

FORTY YEARS WITH THE DAMNED

OR

LIFE INSIDE THE EARTH,

A NOVEL

BY

CHARLES AIKIN,

I will a round, unvarnished tale deliver.

—*Shak.*

Mysterious Yet Colloquial.

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A plain, unvarnished tale, written as we talk.

13 Dec 54 Clark
24 Feb 45 g. A. G. E.
That my purpose may not be misunderstood, I write this preface.

This book is not intended as a burlesque on religion as many might be led to suppose from the title. Although it deals largely in scenes pertaining to hades, yet it is not irreverent; in short it has nothing to do with any form of belief, but is a wild flight of fancy in which the weird and supernatural form the greater part.

The scenes are laid mostly inside the earth, which the author claims, for his story's sake, to be hollow and to contain nearly as much inhabitable surface as the outside.

Where mythological characters are introduced they are given Greek names, that they may the better be understood, as little is known of the people's mythology of which I write.

Stories of the outside of the earth are told by resuscitated beings, whose finite existence was not only on this but on other planets.

C. A.

CHAPTER I.

Stranger, why such haste?

I have a story to tell you, so strange, so weird that for years I have held it a secret locked, as it were, in my memory. I know full well that I am growing old and soon must be done with things earthly. That my story may not be lost I tell it you.

I am a hunter. Farther up this mountain side I have a small patch of ground which yields such meagre returns that I get my meat with my gun, that is, when we have any. But no more of myself.

Ten years ago today, as I was searching along this ledge of rocks for game, I found myself near Luray. Knowing that it would be useless to continue farther in that direction, I was about to return, when my attention was attracted by running water. Feeling thirsty, I stepped up to the fountain head, where the water gushed from between the rocks, and after slacking my thirst and bathing my face and hands in its cooling depths I felt refreshed. As the weather was hot and the shade inviting, I seated myself on a convenient rock to rest and bemoan the scarcity of game.

Growing drowsy I was about to fall into a sleep when something startled me; looking to my right, I discovered the mouth of a cave.

In it stood a man gazing into the valley below, wrapped in deep meditation. He did not appear to have noticed my presence at least, if he did, took no heed. He was of extraordinary mold; tall, broadshouldered, with wonderful muscular development and an appearance of great physical strength. He carried a staff some six feet in length, on which rested his great right hand. His powerful arms and his legs below the knees were bare, brawny, and dark. He wore nothing on his feet, and his head was also uncovered.

From his left shoulder, draped in graceful folds, was a robe of golden yellow, apparently of silk, extending only to his knees or a little below. About his waist was a red or, more properly, a crimson sash. His neck and a part of his massive chest were uncovered save by a necklace of the rarest gems and of the most exquisite workmanship I had ever beheld. But, strange to say, the pendant of this beautiful chain was a full blown rose, which appeared freshly plucked.

His long, white hair, strangely interwoven with jewels, fell down his back and around his dark neck and shoulders in graceful confusion. His eyebrows and eyelashes, like his hair, were white; and yet not white; they might better be likened to threads of silver, seeming to emit light,

and when he moved, his hair would glisten and sparkle like the gems on his chest. His nose was of Grecian mold, strong and well developed. His massive forehead, firm chin, and lips thin and firmly set were indicative of strong mental powers, extraordinary will, and great determination. This, together with his powerful figure, led me to regard him with a feeling of awe. He had not the appearance of a negro, yet he was dark—yes, very dark.

Boldly I said, "Howd'y stranger?" Up to this time he had not looked in my direction or known of my presence. Now, turning his head slowly, he gazed upon me in silence. I began to feel frightened; but, as I peered into his noble face, so calm, so kind and so sympathetic, I knew there was nothing to fear.

At last he spoke. "You are a hunter; but I hope not a hunter of black men."

I assured him I was not; but making bold I said, "May I ask where you are from?"

He smilingly answered, "I live many miles, yes, many, many miles from here. Men call it hell."

"That is strange," I laughingly replied. "You are the first man I ever knew to get away from there; but, honestly, stranger, who are you, and where are you from?"

Continuing, he said, "Forty years ago I was a slave in the valley below. With my young wife I escaped to this cave."

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“Hold on,” said I. “Forty years ago! why, you do not appear to be over twenty-two or three now, and yet your hair so white! How strange!”

Remaining silent for a moment he replied, “If you would hear my tale, do not interrupt me. You will know all later on.”

I hastened to beg his pardon with the assurance that if he would continue his story I would not disturb him.

CHAPTER II.

In a short time he resumed: Forty years ago tonight, as the rain fell in torrents and the wind blew a gale, my fair bride and I fled to this cave to spend our honey-moon free and, if possible, in peace. We had provided ourselves with provisions to sustain us three or four months, determining if possible after that to escape to the North. We had been in this cave but a few days when in the distance the deep baying of hounds informed us that we were being tracked. Having a full supply of candles and matches, we plunged deeper and deeper into the cave, hoping it might be possible that they would not venture so far in search of us. In this we were mistaken. I do not know how far we had penetrated the cave—probably three or four miles; but our pursuers had provided themselves with lanterns evidently with the determination to pursue as far as the dogs led. Knowing that what was to be done must be done quickly, we hurried along, hunting for recesses in the rocks where we might hide from the dogs. As no asylum offered us protection, I turned to Surene

saying, "The master will soon be upon us, what shall we do?"

"Let us die together, Joe."

"I fear it must be so, Surene. To see you driven like a beast by unprincipled men and your fair flesh torn by the whip of the heartless overseer would be worse than death to me."

"Well, Joe, let us die. I am prepared, but how shall we end our lives?"

"No, Surene, we shall not die, at least not yet; I will have my revenge, and the worst that can follow will be death. The man that strikes you shall die by my own hands; then let them do as they will."

Hopeless, not knowing what to do, we fled on, when of a sudden we came to the brink of a river. Our despair was changed to hope as our eyes by chance fell upon a raft floating near the bank. I sprang into the water and, securing it, drew it to the shore, and we hurriedly placed on board our provisions and utensils which we had previously stored in the cave along with our few belongings. Not knowing where this strange craft would float us, we stepped upon it and pushed it from the shore. Our only care was to escape from the dogs, which were so near upon us that the leader sprang at us, landing with his fore feet upon the float.

I rushed towards him intent on braining him

with my club, but my wife with a woman's forethought placed her hand upon my arm, at the same time throwing a rope around the dog's neck, remarking that he might be of service to us later on. Fearing that he would be vicious, we allowed him to remain in this position until he no longer could be dangerous.

Bearing away into the strong current, we had but a short time left our mooring before our pursuers were there. Their wrath and curses were something dreadful to hear. They had no boat in which to pursue us, and if they had I doubt if they would have dared to venture upon this dark, uncertain river. Knowing that in their extremity they might fire upon us, we lay flat upon our float. The precaution was well taken. A log that projected above the others formed a convenient breast work.

Finding that we were beyond reach, they opened fire upon us with all the viciousness of their natures. But feeling our security from them, we returned a derisive laugh to their curses. As we floated on, the darkness seemed to increase. Knowing that it was not safe to have an artificial light, we continued for some time in darkness and in silence. Surene at last, feeling that we were beyond earshot of our pursuers, said, "Joe, where are we?"

"I don't know, Darling; but I believe that our

prayers have been answered, and that this craft was sent by some unknown power to carry us away from bondage." "It must be so," she replied, "or how could it have come at the time when all other avenues of escape were closed against us." We talked on for a long time, wondering what would become of us, but at last, being exhausted and quietly floating down the river, we fell into a sleep.

How long we slept I know not, having no way of computing time, but think that from our exhausted condition we must have slept five or six hours. Our dog was more affected by the darkness than ourselves. He kept whining and howling by turns. Still we floated on, sometimes on one side then on the other side of the river. We could not see across but judged it to be about a half a mile wide. The air was soft and balmy, neither hot nor cold, yet the death-like silence was appalling. Nothing could be seen in any direction. All was perpetual gloom—no ray of light save the tiny candle we maintained on our float; yet our forebodings were not so dark as may be supposed. Congratulating ourselves on escaping from what was worse than death, we gave our hearts in prayer to the power that had saved and led us away from our enslavers. Floating together on that gloomy river, we solemnly swore that we would die rather than be slaves again, be-

ing firm believers in an almighty power that would help them that tried to help themselves.

We had some hopes that the river might again float us on to the earth's surface. The indications were indisputable that the river had once been a surface river and was subject to rise and fall, as the drift-wood along the shore, together with the fact that our float had been constructed by human hands, furnished good evidence.

Up to this time we had taken no nourishment, our minds being too much occupied with past and coming events to care for anything of that kind, but we now felt it necessary to take food to sustain our strength. As I have stated before, we intended to sojourn in the cave for some time and had previously provided food to maintain us two or three months. This we fortunately had with us. It consisted for the most part of cornmeal and bacon, together with fruit and other relishes which were in the reach of the black man of that day.

My wife and I partook lightly of the food, offering a part to our poor dog, which he declined, seeming to grow more and more dejected every hour. After our light repast we sat talking for many hours, but the deathly silence and quietness could not but produce drowsiness and we again fell into a deep sleep.

How long we slept we could not know, but that

feeling we all have after a long slumber caused us to believe that we had slept many hours. It was still dark, but I fancied not quite so dark as before. Our candle had burned out during our long repose and as I lit another I saw that our stock would soon be exhausted at this rate, and feeling that we might need them for food in dire extremity, I knew that a light must be maintained some other way.

Noticing driftwood along the banks, we concluded to make our boat fast to the projecting rocks and go ashore. Doing so, we noticed the land, as we had noticed before, a dreary waste of sand and rocks, no vegetation of any kind. After gathering driftwood, we made a fire to light up the scene that we might see around. But this only rendered our surroundings darker than ever. Leaping ashore, our dog darted off among the rocks as if in pursuit of something, but soon returned more dejected than ever. The darkness was telling sadly upon him. Once or twice he acted as if he would throw himself into the river with suicidal intent, but a few kind words would calm him and he would lie down and whine.

Of late my wife and I had conversed but little, each communing with his own thoughts.

Surene was seven-eighths white and, being maid to her young mistress, had surreptitiously learned to read and write. Her mistress being somewhat

literary in her tastes and her friends and associates of like character, created in Surene a desire for knowledge and served as a school for my beautiful but unfortunate wife. Perhaps more favors had been shown her than to the average slave as her master knew full well that his own blood flowed in her veins.

I was black and had been led to believe of African mold, but being probably endowed with more native intelligence than most of my people, I think that slavery was more galling to me than to the average African.

The meetings of my wife and myself had been clandestine, but in that courtship we had solemnly vowed that we would make a strike for liberty. My master had bitterly opposed Surene's becoming my wife, so our marriage was not what was usual among the slaves of that period. But one night we pledged our vows and appealed to the Almighty to sustain us in the "rectitude and honesty of our intentions." This was only a night previous to our escape to the cave. Now as we sat upon the bank of this dark deep stream, we renewed our vows, determining to again embark upon the river and float on to liberty or to death.

We had some hopes that this river might possibly float us on to the earth's surface in a free state. Yet my wife reminded me that she had often heard the white people talking at the table

in our master's mansion say that the centre of the earth was a great fiery furnace, and seemingly the direction of this river was towards the earth's centre. I knew it had been a superstition among the negroes, ever since I could remember, that hell was immediately under us and heaven above us. Yet we could not understand why a just God should float us on to eternal torment when all our lives had been one continual degradation, torture, servitude, and bondage. Surene's faith was never shaken. So kneeling in that awful darkness, we appealed to Almighty God to direct us aright. Then rising to our feet, I immediately prepared the craft to continue our voyage.

Knowing, as I said before, that our candles would soon be exhausted if we continued to use them I concluded to maintain a torch light from the drift wood we could gather from the shore; so I prepared a bed of sand and rock to prevent firing our float, and after arranging our fire and securing dry sticks enough to sustain it for some time, we again embarked with our dog and floated on.

The current was not rapid, yet strong and deep. The fire on our craft lighted up the surface of the river, which up to this I thought to be uninhabited but now found it to contain schools of fish. They were so tame that they swam along the boat, apparently charmed by the light. In

common with other negroes living along the Shenandoah and Rappahannock rivers, I carried fishing tackle in my pocket such as hooks, lines, floats, etc. These I immediately utilized on discovering the fish. After baiting my hook with a small piece of bacon, I was not long in landing on our craft a fine fellow of three or four pounds. This delighted us. We thought in dire extremity we might spend the remainder of our lives along this dark and desolate shore, subsisting on fish alone, and be far happier than in a life of servitude, for we would at least be free.

I continued my fishing, partly for pleasure and partly for food, until I landed five of these beauties. Then my wife reminded me that to catch merely for pleasure was a sin.

Making our boat fast on the shore and building a fire from the drift wood, we dressed the fish. Surene being an adept in preparing fish, soon had them in a frying pan which we had fortunately brought with us for life in the cave. The feast she prepared was fit for a king. Corn bread and fried fish; even old Bay, who had taken no food since leaving the cave, accepted his portion with gratitude.

Having relieved our hunger, we sat down with quiet thankfulness to think and talk of our hopes and expectations. Old Bay had ceased to whine and lay in what appeared quiet slumber.

Surene was a beautiful singer, being endowed with unusual musical ability and, in common with her people, she loved to-sing. I asked her to sing me one of those old plantation melodies so musically sweet. She made an attempt with her voice pitched at what had been usual on the old plantation. But the echo from the rocks seemed to her like demons calling us back to slavery. She immediately ceased singing, saying to me that it seemed blasphemy. Then she added, "Joe, do you know, I am happy even in this solitude. I would not break it—no, I would not change it. Let us live on as we are."

Embarking, we floated on; days, months, and years may have passed away yet we knew not; we had no way of reckoning time and could only abandon ourselves to an unknown power that carried us down this kind old river. Nature at times would call for rest and a drowsy feeling would come upon us. These sleeping and waking spells continued for a long time. How long I could not tell, but we floated on. Our subsistence was for the most part fish, but my wife occasionally prepared a pone from our scanty stock of corn meal.

One thing that surprised us was that a part of the fish we caught were without eyes while others had eyes. Knowing that the tendency of fish was to work up stream, we were naturally led to suppose that this river would ultimately emerge into light.

It had been some time now since we had landed so we concluded to run into shore, tie up our float, and remain awhile upon land. This last landing gave us some encouragement, the country was less broken, less rocky, and the sand less arid. There was no indication of vegetation, save a moss, or manner of moss, which was hard to distinguish between mineral and vegetable. But what interested us especially was that friction with this unnamable substance would create yellowish light yet of little illuminating power.

We remained for some time fishing and strolling along the bank, gathering this strange moss, and would sit for hours by this dark and gloomy river trying to communicate with the grand majestic body of water, as if we would learn from it our destiny or our destination. The majesty of nature seemed as sublime here in absolute gloom as in the vaulted domes of an ethereal sky. Although above us floated no fleecy clouds, though we saw no rainbow of promise, and the cheering songs of the birds were hushed as if by the pall of night, yet the grandeur, the sublimity, the unfathomable works of the Almighty, were as penetrable in these dark vaults as upon the radiant meadows of the Shenandoah.

It would be idle to continue the description of this shore life. If it were possible to convey to your minds the intensity of our hopes and fears, of

our deep and venerable love of freedom, of our sincere thankfulness for the preservation of our lives to this time, of our deep and unutterable belief in the guidance of a supreme power, and of our earnest intent to obey as strictly as possible the dictates of our own minds as to what was right and wrong, you could appreciate the satisfaction we even felt in these extremities.

Feeling that destiny guided us still further down the river, we embarked upon our craft following the course we had taken before, peacefully, quietly, and I might say happily.

Up to this time our journey down the peaceful river had been so quiet and undisturbed that the lapse of time had hardly been considered, yet the worn and shabby condition of our clothing was to us indicative of having been several months on the float.

Surene up to this time had done her best to keep our clothing in a presentable condition, but the frequent washing and continual wear reminded us that we would soon be like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. While we were considering what we would do when our clothes were entirely gone, our ears caught the roar of a cataract, which grew more and more distinct as we floated on. In wild agitation I said to Surene, who was ever calm, "Is it possible that we are at last to be dashed to pieces down some terrible precipice? Can it be

that this beautiful river, which up to this time has been our friend, will dash us into a mad torrent? "

Turning upon me her eyes, calm as the setting sun, she said, "Joe, if we die, let us meet death bravely, but do not doubt the hand that guides us."

As we floated on the roar of the cataract grew louder and more intense, so much so that we concluded that it would be the part of wisdom to run our craft to the shore and walk down the river, guided by what torches we might arrange, to investigate and locate the cataract. The same rope that had served to bind the bedding we had taken to the cave, and to secure Bay, now served as a tow line for our float.

We found the bank of the river low and level, with now and then a projecting rock. The greatest trouble we had to contend with was to keep our torch burning, light wood growing very scarce. But after many miles of weary travel we had the good luck to find an old pine log, partly decayed, that had drifted there at high water. With our hand axe I soon secured the knots, piling them on our float. These served us a fine purpose as they made a good light and lasted well.

Being so wearied with our long tramp, we concluded to camp on shore, rest and prepare some food. My wife informed me that this would be the last of the corn meal that she had husbanded for so long a time, so she prepared it into pones.

In the mean time I caught two large fish. Our bacon had long been gone and all that remained of our stock was a good sized bag of salt.

In proportion as the stock of provisions we had brought to the cave had diminished, the fish in the river seemed to have increased; the water now fairly teemed with them.

Surene was not long in preparing a good meal, in fact it was a grand feast considering the material at hand. I had long ceased to offer old Bay corn bread, as it was too precious for dogs and he never seemed to appreciate it, so his diet was fish only. When I was fishing he was always at my side, appearing as much pleased at the catch as myself.

The roar of the cataract appeared to increase, yet it sounded far away. After my wife had spread the blankets preparatory for rest and sleep, we sat down to talk. "Joe," she said, "have you seen any change?"

"Why, Surene, why do you ask?"

"Because, Joe, I think I can see a ray of light far down the river."

"I have seen as much, Darling, but dared not call your attention to it for fear it was a delusion, not wishing to create false hopes to have them crushed by disappointment. But as we are the children of misfortune and as every ray of light which has entered into our lives has been crushed

by this accursed African blood which flows in our veins, as we have been ordained by God himself as the hewers of wood and carriers of water, as the chosen victims of cruel bondage and oppression, disappointment is but our natural inheritance."

"Stop, Joe, stop," she said, "we cannot blame our Creator for our oppression. He has endowed us with as much natural physical and mental power as the whites, so if we tamely submit to become slaves and beasts of burden, it is ingratitude to God to blame him for our misfortune. Joe, as we have tasted the fruits of freedom, even under these difficulties, I swear by all I hold sacred, by my love for you, Joe, that if that ray of light we see in the far distance shall lead us again into slavery, that I shall not, neither shall you, submit to the degradation, but we will die striving for freedom."

Continuing our conversation for some time, we became weary and fell into a peaceful slumber.

When we awoke it was morning, as they say on the earth's surface, and as I had caught enough fish the night before for breakfast my wife hastily prepared them, together with the remnants of the corn pones left from the night before. Having satisfied our cravings, we were prepared for another season of labor.

Noticing on our last tramp that my wife had been over fatigued, I thought it best for her to ride on the float and maintain the torch light there in-

stead of carrying it in her hand. This lighted up the shore sufficiently for me to make my way with the tow.

For miles we passed on in silence. Still the ray of light in the distance seemed to increase—there was no doubt any longer of its reality or any fear of a delusion. The shore grew more and more favorable for our travel, although no vegetation had yet been seen. The dog seemed more anxious to push forward than ourselves; he had evidently seen the ray of light and appeared anxious to increase our progress. As the march was long and tedious we became weary and halted for rest. Making the craft fast to the shore, we prepared the meal, as usual obtaining what fish we wanted from the river.

The light from below became so well developed that we no longer doubted that we were emerging from darkness. Surene and myself were fully impressed with the idea that we were nearing the earth's surface.

The roar of the cataract was so great that I could no longer trust Surene on the float, so she walked by my side on the shore. As we neared the falls the light brightened so fast that we did not need the torch, but could pick our way in that weak but welcome light. Every mile we progressed down the shore we could see the light visibly increasing. It did not seem to come from the

sky above, as was our wont, to see on the earth's surface, but evidently was projected from an opening in the rocks, which Surene and I supposed to be the passage of the river upon the earth. Hurrying along with all the speed at our command, I soon could see that the river passed out of a great arched gateway, and the light coming through this opening was what lighted up our passage. We no longer doubted that we were in a great cave and were about to pass into the light of the sun, as we could see the river beyond the mouth of the cave and the light shining on it. Yet Surene and I hesitated for fear we might again be enslaved; but after a long consultation we determined to learn where we were, and if it proved a free state we were all right, if not we could again escape to the cave and live on fish the rest of our lives. The roar of the rushing waters was deafening. With many misgivings we again took to our float and quietly passed out of the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER III.

As we reached the open country beyond the cave and turned in the direction of the cataract. We were spell-bound with the grandeur of the scene. For three hundred feet fell an unbroken sheet of what appeared to be water but afterward proved to be liquid light. This body of fluid did not pass off on the surface below the fall but was swallowed up between two mammoth rocks and again came to the surface two miles below. The light emitted from this fluid was more brilliant than the sun's rays and too dazzling to look upon with the naked eye. This stream did not enter our river but formed an independent river about two miles away and running parallel with ours.

As soon as we had recovered from our surprise we made ready to land, our craft having the while floated about two miles below the mouth of the cave. We were not long in making fast our raft and stepping on shore.

The country around us was a valley of surpassing beauty. I could not compare it to anything on the earth's surface, not even the valley of the

Shenandoah, which in my early days I had always regarded as God's chosen work. As we stood on this strange shore, gazing with wonder and admiration on the lovely valley as it stretched away in undulating beauty, with its flowers and fruit, its soft and velvety grasses, graceful trees, and limpid brooks that lazily picked their way to mingle with the waters of the grand old river, which had kindly borne us from a land of bondage to this chosen spot, our hearts joined in earnest prayer to the giver of all good and perfect gifts.

As Surene stood before me wrapped in admiration at the grandeur of the falls I could not but feel that she was sent as one divine to lead me to freedom. Her face was of a light olive hue, bespeaking the mingling of white and negro blood, but withal sublimely beautiful. Her eyes were soft and dreamy, save when stirred by the wrongs of her people. They then would flash like sunbeams on the beautiful Rappahannock. Her willowy form would bend and sway as gracefully as the tall grasses before her did to the gentle breeze. She seemed like Diana prepared for the chase gazing over the plains of Olympia.

What a strange contrast I was to this beautiful being, for I was black,—yes, black, black as the terrors of night. Yet why was I black—why was my face painted black as a demon's and yet there be given to me a soul so freighted with dream and

poetry that I could sail away on the wings of imagination and people worlds radiant with love and whitewinged purity; but if this was the will of God, it was but an assurance to me that I would some day enter the Golden Gates of the new Jerusalem washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

Old Bay, less romantic than ourselves, reminded us that something to eat would be in order. Our diet now, like Bay's, was reduced to fish alone.

Surene laid before us the fish she had prepared before leaving the cave, and we sat down to eat and be thankful.

Knowing full well from the source of light there could be no night, and worried and much fatigued, we spread our blankets and lay down to rest. As we lay on our backs gazing above we learned for the first time that no direct light came from the sky above us. There was a hazy, mellow light of golden hue near the horizon, but as it ascended it passed into roseate and then into bluish grey.

Nature asserting herself, we fell into a pleasant sleep. When we awoke the same scene presented itself with the same intensity of light.

Surene seemed to have been awake for some time, and when I opened my eyes she was wandering along the river bank. As soon as she saw me sitting upright on the blanket she said, "Joe, I do not believe we are on the earth's surface, but that every

mile we travel down this kind old river brings us nearer the earth's centre. We can find no more beautiful place to spend our lives than right here. There is no indication of animal life and we are probably the first human beings that ever trod this ground."

"I am as well pleased with the surroundings as yourself, the air is soft and balmy and the temperature perfect. We could not ask for anything better. I will build a cabin here that will protect us from this over strong light and settle down in peace."

"Why, Joe, protect us from the light, do you fear our complexions will suffer by it?"

I replied, "Not mine at least, my skin has too often been tanned by the overseer to have any fear of suffering in that direction."

At this sally there was a ring of mirthful laughter, the first we had indulged in since leaving the old plantation, and my heart gladdened at the sound. I think I am justified in saying that no people are so highly endowed with a sense of the ridiculous as those of the African race. This is the one bright spot in their life of servitude.

In attempting to prepare our morning meal we were surprised to find that I could not start a fire with the driftwood we had brought with us on the raft. My attempt to ignite matches signally failed, together with various other expédients to pro-

duce fire. Dejected I gave it up, remarking to Surene that it would be useless to catch fish if we could not cook them. Feeling much depressed at what I regarded as fate, I turned to Surene and said, "Starvation must of necessity follow if we cannot start fire." She with her natural supply of wit in case of a dilemma said, "Joe, we can row back into the cave and prepare our food, using this as a dining room. You have ingenuity enough to build a craft, haven't you?"

The current in the river was strong and I knew that before I could build a skiff with the material at hand we would starve to death.

She continued, "With everything so bright and green as in yon grove there must be fruit."

Without ado we made our way to the grove indicated. There we found small fruit and berries not like we had known in the valley of the Shenandoah yet sweet and delicious. Making our breakfast of them, I brightened up with the hope that we might find other things and live comfortably.

Noticing for some time another clump of trees about a mile farther down the river, we determined to bend our steps in that direction. On arriving there we found a large spring, the source of one of the brooks that lazily wound its way to the river. The foliage was of a richer and deeper green than I had ever before seen and was interlaced with flowers and a new kind of fruit resembling cucum-

bers, yet it grew on trees. Plucking this I found it would peel like a banana. The meat was of a rich redish yellow interlaced with veins of darker red. It looked truly inviting. I said to Surene, "I believe this fruit is good to eat."

She replied, "Be careful how you taste it, Joe, it may be poisonous."

We found also other varieties of fruit but none of them were familiar to us. On the other side of the spring was a grassy bank shaded by overhanging foliage. It was so inviting that we concluded to return to our first camp and bring our belongings to this place, leaving our old craft made fast to the shore of the river.

After being installed in our new quarters, which were about a half a mile from the river, we were ready for further investigation.

Noticing the continual flashing of light from the river that had emerged from the ground below the falls, I determined to go over there and inspect more closely to find out if possible the character of the fluid. This was about a mile and a half from our quarters.

Wandering leisurely along over the grasses and now and then picking the flowers which grew promiscuously on the plain, we arrived at this wonderful river of light. The light emitted from the river seemed equally brilliant with that from the falls and was painful to look upon. So shading my

eyes with my hand, I descended a gentle sandy slope and put my hand into the fluid, trying to ascertain if possible what it was.

The feeling was not like water but more like oil. After drawing my black hand from the fluid I was startled to find the light still remained on it. I tried to rub it off, but could not. The light appeared like a sunbeam projected into a room by a mirror. After commenting some time on the wonders of this fluid we started down the river. As we wandered along I discovered yet another grove somewhat to the right, seemingly about midway between the two rivers. It was larger than the first two yet much the same in appearance.

Surene said, "Joe, let's go over there and see what's in that clump of timber beyond." We were winding our way in that direction, talking of the past and present, when suddenly our dog, forgetting his meagre berry diet, broke ahead of us in a grand frolic, occasionally returning to us wagging his tail as if to say, "I am well suited with these surroundings, let us stay here." He had fully recovered from his loneliness and apparently forgotten his contempt for "niggers." He was much devoted to Surene though perhaps he did not hold me in as much respect, yet we were at least on speaking terms.

After a walk of a couple of hours we entered the grove. If possible it was more beautiful than

the others, every shrub and tree being laded with fruit or flowers.

What surprised us most of all was that there was no evidence of decay, no over-ripe fruit, no wilted flowers, no dead branches, no seared or yellow grass. It was evidently propagation without decomposition. Flowers that Surene had worn for some time in her hair appeared as bright and fresh as when first plucked.

Vegetable life was abundant in every direction but so far we had seen no animal life. We had penetrated but a short distance farther into the grove however when old Bay suddenly stopped and barked. We stopped also and gazed in every direction to discover the cause. Soon all was explained for out stalked a deer. It was not at all startled by our presence but stepped right out in front of us as much as to say, "Ah, who are you?"

Bay was somewhat frightened by it but soon mustering his courage walked up and smelt of it. The dog had lost his viciousness, showing no disposition to attack the animal, but appeared rather glad of its companionship. The deer showing no sign of fear we approached it, Surene laying her hand on its well-formed head.

I suggested to Surene that we might have some fresh meat if it were possible to cook it.

"Joe, I would starve or nearly so before I would consent to kill this beautiful and harmless animal;

better let us cultivate its friendship and if possible induce it to become one of our family."

This was not hard to do as it enjoyed our carresses and followed us wherever we went.

Surene could never get flowers enough. She was continually gathering them, occasionally offering them to our new companion, who ate them with a relish.

After straying for some time through this beautiful grove, we came upon a tree heavily laden with the fruit I have before described. Without any particular aim I gathered some of it, or rather plucked some of the branches laden with it, saying to Surene, "I will take these back to the camp." It looked so inviting I could not divest myself of the desire to taste it. This Surene would not allow me to do.

Wandering here and there, I in time strolled back to the camp, carrying the strange fruit with me. Arriving there, I threw what I had gathered on the ground, as we plucked more of the berries that were in great abundance about us to satisfy our hunger.

Our new-found friend came upon what I had left upon the ground and, without saying even so much as "with your leave," placed his sharp foot upon the fruit and with his teeth gracefully peeled away the skin, eating the meat with satisfaction and with the appearance of its being his every day

diet. We watched him with great interest, as it was a convincing proof to me that the fruit was not poisonous. Old Bay eyed him closely, apparently wanting some himself; so I peeled one and offered it to him. He ate it with a relish, and even wanted more.

I said to Surene, "I am going to try this. I am satisfied that it is not poisonous."

"Wait awhile, Joe, and see what effect it has on the dog."

Finishing our meal of berries, and lacking something better to do, we lay down. "Wife, I'm as empty as a nigger's pocket. Those berries don't touch the spot. I hope the new fruit will treat Bay all right, for it looks to me like a good thing, and we must get something to eat besides these berries."

"I am well satisfied with the berries, Joe, but men must always have meat or they are not satisfied."

While she was talking I dozed off.

After a refreshing sleep we awoke to find things as we had left them. Neither of the animals seemed to have suffered from eating the fruit, so Surene and I tried it ourselves. It was the climax of food and the most delicious I had ever tasted. It combined the qualities of flesh and fruit and so thoroughly satisfied us that we cared for no other food.

Surene said, "We have now reached the Eldorado, this surely is the promised land, everything is provided for us here, and—the greatest blessing of all—we are free. Let us look no further but spend the remainder of our lives here."

"But," I said, "What will we do for clothing? We are sadly in need of that now."

"We will be provided with that too," she replied. "A land that supplies us with everything needful will not be wanting in clothing."

Having found the best of food prepared, we sat down to a life of inactivity. The laziness of our race was fast developing.

Surene, growing disgusted with this sloth, said, "Joe, we must move. We are getting so lazy we will die of dry rot."

After some planning as to where we would go, we started out for a long tramp. We had not yet left the grove when Surene descried in the sky above us and some distance away what appeared like an enormous bird or some monster on wings.

Growing frightened, we fled back into a more dense part of the foliage that we might peer at it from a safer retreat.

Surene said, "I believe that is some monster that devours everything on these plains, and that accounts for there being no animal life here."

I probably feared that as much as Surene but did not care to show my weakness. It advanced

very rapidly and as it neared us it assumed definite form. Its appearance might be likened to a steamboat less the smokestacks. I had often heard old master say that some day there would be air ships, and all traveling would be done in that way; and I believed this one of them.

It did not take long to prove my surmise correct, as the craft was so near that we could see gaily dressed people on each side of her. Passing rapidly over our heads to within a mile of the falls, she gracefully settled to the ground with the ease of a bird.

The people soon left the ship, and we could see them bounding over the ground like boys and girls in frolic. They were arrayed in great splendor, not conventional in style as on the earth's surface, but in brilliant flowing robes wound about them with a grace and beauty unequalled by anything among the queens of earth. Their attention seemed directed towards the falls, for ever and anon they would stop and gaze at it as if lost in admiration at its grandeur.

While this was going on another ship passed over our heads. While landing they were lustily cheered by the people of the first ship. Hardly had the people from this last ship disembarked before a loud cheer went up, and as we looked a third ship, like in appearance to the first two, settled down with the same ease.

According to the best of my observation, I should say there were five or six hundred people. All their attires were somewhat similar. The prevailing colors were red and yellow, with now and then a sash of blue. It was quite evident to our minds that they had come from some distance to view this wonderful falls. Some divided off in groups and seemed to engage in earnest conversation. Others strolled leisurely over the ground, laughing, talking, plucking flowers, throwing themselves occasionally upon the grass, enjoying themselves and the surroundings. Then they all of one accord formed in rows, sitting down upon the grass.

Surene whispered, "They are about to serve something to eat."

She was right, for in a few moments there emerged from the ships black people with trays laden with fruit that appeared to us like what we were subsisting on. At first Surene did not notice that those who were serving the food were negroes. But on discovering it she exclaimed, "My God, Joe, we are on the earth's surface, and there are slaves as in old Virginia."

"Surene, we may be mistaken about their being negroes, as the distance is so great we can hardly judge in detail what the people are."

But the atmosphere there was so amazingly clear we could see at a much greater distance than

on the earth's surface, and I felt some misgiving in saying to Surene that there was some doubt about their being negroes, for to my mind it was conclusive that they were. Yet they appeared happy and seemed to enjoy their surroundings as much as their masters. Could it be possible that even in the next life the black man would play the servant's part? Could it be that God in the arrangement of the human family had created the black man to serve the white? Was he by nature inferior? Could he never hope to be more than a slave? I had always heard that doctrine preached but doubted it. But this seemed to establish it as a fact.

After partaking of the food, they prepared as if for a dance. To our utter astonishment they were in a short time engaged in a mazy whirl, as we had often seen in old Virginia. The music was furnished from the first ship. We could not see the musicians yet the music was enchanting. The dance continued for some time, probably for hours. At last seeming to be satisfied, they as of one accord started towards the river of liquid light. They did not travel in order, but every one as he liked. Deploying over a large space, some of them walked very near to the grove where we were hidden.

I now had a nearer view of them; in fact they passed so close to our retreat that we could see

them in every detail. They mixed promiscuously together, and their faces shone with joy, peace, and kindness. Even the black people mingled with the whites and were arrayed in the same manner. As they reached the river's edge, with little or no ado they laid aside their robes and plunged into the stream.

After sporting about an hour in this fluid they came out, wrapped their robes about them, and passed again so near our hiding place that we could see the liquid light clinging to them. After wandering about over the plains for a time, the people of the first craft boarded their ship and were away, those remaining cheering them as they rose from the ground. In a short time the others took to their craft and were away like the first. We heaved a sigh of relief when we were again alone and again free, but we were far more mystified than before.

Surene asked, "Can it be that this is a free state? If so, why do they have negro slaves?"

I replied, "It can not be, for I have often seen people from the North, and their dress and appearance was the same as the people at home."

After hours of speculation as to where we were, we remained as much in the dark as before, but of one thing we were assured, that these falls were so great a wonder that they must be visited frequently by excursions of this kind, and our safety

depended on getting further away. After debating for some time whether we had better take to our craft and float down the river or travel on foot between the two rivers, we decided on walking. Our belongings were so few that I soon strapped them on my back and we were off.

How far we traveled before resting I could not correctly judge, but it was many miles. The plain was interspersed here and there with strips of timber laden everywhere with an abundance of fruit and flowers; so our inner man was well supplied. The atmosphere continued as beautiful as when near the falls, the temperature being just right. After becoming weary with our long march, we threw ourselves on the grass, and it was not long before we were wrapped in the arms of Morpheus.

When we awoke everything was calm; no change had taken place and, believing that another day's march would remove us beyond the line of visitors, and that we would then be safe from discovery, we started out again. This day's march, if I may be permitted to say day, was much in keeping with the last, the country remaining about the same or, if possible, growing more beautiful.

After walking several hours, we concluded to halt in a small grove, take some refreshments, and rest for awhile. Old Bay and our pet seemed to appreciate this, as they had traveled many more miles than we, running here and there in every direction.

So far we had traveled on a line with the river, not diverging more than a mile to a mile and a half. The two rivers up to this time had run about parallel, but now the river of light bore almost directly to the left, while our river continued in almost the same direction as before.

We were loath to leave this strange river of light but, as we could not follow both, concluded to remain by our old friend. As we had seen no more animal life nor any sign of it, we grew more mystified every hour.

Surene had not spoken for some time, appearing to grow more bewildered every mile we traveled. Suddenly looking up she said, "Joe, is this a dream? It does not appear to me like waking life. Shake me, Joe. Pinch me. If I am in a dream, waken me. I would know where I am."

Laughingly I caught her by the shoulders and gave her a shaking. "Yes," she said, "this is real life, but how strange it is. Where are we going? We tramp on and on but know no more where we are at the end of our journey than when we started. There is no animal life and no human habitation, and yet such a chosen spot—was it made for us alone? Or does the Almighty intend to free all our race and bring them here? Does he think they have suffered enough, and shall the remainder of their lives be lived in peace and quietude, roaming over these lovely plains and feast-

ing on the beautiful surroundings? Were we the first sent here to prepare the way?"

"I would think it so if it was not that we had seen the people of the air ships, and know they were real flesh and blood; yet they did not look like those of earth, as upon them appeared no sorrow. Their faces looked heavenly, yet why did they stay so short a season? If we are in heaven why should we be alone, is there a part in heaven, for the white man and a part for the black? Do they not live in common there as upon the earth? What think you, Surene?"

"Heaven is not inside of the earth but above the earth, and according to what we have been taught this should be hell. It is far too beautiful for that. What say you, Joe, if we see the people from the air ships again to ask them where we are? This mystery is dreadful."

"Then you are not happy, Surene; would you rather the strange people of the air ships know of us? Is it not possible that they would enslave us and carry us away into bondage?"

"You are right, Joe, I am happy here. I would not have it changed, but I would dearly love to know where we are."

"Perhaps it would not be well for us to know, Surene. Knowledge does not always bring happiness, and I have been told by those that have much of it, the less we know in this life the happier we

are. Yet I could never feel that way. It appears to me that to have all knowledge would be happiness itself; but say, Surene, why do you suppose those people of the air ships bathed in the river of light? I have a strong will to try it myself. What say you to it, Darling?"

