels men and women to love each other-or fancy that they do so.
M. Raboche, in driving with him to the railway station, informed him for consolation that his marriage in London with La couleuvre was undoubtedly a worthless formality, inasmuch as the lady had at least two previous husbands in Paris, and perhaps half-a-dozen others who had passed as her husbands, of whom the Vicomte du Trianon was undoubtedly one, and that, in all probability, as long as her youth and beauty lasted, she would have as many more. If the Vicomte survived his hurt-as he probably would-and grew weary of her, as was more probable still, she would not lack wealthy admirers-always on the look-out for fresh

Phrynes and Aspasias-who would lavish their gold upon her for the brief summer of her charms.
M. Raboche knew Paris well, and the manners, customs, and the vices of its people-both high and low-and Melville, with a bitter pain in his heart, or what was left of it, was convinced, against his will, that his French friend spoke the truth. He confessed-thinking, if not speaking, to himself in vulgar slang-that he had been "done," thoroughly, and ignominiously; that vengeance on the woman who had "done" him, would be deprived of all dignity if he resorted to it. She had, however, gained little by her dishonesty beyond her amusement, a few jewels of no very ruinous value, and the pleasure such as anglers feel in hooking a harmless fish, which is of no use to them after they have secured it. He could only explain her desertion of him on the supposition that the Vicomte was one of her early lovers, that she had a return of the affection-or the fancy-with which he once inspired her, and that the Vicomte's magnetism was of greater force and efficacy than his own.

This was but poor consolation to him, if any, in his affliction. Before he reached London he was
partially reconciled to his fate, especially when he reflected that nobody except Mr. Rameses knew of the entanglement into which he had rushed, and that even he was unaware of the depth and foulness of the pit into which he had stumbled. He resolved, however, as Mr. Rameses knew his secret, that he would confide the unhappy result to his sympathy, and entreat him to give no hint to a living soul of the misfortune that had befallen him, and of the causes that had led to it. But his faith was shaken in the doctrine, both of physical and intellectual magnetism as the predisposing cause of the attraction of the sexes to each other. But when this doubt possessed him, he asked himself whether any intellectual force whatever had impelled him towards La Belle Couleuvre; and whether the force, such as it was, was not wholly and grossly physical? He decided in his own mind that it was, and was of the earth-earthy-and of diabolical rather than of divine origin.

And yet he doubted whether the promptings of the flesh were not as worthy of credence as the promptings of the spirit, or how, he asked himself, could animal life be perpetuated in this otherwise miserable
world? All created things, even the trees and the flowers, were impelled by sexual affinities and desires, and how could a young man escape them? Thus he cogitated, until the arrears of the work which he had perforce neglected during his absence in Paris, compelled him to divert his thoughts and energies into the normal channel from which they had been diverted by his rash romance. For the love too often born of idleness, hard work is the best remedy. And so he found it.


## CHAPTER XVI.

## A SPLENDID WEDDING.

On the return of Mr. Rameses and his party from Egypt, after the lapse of six weeks subsequent to the catastrophe recorded in the last chapter, a great marriage was celebrated in London. It had been talked about for many days previously at all the dinner-tables and five-o'clock teas of Belgravia, Tyburnia, Kensingtonia, and in still wider circles (though these were wide enough), and had even formed the topic of gossip in the clubs of Pall Mall, St. James's Street and Piccadilly, where politics and horses, rather than weddings, form the subjects of discussion. The marriage of a handsome Asiatic, in the prime of manhood, supposed to be a prince in his own country, to have an income of at least a hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling per annum, which rumour had magnified into a quarter of a million-(some rumours had it half a million)-and who had been naturalised as a British subject, and determined to make London his home, and to shine a bright particular
star in society, was not an event of every-day occurrence, or to be lightly talked of. So the marriage of the Prince, or the Rajah Rameses, had been the nine days' wonder of the metropolis prior to its celebration, and promised to be a wonder of another nine days after that event ; that is-if any possible wonder could endure for so long a period in this very fast era, when the telegraphic wires and cables and other marvellous agencies of electricity virtually annihilate time and space, not only to make "two lovers happy" as the mad poet of a bygone and slow age imagined might be done, but deprive every event of novelty almost as soon as it has happened. The fame of the bridegroom's marvellous wealth, and of the bride's equally marvellous beauty, was widely spread. The first was universally conceded; the second was considered of more doubtful authenticity, especially by the ladies, young and old, who had met her at balls, or dinners, or evening parties, or places of public resort. That she was not quite so fair of skin as an Englishwoman, was perforce allowed; though the assertions of some, that she was as black as an Ethiopian, or brown as a mulatto, were generally held to be exaggerations. Very marvellous stories were in circulation as to the splendour of
the diamonds with which she had heen presented by her future lord, the least gorgeous of which was reputed to excel in brilliancy and value the Koh-i-noor or "Mountain of Light" itself. No one knew for some days what the religion of the happy couple was, or whether they were of the Mahometan or other Eastern faith, or merely Pagan unbelievers and idolators. But all speculation on the subject was set at rest, or supposed to be, by the announcement that the marriage ceremony was to be celebrated with all imaginable pomp at the Romish Cathedral, by a cardinal archbishop, and that the two greatest prime donne of the day had been engaged on almost fabulous terms to lend the aid of their magnificent voices to the chants, the hymns, and the responses ; that a choir of boys from the ages of twelve up to fourteen and fifteen had been engaged to swell the full tide of melody and harmony in the cathedral, and that the keys of the great organ were not to be touched by any inferior fingers than those of the most renowned organist, who had been especially summoned from a great city and a mighty Dom, or Duomo, either in Germany or Italy, for the purpose. This gentleman it was stated was to receive a fee of two hundred guineas for his rendering of the magnificent
A SPLENDID WEDDING.

Wedding March of Mendelssohn, that glorious hymn of triumphant tenderness, which no music composed by man has ever, so far as is known, surpassed in grandeur, sublimity, and all-conquering softness.

These and other announcements had caused an unusual flutter of excitement, which had extended itself from the upper circle of all the Duchesses, Marchionesses, Countesses and Baronesses of London, down to the cooks, nurserymaids, ladies'-maids, and shop-girls, and the idle women of all the parishes contiguous to the cathedral, and caused a greater crowd of carriages of the aristocracy to block up the avenues of approach, than had been known within recent memory.

There were twelve bridesmaids, six of them of a marriageable age, and six of them merely children, all dressed alike, in the most expensive manner, by the most fashionable milliners, with assumed French names, each with an exorbitant bill to present in due time, and which they truly imagined would be more willingly paid, if they called themselves Josephines, Alphonsines, or Adeles, than if they called themselves by the names of Sarah Smith or Mary Brown, to which they were legitimately entitled.

Each fair girl was presented by the bridegroom with a bracelet of diamonds and rubies, and each innocent child with a gem of which she did not stand in need to enhance her beauty, but the gift of which was held to be essential to maintain the unique grandeur of the occasion.

Among the bridesmaids were the Ladies Maud and Ethel Pierrepoint, and Miss Laura De Vere, and a very galaxy of youth and beauty, some of the component parts of which were not a little envious of the good fortune of the lovely Niona, who had secured in the market of matrimony such a glorious prize as the Prince, or the Rajah, Rameses, whichever he might be.

The wedding breakfast was reported in the newspapers of the following morning to have cost at least three thousand pounds. The flowers alone, composed of the choicest and most expensive of exotics, were estimated at more than one thousand pounds of the money, and were the admiration of all the " snobbery" of London, great and small, and excited the wrath of all the Socialists and Social Democrats of the teeming hive who inveighed on the following Sunday in Hyde Park against the misgovernment of the world by Fate and Providence (or the Devil),
who dealt out the gifts of fortune in such a partial and unjust manner, as to allow an upstart rich man to spend in perishable flowers in one morning as much money as would have provided a thousand working men and their starving families with food and drink for a week.

Unwholesome and prurient publicity was rampant on this particular occasion, for the amusement, but certainly not for the instruction, of all the idle women of high and low estate, of Duchesses and of shop girls-who, thanks to the School Board, could read the penny papers-the dresses of all the bridesmaids were minutely described, with the superadded information of the names of the fashionable milliners who supplied them. If the same sort of information were not provided for the gratification of the omnivorous readers of the cheap tattlers, together with the names of the tailors who made the dress-coats, vests, and nether garments of the gentlemen, it was, perhaps, because there was and could be no interest to anybody to know that all the dress-coats were black, and all the rest of the costume of the same hue, except the shirt and the cravat. Though it might possibly have been of interest to some
people if they could have been informed whether the dress suits were all paid for, and if not, how long a credit had been given by the tailors, or whether it were probable that these often-defrauded and long-suffering tradesmen would ever be paid. But the names of all the guests, male and female, who were present, were duly paraded to the world, which, if it cared anything about the matter for one day, forget all about it on the second.

But the demi-semi-educated public, of high or low birth, of prosperous or unprosperous condition, were, if not instructed, amused by the useless information that the newspapers afforded them; and by the end of the week, had utterly forgotten that such an event had been celebrated.