"Not now, Joe, but later on I may consent. Here is a lovely spot, let us stay here."

We had not rested long when Surene caught me by the arm saying, "Joe, I see a man." At the same time she pointed towards the river, which was now about a quarter of a mile away. Looking in that direction, I could see a man, rather above average height, apparently old, with long white beard and hair. He seemed to have discovered us first, for he was bearing directly toward us. He held in his right hand a staff, and his figure was wrapped in a manner of robe something similar to the people of the air ships. With a swinging and springy motion he advanced very rapidly and was soon upon us. His beard and hair were a contradiction to his face, for as he drew near we judged him to be about fifty, with piercing dark eyes and thin set lips denoting one of great will power and more than ordinary intelligence, while his figure showed exceeding strength for a man of his age. When within a reasonable speaking distance from us he said, "Who are you; how long have you been here?"

"Where are you all from, are you runaway niggers?"

I had always carried, since arriving here, a club I had brought from old Virginia. I sprang to my feet in a moment, angry at being asked if we were runaways. Being a powerful man myself I had no fear in an equal combat with any other man, black or white. Stepping up immediately in front of him I hissingly said, "Yes we are runaways; do you want us?" I was fully determined that if he made an attempt to arrest us, I would fell him to the earth with my club.

He did not seem at all startled at my demeanor but smilingly said, "Do not disturb yourself, boy, I am not hunting runaway niggers, and to make you easy on that score, there are no slaves here, neither are there masters. I had supposed up to a moment ago when I discovered you, that I was the only human being on this vast plain; yet if I had cared to, I could have known that you and the girl were here. So let us be friends. I am glad even of the friendship of a nigger." And then in half soliloquy he said, "Many and many a year have I wandered over these plains alone, homeless, friendless, and forgotten. The only companion I had for years was a deer that came with me from the earth's surface, but in time he grew weary of me and fled from me as from a thing of evil."

I thought of our deer and turned to look for

him, but he was gone. I said, "Surene, where is our pet?" "He is not around; he fled at the approach of the stranger." Our new-comer seemed so lost in his own thoughts that he did not notice our conversation in regard to the deer. He stood for a few moments leaning on his staff as if in a dream, and I thought as I gazed upon him that he was the finest example of manly and physical development for an old man that it had been my fortune to meet.

At last recovering himself, he approached us and said, "Think not of my silence, I sometimes fall into these moods." Now he added, "Children of misfortune, how came you here?"

Surene, who up to this time had not spoken to him, said, "We are not children of misfortune, but the most favored of our race. And as you are a white man it seems most fitting that you tell us first how you came here."

He was about to speak when Serene raised her finger and said, "Will you kindly answer one question before you proceed? Are we on the earth's surface or at the earth's centre?"

"Neither," he said, "my poor girl, neither. The earth's centre is above you. The earth's centre is the sky, as we are wont to say on the earth's surface, but this ground we tread upon is the inside crust of the earth. The earth is a shell, and we are on the inside of the shell. Old Virginia, as I

take it you are from, is on the outside of the shell, and I may say right here that there is nearly as much inhabitable surface on the inside of the earth's shell as on the outside. All the inside of the earth's crust is hell, and at one time was dark. Satan and his imps of darkness held high carnival over these plains, tormenting and torturing as they would the poor victims from the earth's surface.

The inferno is located on an island in the Sea of Redemption. It has an extended area and is far below the surface of the water surrounding it. The water is held from dashing into the inferno below by a rugged rock-bound coast. The nearest point to the island from where we are standing is probably one thousand miles according to our measurement.

“At the beginning of the Christian era, or about that time, everything was changed. After Christ had died for the redemption of sinners and made it possible for all who would to enter the abode of Heaven, He ascended to his celestial kingdom and took it upon himself to better the condition of things here. Being in great favor with the Almighty, He was vested with all power to act as he would. Gathering about Him a large convoy of angels and arch-angels, He descended into this abyss of darkness, driving Satan and his hosts into the inferno and making it impossible for them to ever cross again the sea of Redemption, but not

restricting them from ascending to the earth's surface.

"Now the Blessed Redeemer proceeded to arrange everything outside of the inferno. His first act was to cause a great descending of light, which you saw in the magnificent falls as you entered the Valley of Resurrection, at the same time causing the river which flowed from the falls to pass as a belt around the inside of the earth's crust, forming lakes and bays of the fluid at various places along its course. The reflection from the river, bays, and lakes causes the illumination and brilliant light by which we are surrounded.

"After He had arranged this light, He next proceeded to cover these beautiful plains with the fruit, flowers, and other vegetation which we see so perfect and luxuriant."

Surene asked, "Who are these people that a short time ago passed over our heads and visited the wonderful falls?"

"Those," he said, "are the people of Surey. They have been purified by the fires of hell, and have been redeemed therefrom, and now live in absolute peace and happiness in the valley of Surey."

Surene further inquired, "Where is the beautiful valley of Surey? Is it on these plains?"

"No," he answered, "between us and the valley of Surey there is a deep gulf in which there is a monster who swallows up any one attempting to pass

the gulf, and conveys him to hell, where he will be purified in the fires of torment, except, I should say, those who have already passed through the fires of hell. They can pass and repass as they please over the bay. These people of Surey visit this falls and bathe in the waters of liquid light, that they may have all knowledge."

"I," he continued, "have bathed in the river of light and have all knowledge of what is on the earth's surface and what is in the earth. But it would be useless for me to continue explaining these hidden wonders, when by merely bathing in this river of light you can have all knowledge yourself."

I thanked him cordially for this information and said to Surene, "Let us immediately go and bath in this river."

"No," she said, "Joe, let us first hear our new-found friend's story of how he came here." Then turning to her guest she smilingly said, "Will you kindly continue with what you were about to relate? But first please have some of our freshly-plucked fruit."

Gracefully bowing, he accepted with thanks.

We all sat down on the grass, he of course taking his seat first, for we had not yet left off our reverence for the white man. So we remained standing until he invited us to be seated.

"I congratulate you," he said, "on discovering

this food of all foods. To me it is more delicious than anything I have ever tasted on the earth's surface. I have no desire, after eating this fruit, to taste food of any other kind."

After he had finished his simple repast he remarked, "I am really glad of the opportunity of telling anyone my story of the past. I cannot tell how long I have been here; but it appears to me I have been here sixty years."

As we looked somewhat startled at the remark, he divined our thoughts. "You don't think I look that old now. I was fifty-eight years old when I left the outside of the earth, but as there is no decomposition here one never grows older. You can remain here for a thousand years, millions for that matter, yet would never die, and would never grow older. You would never be sick and could not suffer from any cause save loneliness, that is, if your previous life had been free from enormities. Unfortunately mine has not been free from sin of the most dreadful kind, and as a result I suffer much from remorse.

"But let me go on with the story of my past life and how I came here."

CHAPTER IV.

I was raised in one of the southern states. My father was a rich planter owning many negroes, which I inherited. My early life was spent in riotous living, accompanied with every manner of dissipation. Father died when I was a young man. I, the only heir, came into my inheritance at an early age. It was predicted by the old men living on the adjoining plantations that my career would be a short one, that my fortune would soon be wasted, and that if I was not killed, I would soon end my life in dissipation.

They probably would have been right in their conjectures, if it had not been that about this time I fell deeply in love with a girl who was visiting in the neighborhood. After the usual preliminaries she accepted me as the most favored of her suitors; and after a duel or two with rivals, according to the customs of that day, we were married.

Her control over me was absolute; her wishes were strictly complied with; and I was so wholly under her influence that she shaped my life as she liked. Being a woman of strong moral courage, unfaltering in her sense of right and wrong, she

soon converted me from one of the most dissipated to one of the most moral men in the community. We were seldom apart, being very wealthy both in her rights and my own. We lived in great splendor, free from the demoralizing conditions of other families equally or less rich. Although she gave elegant entertainments, I do not have in mind one man at these many festivals who was ever known to be under the influence of drink, for no liquor, save the lightest wines, was allowed to enter our mansion.

As time wore on a son and daughter were born to us. Unfortunately our son was cast in a mold like to myself, his tendency being towards dissipation. His love for drink seemed to have been inherited from me, but the wonderful influence of his mother over him held him practically to a moral life. As he grew to manhood his mother and I both thought a college education was needed. So after the usual preparation I took him to a school in Connecticut. For the first year or two we had little cause for worry on his account, but by the time he arrived at his junior year he had fallen into bad fellowship.

One day he and some fellow students got to drinking, then went down to the beach and hired a sailboat, which capsized in Long Island Sound. He alone out of a party of five was drowned. This was a terrible blow to his mother and myself. But

his mother, with her usual fortitude and strength of character calmly submitted to the will of fate and more devotedly gave her life to the rearing of her daughter, who was the counterpart of herself.

The loss of this son affected me so strongly I again broke out in drink. But it was only for a short period, as my wife's strong influence soon redeemed me.

As our daughter was growing towards womanhood, the schooling advantages being very poor in our neighborhood, my wife proposed sending her to some boarding school in the North. To this I could not bring myself to consent. I could not divest myself of the feeling that we might lose her too.

This was the first time in our married life that my wife and I had ever entertained radical views in opposition. But she, with her usual tact, knowing what my feelings were in that direction, abandoned the idea, and there was no more thought about it.

About that time a young man came into the neighborhood from Connecticut, seeking employment as a school teacher. As I was one of the school directors at the time, he called upon me. The fact that he was a graduate of the same institution that my son was attending at the time of his death, and further, that he was a class-mate of his, was all the recommendation that he needed with

me; and I soon secured him our district school. The schoolhouse was on my plantation, and when my wife learned that he had been a schoolmate of her son she promptly invited him to make his home with us. At the same time she considered it a rare opportunity of obtaining a tutor for our daughter. This arrangement was very satisfactory to me, as he seemed a young man of high moral qualities.

About this time an epidemic struck our neighborhood, and my wife was among its first victims. My devotion to this noble woman, and my intense love and admiration for her rendered separation the severest blow that ever befell man. My first impulse was not to survive her; it appeared to me that the earth and all its belongings would be blank and spiritless.

But as I remembered she had left her counterpart behind, a woman in spirit and character so like her mother, my duty was plainly to remain, protect, love, and provide for her alone now, as I had jointly loved and protected her with her mother.

Time wore on and my grief at the loss of my companion gradually lessened, but still was so intense that I tried to drown it in drink. I again entered upon a life I think more reckless, if possible, than that of my early manhood. My daughter strove in vain to turn me from this course, but

her influence did not have the power exercised by her mother.

I would for days leave home, staying in a town near by debauching myself with drink. My daughter still continued her efforts to reclaim me, but so fruitless were her best endeavors that, discouraged with ever making me better, she could but allow me to pursue my course towards ruin.

During this time the young school teacher remained at my house, devoting his idle time to tutoring my daughter. His noble manhood, his earnest and honest efforts to advance her in her studies, his true and sincere sympathy for her misfortunes, his splendid presence and elegant address soon won her affections.

Pursuing my drunken course, I paid but little attention to home affairs. The plantation was left entirely in charge of an overseer, the management of the mansion in the hands of a housekeeper, leaving the two young people together a large portion of the time.

I had not thought of anything of this kind until my attention was called to it by my housekeeper. Then my wrath knew no bounds. I could not consider their affection for each other; but it appeared to me he was trying to rob me of the last thing I held dear on earth. I refused any communication with him, but promptly ordered him from the house. I also used my influence, being one of the

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trustees, to discharge him from the school, hoping that he might leave the neighborhood.

Judge Lupue, a man of great force of character, immensely rich in land and slaves, lived on an adjoining plantation. There had been a feud for many years between the two families. The feud had commenced between his father and mine, and although neither of the principals had ever fought, there had been many killed of his and my followers. He was known far and wide as a man of undoubted bravery, ready and willing at all times to defend the right of himself and followers, and it was a saying in the neighborhood that when Judge Lupue drew his gun somebody went down. This powerful enemy of mine now stepped forward and defended the young school teacher, employing him as a manager (not overseer) of his plantation, saying to the neighbors that he would not have the young man driven away at the caprice of the Colonel.

Of course I could do nothing. There were no charges I could bring against the young man in court that would in any way incriminate him, and if I could have trumped up any charges against him, the old Judge was so far my superior in legal matters, having served several terms as circuit judge, that my chance of driving him out of the neighborhood by that course would have proved fruitless, so I could but submit to the inevitable

and allow him to remain. But I inwardly determined to stay at home and prevent any intercourse between him and my daughter. Yet my accursed love for drink led me back to debauchery.

One day returning from town on horseback with two boon companions, all three being beastly drunk who should we meet but Sanders, the teacher. In my drunken and bullying way I said to my companion, "Now one of you act as second to me and the other to him, as one of us has got to die." This seemed to somewhat sober my companions as well as myself. They tried to dissuade me from anything of the kind, declaring that if the young man was killed it would be considered in the neighborhood as murder. As we three were known to be sworn friends, the natural conclusion would be that we had all lent a hand to do it, and they knew further, that Judge Lupue would not tamely submit to having his charge brutally murdered. So they positively refused to have anything to do with the matter. This enraged me so that I put spurs to my horse and dashed up in front of the young man and told him to fight for his life or die. He appeared so cool and wholly unmoved by my threats that it rather unnerved me.

He calmly remarked, "Colonel Branch, if you wish to kill me I shall offer no resistance; though I might succeed in killing you, yet I would not, even in self defense, kill the father of Lenore."

This placed me in such an awkward position that I could only withdraw. So joining my companions we allowed him to pursue his way in peace. One of my companions remarked as we passed on that "that damn Yankee was about as cool and nervy a cuss as he had ever seen." My last hope of redress for imaginary wrongs seemed to have failed. I knew full well that to attempt any further persecution of Sanders would be to hold me up to ridicule and unfavorable comment with planters around the neighborhood. This continued for some months, during which I could learn of no clandestine meetings between Sanders and my daughter. Thinking perhaps the affair had blown over, I relaxed my vigilance,

After a few attempts I found that anything I could say to Lenore about the matter was of little avail. For, like her mother, when approached on any subject disagreeable to her she would remain absolutely quiet.

My hatred for the old Judge was only equalled by his dislike for me. The children from the Judge's plantation were in the habit of crossing a portion of my plantation for a near cut to the school house. In an unguarded moment, and when in one of my drunken bouts, I notified the Judge that the children from his place must not pass over my land. I felt at the time I was penning the note to him that I was making a fool of myself; but as I sent it I had to take the consequences.

Every move I made appeared to place me in a worse light before the community. I had forgotten when I sent this note that my daughter, in pleasant weather, was in the habit of walking over a portion of the Judge's plantation on the way to her church. This of course, he took advantage of. He addressed my daughter a note purely in keeping with his well known gallantry, stating to her in substance the note he had received from me, and really hoped she would continue her walk to the parish church over his plantation, saying that he always felt a sense of pleasure in seeing a beautiful form and lovely face passing so near his mansion. This was the bitterest cut I had ever received and, though a fighting man myself, as well as the Judge, I did not see any plausible excuse for calling him out; and I must frankly admit that, knowing the character of the man, I did not care to do so. My only hope was that my neighbors would not get hold of the affair, so warned Lenore not to mention the matter, but of course the old Judge showed my note to the neighbors, which in itself would have been enough to hold me up to ridicule, and he also showed them a copy of his reply. This was not long in traveling the entire state of Louisiana. Several of the papers published the two notes; so you can judge the position in which it placed me. The people of our state are a proud people, and anything reflecting

on the honor of one of her princely planters was a sore disgrace. Nothing was left for me but to remain silent.

This was but a short time before the election of parish officers. Every one was agog with the coming election, and we all as usual that morning gathered in the neighboring town to talk politics and try to influence votes for our favorite candidates. Of course, as it always is at such places on such occasions, liquor was served to whoever would drink, and I, among the rest, was soon under its influence. I would not say that they were all drinking men, for that was not so. Many planters in the neighborhood did not drink, among them the old Judge. He, of course, was there with all his retainers and followers, making himself felt for his favorite candidate.

The day was not far spent when it was plain to see that the Judge's party was in the lead. Things went on from bad to worse until the closing of the polls.

The Judge and his followers, being well satisfied that they had won the election, did not regard it necessary to stay and hear the count. I, of course, with my followers remained, with the vain hope that it might be better than we expected.

But no, it was worse; they had beaten us two to one.

This satisfied me that my influence was gone.

During my wife's life or while she maintained my manhood, the influence of the Judge and myself were nearly equal, but now I knew or began to feel how I was regarded in the parish.

After the votes were counted a few of us started out for the rounds of the drinking shops, and continued carousing until morning, when, remounting our horses, we rode home.

On arriving there, the first words that reached my ears were from the housekeeper, who said, "Lenore is gone." I was for a moment paralyzed. I could not move. The shock was so great that it sobered me almost immediately. I felt sure in a moment that Sanders and my daughter had eloped. I mounted a negro upon my horse, to pursue my companions and call them back.

I informed them of what had happened and asked them to join me in pursuit.

Trying to get what information I could regarding the flight, I called Lenore's maid and asked her where her mistress was. She was a handsome mulatto girl, very much devoted to Lenore, as she had always been kindly treated by her. In fact, Lenore treated every one kindly and was beloved even by the niggers.

I had some doubts of the maid giving any information that would lead to the whereabouts of the guilty pair, and was so satisfied in my own mind that Lenore had fled with the teacher that I

promptly ordered her maid to tell me where she was and when she went. This the girl refused to do. Threats did not intimidate her. So, calling the nigger driver, I ordered him tie her up and whip her. After a few lashes I again asked her to tell me about her mistress, but she positively refused. She was a frail girl but endowed with wonderful will-power. After ordering the driver to lash her again, I asked her the second time. She refused as before to give me any information about the matter. Fearing to continue the whipping, lest it might injure or kill a valuable slave, we gave it up and turned her loose.

If any one else about the plantation knew anything about the matter I did not know who he was. No one volunteered any information. I had the horn blown and all the niggers called before me, and asked them if they knew anything of the departure of their young mistress. Each in turn declared that he knew nothing of it.

Finding I would have to seek information beyond my own plantation, we started north, supposably the direction the elopers had taken. We had not traveled far in that direction when I saw sitting in front of a cabin an old man and woman smoking their pipes. In a half sleepy manner, usual with that class, they informed us that they were up during the night, and saw a young man and woman pass by on horse-back, who seemed to

be riding as though in a great hurry to get somewhere. But it was so dark they could not discern any of the particulars about them.

With this small clew we hurried on, occasionally getting the same kind of information as we continued the pursuit.

Riding furiously, our horses in a short time were much jaded. Fortunately, as we then thought, I knew a planter a few miles ahead, who would supply us with fresh horses. I was right in my conjecture. From him we got the first real or reliable information that we had been able to obtain.

The elopers had stopped at this planter's to get refreshment, saying that they were brother and sister and had been down near Delphi to visit an uncle of theirs, Col. Burke, that their names were Rodman, and that they lived over the other side of Bayo-mason.

The old planter said he never thought of doubting what they told him, as their manner was so easy, natural, and innocent. It was true they did not look much alike, but that was often the case in children of the same family.

He laughingly said to me as he gave us new horses, "Colonel, I think they are too smart for you: I don't think you will catch them."

I did not relish this remark but said nothing.

Now, freshly mounted, my companions and I

pushed on furiously, determining, when these horses were jaded, to secure fresh ones at any price.

We could hear of the elopers along the way and knew that we were gaining upon them rapidly. After riding at a high rate of speed for some time, our horses failed to respond to the spurs. Coming to another planter of some pretention, a genuine Frenchman by the way, we approached him with a view to trading our horses for fresh ones. He did not seem very favorably impressed with our proposal or, if he was, appreciating our sore necessity, he intended to make us pay for the exchange, as indeed he did. We first addressed him in English, then finding he was a Frenchman, we spoke to him in French, hoping it might have some influence. (Every one in our section spoke French, nearly all being of French extraction.) But it did no good. He made us pay all he could.

I began to feel very much fatigued, as I had spent three nights without sleep and one of them in debauchery.

We were now only about five miles behind the pair, but, freshly mounted, we pushed on with renewed vigor, expecting soon to overtake them.

They were making direct for Black River and we knew from the direction that they intended to cross the river. Black River is about five hundred feet wide and at this time of the year the banks are

full. There was no bridge, and people were taken across on a rickety old ferry boat. The boat was drawn across the river by passing two pulleys at the front and rear of the boat over a guy rope suspended from bank to bank. Another lighter rope was suspended above the guy rope, enabling the ferryman to pull his boat hand over hand from one side to the other, the guy rope keeping it from floating down stream.

We arrived at the river just in time to see Lenore step off the ferry on the other side. This was a bad check to us, for I knew that before the ferry could be brought back and we ferried over, they would have a good start of us.

I hollered over to the ferryman that those people were runaways and if he would hold them until I could get over that I would give him five hundred dollars.

Sanders was equal to the occasion. Quietly drawing his pistol, he presented it to the ferryman's head, telling him to cut his boat loose from the guy line and let it float down stream. To this, of course, the ferryman objected, but looking into Sanders' eyes and then down the muzzle of his pistol, he found the argument so persuasive that he readily complied with the demand.

As the boat swung loose from its holding Sanders quickly stepped ashore, at the same time throwing the boatman a roll of bills, that served as

a balm to the wounded spirit of the ferryman, who devoted his time now to saving his boat, which was rapidly passing down with the current.

The guilty pair were again about to mount their jaded horses, when up rode two niggers leading several light saddle horses with the evident intention of crossing the ferry.

Sanders took in the situation at a glance. Approaching the two niggers with a pistol in each hand, he ordered them to change the saddles from his horses to their fresh ones.

Seeing what was going on, we opened fire. We did it more with the intention of intimidating them than of hitting them, as Lenore persistently kept herself between Sanders and us, evidently knowing we would not shoot her.

After the fresh horses had been saddled and Lenore was mounted, Sanders quickly stepped to the reel that held taut the guy rope that stretched across the river, and with a sharp knife quickly sundered it, also at the same time cutting the hand rope above. The strong current caught the ropes and immediately sent them trailing down stream. Then, mounting, Sanders and Lenore rode away.

My companions gave a cheer as they were hidden from view by a bend in the road, remarking that it was about the most gallant thing they had ever seen. Even I myself admitted that my respect for Sanders was very much increased.

Now, as they were gone and as a mad body of water was between us, it was a great problem how we could get to the other side. If Sanders had not cut the guy rope we might have got the ferry back after a long struggle, and making her fast to the guy line could have got over, but cutting the guy rope defeated all attempts in that direction.

The niggers on the other side seemed stupified at what had happened and did not appear to comprehend the situation.

I hollered over to them and asked them who they belonged to. They hollered back that they belonged to Massa Dunkirk, whose plantation was about a mile west of us.

The niggers on the other side of the river now had three horses besides the jaded ones Sanders had left. As there were four in my party, that would mount only three of us, leaving one of our party behind to settle with the planter that owned the horses, on the supposition that a statement of the situation would make it all right.

Hollering across to the niggers, I asked them if they knew of any skiff thereabouts.

They said they knew of one about two miles up the river.

I told them I would give them five silver dollars if they would bring down the skiff and row us across the river.

After a moment's consultation one, starting on

a run up the river, hollered back that he would do it. The other nigger remained with the horses.

In a reasonable length of time he returned with the skiff. Removing our trappings from our horses, we put them in the boat, and he pulled us to the other side. Paying the nigger his five silver dollars as promised, we ordered him to put our saddles on their horses at once.

They hesitated at first, saying that they did not know what ole Massa would do about that.

We told them that we had left a man on the other side to make it all right with the master.

So, saddling our horses as directed, we mounted and rode away. Lenore and Sanders by this time had at least three hours start of us and, as they were as well mounted as ourselves, no doubt they were riding as fast as we could hope to; but we pushed on the best we could, and had probably ridden eight or ten miles when the roads forked, one leading to the right the other to the left.

Two of the white trash, who were building a cabin near by, stopped their work as we rode up and stepped down to the forks. I thought this strange, as people of that class are not in the habit of bothering themselves about others that pass by, and, as a rule, are uncommunicative. They were playing a deeper game than I supposed, however, for as they approached the forks of the road they paid no attention to us, who, of course, they must

have seen, and were about to walk by without noticing us when I said, "Have you seen a young man and woman pass by here lately?" One of them answered by asking me, "Say, General, has youns got any *terbaccer*?" Of course I used tobacco in common with the other people of that time, and handed him my entire plug, saying, "Keep it. Now, tell me, did you see a man and woman ride by here on horse-back?" "Yes," he said, "weuns were working on de cabin and de young man rode up and asked weuns the way to Wainsburge. Jim said to him, 'youns keep dat road and dat will take youns there.' So dey rode on towards Wainsburge."

Without waiting to hear anything more, we dashed up the road we supposed they had taken. It was now about dark and Wainsburge was about eight miles away. Believing that the runaways must be much fatigued and would stay at Wainsburge all night, we hurried on there.

Wainsburge is a small place of two or three hundred inhabitants, and any strangers riding into the place would be readily noticed. On arriving there, we found that no persons answering to our description had been there.

My companions and myself noticed that when we rode away from the men who were building the cabin, we heard a low laugh, and now believed that they had sent us astray purposely.

Feeling so fatigued that we could no longer keep

our saddles, we decided to stay in Wainsburge all night for rest and sleep.

After we had taken our supper and were sitting on the porch in front of the little tavern, a nigger approached me and said, "Boss, Ise hauling logs today down by de creek where de white men am building de cabin. Dey done tole youns dem folks come dis way, but dat young man done give dem men a whole handful of silver money if dey would put youns on de wrong track, deed dey did boss."

I could now account for that little laugh we heard as we left them, but thought nothing of it then for, after giving them the tobacco, they seemed anxious for us to overtake the fleeting pair. But it was late and we were too tired now to do anything, so giving the nigger a half a dollar, we went to bed, glad of the opportunity to stretch ourselves out in a comfortable sleep.

I knew nothing more till the servants of the house called me the next morning.

After breakfast we paid our bills, ordered our horses, and were about to start when Major Brandon said, "Colonel, we will never catch them folks and damn if I ain't tired of the whole business. Besides, that fellow is as sharp as lightning and, to tell the truth, I rather like him." It would appear that my two companions had agreed upon this speech, for Wilkens said, "Them are my sentiments too, Colonel." This was a damper upon me,

for now I myself had begun to doubt if we would overtake them. They had, probably, by this time got on a steamboat and would be north before we could do anything.

Being rather crest-fallen, we gave up the chase and started towards home. After learning the shortest road back to the ferry where we had left our comrade, we mozied along, not failing, before we left Wainsburge, to get our flask filled with what we then regarded as needful.

On reaching the ferry, we found our friend and told him we had given up the chase. He laughed and said that probably it was just as well.

Our horses were so rested that, arranging things satisfactorily to Judge Dunkirk, we continued our journey toward home. Returning to the planter's where we first got fresh horses, we told him we had given up the chase and concluded to let the fugitives go.

My old friend, the planter, said, "Colonel, I think you acted wisely. He is a darn nice appearing fellow and I think the girl will not do bad in marrying him. In fact, if he comes back and wants one of my girls I will not object."

This made me feel better, and we started home more jovial than would be supposed under the circumstances.

After reaching home I did not care to meet any

of my old associates so I stayed on the plantation and kept sober.

A few days later I received the following letter from Lenore:

ST. CHARLES HOTEL,
NEW ORLEANS, April 16.

DEAR PAPA:—

Jack and I are married. Enclosed find copy of certificate. Nothing but your forgiveness is wanting now to make me absolutely happy.

I know you will like Jack when you know him better. We take a steamer for New York, which sets sail at three o'clock today. Write us, "General Delivery, New York City."

Your loving daughter,

LENORE.

P. S. The last you saw of us was at the ferry. We then bore towards the Mississippi, passing by where there were two men building a cabin. Jack hired them to set you wrong. Getting directions from them, we started towards the Mississippi, reaching a small landing a few miles below Nathez. Jack told the people there we were just married and were on our wedding tour to New Orleans, and would like to leave our horses there till our return.

We did not have long to wait for a boat. Soon one came steaming down the river and being hailed it lay to and we got aboard, arriving in New Orleans all right. Married in an hour after we got there.

Lo.

CHAPTER V.

Surene and myself, up to this time, had sat almost unmoved, listening to the old man's story.

As he ceased speaking Surene remarked, "What a happy ending."

He looked up with sorrow written in every lineament of his face and said, "Would to God this was the ending."

Burying his face in his hand, his great frame shook with emotion. Remaining silent for a few moments as if communing with his thoughts, he again burst forth as if addressing some unknown power, "Why did the fates conspire to lead me to this horrible end? Why was I allowed to leave the earth's surface to wander up and down these beautiful plains consumed with remorse? Why, before that fatal day, was my body not burned and the ashes scattered to the west winds that there should remain no trace or remembrance of a murderer whose life was but a curse to his fellows, who bore his family down to ruin, whose death was a cause of thanksgiving among a down-trodden people, who had been driven without mercy and whose whole life on the earth's surface can only be likened to that of a demon?"

At this, Surene's whole sympathy was awakened. She cried in alarm, "Do not talk that way, unhappy man, even if your life has been as bad as you would lead us to suppose, there is yet hope. You may be redeemed from your sins, and the atonement for your past life is yet in your power."

He answered her, "No, poor girl, no. He that leaves the earth's surface with his sins upon him, passes the bounds of atonement. I know full well that my sainted wife and daughter are walking the golden streets of the celestial city and kneeling before the great white throne of the Almighty pleading with Him to be merciful to me, whom they once loved and now would reclaim. But it is impossible. The laws of God are as unchangeable as rocks of adamant. All hopes of my entering the Celestial abode are past. I know I can enter the beautiful Surey by being purified by the fires of hell, but I cannot bring myself to enter that great gulf and the inferno which will lead me to this happiness."

We asked him to explain to us what he meant by these remarks. He answered, "You will know later on."

After a moment's pause he said:

"Let me continue my tale of horror and tell how I came here.

Considering for a short time Lenore's letter and

missing her so sadly from the plantation, I wrote her a short note saying, "You and Jack are forgiven. Come home."

In a few weeks I received the following:

NEW YORK, June 21.

DEAR PAPA:

Your note—I cannot say letter—makes me extremely happy. Jack is everything to me and I do not doubt he would be to you if you only knew him better.

We are beautifully situated and Jack does not consider favorably the idea of returning south. He belongs to one of the best families, and his business opportunities are much better here than there. I asked him the other day why he ever went south. "Why, Lo," he said, "it paid me to go south, didn't it?" I told him I could not see why he should leave this beautiful home and surroundings to go south and teach a parish school. He laughingly replied, "I went south for adventure and a beautiful southern wife. I got both, so now I am content to remain north. But of course any time you wish to visit your father I will have no objections to your doing so. But would it not be better to induce your father to visit us?"

I told Jack that when I went home I wished him to go with me. Jack is very busy now and sees no opportunity to leave; so would it not be better for you to come and visit us?

We often laugh over our adventure and the hard ride we had on leaving Louisiana.

But "All's well that ends well."

Your loving daughter,
Lenore.

P. S. I should have told you where to address
123 Beekman Place, New York City, New York.

Lo."

When correspondence had continued for about a year, I could stand it no longer without seeing the girl, so I concluded to go to New York and see her.

I found her elegantly situated, surrounded with every thing she could desire, seemingly very contented and happy with her new found friends.

I was received very kindly by her and Jack, yet when I would speak of their going south Jack would always demur. But I finally persuaded Lenore to return home with me, without any objection from him. So it was arranged that she should go with me and after two or three months that Jack should come down for her. This appeared all right so we returned south by steamer to New Orleans.

Lenore's friends received her with every demonstration of affection, the three months passing very pleasantly and quietly. On Jack's arrival he was received very kindly in all directions, not only because he was the husband of Lenore, but the way in which he carried her off made him a hero among the young people of the neighborhood.

Old Judge Lupue's hospitality knew no bounds. He appeared to think as much of Jack as if he was his own son.

All went right as long as I kept sober, but I soon got to drinking again. One day I returned

home and told Jack that if he wished to live with my daughter he must remain in Louisiana. He saw, however, that I had been drinking so he did not care to argue with me, trying to excuse himself by saying he had an engagement over at the Judge's. We would talk about this later and make it all right.

This I would not have. I told him the thing must be settled right now.

He said that his business interests would not admit of his remaining in Louisiana, and that he could make more money in New York.

I replied that my daughter had always been raised as a lady of consequence and that I did not care to have her associate with shopkeepers and their families.

This angered Jack, but he walked off without speaking. Going into the mansion, he told Lenore that he thought the wisest thing to do was to go to New York at once as things were growing unpleasant. Lenore acquiesced and said she was ready to return to New York at any time. Jack, not wishing to cause any talk in the neighborhood, thought it would be best not to leave too precipitately, so he spread the report that they would return to New York in a week or ten days.

This angered me, for I thought I should first be consulted about the time they were to return. So I inwardly determined that Lenore should not return with her husband to New York. Now the

Major was one of my most particular friends. He was also a friend of Jack's. One day when we were drinking together I told him that my intention was not to let Lenore return with Jack. The Major replied, "I think, Colonel, you are making a mistake. She is no longer under your control and if she wishes to return with him I do not see how you can prevent it at least lawfully."

I replied, "I will prevent it at all hazards." So there was no more said about the matter until one day about the time they were to leave for home.

Drunk as usual, I told Jack that he should not take Lenore back to New York with him and that he was an adventurer and had only married my daughter on the supposition that she had a large fortune. Jack's face grew white and his lips trembled as he said, "I will not stay under your roof another hour to be insulted in this way." I told him he could leave as soon as he liked, but that he could not take Lenore. As I made this remark Lenore stepped into the room.

She looked hurt and said, "Papa, I love you both but you are not treating Jack right, and my first duty is plainly to follow my husband. When Jack leaves the house, I leave also."

This inflamed me beyond endurance, and I told Jack to leave immediately, at the same time putting my hand upon Lenore, saying she could not go. She struggled to free herself when Jack

stepped up, took hold of her, and told me to release my hold. He was a powerful man and when I refused to let her go he dealt me a stinging blow that felled me to the floor.

I was stunned for a moment and when I recovered, Jack had Lenore in his arms and was carrying her down the front steps.

I was armed, as was every one in those days, so drawing my pistol, I shot him in the back. He moved but a few steps further, when, setting Lenore down, he reeled, then fell dead upon the walk. Lenore screamed. Throwing herself on his prostrate form, she called the servants to bring water. Failing to resuscitate him, she swooned and I thought for a moment that she also was dead. Picking her up and dashing some water in her face, I found that she revived. Carrying her into the house, I put her down and said, "Lenore, are you hurt?" She answered me with a laugh so wild and maniacal that it chilled my very blood. I knew then that her reason was dethroned. As this tragedy was being enacted several of the neighbors who were riding by on horse-back, dismounted and rushed in to learn the cause of the terrible affair. The tale was soon told.

The party being some of Judge Lupue's followers, a litter was immediately improvised, and Jack's remains were taken to the Judge's. The news soon flew over the neighborhood and in a short time it

seemed as though every man for miles around was at the mansion, the sheriff, of course, among the rest. Putting his hand upon me, he said, "Colonel, you must go with me and I hope you will do so without force." My first impulse was to shoot him and then myself, but as several of his deputies were about him I knew I would not be permitted to draw my pistol. So, without resistance, I was disarmed and taken to the parish jail.

Left alone, I now had time to think over what had happened and to realize the enormity of my crime. I called lustily for whiskey, but the jailer said he had orders to allow none to pass into my cell. I believe that if I had had the means to take my own life I would have done so at once, but I had been disarmed of everything I had, even a pocket knife.

For a time I was refused all communication with the outside world. Later on, the Major called at my cell. Peering through the grating, he said, "Colonel, it pains me beyond measure to see you in this plight." I answered, "I care little for myself but how is Lenore?" He hesitated for a moment and I said, "Do not try to save my feelings but tell me exactly, how is Lenore? I wish to know the truth." He said, "Colonel, if you must know the truth, she is a raving maniac, and the doctors say, past all hope."

I sank into my chair and for a few moments was

unable to speak. Recovering I said, "Major, we have always been friends, and now I ask you as a last and only favor that you give me your pistol."

He said, "Colonel, I will not murder you neither will I lend you the means to murder yourself," at the same time passing through the grating a pint flask of whiskey. I drank the contents without stopping, handing him back the flask. I hoped that this would drown my misery for a short time at least, but, strange to tell, owing to my terribly excited condition it had not the least effect upon me.

The Major, promising to call every day, left, saying, "Colonel, keep up your spirits, it will be all right yet."

My greatest grief was not for myself but for Lenore. I was now visited daily by the Major, my overseer, my lawyers, and many others. Several attempts were made to release me on bail but they were unavailing as the deed was considered an out and out murder. You may rest assured that old Judge Lupue was not slow in securing all the evidence possible against me. Unfortunately for me some of his retainers were passing at the time, so they could swear positively that they saw me shoot Jack. My lawyers gave up all hopes of trying to prove me innocent, but bent their energies to proving my act justifiable. Time dragged on but I still remained in jail. I heard daily from Lenore, but instead of improving she was steadily growing

worse, so much so that the doctors finally concluded to send her to an asylum without consulting me. As the asylum was a considerable distance away I could hear from her only occasionally, and when I did, the report was not encouraging. The doctors of the asylum, after giving her a thorough examination, pronounced her incurable and further declared that the terrible strain upon her weak and frail constitution would probably soon end her life.

I had not long to wait for the climax. One day I received word that Lenora had passed away without regaining her reason, even for a moment.

I was now accused in the neighborhood of double murder. Not only had I shot Jack but I had been the indirect cause of Lenora's death. When my case came to trial the feeling in the parish was very bitter against me.

My lawyers did everything possible in my defense. But after a protracted trial of over a week, the jury found me guilty of murder in the first degree and in due time the sentence of death, by hanging, was passed upon me. I was so much depressed in spirits at the loss of my entire family that I cared little what became of me, but as time wore on and I still remained in jail, my desire to live returned.

My lawyers applied for a new trial, which, after a long wrangling over legal technicalities, was granted. They secured extensions from time to

time, hoping that public opinion might change in my favor.

About this time an incident happened in the neighborhood which turned the sentiment in my favor rather than against me.

A steamer had been lying in the river for some time under the pretense of buying sugar. She was a light sea-goer and carried the English colors. After buying considerable sugar and cotton, one night she disappeared; at the same time several niggers from different plantations, who had been engaged in loading her, disappeared. It was the immediate conclusion of the people that she was a craft sent from the north to steal niggers. Of course, they had no positive evidence that the niggers were aboard the craft but as they were gone, this seemed the natural conclusion.