The bridegroom and the bride took few people, and only such intimate friends as Sir Hector and Lady Mac Tavish, Mr. De Vere, and Saadi Ben Ahmed, into their confidence as regarded the place where they were to spend the honeymoon. As soon as the wedding breakfast had concluded, and all the ridiculous speeches thought to be appropriate to such occasions had been made, a travelling carriage drawn by four showy, but serviceable horses, drew up to the mansion of Mr. Rameses, and the
wedded pair took their departure, amid such customary manifestations of good will as old slippers and rice are supposed to convey in communities which are not classed as Pagan or Superstitious, but which cling nevertheless fondly, or it may be only blindly and thoughtlessly, to observances which, whatever they may be, are certainly neither religious nor Christian in their origin.

Before taking his departure, Mr. Rameses had left with the private secretary a sealed letter, not to be opened until the morrow, directing him where to follow, in due time, to the destination appointed for their next meeting. That destination was Cairo, a city that had peculiar fascination in the mind of Mr. Rameses, more than half an ancient Egyptian in blood and descent, and almost wholly an ancient Egyptian in his adherence to the creed of the Pharaohs, as it prevailed in the days before Moses and Aaron.

As the first stage, in that long journey, the coachman was directed to drive by easy intervals of travel to Southampton, where the superb steam yacht of Mr. Rameses lay on the waters, all ready-with an experienced captain and a picked crew-to receive him and his bride on their arrival.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NILE.
Mr. Rameses, as has already been noted, was passionately fond of music, a passion that the lovely, and in every respect sympathetic, partner, whom he had chosen from all the world, to share the joys and sorrows of this mortal life, enthusiastically shared. By dint of patient enquiry and liberal payment, he had succeeded in drawing together to his service a dozen accomplished performers on the flute, the clarionet, the horn, the trumpet, the bassoon, and other wind instruments, and who, in addition to the qualifications for the working of a ship as seamen and engineers, possessed a knowledge of music, and were fairly good executants. He called this "Band," so carefully got together, the "Silver Band," for the reason that he provided them all with silver instruments, because he thought silver to be more capable of the soft sweet melodies and harmonies that he loved than the brazen or wooden instruments usually employed.

When the Niona left her mooring in the Solent the day after the arrival of the bride and bridegroom, the "Silver Band" struck up the Newcastle air of "Merry may the keel row," to the great delight of a crowd that had gathered upon the shore; followed after a short interval by the equally lively, but more beautiful, Scottish melody of "Weel may the boatie row," which, as the dulcet tones were borne in faintly dying echoes over the quiet waters were greeted with redoubled cheers by the assembled multitude.
"Happy is the bride that the sun shines on," if the old song and proverb are to be believed. Of happy augury to the fervid imagination of Mr. Rameses was the brilliant sunshine that poured from the unclouded sky as the Niona steamed through the Solent into the British Channel. Music and rejoicing followed on the way, and happy thoughts possessed both bride and bridegroom, as the yacht coasted the lovely shores of the Southern Counties of England and the Western shores of France, and found, even in the usually rough swell of the Bay of Biscay, a calm and a welcome that filled every league of the voyage with pleasantness. Delightful were the days, but still more
delightful were the walks upon the deck in the silent night, under the deep blue sky, that disclosed the awful majesty of the starry heavens with a vivid distinctness rarely seen in the "misty, moisty," atmosphere of the British Isles.
"How sublime is religion in the awful presence of the stars," said Mr. Rameses to the sympathetic Niona, "and how petty and mean is Theology as propounded in the creeds of Europe and the modern world which believes in the rare intervals when the engrossing cares of eating, drinking, sleeping, money-making and procreating permit them to think of higher things. Credulous as budding childhood that listens to a fairy tale, the multitude think this poor, almost infinitesimal, grain of sand on the eternal ocean is the especial, if not the exclusive, object of Almighty love, and that for its benefit alone all the countless orbs of Heaven came into existence. The crowds who believe the monstrous fable call themselves Jews, Christians, or Mahomedans. They are religious people-after their own fashion -as religion is interpreted by warring theologians, but not religious except in the narrow circle that bounds conventional morality, observance of the social laws and conformity to the ideas of their fathers and grandfathers-religious serfs,
the mediterranean and the NILE. 205 in fact, bound to the soil which their ancestors cultivated. Their theology is but another name for mythology-though they are not aware of it-and laugh at all mythologies except their own. Forgive me, oh, my love," suddenly exclaimed Mr. Rameses, turning to Niona, " if I talk on such high subjects, but you know that I am powerless to resist the fascination with which they possess me, and that it eases my full heart to unburthen it of the thoughts that are not too great for inadequate utterance, but that are far too great for concealment."

Niona shared to the fullest extent the religious enthusiasm of her husband. His faith was her faith, his thoughts were her thoughts, his hopes were her hopes, his aspirations her aspirations, and his love her love. She was the "twin soul," of whom he had dreamed and thought-ever since he had been able to think at all-the crown and completion of his spiritual lifethe heaven of his earth, the pulse of his heart, the union of fair body with pure mind, the corporeal and the mental in perfect accord and harmony-the basis of the only happiness for man and woman that is allowed or possible in this probationary world.
"I think with you," she said in reply to his reflections on the glory of the starry heavens, "that the modern world has not advanced in religious thought very greatly beyond the mythologies of antiquity. Priestcraft has in-creased-religion has diminished-Clericalism has become a trade or a learned profession, like that of law or medicine, depending for its existence and maintenance on the fees paid by those who believe in it."
"Every true man," said Mr. Rameses, "ought to be a priest of the High God, after the order of Melchizedek. Every father of a family, worthy of the name of a father, is by nature a Pope, a holy father in function and duty as well as in name, and should teach his children to lead pure lives, to cultivate their spiritual nature, to learn and to obey the divine laws that govern the Universe, and to look upon this poor world as but the entrance, after the time appointed for all living, into a higher and a better one. To teach this noble doctrine needs not the intervention of any extraneous and mercenary advocate. The Religion of the heart and soul transcends the trade religion of the Chapels, the Churches, the Cathedrals, the Mosques and the Temples, the Pagodas, and the Synagogues as much as the light of the morning sun transcends the light of a torch or a wax candle that flares before the high altar. All the religions of the earth seem to be of the earth, earthy-and not of Heaven, heavenly. In fact, all the modern ideas of the joys of Heaven seem to me of a purely physical nature. The Mahomedans dream of a Paradise filled with beautiful nymphs or Houris, amongst whom they may select as many brides as they will ; nor are the so-called Christians of every denomination and sect imbued with loftier aspirations, except in the matter of the Houris. To most of them the Paradise of Heaven is but an extension of the Paradise of earth, or Garden of Eden, in which Adam and Eve dwelt in physical happiness, while the Jews, less imaginative, think that length of days in this world is the greatest possible reward of well-doing, instead of being, as it really is, a lengthened imprisonment in the dungeon of the flesh."
"It appears to me," remarked the secretary, who had been a privileged listener to the discourse " that the Jews in the time of Moses, whose ancestors had been slaves in Egypt for three or four hundred years, when they obtained their freedom under that great leader, were unable to
emancipate themselves from the slavish ideas to which their long and hard bondage had accustomed them; that their sorrowful experience as slaves, condemned to unreasonable labour, in building pyramids and other ostentatious and unproductive works, had rendered them more than willing to receive as divine truth the notion that God had imposed work upon mankind as a curse rather than a blessing; that their sole notions of felicity were derivable from the pleasures and the freedom that they expected to enjoy in this world, and not in the next. They do not appear to have acknowledged that God was a spirit, or that the soul of man was immortal. Nations far older than the Israelites had nobler ideas. Job was a philosopher of a higher intelligence than Moses and Aaron, and, had he been a lawgiver, would have promulgated the more spiritual faith. Far superior ito anything in the Hebrew creed was the faith of our Indian ancestors-true spiritual philosophers and enlightened sages, at a time when Europe, if inhabited at all, except by wild beasts, was only inhabited by the rudest barbarians."
"No," said Mr. Rameses, "the Druids, who are the earliest worshippers we know of, were not barbarians. They

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NILE. 209 reverenced the sun and the heavenly bodies, as embodiments or manifestations, visible to man, of the great Spirit of the Universe, and taught a religion of equity, justice, and a pure life. Spiritual Christianity in Europe and America is fast expiring under the physical weight of a vicious and effete mythology, and the equally crushing and suffocating weight of a rapidly-increasing sensualism, that pervades and almost monopolises the thoughts of Society, from its lowest to its highest grades."

In calm, sunny weather, amid discussions like these, cheered and varied by the strains of the well-trained Silver Band-whenever soothing or inspiriting music was needed, or was congenial to the moods of mind of the transcendental but supremely happy couple who were taking their nuptial holiday upon the waters-the time passed so pleasantly and imperceptibly that the yacht entered the Mediterranean before they were aware of the distance they had traversed. And here, inspired by the genius loci, the speculations and discussions of the pair took a new direction, which they followed willingly, into wide and fascinating and not altogether unprofitable regions of inquiry.