During this time my lawyers had set afloat the story that I had offered Jack my plantation and all my niggers, reserving a small competency for myself if he would remain south. On his refusal to own nigger property because he did not think it was right, the quarrel had arisen which led to his death.

Of course, this was a pure lie as I had never spoken to Jack on the subject, but it had the effect of turning the feeling that was against me into prejudice in my favor. One year had elapsed before I came to the second trial. As I was very

rich, large amounts of money had been spent to secure a jury for acquittal.

The second trial was a farce. I was acquitted as promptly as I was convicted before. Old Judge Lupue was not backward in expressing his opinion as to how the acquittal was brought about, and his assertions led to many fights and quarrels but did not change the opinions of honest men.

Leaving the jail to men less guilty than myself, I returned to my plantation determined to hold myself aloof from society and spend the balance of my days as much in seclusion as was possible. Having been fond of hunting all my life and now being practically ostracised I devoted my entire time to that sport.

Near my plantation, and running through a low and swampy district was a small river, that, a few miles below, ran into a cavern in a low bluff and was swallowed up. This river had always been the wonder of the neighborhood as it dashed down with great force and disappeared from view, apparently emptying into a hole. Along and near this river was my hunting ground. I had a row boat and kept it at small village near by, riding to and from the plantation on horse back. I always took with me, on these occasions, a nigger about eighteen years of age, whom we called Jim. He rowed the boat, took care of the game, cared for the horses, and did everything else that was re-

quired of him. On this hunting trip, as on all others, we carried a jug of whiskey with us, every morning getting it replenished at the grocery in the village. This was my last day on earth. We went up the river in a skiff, Jim rowing in silence as usual, for I did not care to talk to him, and after we had got probably three or four miles above the small town, Jim made her fast and we started along the edge of the swamp, ready for whatever might turn up. We had not tramped long when I saw feeding beside a small pond three or four fat, sleek deer, apparently happy and unconcerned. Being a good shot, in a moment I brought down a beautiful doe about two years old. Telling Jim that that was enough for one day, I ordered him to shoulder the deer and put it into the skiff. The day was now fairly spent, and feeling hungry, I told Jim to make some coffee and prepare the lunch he had brought with him in the skiff, for we always took with us a supply of food, as we sometimes stayed in the woods all night. After eating what I cared for, I stepped into the stern of the boat waiting for Jim to eat his lunch preparatory to rowing the boat down the river. While stopping for our refreshments, I had set my favorite gun against a tree and had gone off and forgotten it. We had rowed about a mile down the river before I noticed that my gun was missing. I asked him where it was. He said he didn't know. I told him I recol-

lected setting it against a tree where we had lunched, and he must go back and get it. He started back on a run returning soon saying he could not find it. I replied, "A chuckle-headed nigger could never find anything," and ordered him to pull the boat back to the place where we had lunched as I knew it must be there. But the gun was gone and could not be found anywhere. So I felt sure it had been stolen. Annoyed at this and having no one else to blame but poor Jim, I scolded him for not taking care of things. He replied, "Massa Jass, you always takes care of your own gun and never 'lows me to touch it."

I replied, "I did not ask you to touch it but you should have told me that I was going away without it."

He spoke up more impudently than I had ever known him to speak before saying, "I has everything else to look after, Massa Jass, I thinks you might look after your own gun."

This enraged me so that I picked up one of the oars and struck him over the head with it, having no intention of killing him, but, in keeping with the rest of my ill luck, I hit him in a vital spot and he was dead. I did not regret the death of the nigger as much as the value that went with him, knowing that that blow had cost me a thousand dollars. I had no fear of any legal proceedings against me for killing the nigger, but in our neigh-

borhood to kill a nigger in anger was considered at least bad form. There being no way of bringing him back to life, I threw him over into the river, intending to report that he had run away while in the swamp.

It was now late in the day, and the sun was getting well behind the trees. Hoping it would be after dark before I got back to town, as I would be asked by the idlers along the river bank what had become of the nigger, I felt it better not to hurry.

Letting the skiff float with the current, I devoted myself to the jug and its contents. Influenced by the continual imbibing, I fell asleep. How long I slept I never knew but on awakening the boat was plunging with great fury down what appeared to be a strange rapids. As I was bewildered it took me a long time to understand the situation and to realize that the river was being swallowed up and that the boat was rushing down the terrible chute.

As it slowly dawned upon me that I was lost, my life passed before me as a panorama. I knew nothing could save me, no oarsman in the world could have pulled against that current. The horror of the situation with its threatening future was as a book of fate spread before me.

on either side of the boat and in reach of the oars I could see high jagged rocks rearing their ugly heads and appearing to frown upon me. Knowing that I could not arrest my way to certain death I de-

voted myself to lighting matches in hopes of peering ahead.

Not having courage or manhood enough to meet death bravely, I drank heavily from the contents of the jug. My nerves could no longer resist this powerful stimulant so, sinking down heavily in the bottom of the boat, I remained for many hours unconscious.

Upon again recovering my senses and trying to realize what it all meant and how I came there, it slowly came back to me where I was and that I was lost. Realizing the danger of the situation, my mind became confused, and as I was suffering with intense thirst, I fumbled about the bottom of the boat to find our tin cup. Securing it at last and dipping it into the river, I quenched my thirst and tried to eat some of the food left from our lunch on the shore. This I could not do, for more liquor was all I desired in the way of nourishment. As I had drunk heavily, the quantity had rapidly decreased and must soon be exhausted. Knowing from past experience that if I broke off drink at once I would be crazed, I determined to husband what little whiskey I had left by taking it gradually. My control over myself was less than I had supposed, for after taking one drink I could not resist another, and so on till I had drained the last drop. In my weak and exhausted condition the whiskey soon prostrated me. Laying myself again

in the bottom of the boat, I floated on. Of the time I lay in this condition I can form no idea, but know that on awakening from this drunken stupor, I was crazed for want of more drink. As it was impossible for me to obtain the liquor I drank heavily of water. Nature could no longer resist these terrible onslaughts and I soon grew deathly sick. Floating on in this terrible gloom and knowing that no human help could avail me, I often roused up with the intention of throwing myself into the river, which was now quiet, and ending my miserable existence. I either had no strength to throw myself out of the boat or lacked will-power, I know not which. But manifestly the fates had otherwise decreed, for, after suffering untold agonies, I knew no more. Death had come to my relief. How long I floated down this river of darkness no one will ever know, as all is hidden in the shadow of the past; but when my boat brought me out of darkness into the light of this valley, life was restored to me and to the deer that I had slain and laid beside me in the boat. This may appear strange to you but you should know that this is the Valley of Resurrection, and all that go to hell pass through this valley and are resurrected from the dead and reincarnated

Finding myself and the deer alive and possessed of all the feelings characteristic of our earthly nature, I guided my boat to the shore and after mak-

ing her fast, the deer and myself were again on land. My first desire was for drink. That being unobtainable, we searched for food, the deer finding plenty in every direction. I, of course, could not find food so readily, so I determined to slay and eat my companion, not knowing at the time that death in this valley is impossible. After several vain attempts to kill my companion, I ate as food the fruit, which is abundant in every part of the plain. But as I see you have learned to eat all the foods I discovered, no description of them is needed. My bad treatment of the poor animal here and on the earth's surface also, caused it to leave me. I have followed it for years trying to win its affection. My tale is done.

Then, without a word, he grasped his staff and walked rapidly away towards the falls.

CHAPTER VI.

Surene and I sat without moving for some moments after the old man had left us.

Finally turning to me she said, 'How strange, how strange! I cannot comprehend this strange wanderer. Speak, Joe, what do you think of him?'

'I am as much at a loss as you, Surene, but where is the deer?'

'He left us on the approach of the stranger, and has not been with us since, and I believe that it is the same deer of which the old man spoke.'

'I have no doubt of it, Surene.'

'Joe, I can not say that I am glad to have met the old man. He has left us in as much and even more mystery than before. If this is the Valley of Resurrection, as he says, and the spirits of the dead from the earth are again clothed in flesh here, preparatory to entering hell, why is it that we are alone and that none of the resuscitated beings of the earth's surface are here as a proof of his assertion?'

'I cannot answer that, Surene. In fact, I am more mystified, if possible, than yourself. One thing you no doubt recollect, that he told us that

if we would have all knowledge of the outside and inside of the earth's crust, we might obtain it by bathing in the river of light. Knowledge among the people of the earth is power, and to me it seems to be the greatest of all blessings, while ignorance, which places us within the power of others, is the curse that has riveted and still rivets the chains of slavery upon our people."

"I do not care to know the great future. You may regard it as a weakness in me, Joe, but I frankly admit that I think there is great tribulation in the future, of which I would not care to know."

"That may be true, Surene. It may be best that we remain in ignorance, but I have an undying desire for this knowledge. If you do not object too seriously I will plunge into the river of light, obtaining the knowledge that will direct us aright. If you do not care to know all things I will not insist even on your accompanying me to the river's bank, and afterwards I will impart only such knowledge as you may wish to know."

After hesitating a few moments, Surene replied, "Joe, if you feel that way, go. I and Bay will remain here to await your return."

Leaving my wife, I turned in the direction of the river of light. On arriving there and divesting myself of my few poor rags, I plunged head first into this wonderful river. The sensation was de-

lightful, the fluid exceedingly buoyant for I was immediately borne to the surface, where I could desport myself as I would, but could not sink. Remaining in the fluid but a short time, I stepped on shore. My whole being was changed. Ignorance, which had been the bane of my life, was supplanted by a thorough knowledge of all things, earthly and unearthly.

I knew the beginning, I can not say the end, of man, for to man life is eternal, but I could see his final state. Being now exceedingly happy, I returned to Surene, and with gladness in my heart informed her that we were saved from the tortures of hell, and that if we had died before leaving the earth's surface we would not have been lost but would have been gladly received among the blessed or chosen of earth.

Our lives had been so simple, so fraught with oppression, so devoted to the great and all-wise Governor of men, that the little sin of which we had been guilty had been washed away by our suffering.

Surene for a short time could not comprehend my meaning, turning to me she said, "Although I do not fully understand you, Joe, yet I know from what you say that we are among the redeemed."

"I will give you all the information of the future you desire, but for fear you may be pained by learning of the sufferings of others, I will volun-

teer nothing, but will answer all questions as you ask them."

"Tell me then," she asked, "If this is the Valley of Resurrection, why are we alone?"

"This is a vast plain, Surene, and we are not on the arteries of communication between the inside and outside of the earth, but further down our old river joins another river vastly larger than ours, over which the damned are transported."

"Tell me again," she continued, "where is the Surey of which the old man spoke. I did not understand him."

"Between us and Surey there is a vast gulf into which the two rivers empty. Surey is on the other side."

"Can we behold these wonders?"

I replied, "We can."

"Then how far are they from here?"

"Many miles, darling, but if you desire we will bend our steps in that direction and, standing upon our own bank, we can view the wonders that pass before us."

Knowing now that we had nothing to fear from the people of Surey, that might pass over us, we traveled over the open plain with no fear or misgiving, poor old Bay following behind apparently heart-broken at the loss of his companion. Our march was uninterrupted save when we stopped

for rest or nourishment. We took no heed of time but wandered leisurely through groves, meadows, and open plains. We had for a long time been making our way towards the gulf when in the distance we discovered a deer that we believed to be ours. With ears erect, he stood upon an eminence looking intently as if trying to convince himself that we were his friends. Old Bay, on discovering him, broke away at a furious rate towards him. The deer seemed satisfied that we were his friends and approached rapidly to meet the dog. The meeting was very affectionate. As we all got together again it was a family reunion, Surene putting her arms around the deer's neck and caressing it as though it were a child. We were now a happy group and continued our march in peace and contentment.

I will not attempt to describe the little incidents of our journey, but in due time we arrived at the confluence of the two rivers. The River of Death was much larger and darker than ours and apparently more gloomy. As my eyes wandered up its banks I saw that they were rocky and barren. Farther up, the river appeared to immerge out of gloom and darkness. About a quarter of a mile below where the two rivers united, they emptied into the Gulf of Turmoil. We were standing on the bank of the river opposite where the new river, or River of Death, united with ours when a large

craft hove in sight floating slowly down what we named the River of Death.

I should say that the craft was about a thousand feet long and probably two hundred feet wide. It was built somewhat like a scow. Its bulwarks were not over three feet from the water's surface. Outside and passing entirely around it, was a low platform extending probably two feet from the side of the boat and about one foot above the water.

There was no covering on this strange vessel, and the deck, if deck it might be called, was nearly on a level with the top of the craft, thereby leaving the bulwarks but a few inches above the deck.

On the stern of the craft and guiding her course was a pilot, whose right hand rested on the helm. This pilot was called Death. He was tall and strong-limbed with long silvery hair and beard, not repulsive in appearance but with a face rather kind, yet stern. His compressed lips showed a changeless and unalterable will that nothing could turn from its purpose; his legs and arms were bare, bony, and muscular. About his waist was a short robe or gown of plain grayish blue. His head was bare and his long grey beard covered his broad naked chest. He wore no ornaments and appeared with no instrument of death. He was indifferent to his surroundings and the doings of others. His apparent aim was to guide the boat

aright, heedless of the cry for longer earthly existence.

Pacing with measured tread back and forth in front of Death, was a small figure apparently not more than half the height of the pilot. He was draped in black and in his right hand he held an hour glass, on which his eyes were constantly bent save when speaking with Death. By his side and suspended from his girdle hung a book. Ever and anon he would consult this strange volume, holding it up to Death as he pointed out the name of some poor mortal whose sands of life had run their course. This was Father Time.

On the bow of this craft stood a woman of medium height and graceful form. Her hair was long, loose and of a metallic luster; her eyes were dark, piercing and soulless. She wore a smile but it seemed that the play of her lips had no mirth or good will. She was dressed in a magnificent robe of scarlet and about her waist was twined a serpent. This was Sin.

Around the low platform near the water's edge could be seen the three furies, each vying with the other in deformity and hideousness. The first, whose face was red, with yellow and black spots, had unkempt black hair falling in wild confusion over her neck and shoulders. About her loins was wound a coarse garment with stripes of alternate black and red extending part way to her knees,

and it was fringed with rings apparently of brass. Her feet were bare and around her ankles were twined vipers as anklets. About her neck and poised as a crown on her head were yellow and black serpents.

The second figure, taller and more angular than the first and, if possible, more hideous, was partly draped in a black velvet robe bespangled here and there with stars of brass. Her feet were bare and on her head she wore a brazen crown, like the queens of earth. Scorpions and vipers were chasing each other and hiding in the folds of her dress.

The third figure was shorter than the two preceding and even more venomous looking than her sisters. About her loins was girt a torn and ragged gown that reached part way to her knees. The rest of her figure was bare and, to add to her ugliness, her eyes were blood shot and glaring, her teeth protruding and fang like.

Every inch of the deck was occupied by all manner of people who had been restored to flesh and blood when they reached this Valley of Resurrection. Now they were on the way to the inferno, each one engaged as they were wont on the earth's surface.

Sitting around tables laden with liquors were men and women clad in the most sumptuous apparel, hilarious with drink shouting and laughing, rehearsing coarse jokes, and conducting themselves in every way as when on the earth.

Around other tables was piled money of various denominations, while all kinds of games were being played for its possession.

Some were singing coarse songs, while others, lying on the deck prostrated by drink, were being trampled upon by those equally vicious but who had not yet fallen.

Gliding in and out among the throng was the harlot, her cheek tinged with the fatal crimson that bespoke her former life of dissipation.

Sitting flat on the deck of the vessel was the millionaire. On either side of him were piles of gold, red with the blood of his victims, while his steely eyes, hook nose, and bony claw-like hands told the story of his earthy career. Near by sat the misers, equally vile in appearance, who would occasionally grab each other's gold; then a skirmish would ensue in which they would claw and gouge each other, finally sitting back in their places with a chuckle of satisfaction if they had obtained by force any of their companion's gold.

There were people of all trades and professions indiscriminately mixed trying to wrench from each other their jewels and wealth.

The minister with his smiling face was among them apparently trying to lead them from their wicked ways, yet in reality flattering the harlots.

The lawyer was there trying to secure the

rights of his clients; pretending to settle the affairs of widows while stealing their substance.

The doctor was there apparently trying to heal the sick yet indifferent to the result if his fee was secured.

The merchant prince was there who had taken advantage of the poor shop girl's necessity and forced her to work for a paltry four dollars a week.

The banker was there who had stolen the earnings of the poor, and as he counted his cash, he looked cautiously around as if expecting to be discovered and imprisoned.

The judge was there who had sold the cause of right for paltry gold.

The politician was there with his string of lies, misrepresentations, and corruptions.

The legislator was there counting the money he had received as bribes from corporations and money-eyed corrupters.

The shop girl, the poor widow, the artisan, the common laborer and other "mud sills" of the earth's surface were not there. Their trials, oppressions, and wrongs while on the earth had atoned for their sins, and from the other side of the river of Death I could see them landing on the shore to be borne away by convoys of angels to mansions not made by human hands, eternal in the sky" I was much amazed at seeing the poor beings

carried away by angels, but as I recalled their life of toil, suffering, and degradation while on the earth I could but feel how wise and just was the Almighty.

The craft floated slowly but surely on, as it neared the gulf, consternation, dismay, and fear seized the victims. They could hear the cold, vicious laugh of Sin and the furies and could see the monster at the mouth of the river ready to swallow them up and part them from their idols.

Surene and I looked toward the gulf. There we saw the dragon with seven heads and ten horns. The deformity of this dreadful monster is beyond description. His body was somewhat like that of a toad but of enormous proportions, the part above the water being, I should say, fifty feet high by one hundred and fifty feet across. Around his enormous body at regular intervals were projected heads with necks from thirty to forty feet long. Between each of these heads was a horn of the same length, and in the forehead of each head was one eye. He appeared to be without a nose but had a mouth of immense size. He also had long feelers, which reached in every direction and were so innumerable that his prey could not escape him. This monster was stationed at the mouth of the river so that nothing could pass into the gulf without being devoured by him.

As we gazed in wonder at the monster, the craft

laden with its victims reached the gulf. The commotion on the boat since the eyes of the damned had discovered the monster had increased and was terrible to behold. The shrieks of these wretches were only equaled by the peals of laughter from Sin and the furies, who seemed glorying in their work of destruction.

When the work of the furies began, they stepped from their low platform onto the deck and with their sharp spears pitched their victims one by one into the sea, where they were immediately picked up by the monster that was waiting to receive them. The groans, shrieks, and curses of the victims as they were thrown into the water were appalling and terrible to hear. Some tried to pray, others endeavored to swallow large amounts of liquor, still others were grabbling at their gold as if they would carry it with them to buy from Satan licenses and favor.

After disposing of its human freight, the boat was put about, passing up stream propelled by no other power than the will of Death. The boat had not been gone long before it returned freighted as before with sin and corruption. Greed, fraud, selfishness, dissipation, curses, and mirthless laughter were on every side as before.

Surene, sickened by the scenes of horror, drew me away saying, "Joe, I have seen enough, let us go."

"I am as ready as you are to leave these scenes, Surene, but where shall we go?"

"Any where, any where. Let us away."

As we wandered along the rock-bound coast of the Gulf of Turmoil, we could see that this body of water was many miles in width and rolled in billows, as if driven by the wind, and yet there was no wind: it was disturbed only by the demons or monsters playing between the mouth of the river, and the inferno, as they conveyed the victims from the crafts to the infernal regions beyond. The country immediately along this coast was rocky, barren, uninviting and desolate, fully in keeping with the horrors beneath.

Wishing to escape from the groans and shrieks of the victims as well as from the roar of the troubled waters, we retraced our steps towards the great falls of light. After several hours' march we were beyond earshot of the scenes we hoped never to look upon again. Journeying leisurely along from day to day, we in time settled ourselves near a small stream whose banks were rich in fruits, flowers, and trees radiant with incomparable foliage. All that was lacking to make these scenes perfect was the song of birds and the low humming of bees. Yet nature was perfect—we could ask no more.

Surene said, "Joe, as you have all knowledge, tell me, are we to remain here always? I would

ask for nothing better, yet still would like to know."

"As we like about that, Surene. In a short time there will be air ships passing over our heads. They know of our presence here, for those who conduct them have bathed in the river of light and have all knowledge, and as I peer into the future, I see them gradually descending to the ground asking us where we are from and why here. I speak of this, Surene, to prepare you for their coming, and further, have no fear, darling, for it will be left entirely with you whether we join them or remain in this lovely spot."

"Joe, tell me about Surey. Is it more lovely than this? Will we be more happy there than here?"

"I will not say as to that, Surene, but this I will promise; if you are not as happy in Surey as here, we can return and for all time and eternity wander up and down these beautiful plains locked as it were in each other's love."

"But, Joe, if we should go with these people of Surey, what would become of our pet, and poor old Bay? Would we leave them here?"

"Let us not talk of that. If left alone, they would have plenty, and would live happily and peacefully together, avoiding the terrible old man whom the deer so sorely mistrusts and fears."

It had been some time now since I had bathed in the river of light and the peculiar effect left up-

on my black skin, which I have spoken of before, began to peel off, leaving me blacker, if possible, than before. This applies only to my skin, as my eye-brows, hair, and eye-lashes remained of a metallic whiteness--no change in the least. Indeed, I shall never be more or less than I am now, for the human form, on entering the Valley of Resurrection, suspends, as it were, further physical development. In short, the propagation of animal and human life is impossible. Should a child of four years of age enter this valley or a man of mature age they would continue for all time unchanged. The child would never grow to manhood; neither would the man grow older. All would remain as upon entering the valley, not even his hair or beard would grow. This only applies to animal life. Vegetable life will grow and ripen into maturity and from that will remain unchanged. As decomposition is impossible, there is no decay. It does not seem in the arrangements of nature that this valley was intended for animal existence. The presence of the animal life here in the persons of the old man, Surene and myself, the dog and deer appeared a violation of Nature's law.

CHAPTER VII.

I took no note of how long Surene and I remained beside this beautiful stream as our happiness was complete. Once when returning from a walk when my eyes were directed for some cause in the direction of Surey, in the distance could be seen two airships standing, as they say at sea, directly for us. I knew they were coming towards us and told Surene that they were coming for, or at least to interview us. We watched them as they approached passing by and landing but a short distance from where we stood. As the people passed from the ships I could see that they were dressed as we had seen them at the falls. As they approached us we advanced to meet them, showing no surprise at their coming. The leader said, "You knew of our coming, you have bathed in the river of light." "Yes," spoke another, "the wanderer has shown him the way to knowledge."

By this time two or three hundred had disembarked from the ships and gathered around us; each in turn shook hands saying, "Son and daughter of misfortune, your sins have been washed away by a life of sorrow, servitude, and oppression. We

have not come for you yet to enter our beautiful Surey, as no one is there except those purified by the fires of hell. Yet if it is the will of God that you be made a part of us the revelation will soon be made. Then we will gladly gather you to us for future life, which will be eternal, then you will be blest and forever happy."

After a moment's silence Surene spoke, "Tell us of Surey. Is it more beautiful than here?"

A woman who had not spoken before stepped forward and with a voice so musically sweet that enchantment seemed to follow every word, said, "Yes, sister, far more beautiful than here, but as I feel well assured but a short time will elapse before you are one of us it were better you see for yourself."

These were the first pure beings I had ever conversed with, and a sense of pleasure and elevation followed. I knew that to live with these perfect people of Surey would be eternal happiness. They were of all molds, as on the earth, but dressed practically alike, perhaps some diversity as to the arrangement of their robes but the quality was the same. The hair of the women hung loose over their shoulders and was of a metallic luster. The hair of the blond type reflected the light as burnished gold, or more correctly speaking, it emitted light. The black or dark brown hair was equally brilliant, yet the light emitted from the deep tresses

was more like burnished silver and little less beautiful. The children's well-kept locks were as beautiful as those of their elders. These people wore upon their feet a manner of sandal or slipper, leaving the upper part of the foot and ankle bare. Their robes extended from the left shoulder well below the knees.

Wound about their waists, as I have described before, were silken scarfs of scarlet, some few blue. The women, or at least most of them, wore garlands of flowers as necklaces. Some had white, pink, and yellow roses woven in their hair, often held in place by rare jewels. The dress of the men and women were practically alike. All of these people, independent of age, were equally beautiful, as the deformities, diseases, and uncomliness they had brought from the earth's surface had been destroyed by the purifying fires of hell. What the young gained in personal appearance by their youth the older gained in maturity and ease of manner. The long flowing white beard of the old man was an offset to the young man's well kept locks. Many of the men both old and young, and occasionally a woman, had silvery white hair, showing they had bathed in the river of light and had all knowledge.

We had been conversing with these favored people but a short time when another smaller ship hove in sight, coming with great rapidity directly towards us. As they noticed it rapidly advancing

they cried as with one voice, "The messenger! The messenger!" She showed much greater speed than the other ships and was much smaller. It was evident from her size and speed that she was what they called her, a messenger. As she neared us she lessened her speed, lowering at the same time. She did not land but, passing slowly within a few feet of the ground, this new ship, "Bearer of Tidings," bespoke us. An old man with long flowing white beard standing upon her deck cried in a loud voice, "I have the revelation. Bring the fugitives to Surey." Without another word, putting about their ship rose in the air, returning as rapidly as they had come.

I received the glad tidings with emotion of gratitude. Surene, who knew less of the future, was somewhat startled, but a few kind words from myself and others reassured her and she gladly embarked with the rest of us, saying as we rose from the ground that she felt a sense of remorse at leaving our lowly companions, the dog and deer. Old Bay gazed after us, barking furiously, as much as to say, "Where are you going without us? When will you be back?" After we had reached an elevation of a few hundred feet the ship was put under way and headed for Surey, traveling with great rapidity. For speed I can make no comparison with anything on the earth's surface, not even the most rapid train. After we were well under

way and not again wishing to look upon that troubled body of water lying between us and Surey, as we passed over it I betook myself inside to see the workings of the ship, her motive power and buoyancy, and how she was propelled through the air with such great rapidity.

The length of the craft was two hundred and ninety feet; her beam, probably sixty feet; her hurricane deck, or top deck over all, was square, from bow to stern about three hundred feet and from leeward to wind ward sixty-five feet. Her hull was like that of a water craft in shape but built of much lighter material, yet she carried ballast. and was a three decker. The pilot house was not on her deck but projected on a line with her hull in front. In the centre and extending vertically to the bottom of the ship was a shaft or air chamber four feet in diameter, to which, at the lower end, was attached a motor, a combination of turbine wheel and exhaust fan. This motor was connected with an axle running horizontally from right to left beamsway of the ship. On either end of the axle, set at angles of about sixty degrees, were paddles. The buoyancy of the ship was obtained by removing the air pressure from her top, or hurricane deck. Unlike air pressure on the earth's surface, in Surey it is entirely vertical, and thirty pounds to the square inch.

We have in Surey all knowledge of mechanism,

mechanical construction, and application of power, and have discovered a substance which is in practical use among us. I cannot say it resists air pressure, but on it the air refuses to press. So when the top, or hurricane deck, of a vessel is covered with this material, she immediately becomes so buoyant that she rises in the air to any height desired.

As it is necessary that we use a certain amount of air pressure to hold the ship at the elevation desired, we have this substance in rolls, one on the front and one on the rear of the hurricane deck. It is so arranged that when the pilot wishes to rise in the air from the ground, he can from his pilot house, with the use of a lever controlling the machinery, unroll the anti-air pressure covering the ship's top, or at least as much of it as he desires. When the ship's top, or hurricane deck, is so covered, the air pressure being removed, she gracefully and rapidly rises from the ground. He holds her in position in mid-air by rolling or unrolling the anti-air pressure. Her motive power is obtained by the air pressing down through the shaft or air chamber upon the motor, thirty pounds to the square inch.

The speed attained when five hundred feet above the ground is probably two hundred miles an hour. When wishing to land, the air is again allowed to press upon her hurricane deck by roll-

ing up the anti-air pressure, at the same time covering partially or altogether the shaft through which the air is pressing on the motor below.

I spent some time inspecting the various appointments of this wonderful ship. Many of the arrangements on her were like those on a first-class steamer on the Mississippi. Her cabins were richly upholstered, her state rooms, or sleeping apartments, much in keeping with ordinary ships, although her timbers were much lighter. After inspecting every part of her, I returned to the cabin to look after Surene. To my surprise on presenting herself she was arrayed in the most sumptuous robes, similar to the other ladies of the cabin. Up to this time I had not thought of my unpresentable appearance in my tattered rags, but will say that Surene's rags and mine were absolutely clean, she being fully impressed with the saying that 'cleanliness was next to godliness.' We considered that bathing our bodies and washing our clothes was always in order.

I was not long left in this disagreeable dilemma, for an old man tapped me on the shoulder, showing me into a state room, saying, "Disrobe yourself and cast your rags into this troubled sea before we have passed over it, that they may not desecrate the sacred land of Surey," at the time presenting me with new clothing.

After arraying myself in this elegant robe, I

stepped out into the cabin with a feeling of elevation and gratitude that I had never before experienced. I knew my life of degradation and servitude was at an end, and rejoiced that if we were not permitted to enter the celestial kingdom, we were at least among the favored of the Almighty. All pride, envy, jealousy, hatred, remorse, and feelings of revenge for past wrongs had been supplanted by love, sympathy, and a strong desire to wrench from the thralldom of sin the victims she held in her grasp.

When I again met Surene I could but feel a renewed admiration for her lovely and almost incomparable beauty, yet I had no feeling of rejoicing that her beauty was superior to others, for as I gazed upon the other women I saw that they were perhaps of a different type, but equally beautiful. There is no jealousy among the people of Surey as to each other's belongings or beauty. The aim of life there is who can best serve and render happy his fellows.

We were traveling at such a terrific rate of speed, it was difficult to see in detail what lay beneath us. Surene and I talked of our surroundings and the radical change in our condition. Feeling that our troubles were all over, we devoted our time and attention to our immediate surroundings and associates. They had ceased to congratulate us and regarded us a part of themselves and community.

The table, reaching the entire length of the cabin, was continuously spread, the covering being of white and of immaculate cleanliness. Dishes for fruit, wrought of gold and precious stones, were piled high with the perfect food. Gold plates with silver knives and forks, were placed at the usual distance, and as many as would serve the guests. Flowers were promiscuously strewn over the table. No call for meals was sounded, each helping himself to the food when he desired. Talking, feasting, walking around in conversation, harmless games and other amusements were intermixed, and each acted the part that suited him best. So we remained at the table for two or three hours, each doing his best to entertain his neighbor. Things were kept to rights by the waiters, who were, almost without exception, black.

Seeing a group of colored people gathered together in one end of the cabin, I approached them, asking why it was that even in Surey the blacks served the whites. One old man answering said, "It is a law of nature and the will of God that the black man serve the white; yet with us it is no servitude, neither is it required of us if one cares not to do it, there is no compulsion. But in Surey the feeling is universal that each serve the other as best he can, and as we all do something, we can best perform our part by serving the whites. There are no idlers in Surey, neither are

there toilers. Labor is not needed for subsistence or comfort, neither can he that works subsist or fare better than he that is idle. As on the earth's surface we have a strong desire to perform some kind of service, not for gain, but purely for love. There is no reward for labor save the satisfaction of seeing something that you have created with your own hands, for the creative feeling is even stronger here than on the earth. With us you will see the most wonderful pieces of mechanism, of which this ship on which we ride is an example. The jewels with which many of our ladies are decorated are another evidence of our mechanical dexterity, but it is useless for me to describe or comment; you will soon see all for yourself." Conversation continued on this subject until the lowering of the ship gave the first intimation of our landing. We had probably been on board this craft twenty-four hours, but the enormous rate of speed at which she traveled was evidence to us that we had passed over a vast territory. She settled on the ground so quietly and with so little jar that only a slight vibration informed us that our journey was ended. Surene was exceedingly anxious to step on land and view our surroundings. Her expectations were high, yet her imagination had not shown her anything so beautiful. As far as the eye could reach was a valley so rich in color, with such absolute cleanliness and freshness, such

harmony of arrangements, such unity of effect, so restful, so quiet, so estranged from anything coarse or vulgar, so unlike anything on the earth's surface, that we gazed in wonder, admiration and thankfulness.

Surey includes in its vast territory three fourths of the inside of the earth's crust. The other one-fourth is occupied by the Valley of Resurrection, the Gulf of Turmoil, and the island on which is located the inferno.

I shall speak only of the valley of Surey, or that portion in which we abide, which is near unto the sea of Redemption and is like the rest. All people of Surey live in villages. The one to which I am attached is about one league apart from the sea. In describing our village I would say that it is but a counterpart, neither more or less beautiful than others of this vast kingdom.

In the center of our village is a large fountain, in which art plays no part. Surrounding this fountain is a pool or lake about five hundred feet either way. A small rivulet or stream flowing from this fountain gently winds its way over pebbly beds to the sea. Around this beautiful little lake or pool is a square or park studded here and there with trees of brilliant foliage, and with many flowers. The ground is covered with soft velvety grasses intermixed with brilliant shrubs and graceful statuary in silver, marble, and gold.

The descent to the pool or lake is a gentle sandy beach, where the water is so absolutely clear that between the pebbles at the bottom and the surface of the lake no water seems to intervene. Walking over the grasses does not soil or injure them in the least. As I have said before, propagation exists here independent of decomposition; consequently there is no decay, as on the earth's surface, as vegetation depends alone upon divine will. Around this beautiful park are arranged our magnificent structures. The first of which I will speak are our temples which, for elegance and masterly skill in construction, are only surpassed by the Celestial City.

The foundations of these great temples are of polished red granite, on which are erected graceful marble columns of great height and most elaborate decorations. They support a canopy or arched roof, whose beams are of solid silver, and interwoven as lattice work between these girders are chains of gold. Betwixt these marble columns are balusters strangely wrought in silver and precious stones. The floors are tresselated, of alternate blocks of silver and onyx. The altars are of pure gold festooned and garlanded with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. The seats are of silver, upholstered in yellow and fringed in gold. No walls are there to obstruct or hinder our outside views; art communes with nature unobstructed.

Around these graceful columns are twined jessamine, roses, and other beautiful climbers, which circle round and round until they have reached the top, then around the silver beams, and interweave themselves among the chains of gold and hang in festoons and garlands from the ceiling.

As there is no sun, no rain, no dust, and no wind, closed coverings for these vast roofs are unnecessary. As there is no decomposition, the foliage and flowers remain undimmed for thousands of years. The rich polish of the stones and metals does not tarnish nor lose its luster, as there is no corroding or oxidizing there.

The light shining through these silver beams, in terwoven with chains of gold, jessamine, roses, and other flowers, produces an effect incomparable. Our play-houses, or theaters, are alike grand. The foundations are of grey sandstone, the walls of polished jasper, which rise above the foundation about ten feet and are capped with blocks of snow-white marble. On these walls stand figures of angels wrought in gold, which with uplifted hands support an arched roof. Between beams of silver are interwoven chains of alternate links of gold and garnets, yellow and green. On the jasper walls are paintings whose truth to what they represent, beauty of execution, purity of color, and ease of handling, cause them to stand alone and unequalled. The floors of these magnificent structures are of

alternate silver and red granite. The stage is of alabaster and gold set with pearls. Between the paintings on the jasper walls and hanging from the feet of the angels that support the roof are garlands of roses interwoven with festoons of diamonds and rubies. The seats are of yellow sandalwood, strangely carved and draped in silk. Climbing the outer walls and hanging in festoons from the top are flowers in wild profusion. The roof not being closed, the light passes among the flowers and jeweled chains, little less brilliant than the temples.

Our halls of glee are next in splendor. Standing on walls of yellow sandstone are columns of great height and beauty, wrought in pure silver and gracefully capped with scrolls and leaves of sapphire. On these columns rests a great dome of burnished gold, along the eaves of which are chains of silver bedecked with yellow jessamine. Between the silver columns, interwoven and strangely wrought, are balusters of yellow jasper. The floors are of blocks of alternate silver and red granite, the choir loft of colored and white marble, interwoven with rubies and bars of gold. The seats are of green and gold bordered with strings of rubies. As in the other edifices, roses, jessamine, and other flowers twine and wind themselves about, adding beauty to the effect.

Our dancing pavillions are little less beautiful,

but constructed entirely of wood, save the foundation, which is grey sandstone. The carving, decoration, and painting on these light, airy edifices lend a grace and buoyance to their structure rendering them almost ethereal in appearance. The floors are of polished wood and the balusters about them beautifully carved and interwoven.

All other public buildings in Surey for whatever purpose are equally beautiful, or nearly so. The streets away from the park are lined on either side with palaces constructed almost wholly of sandal-wood and cypress, and covered with silken canopies. The avenue road-beds are of marble, and on either side are soft velvety grasses, as in the park.

In every part of the village are dining avenues, which consist of long white marble tables upon which is piled in great profusion the perfect food intermingled with flowers.

We have carriages, chariots, coaches, and all manner of light vehicles, propelled in the manner of our airships, but which pass within a few inches of the ground. The speed of these vehicles can be made whatever the driver may desire.

Our couches are of silk. In fact, there is but one fabric with us, that is, nature-woven silk. The explanation of this fabric and the reason why it is so universal is that it is grown and not woven. There is a tree in Surey known among us as the

silken leech, from which we obtain silk of all colors and any width and universally of the same quality. The stem of the tree is a roll of cloth. Wishing a piece of any desired width, say two yards, we fell the tree and cut from it the desired length. From this log we remove the outside bark and unroll the silken cloth. The remaining part of the tree we again place upright upon the stump. It does not die, but in a short time it has again grown to its natural estate.

As I have explained before, there is no decomposition here, nothing dies. On either side of the street flowers are growing in great profusion. The beauty of the grasses, the shrubs, the flowers, the stems, and the brilliant foliage is beyond comparison with that on the earth's surface. In the more rugged parts, where rocks project above the surface, veins of gold and silver are seen in every direction. These metals are pure, being freed from foreign matter by the intense heat of fires that have raged in the earth's crust.

The good people of Surey know no pain, sorrow or fatigue. When they grow drowsy, they throw themselves upon their silken couches, heedless of who may go by. There are many children in Surey of two years of age and upwards. Leaving the earth's surface at that time and entering hell, they were purified, and now are among the chief blessings of Surey. There are no children here a span

long, Presbyterians on the earth's surface to the contrary notwithstanding.

As there is no fire, our metals are liquified by a chemical process, then molded into whatever form is desired. The excellent tools we have in use, and with which our unequalled mechanisms are produced, are moulded from the sap of a tree mixed with a peculiar clay, and not wrought by fire in steel, as upon the earth's surface. Any degree of hardness can be obtained by this method, admitting of the keenest edge, the substance being far more durable than steel and more tenacious.

What we produce here is purely a labor of love. There is no barter, no commerce, no money, no values. What belongs to one belongs to all in common, and what one makes is not for himself, but for the good of the community. If one woman wears a jewel more excellent than another, each enjoys it as much as she, and no one covets it, neither does anyone envy her its possession.

Air ships are numerous, being of all sizes and of matchless speed. Voyaging through the air is one of the chief amusements of our people.

There are no strata or cliques in society. We have no governors or leaders; each pursues the course that is most to his liking. We have no rich, no poor, no weak, no strong, each does well, and each is equally happy.

We are in direct communication with the Celes-

tial region; also, in direct communication with hell, being separated from hell only by the Sea of Redemption. Messengers from heaven, with convoys of angels, are continually arriving and departing between the two abodes of the blest. The denizens of the Celestial Kingdom are as much at home on the sacred soil of Surey as around the great white throne of the Eternal.

The passage between the inside of the earth's crust and the golden streets of the Celestial City is by what is known on the earth's surface as the north pole. Here the communication is unbroken, and we of Surey often feel a sense of pity when we know how fruitless has been, and always will be, the attempt of human beings to reach the north pole, as in the great arrangements of nature this was left as a line of communication between heaven and hell.

Our arrival upon the sacred soil of Surey must have been a matter of great moment, as we were the first and only beings that had ever entered this sacred valley without first being purified by the fires of hell.

There is no death in Surey and, as I have often said before, every thing remains unchanged from the time it enters within its sacred precincts. This, together with the large influx of the purified from hell, would lead those of the earth's surface to think it would soon become overcrowded, but this

cannot be, as the angels from heaven are continually transporting those who have been longest among the redeemed, or at least those who care to go. Some do not care to change.

Surene and I remained together, associating by natural instinct with those of our race, but not wholly so. We associated to some extent with the whites, serving when occasion required, but even there in Surey our natural affinity was for each other. This was not because we were looked upon as inferior beings, but it verifies the old saying of the earth's surface that "Birds of a feather flock together."

There is no record of time kept in Surey, but in heaven the Great Ruler of the universe spans time between past and coming events, so the purified are relieved from their torment at intervals and spaces of time directed by the Giver of all good and perfect gifts. When angels arrive from heaven to enlist men, the people of Surey marshal their forces, attack hell, and wrench from the demons those that have spent the allotted time in torment. The ardent zeal is boundless. Following these events, which I shall describe later on, the influx from hell is large and the redeemed are enthusiastically received. Husbands meet wives, wives meet husbands, mothers meet sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers and all that they held dear on earth, who are now purified and will remain inseparable forever.

The amusements of our people are as varied as those among the dwellers on the earth's surface. Our temples, our play houses, our halls of glee, our dancing pavillions, our air ships, and all other public and private amusements are alike pure. Those who deliver eloquent orations, those who conduct and those who join in praises to the Almighty meet alike in the mazy dance. The song, the play, the diversions at sea and in mid-air are participated in by all alike.

What are known as the fine arts on the outside of the earth are among our chief employments and diversions. Music with us is divinely enchanting, ever floating upon the air as it emanates from the temples, the theaters, and the halls of glee.

Choirs of angels from heaven, with their golden harps, mix and sing with those of Surey in unison and sweet accord. As the music floats away upon the air from the harps and voices of the angels and the purified, our happiness is beyond human conception.

As nothing can be done in Surey but what is perfect, there is no diversity of tastes. When a picture is painted it is done with a perfect knowledge of harmony, effect, and truth. The sculptor and architect render their art alike perfect. No discord or want of harmony is possible in our songs. Having all knowledge and no sin upon us, we cannot diverge from the path of truth and harmony.

Visitors from the various parts of the kingdom are arriving and departing hourly. We are fond of travel, and, as our ships furnish such great speed and delightful comforts, we spend a large part of our time in the air. There is no hospitality among us, as what belongs to one in this vast kingdom of Surey belongs to all. The dweller in one village is as much at home in another as in his own, and goes and stays as he pleases.

In fact, we have all the advantages of perfect art, perfect mechanism, and perfect comfort, without any of the perplexities. In the distant future all the unhappy children of the earth's surface will be gathered together in the Celestial Kingdom and in Surey, then The Valley of Resurrection, the Island of the Damned, and the Gulf of Turmoil will become purified and a part of our vast kingdom.

The Gulf of Turmoil alone separates Surey from the Valley of Resurrection. This troubled water extends from the River of Death nigh unto the Sea of Redemption. Intervening between the gulf and the Sea of Redemption is a league of solid rock; but under this rock and under the Sea of Redemption is a vast tunnel, which connects the inferno with the Gulf of Turmoil. The waters from this troubled gulf are held from dashing into the inferno beneath by a crib of rock that projects from the tunnel above the surface of the water. Through this tunnel the demons run redhot cars,

in which they transport the damned from the Gulf of Turmoil, or from the monster with seven heads and ten horns, to the inferno beneath.

On the arrival of the monster he disgorges his victims into the redhot cars, which pass through the tunnel to the bottomless pit. The cars are dragged along the tunnel by beasts whose breath is fire and smoke. The rocks on either side of the tunnel are alive with snakes, vipers, and dragons, which throw themselves into the cars of the victims, winding and crawling among them, injecting into their faces their poisonous venom.

On reaching the bottomless pit the damned are thrown into fiery furnaces, where they burn but are never consumed. The demons are continually passing to and fro among the furnaces adding fuel and curses to the unconsumed. As new victims arrive those who have been burning, yet are undestroyed, are raised to furnaces yet higher, the new arrivals taking their places. The damned continue rising from furnaces below to those above until, after forty years of torture, they have reached the top of the inferno, and, being purified by fire, are released from torment, enter Surey, and are forever happy.

Viewed from the Sea of Redemption, the domes of hell have an area about ten leagues square, but the depth is about two hundred leagues, reaching through the earth's crust near unto the earth's surface. The smoke of the torment is not vomited

forth into the inside, but goes to the outside, passing through the craters of volcanoes on to the earth's surface, and the only egress Satan has to the outside of the earth is through these craters. None of his demons of hell ever accompany their master to the earth's surface, as he finds all the help he needs there. Many of our people obtain power to leave our sacred land and ascend among men, trying to defeat the devil and his work of drawing people to his kingdom. When the purified are on earth they need no food or rest, but remain invisible, working wholly on the conscience and better judgment of those whom they would prevent the devil from leading to destruction, and returning now and then to tell us of their doings and the condition of mortals.

Our people are probably more given to sociability here than on the outside of the earth. We love to get together and talk of scenes that have passed; of our life on earth, its few pleasures, its many sorrows, troubles, and perplexities. Old men are more given, if possible, to details of their earthly life than the young, but "each does well in his degree."

It has been a great source of pleasure for me to sit and listen to the recitals of old men's careers while on the earth's surface. Their past sufferings, hopes, expectations, and disappointments, together with their long and active lives, make their stories of large interest to the young.

CHAPTER VIII.

A man who, up to the event of which I speak, had not been given to much recital of his doings on the earth, was induced by a few of us, once upon a time, to give his reminiscences. He said:

Dear brothers, my tale is a sad one. Had I lived on the earth's surface until this time I would have been, according to earth's calculation, fifteen hundred years old.

I am a Toltec. My race sprang from the Goddess of the Sun, and lived for many years in Nipon, which is now a part of the Japanese Empire. Probably our people at the time of their emigration from Nipon to Mexico were further advanced in civilization, and, as they thought at that time, superior to the barbarians who, by physical force, drove them from the island. They had made more progress in navigation, and probably owned more ships, than any other civilized or semi-civilized people on the earth's surface.

Feeling that they could live no longer on the island of Nipon in peace, they placed what belongings they could upon their ships, gathered together all our people, and sailed southwest, not

knowing where they would land but hoping to find an uninhabited country or island where they could live in quietude.

Sailing in a south-westerly course, with the assurance of the gods that they would ultimately land on a beautiful shore, they bore away steadily in this one direction. After calms, storms, and the various vicissitudes of sea they in time sighted what is now known as Mexico. Running along the shore for several weeks trying to find a harbor, they finally sailed into a river named Zactula, now called De Balsa. Working their way as far up this river as the water would float their vessels, they made fast and landed at a place now called Maccala. After settling themselves there, not permanently however, but for a few seasons, exploring the country around the while, they at last made their home on a plateau of the Cordilleras, establishing a village, which they named Toltecke, now known as the city of Mexico. The country was fertile with excellent climate, plenty of good pure water, and everything necessary for maintaining a large population.

They were peaceful, contented, and well satisfied with their surroundings. They multiplied so rapidly that in two centuries they rose from a tribe to a nation of considerable power. For three centuries my people remained undisturbed, up to this time having no outside communication save with a

people calling themselves Aztecs, who spoke the same language and were apparently the same people as ourselves.

Toltec had become so thickly inhabited that our people extended from sea to sea. We were what might be known as a pastoral people, yet we were much given to commerce and had many traders along the coast. This, together with fishing, engaged many of our ships.

One day some of our vessels passed further out to sea than usual, were caught by a storm and driven north, being wrecked upon the coast of Bagdad, near Matamoras. Here our men were picked up by the Aztecs, who, giving them kind treatment and returning them safely home in their own vessels, together with many presents and good wishes for our people, led us to regard them as friends and to increase our traffic and communication with them. They were a hardy, active, warlike people and had made fully as much, if not more progress in civilization than we had. Physically they were our superiors. We probably had more of the sinews of war than they, as we were a provident people and our supplies on hand were sufficient for a two years' campaign, yet it was our purpose if possible to maintain friendly relations. We found this difficult to do with a people of such warlike tendencies. We were both possessed of a more warlike and barbarian spirit than

those occupying that country at the present time.

Self-laudation is largely the curse of many people, and so it was with us. We preached our superiority among ourselves; they did the same. We were given to boasting; so were they. The result was that after a few irritating and exasperating onsets on their part, fights and broils occurred among the fishermen of the two sections.

A crew of one of their trading vessels was caught depredating the people of one of our villages. We sent our men to capture and imprison them, which they did. Then the trouble commenced. They asked for the immediate release of their people, while we demanded that they should be punished for their depredations. They replied that if their men were punished they would retaliate. We believed that they would, and were slow to resort to extreme measures; but we still held their people as prisoners. The place in which they were imprisoned was poorly guarded and well on the frontier; so they tried to liberate their people by force. However, before they accomplished this, word had reached our men-at-arms, who arrived on the scene in time to prevent their setting the men at liberty; but a fight ensued, in which three of their men were killed, and five of ours wounded. We had no way of knowing how many of them were wounded, for on their retreat they took their disabled with them.

I, at the time, was at the head of a body of knights. This being the age of chivalry, the only way to honor was by the spear and sword. Knight-errantry was the most honored of professions.

No formal declaration of war was made by either side, but we had studied well their habits, their temper, and their manner of warfare, and, in the nature of things, expected an attack at any time.

Our days of peace and peaceful pursuits were at an end. The instruments used in cultivating the soil were laid aside, the yeoman donned the trappings of the warrior, and the songs of war and deeds of chivalry had taken the place of songs of peace. Our priesthood, which had become a dominant element with us, hated the Aztecs, whom they called disbelievers, and this feeling they soon instilled into the minds of the people, who demanded that these prisoners should be sacrificed to the gods that we might win favor and help from this unseen power, and no amount of wise counsel could prevent the priests from carrying out their infernal purpose. At the time, our religious belief was divided between the true God and the gods of mythology. We believed in a great or Supreme Ruler over all, and lesser gods presiding over the different planets and elements, as gods of the sun, gods of the moon, gods of sea, gods of light, and gods of war; goddesses of beauty, chastity, and purity; also, gods of evil, who were held in sub-

ordination by the other gods, and could injure the denizens of the earth only by their sanction. All these greater and lesser gods and goddesses were second to the great Jehovah.

Of Christ, we knew nothing; yet believed, as they do now on the earth's surface, that she or he who led a pure life would again live in a state of bliss. Sacrifice was among the chief curses of our people, and to appease the wrath of the gods, or to gain favor with them in any of our great undertakings, human beings were sacrificed; but the sacrifices up to the time I speak of were of criminals only.

As we were now about to engage in war with another people, the priests demanded that all prisoners captured should be given to the sacrifice. This included the sacrificing of the prisoners of which I have spoken.

The Aztecs were brave and adventurous. They gloried in thrilling scenes, and loved to enact them. Bravery was their chief and cardinal virtue. There was no sin among them so enormous as cowardice, and no reward too great for the brave.

By this you may form some idea of the people with whom we had to contend. The feudal system, based on the religious government of which I have spoken, of a great power and of lesser powers, was in vogue among us. Tolsey was then supreme ruler with us, and lords of lesser degree main.

tained castles, had their followers, men-at-arms, and supported a miniature representation of the general government, all subject, of course, to Tolsey, the King. The Tolsey family had reigned for several generations, the present king having several brothers in the immediate vicinity of the capital, maintaining castles in the manner of which I have spoken.

We were prepared and ready for an onset from the Aztecs; but what appeared strange to us was, that for some time everything had been painfully quiet. They had not attacked us, nor committed any further depredations upon our outposts.

One of our king's brothers maintained a castle in great splendor about three miles from the capital. He, of course, fearing no onset from the Aztecs, had taken no precaution nor placed any special guard about his place. Imagine our surprise, one morning, to hear that the Aztecs had raided this castle, striking down the guard and carrying away with them everything valuable—jewels, horses, and everything else they could find—taking as prisoners the king's brother and five of the leading ladies of the kingdom, among whom was the wife of the king, who, by chance, happened to be spending the night there.

Every one about the place whom they cared not to take with them had been imprisoned in the castle and told if they tried to leave it they would be

killed on the spot, as the whole Aztec army was there to guard the place. This attack was early in the night, and, as the prisoners supposed the Aztecs still there, no one dared venture out to give the alarm. This ruse, together with the confusion attendant upon such a thing, and the time necessary to organize a pursuit, of course gave the Aztecs a good start, and put them well towards their own country. As soon as we could organize and get under way we were after them. Feeling that it would be unwise to lead our army into their country, I asked for followers, not to exceed one hundred. Our best men-at-arms, who thought themselves brave in battle, volunteered to accompany me. None of us had ever seen service or done battle, save in tournaments, which we held yearly, and to break sword or spear with a real enemy was yet untried.

Donning our chain armor, with sword and spear, we mounted our horses and were away, with the best wishes of our people. General direction was all that was left to guide us in our search. Following their trail as best we could, being guided by such information as we could pick up along the way, we at last found ourselves near the boundary. Having traveled far enough to see the folly of our gilded and showy trappings, I determined to change our appearance, realizing, for the first time, that tournament among our friends was one thing,

and real battle in another's country was vastly different. Dividing our force into bodies of ten, we separated, deploying and entering the country by different routes. Knowing that our gay trappings must be hidden, we purchased from the peasants their long frocks and hoods. Disguising ourselves by covering our armor we started forward, traveling incognito and quietly entering their domain. The party to which I belonged spent our fifth night in a forest with, or at least near, some Aztec hog herders. Our language being the same, we obtained what food we needed from them but little or no information regarding our search. Large droves of hogs were maintained by the Aztecs and fattened at certain seasons of the year in the forests on the mast or acorns that fell from the trees. Buying from these herdsmen a young shote and some cornmeal, we prepared our supper, enjoying it hugely, as it was the first food we had had since early morning. The herders also supplied us with corn for our horses.

After satisfying ourselves, we lay down for rest and sleep. As soon as all was quiet I got up, stole away from the others, and went over among the herdsmen to gather what information I could from them.

Communication among people in that day was very little, even in their own country. I was welcomed in the herdsmen's quarters and treated very

hospitably and even genteely for so rough a people. We talked on various subjects concerning the hogs, what lord and what castle these lands belonged to, whose followers they were and how many retainers and nobles occupied the castle, their records as to warriors, of their whereabouts, and if anything unusual had happened in the last few weeks. To all this they gave a ready reply yet nothing bearing directly upon the object of my search. There was no dissembling on their part, as they evidently knew nothing of what was going on. They were loud in their boasts about the prowess of their knights, the wonders of their knight-errantry, and their superiority over the Toltecs.

I was about to despair of getting information that would serve me and had risen to go, when in stepped another herdsman, evidently from some distance away. His visit was unexpected by these good people as shown by their surprise at seeing him.

"Ho, Hogsan!" they cried as of one voice. "What brought you here?" "My legs, of course," he replied.

"Your legs did well, if you call them short stumps legs."

At this sally he deigned no reply. He was a short man of powerful build, broad shoulders and thick neck, indicating in every way of a hard man to handle.

He said, "Boys, we will soon have a better job than herding hogs, for we are going to have a fight with them Toltecs down South, as they gave our boys to the sacrifice. But the knights of the clouds are even with them. They went to one of their castles and captured one of their lords and five of the most beautiful wenches. Beautiful? I should say. You fellows never saw anything half as handsome as they are."

One of the herdsmen said, "Tell us about it, Hagsan."

"Well it was this way, boys, the knights of the clouds swore to be revenged on the sacrifice business, so fifteen of them disguising themselves as horse and cattle sellers, driving their stock to the capital, had no trouble in reaching their city, or near there. Camping in a piece of woods on one of their best estates, they raided the castle, bringing away the wenches and what else they wanted."

"But where are the wenches now, Hagsan? I would travel a hundred leagues to see them."

"You see them. Tilt! Do you suppose they would allow such a beauty as you, not to say a hogherder, to look upon these queens? You must think knight-errantry running pretty low among the Aztecs."

Tilt burst into a loud laugh saying, "Hagsan, was it your beauty that admitted you into the presence of these beautiful wenches?"

At this they all broke into a laugh, at the same time offering Hagsan some food and drink, which he took with a will, particularly the drink. In a short time he replied, "It was not my handsome face that gained me admittance to these beauties, but I was their guide through the forest."

"You their guide! How could you leave your hogs?"

"It was not a question whether I could leave them or not. One of the knights drew his sword, telling me if I could not leave my flock they would take my head with them anyhow, saying it would be as good a guide without my body as with it, so I could have my choice. Their manner was so winning that I concluded to go with them without further parley."

"But, Hagsan, why are you here?"

"I was returning to my flock and, as this was not far out of my way, thought I would like to see you boys."

They gave a shout saying, "Good for you, Hagsan, never travel near here but you call on us; but where have they gone with the wenches?"

"Gone with the wenches? Well that's a nice question! Do you suppose they told me where they were going with the wenches?"

"No, I don't suppose the knights told you where they were going with the wenches, but you are such a beauty, I supposed the wenches told you themselves where they were going."

A laugh followed this, to which Hagsan made no reply.

Soon the questioner continued, "Why do you think, Hagsan, we are going to have war?"

"The knights told me they would need all us laddibucks to break the heads of them Toltecs south, and we were all in for it." As nothing more was vouchsafed and finding I was to get no further information, I bade the boys goodnight and had just passed out of the cabin when up rode twelve or fifteen Aztec knights, and inquired of the herdsmen if they had seen any of the Toltec men-at-arms pass that way.

I stepped into a place darker than the immediate surroundings to catch what I could concerning ourselves and others. The herdsmen replied that they had seen no men-at-arms, but that there were some cattle men camped in that bunch of trees beyond, but that they knew they were no fighting men because they wore gowns and hoods.

One of the knights replied, "We are not looking for people in gowns and hoods, but tell us if you have seen knights or men-at-arms."

The herdsmen all replied they had not; so, wheeling their horses, the knights rode away.

As soon as they were gone I hurried back to my companions, wakening them and relating the information I had obtained from the herders. It was evident to us now that the Aztecs had spies

upon us and our presence in their territory was known to them. Feeling that we could not act before morning, I lay down to get what sleep I could preparatory to another day's action. Early the next morning we were up preparing our meal, feeding our horses, and getting ready for another day's march. After taking our simple refreshments, we mounted our horses and were off. The herdsmen were out early looking after their flocks, for when we passed by their quarters were deserted.

Riding on, hardly knowing which way to proceed, we by chance came upon one of the herders I had met the night before. Acting on the suggestion of Hagsan being forced into service, I rode up and informed him that I wanted him for a guide. He at first laughed at the idea of being guide for a cattle herder, and was about to ride along, when slipping my hand beneath my frock I drew my blade, at the same time exposing a part of my armor. The man knew me from the night before and was surprised beyond measure.

I told him we were a body of Aztec knights, and if he cared to keep his skin whole he must come with us without further parley. Feeling there was no way out of the matter he submitted as gracefully as he could under the circumstances.

"Now," I said, "show us the way to the castle where Hagsan belongs."

He said, "It is a long way. My hogs will be lost before I can return."

"Lead on," I replied, "and be sure you lead us right. If I find any treachery on your part, off goes your head."

He led us in a northwesterly direction through a forest that seemed little frequented. We passed other herdsmen with their droves of hogs but elicited no information from them that would serve us any purpose. It was near night when we reached the environs of the castle, so I ordered the guide to ride forward to the castle and inform the lord of the manor that ten hungry knights, fatigued with the days march, craved his hospitality. I told him to take good note of who was there and to find, if possible, from some of the retainers, if the knights having the handsome Toltec wenches had stopped there for refreshments, telling him if he did us good service in this we would allow him to return to his flock, at the same time placing in his hand a handful of silver.

He was not away long when he returned to us saying that the lord of the castle was now away on the chase and intended to go to Zuma, the capital of the Aztecs, before he returned. He further informed us that eight knights were left to guard the castle and that they sent us greeting and welcome. I felt some doubt as to the honesty of the

guide's report, and questioned him very closely as to the source of his information. He said he had obtained it from one of the retainers about the castle, a man-at-arms of low degree.

Feeling at last that the man had given an honest report, we allowed him to return to his flock, well pleased with his pay. After a short consultation we determined to remove our frocks and hoods and boldly ride to the castle, claiming to be Aztec knights looking for Toltecs. This was made possible by the diversity of armor and trappings worn by the Aztecs of that day. So different were they that it was impossible for one Aztec to tell another by his dress or speech, as one section of their country differed materially from another. It was our intention, if we found it practicable, to pass ourselves off at the castle as Aztec knights from Zuma, hoping before we were discovered to be Toltecs we would be able to gain entrance, and then we could rely upon our superior strength to capture the castle and its belongings. Knowing that any delay might cause suspicion we hurried on to the castle. We were received at the drawbridge with great hospitality and allowed to enter without hindrance.

We had arranged on a signal so that, if I felt it wise to make an attack, that each would be informed of the other's intention. I was now persuaded that the herdsman's report was correct, for

as we rode into the open court surrounded by the castle, there were eight knights in full armor mounted upon their horses to give us honorable reception according to the customs of the day. Around one of the inner balconies of the castle were arranged the ladies also to give us welcome.

I felt that now was the time to make reprisal. We could not hope to capture those we had lost, so retaliation was our only hope. Recognizing that immediate action was of the greatest importance to our enterprise, I gave the signal for the attack. Our assault was so sudden and unexpected that we downed seven of the Aztecs in our first onslaught, only one of our party being wounded. Their eighth knight was a noble specimen of manhood but, combining against him, we soon lowered his colors. Such an affair as combining against one knight was considered very dishonorable in that age of chivalry, but the necessity of the occasion justified it. We now had them disarmed and in our power, so, calling one of the servants, I commanded him under pain of death to show us the prison.

We were not long in putting them hors de combat, giving us full possession of the castle. Gathering together what retainers and horses we needed, we ordered six of the handsomest, and what we supposed of the most titled importance, among the ladies to mount horses we had prepared for them.

After ransacking the castle and taking what we wished, we packed it upon the other horses. Forcing some of the retainers in as servants and guides, we were away for home.

As it was not quite dark our greatest fear was of meeting roving bands of knights. One of our men being wounded in his swordarm, reduced our number to nine. This, together with guarding the prisoners, reduced our force materially. When we had got well under way I called the few retainers we had with us as servants and guides together with the ladies before me and informed them that we were Toltecs, but they had nothing to fear if they caused us no trouble or gave no information that would lead to an attack. Our intention was while in the Aztec domain to pass as Aztec knights and that anyone giving information to the contrary would be struck dead on the spot. The guide I had pressed into service was so well acquainted with the forest and so proud of his knowledge that he confidentially informed me he could lead us as well at night as in the daytime; so I placed him between two knights with drawn swords, instructing them in his presence that if he showed the least sign of treachery to strike him down without a word.

It was a dreary march through the woods that dark night, but we continued without interruption till daylight, although our lady captives were

much fatigued. Knowing they must have refreshments before proceeding further, we halted near a woodsman's cabin buying from him a goat. Having it dressed, we hired his wife to prepare it, together with some cornbread, at the same time securing some corn for our horses. The captives were much refreshed after partaking of the food, and in a short time we again took to our saddles, pressing on as best we could with our jaded horses, knowing the success of the enterprise depended on getting into our own country as soon as possible.

Our guide had now become useless to us as we had carried him beyond his knowledge of the country. Fortune favored us, however, as we came upon a hunter, who with his bow and spear had killed a small bear. Buying the bear at his own price, we hired him for a guide, dismissing our Aztec and mounting the hunter in his place. Allowing the servants time to secure the hind quarters of the bear and throw it across their saddles, we proceeded moving along necessarily slow. I knew that at this rate we would be under the necessity of securing new mounts, so determined to make a forced horse trade at the first opportunity. We had just forded a creek when, to our surprise, we were faced by two Aztec knights who, with several followers, had been raiding our territory for horses. These knights

had four or five followers leading the horses, who proved to be Toltec herdsmen they had pressed into service.

Riding forward, I inquired who they were. They answered, "Aztecs. Who are you?" I replied, "Toltecs," at the same time drawing my sword and charging them both, but my companions in arms were immediately with me. The Aztecs, seeing themselves at so great a disadvantage, surrendered with little resistance. They informed us that they had been raiding for horses in our country, and that their followers were Toltecs they had forced into following them.

Being provided with fresh horses, we dismounted, changed our trappings, and were off with our force largely augmented with men and horses. Leaving the knights we had captured with our jaded horses, we turned them loose disarmed after paroling them, they pledging their knighthood to report to our king with the horses we left in their charge. Having so arranged we pushed forward, leaving them to follow as best they could. Nothing further of interest happened to us except our forced halts, that were occasioned by the exhausted condition of our prisoners, and we finally returned to our capital without the loss of a single man. It is true Sir Balsag was wounded in his sword arm, but not beyond the skill of our leeches. We were received with great

rejoicing; every man and woman in the city seemed anxious to see our prisoners and learn of our adventure. The lady captives had been treated with great consideration on our march, and now were received with every mark of kindness. Every preparation was made for their entertainment, for we were determined to make their forced stay among us as pleasant as possible.

No tidings had so far been heard from the other knights from whom we had separated, and we all felt anxious about them. The knights we had paroled arrived in due time with the horses we had left in their charge. The king tried in every way to induce the captured knights to give information regarding his brother, the queen, and the other ladies of distinction they held as captives, but they claimed to know nothing of them, and, if they did, they felt honor-bound not to divulge it.

It was not our policy to attack the Aztecs on their own ground, as "defensive and not offensive" was our motto.

They advanced no regular army, but confined their attacks to raids of such a daring character that we were undecided how to act, and could only await further developments. During this time my fellow knights and I devoted our best efforts to entertaining our fair captives and making it pleasant for them; but I may as well admit here that some of us were more captives to them than they to us.

One of them, a beautiful girl, daughter of Montezuma, the lord of the castle we had raided, forced upon my mind that she was superior to any other woman that it had ever been my fortune to meet. She was probably a little above the average height, queenly in her bearing, yet mild and gentle, fair of skin, with large, dark and luminous eyes, together with hair as black as a raven. To me her slightest wish was law. As I was leaving her presence one day I asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I have but one wish," she replied, "which I will not ask you to comply with. I know your duty is to your king and would not prevent your doing it." I gazed at her in silence for a moment, when she continued, "You would know this thing I most desire. Shall I tell it you?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Send me back to where you brought me from, my father's castle." But hastily she continued, "I do not ask you to free me; I would not accept at the sacrifice of your honor."

I replied, "There is one thing you can do. Become my wife, then you can return to your father's castle at will; and I will guard you on the way." Dropping her eyes for a moment she remained silent, and I, fearing that I had wounded her feelings, hastened to make amends.

Placing her hand upon my shoulder she said,

"You have not displeased me; you have not offended me. Had I the choice of all men for a husband you, to me would be the most acceptable; but hear me now for all time, I will wed you only in my father's castle."

I pressed my suit no further at the time, having learned to respect her will and force of character, but said, "Luzel, before I leave you I will promise you this, if you will prepare a communication to your father, I will pledge my knighthood that he receives it."

On leaving her presence I immediately sought the palace, asking for an audience with the king. This being readily granted without the usual formalities, I asked him what disposition he intended to make of the two knights I had paroled. With his usual kindness of heart he replied, "I will be guided entirely by your suggestion and wishes."

I related to him my interview with the fair Aztec and my intention, if I was permitted to do so, eventually to take her as my companion in life.

"I have no objection to that," he replied, "but cannot see what that has to do with the knights on parole."

"It has this to do, noble sire; that I have pledged my knighthood to this daughter of Montezuma that I would forward a communication to her father of her whereabouts and how she fares. As the knights were paroled and strictly kept it in

reporting to your Highness with the horses, I feel justified in believing that they would not appear in arms against us in our struggle with the Aztecs. And if I may be allowed to suggest what disposition should be made of them, would say, return them to their country under parole and as bearers of a communication between Luzel and her father."

To this he made no objection, saying, "There is but one provision I require; that is, that I know the contents of the communication before it goes; my only object in this demand is that she confine herself strictly to the doings of herself and companions."

Hastening back to Luzel, I told her I was ready to forward the communication to her father as promised. She had it prepared ready to send. The mode of writing among our people at that time was by pictures and signs. We were adepts at the work, being a nation of artists. Communication between the Aztecs and Toltecs was the same, pictures and signs. The written language of our people at that time was universal, as any one could read it, and it appears to me far more expressive than the present methods in vogue on the earth's surface.

Returning to the king with the communication that she wished sent to her father, he was well pleased with it, and ordered the release of the knights. Without delay I sought out the knights,

informing them on condition that they would proceed immediately to the castle and deliver the communication, I would set them free, giving them convoy to their own country. This was received by them with every demonstration of gratitude, and they pledged their knighthood that they would do as directed, and of course swore not to fight against us in the coming struggle.

After seeing them off I returned to my quarters, depositing myself in an easy attitude for some sleep, which I so sadly needed. Scarcely had I got into a doze when my body servant announced the presence of a peddler, or seller of jewels. Knowing that the peddlers of that day carried the rarest jewels, I thought it an opportunity to secure something for my fair Aztec, so ordering the servant to admit him, he was soon in my presence. With scarce any salutation he unswung his pack and proceeded to unstrap and show me his stock. I was struck with his wonderful physique. He would weigh over two hundred pounds and, as the saying is, "was built from the ground up." He had a lofty bearing, which hardly became his pursuit, but as the trades people of that day were the main factors in society, I thought little of it. His display was magnificent, more elegant than anything I had ever before seen in that line. Having but one thought in mind, that being to please my fair enslaver, I asked him to allow me to take his stock to

show my lady-love. Looking up he pretended surprise, saying, "I have not the least doubt that my pack would be safely returned, but I could not think of allowing one of your dignity to carry a peddler's pack into the presence of his lady-love; yet I would be more than pleased to accompany you into the presence of the lady and show my jewels to the best advantage." Thinking his presence of little importance one way or the other, we were soon off to allow her such selections as she might care to make.

She gave us audience with little delay. On entering I was in front of him. She welcomed me with a smile, extending her hand and saying, in her courteous way, "Welcome, best of Toltecs and most welcome of men, pray be seated," at the time pointing to a chair. As her eyes fell upon the peddler she gave a start, then noticing my look of surprise she smilingly asked, "Is it customary among the Toltecs, noble Forno, to admit peddlers in the presence of ladies?"

I apologized for the rudeness, and the peddler proceeded to show his wares with little or no concern. She was much delighted with them, selecting those she most admired, asking the peddler as to their fitness and how they became her. He, of course, praised them; so I bought them with little regard to cost, as my only care was for her. The peddler appeared much pleased at, as I supposed, my

liberal purchase of his wares, and he, in the way of his craft, tried to induce fair Luzel to take still more of his jewels. But she had enough, and was about to dismiss him when he pulled from the recess of his pack a small package, apparently a gold case, which he gracefully held in his fingers, remarking that inside of this case was a rare jewel to which every artist in jewelry had contributed his share to make more beautiful than any other jewel in the fair land of Toltec, and that he was instructed to present it to the most beautiful woman that he should meet in his entire rounds of the kingdom. Then stepping a little closer to Luzel he said, "You being the most lovely I have seen, I present it to you with but one condition, that you do not open the box in the presence of any one and not under two hours from the time I leave you."

Smilingly she extended her hand, saying, "I accept it on those conditions, if a prisoner that is not a Toltec may do so."

"You a prisoner?" he said, starting. "One would more likely judge the noble knight to be the prisoner than yourself; but that as it may, I present you the jewel in the name of the craft and with the sanction of the gods."

"Many thanks, noble tradesman," she returned, "I will ever wear it in remembrance of the prince of peddlers."

I paid him liberally for the jewels I had pur-

chased and dismissed him with our blessings. I remained behind with Luzel, saying that I hoped she would not think I had the curiosity of a woman, but that I had the strongest desire to see what was contained in the casket.

"Noble Forno," she laughingly replied, "what will you give me if I will show you the contents of the casket? "

"Give you! I will give you the entire contents of the peddler's pack. Aye, more than that, I will give you my lo—, but as you have that already I have little more to offer."

"No woman is more curious than that, Forno, not even I, but I will not break faith with the peddler for all the jewels in Toltec; neither would you wish me to, would you, noblest of men? "

"No, fair Luzel, I do not wish you to, I was only bantering. I will abide the time," so bidding her good bye with the promise that I should see the jewel later on, I returned to my quarters and found the peddler had been there for his staff and was gone, and the servants had not seen him since. As I had expected, on reaching home I found three or four knights there talking of the dismissal of the Aztecs, the probability of their keeping faith with us, and what the next move would be. All were growing impatient to hear of the whereabouts and doings of the other knights, who had been away for over a month and from whom no tidings

had been received. Every manner of conjecture was rife regarding them. The king was much worried at their long delay, fearing that they had been killed, captured, or lost at sea, as it was thought that they would hail one of our fishing vessels and return by boat, but all we could do was to await developments and hope for the best.

Having lost much sleep of late, I dismissed the knights, explaining to them that I must be alone as I sadly needed rest. I urged them to call next day and dine with me, hoping by that time we might have news of our missing comrades, so after taking wine together they departed.

Ordering my servants not to allow me disturbed unless something of grave importance required my attention at once, I threw myself on a couch and slept many hours. It was well into the next morning when my servant rushed into my chamber, informing me that my lady love, the fair Aztec, had escaped and could not be found. This sudden news stunned me. For a moment I hardly knew how to act. At last recovering myself, I hurried over to her quarters, finding the guard more bewildered than myself.

"Where is the prisoner?" I asked.

"I know not," replied the sergeant, "we were placed on duty about nine o'clock, and no one has passed save the page, noble Forno, but as you had given us orders to allow him to pass

and repass at will, we did not hail him, as he bore in his hand a piece of paper which we supposed was a communication to your Lordship."

The whole thing flashed upon my mind in a moment, she had escaped in the clothes of my page, who was a handsome boy, about the size of Luzel, probably fourteen or sixteen years old. My fair captive was an expert in working ornaments with threads of gold on men's dress costumes, which were much in vogue at that day, ladies of rank spending much of their time in making this beautiful decoration. Luzel had fully won the affection of this boy, having decorated many of his garments, and she had in her possession one of his suits at the time, which enabled her to pass the guard disguised as a page. How she communicated with her brother I could not learn, but she was gone. Entering her private apartments the first thing my eyes fell upon was a note addressed to myself. Hastily breaking the seal I read as follows:

DEAR AND NOBLE FORNO—

When you read this I will be many miles away, do not follow me. I am with my brother and his followers, the robbers of the Cordilleras. They will place me again in my father's castle, which I can assure you will not be so easily surprised as before. He that played so well the part of a peddler was my brother. Allow me to say in conclusion, dear Forno, that you are more to me than any man on

earth. Hoping that the trouble between the Toltecs and Aztecs will soon be over, and I shall see you in my father's castle, I am yours, LUZEL.

P. S. I forgot to show you the contents of the box presented by the peddler. Will do so when you call at my father's castle.

I consulted with the other fair captives as to Luzel's escape. They were well aware of what was taking place at the time and would have accompanied her, had it been practicable. They told me her brother disguised her as a boy, furnishing her with another peddler's pack and passing her off as an assistant in carrying his goods; and they expressed themselves highly pleased that she had escaped without detection, for had she been discovered it would have cost the lives of many a brave man, as her brother's followers were scattered in close proximity about their leader, and anyone knowing their terrible fighting qualities could but shudder at the result.

The mysterious doings of the Aztecs were thickening about us so rapidly that even the king was becoming confused. He had for many years learned to respect our enemy for their bravery and daring deeds, but their cunning and diplomacy was something more than he had figured on. For a long time I had hoped we might enlist the robbers of the Cordilleras on our side, as what drove Prince Montezuma to his present life was that he had been an unsuccessful claimant to the throne of the Az-

tecs, his successful rival placing a price upon his head, which he was constantly after. As a warrior of the time, he was without a peer. He was herculean in strength, and for brave, daring, and noble deeds he stood alone. No knight among the Aztecs or Toltecs would break spear with him in his day of favor among the Aztecs. He was always ruled out from participating in the tournament, as no one cared to meet him.

Thinking over the situation, my plans were soon formed. I had won the affection of his sister. I determined to immediately visit him in his stronghold, and, if possible, induce him to join the Toltecs in war upon the king of the Aztecs. Acting without consulting anyone, not even the king, and disguising myself as a herdsman, I left unbeknown for the home of the robbers.