As the yacht passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, the VOL. II.

Silver Band striking up the cheerful air of "The British Grenadiers," in homage to the British garrison of the frowning fortress, Niona, who had lain in her state-room neither wholly asleep nor wholly awake, had a dream of the origin of the Mediterranean, of which she could not banish the remembrance from her mind, as she afterwards paced the deck with her husband to inhale the invigorating freshness of the morning. She hesitated for a time to repeat the vision that haunted her, until she could assure herself that it was remarkable enough to be welcome in the telling to the sympathetic mind of her husband. She had notions of her own with regard to the dreams recorded in history, tradition, and mythology, that forbade her to regard all the ideas that passed over the receptive mind in sleep, or semisleep, as idle and worthless. Just as our waking thoughts are often foolish, extravagant, grotesque, or utterly inane, so she considered that our dreams might be, and often were, ridiculous, inconsequent, contradictory, and absurd. But, in like manner, if our waking thoughts were sometimes noble, and founded upon the teachings of experience, or the promptings of an intuition for which we could not account, she imagined that our dreams might sometimes

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NTLE. 211 partake of a similar origin, and be the result of a sublimated mental action, when the eternal soul within us, freed for a time from the debilitating influence of the corporeal frame that limited and imprisoned its energies, might take wide flights into the hidden realities of Time that was, and Time that is to be. Dreams, she thought, are either the blurred and heterogeneous impressions of past events, reviving confusedly in the brain, under the disturbing influences of bodily derangements, and are consequently worthless in a spiritual sense; or they are-in rare instances-the results of purely mental action, as totally untrammelled by the flesh as the lightning that flashes in the heavens. The inspiration of great thoughts which all great minds, and poets and inventors perhaps more especially, receive and elaborate in their waking hours, come also to great minds in their sleep, though too often dispersed, obliterated, or weakened in the waking hour by the physical influence of care, suffering, or apathetic indifference to spiritual things, that are more common to mankind than our appreciation of the fact-unsuspected for the most part-that the earth and earthly wants, and passions, do not form the whole of man's existence.
"Tell me," said Niona to her husband, "if it were a mere dream, born of my idle fancy, or an imprint on my somnolent memory of what I had thought of, or read, or heard of before, and which came back to me in my solitary silence? The mind-if vision it were, and not a revival in my mind of previous, though long-forgotten, knowledgedisclosed to me the mighty events of five, or, it may be, of ten or twenty thousand years ago, when the Mediterranean was dry land-a fertile valley between Europe and Africa, thickly peopled by a highly-civilised but corrupt race, enervated by their wealth and by the vices that grow out of it. Between what is now known as Gibraltar and Ceuta, the opposite coast of Africa, stretched a long expanse of sandy shore, on which the waves of the Atlantic had flowed and ebbed in their appointed courses for millenniums. From that point eastwards to As.a Minor, the teeming territory was inhabited by many millions of people, divided into many hostile nations, governed by mighty monarchs continually at war with each other, who filled the lovely and fertile land with desolation and ruin to gratify their lust of dominion. Upwards of a hundred great cities, with towers and temples, and all the pomp of architectural

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NILE. 213 splendour, were interspersed over the plain, abounding with wealth and luxury and all the physical triumphs of an advanced civilisation-but, at the same time, teeming with the rices that civilization produces, when it grows too ripe and decays into rottenness, as all civilization does which is founded upon selfishness and wealth-worship. Some of these empires and monarchies that divided the land between them had flourished for many centuries, under various dynasties of devastating conquerors, who shared dominion with the priests to keep the people in subjection-the one by the gorgeous display of physical force, represented by legions of armed and disciplined men ; the other by the no less gorgeous display of ceremonial superstition, which they called religion, and by the soul-enslaving and blinding mysteries of the worship of their false gods.
"Time is non-existent, or is not taken into account in our dreams. A minute of a dream may represent and include the events of many years, and I saw in mine that in the progress of the ages, the narrow strip of sea-sand that separated the projecting points between the Rock of Gibraltar and the Pillars of Hercules was gradually in-
vaded by higher and higher tides of the great Atlantic, that stretched apparently limitless beyond, and that threatened annually to submerge the low-lying valleys, of which the protecting ridge of partially elevated shore formed the barrier against the ocean. The danger was observed by many of the natural philosophers and astronomers of the time, who calculated, or thought they calculated, accurately the movements of the heavenly bodies and their effects upon the little world on which the little insect, man, crawls, and thinks the stars were created for him to look at and for nothing else; but as the danger, even according to these philosophers, was exceedingly remote, no heed was paid to their warnings, and the thoughtless multitude sinned and suffered, ate, drank and made merry, made war and peace, lived and died, and left the world to their descendants-neither worse nor better than themselves, and scarcely worthier of remembrance in the after-cycles of Time than the green leaves, the fair flowers, or the dancing midges that sported in the sunshine for their brief hour a thousand years previously. But at last the appointed, and slowly but certainly approaching catastrophe burst upon the doomed centre of civilization.
the mediterranean and the nile. 21;
Towers, towns, temples, and palaces-all the stately monu. ments of man's ostentatious pride and magnificence-were engulfed in the waters of what is now the Mediterranean. So fierce and rapid was the rush of the overwhelming waters when they burst through the last solid impediment that restrained them, that none of the many millions of the unfortunate people, except those few who dwelt close to the high coasts on the European and African shores, were enabled to escape, which some of the more robust among them were enabled to do by clambering up the cliffs. The inhabitants of the crowded cities and the populous plains all perished in the merciless and irresistible waters, by millions and millions, in one tremendous catastrophe. Tyrannical rulers and their armies, princes and plebeians, masters and slaves, priests and worshippers, trich men and paupers, head-workers and hand-workers, the luxurious few and the miserable many, women and children, and innocent cattle, all were swept into death in the pitiless flood, that in a few days rolled over them, as peacefully gleaming in the noon-day sun as if no such stupendous tragedy had been enacted in the face of the unconscious hearens, that looked down upon but saw not their misery.
"The inhabitants of the neighbouring countries, terrorsmitten at the awful extent of the visitation, and looking upon their neighbours as worshippers of false gods, because their faith differed from that which they themselves had been taught for ages to believe-and which they believed without understanding-considered the Deluge as a judg. ment upon the myriads of drowned people for their sins and their idolatry, inflicted upon them by the true God; and went on sinning in their own way, as if the judgment and the warning were not intended for people as spotlessly pure as they were in their own conceit. They never once suspected that the portentous cataclysm was the certain result of natural laws in operation throughout the universe, and having no more reference to the virtues, the crimes or the existence of mankind, than a thunder-storm bears to the existence of the wasps or other flies that are a nuisance to men or cattle in the countries where they so unhappily propagate. And the awful judgment, as the priests and philosophers persisted in calling it, had no effect whatever on the faith or morals of the countless generations that succeeded them, or tended in the least degree to increase their reverence for the Eternal Ruler of the universe, or to decrease the vice or crime that had prevailed amongst them for countless ages."
"A dream! an intimation! an inspiration! a revelation!" sard Mr. Rameses, when Niona concluded the recital, to which he had listened with all-absorbing attention. "There can be no doubt that a mighty Deluge swept over a large portion of the inhabited world at some remote period anterior to the birth of Authentic History, if any such phenomenon as authentic history has come down to us, but of which a vague record is preserved in the traditions of the East and the West, as a fact that is not to be disputed. The Jewish record, which was once accepted by Christendom, and which represents the Deluge as having submerged the whole Earth, is no longer believed by Christian thinkers, or only blindly accepted by the gregarious multitude, who have neither the will nor the capacity to think for themselves. Even the Jews, to whom the modern world owes the story, have discarded it, except as a venerable fable, no more entitled to positive credence than a fairy tale. And your dream, oh, my love, even if it be nothing more than a passing fancy of the mind, originally formed in the waking state, but intensified in sleep-when the soul, disencumbered of physical weight,
is free to soar into the illimitable past or into the illimitable future, possesses all the elements of probability of which the Mosaic treatise is deficient. The souls of Amenophra and Lurulà, if they were two souls, and not one, seems to me to be your soul also, oh, my beloved! -my thrice beloved-my twin soul !-mine from all past eternity, and part of my immortal being to all futurity!"

The matter-of-fact reader of these pages, having followed the fortunes of Mr. Rameses to this point, will perhaps close the book in disgust, or weariness, or apathy, if he or she be expected to receive as probable the transcendental hallucinations, as he or she may possibly consider them, of a man of the world like Mr. Rameses, and may say of him and his flights into the world of imagination, as Festus said to the great apostle of Christianity: "Paul, thou art beside thyself! much learning doth make thee mad!" and Mr. Rameses, strong in his spiritualistic and Oriental faith, might reply, as St. Paul did to the incredulous Roman: "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of Truth and soberness," and add: "Truth, as I understand it-and soberness of argument, that invites confutation, if confutation be calm as my belief, and is supported, not only by appeals to my reason, but to my inner consciousness."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DOLCE FAR NIENTE.
What is usually called the "Dolce far Niente," for want of an English synonym equally elegant and convenient, signifies a state of physical rest, in which all the sensations are pleasant, and free from the desire or the necessity of bodily exertion. But in this state the mind is not necessarily inactive, or the imagination lulled into quiescence. During the whole of his voyage over the sunny waters of the Mediterranean, Mr. Rameses might be said metaphorically to have been a dweller in the enchanted Palace, or the impregnable fortress of the "Castle of Indolence," to have fed his mind on the magical and slumberous fruit of the Lotus, and to have allowed his thoughts to wander uncontrolled into the wide and hazy regions of speculative philosophy. The idea that his beautiful bride was endowed with the mysterious faculty that has acquired in our day the name of "clairvoyance" had long been familiar to his mind. This occult force, faculty, or pretension, whichever it may be, was in bygone ages stigmatized as witch-
craft, and demoniacal posssesson, and attributed to a compact with the infernal powers for the injury and the deception of mankind. In modern times it is more commonly stigmatized by those who do not believe in the genuineness of its manifestations as knavish and mercenary imposture, because it seems to contradict ordinary reason, and consequently invites denial and exposure. But if it merely transcends ordinary reason, without contradicting it, no denial, whether supported or unsupported by argument is sufficent to disprove its claims to credence. If men believed nothing that they could not comprehend, their ircredulity might extend to the why and wherefore of the existence of the human race, if not of all creation. None but people of very limited intelligence, consider human reason to be illimitable. What is merely incomprehensible, may be positively true, in spite of all the mathematicians and materialists that ever existed, from the days of Archimedes to those of M. Comte and the modern school of Atheism, Agnosticism, and Positivism.

So thought Mr. Rameses. "We see into the past," he said to himself, "and why not, under favourable mental or physical circumstances, into the future? There are
countless millions of planets, suns, galaxies, and constellations scattered over the infinitude of space, whose light takes fifty thousand, or fifty times fifty thousand years of time, as we measure it, to reach our eyes. We see these mighty worlds not as they may exist to-day, but as they existed ere their light began to travel earthwards, and which may in the interval have been extinguished by the decree of Almighty power-that dooms whatever lives, whether animalcule, man or planet, to die or change its physical form at the time appointed. Physically we are thus enabled to see with dim eyes into the Past, and if physically we are able to enjoy-faintly although it be-this power and privilege, may we not spiritually enjoy the still greater, and to us the more interesting, privilege of looking back into the history of our own small planet, and to the deeds of the men and women who inhabited it before us? Not to every one is accorded this high gift. Not often in any of us does the slavery of soul to body cease for any appreciable period. Not every soul is so free from the impurities, infirmities, and trammels of the flesh as to be capable of receiving or even of understanding the highest truths, and none but those who
in the successive incarnations of the spirit, have in each incarnation to which they have been doomed in the advance from mortal evil and suffering into immortal good and happiness, deserved to take a step in the illimitable progression, are so highly and holily privileged."

Such a soul animated, in the thought of Mr. Rameses, the lovely body of Niona, and explained the impulse which bound him to her in life, and would bind him to her in death, whenever that great change-but not end-occurred to either the one or the other. This change, the commencement of a new life, when it came, he fondly hoped would come upon them both simultaneously, and realize the beautiful phrase of the Oriental nations, coeval with and anterior to the sacred books of the Hebrews, "lovely they were in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." Meditating much on this subject both before and after his happy marriage, he debated with himself whether he did not possess the power of will-exercised through the magnetic or electrical agencies that pervade the universeto induce in her soul, in sympathetic unison with his own, that state of spiritual exaltation which temporarily liberates
the mind from the impediments opposed by the body to the expansion of the faculties?

He had not long to wait before an answer came to his inquiries, which, if not wholly conclusive of the existence of the power which he suspected, tended to confirm his belief in it. Two or three days after her recital to him of her dream of the Deluge, she lay apparently in a peaceful sleep on a couch in the cabin of the yacht. Taking a seat noiselessly beside her, lest he should disturb her slumbers, he gazed for a few minutes silently upon her face, fearing the while that even his reverently loving look might be rude enough to ruffle the serenity of her repose. He had been absorbed since he arose in the morning, in the idea that fascinated and haunted his mind, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, as it had been taught by the priests and philosophers of Egypt and Phœenicia, and the still further east of Asia, for thousands of years before Pythagoras had taught it to the Greeks. He still brooded on the subject as he sat quietly beside her, and watched the gentle heavings of her bosom and listened to the regular breathings that issued from her beautiful ripe red lips, as she lay in her innocence before
him. He had remained silent for at least ten minutes, wrapt in his meditations, when he was suddenly startled to hear her-in a low sweet voice, scarcely louder than a whisper-pronounce the one word

## "Pythagoras !"

She lay silent for fully a minute afterwards, when she slowly opened her eyes, and looking earnestly at her husband, clasped the hand which he had instinctively extended towards her. "I have been dreaming again," she said, "and seemed in my dream, though it cannot have lasted for many minutes, to have lived whole years of life as a priestess in the Temple of Isis. The vision was even clearer and more vivid than that which possessed my sleeping spirit when the events of the Deluge passed in a long sequence before me. It was so palpably defined, so free from obscurities and contradictions, so natural and truth-seeming in all its details, that it impressed me even more thoroughly than the events which befel me yesterday, and are still fresh in my remembrance."
"Do not fatigue yourself, dear love," said Mr. Rameses, "by repeating it to me now. The"day is lovely. There is not a speck of cloud, or a haze of vapour_on the clear blue
sky. A soft cool breeze is blowing, and a walk on the deck will refresh you after your slumbers."

Niona arose and mounted with Mr. Rameses to the deck, and, sitting down at his side, proceeded to unroll the picturesque panorama of her vision while the colours were yet fresh on the mind's canvas. "I know," she said, "that many estimable people despise dreams. You, oh, my love ! are not one of them. Many dreams, as all the world is prepared to admit, are idle and worthless, born in the temporarily disordered brain of the sleeper, when the physical and mental faculties do not work harmoniously together. But I do not think that the vision from which I have just awakened is a dream of this nebulous kind, or I would not repeat it even to you. It was much too vivid and real ever to be forgotten. I seemed to live over again all the days and years of my youth in the sacred city of Thebes. I sometimes wandered alone at early morning through its stately avenues, and sometimes mingled with the crowd of worshippers who thronged on festal occasions to the great Temple of 'As-Uy'-so called in the ancient language, from AMr, the soul, and Us, or On, the Universe -or stood in the marble portico to watch the devotees as VOL. II.
they entered the Holy of Holies, to bend in awe and adoration before the shrine, where the sacred fire of Heaven, tended by vestal virgins in their white robes, with garlands of flowers upon their foreheads, was kept continually burning. I saw, again, clearly defined as I passed, the old familiar and magnificent temples to the gods and goddesses-not worshipped as living powers, but simply as emblems of the might, majesty, and goodness of the supreme and only God. I also stood at the gate of the magnificent palace of Pharaoh Thothmes, the most powerful monarch on the earth, and witnessed the procession of princes, nobles, and notabilities who accompanied the Pharaoh to the temple of Am-Un, preceded by musicians, with shalms and drums and other instruments, amid the admiration of the shouting crowd, who bowed their heads and knelt before him as he passed. I looked again on the lofty towers, the long avenues of pillars and obelisks, each bearing commemorative inscriptions and hieroglyphs, to be read and pondered by the priests and philosophers as they passed to the Temple. I gazed for long hours on the calm features of the gigantic sphinxes, placed in the public squares, to hint at the mighty secrets which they were supposed to
know, but to hide with an impenetrable veil from the curiosity of the multitude ; and wondered, as I passed, whether to me would ever be given the privilege of knowing and understanding even the least of the mysteries of the Universe, or of beholding so little as the dark shadow of the ineffably inscrutable.
"One morning, soon after surrise, as I sat alone in the spacious porch of the Temple, I saw two men approach up the avenue of obelisks that led to it. One was a venerable priest, whom I knew as Amun Ra , the chief ministrant and hierarch of the great Temple of Isis, over the gate of which were inscribed the awful words: ' $I$ am all that $\bar{n} a t h$ been, all that is or ever shall be. No mortal hath ev'er lifted my veil.' He was a man of serene and benign aspect, slightly bent with the lload of nearly fourscore years and ten, but had a bright, clear eye, and walked with the firm and resolute step of a man in his prime. He was clad in a loosely-flowing robe of purple velvet, of which the hems and sleeves and the broad bosom were embroidered with threads of gold studded with precious stones, and hieroglyphs of doctrine. The other was a fair youth of about twenty years, plainly clad, but shewing in every
lineament of his beautiful face that the divine fire of genius sparkled in his eyes and animated his heart. He looked with profound respect and reverence upon the venerable companion of his walk, and seemed to ponder deeply upon every word that fell from his lips. I also had seen him before, and recognised him as a student from the distant western land, imperfectly known in Mizraim, inhabited by a pale-faced people, slowly emerging out of barbarism, who worshipped many false gods and goddesses, whom they represented in human form, and to whom they attributed the vilest human passions of lust, revenge, jealousy, and unreasonable wrath. They were represented in Egypt as slowly emerging out of mental darkness into the light of a purer faith. This student was known to the philosophers and hierophants with whom he associated as ' Pythagoras,' and his object in visiting Thebes, the oldest and most celebrated city in the world, was to study the wisdom of the priests of 'Am-Un' and 'Isis,' the maxims of religion and morality which they inculcated, and the arts and sciences with which they were acquainted, and carry the knowledge thus acquired to his own country and teach it to the people. He had been for five years in