As my coat of mail and sword were covered by a frock and hood, and as I traveled incognito, I attracted little or no attention, thus making good headway, and getting beyond where I was known the first day. Riding well into the night, I discovered a light, which led me to the home of a ranchman. Here I was received kindly and myself and horse provided with food and a resting place for the night. I told the ranchman I lived down near the border and, fearing the Aztecs might raid my place and drive away my cattle, I had been to Toltecke to dispose of them to the

government. As they had bought them I was returning home to round them up and drive them there. He liked the idea and thought he would do the same thing, as it was getting unsafe to hold them any longer. Our conversation naturally led to the trouble between the Aztecs and our people. He expressed himself much displeased with our king, saying that he was led too much by the priests, and that there was no cause for war, and that he believed able men might adjust matters without ruining the country. He continued, "We are a pastoral people, while the Aztecs are a war-like people, and more than we can handle in war, and if those fool knights and priests are given their way much longer, the country will be ruined."

I did not feel very highly complimented by this remark, but had to admit, even to myself, he was right, and told him so. Having had a good night's sleep, and feeling much refreshed, the next morning I pushed on my way, continuing for several days without meeting any adventure worthy of note, at last, arriving well up in the mountain side at the stronghold of Prince Montezuma, the robber chief. Supposing I was alone and unnoticed, I was taken wholly by surprise when several men sprang as it were out of the ground and gathered about me.

The leader advanced and said, "Who are you, and what do you want here?"

"I am a herdsman," I replied, "and having cattle to dispose of, would see your chief."

He smilingly replied, "You are not a herdsman but Forno, whom I saw but a few days since in Toltecke." "I know much of you," he continued. "You are the lover of Lady Luzel, and I was with our chief when he relieved the Toltecs of their lovely prisoner."

I admitted my indentivity, saying I had assumed this incognito that I might better travel without delay to see his lordship, their chief, at the same time asking to be presented to him.

He replied, "Our chief is absent but will be back tonight, yet I bid you welcome in his name, and will give you fitting fare until his return."

The stronghold of the robbers was rightly named. Nature had done much, art apparently more, to make it impregnable, as a few men here could hold a large army at bay as long as they desired. The robber's policy had been a wise one, for he never allowed a ranchman or herdsman to suffer from his followers, buying and paying liberally for everything he got from them. Their raids had been entirely confined to the belongings of the Aztec government. He had not only paid the planter liberally for his supplies, but had also prevented the Aztec government from collecting taxes or forcing the planter to pay tribute of any kind to

the king. This had so endeared him to the people for many miles around that his popularity had materially strengthened his position. He maintained his castle, or stronghold, in great splendor. All the luxuries known to the age were among his belongings and appointments, including the most choice wines, elegant gold and silver plate, sumptuous draperies and decorations, and beautiful grounds, together with a well regulated household. My horse was passed over to the attendants, while I was shown to elegantly furnished apartments, with the assurance that anything I desired in the way of refreshment would be gladly furnished. This was very acceptable, as I had been many hours without food and was sorely hungered. I thanked them for their hospitality, saying I would be glad of anything they would provide as I was sadly in need of nourishment. I had not long to wait as I was soon summoned to the dining hall, where splendor reigned supreme. Gold and silver trappings, both ornamental and useful, were hung in the wild profusion about the hall. The table service was entirely of gold and silver. The attendants, neatly dressed in white aprons and caps, were cleanly and well mannered. I was served with roast beef, partridge, bread and wine, together with many dainties. After satisfying my hunger, I returned to my apartments, threw myself on a couch that looked inviting, and, owing to my fatigue, was soon asleep.

While there I dreamed I was listening to music in which I could hear the low voice of Luzel, in song. So soft and sweet was the melody that I was lost in enchantment. The sound seemed to float away upon the wind, returning sweeter than before. When I awoke I still heard the music. The low sweet song rendered me wild with excitement. I knew it must be Luzel, would she see me. Springing from the couch I loudly rang for a servant, who appeared asking if he could serve me. Passing into his hand a handful of silver, I said, "My good man, answer me one question. Is Lady Luzel in this castle?" He appeared taken by surprise but at last he replied, "I do not know who is in this castle. There are many ladies here."

Putting my hand on him and offering him still more silver, I said, "Tell me, my good man, tell me true, is she here?" I must have spoken loud in this entreaty, for I was much excited. The man demurred, but I still insisted on knowing, he at the same time backing away from me into the great reception hall, I still pleading and offering him a rare jewel if he would give the desired information of her whereabouts.

He refused the jewel, saying that he knew his duty and was not at liberty to say who was or who was not in the castle.

I was about to despair of obtaining the knowledge I sought for, and turned to enter my apart-

ments, when from the opposite side of the hall I heard a voice say, "Forno." Looking in that direction, there stood Luzel. With one bound I was at her side.

She laughingly said, "How curious men are! You have ridden all this way to see the jewel the peddler presented to me," at the same time drawing from the folds of her gown the gold box, saying, "Open it; you will see the jewel for which you so long have sought." As I did out fell a note that ran like this :

"DEAR SISTER—

When all is well place a light near your window."

"I know it all, darling; I need no further explanation. This happiness is more than I could have hoped for, as you know I did not expect to meet you here, Luzel. As I lay upon the couch dreaming of you, I heard your voice in song, and awoke only to find it a reality. My anxiety to meet you you undoubtedly saw by my attempting to bribe the servant. Now you are in your own domain, let us consummate our vow."

"Not here, Forno, only in my father's castle." But continuing, she said, "What brought you here? Surely it was a long ride."

"Not expecting to see you, Luzel, for this is a pleasure I did not expect, but to induce your brother to join us, not against the Aztecs, but against the usurper that occupies his throne."

"Then you know my brother and the wrongs he has suffered at the hands of the usurper. I do not know what course my brother will pursue, but were I a man I would unsheath my sword and swear by the gods that it should never again know its scabbard until my brother's wrongs were righted and he was on the throne. He is a great and noble man, brave and just, and is only kept from his rights through duplicity, villainy, and misrepresentation. He has suffered much at the hands of this cursed usurper, he calling him a robber, a fugitive from justice, a marauder, a defiler of purity, and placing a price upon his head. As you know, my father was king of the Aztecs twenty years, the time according to our laws that one can sit upon the Aztec throne; my brother was next in line, but no doubt you know it all, and it is useless for me to enter into these disagreeable details." As she spoke her dark eyes flashed with indignation, showing the courageous spirit of her family.

"Do not let us talk of this, Luzel; I feel the justice of your indignation and also know the wrongs of your brother. If he will join us we will see him righted; but as our stay together must be necessarily short, I would see you in your happier moods and not stirred by the wrongs of your people."

"You have spoken well, Forno. It is not fitting that I talk of war, so let us away to the mountain cliff and gaze on the valley below."

As we wandered along the ledge of rocks, the scene presented below bespoke of joy, peace, and plenty. Waving fields of maze, broad and verdant meadows laden with flowers and waving grasses, fields of golden yellow grain ripe and ready for the sickle; rivulets and streams lazily winding their way through meadows and fields, losing themselves in the river that carries them to the sea; herds of cattle, droves of sheep, with horses galloping here and there in the exuberance of plenty and contentment, gay-plumaged birds radiant with color and sweet in song, the low humming of bees and the lowing of cattle; sunlight interwoven, as it were, with shadows playing here and there—surely this is the land of milk and honey; but, alas, how soon will be torn by the ravages of war!

Luzel and I talked of the future, weaving it in rose colors intertwined with threads of gold. Hope, joy, and future bliss were woven as pearls and diamonds in the fabric. We discarded from our future everything dark, gloomy, or unhappy; these things might follow others, but our lines were cast in pleasant places and could not be changed or altered. As we reveled in these scenes of coming bliss the shrill blast of a bugle announced the coming of her brother, Prince Montezuma.

Gazing in the direction of the horn we saw the chief and his followers rounding a projection of the rocks into view. Never before had I looked

upon a finer example of manhood, or one of more noble or lofty bearing. He rode a large grey horse, so muscular in build that it seemed a fitting charger for the master it bore. The chief was herculean in proportion, broad-chested, powerful-limbed, tall and muscular. His eyes were large, dark and piercing; his black hair fell in graceful confusion over his steel armor, which glistened in the sun like burnished silver. As he drew near upon us, giving spur to his horse, the noble steed sprang with the agility of a deer to our side, the chief at the time raising his helmet gracefully to his sister while his piercing black eyes rested upon me. Bending forward and extending his hand, he said, "I need no introduction. You are the noble knight Forno. I will not ask why you are here," saying with a laugh, "a man will barter his soul for the smiles of a woman." Then reigning up his steed he remarked, "I will not molest your *tete-a-tete*. Will see you later on in the great hall." Gracefully waving his hand as his horse wheeled away, he said, "Remember, noble Toltec, you are more than welcome at the castle of the robber chief."

Still straying further from the castle along the cliff, talking as before of our hopes, expectations and future happiness, communing as only new-found mates are wont, we did not heed the flight of time, as we were both fond of each other's company, and asked for no greater blessing, as our cup

of joy was full. But this happy communion was suddenly brought to an end by Luzel's maid, who announced the return of the master, also that the feast was waiting us.

Luzel remarked at the time, "My brother brooks none tardy at the festive board, so let us home at once."

We arrived none too soon, as the guests, if guests they might be called, but mostly retainers, led by their ladies, were passing into the grand banquet hall.

The chief sat at the head of the table, placing on either side Luzel and myself. A blast of the trumpet announced the presence of a priest, who implored the blessings of the gods for continued favor, happiness, and plenty. The line of waiters, headed by the steward, marched in, each laden with his specialty for the guests. The first, assisted by two attendants, bore upon immense platters great roasts of beef, which were placed at intervals along the table. Elegant vases with freshly plucked flowers sat between. Roast shotes, turkeys, ducks, mutton, and fish, together with a good supply of partridge, were intermixed with various kinds of fruit, great pitchers of wine, corn bread, and sweet potatoes; in short, there was everything to make up a great feast. Carvers now advanced with large knives, serving us with more than abundance of what we would have. Our large

golden flagons were filled to overflow with wine from the silver pitchers. Every one, following the example of the chieftain, laid to, and such feasting was past anything I had ever seen in Toltec. Lord Montezuma laid aside his dignity and laughed and talked with each in turn, being particular in his graciousness that no one, however low in rank, should be neglected, as all who domiciled in the castle sat at one table. Rank and distinction were wholly discarded and for the time forgotten.

There being several of the planters of the immediate neighborhood present as guests, the chief related his experience as peddler in Toltecke, jokingly remarking that the lady to his right had appeared much shocked at having a peddler admitted into her presence. At the same time he laid his hand upon his sister's shoulder, remarking, "Luzel, you played your part well." Loud peals of laughter followed these anecdotes. Turning to me, he said, "Noble Toltec, I can readily pardon your lack of shrewdness in not detecting the peddler, as you could see but one thing, how the magnificent jewels would look upon your fair prisoner."

The feast passed off very pleasantly, each lending well his part; and such quantities of wine as were taken by these hardy men-at-arms would be scarce creditable to relate. After the feast I spent

the balance of the day and evening communing with Luzel as before, planning for the future.

The next morning, after the meal was over, I asked for a private audience with the chief, which was readily granted, with little or no formality. I related to him the object of my visit, beseeching him to join us against the usurper of the throne of the Aztecs. Presenting my case the best I could, I awaited his reply. He remained silent for some time, finally he said, "I am disposed to join you, but there are some conditions I will require; among them the most important is that if we should succeed in defeating the Aztecs—I should not say the Aztecs, but the usurper that holds the throne of the Aztecs—I be placed in possession of my rightful heritage, the throne of the Aztecs. Another is, that the priesthood be subservient to the government of the Toltecs. Lastly, that the prisoners held by the Toltecs, which are a part of my father's household, be returned without delay."

I replied, "I can readily grant two of your demands, that you be placed on your rightful throne; next, that the prisoners of your father's household be returned. Over the third I have no control. I fear the priests have more influence with our sovereign than the knights of whom I am the head; but immediately on returning to my king I will place before him your alternatives and do my best to induce him to accede to your demands. Further,

allow me to ask what is your influence now among the Aztecs?"

He answered, "Were I to organize an army, which I hope you will not think me egotistical in saying I could do, I believe most of the lords, with their retainers, would join my standard; but there is so much treachery and false pretention of friendship among our people that I cannot speak positively as to the result."

I informed him that I was more than satisfied with our conference and, as time was pressing and my visit to him wholly unknown to my sovereign, I would immediately have to return to my people, so if he would kindly allow me to depart I would order my horse and be off at once, and as a last favor would crave his permission for a moment's audience with Lady Luzel before I departed.

All this was readily granted. Seeking out Luzel I took an affectionate farewell, mounted my horse, and was about to be off, when the chief approached me, saying, "I am sorry you go so soon. We are about to go on the chase and would be more than pleased to have you stay and join us."

"Nothing, my noble prince, would give me more pleasure than to join you in the chase, and under ordinary circumstances I would do so, but you know these are trying times with my people, and I must hasten back to them and tell the king of my visit to you and of your ultimatum."

"I know, noble Forno, these are trying times with you, and will not urge you more, but I will give you safe guard beyond the border."

Thanking him I said, "I found my way here with little interruption, and think I can avoid the Aztecs while returning."

"The Aztecs you may avoid, but my liegemen hold this part of the country. They are not so easily shaken off."

I hesitated, not wishing to accept his escort. "I know," he continued, "you are a gallant knight and wield a steadier lance than any of the Toltecs." At the same time laying his hand upon my arm he said, "This is a good sword arm, and I have often felt that I should like to tilt against you in the tournament, but it's all over now; we are brothers. You may fear little from those you meet, and are no doubt able to cope successfully with one or two of them, but numbers might worst you; as I see you do not care for an escort, here is a passport beyond my liegemen at least," at the same time handing me a small dagger with a jeweled hilt and signs engraved upon the blade which I could not decipher. "You will know my people by the black anchor painted upon the breast of their armor." With a hope for my safe return we parted, I rode away as rapidly as moderate caution would permit, riding on for the better part of the day without meeting anything worthy of relat-

ing, but later I was surprised by five knights, or men-at-arms, who were immediately all about me. I had not seen them and hardly knew how they got there. Halting, I asked, "Why this interruption?"

The leader replied, "We have no intention of interrupting you, but who are you and where from?"

"Strange you do not know me; I have the advantage of you."

"Ah, indeed," replied the leader, "where have you met us?"

"I have not met you before." At the same time I drew the small dagger, saying, "This will explain."

"It does explain," said the leader, "we are at your command. Can we serve you?"

"Nothing further than to direct me where I can find food and rest for myself and my jaded horse."

They told me of a near cut through the forest that would bring me to the quarters of a cattle ranchman, several miles distant.

I soon parted company with them, hoping to get through the forest before darkness overtook me. Later on I found that I had not heeded carefully their directions, as it was now nearly dark, and I knew that if I had gone aright, I should have had plenty of time to reach the ranch; and as I could see no sign of it, the disagreeable fact was

forced upon me that I was lost; and in trying to retrace my steps, I found that I was traveling in a circle. Determining to break away from this, I concluded that my only safeguard was to follow a small stream of water, I perchance wandered on. The woods were infested with wolves, making it unsafe to camp. Besides having no food for myself or horse, I wished to avoid it if possible, knowing full well that it would be difficult to protect my horse from the wolves. I was encased in steel armor and by lowering my helmet and drawing on my gauntlets, was well fortified against them, but as this would be very unpleasant, and as I might lose my horse, I determined not to give up reaching a settlement as long as I could make my way, still following the creek. The undergrowth was thick and well interwoven with vines, making progress exceedingly difficult, yet working my way as best I could, I made little headway. I was about to give up and settle down for the night when my eyes caught a light immediately to the left. My horse must have seen it as well as myself, as he was anxious to hurry on in that direction.

I soon saw a log cabin, or rather two or three low cabins or outhouses, but with a light in one only. Riding as near as possible, I shouted to attract attention. No response. Dismounting, I rapped gently on the door. No answer. Think-

ing they might possibly be asleep, I rapped still louder. Still no response. Growing impatient I struck the door two or three heavy blows. At last indifferently the answer came, "Who is without?"

"A wanderer," I replied, "who craves your hospitality."

"Move on," he said, "we have no accommodation for travelers."

"I can not be left in the forest to be devoured by wolves. I will accept any kind of accommodation." No response. Feeling angered at their want of hospitality, I determined to see inside the cabin. Loosening my sword and dagger ready for use, and throwing the rein of my horse over a post near by, I threw my whole weight against the door. As the door flew open, I found myself in a room with two men, one a man of splendid physique, strong and muscular. The other was a small man with narrow shoulders, sunken chest and of little physical strength. They both approached me, intent on throwing me out. I quickly took in the situation, and struck the larger man a terrible blow with my mailed hand. He measured his length on the floor. His partner seemed disposed to resent the attack, but he was physically of so little consequence that I did not think it necessary to strike him. At that time in my life I was a powerful man physically, hardly knowing my own strength, and often struck much harder than

I intended. This was one of the times. As the man did not get to his feet, I became frightened, fearing that I might have killed him, and ordered his partner to bring some water and wine. He also being scared readily complied, and we soon had the man on his feet, he having sustained no injury save being stunned by the blow.

I ordered the small man to provide for my horse and give him shelter from the wolves, which he did without parley. When he returned to the cabin, I told him I must have food and drink.

"We have no food," he replied, "and there is what wine we have," pointing to the vessel he had brought from the cupboard to restore his partner.

"You must have food. You could not live here without food; give me anything for I am dying of hunger, weak and exhausted for want of food."

"We would not have you stronger," laughingly remarked the man who had received the blow "I am well satisfied as to your strength," then addressing his partner, said, "prepare some of the venison."

The large man seemed the superior mind and the dominant spirit, for in a short time a good hearty meal was prepared and spread upon a table of common boards; food and wine were in abundance. We all gathered around it, for it appeared that they had not yet partaken of their evening meal.

The large man to whom I had so rudely introduced myself, seemed to entertain no ill feeling against me, but rather admired me, saying, "I've had many a rough and tumble with men in my day, but you are the first man that has ever laid me out," intimating at the time that if he had been better aware of the character of his antagonist, I might not have been so easy a victor.

"Noble host," I laughingly replied, "if you wish another chance, I will readily grant it, after the meal."

He courteously answered, "I could not accept your challenge in my own cabin where practically two are against one."

"That there may be no mistake in regard to who attacks me, I challenge you both."

"Not I," the little man replied, "not I. One blow from that great hand of yours would close my career as a saint."

At this we all joined in wine and laughter, and no more was said about the fight. Talking and drinking, we spent the evening pleasantly. "Neither of you," I said, addressing them both, "is a woodsman by birth or choice. Who are you; are you Toltecs or Aztecs?"

"We have no nationality," the little man replied, "neither do we want any. That life you call civilization is a curse, enabling one man to enslave his brothers, under pretence of bettering their con-

dition. They speak of people who have not submitted to this degradation as barbarians, but do you know that the barbarian is far superior to the civilized man, and much better at heart. I for one, as I said before, have no nationality, have no civilization and want none."

Said mine host, the larger man of the two, "As you would infer from his remarks, he is not in love with the life of the priest-ridden, neither am I."

"As I see, noble hosts, you do not care to inform me as to who you are, I will not press you, but will you tell me whose domain is this? Is it Aztec or Toltec?"

The larger man smilingly answered, "No one knows better than you that it is not Toltec, and, I may add, neither is it Aztec, but the domain of the grandest man the earth ever knew, Lord Montezuma."

"Then I take it you are a follower of the robber chief."

"I am a follower of no man," he replied, "but did the robber chief need strong arms to do battle, I am frank to admit, noble Toltec, this good right arm of mine would serve him as best it could."

"You call me Toltec, how know you I am a Toltec?"

"No matter how I know you are a Toltec, I have seen you often, Lord Forno, in Toltecke, your

capital city, and know you to be the leader of the knights of the raven crest."

"You surprise me, noble hermit, but when were you in Toltecke, may I ask?"

"Later than you would suppose," he replied. "When the noble Montezuma recaptured his lovely sister from your strong hold, I was with him."

"You near him?"

"Aye, near him when he passed with you and his peddler's pack into the presence of the fair Luzel."

"Then you were one of his followers?"

"No, not one of his followers, but feeling that he might need 'warm hearts and strong hands,' I followed him not as one of his retainers but simply for adventure."

"Were my people, the Toltecs, to engage in war with the Aztecs, where would the robber chief be found?"

"Not fighting the battle of the Aztecs," he replied, "not fighting the battle of the Aztecs, or at least not fighting for the king of the Aztecs. Montezuma is a true Aztec and loves his country and his people. He is their rightful king, and had he his just deserts, would now be occupying the throne of the Aztecs; but by intrigue, villainy, falsehood, and all manner of duplicity, the villain that now occupies it gained the throne of the Aztecs. A thousand curses on this heartless

scoundrel, and were the gods this moment to grant me any favor I might ask, I would say, give me a chance to plunge my sword through the heart of this usurping villain."

"You have evidently suffered much at the hands of this Aztec king—yes, suffered much."

"It matters not what I have suffered. My hatred for this arch-fiend is based on the wrongs of our people. But let us talk no more, it is growing late and you are sadly needing rest. There is your couch. Take it when you will."

I was not long in accepting this offer. Feeling that I was safe from any danger, I laid aside my mail, stretched at full length, and was soon lost to all surroundings. As I had lost much sleep, the sun was well up before I woke. When I arose, a good breakfast was prepared, in which we all joined heartily and with good will. As I was about to depart I handed the larger of my hosts a talisman, saying. "When you come to Toltecke again, seek me out, and if anything should befall you among my people, this will give you audience to our king or myself." Then offering the small man a handful of silver, which he declined, I rode away full of hope and expectation.

I was much impressed with the remarks of my late host; evidently he was a man who had been of more importance than he appeared. The smaller of the two, though not a warrior, must have

been formerly a man of consequence. I was most impressed, however, with their hatred for the king, and wonderful loyalty to the robber prince. My mind was made up as to the feeling of the people, in this section at least, in regard to their government. I determined as opportunity presented to inform myself further as to their loyalty.

My late host having put me aright as to directions, I traveled along without delay or inconvenience. In the latter part of the day I came upon a hogherder's quarters, something in character like those I have before described. They are a hardy, careless people, whose likes and dislikes are frankly expressed, independent of anyone. Craving food and shelter for myself and horse, which they readily granted, I sat down to talk with them.

"Whose domain is this?" I inquired.

"Whose what?" they said.

"Whose domain?"

One replied, "We don't know anything about domain, never heard of it before. Where is it or what is it?"

Being disguised in my coat and hood, they supposed me a cattle-herdsman, and talked freely with me. In way of explanation, I asked, "Are you Toltecs or Aztecs?"

One replied, "We are hog-herders. Are you Aztec, Toltec, or cattle-herder?"

But soon I had them interested, and drew from

them the popular feeling among their class. "We are Aztecs," one said, "You would not except to find Toltecs here, would you?"

"At least," I remarked, "you are subjects of the king of the Aztecs."

"We are subjects to no one," he replied, "but ourselves."

"But in case of war between the Aztecs and Toltecs, whom would you fight for?"

"We would fight for neither. All we would fight for would be to place the robber chief on his rightful throne."

Regarding further conversation with them unnecessary, and feeling that I had the tone of their class, I sought rest and sleep. Early the next morning I was off in good spirits, knowing that we would soon overthrow the Aztecs, if we had the support of Montezuma, whose friendship I knew would be assured by placing him on the throne, and my marriage with Luzel. Keeping steadily on my way without anything of further interest, I arrived home after an absence of just three weeks. My coming caused considerable commotion among our people, as the general impression was that I had been crazed by the capture of Lady Luzel, and had followed her. As to the following, of course, it was true, but I did not, as you know, expect to see her.

On learning of my return, the king ordered me

into his presence without delay. He appeared somewhat piqued at my leaving him so unceremoniously, but being of a frank, sympathetic and forgiving nature, he soon forgot it, and asked for a recital of my doings while away. I related in substance all that transpired, my promises to the robber chief, my interviews with the people along the way, and everything that could be of interest to him. He was elated beyond measure as to the willingness of the robber chief to join us against the Aztecs, or rather, I should say, against the throne of the Aztecs. He immediately gave orders for the release of the prisoners that belonged to the house of Montezuma, at the same time denying that the priests influenced or controlled him in any way in regard to the administration of his government. This I knew was not so, but it did not become me to contradict him.

I had had but little time to inquire after the absent knights before I had been ordered into the king's presence; but he gave what information I sought regarding them. "Yes," he said, "many of them were killed; some are prisoners and some have returned to court. Little good has come of it all, save that I have a proposition from the king of the Aztecs as well as an assurance that my brother, the queen, and the ladies attendant upon her are well cared for and are held pending a negotiation between the two governments. The proposition

he makes contains much good reasoning, and if you feel favorably impressed with it, probably it would be the best adjustment for our difficulties." He handed me the communication, which ran thus:

"Zuma, third year, ninety-fifth day of the reign of Belzo, king of the brave.

Greeting to the Child of the Sun, King of the Toltecs:—Brother, hear me!—That it may be well with us unto the gods, I hereby make known the wishes of the king of the Aztecs.

As trouble now exists between us, noble king, and that it may be settled without useless waste of blood and impoverishment of our nations, I do hereby make known and propose that you select from among your men-at-arms ten of your noblest warriors who have done service in tournaments or otherwise, whom you know and feel to be brave and true.

I will select a like number from among my braves, and they shall meet in tournament on the border, each doing battle for his cause. The last man left upon the field shall be declared the victor and dictate terms of settlement. That no advantage shall be possible on either side, our armies shall be drawn in line facing each other on either side of the lists; also, the knights that enter the lists shall be disguised so that no one shall know who they are or whence they came. Hoping this may find favor with thee, oh king, great of earth, I am thy brother, wishing good to thee and thy house.

BELZO,

King of the Aztecs."

My surprise at this proposition was only equaled by its acceptability. Turning to the king I said, "If you will allow me the selection of those I think most worthy, I will guarantee the success of our cause."

"Willingly," he replied, "willingly. I have waited many days for this expression. I know well your prowess as a knight, and will depend wholly upon your judgment as to the selection and manner of combat."

I immediately called for a list of those who had returned from the search for the queen. This the scribe furnished me at once.

I informed the king that I would return to the robber prince with this message, and, if acceptable to him, he and I would do battle with the ten knights to be put against us in twos until we fell. Then others would take our places. To this the king strenuously objected. "I will never submit to this arrangement," he said, with more fervor than I had ever known him to express. "I am willing that you should receive the first onset, but after you have downed your man, which I know you will do, you must not appear again in the lists until you have fully rested and regained your strength."

"As you will, noble sire," I replied, "your reasoning is good and I willingly submit to your wiser counsel, but first of all I must see the robber prince."

"One thing," he said, "I should like to make provisional in this tournament—that the king of the Aztecs and the king of the Toltecs enter the lists with the other knights; disguised, of course, so their identity in the lists may not be known."

"Noble sire, your wish is command with me, but that cannot be. It would cause disarrangement in our government, and it is more than possible that the king of the Aztecs, if he was so disposed, would not be allowed to accept such an arrangement. To my mind it would be wiser to accept his proposition without qualification or change."

My sovereign replied, "Perhaps you are right; do as you will, noble liegeman; I abide your judgment."

As the lady prisoners were about to be returned, the opportunity of again visiting the robber of the Cordilleras was all I could ask. The ladies were informed of our intention of releasing them and were told to prepare for the journey. At the same time we dispatched three messengers on three successive days, that the message might not be miscarried to the king of the Aztecs, saying that we would accept his proposition, together with a letter from our king fully as conciliatory as his. Two days were consumed in arranging matters for the prisoners' return. During this time I went among the knights that had returned from the raid eliciting

what information I could and selecting from among them those that had proved the strongest and most daring in battle and tournament; but fearing that this might cause some ill feeling among those that were not chosen, I ordered they should be voted on by the entire knighthood of the raven crest. This appeared satisfactory to all, so half of them were chosen; the other half I reserved in deference for the robber prince, knowing well that among his followers there must be men of great strength and bravery. The preparations for the return of the prisoners now being completed, every possible attention and courtesy was extended to the ladies. As we departed, all our ladies of rank gathered around our fair prisoners, vying with each other in presents and all manner of courtesies, many following on their beautifully bedecked horses for some miles.

Two days before I had dispatched messengers to the robber prince, notifying him of our journey to the castle with the prisoners, and soliciting an interview with him midway, giving as a reason that my frequent visits to his castle might be reported to the king of the Aztecs. Nothing of interest occurred on our journey with our fair prisoners until we had reached the place where I had requested the robber prince to meet me. On arriving there we found that he had been several hours ahead of us. This was very satisfactory. Giving our

charge over to the care of his men, my escort returned home, leaving the robber prince and myself to arrange as to the tournament.

I was not long in laying my plans before him, soliciting him to join us in the lists. He gladly accepted my offer, saying that the gods were surely smiling upon his cause. I further informed him that my sovereign had granted all the conditions he required, saying the influence of the priests which he claimed did not exist.

He replied, "We will waive all considerations in that matter and give our entire attention to the coming combat."

I informed him that I had chosen five of our ablest warriors, myself inclusive, whom I knew to be true, brave, and strong, holding the rest in reserve for him to make such selections as he might regard as fit. He was pleased with this arrangement, saying he could ask for nothing better, and had in mind four men as brave and true as ever broke lance. "One of them is not a liegeman of mine, but a friend, who is scarce a day's ride from here, whose counsel I often seek, regarding his wisdom and diplomacy equal to his strong arm. If you will join me we will away to his cabin. He lives in a secluded place in the forest, together with a man who was once scribe to the renegade king of the Aztecs."

I was struck with the description so tallying

with the men on whom I had so rudely forced myself as a guest, remarking to the chief the similarity and relating to him my adventure with them. He laughed heartily at this, saying I had struck down one of the ablest men that ever drew a sword.

Making our way as best we could, it was about dark when we arrived there. They had just returned from the chase, and so well provided were they with game that their larder would not need replenishing for weeks. We were received with every mark of attention, Montezuma even with affection. We laughed over my adventure with our hosts, for which they bore me no ill feeling.

When our plan was laid before him he said that he, my late antagonist, would readily join us on one condition, which was that he might be allowed to do battle with the renegade king, for whom he had a special lance, at which I was somewhat surprised, asking if they expected the king to enter the lists. The prince remarked, "Most assuredly; he never loses an opportunity to show himself off; but in justice to him, I will say that whatever else may be his faults he is no coward, neither is he a mean antagonist. The man that unhorses him must needs be well learned in the art of war. But our noble host," he continued, "is far his superior. He evidently has not figured on finding him and me in the lists, but as we are to enter the tourna-

ment disguised, no one will know of our presence."

Then I asked, "How will our noble host distinguish the king from others?"

They both laughed, the host saying that I little knew his vanity. All will know the king. His armor is snow white; he allows no other knight in his kingdom to wear the same. Further, the prince has spies about his throne who continually inform him of the doings at court. On the day of the tournament we shall know each man that enters the lists, his cunning, his strength and his bravery. Lots are usually cast at these tournaments as to how the battle is to be arranged; whether we fight in a body against their united forces, or in single combat, or two against two. "I would suggest," the chief remarked, "if it falls to our lot to dictate the arrangements that we fight in single combat; if it falls to their lot and they arrange differently, we shall be so informed of their men that we can pit ours against them according to strength, but, of course, this depends wholly on who may draw the lucky card."

We sat well into the night forming and discussing the best plans to pursue for success, but it was well understood that upon us three rested the weight of the day, and I hope you will not think me egotistical in saying that we regarded ourselves far superior to any three men they could send against us unless some great unknown fighter

should develop. The hatred of our host for the king could only end with the death of the king or of himself. We knew that he had suffered much at the hands of this usurper, and looked upon him as the bane of his life. He and the scribe had been obliged to flee for their lives, not through any fault of their own, but through the villainy of their king.

My sovereign's reply to the king of the Aztecs granted the right to the Aztecs to arrange the day and hour the combat was to commence. The border or the boundary of the two nations was to be the battle ground.

It was decided that the robber prince should accompany me home to Toltecke, and there await the return of the Toltec messengers from the king of the Aztecs. Everything being arranged as far as could be between the host and ourselves, we sought our couches for sleep and rest. Early the next morning, after our breakfast and with the best wishes of our host, we rode away for the land of the Toltecs. Our conversation had been upon various subjects, regarding ourselves, our nations, and the coming fight, when I remarked, "Noble prince, I know you have forgotten something, but I have not, it has been on my mind since our meeting."

"What is it, noble Toltec?" he asked.

"See if you can not draw your memory to it."

"By the smiles of my lady love," he answered,

"I had forgotten it," at the same time thrusting his hand into a receptacle of his saddle, and drawing forth a communication from Lady Luzel. While perusing this, I was oblivious to the robber chief and all other surroundings. Finally folding it up and placing it in my armor, I mused for a few moments without remark, thinking, of course, of Luzel. After a time he broke into a loud laugh, saying, "By Jove! A woman can turn the head of the strongest man. It always has been so, and no doubt always will be until the end of time."

Having met no adventure so far, it being well into the after part of the day, the prince remarked, "Noble Toltec, I am as hungry as a bear. Let us try to obtain some food and wine as well as something for our horses. Espying a cattle ranchman's house to the right, we rode up and asked for food for ourselves and mounts. The men were away, but the woman prepared us a good meal, and furnished corn for our horses as well.

Always ready to test the feelings of the people, in regard to the government, the prince led off by asking how they were doing, and if it had been a profitable year with them and their neighbors.

The woman stopped. Gazing into his face for a moment, her black eyes flashing with indignation, "Profitable year," she said, "how could it be profitable when we have a robber for a king. He sent his dirty minions here, who by force of

arms robbed us of our cattle, our grain, our wine, and everything that the thieves could put their hands on; but we are not the only sufferers; the country around has suffered alike with ourselves. I had hoped the noble Montezuma would strike for his rights, the throne of the Aztecs; but alas, even he has forgotten the wrongs of his people, and we are told sits idly in his castle, sipping his wine, while we are being robbed by the tyrant king."

Looking up, Montezuma quickly rose from the table, and paced back and forwards for several moments. At last he confronted the woman, saying, "You wrong Montezuma. I will report to him what you have suffered at the hands of this renegade king and try to induce him to do something for the protection of his people," at the same time he forced upon the woman a handful of gold. As he refused to eat anything more, we took our horses after they had finished their corn and were off, riding along some time in silence, I not daring to break his reverie.

Finally he looked up saying, "Noble Toltec, I have sustained many a deep and galling rebuke in my day, but that woman's was the worst of all. I have heard many and many a time that such was the impression of my people, but never before has it been made directly to me. Oh, how little do they know what efforts I am making in their behalf; how many sleepless nights and days fraught with

toil, but now I think I see the end. I feel sure of our success, but if it is a failure, I shall not live to be wrung by the disappointment and disgrace."

"Noble prince, 'the cloud is passing and will pass full soon.' I can see a bright future for you and your people, as well as for me and mine. I have not a doubt that we shall win the tournament, and that it will end the life of the present king, as the rules of all tournaments place the life of the fallen foe in the hands of the victor, and you know the love of the forest knight for Belzo."

"Know you this, noble Toltec, if our forest host shall fail to overthrow this renegade, 'I mark him for my own,' and shall this right hand fail to sever his head from his body, I will die in the attempt, but I have no doubt that we shall carry the day and redeem my people from this viper."

I could notice that the prince continually chafed under the chastisement he had received from the woman. As we rode along, his hand would continually wander towards the hilt of his sword as much as to say, 'I wish opportunity would present itself for me to right the wrongs of this woman.'

I said, "Noble prince—"

Suddenly drawing up his horse and at the same time raising his finger, he said, "Hark!"

Stopping to listen we could hear shouts and a clash of arms that informed us that a battle was being fought somewhere down the road. Putting

spurs to our horses we dashed on in the direction of the sound. As we rounded a turn of the road, we came upon a plantation, the house being somewhat back from the highway. Inside the enclosure, or temporary fortification, were a number of herdsmen, planters and ranchmen trying to keep back a body of Aztec knights, who were trying to force their way into the yard.

In the confusion we judged there were about twelve or fifteen of the knights. Without a moment's delay we hurried on to the scene. As we arrived there, the prince demanded, "What's the matter here? Why would you kill these people?" Seeing us the knights drew away from the attack. At the same time the leader advanced, saying, "Who are you, and why this interruption?"

The prince replied, "I am a knight, and by the right of my knighthood, demand why these people are attacked by you."

"Know you, sir, that we are here by the order of our king and sovereign, Belzo, king of the Aztecs, greatest of earth."

"Then may I ask," the prince replied, "why are these men being slain by you?"

The Aztec answered, "They refuse to pay tribute to our noble king."

"Indeed, is this cause sufficient for murdering these people? I know many near the robber prince that have paid no tribute for two years. Why are

they not molested, and these murdered for the same offense?"

"I have no time to bandy words with a meddling, roving knight, and if you would not be taken before the king, move on and mind your own business."

Hearing this I advanced, saying, "I will talk to these people, and I think I can adjust the matter satisfactorily to both sides without useless waste of blood." This appeared satisfactory to the Aztecs and I was allowed to call aside the leader of the planters and defenders and talk with him. I hastily informed him, out of the hearing of the Aztecs, that the large knight with me was the robber prince; that we intended attacking this whole body of knights, and wished them to give such aid as they could with their spears, bows and clubs. As their armor would protect the knights from any weapon they had, I advised them to direct their attacks against the horses of the Aztecs, spearing them and discharging their arrows wherever they might find an exposed place about man or horse. He was much elated at this, saying they would do their best, and that he believed they could render better service than I supposed.

Riding back to the prince I informed him of the situation and what I had done. On the receipt of this news he rode up still nearer to the Aztecs saying, "I command you to disperse."

Hearing this the Aztecs laughed. "Pray who are you," the leader said, "that you would command the knights of the clouds to disobey the orders of the king?"

"Know you, sir," replied the prince, "that my companion is the Toltec, Forno, greatest of the raven crest, and I am your rightful king, Montezuma, the robber prince."

At the sound of his voice they as of one accord drew back, awed by the name. Recovering themselves, their leader cried, "Down with him! There is a price upon his head!"

Without a moment's warning the prince dashed upon them, at the same drawing his ponderous blade. Of course I was by his side. The onset was terrific; in less time than it takes to relate we had four of their ablest knights dead upon the field, the leader included. I had often heard of the terror of the robber prince in battle, but had never formed any idea of this wonderful fighter. He seemed to have grown in size in a moment. Every time his great sword fell upon its victim everything went down before it. His dark eyes beneath the visor of his helmet seemed to flash fire which quailed all before him. His sword was probably twice as heavy as any of theirs, he having an arm that was fully capable of wielding it. The blows dealt by them upon the armor of this powerful chief seemed to have no effect. My blade was

probably of little less weight than his. I, too, was well pleased with my part in the heroic game. The planters and herdsmen also rushed upon the knights with their spears, bows and clubs, maiming many of their horses, spearing them and rendering them unmanageable, while we furiously fought the riders. One powerful herdsman with a club some six feet in length and of enormous weight, jumped into the thickest of the fight, striking down and slaying everything within his reach with this simple but powerful weapon.