Thebes, imbuing his mind every day with experience, and confirming himself in the new faith, that had taken such possession of him that he was enabled finally to abandon the last lingering belief in the superstitious errors that had been instilled into his mind in his credulous and receptive childhood.
"They both entered into the Temple, and I followed them. The morning worship was about to commence, with a 'Hymn to the Rising Sun,' with which it was the invariable custom to sanctify the day and dedicate it to the service of the Great Spirit, of whose glory the light of the sun was but a faint and feeble emanation-but, faint and feeble as it was, too transcendently powerful for human eyes to look upon undazzled, or without incurring the penalty of death or blindness. A choral company of boys and women, with voices scientifically trained, numbering three or four hundred, raised a triumphant hymn of praise and welcome to the new-born day, the choral harmonies swelling as they sang, into waves of music, loud as the sea when the wind lashes it into thunder. When this chant had concluded, it was followed by a joyous outburst of prolonged harmony that shook the Holy Fane as with another
tempest of sound, from psalteries, shalms, trumpets, bassoons, trombones, sackbuts, and other instruments, mingled at intervals with the shriller melodies of fifes and flutes. The spacious edifice seemed to my entranced senses to float like a ship in an ocean of divinest harmony, wafting me to hitherto unknown regions of beauty and delight.
"As soon as the music ceased, the venerable Hierarch, standing before the high altar, addressed the kneeling worshippers in a strong, clear voice, distinctly audible to the remotest corners of the holy place. His exhortation was short and eloquent, and impressed upon the multitude the duty they owed to the body and the soul which animated it, and dwelt particularly upon the sin of which many of them were habitually guilty-of cruelty to the animal creation, the humblest and meanest members of which, he reminded them, were the creatures of the Great Spirit that animated the Universe. 'All of these,' he said, 'are capable, like men and women, of infinite progression or retrogression, according to their obedience or disobedience to the immutable laws of the Supreme Being and the spiritual movements of the Universe. Thus,' he went on to say, 'the soul of him who systematically, wickedly, and cruelly maltreats and tortures his camel, his dog, or other four-footed
friend and assistant of his labours, and ministrant to his luxury-when the death of his material body liberates his soul or mind to find another physical habitation, may be doomed to suffer the pangs which he has inflicted in his human life, and become a prisoner in the helpless body of a beast of burden, or may even be fated to a still more painful penance, in the body of a worm, or a small insect, invisible to human sight, shut out in his amazing littleness from all but infinitesimal communion with the beneficent, benevolent and all-pervading nature that surrounds him.' The listening multitude bowed their heads at his words, and uttered, as if simultaneously, a loud 'Amen!' And then again the choristers lifted up their voices in another solemn and tempestuous hymn of praise and glory. The shalms, the psalteries, the trombones, the bassoons, and other instruments were sounded in triumphal harmonies-and the crowd slowly and reverently departed, and I along with them.
"Then my vision changed, and I formed one of a small group of spectators who had gathered on the seashore, far away from Thebes, to take a final farewell of the beloved student, Pythagoras, as he stepped on a trireme, to proceed to the vessel anchored at a short distance, which was to convey him back to his own semi-barbarous
country, where he was to impart to such as his countrymen as thirsted for knowledge, the hitherto unknown doctrines of the sublime spiritual philosophy of the Egyptians. As he waved his hand to the friends he was leaving, I awoke from my dream, and saw you at my side, oh! my beloved, and thought for awhile, ere my awakening thoughts concentrated themselves upon the realities around me, that I was still in Thebes-four thousand years ago."
"Your sleeping and my waking soul were in sympathetic union, when you uttered the name of Pythagoras," said Mr. Rameses. "Your thought communicated itself to mine-or mine to yours-not merely by mere accident and coincidence, as materialists might suppose, but by spiritual affinity-acting and re-acting, each upon each, with an attraction as certain and irresistible as the steel to the magnet, and the law of universal gravitation."

It was now full noon, and the "Silver Band," agreeably to the invariable custom imposed by Mr. Rameses, appeared upon deck, to enliven the voyage by the performance of the melodies and harmonies which he loved. He requested them to play the "Wedding March" of Mendelssohn, and to its magnificent strains the yacht made her way through the calm blue waters to Alexandria.

## CHAPTER XIX.

> IN THE SHADOW OF THE SPHINX.

On the arrival of the Niona at Alexandria, on the second day after this conversation, Mr. Rameses was surprised to learn that his friend Saadi Ben Ahmed had preceded him to that city, having been unexpectedly summoned from London, where he had made arrangements for a prolonged stay. Mr. Melville was deputed to call at his hotel, and invite him to come on board the yacht as soon as he could make it convenient, as Mr. Rameses and Niona were not inclined to exchange their luxurious quarters in their floating home for the inferior accommodation of an Alexandrian hotel. On presenting himself to the sage, Mr. Melville was grievously pained to learn that the wound inflicted upon the Vicomte du Trianon in the unfortunate duel which the wickedness of La Belle Couleuvre had provoked, had, contrary to the expectations of the physicians and surgeons who had attended upon him, proved mortal, and that Madame or Mademoiselle de Molinari had, to the surprise of all ac-
quainted with her character and antecedents, manifested an extremity of grief that was, to all appearance, wrung from the agony of her heart. The first impulse of the young secretary was to return to Paris, and court such penalty as the laws of France might impose upon him. "Do nothing of the kind," said Saadi Ben Ahmed, "if you are wise. The tribunal would certainly acquit you if you submitted yourself to its judgment. Society has already acquitted you. The only aggrieved person is the Molinari-if she be really aggrieved. Even if she be, she will speedily console herself with a new lover, unless her reputation belies her real nature. I cannot, however, but regret that the victim was the foolish man, who did not know that he had wrongfully possessed himself of another person's wife-and not the heartless woman, who knew that she was injuring a husband who had loved and confided in her."

Mr. Melville, in his solitary reflections, as he returned to the yacht, persuaded himself that the advice of the philosophical man of the world was sound and prudent ; that no good could come of his offered self-sacrifice, even if it were accepted; that though his hand had inflicted on the Vicomte du Trianon the penalty of the wrong he had done,
it was the hand of Fate which had guided the fatal blow; that his unhappy attachment to the woman who was the prime cause of the evil that had befallen himself and the Vicomte, was to blame for the calamity, and that he was the innocent instrument of a Destiny which he had not the power to control or to evade. "I desired love," he said bitterly to his own conscience, " and I found indifference ; I sought truth and fidelity, and I found falsehood and treachery. I wished to punish the aggressor, but not to slay him ; and merely yielded to what I considered to be a justifiable impulse, sanctioned if not commanded by the opinions and usages of society, and I became a murderer in fact though not in intention."

The immediate result of these cogitations was a determination to unbosom himself to his best friend, Mr. Rameses, and to be guided by his counsel. The unhappy young man acted on this resolution, and on his return to the yacht confessed to his sympathetic employer all the circumstances attendant upon his infatuated wooing, and still more infatuated marriage with the beautiful but wicked woman who had cast her fatal glamour over his imagination.
"You could not avoid falling into the snare that had been set for you," said Mr. Rameses. "You are young, susceptible, inexperienced, with hot blood in your veins, and the fowler that entrapped the bird was cool, wary and unprincipled, and fascinated your eyes by the too powerful witchery of her bodily beauty. The great error which you committed was to contract a secret marriage. Had you divulged your intention before taking the final step, the catastrophe and all its guilty results might have been avoided. Law is costly, vexatious, and dilatory, but for your own future peace of mind and freedom of action, you must have recourse to that cumbrous machine, to remove the impediment of the marriage contract out of your way. I will be answerable for all the expenses, whatever they may amount to."

The young secretary kissed the hand of his benefactor, burst into tears, respectfully refused the pecuniary aid so generously offered, and resolved to adopt the advice which had been offered.

Saadi Ben Ahmed came on board the yacht the next morning, and it was arranged that he should accompany Mr. Rameses, and Niona and the secretary, to Cairo, after
the delay of a few days, necessary to procure vehicles for the journey in the luxurious style consistent with the wealth and taste of Mr. Rameses. The journey had been originally proposed by Niona, whose life-long desire had been to visit the great Pyramids of Gizeh or Jeeseh, and to sit in the shadow of the mysterious Sphinx, so grandly beautiful in its desolation, and feed her dreamy mind with the thoughts and fancies of the Past, the Present, and the Future, which the scene was so likely to excite. She was greatly, but pleasantly excited, when she thought of the approaching fulfilment at the side of her soul's true partner, of a purpose so long cherished. She could not account for the uncontrollable desire which had taken possession of her to pay this visit to the venerable relic of a past civilisation and a dead religion, of which she had thought by day, and dreamed at night, without ever losing faith in the idea that her desire would one day, sooner or later, in fate's appointed time, be gratified.