The fight lasted but a few moments. In that time we had disabled or killed them all but three, who surrendered, pleading for mercy. The prince ordered the herdsmen to desist and to strip the knights of their armor, arms, jewels, and everything else about them. Several of the herdsmen and planters had been killed, but the prince and myself had suffered no injury worth mentioning.

The prince, calling before him the gallant herdsman with the club, ordered him to array himself in the armor of one of the largest Aztecs that lay dead on the field. After he had done so the prince knighted him on the spot, saying, "No braver man ever drew blade than you. Guard your honor well."

The wounded herdsmen and Aztecs were cared for by the women and rude servants about the plantation. Some of the Aztecs were so badly

wounded that their lives were despaired of. Montezuma, as usual ready to glean such information as he could as to the affairs at Zuma, interviewed a dying knight as to the affairs at the capital, and asked why King Belzo had made the strange proposition to the Toltecs to settle their difficulties in the list.

He said, "The king has little faith in the loyalty of his lords or people. Believing that in case of war the robber prince would join the Toltecs in their war against the Aztec government, and feeling that the influence of Montezuma among his people was much greater than his own, he thought it best not to risk his cause in open war. Knowing the Aztecs had always been considered the superior of the Toltecs in the lists, he believed it an easy way to win an almost bloodless victory, at the same time raising his own standard as he intended to appear in the combat himself."

This was very satisfactory to Montezuma, who believed it the true condition of affairs, and had no doubt that the man was telling the truth. The prince now called before him one of the Aztecs that had surrendered, saying to him, "Return to your villain master and say to him that you met the robber prince, who was accompanied by two liegemen, and that you, single handed, attacked and slew them all, leaving them dead upon the field. This," said the prince, "is but a fitting lie to a king whose court is as corrupt as himself. Go!"

Then gathering together the spoil and armor he had taken from the knights, he gave a part to the master of the house, saying, "Hang them on your outer walls as a warning to coming thieves." Then he ordered two of the men to take the rest of the armor and jewels back to the house where we had taken our refreshments, present them to the hostess and say to her that Prince Montezuma has avenged her wrongs and prays her to accept these trophies as an earnest of his love for his people, and that her home henceforward would be protected by the robber prince.

We left the wounded knights at the mercy of the people they had tried to rob. The knights, being disarmed and disabled, we feared they would fare badly, but hoped mercy would be shown them.

As we rode on the chief appeared much more jovial and happy, since, as he said, "We had somewhat avenged the wrongs of the woman." Hearing the clatter of horses' hoofs behind us, I turned to see who was approaching. As I did so, one of the retainers of the plantation drew near us. Lifting his hood in way of salutation he said, "My master prays you will return as his guests for the night. During the confusion he did not notice you were going. He would feel much grieved if you refused to accept his hospitality. Pray you, sirs, return and he will give you fitting cheer."

As it was growing dusky and we knew not where

we should spend the night or what accommodations we should chance upon, we readily accepted the invitation and returned. On reaching the house we found a large number of people, as the herdsmen and planters for miles around on hearing the news had gathered there to learn what had happened. The prince's identity was now well known, and he was received with every demonstration of affection and devotion to his cause. Each saluted him as their sovereign, saying, "May the gods speed the day when a Montezuma shall again ascend the throne of the Aztecs." All appeared to know of the pending war between the Toltecs and Aztecs, and were loud in denunciation of Belzo the king, saying in no way would they serve or lend a helping hand to crush the Toltecs, believing this declaration of war against a weaker power was to draw the attention of the lords and people away from the bad government at Zuma.

It was well into the night before these planters and herdsmen took their departure for home. The evening for the most part was spent in declaring their allegiance to the prince and love for his father, who had once been their king and ruler. Before the departure of the people, several attempts were made to excite their hatred against the defeated and wounded knights, and to put them to death, but the wise counsel of the prince prevailed, and those that were able were allowed to

depart. Great quantities of food had been prepared, and all who would were welcome to the food and wine. After the guests had departed, the host kindly showed us to our couches, which we gladly accepted, and were soon asleep.

The next morning the prince again sought interviews with some of the wounded knights, eliciting what information he could regarding the government, and why it was that the country was continually raided and the planters and tradesmen robbed by Belzo's men-at-arms.

One of the wounded knights replied that the king's accursed policy of pensioning the knights and lords to retain their support was the cause of this system of robbery and must end in his ruin.

Believing that he had obtained all the information he could, and bidding adieu to our host, we departed. We had scarce left the plantation when we were overtaken by the new-made knight, asking the prince to be allowed to become one of his liegemen and join us in our journey of knight-errantry. He was a fine example of manhood, so the prince readily accepted him as a follower, saying at the time, he could accompany us until something better developed, or till he met some of his knights. It was a perfect morning; nature was in her happiest mood; vegetable and animal life rejoiced in the sunshine; only man was sad and at war with his brother. The fields were ripe with golden

grain and the hills and plains were covered with cattle, sheep and horses. Plenty reigned in every direction. Why should man alone bring misery upon the world? Why could he not live in peace with his neighbor? There was plenty for all. Everything was happy save man, and he might be, if he would. Montezuma's thoughts must have run the same for he said, "Noble Toltec, in a land so blest as ours where plenty and to spare is on every side, why is it we continually war with one another? If I shall be allowed to ascend the throne of the Aztecs, I swear by my good sword, which I hold as my truest friend, that my aim shall be to render my people happy and contented. I will not allow the strong to oppress the weak, neither will I depend on the reports of those under me as to the condition of my subjects, but shall make it my duty in life continually to travel over my kingdom, learning personally the condition of my people, and woe be to him who by virtue of his strength shall oppress them. He again relaxed into silence, and we rode many miles without speaking. Continuing our journey until well into the afternoon, in a piece of woodland, beside a stream of water, we came upon a company of merry-makers. They were having their harvest-dance, laughing, dancing, feasting, and enjoying themselves to their heart's content. Upon seeing us the women screamed, the men fell into line with

heavy clubs, and some with spears. This appeared to pain the prince beyond measure. Riding up he asked, "Why this confusion upon our arrival?"

One of the men said, "We know the minions of our tyrant king, and no three of them shall rob this body of merry-makers."

The prince asked, why they gathered together in array with clubs and spears.

The speaker replied, "That we may protect ourselves against the thieves and robbers of the king. The people of this section and all over the kingdom have organized to resist the minions of the worst government the Aztecs ever knew. We have waited long for Montezuma to lead us on to crush this tyrant king, but alas, it is useless waiting."

This placed the prince in a disagreeable dilemma. In a moment he said, "Have you heard of the coming war between the Toltecs and Aztecs?"

"We have," he replied, "and welcome it, and you can tell your dirty master that we will not lend him a helping hand, but bless the day when the Toltecs crush him and his court of thieves."

The prince replying said, "We are hungry with our long ride. Could you give us some food for ourselves and horses," at the same time throwing a gold piece at the feet of the merry-makers.

The leader answered, "Yes, more than welcome to food for yourselves and horses, but we want

none of your gold, and, mark you well, you will not get the advantage of us, for we shall watch you."

Dismounting we accepted their hospitality, the prince remarking at the time, "We are not minions of Belzo and hate him far worse than you do."

After our refreshments we mounted and rode on. As we rode away the prince said, "Noble Forno, when you first called upon me in my stronghold you asked me what my influence was with the Aztecs, and if I had power to raise an army. You have seen enough; you can judge for yourself." Questioning he said, "Was there ever a people so thoroughly at war with their government, or that hated their king as much as we?"

Continuing on without interruption, about night-fall we rode into a village. There appeared to be great confusion. On ascertaining the cause, we found that Belzo's minions as usual had been trying to rob the village. The villagers having organized against these raiders, were fiercely doing them battle at a great disadvantage, when in rode seven liegemen of the robber prince, who joining with the people, drove away the Aztecs, killing five. Staying here for the night, we learned the feelings of the people against Belzo and his government.

The next morning we rode on without further interruption, and on arriving at our capital found everything quiet and undisturbed.

The messengers sent to the king of the Aztecs

had returned, stating the time that his majesty had appointed for the combat. It was to take place in sixty days from the first change of the moon. Of course, great preparations followed in both countries. The robber prince asked permission to furnish the spears, as he had a lance maker who had a secret of tempering lances that never broke, or at least seldom. As to the swords he had nothing to propose.

Our king received the prince with great demonstration. Everything was done to render his sojourn among us as pleasant as possible. As no one knew of his identity but the king, myself, and the planter, he was presented to the other knights as a roving knight that claimed no nationality or clan. This was made possible by such men often passing through the country, doing battle wherever they could find an antagonist worthy of their blade.

He remained with us but a few days, returning home to prepare his own knights for the combat. We had arranged when and how to meet incognito his men and liegemen who were to form a part of the Toltec army. He believed that he could keep this fully from the Aztecs, and as no one among the Toltecs but the king, the knights and myself would know of the arrangement, it was easy to keep it a secret with us.

I asked him as to the knights he had turned loose at the planter's.

He replied, "Belzo will never hear from them of their defeat or their meeting us."

The thrilling incidents encountered by the knights who went in search of the queen and fellow captives might be interesting to relate, but as you have asked me only for my own adventures, it may be well not to relate them. Knights throughout the kingdom who did not belong to those of the raven crest were continually offering themselves for the tournament. It pained me to reject many of them, as they were noble specimens of manhood and of frames, which showed that they would be strong in battle. But as only ten were allowed and five of these were to be chosen by the robber prince of the Cordilleras, I could only say to them, "You may be chosen, or at least some of you, but only in case those before you should be unfit for battle. Our whole attention was now occupied in getting the army in a condition to move, and arranging every detail preparatory to the combat. After everything had been arranged for the protection of Toltecke, in case of surprise during our absence, we commenced slowly moving the army towards the frontier. It was our intention to be near the battle-ground before time, and to have our combatants as well as the army on the very best war footing possible. Having plenty of time, our marches were short and easy, yet regular.

One morning after making the usual prepara-

tions for the day's march, a small squad of Comanches rode into camp. They belonged to a small tribe of semi-savages that live far north of the Aztecs, occupying a country known as Aldora, on a river of some importance. These hardy people were continuously at war with the Aztecs and their hatred for them was often manifested by the most daring raids upon their frontier. The leader or spokesman for this small squad of men was one of the most wonderful specimens of humanity I had ever met. He was a man that would weigh, judging him as I saw him in his saddle, about two hundred pounds, probably two hundred and twenty-five. His shoulders were of unusual width, his bare left arm hanging down by his side. In his right hand he held the rein of his horse or rather pony. He was raw-boned, angular, seemingly made up of muscle and bone only. With a sudden spring he threw himself out of the saddle on the ground beside me, speaking some Toltec, saying in substance, "I came here to fight with you against the Aztecs in the lists."

He looked much surprised when I informed him that the lists were already made up, yet his only reply was a grunt. Wandering about among our knights and regarding their spears and lances, with apparent curiosity he picked up one of the lances, remarking that it would be of little use against the Aztecs, as they were hard fighters, and we would

have to prepare ourselves with better arms if we expected to succeed. Some of us laughed at this, asking him if he had ever held a stronger lance. His only reply was, "Yes," at the same time snapping it in two with his hands as though it were a reed, saying, "If you fight the Aztecs with no better lances than that, you are beaten."

Our surprise at this exhibition of strength can hardly be realized. We gathered about him to look more closely at his powerful arms and hands. One of the knights passed him another lance, asking him if that was any better. Taking it in his hands he broke it with even more ease than the first. I wondered much at this and called to mind the request of the robber prince that he might furnish the lances, which naturally led me to the conclusion that our lances were inferior to the Aztecs.

We asked him to show us his lance.

"I have no lance," he replied, "and can down any man that carries a lance."

This was a direct challenge to every knight of the raven crest, as all of us had prided ourselves on our lances and our ability to wield them. Some of our men stepped forward, asking permission to tilt with the stranger. I told them this was no time or place for affairs of that kind, and that they had better husband their strength to meet the Aztecs than to waste it on this wild barbarian.

The stranger's lips curled with scorn and was about to remount his horse and ride away, when I stepped up to him and said, "Stranger, do not leave us with ill feeling, for we admire your strength and would be glad to have you enter the lists with us, if our number were not already full."

He smilingly replied, "You may need me later on." Continuing he said, "I will tilt unarmed with two of your ablest men, one to follow the other immediately, and will carry neither sword nor spear; only my shield to protect me from their lances."

As this appeared a bloodless contest, we could not refuse it, and immediately arranged for the trial. As our men were ready prepared for the march, we only waited his pleasure. Beckoning to one of his followers who led a black stallion of unusual vigor, strength, and viciousness, to come forward, the strange Comanche knight unstrapped the saddle from the horse he had ridden, on coming into camp, and placed it on the black stallion, then, throwing about him a kind of armor, he mounted the black horse with the agility of a panther. At the same time his attendant handed him a manner of shield, and he pronounced himself ready for the contest. His shield was wholly unlike anything I had ever before seen. Instead of being convex as we supposed was necessary to turn the lance, it was concave to receive the lance in such a way that it could not glance off, and

must of necessity slip to the center of the shield and there remain, depending on his and his horse's immense strength to throw the shock upon his antagonist.

Our two men were put probably one fifty yards in advance of the other and distant from the stranger, probably one hundreds yards. The signal was given for the onset. Each advanced against the stranger with his lance set ready to unhorse him, our men probably advancing more rapidly than the barbarian. When within ten yards of each other, the barbarian's horse leaped forward with a tremendous plunge. The barbarian at the time caught the point of his opponent's lance in his shield, throwing both man and horse heavily to the ground. Leaping forward, in an instant he received our other man in like manner, throwing him to the ground, and breaking his leg.

Our surprise and admiration of this stranger knew no bounds. As he had wholly disabled one of the knights that was chosen for the list, I allowed him to take his place. His mode of warfare was entirely different from anything we had ever before seen.

I inquired of him if he carried no arms. Beckoning to one of his attendants to come forward, he presented his chief with a sword, four or five feet in length. I said sword—it was more like a dagger, as it was like in form to the one the robber

prince had presented to me, yet of such gigantic size and weight that few men could wield it. I, too, carried a heavy sword, as I was a man of great physical strength, yet mine was but a toy in comparison to his. In producing his blade he asked if there was anyone here that would care to cross swords with him that he might prove himself worthy to enter the lists with them. No one appeared anxious to accept the challenge.

Another thing that rendered his antagonist at a disadvantage, was that this barbarian's sword arm was his left. He carried his shield in his right hand. His black stallion wore no bridle, but was guided entirely by the word of his master. In short, the man and horse were so much a part of each other, that they appeared inseparable, the powerful black charger playing an equal part in the fight. After this our army got under way, the barbarian having his saddle changed to the horse he had ridden into camp, leaving the noble black to be led as before.

We were getting well toward the frontier, and not wishing to arrive there too soon our marches were short and easy. At last we had arrived at the point where we intended to remain until the day before the battle. Nothing was left for us to do but to remain quiet and await the lapse of four days pending the fight. Our men amused themselves during the time with various sports and feats of strength.

We were a superstitious people, believing in all manner of ghosts, fairies, and hobgoblins, and as a result our country was infested with any number of wizards. They told of coming events and of what would happen, all, high and low alike, consulting them before engaging in any great enterprise consequently we were always ready and easy victims of these humbugs. The sun was just sinking below the horizon one evening when two of these astrologers leisurely walked into camp, a man and a woman. The man was of low stature, badly bent, thin, ugly, and repulsive; the woman less repulsive, yet ragged, old, and unattractive. They appeared desirous of avoiding the knights and high officials, and remained with the men of low degree, telling their fortunes and gaining what information they could regarding our movements, the woman doing most of the talking, the old man being an interested listener. Hearing of the presence of these wanderers, the king ordered them brought to his quarters. In a good-natured way the king asked the woman if the signs were propitious. After reading the stars, she said we should win the battle and could dictate what terms we liked to the Aztecs. The king asked them who they were and where they were from. The man replied, "From the gods. We have no settled home, but the most of our time is spent in the forest yonder."

The Aztecs were given to sending spies among

us, disguising them in every way and eliciting what information they could from us. My suspicions were aroused by the wizard, who was evidently a man of more intelligence than he would have us believe. I communicated my suspicions to the king, saying to him that I intended to hold these people as prisoners until after the fight, as I believed they were Aztecs in disguise. The king laughed at this, but said that if I thought it wise, I might do so. I ordered a guard and placed them under arrest, with instructions that they were to be closely watched and not allowed to leave the camp. We had hardly taken this precaution when with a shrill blast of a bugle blown three times, the signal agreed upon, the robber prince and his followers dashed into camp. They were a noble body of men, in short, a small army of giants. Among them was our forest host, the scribe and the planter knight.

Scarce had the robber prince dismounted from his noble charger when up stepped the barbarian. Smilingly advancing he clapped the robber prince on the shoulder, saying, "Ho Ho."

The prince wheeled around; the two giants stood face to face. The robber prince for a moment seemed to doubt his own eyes. But soon, advancing and throwing his arms about the barbarian, he said, "Noble savage, surely the gods have sent you."

Turning to me at the same time, the prince said, "Behold, the greatest warrior the earth ever knew."

I replied, "We have seen some exhibition of the power of this wonderful giant."

Explanations followed, the prince remarking that with this powerful ally we could not fail.

We did everything possible to make the robber prince and his liegemen comfortable. Montezuma and his followers the next morning while wandering through the camp noting our strength and equipment, by chance ran upon the wizards whom we had under guard. The forest scribe knew them at a glance. Advancing to the man he said, "Tarzo, arch-villain of the earth, how came you here?"

The wizard, holding his head high, said, "Who are you? Why do you call me Tarzo? That's not my name, neither have I seen you before."

Their loud conversation attracted the attention of the robber prince and the forest knight, who stepped forward to learn the cause of this commotion. Each knew the wizard as well as the scribe. The prince, calmly looking down upon him, said, "Tarzo, thy villainy is only equalled by thy master's, the usurper of the throne of the Aztecs, and it were better for thee, Tarzo, and for the earth which thou pollutest, that thou were given to the priests."

After this he was brought before the king, the robber prince, the forest knight, and the scribe giving evidence against him, stating that he was a secret emissary of the usurper, and was evidently sent into our camp to ascertain our strength and gather what information might serve his master.

When our king heard this his brow darkened. Looking steadily at Tarzo for a moment he said, "What have you to offer in self-defense?"

"What have I to offer?" returned the wizard, "I have this to offer that you have allied yourself with a robber to defeat the Aztecs, and I call the curses of the gods upon you and your followers henceforth, now and forever."

The king replied, "May the gods be merciful to you, Tarzo," then ordered him away to the priests.

The religious rites of that time among the priests must, to be impressive, be accompanied with the sacrifice of human beings. As a large number of these priests had followed the army, they soon improvized a scaffold on which to sacrifice the prisoner. The ritual was long and tedious, but all that would be of interest to relate was the sacrifice. A scaffold was built eight or ten feet high on which was placed a long table. After Tarzo had been divested of his garments he was placed, back down, upon the table, his hands and feet lashed fast. A priest now mounted the scaffold, knife in hand,

mumbling all the time a sort of prayer, and proceeded to cut out the heart of the victim. Deftly executing the work, he held the heart up to the gaze of the crowd who, bowing their heads, murmured a prayer for the soul of the departed.

Then the table was removed on which had rested the body of the victim, and in its place was put a large urn in which a fire was furiously burning. In this was placed the heart, and around it gathered all the priests, offering prayers to the gods. The body of the victim was not buried but carried away to the forest, where it might be consumed by the wolves. Tarzo's fellow sorcerer, the woman, was not sacrificed because of a belief among us that the sacrifice of a woman is an insult to the gods; but she was held as a prisoner until after the battle.

We now moved on nearer to the battle ground. The lists had been prepared by enclosing a plot of level ground about five hundred feet square. No one was to be admitted into this enclosure save the contending knights, the litter-bearers and the leeches.

Early the next morning we drew up our army in line of battle, the center resting on the south side of the lists. The right and left of our forces extended probably a quarter of a mile from the center either way. The Aztecs were drawn up in like manner. Ten o'clock was the time arranged

for the memorable combat to commence. About that time the Aztecs, or at least those chosen for the combat, entered the lists. In a few moments we also filed in.

Our opponents, as we viewed them from the opposite side of the list, were as fine a body of men as to contour as probably ever did battle in any lists. In the center was the king gracefully mounted on a snow-white charger. His armor was also pure white, with a white plume waving from his helmet. The men to his right and left were uniformly arrayed in their burnished armor which glistened in the sunshine like burnished silver, and bespoke strength and durability. Our side was more motley in appearance. The prince, the forest knight and myself were encased in dead black armor, waving from our helmets black plumes. The barbarian's armor consisted of plates of steel, on either side of which were iron plates projecting from his saddle and passing from his loins under his feet that protected the lower part of his frame, and on each shoulder and over the right arm were plates of steel. His left, or sword-arm, was entirely bare; his shield was burnished to such a degree that he could throw the rays of the sun to any point he desired. He carried no spear, and his immense sword hung loose from the pommel of his saddle. His horse, as I have said before, wore no bridle, but its head was protected by an iron casting. On its

breast it wore a heavy iron plate from which projected a spike about twelve inches in length. This he would force into the opposing horse, usually disabling him.

The object of this highly burnished shield was that the barbarian could so direct the rays of light against his coming antagonist's eyes that it would blind him and to a certain extent confuse him.

Our other knights were uniformly arrayed in dark-grey armor, with burnished helmets. Each knight in the arena, both Aztec and Toltec, wore his private colors which were known only to his friends.

As I said before, we drew lots for the side that should arrange the order of meeting. We lost. It now rested with the Aztecs whether we should meet in single combat, by twos, by fours, or the entire number at once. Only a few moments now remained before the contest. The prince was informed by his spies who each knight was among our opponents. The first, as supposed, was the king in the white armor; then the prince went in detail through the other nine, pitting our men against them as he knew their comparative strength.

Soon the time had elapsed and the trumpet sounded for the combat. Two Aztec knights from the left of the king rode out. The prince remarked to me that they were probably two of the weakest among the Aztecs, and advised me to send two of

my weakest men against them. I did so, ordering two of our knights to do them battle. As they rode out to meet their opponents, a second blast of the bugle gave the signal for the onset.

The charge was tremendous; but the fight was of short duration. Both of our men fell dead upon the spot. A great hurrah went up from the Aztec side. This was somewhat disheartening to our side, but the robber chief gave a low laugh and said it was just as he would have it. As soon as the field was cleared, the trumpets sounded for another combat.

At the same time out rode another knight immediately from the right of the king. He was the was the finest example of manhood among them.

The prince whispered to me, "Send the barbarian against him." As the barbarian rode out, there was a smile on his face, and his eyes flashed with satisfaction. Again the bugle sounded to the combat. The barbarian's horse started out in a slow lope while the Aztec's horse was coming at furious speed against him. When within a few yards of his opponent, the black horse leaped forward with tremendous speed. The barbarian received the point of the Aztec's lance in his shield, throwing the Aztec from his saddle upon the haunches of his horse. In an instant the barbarian's sword flashed in the air, and the Aztec's head, armor and all, was severed from his body.

The work was so sudden and so appalling that for a moment everything remained quiet. Then a tremendous shout from the Toltecs greeted the victor. As the barbarian rode back to the line he would occasionally look at the Aztecs as if desiring to attack them all single-handed. As he came back into line beside me he was as calm and undisturbed as though he had had no encounter. Whispering to me, he said, "You will give me another chance?"

"Yes," I replied, "we four may yet fight together," meaning the barbarian, the prince, the forest knight, and myself, for we could but feel that on us rested the fate of the day. We had not long to wait; the field being soon cleared, again the bugle sounded. Four of the largest Aztecs rode out in line. The prince whispered to me, "Now is our time." We four that I have mentioned rode out to meet them. Again the bugle sounded. On!

Each bent forward to meet his opponent. We felt that the flower of the Aztec knighthood was against us. The charge on each side was terrific. The robber prince and the barbarian were side by side. The forest knight and myself kept together, As we neared our antagonists the black horse, as usual, plunged forward of us, the barbarian receiving his antagonist as before, throwing him to the ground, horse and all. This was done so suddenly that it confused the other Aztecs, who felt and knew that it was four against three, but the barba-

rian took no advantage, urging his horse beyond, and waiting our contest of three against three. The robber prince, not to be outdone by the barbarian, cleverly beheaded his man as the barbarian had before.

The forest knight and myself were not far behind. We each unhorsed our antagonist as readily as we had expected. The forest knight, being more vindictive than I, leaned forward and thrust his sword into his wounded antagonist. When order was restored, the barbarian proposed that we four attack their remaining five without returning to line. This, of course, we could not do, and informed him that would be a violation of the arrangement of the fight. As we rode back, a tremendous shout went up among the Toltecs. The victory was practically ours, we having eight men against their five. As we neared our line a shout went up among the Aztecs, crying, "Montezuma! the robber prince, Montezuma!" Hearing this the prince raised his helmet, saying, "May the gods bless you, my people." Now a much louder cheer than before, crying, "Long live Montezuma, our rightful king! Long live Montezuma!"

Knowing that his cause was lost, the king of the Aztecs rode out on his white horse, at the same time waving his hand to the trumpeter to keep silence, and made this challenge, "I know," he said, "full well, that the traitor, Montezuma, the

robber prince, is in this band, and know you," turning to the Aztecs, "that this traitor is fighting against his country in favor of the Toltecs. Know you, also, that I, the rightful king of the Aztecs, do hereby challenge Montezuma, this traitor to his country, to do battle with me single-handed, and thus decide the contest."

Under these galling charges, Montezuma remained calm and undisturbed. Turning to the forest knight, he calmly asked, "Will you, my beloved brother, waive in my favor the right to fight that renegade king?"

"I will," replied the forest knight, "and may the gods strengthen your armor."

"Many thanks," returned the robber chief, who rode forward to meet the renegade king of the Aztecs. It was an unequal fight, for the robber prince was thrice his match.

The trumpet sounded and they rode to the onset. This, probably, was the grandest of any of the contests. The robber prince, disdaining even to use his lance against the king, deftly turned the lance of the king away, striking him such a powerful blow with his heavy sword that he cleft his head in twain, the king falling at the feet of his horse. Then raising his helmet to the Aztecs, Montezuma said, "I am Montezuma, your rightful king, and am here to claim my heritage, and woe be to him that shall gainsay my right." Then,

dashing towards the Aztecs, his horse easily leaped the barriers, and the prince put himself at the head of the Aztec army.

The forest knight, the barbarian and myself were at his side in an instant. The Aztecs received him with applause, gladly welcoming him as their king. A dozen of the Aztec knights, knowing that if Montezuma ascended the throne it would not be well with them, rushed upon him with the intention of killing him. But the barbarian, the forest knight and myself were at his side. For a few moments the fight was terrific; the prince and the barbarian swept down the Aztec knights with appalling rapidity. In a few moments ten of them lay dead upon the spot; the other two fled for their lives. Out of the ten dead the barbarian had killed five. I was wounded, but I kept my saddle until Montezuma was hailed king of the Aztecs; then, growing weak from loss of blood, I fell to the ground. I heard a scream; Luzel was at my side, but they could not stay the flow of blood—I died! You all know what follows death.

I have not bathed in the river of light and know nothing of my people since that fatal day, but hope it is well with them. I am happy here, and have but one wish, that Luzel and I may sometime walk together the streets of the Celestial City. I know she is there, for I have often met her with convoys of angels visiting Surey, Turning to an old man

with white hair he said, "I know you have bathed in the river of light and have all knowledge; tell me what became of my people?"

After a moment's thought the old man spoke, "Your friend, the robber prince, ascended the Aztec throne without further hindrance, reigning several years undisturbed, stopping the pension system and putting to death all that oppressed his people. He traveled largely about his kingdom, learning the condition of his people by personal observation. Toltec, your king, and the robber prince remained fast friends in a reign of many years of peace and quiet. After Montezuma had served his twenty years, he was again chosen for another term. On the death of the Toltec king, the two governments peacefully merged into one under the government of Montezuma, who changed his capital to Toltেকে.

After the death of the robber prince another Montezuma peacefully ascended the throne, and the family remained in power eight centuries, or up to the time of the conquest by the Spaniards. The priests during this time had gained such control over the government and the people that by the sacrifices about one hundred thousand yearly were put to death, causing the country to be torn by dissensions, rebellions and sectional strife.

A few Spaniards, seeing the condition of things, took advantage of this sectional hatred, put them-

selves at the head of one section, and by causing them to destroy each other, made themselves masters of the country. The priests of the new or Christian power now put to death all the priests of the heathen or false faith as they called it, fettering the priest-ridden people more closely than before. It is true that the Aztecs gave to sacrifice one hundred thousand yearly, but the Christians gave to the inquisition one hundred and fifty thousand yearly. The difference was that the Toltec priests believed their victims would go to heaven, while the Christian priests believed they were sending their victims to hell.

Probably no prince that ever reigned loved his people as much as Montezuma, the robber prince, or lived so wholly for them. After the Toltecs and Aztecs had united, and the noble Montezuma had become ruler of them both, he found that the knighthood was causing trouble and robbing his people; so he ordered every horse in his kingdom to be killed, and made it a death penalty for anyone to own or ride one, thereby destroying the possibility of knighthood, and for several centuries horses were unknown in Aztec. In fact, the people had forgotten them until the sixteenth century when Cortez, the Spaniard, took them there.

The barbarian that fought so bravely for the right, lived as the ruler of his people for many years, remaining a steadfast friend of Montezuma,

but after his death his people degenerated into a roving tribe of Indians, yet up to this time they occupy a part of the same country they did then. and are still regarded as able warriors.

CHAPTER IX.

Surene and I have our dwelling place not in common with the others, but dwell together in lovely quarters somewhat apart from the whites. Our intercourse is mostly with the black people, but, as I have said before, there is no caste or distinction; the natural affinity of the blacks for each other is all that holds them apart from the whites.

Since bathing in the river of Night I have been able to look back into my early life, and see my parents, my childhood, and my early surroundings. I find there is no negro blood in my veins. My father and mother were Arabs, living in south Africa. My father was a trader among the negroes for ivory, diamonds, and everything else that made up their commerce. I played with the negro children, and being much darker than the average Arab, the difference between the black children and myself was not noticeable. One day while we were playing, the slave capturers gathered up many children, me among the rest. We were put on a ship laden with blacks, carried to America and sold into slavery.

Surene's mother was a quadroon, and her father

was her master, which made her an octoroon. In speaking to her of my absence of negro blood, she was not surprised, and said it was remarked even among the negroes that I was not like them, yet, being very dark, the natural conclusion was that I must be a negro. Our abode was a league apart from the Sea of Redemption. The approach to the sea is down a gentle declivity of yellow sand. Its waters are placid, calm and unruffled, as no wind disturbs their surface. Much of our time was spent along this lovely sea, bathing in its waters, riding over its surface in our shell canoes, and besporting ourselves along its sandy beach.

Emissaries sent to the inferno from Surey returned, informing us that fifteen thousand purified by the fires of hell were waiting and unjustly suffering for release. This caused much commotion among us, but nothing could be done until communication could be had between heaven and Surey. The knowledge we had acquired by our emissaries was not necessary to communicate to the Great Jehovah. Knowing the condition of things inside the earth, He ordered the archangel Michael to muster the hosts of heaven and send them to Surey, and there to gather the additional force needed to attack Satan and his minions, wrench from them the purified, and convey them over the Sea of Redemption to Surey.

Messengers arrived telling us of the preparations of the angels and arch-angels and ordered us to organize and attack the devil and his hosts at once.

All was commotion. Our air ships and ships of sea were made ready to convey the people of Surey, or those that would do battle with Satan and his hosts, across the Sea of Redemption.

Nothing was thought or talked of but preparations for war with the demons. Each vied with each how best he might act his part. Organization was necessary that we might act effectively and in conjunction with each other in the coming battle; casting about us for a leader, the Toltec was chosen as chief commander. It was well known among us that he who fell in fighting the hosts of hell, had won his diadem, and would be transported by the angels to the celestial city. There was no lack of volunteers as all men of Surey were anxious to have a part in the struggle, and were continually arriving from all sections. The Toltec's plan of battle was to freight five of our largest air-ships with as much water as they could carry. purposing to float them so ladened over the red-hot domes of hell, and when in position, simultaneously to discharge their cargo of water upon the domes. Accordingly the lower parts or hulls of each ship were made so tight that they could be filled with water to the extent of their capacity to rise in the air.

After we had so freighted our ships, we turned our attention to our sea-going crafts. We had many of them, large and strongly built. They were all sumptuously fitted, as their use had been exclusively for pleasure or nearly so. They carried in themselves no motive power; that was furnished by small air-ships built for that purpose that acted as tugs. Six of these large ships were made ready with everything necessary for our campaign against the inferno. Our forces were marshalled and drilled for service upon the air-ships, and another portion of the army for service upon land around the inferno.

Satan's portion of hell's domain, or the inferno, is one hundred leagues apart from Surey, and the gates of hell are three leagues from the rock-bound coast of the Sea of Redemption. From the sea down to the gates of hell is a rapid descent over rocks and arid sands, kept continuously hot by the proximity to the furnaces of the damned.

The east gates of hell are two-fold, one of brass, one of iron; and on the outer side of these gates are two guards who preside over them, and are never relieved. No one can pass or repass save those who hold a permit, written upon brass by Satan himself. The names of these demons are Deception and Hatred. As they pass and repass, pacing back and forth in front of the gates, their frowns are dark as the chambers of death. They

continuously mutter threats against each other, and are only appeased by the admittance of some mortal whom they can torment.

The gates on the south, like unto those of the east, are two-fold, one of iron, one of brass. These are guarded by the demons Lies and Anger, who, like those at the east gates, continually war with each other, cursing earth and heaven alike. No one can pass these gates save by permission of the arch-demon.

The gates on the west, like unto the other two gates, are two-fold, one of iron, one of brass, guarded by the demons Jealousy and Revenge. None can pass these gates save Satan himself, who sometimes wanders to the rock-bound coast of the Sea of Redemption, inspecting his outposts and instructing his demons that preside over the watch-towers.

It was the purpose of our leader to attack the east, west, and south gates of the inferno simultaneously. At the same time he would explode the red-hot domes by the discharge of water from the air-ships, feeling confident that Satan and his hosts would be attracted by the terrific explosion to do battle with the air-ships in mid air, leaving the gates of hell unguarded, or at least partially so, giving our land forces opportunity to force the gates and release those that had been purified. He also established a line of air-ships of the great-

est speed between Surey and our contending forces around the inferno, that our supplies of men and munitions of war might not be wanting.

Satan and his minions, being prohibited from entering the sacred precincts of Surey, could have no information as to the coming attack. He of course had established watch towers along his rugged coast, whose duty was to give information of coming attacks from the celestial bodies or the people of Surey.

Our land forces were under the command of one of the oldest of the purified, Alexander, known on earth as Alexander the Great, it was his intention when we hove in sight of these watch-towers to make all possible haste to land our forces that were to attack the gates of the inferno and carry away the purified. Having at last made all our preparations, we embarked upon our ships, heading direct for the abode of the damned. Our air-ships ran with such tremendous speed that they soon arrived upon the scene and were ready for action. The sea-goers being necessarily slower, took many hours to reach the coast where we intended to land our forces. I was with the forces on board the air-ships. Several times we passed over the domes, demonstrating as though we would make an attack to attract the attention of Satan from our sea-coming squadrons, but he seemingly divined our purpose, and arranged his forces in and outside

the gates of the inferno and along the coast. When our forces arrived from sea and attempted to disembark, they were fiercely opposed by Satan and his fellow demons. As the battle grew fierce and strong, the attention of all the inferno was directed to the contest between the landing forces and Satan and his hosts. Now our air-ships floated over the domes of the inferno, and simultaneously discharged their cargo of water upon the red-hot domes. Our people were expecting the report and paid little attention, but Satan, seeing the situation and fearing the fires of hell might be extinguished, drew a large part of his force from the land to attack our ships in mid-air.

The onset was terrific; the demons concentrated their force,—or a large part of it, at least,—on our air-ship, “Peaceful.” Our people fought desperately to drive Satan and his minions from their ship, but with little avail. They threw our men from the ship, dashing them against the red-hot domes of the inferno. None of our people were left on our good ship, and for a short time it was given over to the devil and his hosts. Elated over his victory, Satan drew his forces from the ship he had captured to attack the next ship in line. Again the fight was terrific.

The transports that were ordered to keep men and munitions in readiness, seeing the situation of the abandoned ship, manned it, again placing it

on as good a war-footing as before, enabling it again to do battle against the legions of hell. When this was done, I heard a loud voice, saying, "Well done, ye purified men of earth, well done." As I looked in the direction of the voice, I heard a sound as of a loud trumpet and saw the heavenly host advancing in great splendor. On the right rode the arch-angel Michael, on a snow-white horse. At his left was Gabriel, also riding a white horse, and in his right hand he held a silver trumpet. Immediately following was a long line of arch-angels mounted, as their leader, on white horses, which trod upon the air as they would upon solid earth. On either side were convoys of angels ready to carry away those of Surey that fell during the battle for the cause of God, justice, and right. In the right hand of each arch-angel was a flaming sword, and as they advanced, I heard their voices as if in song, singing praises to the Almighty. They advanced in column until within a half league of the inferno, then turning the head of the column immediately to the right, they moved forward about one league, the rear resting at the point where the column had turned to the right. Halting, Michael ordered the arch-angels to left face, thereby placing them in line of battle, at the same time ordering the angels that were to bear away the wounded, to the rear of the line of battle.

Fearing their onset, Satan drew his forces away from the air-ships farther over the inferno, as if he would separate the hosts of heaven from the people of Surey, and do battle with each in turn. Now I heard the arch-angel Michael exclaim in a loud voice, "Ye chosen of God, both angels and arch-angels, each lend well your part." Again I heard a great voice, saying, "Men of Surey! on to battle."

Our ships were immediately put about and headed for Satan and his legions. The Toltec stood upon the top deck of the good ship Charity, and with a loud voice directed all to follow as he plunged his ship into the midst of the enemy. Foreseeing the intention of the air ships to break his line of battle, Satan caused his demon army to settle down near the red-hot domes of the inferno, hoping by this the air ships would pass over them, not daring to approach so near the domes. In this he was at fault, as our pilots had their ships so well in hand that they lowered them within a few feet of the tops of the domes, thereby breaking the lines of the hosts of hell and confusing them. Michael, seeing his opportunity, ordered the hosts of heaven to attack the demons, taking advantage of their confusion. Soon Michael with his hosts of arch-angels and angels was fiercely contending with the legions of hell. The battle was long and fierce, yet the hordes of hell were giving way.

to the purified and the heavenly hosts. While Michael was gathering his mighty hosts for a final charge, above the clash of arms, the curses of the demons and the roar of battle could be heard the songs of the angels and arch-angels, as they wrapped more closely about them their spotless robes and, mounted upon their snow-white steeds, dashed with the fury of a mad torrent against the legions of sin, and drove them in wild confusion back into the inferno, leaving their wounded writhing upon the red-hot domes. Our land forces had not been idle. They had forced the east, west, and south gates of hell, releasing the purified and conducting them to the Sea.

The angels gathered up and carried our wounded and those of Surey that had been slain and plunged them in the Sea of Redemption, where the dead were restored to life and the wounded healed of their wounds.

We gathered together the redeemed and transported them to Surey. Our noble captain, the Toltec, had fought bravely, but was thrown from the deck of his ship upon a red-hot dome of the inferno. Being rescued by an angel and carried to the Sea of Redemption, his life was restored, and his long desire of being able to enter the Golden City and live side by side with his beautiful Luzel, was gratified. She was among the hosts that had accompanied the arch-angel Michael in

his attack upon the inferno, and it was she who bore the noble Toltec to the Sea of Redemption.

Seeing that he had lost beyond recovery, Satan determined to make desperate efforts to replenish his depleted inferno with victims from the earth's surface.

CHAPTER X.

Great rejoicing followed our return, the angels and arch-angels accompanying us home to Surey, endowing the Toltec and others that had fallen in the conflict with winged power to return with the heavenly host to the Celestial City. Some lingered with us longer than others; but in a short time they had all winged their way back to their heavenly home.

We were now alone with our newly redeemed and the warriors from other parts that had assisted us in releasing the purified. Our visiting friends after staying a short time got their ships in order, took with them a large part of the late redeemed, rose in the air and rapidly passed from view, homeward bound.

Everything in Surey settled down again to its normal condition, the same round of love and pleasure that crowns the life of these blest people was resumed. Our duty was done, and each had done well his part. We had entered into the service with no misgivings, as we knew it was the will of God, and each made haste to do his share as best he could. Surene and I returned to our silken

home, sleeping, feasting, and enjoying the sweet strains of music that continually float through the air. Surene said, "Joe, I have but one wish; that is, that the poor, unhappy dwellers on the earth's surface could end their miserable existence, and that those not fitted for the celestial kingdom should be purified by the torment and in time form a part of this people of the blessed."

"Surene, even if they knew the happiness that awaits them, they would not willingly surrender their earthly idols to enjoy these blessings. Even the wanderer on the plains of Resurrection suffers remorse that blackens his life and renders him a victim of despair and melancholy, rather than plunge into the troubled waters and suffer torment that he might be redeemed."

"I sometimes feel sad, Joe, as I think of the sufferings of others; although our lives in early youth were cast in dark places, yet we have reached the land of the redeemed with less suffering than is possible for our masters."

"Surene, I know your heart is one of sympathy, and I have through all our association together sympathized with you, and hope you will not think me lacking in that greatest of all virtues, sympathy, when I say it is the will of God, and each gets his deserts in accordance with his life while on earth."

"Joe, I have often heard you say that in time

all the human beings on the earth's surface would either ascend to heaven or be purified by the fires of hell, and then enter Surey, and ultimately all would be happy. Tell me why will this be?"

"You know I have bathed in the river of light, Surene, and can look into the future as well as the past. In time man on the earth's surface will be poisoned by his own presence. The population will become so great and decomposition so rapid that the poisonous gases that must of necessity rise from the decomposed matter will poison human beings and create so much insect life that it will be impossible for men to produce substance enough for their own maintenance. They will war against each other for the possession of wealth and become so greedy that they will murder each other for it."

It was known that after Satan's defeat he had ascended to the earth's surface, determined to replenish his depleted domain from among the unhappy people of the earth. It was his purpose to enlist into his service the rich and powerful, whose business would be to oppress and degrade the poor, wringing from them their labor, substance and strength, thereby enriching themselves and serving the devil at the same time. We knew he had already caused the rich to drive from the churches the poor and helpless, and was grinding them in the treadmill of oppression.

The Almighty called for volunteers among the

people of Surey to proceed to the earth's surface and try to counteract the work of Satan and his earthly demons. Surene was among those that readily volunteered for this service. Leaving our beautiful home she, with many others, immediately set about her duty. They were endowed with winged power to travel where they would and subsist without food or shelter, rendering themselves invisible at will. They had no instructions where they should go or as to the manner of conducting their work, or how long they should stay. All that was expected of them was, as far as possible, to defeat the destroyer. At will they could place themselves in any part of the world, not being confined to this planet alone, but free to go anywhere within the great universe of the Almighty.

In our intercourse with the angels in Surey, we often met those whose human existence was not on the earth, but on other planets. Among them was a lovely being whose birth and finite existence had been on the planet Mars. As the knowledge I had obtained by bathing in the river of light had not extended beyond this planet, Surene and I were much interested in the recital of things that had and were transpiring on Mars. I showed such large interest and such a strong desire to visit Mars, the angel kindly consented to accompany me there, saying that now was the most favorable time, as Mars was twenty-six million miles nearer the earth

than it would be again for fifteen years. She endowed me with her winged power of placing myself where I desired.

It was agreed that we should accompany Surene to the earth's surface, and after seeing her well at her work, we should wing our way to that planet. Knowing that there was to be a great war or revolution, Surene sought as her field of action the North American continent.

It was a beautiful day in early summer that we were leisurely winging our way over a rich and fertile country, when our ears caught the sound of worship in a small, unpretentious country church. The singing was something unusual among the dwellers of the earth, so we dropped to the ground near by to listen. Everything about the place of worship was so estranged from pomp, pride, envy or jealousy that we wandered in among the worshipers, of course invisible. It was Sunday, and the people about had gathered for devotion. The leader in the singing was a young maiden about eighteen and of rare beauty. She was playing upon a small melodion, singing at the same time, many others joining with her in her song of worship to the Almighty, but none compared with her in beauty, modesty, simplicity or melody of song. Knowing that she had a great future and that her passage through life was to be darkened by many unseen and unexpected trials and misfortunes, Su-

rene knew of no better way to serve her mission than to throw her spiritual protection around her. So she determined to follow her through her short sojourn of life; I say short, for compared to the celestial kingdom or the sacred land of Surey, the longest human life is short.

After this unpretentious service was over, the worshipers started homeward, winding their way in various directions. Many gathered around this beautiful girl, shaking hands with her and expressing their sympathies for her late misfortunes. As I looked into her past life, I could see that she had lately been bereaved of her father by death.

As she started for home, we followed her. We had proceeded but a short distance when a young man overtook her, asking permission to accompany her home. "Yes, John," she said, "you know you are always a welcome guest at the home of Dell Falgo."

He replied, "Thank you, Dell; I hope my life and devotion to you may always give me a hearty welcome to the home of the sweetest girl—"

Hearing this she raised her finger and said, "Now, John, no more of that."

"Why do you shut me off in that way, Dell? You know that I love you more than man ever loved maid before."

"I know you do, John, and I return your affection with measure full to the brim, but this is no

time for you to renew your vows of devotion. My father is scarcely cold in his grave, and I cannot feel it a fitting time to make merry or hear tales of love, and further, it must be many and many a year before you and I can consummate this affection. War is upon us, and I hear you have accepted a captain's commission from the governor of Virginia, and are now drilling a company at Winchester, preparatory to lending a hand to the destruction of this government."

"Why, Dell, I am pained to hear you talk that way, and I am shocked beyond measure that you should think me engaged in anything dishonorable or unpatriotic; but you know, Dell, my first duty is to my state and home."

"It is useless for us, John, to discuss the justice of your cause. For one, I am bitterly opposed to this secesh movement, and I tell you right here that I shall give my energy, prayers, and devotion to the preservation of the Union and the perpetuity of the stars and stripes."

To this John could frame no answer. He seemed to have lost the power of speech. Walking along some time in silence, sadly she continued, "I will tell you, John, the history of myself and people. Perhaps you may have heard it before, but that you may have the true version I tell it you. Twenty-five years ago this very day, my father and mother, then young, came to this state from north-

ern Ohio. They both being teachers before they were married, they concluded to come to Virginia and establish an academy. They did so, as you know, for you and I in common with the most of the young people of this section were educated there. They spent their lives here in peace, harmony and good feeling with the people about, and, like the rest, owned slaves. My father never particularly objected to the institution of slavery, feeling that perhaps the slave was as well off as if free.

Nothing in that twenty-five years arose to disturb his pleasant relations with the people about until the attempt of a few politicians to destroy this government. Then, you know, he took an active part, trying, together with your father and many others, to ward off this terrible disaster. You know that last week, while making a speech denouncing secession, he dropped dead upon the platform. This was occasioned by heart trouble, with which he had suffered for a long time. But those who favored the dissolution of the Union circulated a story that God had struck him dead for advocating an unwise and vicious policy. But I feel with my father that your cause is unjust, and I will not, neither will my mother, lend it aid or sympathy in any direction, or claim to be friendly in any way to its consummation. So my mother has determined to return to Ohio, where she can conscien-

'tiously give whatever aid and comfort is in her power to put down the rebellion. Of course I shall accompany her, and as we go very soon, this may be our last meeting."

John now seemed to have regained his power of speech. "Up to this time, Dell, I have regarded you as a sweet, trusting girl; but never before have I learned to respect your force of character. But now I know it is useless for me to try to convert you to my way of thinking. I know the character of your mother and her devotion to your late father; how strongly and wisely she has played her part as his partner through life. She believed in him firmly, and as he fell trying to defend the cause he regarded as just, by the very nature of her being she would espouse the same. I shall not in any way try to dissuade her from returning to her native home, for I know it would be useless, and might occasion ill feeling, which I would avoid of all things. But believe me, Dell, I am in my line of duty, and it pains me beyond measure to know how far we are apart in what each regards as right; but it will soon blow over and we will yet be happy. If I should fall in the strife, remember this, dear girl, that no man can love you as I have done. But it is useless to talk of so gloomy an end. As soon as the North finds we are determined to defend our rights, they will withdraw their troops, and we will govern ourselves as we like, without let or hindrance from them."

"I hope you may be right, John, in thinking that the war will soon be over; but my mother does not think so, neither do I."

As Dell made the last remark, we had arrived at her home. John was asked in to take dinner, and met her mother.

The old lady advanced, taking him by the hand, warmly saying, "John, I learn you have accepted a commission from the governor of the state, and are now drilling troops at Winchester. I am pained at this, for you, too, are lending a hand to this unholy cause. Your father and my late husband were of one mind on this question, and it appears strange indeed to me that his son should embrace a cause his father so much detested."

"My father," John answered, "stayed by the Union till his state seceded, but after that declared that he was a Virginian, and what befell Virginia, all should share in alike; and my father does not object to my entering the field to drive back the Yankees. But let us not talk of this; neither can change the mind of the other, and controversies are disagreeable at best."

"You are right, John," the old lady replied, "you are right. I do not see how you could recede from the position you have taken and yet maintain your manhood; and to convert Dell or myself to your way of thinking would be alike impossible."

Conversation at dinner ran upon various sub-

jects, but nothing touching upon the war. After dinner John took his departure for Winchester. Dell followed him to the gate, making arrangements to meet him again before she and her mother started for Ohio, which must be soon, as Fremont's army was now moving towards Virginia, and Dell and her mother knew they must go at once, or they would not be able to pass the lines.

Arrangements had been made for a prayer-meeting in the country church that night. Dell and her mother attended as usual. After the usual songs and prayer, Mrs. Falgo, in common with many others, was called on to give her experience. She rose, saying, "As the remainder of my sojourn among you must be necessarily short, and as our relations have always been everything that could be desired, I think it becomes me to state the causes that impel me to leave you. As this will be the last time we shall probably meet together, I regard it fitting to say that I leave you with many misgivings and regrets, never expecting to find better friends than I have here. But as my husband fell fighting against what I regard as an unwise cause, and after hearing him say that he would not remain in Virginia if it seceded, and knowing him to be wise and just, as a dutiful wife I must follow the dictates of my own conscience as well as my duty to my country and to my late husband.

"We have lived among you twenty-five years;

my daughter was born and raised here, and in common with most of your children was educated here by my husband, and like the rest of you, I own slaves and land, but as regards this rebellion against the best country God ever gave existence, I can not, neither will I, lend it my sympathy, prayers, or aid; but will with my best efforts do everything in my power to perpetuate the government they would tear asunder, and that I may the better assist to preserve the Union, I go to a state that is loyal and true. I could not live among you, pretending friendship to your cause which in my heart I detest, but my love for you as individuals and my gratitude for your kindness, friendship, and support will never end."

After she had taken her seat, the kind old minister rose, saying, "God save the right, and if the dear and faithful sister, who has spent so many years among us, feels that she cannot conscientiously embrace our cause, I say to her, depart in peace, and may God in His wisdom guide her aright."

After the services were over, they gathered about Dell and her mother, wishing them God-speed, saying, "When the war is over, return to us and we will be friends as before." As I looked into the future I could see the end of the rebellion, and that the South would ultimately be defeated and the bondsman set free, yet I could see little

benefit to the freedman as his inherent sloth and laziness would bear him down. I knew he would be but little improved by his change of condition, yet I gloried in the prospect of his freedom. Being once a slave myself, I knew how galling and unhappy was his condition in life. If he made no progress in his freedom, the fault rested with himself alone, he being empowered with his God-ordained rights. And many of them, yes, many of them, would be bettered by the dearest of all boons—freedom.

Now leaving Surene, looking after the destiny of Dell, we winged our way towards Mars. Our flight was so rapid that I can only compare it to the flight of fancy or human imagination. As only void space intervened, our journey was unbroken and continuous.

CHAPTER XL

In a short time we settled down upon Mars, in the kingdom of Ponteia. Any detailed description of this country or its denizens would be useless, as they are almost identical with those of the earth, save that the people are of much larger stature. An ordinary-sized man is about seven feet high, and weighs from two hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds. The women are about six feet high and weigh from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds. The average length of human life there is about thirty-six hundred months, sidereal reckoning.

There are various governments upon Mars as on the earth's surface. They are continually at war, the rich oppressing and degrading the poor, as upon the earth. Their form of worship is not materially different from ours, and like unto ours their globe is a shell, the inside of which contains an inhabited area, like Surey; of little less magnitude than the outside. They also have an inferno presided over by a demon who is so like our own that it is useless to describe him. The population on the outside of Mars' crust is prob-

ably about as dense as ours. The only thing that differs materially from the earth is the rarity of the atmosphere. There the atmospheric pressure is scarcely five pounds to the square inch. The entire face of the planet is laced and interlaced with canals, rivers, lakes, and broken seas. The largest bodies of water are thickly intersperced with islands which for the most part are inhabited. All their governments are unstable and unwisely managed and governed. Many little principalities presided over by chiefs prey upon the more stable governments and wrench from them whatever they can by force of arms. Often these robber chiefs become so powerful that they overawe the general government and dictate such terms of settlement as they may desire. The result is that war is almost perpetual.

The surface of this globe is fertile and its climate much like ours. Railroads are unknown among them, but their water transportation far exceeds that of the earth. Owing to the rarified condition of the air and the density of the water, vessels ride practically upon the surface, and thereby are propelled at a greater speed. This is easily accomplished by their meeting, but little resistance from the air or water. Their motive power is peculiar, and greatly superior to anything on the earth. They use no steam; in short, they know but one power, which is so universally accepted as

the best possible that I doubt if they ever considered any other motor. Their engines are constructed somewhat in appearance like the steam-engine of the earth's surface, but the energy is supplied in an entirely different way. It consists of small explosives, in size about that of a cherry, or marble. These drop into a cylinder, one at a time; the first one drives the piston rod forward; then another drops in and drives it back; then another drives it forward. This continues as the piston-rod moves back and forward. The more rapidly the machine runs, the more explosives are dropped into the cylinder and vice versa. The peculiarity about these explosives is that they must strike a certain metal peculiar to Mars, before they will explode. The inside of the cylinders is composed of this metal. A vessel provided with this motive energy requires about one one-hundredth of the space of that of coal for steam-ships on the earth's surface. As I have said before, the vessel, practically riding upon the surface of the water, meets so little resistance that it moves with a speed of about one hundred and fifty miles an hour. As this kind of explosive can only be discharged by coming in contact with the peculiar metal I have spoken of, it makes it practically safe to handle, as no explosion is possible in the absence of the metal. As the water crafts are the chief pride of the people, and the attainment of speed is para-

mount to all other considerations, you can imagine the amount of thought and labor employed in their construction.

At the time of our arrival in Ponteia, the people were much excited over a new gun that had been lately invented. The inventor was an old man of probably twenty-four hundred months and was at this time the lion of the whole country. Many attempts had been made to discover an energy for projectiles that would cause no concussion. Probably no people are more familiar with explosives than those of Ponteia. This is necessitated by the lightness of the atmosphere. If the same explosive was used there as by us of the earth, the explosion would be so great that more people would be killed by concussion at the starting point of the projectile than where it landed. This man's gun caused no report, but sent the missile with great force and accuracy. The government of Ponteia had hoped to keep from other nations the secret of this force, thereby giving them a great advantage over their enemies in war, but had not as yet bought it from the inventor. The people of other nations were informed of such an invention in Ponteia, and every effort was made to learn the secret by money and by all manner of bribery, but up to the time of our arrival they had made but little progress in obtaining what they desired.

The capital and principal commercial mart of

Ponteia has probably about eight hundred thousand souls. The commerce and architecture, the general government and its corruption and intrigue are so like the cities of the earth's surface that a description is wholly unnecessary. Distant from the city about five hundred miles is the small town of Turna, of two or three thousand inhabitants, located on the river Loroan. Here lived this inventor, a part of his time at least, but probably the greater part of his time was spent at a country home about twelve or fifteen miles up the river. He had one daughter who, with the servants, composed his entire family. The summers they usually spent in their country home; the winters in the town. He was fond of hunting, and as his new gun gave him excellent opportunities in that direction, he spent a good part of his time in the forests. It was the custom of his daughter to take him across the river in a skiff, as the hunting was much better on the opposite side. He usually returned about night-fall, and the blast of his horn announced his coming. On hearing the sound she would take to the boat and row across. One particular night the call was later than usual, as the sun was getting well behind the trees; but she thought little of it, as he probably might have had some trouble in getting his game to the river bank. But when she arrived on the opposite side, she did not see him. Wondering at this, she cried, "Father,

are you here?" There was no response. Now she grew frightened, crying louder than before, "Father, where are you?"

Hearing the sound of her voice, a man stepped from behind some bushes, saying, "Your father is not here; but he sent me to tell you that he has been captured by the rebels of Zanzee." Hearing this announcement she settled back in the boat and deftly pushed it from the shore. After feeling herself at a safe distance, she said, "Why was my father captured by the rebels of Zanzee? He has no gold, neither have his friends wherewith to pay his ransom."

"Fair maid, it was neither for gold nor ransom that he was captured, but on the contrary, they will load him with gold and give him a place of honor among them, if he will teach them his cunning, and he sends me to assure you that his treatment will be all that he can desire."

"This is a strange tale that you bring me," she replied, "for he will not give the secret of his gun to the rebels of Zanzee, as he is a loyal subject of Ponteia."

"I know, fair lady, your father has ever been loyal to his country, and probably the greatest mind among them, but how has he ever profited by it? Many other inventions of his have been wasted upon your ungrateful king, who has practically robbed him of what he should be well paid for."

"Perhaps you are right, noble stranger, but that gives you no right to rob him in turn of his greatest invention, and I, as his daughter, demand his immediate return."

"We do not purpose to rob him of his invention, but will ply him with more gold than he and you together can carry away. Even more than that, fair maid, I will lend you my strength and help you to bring it to this river bank."

"You speak with authority, bold rebel. Did your chief so instruct you?"

"I have no chief," he replied, "I am the chief of the rebels of Zanzee. I know no master and believed myself as free as the mountain air until my eyes rested upon you, fair maid. Now I feel that I have been captured by the nymph of the river Loroan."

"You speak in riddles, chief of the mountains, I scarce know your meaning."

"Then hear me, lovely maid, I have met you many times before, and whirled with you in the mazy dance in the village of Turna; yet you know me not; and, know you further, I have traveled much in disguise over your kingdom, of which I once was a subject, having to flee for no fault of mine but by the treachery of others. Now I hate, as only one like me can hate, the government of Ponteia; but it is idle for me to say more, for my tale is long and this is scarce a fitting place; but

what I would say, daughter of Aronda, is that I love you more than I have words to tell. This is no new love; it commenced with the moment that I first led you into the dance at Turna."

"Your speech is bold, chief of the mountains. Your form, noble brow and lofty bearing well become a rebel chief, and your tale of love is pleasant to hear. Set my father free and I will listen more, but now enough."

"As you will, fair nymph; yet hear me further. I will give you safe guidance to your father, and you can see for yourself how he fares."

"Not yet, noble chief; not yet. I must know more of you and what my father thinks; but I will seek the way myself. Think not that you have all knowledge of the mountain fastness and that you only know of its secret paths. Later on I may know more of you in your mountain home. Adieu."

Gracefully swinging her boat about, at the same time waving her hand to the rebel chief, she pulled across the river. As she guided the boat to her shore, the servants were there to meet her. They all cried as with one voice, "Where is the master?"

"Your master," she replied, "is a prisoner among the rebels of Zanzee."

An old man who had served Aronda the greater part of his life was much affected at this bad news. Murmuring aloud, he said, "It is sad to know that

my master is held a prisoner for no fault save that he knows more than other men." Then turning to the nymph, he said, "Lovely mistress, take the earnings of my life that you have in keeping and buy your father's freedom. I can offer nothing more."

"I know you love your master, old and well-tried friend, but I will not take your gold unless all other means shall fail."

Ordering her horse she proposed to start for Turna at once, but as it was now quite dark, the servants gathered around her, trying to dissuade her from her course. To this she paid little heed, and directing one of the ablest of them to mount his horse and follow as best he could, she dashed away towards the village. There were but two things on her mind—her imprisoned father and the rebel chief. As she rode on her imagination served as a mirror in which she could see this wonderful man of the mountains. He was probably over seven feet high, with massive chest and powerful limbs; his tread was springy and his movements graceful; his brow was lofty, his eyes were deep grey; long, flowing hair of light auburn fell over his broad shoulders in confusion; his lips were thin and firmly set; his chin square and well formed; in fact, everything about him denoted an unfaltering will with plenty of physical force to back up his determination, yet withal his face was kind and sym-

pathetic. For miles she rode on in the dark, viewing in her mind's eye this powerful man whom she was loath to own she loved. On arriving at the village, she went straight to the chief of the military, informing him of her father's capture, yet at the same time having little faith in the government or him.

He said that he could do but little, in fact, nothing further than to inform the government of what had happened. This he did at once. The commotion was intense at the capital; not that they cared particularly for Aronda, but feared that the rebels might wring from him his secret, and with these new firearms would practically have the power to subdue the government.

At this time the rebel chief had become so powerful, and had so many friends among the people of Ponteia, that to attack him in his stronghold was considered not only folly but madness. The king appeared nearly beside himself with excitement, and cursed his want of forethought in allowing Aronda to live so near that he could hunt in the domain of the rebel chief; but as that could not be helped, the first thing to consider was how to recapture him. He knew full well that this could not be readily done, and probably before it could be accomplished the rebels would have the secret of the new gun. What annoyed the king beyond measure was that he had been so long bartering

with the inventor to obtain the secret for merely nothing. Now, probably, it was lost to him forever, giving the rebels such an advantage over him that possibly his head would pay for his want of forethought, as the rebel chief, having an army armed with these guns, would not hesitate to attack him in his capital.

While the government was wrangling over what they could do to obtain possession of Aronda, the inventor's daughter determined to visit her father unknown to the rebels and every one else, save an old hermit or wizard which she knew lived in the mountains near by. Dismissing her servant, telling him he could return home and say to the rest that possibly she would remain in town several days and not to worry about her. She at once arrayed herself as a hunter, crossed the river and sought out the hermit. He was a strange being, living in a cave apart from Turna about ten miles. Everything about him was mysterious. He lived entirely alone, save that two large, powerful dogs guarded the mouth of the cave and accompanied him wherever he went. The nymph had so thoroughly disguised herself that she readily passed with those who knew her as a hunter of the mountains. On arriving at the mouth of the cave, she was met by the dogs, who refused her admittance. "Danzo," she cried, "noble hermit, is this fitting welcome for the nymph of Loroon?"

Hearing the sound of her voice the hermit immediately came forward, saying, "Down! Zone, down! Talvo, down!" Then, stepping forward and extending his hand to the nymph said, "Welcome, more than welcome to the cave of the wizard, Danzo. But what brings thee here, fairest of Ponteia? What brings thee here?"

"My tale is soon told; I would have you go with me to my—"

"To thy father. I have seen thy father in the rebel's home, and although a prisoner, he fareth well."

"I know, noble wizard, that you are omnipresent, and would have you guide me to him."

"I would serve thee first of all, maiden, and need not tell thee that I have ever been at thy command; but art thou not asking much of thy wizard friend? How knowest thou that thou wouldst be a welcome guest at the home of the rebel chief?"

"If the nymph should say to you, noble wizard, that none would be as welcome as she, would you accompany me then?"

"Ay, more, if thou shouldst tell me that the stars would fall, I would think thee true."

"Then know, noble wizard, none could visit the rebel's home so welcome as I."

"I hear enough, lovely nymph. Command the wizard and thy wish is law; but as it is well into night and many wolves infest the mountain side, it

is best for thee to rest and fit thyself for heavy toil, for climbing the mountain side, as thou knowst well, needs strong limbs and steady head. So sit thee here by this feeble light and read this strange volume I've written for the gods."

Leaving her with the manuscript in hand, he seeks another part of the cave and prepares a meal fit for a king; venison, wild honey, mountain fruits with bread and excellent wine. After seating her at the table, he said, "I need not have asked thee, fair maid, if thou wert welcome at the rebel's home, for I knew well thou art. Leaning upon a rock near the river's side, I saw thee in a boat near by. The rebel brought thee tidings of thy father. To thee he made a noble speech of love, the better part. It is needless to repeat what thou knowest well. I could see that it pleased more than it offended the fair maid, and when thou didst pull thy boat away, the golden chain of love held thee still bound to the rebel chief, and I hardly know as I look into the rebel's home and see two men sitting side by side, one great and strong, the other great in thought, which first thou wouldst love to meet."

"If I did not know that you knew the heart of man so well, noble hermit, I'd gainsay your speech, but let it pass; time shall tell whether you divine aright or no."

"One thing, fair maid, thou must admit; the

rebel's speech for the most part was true, when he told thee thy father fared but badly in giving to the king inventions for which he paid him not; and left him poor, while others made fortunes off the the brains thy father furnished; and methinks it well if the rebel chief doth pay him well for his daughter's sake, if nothing more, to take the gold."

"My father is wise, noble hermit, and if the chief shall show him that he has been wronged, I trust him for the rest."

"Then thou wilt not urge him with thy advise to take the gold, fair nymph, but I, thy friend, will urge him much."

"But is this loyal to his king, noble hermit?"

"Little do I care, fair maid, for kingly favor. Kings' debts are mostly paid by heaping wrongs upon the heads of those that serve them best, but enough of this. The night is passing on, thou shouldst to thy couch, and may the god of sleep strengthen thee for tomorrow's toil."

In a retired part of the cave he showed her a cleanly couch. She throws herself upon it and knows no more until the morning light tells her of coming day. Hastily arising from her bed, she prepares herself for the day's journey. But the hermit is up before her, and has prepared a fragrant meal to which each lays to and does his part. That they might not want food upon the way, he has filled a haver sack with meat, bread

and wine. Throwing the remnants of the meal to the dogs, he is ready for the journey. No one knows the mountains better than he grasping his staff leads the way, she following in silence. The hermit is in one of his silent moods; she knows his ways and cares not to break his reverie. O'er hills and valleys, many and many a mile, they travel on. No word is spoken. The dogs are running to and fro, barking at game they have driven to their hole, or up some lofty tree, or hid beneath the water of some running brook. Yet the hermit, heedless of their doings, presses on, seemingly with but one thought—to lead the maid where she would go, and bring her to the rebel's home.

As the noon hour came he stopped by the side of a gentle stream where convenient seats are found, unstraps his pack, and with water from the brook each bathes his face and hands. At last he says, "I have not worried thee with much speech on this weary march, for I knew full well thy strength was sorely taxed to follow my rapid tread. So let us sit here and refresh ourselves with food and wine, and if thou couldst sleep awhile, it would be better still. I will make thee a resting place of these boughs and leaves, which will be soft to thee as a downy couch."

"You are alike noble, kind, and wise, strange man of the mountains. Tell me why did you choose a hermit's life?"

"I can not tell thee now, but promise when idle time shall come our way, a tale of unrequited love for which thou mayst gladly while an hour away. Now after food and wine I would have thee sleep, that thy strength may gain for our weary march."

"You are ever wise, noble hermit, and I gladly accept your offer."

When she awoke he was ready for the march. So drawing her belt more closely about her, they hurried on. Again silence fell upon them both. No word was spoken, but on and on they moved, and not until the sun was getting low did he halt, saying, "I have taxed thee sorely, fair nymph, but thou hast bravely done thy part, and in this small cave where I have often spent the night before, we will stay the while. I advise thee to bathe thy feet in the brook beyond, that they may be healed for tomorrow's march.

She did as he directed, bathing her feet in the rivulet. After she had done so, he furnished her with an ointment which none but he knew how to prepare, that would so harden the flesh that she would not suffer from sore feet. By this time he had a fire started, and when it was burning he dropped with his spring shaft into a thicket from which he soon emerged with a pheasant. This he deftly prepared, together with the bread and wine from his haversack, and made an excellent supper. After the meal they were both much refreshed.

Now he prepared her a bed of leaves and small boughs, spreading a blanket over it. The camp-fire being near the mouth of the cave, made her resting place very comfortable. The meal being over and her bed prepared, he threw himself on the ground, near the camp-fire, saying he asked for nothing better.

“Noble hermit, I do not care to sleep, and if we are of one mind, why is not this a fitting time and place to tell me the promised story of your early life.”

CHAPTER XII.

If the nymph of Loroön would hear my story, I will tell it thee. I am not of Ponteia, but was born on the island of Pozee, which as thou knowest belongs to the kingdom of Novae. I was educated for letters, and after having finished my course, seeing no opportunities for me in my native village, I determined to try my fortune at Canto, the capital of Novae. Near me was reared a girl of surpassing beauty, and as we grew up together, I being sixty months her senior, we became much attached, and many and many a time did we pledge our troth. As I was about to leave my native village, we renewed our vows. She was so beautiful and I was so poor that it did not appear to me in the nature of things that she would remain true. As we parted I told her that she would learn to forget me, and that when we were apart, some one of wealth and noble birth would sue for her love. Then I said, "Wilt thou forget thy vows to me?" I felt I had wronged her for she seemed much hurt, saying, "Is it possible, Danzo, that thou doubttest my love? Methinks you regard it lightly."

"Not now, dearest, not now, but time may

change thee." "In sooth," she said, and drew from her finger a golden ring. Placing it beneath her foot, she broke it in twain. "One part she in her bosom hid," the other handing to me, she said, "Hear my vows; when I to thee shall prove false, Danzo, may the gods that hear this pledge carry me away to the damned." Without another word we parted. That night I took boat for the capital, arriving at the nearest point to Canto which was many leagues from the coast. Having no money to pay my passage by chaise or coach, I traveled as best I could on foot. My mother had prepared food to last me on the way.

As night drew on I sat down to rest and eat my lunch. Being wearied, I fell asleep. It was well into the night when I awoke, and feeling no desire for more sleep, I walked on, arriving at Canto at early morn. The gates of the city were not yet open, so I threw myself upon the grass near by to wait until the gateman should admit me into the city. Here I fell asleep. On awakening two young men in gay attire were standing over me. One shook me, saying, "Who art thou, and why here?"

I replied, "When I arrived here the gates were not yet open to admit me into the city, and while sitting upon the grass I fell asleep."

"Yet thou art a stranger in Canto," he replied, "for none of such garb as thine are admitted here."

At this the other laughed. I knew they'd do me jest, so laughing, I said, "All cannot be as gay as ye; ye are the favored sons of Mars."

Then the one that had done me jest turned to his companion and said, "His speech is lofty and, by my lady's garter, I swear I like him well." Turning to me again he asked, "Stranger, what wouldst thou among the learned of Canto? for by thy speech I know full well that thou art better learned than thy garb would lead us to suppose."

I replied, "Fair strangers, as ye would do me just; I tell thee frankly why I am here. I am from the island of Pozee, and as nothing in my native village offered to better my estate, I here have come."

"Then, come," they said, "and breakfast with us, for we take it thou hast but little gold, and as the council needs a ready scribe, we do not doubt we can find thee work."

I thanked them and readily followed where they led. They took me into a public house and fed me well, one saying to me, "That thy garb may be more fitting, I will array thee in one of mine; then to the chief of council I will take thee, and by my asking he will give thee work; then, if thou shalt prove fitting, thy wants will be well supplied."

I thanked him for his offer kind, saying, "I will try and prove myself what thou hast hoped for me." After having arrayed me in one of his cast-

off robes, he complimented me, saying, "Thy mind is fit for a senator's, and the garb becomes thee well."

Then we were away to the council. Entering the grand chamber, we found the chief was there. He arose and cordially greeted my benefactor, who in turn introduced me to the chief, saying, "This is a friend of mine, an able scribe and well qualified to do the work thou hast in hand. Pay him well, for he needs it much."

The chief replied, "Whom thou dost favor, noble prince, will always find favor here."

My benefactor, the prince, then extending his hand to me, said, "I will see thee later on."

I did my office well, the chief of the council telling me, "Thou art an able man. But I knew the prince would offer none other, as he is a good judge of men." I continued in this office for twenty months, during the time writing articles for the chief bulletin of Canto, which created much interest, not alone with the government, but among the people. One day the prince, my benefactor, approached me, saying, "Noble Danzo, I would have thee the chief of Canto's bulletin. If thou wilt accept the place I will arrange it for thee."

I replied, "Noble prince, thou has ever been a true friend of mine. If thou thinkest it wise, I will gladly accept."

About this time the reigning king died, and my

noble benefactor, the prince, succeeded to the throne. There was a strong opposing party in Canto. I, of course, advocated the cause of the prince, and ably supported him in my bulletin. Time went on and I grew more popular, and was at last elected senator. The government was somewhat peculiar—but as that cannot interest the fair daughter of Aronda, I will not tell it thee. I now began to think of returning to the island to claim my bride. I had had no communication with her, for it was arranged that I was not to return for seventy-two months. Soon after the prince's accession to the throne, it was noised that he was to wed a humble maid of the island of Pozee, who was transcendently beautiful. It never entered my mind that it was my betrothed, so I began as readily as the rest to arrange a great reception to do honor to the prince and his bride. The wedding was to take place upon the island; the reception at Canto. Of course all the high officials made every preparation to make the event as imposing as possible and to give the bride a fitting welcome. The reception was to take place in the great hall of the capitol. Of course I was arrayed in the height of fashion with the rest of my fellow officials. The senators were the first to be introduced after the royal family. As I had won the distinction of being the most gifted orator of the kingdom, I was chosen to make the speech of welcome to the

bride. When the eventful evening came, and with it the king and the new queen; she walked into the center of the hall, leaning upon the king's arm, heavily veiled. I had jealously guarded the broken ring and caused it to be made fast to one of the medals I had been presented with. As her maid unveiled her and I was about to address her, the broken ring fell from its fastening on the jewel almost immediately at her feet. Her eyes caught it before she looked into my face. Then our eyes met. I could not speak. I was struck dumb. I was about to flee from the room, when she cried, "Danzo!" and fell dead at the feet of the king.

All was commotion. During the excitement I fled from the hall. My only object was to get far away from the scene. I ordered a chaise to take me as quickly as possible to the coast. Finding a boat about to start for Ponteia, I took sail, arriving in due time. For a time I was crazed. I scarcely knew what course to pursue. At last I joined the army of Ponteia, hoping that I might end my life in fighting the rebels of Zanzee which were continually warring with Ponteia; but as fortune would have it, soon after joining the army war was declared between Ponteia and Novae. As I would not fight against my benefactor, the king of Novae, I fled to these mountains and have since lived a hermit's life."

As the strange wizard of the mountains looked

toward the nymph of Loroön, he saw that she was sound asleep. "By the beards of my fathers!" he said, "my story was well told, for the maid is fast asleep." So after a prayer to the gods he lay back, wrapping himself in his blanket and soon passed beyond the cares of Mars.

CHAPTER XIII.

By the early morning light they were both astir. The breakfast was soon prepared from what they had left the night before. The hermit said, "Daughter of Aronda, I will promise you something better for our noon meal, for on our way the dogs will point me some game."

As they ate their breakfast the nymph said, "The story of your past life interested me more than anything I have ever heard."

The hermit laughed heartily, "I knew it did; nothing could have pleased me better than the effect it had, for when I was done thou wert fast asleep, and I think thou must have been an hour before."

"Not so, noble hermit, you reckon wrong. I heard it to the last and murmured much at its strange ending. That you may know I was not asleep, I will tell it you, or at least, the ending of it." This she did.

"I would have sworn," he said, "thou wert asleep; thy eyes were closed, at least."

Throwing to the dogs the remnants of the meal, they gathered about them their few belong-

ings and were off. This day as the day before, the hermit pushed on in silence. As noon drew nigh, he secured some game and in a short time halted to prepare it. Being tired and hungry they ate heartily. Having their fill, they were off again. The tramp continued until nightfall, but as they spent this night like the last, it would be idle to give it in detail. At noon the next day they had gained a mountain peak that looked over a level plain known as the plateau of Zanzee. Now turning to her hermit friend, she said, "I would not have you go further, noble hermit. Return to your mountain cave and know as you have ever known before, the home of Aronda holds little sacred from the strange man of the mountain side."

"May I ask the nymph of Loroan why I am so unceremoniously discharged, and dost thou think I can leave thee here without a trusty hand? Surely thou puttest low value on the hermit's gallantry."