It was a whim, a fancy, a vague longing, born partly of curiosity, partly of superstition, and partly of religious enthusiasm; but the idea-which might more properly be called a presentiment-had gained such possession of her
she knew not how or why, that she could not but resign herself a willing slave to its tyranny.

After a stay of a few days in Alexandria, Mr. Rameses and his party proceeded to Cairo with the intention, after visiting the Pyramids, to take a voyage up the Nile to the site of Thebes, which, almost equally with the Sphinx, was hallowed in the minds both of Mr. Rameses and Niona, by venerable recollections inherited from their race and ancestry. They stayed but three days in Cairo, where they found nothing to interest or to detain them. Saadi Ben Ahmed engaged two comfortable vehicles, one for Mr. Rameses and his bride, one for himself and Mr. Melville, and a guide in charge of the provisions and water necessary for the day's consumption. He took especial care to make a compact with the guide, whom he knew, to exercise influence over the greedy Arabs, that swarmed like vultures or cormorants about the bases of the Pyramids on the arrival of strangers, from whom they expected to extort backshish, that he and his party should be left unmolested, on condition that every Arab who kept at a distance should receive a double gratuity, but that anyone who approached within sight or hearing should receive-nothing.

Both Saadi Ben Ahmed and Mr. Rameses had ideas of the immense antiquity and supposed sacred purpose of the Pyramids, which were not wholly in accordance with any of those that are prevalent among professed and hopelessly antagonistic Egyptologists. They considered the great Pyramid to be at least ten thousand years old, how much older they did not think it worth while even to surmise. They considered that it and its smaller compeers were not -as some too readily supposed-the ostentatious tombs erected by a slavish people to receive the mortal remains of departed conquerors and Pharaohs, but that they had been originally planned by the earliest immigrants into the flat and fertile lands of Lower Egypt, who swarmed into the country from the mountainous regions of India. These early adventurers-driven out of their densely peopled Asiatic homes by the pressure of numbers upon the means of subsistence, as Europeans in our day are driven across the Atlantic to North and South America by the same causes-were worshippers of the sun and stars, and were accustomed to study the motions of the heavenly bodies by the aid afforded to scientific observation by the mountain peaks of their birth-place. They
were thus enabled to record and predict the periodical re-appearances of planets and fixed stars at the place in the heavens to which the summits of the mountains pointed. In other words, they held that the Pyramids were artificial mountains, erected for astronomical and religious purposes by a highly ingenious, cultivated, and imaginative people ; and that the absolute power possessed by their monarchs was such as to command an almost limitless supply of compulsory labour, to complete these stupendous scientific and religious monuments. The Sphinx, they considered to be carved out of the solid rock at a comparatively modern period, when the primitive religion of the Starry Heavens had lost its early simplicity, and become encumbered with a grotesque mythology, personifying under animal forms, hybrid or semi-human, the powers and attributes of the Great Creator, and departing almost entirely from the purer religion of their ancestors.

Niona shared to the fullest extent these opinions about the Pyramids, but attached to the numerous sphinxes that guarded in ancient times the approaches and porticoes of the temples of Amun, Isis, and Serapis, and especially
to the largest of them all-which rears its sublime though mutilated head in the shadow of the Pyramids-an allegorical meaning, of which the Greeks caught a faint and distorted glimpse in the fable of CEdipus. She thought, with Mr. Rameses and Saadi Ben Ahmed, that the Sphinx, halfhuman, half-bestial in form, symbolized the two-fold nature of mankind, and that that two-fold nature in its turn symbolized the deep mystery of the universe which the spiritual man desired to solve, but which the beast, that was a part of him, forbade him to fathom, so that his mortal eyes could never see, his mortal ears never hear even the whisper of, and that his intellect, which was the all but helpless thrall of his limited and feeble physical senses, could never comprehend, however ardently and religiously it might strive.

These and similar reflections occupied the thoughts of her two elder companions, in the bright sunshine of the early morning as they proceeded on their journey from Cairo to Ghizeh, or Jeeseh-a drive of ten miles over a good road, pleasantly shaded with trees. The only one of the party who, on arriving in front of the Sphinx had any desire to scale the side of the greater or two lesser VOL. II.

Pyramids, was Mr. Melville. After having partaken of the temperate and refreshing luncheon of fruit and bread, and a supply of pure water in stone jars, with which they had provided themselves, he went alone to scale the stony height of the greatest of the three pyramids as far as was practicable, leaving the rest to their meditations and the conversation in which they loved to indulge. Saadi Ben Ahmed, who had studied his fellow creatures in every quarter of the globe, east, west, and at the far antipodean realms-destined one day to be the paramount powers of the world, and to reign over it, vice Europe, effete and superseded, as Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome had been by the growth of newer and more vigorous nations-led the conversation. It concentrated at last into an examination of the present condition of religious and scientific opinion in the Christian states of Europe and America, and a comparison of it with the state of men's minds when the paganism of Greece and Rome was being undermined by philosophic scepticism, and finally overthrown by the new and rising faith of the religion of Jesus Christ and his apostles Peter and Paul.

They all agreed in tracing many fatal resemblances

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\text { IN THE SHADOW OF THE SPHINX. } 243
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between the solid scepticism, and the unsettled and decaying philosophies of the Past, and the equally solid scepticism and conflicting philosophic systems of the Present, and the increasing indifference of the great masses of the people in all Christian countries to the narrowminded and unearnest teaching of the salaried preachers of religious faith and duty. They agreed that the age was one of mockery, unbelief, and sneers, and that the multitude in all countries were fast losing their faith ; that they did not love each other as the Divine Master enjoined, that they had no longer any reverence except for money, and the enjoyment and power which money could purchase ; that their thoughts were of this perishable life only, and not of the life to come, and concentrated upon carnal needs and enjoyments. To buy and sell for exorbitant, or (if they were driven to it by greed and necessity) for fraudulent profit, was the engrossing pursuit of more than half of the people, who would rather overreach their neighbours in a bargain than labour honestly for just reward, and who thought that everything was fair in love, war, and commerce, however contrary ito eternal justice it might, by strict moralists, be considered. The
poor dreaded to appear to the world as if they were poor, or to be known by their fellows in their true character ; and preferred to pass their days in a pitiful masquerade of false pretence, as if they did not belong to the class in which the hard necessities of life, and the pressure of their own overwhelming numbers, had placed them. Imperfect Science was dethroning perfect Faith, though it only pierced the thin outer rhind of the great sphere of knowledge. Love had degenerated into Lust, Hypocrisy had arrayed itself in the garments of Religion, and paid it a tribute, not because it believed in Religion, but because an appearance of Religion was "highly respectable." The loudly expressed and recorded opinion of the majority was socially and politically regarded as the voice of the Almighty. Society and Fashion, however perverse and foolish they might be in their thoughts and actions, had become idols, false gods-Fetishes and Mumbo Jumboswhom educated and uneducated people agreed to worship, or, if not to worship, to obey. The ignorant many tyrannized over the wise few. So shadowy and so flimsy were the pretensions of the respectable-looking crowds who frequented the churches and chapels on one day out of
seven, that at least nine-tenths of the seeming devotees acted as if there were no compulsion upon them during the other six to refrain from what they considered the venal offences and peccadilloes of lying, cheating, and slandering ; and thought themselves good citizens if they paid their debts and their taxes, and committed neither forgery nor highway robbery, neither burglary nor murder. In Continental Christendom the women alone-not the whole of them-preserved a lingering faith in Jesus and the Holy Virgin, and a respect for the ministers of Religion, and nine-tenths of the men either despised it secretly or laughed at it openly. Even the paid ministers of Religion looked upon Religion as the trade and profession by which they lived, and shared with the people a love for the things of this world-thinking but little, if at all, of the next-disbelieving alike in the exploded notions of the torments of Hell and the physical raptures of Heaven. War had not raged more fiercely and constantly among Christian than among any other nations, but that it should have raged at all ainong the followers of the peace-proclaiming Jesus, showed that his followers were not true followers, and that they either disbelieved the doctrine He taught, or wilfully disregarded it an
inapplicable to worldly necessities, or impossible of realization in a wicked world, or as if diabolical hatred in human government was of greater power and efficacy than Divine Love.
"What would the spirit of the Sphinx say, if the Sphinx had a spirit and a voice to give it utterance?" enquired Saadi Ben Ahmed, turning to Niona.

Niona imagined that the spirit of the Sphinx animated her as she replied, " It would say, as I say, that all these symptoms prefigure the inevitable end. After the sickness that afflicts modern civilization will come dissolution and death, and after Death the new spiritual Life that will arise out of its ruins. Science will attain to its utmost possible and inherently narrow limits, and will strive in vain to overthrow the Faith that infinitely transcends it, because not circumscribed by the petty bounds of our perceptions, and by what we ignorantly call common sense. Common sense is an impostor when it pretends to account for everything, even in this world, and has not the faintest glimmering of any other, except when it confesses humbly that other worlds of body and spirit exist, of which it can know and imagine nothing. Thus saith the Sphinx, as I sit in its shadow."

And, as Niona uttered these words, she fell exhausted into the arms of her husband, uttered a deep sigh and tainted away, to the great alarm of her two companions. She remained insensible for several minutes, but consciousness returned while Mr. Rameses bathed her brow with water, rubbed the palms of her hands in his, kissed the pale lips and cheeks with passionate fervour, and lavished the tenderest endearments upon her. Then she fell into a quiet sleep, which lasted for a full hour, on awakening from which she expressed a wish to be taken back to Cairo. She slept in the carriage during the whole of the journey, and arrived at the end in a weak but not fainting condition. The medical attendants who were called in to consult and advise, recommended quietude and repose as the best restoratives for the perturbation which her nervous system seemed to have undergone.

Mr. Rameses remained awake and watchful, on a couch at her bed-side, until the dawn of the next morning, when she opened her eyes, bright and sparkling as usual. "Beloved," she whispered, as he bent over her, "I am better, though I once thought my last hour in this world was approaching. But I feel strong again, and know
that I shall not die until I have seen Thebes. Take me thither, and let your Silver Band make sweet music as we sail up the holy river to the once holy city."
"Thy will shall be done, oh my beloved! Thy wish shall be accomplished ; and at Thebes we shall join our hands, our hearts, and our souls together, in a union more heavenly than that we effected in London. We shall be made one in Time and Eternity, at the shrine of the Temple of Isis, by the light of a fire, kindled direct from the Sun's rays, as was the practice of your ancestors and mine in that early morning of all civilization and all religions that have come down to this dark and misty evening of the world's history."


## CHAPTER XX.

THE PYRE OF CONSECRATION.
IT was not until a week after the conversation between Mr. Rameses and Niona, already recorded, that her health was considered to be so satisfactorily re-established as to permit her taking with prudence the voyage up the Nile to Thebes. When all doubt on the subject had disappeared from the anxious mind of her husband, he engaged the two most commodious Nile boats that money could procure, and had them fitted up with all necessary and appropriate luxuries for the comfort and ease of the travellers. He took care to provide himself with an abundant supply of sandal wood, cinnamon wood, and branches and logs of palm, in order to kindle a fire direct from the Sun's rays in front of the Temple of Isis-or what remained of it-in honour of his union with Niona, and as a befitting supplement to the religious ceremony that had been previously performed in London, and as a mystic reminder that neither of them considered the faith of their remote ancestors to be so
devoid of pious significancy as the later civilization of the world thought and asserted. The deft musicians of the Silver Band were summoned from the yacht lying before Alexandria, to accompany the party in one of the dabeeahs, and to discourse sweet melodies and harmonies on the voyage of three hundred and fifty miles to the mournful remains of the once grandest and most sacred city in the world.

Niona was in a flutter of pleasurable excitement and expectation. Thebes was her dream by night and her thought by day, and the strain upon her nervous system was so great, that it became absolutely necessary, in the opinion of her husband and all around her, that the visit should be made as soon as possible, that her mind might be restored to its usual equanimity. If she could but have known what the end would be, would she have clung to her hope so passionately ? Alas ! and thrice Alas ! Could we, any of us, know what sorrows the gratification of our fondest wishes might bring upon us, or what blessings might flow from apparently cruel disappointments, we might learn to look upon the granting of our wishes with fear, and on our disappointments with hope. We might reflect, if we
were wise, that unkindly Fate might dwell in the bright sunshine, and kindly comfort rain on us unexpectedly from the thunder-clouds. Blessed is the veil that in mercy hides the future from our gaze, and that, if we could lift it, would in all human probability disclose to us, whoever we may be, or however highly placed, more sorrows than joys.
" Happy are those who cannot see
Through the dark vistas of Futurity, But happier far who never seek to know What Heaven in mercy veils from men below, And oh ! most sad, most miserable lot, To see the Future though we wish it not.
To read our Fate's enigma in the gloom, Yet have no cunning to avert the doom!"

Meanwhile, the veil being withdrawn, the thoughts of Mr. Rameses, as well as of Saadi Ben Ahmed and Mr. Melville, were as hopefully and pleasurably bent on the voyage up the Nile as were those of Niona. The lowlying shores of the renowned river, with the villages and groves of palm-trees on either side, offered but few attractions, either picturesque or historical ; and were it not for the charms of social intercourse among congenial minds, varied by the enlivening or soothing music of the Silver Band, the voyage of three hundred and fifty miles on the broad bosom of the. Father of Waters would have been
wearisome and monotonous. But wearisomeness was not of their party, and monotony was banished from among them by the discussions prompted by the overflowings of the full minds of Mr. Rameses and his friend Saadi Ben Ahmed, and the sympathetic reception of their converse by Niona, and the earnest attention of the young secretary, who was more of a poet and a philosopher than he was yet aware of.
"For how many millenniums, I wonder," said Saadi Ben Ahmed, as the dabeeah breasted the down-pouring current of the Nile, "have the rains of Central Africa formed and fed this mighty river, running its daily course, for what we poor mortals, from want of a better phrase, call ' for ever and ever,' and how many millenniums has this mighty river been engaged in depositing its mud and slime and superfluous earthy spoil on the low-lying shores of the sea into which it discharges itself, so as to build up, imperceptibly, century after century, this fertile land of Egypt? And at what remote period did men first take possession of the new-made soil, and from whence did they come? All history is but a thing of yesterday, full of lies, of fables and contradictions, and of truths, perhaps, which we do
not know to be truths, and which we lack the power and the means to test or to investigate."
"Such great questions are easy to make, but impossible to answer," said Mr. Rameses. "The men of to-day know no more of what happened on their planet a few thousand years ago, which are but yesterdays in the life of our perishable earth, than the roses of this morning know of the roses that flourished in the days of Zoroaster. Our living generations take small or no heed of the business of the generations that preceded them, and in their lazy contentedness with their own ignorance, which they neither can nor wish to escape, placidly or apathetically accept the abundant fables, taking no trouble to doubt or even to laugh at them."
"Yes," rejoined Saadi, "our prolific Mother Earth has produced trees, grasses, flowers, insects, beasts and men for countless millenniums, and men have produced and elaborated systems of civilisation for quite as long ; and the trees, grasses, flowers, insects, beasts, men and systems of civilization have lived their day and died, to be succeeded by new ones, of possibly a better species. The civilizations of China, India, Assyria, Babylon, Phœnicia, Greece and

Rome, were but successors to or inheritors of civilizations perhaps totally different, either for better or for worse, and they have all disappeared, leaving no traces of their bygone existence, except in mysterious monuments, as in the pyramids of Egypt, the monoliths of Salisbury Plain and Carnac, or in the equally, or still more, ancient monuments of Mexico and South America. All of them do nothing but excite a curiosity which they fail to satisfy."
"True," said Niona, who had listened attentively, " and there were doubtless civilisations which have left no traces even in enigmatical stone behind them, not even a furrow on the earth's surface, and that are shut out from human sight and remembrance beneath the waters of the ocean. I have not only a faith that the Mediterranean covers with its undivulgent waves the sites of many once mighty empires in which art, science, philosophy, literature and religion flourished as luxuriantly as they do now-perhaps still more benefically to the races that inhabited them-but that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are the graves of empires. And if this be true of the past, shall not Europe and Asia, in the fulness of the time appointed, be engulphed, as other continents have been, by the irresistible and shifting
sea, and the now-hidden depths again expose to the sun the long-buried continents of antiquity ? "
"l, too," said Mr. Rameses, "have also dreamed imagined, or calculated-that the Equator of our earth was not always the Equator-the Pole not always the Pole, and that the earth did not always revolve on the plane of the Ecliptic. Spirit and matter, or some say Good and Evilthe Good paramount-form the Universe which has endured from and will endure to all Eternity. Matter undergoes perpetual modifications imposed upon it by the life-producing spirit, whether it manifests itself in the infinitely small, or in the infinitely great. "Small" and " great" are only words employed to express ideas that mislead us. Nothing can be either small or great in the Universal mind of the Creator. Wonderful alike, if truly considered, is the animated matter in the body of the minutest animalcule that lives, loves, and perhaps hates, in a drop of water, or that moves in the stupendous orbs of Sirius, Arcturus and Aldebaran, or the possibly still more stupendous orbs that the human eye, aided by the utmost resources of daily advancing Science, has never yet seen and never will see."

It was amid the indulgence of thoughts such as these,
that the party, after a journey of five days, arrived at Thebes, to explore its ruins and contrast the dead old city with the ever young and living Nile, on whose banks it once reared its towers and temples in glory and in majesty. The glory and the majesty and the religion that produced them have disappeared, but the Nile, fresh and free, still bears its fruitful waters to lands that without their help would be as barren as the Sahara; and a new swarm of ephemeral humanity, a new religion, and a new civilisation have taken the place of those which have perished, only to perish in their turn, whenever the great Spirit of the Universe shall so determine.

Such were the ideas that occupied the minds of Mr. Rameses and Saadi Ben Ahmed, as they stepped on shore to explore the perishing and desecrated remains of the magnificent Temples of Serapis, Am-Un, and Isis, that once made Thebes the pride of the Eastern world.

They had explored the two divisions of the defunct metropolis of Mizraim, one on each bank of the Nile, before they had fixed on the site of the Temple of Isis, which they only suspected, but did not know to be the true one,
from the fragments of once imposing obelisks thrown upon the ground, and of the rude remains of sculptured sphinxes which they supposed had originally stood on either side of the portico. Here, after much deliberation, they had resolved to kindle the emblematic fire, before which Mr. Rameses and Niona were to renew their plighted troth, for life and death, for time and eterrity, and sanctify, by the old faith of their ancestors, the compact into which they had already entered, and hallowed by the new faith of Christendom. Neither of them thought the solemn ceremony to be senseless or nugatory, though it might appear to be so in the estimation of the fashionable society of London, which had witnessed and was aware of the previous ceremony performed in a Christian cathedral with all the pomp and splendour consistent with the ideas of the times. But to them it was a new holiness added to the old holiness, which had gone before ; the flourish to the signature, the setting to the gem, the crown to the king, which did not make him a king, but was the emblem of his power, the baptism of fire, and the seal of the heavenly and eternal upon the earthly and transistory-

[^6]In all these respects the concluding ceremonial was satisfactory to their hearts and minds, to their thoughts of the present, and to their aspirations of the future, and they never asked themselves whether it were in accord or disaccord with the public opinion of their contemporaries.

Having selected the spot for the enkindlement of the pyre of consecration, a few of the willing mariners of the yacht Niona, the chosen few who formed a portion of the "Silver Band," were employed to convey from the Nile boat the logs and branches of fragrant wood that had been obtained at Cairo for the purpose. The pile was arranged under the direct personal inspection of Mr. Rameses, It was fully twelve feet in height, and six in diameter at the base, tapering upwards in pyramidal form, and pointing spire-like to the clear blue sky. Angus Cameron, a stalwart Highlander from the Island of Mull in Ross-shire, and a member of the Silver Band, who in his earlier days had often assisted at the not wholly obsolete Druidical ceremony of kindling the Beltain fire, on the first morning of May on the top or slopes of the lordly Ben-More, in his native island, took a delighted interest in the performance.

Nor did the other members of the Silver Band feel wholly
indifferent to the ceremony, useless as it may have seemed; -for a bonfire is always attractive to onlookers, and there is a fascination about the mounting flames which few people, young or old, are able to resist. Mr. Rameses had provided himself with a powerful lens, to collect the sun's rays, and with incense to cast upon the flames, so that nothing was wanting to the befitting and decorous observance of the rite on which Mr. Rameses and Niona had set their heartsnothing but the much-desired absence of the prowling Arabs of the desert, who were certain to be attracted to the spot by the double-edged incentive of greed and curiosity. This was, however, a matter of easy management in the hands of Saadi Ben Ahmed, who knew their ways and spoke their language. He was able without much difficulty to purchase their withdrawal out of sight and hearing, by a preliminary payment of backsheesh, and the payment of a second instalment if they kept to their bargain, a method of arrangement which had proved successful with their fellows a few days before in the shadow of the Sphinx.

Niona grew more excited as the time approached for the kindling of the mystical "fire of consecration," to which
she looked forward with religious emotion. As she and Mr. Rameses, accompanied by Saadi Ben Ahmed and Mr. Melville, proceeded from the Nile boat to the place appointed for the ceremony, among the ruins of a once magnificent temple, preceded by the Silver Band, playing Mendelssohn's "Wedding March "-selected for the occasion-Mr. Rameses thought that his bride, arrayed in her bridal robes, wearing a coronet of diamonds that sparkled through the gauzy web of the white veil that covered her head and face, had never before looked so heavenly beautiful. Her eyes seemed, in the glamour that his passionate love had cast over her, to glow with a light from the skies that far surpassed in its intensity the garish lustre of the gems that adorned her forehead, while her animated countenance suggested the immortal youthfulness and beauty of Hebe and Euphrosyne, as represented by the poets and sculptors of Hellas.

On arrival at the yet unkindled pyre, Mr. Rameses, turning his gaze to the noon-day sun for the short space that his eyes permitted him, unblinded or undazzled, to do so, formed a prayer in his silent mind to the ineffable Creator of the sovereign luminary of the world, that the fire which
he was about to draw from its beams would sanctify the love between the wedded pair who now stood erect in its presence, and make it as pure, intense, and eternal as the light of Heaven. A similar thought or prayer passed through the mind of Niona as she eagerly watched the brilliancy which shone in the lens which her husband steadily directed upon the small heap of stubble and shreds of perfumed paper which had been placed in contact with the pyre. In a few minutes the wished-for flame leaped upon the combustible mass and rapidly mounted amid the branches and twigs placed to receive it. The blue smoke clomb and curled in the clear air, and spread around, as it diffused and ascended, an odour as of incense in a cathedral.

Niona, as she felt the pressure of her husband's hand upon her arm, and his kiss upon her lips, as they stood reverentially before the crackling and ascending flames, suddenly uttered a sharp cry of either joy or pain-none could tell which-and fell back senseless into the arms outstretched in a moment to receive her. She breathed but one word, heard alone by Mr. Ramesesthe word Love-and, closing her eyes, became unconscious and helpless.

Saadi Ben Ahmed, who had studied medicine in his youth, both in India and in Europe, and had a little medicine case in his pocket, administered such restoratives as he thought advisable. He endeavoured to feel her pulse, but it was imperceptible ; put his ear to her heart, but heard no faintest movement of the mechanism within ; and shaking his head mournfully, knew that the spirit had returned to the God who gave it. The over-sensitive Niona had expired of strong mental excitement, acting upon a weakened frame. The body was tenderly and sorrowfully borne by the awe-stricken mariners of the Silver Band to the Nile barge, which had brought them so joyously and hopefully to the fatal ruins of Thebes, so sacred to the heart of the living Niona, and so more than sacred to the heart and soul of her afflicted husband. The return to Cairo was immediately commenced. The body was laid reverently in the cabin of the dabeeah, which none presumed to enter, except Mr. Rameses, who sat silently by the side of the lovely corpse-lovelier even in death than it had been in life-and refused all comfort, all sustenance, all sleep both by night and by day. On arrival at Cairo, the body was embalmed, placed in a sumptuous sarcophagus,
preparatory to its final interment in a mausoleum at Thebes, which Mr. Rameses had determined to erect, under which she and he should lie side by side together.

The tale is told. Mr. Rameses was stunned, but not vanquished ; reconciled to live on because Destiny had so willed it ; reconciled to a further term of earthly existence, but not in love with it; ready for death and hopeful of its coming, that it might open the glorious gate through which his spirit would pass into a higher, holier and happier state of being, in which he and his soul's partner should be united in perfect and eternal beatitude.

It is only necessary to record, in conclusion of the story, that Mr. Rameses, after this heavy blow, lost the little love that he had ever felt for the enormous wealth he had inherited, and that he resolved to distribute it while he yet lived, instead of bequeathing it by will after his death, for the fulfilment of purposes on which his heart was set. He bestowed munificent gifts upon his dearest friends, amongst whom Mr. De Vere held the foremost place, Saadi Ben Ahmed the second, his brother-in-law, Sir Hector, the
third, and his young secretary and disciple, Mr. Melville, the last-besides devoting large sums to the endowment of charitable and educational institutions in India, Egypt and England. He applied the remnant to the erection of a magnificent mausoleum at Thebes, on the site of the "fire of consecration," whence the beautiful spirit of Niona had taken its last flight from its mortal habitation, resolving that the edifice should rival the renowned Taj Mahel in splendour and costliness, if money, skill and architectural genius could accomplish the feat. He has wholly disappeared from London life, is sometimes a quiet guest of Mr. De Vere at the Rookery, but passes most of his time in Egypt, with his friend, Saadi Ben Ahmed, engaged in the necessary preparations and plans for the great mausoleum that, in the fulness of time, is destined to receive his mortal remains, to rest alongside those of his beloved Niona.


[^0]:    "Perhaps not," said Lord Stoney-Stratford. "The good

[^1]:    "But do you really think that within the compass of

[^2]:    "Souls made of fre, and children of the sun,"

[^3]:    "I am pushed to extremity myself," she answered," by

[^4]:    "Such," said Sir Henry De Glastonbury, "is the condi-

[^5]:    " Oh! happy love-where love like this is found, Oh! heartfelt rapture, tliss beyond compare!"

[^6]:    " Love's holy flame for ever burneth From Heaven it came, to Heaven returneth. '