"Not so, noble hermit; not so; but my purpose is to relieve my father. I have my plans; I am sure they will work. and as I would not put you at variance with the rebel chief, I would not have him know you had lent a hand."

"I will not interfere with thy plans, fair maid, neither will I lead or follow thee to the village, but will remain near by on this mountain crag, and with this powerful glass of mine will watch thy doings in the valley below, as well as the village's light will give me aid."

As several hours must elapse before nightfall, feeling that she could do little until darkness came, they sat down to talk.

"Tell me, noble hermit, what is the best my father can do to get paid for the cost and trouble of his invention."

"I see but one thing, and to me that way is clear, daughter of Aronda; he must sell his secret to the rebel chief. Then of course, he could not return to his home, but either must remain here or flee to Canto. By the law of nature thou wilt be the wife of the rebel chief, and some day methinks the rebel chief will rule all of Ponteia. If thou settest thy father free, he knows the mountain way as well as I, and I doubt not thou wilt see him safely home again. I will watch thy coming by the way; but hear me further, daughter of Aronda, trust not that wily king. If he hears of your father's safe return to his domain, he will summon him to the capital. I will not foreshadow what will happen, but I like it not."

"Then you would not, noble hermit, advise my father's return home?"

"Ah, thou art right, as I gaze into the misty future, I see no good for thee or him in the domains of Ponteia."

"I know you are wise, noble hermit; I trust much in what you say; but first of all, I must see my father; his will is mine, yet if he desires to re-

turn to our river home, I have the power to set him free."

As night drew on she said, "We will converse no more, but I will descend while yet there is light nearer unto the village, and if possible, locate the guards, that I may avoid them.

With this she started to leave. As she moved away, the hermit said, "May the gods guide thee aright."

The plateau that lay beneath her was of large extent and beautiful withal. As far as the eye could reach in every direction it seemed densely populated. The people for most part lived in villages located from one to four miles apart. These were occupied by different clans who were subject to the rebel chief, or better known as rebels of Zanzee. Why they had obtained the name of rebels, I could not learn, for they troubled no one and were a peaceful people save when disturbed by the government of Ponteia, to which country they had originally belonged, but now refused allegiance and to pay tribute. When stirred to battle, they were terrible fighters. No army that had ever been sent to subject them to the king of Ponteia had lived to return, being killed almost to a man among the mountain ranges with which these rebels were so well acquainted; hence the reluctance of the king to send an army to recapture the inventor. The arms

used by these people were like those used in every other part of Mars, the sword and lance. As I have said before, no people in the universe were better acquainted with explosives than those of Mars, but their study of explosives had been to avoid them rather than to use them. They used a kind of gun of but little avail in battle. It was in appearance something like that common on the earth's surface; but the projectile was put in motion by a spiral spring forced to its greatest tension by a lever which when released, threw its missile with little force. The new gun invented by Aronda would carry a ball a great distance with the accuracy of the best rifles on our earth, yet with no concussion, hence the anxiety of every nation to obtain the secret.

The nymph had now descended well into the plains, avoiding the guards, and arriving in the outskirts of the village just as night was setting in. Near the thicket in which she was hidden stood a deserted house, probably half a mile from the village center. Into this she crept. Now taking from a recess of her hunter's frock a bottle of heavy wine, she added to it a few drops of a dark tincture from a phial. This was a sleeping potion. Only her father knew the secret of its preparation; mixed with a glass of wine it would throw the drinker into a sound sleep from which it was impossible to waken him for several hours, but

on awakening felt no ill effects from the draught. As everything was prepared, her purpose first of all was to seek out her father and find where he was imprisoned. Waiting in her dark retreat till well into the evening or about the time the people would retire, she fired the vacant house in several places; then slipping back into the thicket she cautiously worked her way towards the center of the village. By this time the house was burning furiously, attracting every one in the vicinity to it.

Now was her time. She stepped out into the main street with her bottle in hand, seeming hilarious with drink, staggering and playing well the part of a drunken hunter. Having besmeared her face and clothes with mud, she passed through the streets as a drunken huntsman from a neighboring village. As she was turning a corner she met a man who looked hungry for a drink. On seeing her bottle, he approached her saying, "Helloo, boy! pretty full, hey? can't you give a fellow a drink?"

"Give a fellow nothing," she said. "Do you think I buy my wine to give it away?"

"No, I don't think you buy your wine to give it away, but when a poor fellow hasn't had a drink for months and you have more than you want, it would only be a square deal to give him a nip."

"Say, old man, I'll tell you what I'll do. I live

over here in Bars, and came over to see the gun the fellow made whom they have got in prison."

"I hain't seen the gun; I don't know where the gun is; I 'spect he's got it in prison with him."

"Well, as you seem a pretty good fellow, take a drink and come on down to the prison and see if we can see the gun. I'll give him this bottle of wine to show me his wonderful gun."

"All right, we'll try him. Come on."

The stranger led the way to the prison. By this time he, too, was growing rather hilarious as the effect of the potion was telling upon him. As they arrived at the prison door, playing drunk and reeling about, she asked the guard to let her see the fellow that had the wonderful gun.

"Go away," said the guard, "and get sobered up; but before you go, give me a swig at the bottle."

"I'll do it," said the nymph, "if you'll show me the fellow that's got the gun."

"Let me try your wine, and if it's all right I may let you see the prisoner."

On this promise she handed him the bottle, from which he drank heavily. The first man she had met was now so overcome with drink that he was sleeping near the prison wall. Supposing that he had been drinking heavily, the guard thought he would let him sleep it off. But soon the guard felt occasion to sit down, as he could not stand steadily

on his legs. Soon the two were sound asleep. After a few moments she worked her way into the prison yard, apparently drunker than ever. There she met the jailer going the round of the cells for the night, preparatory to retiring. Seeing our drunken hunter, he said to her, "How came you here? How did you pass the guard?"

"Pass no guard; where—where's—the guard?"

"Get out of here, you drunken fool. I'll see the guard myself."

Laughing he drove her out of the yard. When he came to the gate, there lay the guard, as he supposed, dead drunk, and the other fellow near by. The jailer, in common with his class, was fond of a drink himself, and said to the hunter, "You and Jem have been having a high old time here all to yourselves. I'd thought you'd of called me for one drink at least."

Hearing this she staggered up to him and said, "Nothing mean about Jeff, the hunter. Take a drink."

Quickly he pressed the bottle to his lips and took a long draught from it, passing it back to her.

"Say, old man," she said, "show me the gun the fellow brought here from Ponteia. I hear he can center a mark a half a mile away. Say, please show me the gun, won't you?"

"I haven't got the gun," the jailer said.

"Well, if you haven't got the gun, you know

where it is. I'll give you the bottle of wine to show me the gun."

"I tell you I haven't got the gun and don't know where it is."

By this time he was beginning to feel pretty hilarious himself.

"Well, if you don't know where the gun is, show me the fellow that made the gun. I came all the way over here from Bars to bring you fellows over some drink and see the gun. Say, pard, take another drink."

This he could not refuse, and took another heavy swig. By this time the jailer was looking for a place to sit down himself, remarking, "That is pretty good stuff; I'm beginning to hear from it. As you seem to be a pretty good fellow, I don't mind showing you the prisoner, but you can't get in where he is. I'll whistle him up to the bars."

Now they both staggered up to the cell where Aronda was imprisoned, and the jailer called him to the grating in the door.

By this time the jailer was so overcome by the drugged wine that he settled down upon the floor and was soon fast asleep. In a jiffy the nymph had from his pocket the keys, unlocked the cell, and threw her arms around her father, who had not recognized her up to this time. In a moment she related her whole adventure, saying, "Let us away at once before the people return from the fire."

In a short time they were out of the prison and beyond the village at the foot of the mountains. No one knew the mountain passes or the mountain ranges better than her father. He had for years been acquainted with the rebel chief; even a friendship had sprung up between them, so he could hunt as he liked in the rebel's domain. As he left his prison cell, his daughter was surprised to see him go to a corner and bring away his gun.

Afterwards she asked him, "Father, why did they allow you to keep your gun?"

Aronda said, "I asked as a favor from the rebel chief that he would not deprive me of it, saying that I would pledge my honor that I would not use it upon the guard. Then, fair daughter, what do you suppose he said?"

"I cannot guess, father; tell me."

"I grant it you," the rebel said, "for the love I bear the nymph of the river Loroon."

To this she made no reply, but hurried on. They were now well into the mountains, and expecting to be followed, when in the morning the village should awake to the situation. They determined to take some mountain pass little frequented. As they were debating between themselves the better way, a voice spoke, saying, "I know a better path than that, noble Aronda; follow me."

Looking up, there stood the wizard. Without another word he moved away at a rapid stride,

Aronda next, his daughter next, the dogs behind. As was the wizard's wont, he spoke no word until day was peeping over the mountain tops. Then halting, he said, "Noble Aronda, thou and I might still continue at this rapid pace, but the fair nymph must be sadly taxed; so let us halt, prepare some food, and, if possible, give her an hour's sleep. What seems strange to me, noble friend, is that thou shouldst have brought thy gun away with thee from thy prison cell."

Then Aronda related what he had told his daughter. The wizard laughed heartily, saying, "No bar so strong as the web a woman weaves; but as thou hast thy gun, noble Aronda, and there is but little food within my pack, I pray thee take to the woods and bring us game."

Taking his gun Aronda and the dogs passed up the rivulet's bank, soon returning with two pheasants, which were prepared, and made a noble meal. During Aronda's absence, the hermit prepared, as he had done before, a couch of twigs and leaves for the nymph, also building a fire and securing some water from the spring. But before he would allow the nymph to lie down, she must bathe her feet in the brook hard by, and anoint them as she had done before. This she readily did, as her feet were growing sore. After the meal was finished, the nymph was soon asleep. Putting out the fire, that those in pursuit should not see the smoke, they de-

terminated to wait an hour to give the maiden rest. As they sat talking, the hermit said, "Noble Aronda, thou hast much trouble in store for thee; and, as I look into the future, I see treachery on every hand. There is little good in that king of Ponteia. He is selfish, penurious, and I may say, heartless. Beware of him. Trust him not. I almost fear to have thee again set foot where he controls. I know he will summon thee to the capital, and nothing good awaits thee there, noble friend Aronda--nothing good. He is soft of speech, but his honied words are poisoned with the arrows of deceit. He will try to wring from thee thy secret, Aronda, but beware of him. He is not thy friend. Do not be deceived."

"Noble hermit, you think evil of our king. I cannot feel that he is as bad as you would lead me to suppose. But mark you well, old friend, he will not get the advantage of me; neither will he know my secret until I am well paid."

"I hope thou mayst be right, noble Aronda, but I trust him not. I had hoped thou and the rebel chief might have agreed on terms, for I know he'd pay thee better than the king; but let it pass; time will show which of us is right."

Fearing to remain longer in their camp, they gathered together their trappings, awakened the nymph, and were off. It was a hard day's march; still they forced themselves on, taking but a short time for their noonday meal and rest.

Halting for the night they prepared their camp as usual. The nymph, being sorely fatigued, this time her father bathed her feet and anointed them, and then prepared her couch as the wizard had done before. As they had secured plenty of game and prepared an inviting meal, they all sat around it upon the ground, partaking heartily, congratulating themselves that they soon should reach the river, and laughing at the shrewdness of the nymph in spiriting her father away from the rebels.

Of a sudden the dogs barked furiously. Looking up they saw standing over them the powerful figure of the rebel chief. "I greet you," he said, "and as I am famished with hunger, pray allow me to join the feast."

Meeting the eyes of the nymph, he gracefully raised his hood, saying, "Most lovely of Ponteia, I give you double greeting, for you played it well upon the rebel chief; yet I am not here to carry you back by force of arms, but to plead my cause. You were not an hour away before I alone was on your track. It was mere chance, however; as after the fire I wandered over to the prison for a talk with the noble Aronda. I saw the situation in a moment, and believed that the nymph had been there, for, as you know, when we last parted, lovely daughter of Aronda, you said others knew the mountain passes as well as I; but as I would know better how you released your father, will you kindly tell it me?"

"Sit beside me here, noble chief, and join the feast, and I will tell you my story the while."

Needing no second bidding, he sat down beside the maid. After he had been helped he said, "Be in no haste to finish the meal, as it would not be wise to tax your strength further tonight; so let us make merry and listen to the tale of our heroine."

Laughing, she said, "Noble chief, gallant to the last, as you would know the story, hear me." She related in detail all that had happened since their meeting on the river, how she had burned the vacant house, made drunk with her drugged wine all who had stood in her way, and so deftly spirited her father away from the prison. All joined in the laugh, but none so heartily as the chief.

"Did you know," he asked, "that I was the first to dub you with the name 'nymph of the river Loroon?'"

"No," she laughingly replied; "I am glad I have the man within my reach who gave me the name. You do not know the punishment in store for you, truant chief; I'll make you pay well for making a nymph of such solid flesh and blood as I. But may I ask," she continued, "what led you to name me so?"

"Nothing could be more fitting; for no man or maid, be they civilized or barbarian, could handle a frail canoe as well as you. I have often sat upon

the river bank hidden from view and watched you as you deftly shot your boat from shore to shore, and could find no more fitting name than that you have."

The hermit said, "All are ever merry and happy where the rebel chief doth abide. Tell me where dost thou hide thy sorrow, or have the gods so framed thy life that sorrow forms no part?"

"Not so, noble hermit," the chief replied, "but as little can be gained by gloomy thoughts or words, I'll have them not, but merry and free as the mountain air I hope to live and die, unless perchance I'm chained to some fair maid who has in store for me dire punishment; yet as I am strong and my shoulders broad, I am prepared to carry the load. So, nymph, lay on."

"Not yet," she merrily said, "some other time, when the spirit of the furies is upon me you will sadly feel the dire vengeance I have in store for you."

Each lent well his part to make their humble feast as jolly as the most festive board, yet none did better than the rebel chief. Later he said, "The night draws on, and as you all need rest, I'll guard the camp the while. So prepare your couches and rest until the morning light. Then we'll form some plan, that I hope will find favor with all; but as each needs rest, we'll say no more to-night."

Each sought a resting place and was soon asleep, but the chief sat by the fire, keeping it alive, ever and anon replenishing it with fresh fuel. I in my invisible form sat beside him and read well his thoughts. I could read in his heart a good man; I could see his devotion to Aronda's daughter, and knew it to be pure and noble. I believed Aronda to be a good man, honest and true. His daughter was purity itself, and I think one of the noblest beings I have seen outside of Surey. She believed most earnestly in her father, and was ready to make any sacrifice that was due to him as a parent. I believed as the hermit did, that if Aronda placed himself in the power of this treacherous king, he would suffer by it.

The angel had left me soon after our arrival on Mars and returned to her celestial home. I had no stated time to remain on this planet, but becoming interested in the inventor and his daughter, I concluded to see the end of all their trouble; so I determined to stay by them until this issue was over. As the night advanced, the chief threw himself on the ground and slept soundly. By the morning light they were all up, merry and happy. Aronda with his new gun secured plenty of game for breakfast, which consisted almost entirely of meat, as the bread and wine had given out. After the meal was over, they were all ready for action. "Now," the chief said, "I have a proposition to

make to you Aronda; and as I know the hermit to be a friend of yours and mine alike, I will be glad to admit him into the council, and that we may deal justly with each other, I would have the nymph of the river Loroön also present."

"Go on, noble chief," Aronda said, "we are all ready to listen."

"Then what I want you to do, in the near future, is to return home with me, and I trust I can show good cause why you should do so. I would have you one of the honored of my domain and feel that if the king of Ponteia learns the secret of your gun or the composition which gives its force, his first effort will be to crush me and my followers. Hence you see my anxiety to keep the secret from him. I will pay you more gold and give you greater honors than he. Whatever his proposition may be, I will give you more. All that I ask of you is that you keep my proposition secret. I could hardly expect you now to return with me and hold intercourse with your king while in my domain, so I will accompany you to the river, see you safe in your own home, and after you have obtained the best possible offer from your king, you will promise me to accept mine and be one of us. I am done."

For some time all sat in silence. Finally Aronda said, "Your offer seems fair, and I cannot ask anything better; but I would not decide too

hastily. I will communicate with my king and let you know my decision later."

"Enough," said the chief. "Hoping that it may be favorable towards me, I await your answer. If you and the hermit lead the way, we will go on to the river. I will help the nymph over the rough places."

This Aronda and the hermit understood, and they walked on together. The chief and the maid followed as they would.

"Now, lovely nymph, we are practically alone; tell me, do you return my love?"

She remained silent for a moment and then said, "Need I tell you, yes?"

"No," he said, "I knew it well before, but to make it doubly sure I wanted the answer you have given well. Now state the time and place for our union, and pray do not make it far away."

"I cannot state the time and place yet, noble chief, but will say that as soon as my father's claims are settled, I am yours."

"I will ask no more, fair girl; it is enough, I will abide the time."

"Now, as your cause is mine, and mine is yours, will you not plead with your father for the secret which is of all importance to our future happiness? Surely as the plighted coming husband of his daughter, I have more claims upon him than the king. Yet I will pay the gold as I promised in the camp. What needs he more?"

"Nothing more would he ask of you, noble chief; but until he has had his talk with the king, he will make no promise."

"Do you know, dear girl, I doubt the king, and fear for you and your father if summoned to the capital. Hear me then, my future wife; you know the mountain pool where my vessels lie, and you know how cunningly I can look them down into the River Loroon."

"I have seen them there, noble chief," she said. "What a lovely spot."

"Then know you, sweetest of girls, I have them manned. My pivot ship which is known to be faster than any in Ponteia is ready for a cruise at any moment, equipped with five hundred men, brave, strong and true. We can move upon the capital in a few hours. This I have done to protect you, for when I learned that your father would do nothing until he had seen the king, I feared for him and you. It was my intention before you set your father free to return him to you this very day. He has suffered little in his prison. I spent my time mostly with him there, and we dined together every day, locking him in his cell only at night, and I do not think he will complain to you of ill treatment."

Communing together as lovers will, I left them to themselves. In due time we reached the river's bank. A blast from Aronda's horn brought the

servants with the boats; the nymph and the chief came later on. Soon Aronda and his lovely daughter took to their boat and were rowed to the other side, leaving the chief and the hermit watching them the while. I lingered with the chief and the hermit to hear what they would say. When they were alone the chieftain said, "For many years we have been sworn friends; but do you know that in the near future I shall need to tax all that friendship to me bear, for if the king wrings from Aronda the secret of the gun, I will not give him time to make them to slay my people, but will attack him at once. You know Barso, the chosen chief of Zanzee, will not sit with folded arms and see his people shot down." Gazing a moment into futurity the chief sat lost in thought, Then jumping to his feet and drawing his immense blade, he swung it over his head and cried. "No, noble hermit, it is not in the blood of a Barso to sit calmly down and see his people wronged; and I swear by this good blade and by the maid that I hold dearest of all on Mars, it shall not be; and by the morning sun if all looks not well, this river shall run with blood."

"Cease thy agitation, chieftain. Aronda will not give the king the secret of the gun. He loves thee far more than him, to say nothing of the nymph who loves thee far better still. He could do nothing better than he has done. Now he

offers his genius to the highest bidder; it is a commercial trade. None could ask more; and mark thee, chief, the nymph holds power thou knowest not of over her father. I take it she has plighted her love to thee; no power on Mars can change it. At this very moment she is pleading thy cause, chieftain, and thou knowest little of her influence if thou thinkest her father would do aught but what she wished. So calm thyself. The smiles of the gods are yet upon thee."

"Do not understand me, noble hermit, that I doubt the nymph or her wise father; but what I fear is, that the king will summon both of them to the capital, and by torture or threats of death wring from Aronda his secret; but it shall not be. I shall have my spies near them, and woe be to that king or minion who wrongs the fair daughter of Aronda. But let us not waste our time in idle speech. If you love me, hermit, hie you away to the capital. I leave the rest to your cunning, for no man on Mars knows so well a secret duty as you. Take such as you will of my people. You know them well, and with my swiftest message boat keep well in sight of the nymph and her father. When you need me you will find me where you have often found me before."

The wizard tacitly bowed and strode away. I conveyed myself to Aronda and his daughter, whom I intended to hover around until this thing was settled

The value of the gun that had caused so much agitation among the nations of Mars was not in the gun itself, but in the physical force that put the missile in motion, a substance like our powder on the earth, yet causing no concussion, the great desideratum in Mars, owing to the lightness of the atmosphere.

The next morning Aronda and his daughter prepared to move into Turna and remain there until some disposition had been made of his invention. Probably he had made greater progress in chemistry than any man on Mars, and he had a reputation all over that globe. He was much revered by the learned and feared by the ignorant, as it was thought by them that he had dealings with the devil. This was encouraged by the priesthood, who would keep the people in as much ignorance as possible. His escape from the rebels of Zanzee caused nearly as much excitement as his capture. It was soon known all over the land of Ponteia that he was again safe, and that the rebels had not learned his secret. The doings of the nymph in spiriting her father away from the rebels were magnified into the most wondrous stories. He received congratulations from the king and all the dignitaries of the country. The king sent his special pleasure-craft to Turna to bring him and his daughter to the capital, feeling, as he said, that they would be safer there than so near the border.

Aronda, being honest himself, could not feel that the king would be treacherous. He therefore accepted his invitation, and together with the nymph went to the capital. He was received there with much demonstration, invited to dine with the king and to make his sojourn in the palace until he could secure pleasant quarters elsewhere.

Late one afternoon he was summoned in secret to the presence of the king. Reporting himself as directed, he found the king alone in his audience chamber. When Aronda went into the room, the king arose, extending his hand and greeting him cordially.

"My dear Aronda, there has been enough—aye, too much, bartering about the secret of your invention. Now I wish you, alone in this chamber, to give me your secret and trust to my honor to pay you, if it shall prove successful."

"As to the success of it, noble sire, there can be no question, as you have seen it thoroughly demonstrated from time to time."

"I do not doubt the working of it, Aronda; but give me the secret and I will see you well paid."

"You told me as much, noble sire, about my light, for which I have never received one piece of gold, and I must have a substantial guarantee of a stipulated price for my invention or I will not divulge it."

Quickly the king's brow darkened. "I am sorry, Aronda," he said, "that you doubt my honor."

"I do not doubt your honor," Aronda replied, "but as all my other inventions have brought me naught, and that of my father also which furnishes the greatest motive power on Mars, and almost the universal one, I propose to have something out of this, or I will sell it to a government that will pay. I have had large offers from other governments, as you well know; but my loyalty to you has prevented my accepting. Now I propose to put my invention upon the market and the one who pays me the most gets it."

The king grew furious, saying, "No other nation shall have it, and this night you either give me the secret or die."

To this Aronda made no reply and seemed unmoved.

"I will give you five minutes," the king continued, "to give me the secret, or you will go to a dungeon."

On hearing this Aronda's eyes flashed with indignation. "I do not want five seconds, tyrant, to tell you that you will never get the secret. Though you may take my life, you shall not know it; and you could not buy it from me for all the gold you could gather by taxing your king-ridden subjects."

In a rage the king cried, "Ho, the guard!" In a moment the room was filled with armed men. Addressing the officer in charge, he said, "Away to the dungeon with this man, and, after dark has

come, put him to the rack. When he is ready to give me the secret I ask of him, send for me."

Hurriedly the guard took him away, locking him in a dungeon beneath the palace. Then the king sent for Aronda's daughter, causing her to appear before him. Suspecting nothing, she smilingly entered the room. The king with rage approached her, saying, "I have sent your father to the dungeon and will send you to abide with him. Persuade him to give me the secret of the gun, and I will set you both free and load you with gold; but if he does not give me the secret, he dies tonight and you as well."

Suddenly she stepped forward. Her whole being seemed changed. "Vile tyrant!" she cried, "if my father refuses you the secret, may the demons take you and your house. We die together, disdaining your threat and your paltry gold."

Before her flashing eyes and terrible demeanor, the king quailed and stepped back. "Surely," he said, "the spirit of your father is upon you; but tell me, are you affianced to the rebel chief?"

"The rebel chief is so much your superior that it is almost blasphemy for you to speak his name, and I want no more of you. Send me to my father's prison."

Much enraged he ordered her to the dungeon.

As I looked into the heart of this villian, I could read his mind. I knew he intended to murder

Aronda whether he obtained the secret or not. His purpose was to torture him and obtain the secret. After that he would put him to death, destroying the possibility of others learning it. He had some misgivings about the nymph, as he was led to suppose she was betrothed to the rebel chief, and knowing the spirit of the man, he feared what might follow. Then he feared still further that if the rebel should obtain the secret that possibly the nymph might have, he would not hesitate to arm his men and take possession of Ponteia. Knowing him to be powerful and much beloved even by many of his own kingdom of Ponteia, he scarce knew how to act. As he was weighing in his mind what to do, a page announced the presence of a strange man at the palace gate, with urgent tidings for the king. He said they were for the king alone; no other ears could hear them.

Hearing this, the king ordered the guard in the room to pass outside, but to stand ready at his call; then turning to the page, he said, "Show the stranger in." A man entered leaning upon a staff. He was well in years, yet strong and muscular. As he entered, he did not salute the king, but simply said, "Sire, I bring a message from the rebel chief of Zanzee."

"What may it be?" the king quickly asked.

"He bids me tell thee, king, not to harm Aronda or his daughter. My errand is done; I would retire."

"Not yet!" the king cried; "not yet! I would know more of the rebel chief."

"Not of me," the hermit said. "My errand is done."

"Then your rebel chief threatens me, does he, strange messenger?"

"As thou wilt about that; I am not spokesman for my chief."

"But do you know, strange messenger, that beneath this castle there is a dungeon and a rack as well, where men are made to talk?"

"I know it well," the hermit said.

"Then tell me what I would know, or I will send you there."

"My errand is done, sir king; I'll say no more."

"Ho, guard! to the dungeon with this man."

They took him away somewhere beneath the palace. After he was gone, the king paced back and forwards across the room, seemingly much agitated. He was alone and talked to himself, saying, "I do not like this business. That rebel chief will make me pay well for it; but what can I do? Ho, guard! Go turn the strange man free. I have enough upon my hands. I want no more."

Upon this the hermit was again brought before the king, who said, "I meant you no harm, noble stranger. It was but a jest. Go, with the blessings of the king."

The hermit deigned no reply, but passed out to the place whence he came.

As night drew on the king's agitation seemed to increase. He feared to turn Aronda loose, and he feared to take his life. In either event, it meant great calamity; but then he thought that if he should learn the inventor's secret, he could drive the rebels back and with its aid could conquer all his enemies. "But," he murmured to himself, "will the rebels give me time to prepare for war? It will take many months to make these arms, and the chief is not slow to act."

Finding himself in a dilemma from which he could not escape, he summoned his council to meet at once.

Soon two of them announced their presence; they were quickly admitted. Without delay he stated to them what he had done, and the position he occupied as he saw it. They were as much perplexed as he; knowing that the rebel chief would visit dire vengeance upon them and theirs if Aronda or his fair daughter were harmed; and they advised the king to make peace with Aronda, to crave his pardon, load him with gold and turn him free. The king could not agree with them. He said, "The daughter must go free as well as the father, and whether or not I bind him by honor to keep the secret, no power on Mars can keep her from revealing it to the rebel chief, and methinks Aronda would despise any offer I would make, as he would think that it was simply from fear of the

rebel chief that he was freed. No, he must die, and the secret with him, unless we can wring it from him before he dies upon the rack."

"But what shall we do with the girl?" the council asked.

"She too must die," the king replied; then turning left the council chamber.

I could not see Aronda and his daughter die. I knew them to be pure and good. My mission on Mars was to defeat Satan's work; so I determined to prevent this horrible slaughter. In my invisible form I passed continually between the king and his prisoners. I resolved to be on the alert that they should not suffer. It was growing well into the night, and the rack was fixed for Aronda in one of the corridors. He was brought from his cell and placed upon it, and bound to it with silken cords. I had put into the minds of Aronda and his fair daughter that it was the king's intention to murder them whether he obtained the secret or not. Without a tremor from either, they passed into the corridor, Aronda submitting without a murmur. Before they turned the screws, the master of the guards said, "The king would know your secret. I give you but two minutes to decide. If you give him the secret, you will be released. If not you will die this slow and painful death."

Aronda said, "Do your worst, demons. I'll not reveal the secret." Hesitating a moment, the sergeant ordered the men to turn the screws.

I was invisible to all about. Snatching a knife from the belt of one of the guards I severed the cords that bound Aronda, and he leapt from the rack. The guards seemed petrified with fear. They saw the knife do the work, but apparently no hand guided it. They could not move. Aronda and his fair daughter were as much amazed as the guard yet were calm. At last the sergeant regained his speech, saying to one of the men, "Go tell the king what has happened." The guard needed no second bidding as he was glad to flee this terror-stricken place. Hastening to the king, he communicated to him what had passed.

The king was in a rage, saying, "You drunken dog, back to your work, or your head shall answer for it."

Hastening back, he informed the sergeant of the orders of the king. With fear and trembling they again forced Aronda back upon the rack, binding him as before; as they commenced to tighten the screws, I again cut the cords asunder. As Aronda leapt from the rack a second time I grasped a bar that stood near by and broke the rack in pieces. The officer and guards fled as for their lives; nothing could induce them to try the work again. They seemed to fear me more than death, their only care was to flee the place, knowing that the king would not believe their story, and that the men might suffer injury when they appeared be-

fore him to tell what had happened, I too was there. The king was in a rage as before threatening death and all manner of evil upon the guards. As he was about to call fresh guards and send them to the dungeon, sitting upon his throne at the time with his face red with anger, I reached out and snatched from his hand the wand. Stepping back a few paces, holding it in my hand, I took upon myself my visible form, black and dressed as when in Surey. In a deep voice I said, "Would you murder your fellow men? It must not be, vile king; set them free."

If the men's fear was terrible to behold, the king's was worse. He could not move; he could not speak; all color had left his face; he was pallid as death; his eyes protruded; his mouth was open; his hair stood erect and his great form shook as an aspen leaf. He was a pitiful object of abject fear. Every one but him hurried from the room. He sat as dead upon his throne. At last partially recovering himself, he feebly cried for the guard. No one answered the call—all had fled as from the "glance of destiny." Settling back in his chair again for a few moments, he buried his face in his hands, murmuring aloud to himself, "Is this death? Surely it is." Reaching his hand out for the bell, he rang for the page. No one answered the summons. Listening for a moment he then rose from his seat as if to leave the room; but his

legs refused to carry him. Again he settled back in his chair, murmuring, "Surely, that was Satan himself." "I have often been told," he continued in soliloquy, "that Aronda was in league with the devil, but never before have I believed it. Now I know that I cannot harm him, but oh, how quickly he could take my life if he chose. All is explained; his proud and lofty bearing and that of his beautiful daughter; they both knew of their power over me. What a fool I am. Why did I not give him the gold he sought for and retain his friendship? Now all is lost. I know I have his hatred which I have cause to fear." Again he shouted for the guard. No one answered.

Rising to his feet, he paced back and forwards for a few moments, murmuring aloud. "I will see Aronda. I will throw myself at his feet and seek his pardon; then I will ply him with gold; I will buy his friendship whatever the cost may be." Again he called for the guard. None appeared. Slowly he continued, "It is better that I see him alone. I will go to his dungeon and seek him out." Turning he went to the prison below. Aronda and his daughter were gone. Despair with all its terrors was upon the king. No human voice answered his call. Darkness reigned on every side. As he was about to ascend the steps, a tall figure stood before him, calm and motionless. Gazing at it speechless for a moment, the king said, "Who are you and why here?"

Without move or gesture, the figure spoke, "I bring thee warning, harm not Aronda or his beautiful daughter." Then passing up the stairs in front of the king, he was about to pass out when the king cried. "Who are you and who is this message from?"

The hermit replied, "They call me the strange man of the mountain cave. I serve the rebel chief. Woe be to him that would harm those whom the rebel would protect." Suddenly as he came he passed from view.

The king ascended to his chamber and sought the queen. She was sleeping soundly. Wakening her, he told her the terrible things that had happened.

She laughingly said, "My noble lord, of late you have drank too much. Disrobe yourself. I'll prepare for you a soothing draught."

"No sleep for me," he said, "Neither have I drank—hark—"

They were both startled. They could hear the tramp of feet and clash of arms about the court and in the halls. In a moment their door was burst open; in stepped the rebel chief with drawn sword, followed closely by his clansmen. In a loud voice, he cried, "Villain, where is Aronda and his lovely daughter?"

The king made no reply. Again the chief cried louder than before, "Where is the lovely nymph

and her father?" at the same time seizing the king by the shoulder. "Tell me, vile tyrant, where they are. If harm has come to them I'll have you torn limb from limb."

The king feebly answered, "They have fled."

For a moment the chief gazed at him in silence, then ordered his men to bind him and the queen and take them aboard the ship. This they did, the chief leading the way, striking down all that opposed him. The fighting in the court yard was terrific, yet it was so dark one could scarce tell friend from foe. After the king and queen had been safely imprisoned, the chief again returned to the palace, searching for Aronda and his daughter. Passing into the corridor of the prison he met the hermit. The chieftain cried, "Noble friend, where are Aronda and the beautiful nymph?"

"Fled," the hermit answered, "an hour ago."

"How know you this, noble hermit?"

"I learned it from him," pointing to a man shrinking away into a dark corner.

The chief stepped forward, grasped the man, and dragged him into the light, saying, "Tell me your story, and tell it quickly. Where are Aronda and his lovely daughter?"

The man related what had happened. When he had finished, the chief seemed in a rage, saying, "You villain. Do you think to deceive the rebel chief by such a tale as that? Tell me the truth or you die at once."

"I have told the truth, noble chief; I can tell no more. Seek the prison through. If you find Aronda, take my head."

"And why are you here?" the chief did ask.

"I was one of the guards," he replied, "and till now have not had strength to leave this accursed prison, which I hope never to see again."

Speaking to his men the chieftain said, "Away to the ship with this prison guard, and if I find he's told me false, I'll burn him at the stake."

"It is needless for thee, noble chief, to look further," said the hermit, "I have sought for them in every corner of the prison. They cannot be here, and when I entered the guard had left. No one was here save this man whom I found so stricken with fear that he was unable to leave. I somewhat believe his tale."

The chief did not reply, but seemed staggered by the mystery, recovering said, "Noble hermit, if I were sure that Aronda and the fair nymph were not here, I'd burn the palace; but for fear they are and might perish in the flames, I forbear. Let us to the ship."

The fight still continued in the court yard, but, as I said before, it was so dark that none could tell friend from foe. A loud blast from the trumpet of the rebel chief called his men to the ship. Putting her about, they headed with tremendous speed for the mountains of Zanzee. As the hermit had been

ordered at the river side to keep in sight of Aronda and his daughter, he had taken one of the chief's fastest messenger-boats and followed them when the king sent for them. He learned of the sentence upon Aronda and his daughter almost as soon as it was given. Despatching his boat back with all possible haste to the chief, he boldly entered the palace, warning the king, as you know, not to harm Aronda or his daughter; but when all supposed he had left the palace, he remained about and by a free use of gold learned all the secret passages; so that when the rebel chief arrived with his men, he was able to lead them into the palace by various routes. The chief made all haste to take the king and queen to his mountain stronghold, leaving them strongly guarded, with orders to allow no one to approach the prison. Then returning to his ship where he had left the hermit, he ordered him to again proceed to the capital and to announce that the rebel chief had the king and queen in his power, and that if any harm should come to Aronda or his daughter, their lives should answer for it.

Again the hermit departed to carry out his orders. On arriving at the capital he found the king's son, then a young man of three hundred months of age, had ascended to the throne, governing in the place of his father. Entering the presence of the prince, the hermit said, "I bring a message from the

rebel chief, who holds in durance the king and queen, and I am instructed to say if harm comes to Aronda or his fair daughter thy father and mother will pay for it with their lives."

For a moment the prince made no reply then angrily said, "Go tell your rebel master I disdain his threats, and tomorrow Aronda and his fair daughter die. If he does harm to my father and mother, woe be to him. Go."

The hermit retired, but he read the young man's heart. He knew that of all things he most desired was that the chief would take the lives of his father and mother, leaving him in occupancy of the throne. The hermit was well satisfied that Aronda and his daughter were not about the palace or prison, and that the prince had less knowledge of their whereabouts than he himself. The thing that worried the prince the most was the fear of what he supposed was Satan, who protected Aronda and his daughter. If he could by any means put them to death, he believed that he could free himself from the evil spirit that was abroad in the land; and, knowing the character of the rebel chief, he believed that his father and mother's life would pay the penalty, thereby leaving him in peaceful possession of the throne. Calling the priests about him he asked them if they had the power to drive the demons from the land. Each in turn told him that they had the power and would use it. At that

time in Mars there were as many forms of religion as on the earth, each priest claiming his faith to be the true one, and all other creeds the false; but they all agreed in one thing, that it was important to drive the devil from among them, although their methods were often more devilish than the devil himself could conceive. Religious fanaticism probably curses the people of Mars more than those on the earth. As a rule, I think they have less intelligence; yet among them are men of great wisdom. Although they have no Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, or Virgin Mary, yet they have their lesser gods or saints like them who are supposed to intercede with the great Jehovah for the people. Sacrifice was common among them, yet human sacrifice had not existed for many years.

The prince gathered about him priests of all creeds, asking each to lend his part to drive Satan from his domain. All manner of rite and ritual was gone through. These gabbling charlatans, finally informed the prince that Satan had fled, and there was nothing more to fear from him. After this he placed a great price upon the heads of Aronda and his daughter, taken either dead or alive. The priests in the meantime stirred up the soldiers and the populace with a religious enthusiasm, saying they had no cause to fear Satan as he would do them no harm, being driven

from the land. The people believed what the priests had taught them, that Aronda was possessed of the evil spirit, and that if they would serve the gods and the king they should seek Aronda's life, also his daughter's, who was a sorceress. I could not understand why I should be regarded as a demon. I had done no harm, having simply protected human life and prevented a most atrocious murder. There are no black people on Mars, and the only black people they supposed to exist were Satan and his imps, and as I had appeared in my black form and many had seen me, it seemed a natural conclusion for them to suppose I was the evil spirit; but why the demon should be condemned for doing good, I could not comprehend. As the hermit had taken with him a return messenger, he sent him back to the chief, informing him what the prince had said, together with his views about the prince's desiring the death of his father and mother, that he might be left in possession of the throne, and that he would devote his time in locating Aronda and his daughter and would not return until he could give information of their whereabouts.

After he had despatched the messenger to the chief, he started out in the guise of a wandering priest, searching for Aronda, the inventor. Priests and high officials were heading armed bodies of men, searching in every direction for these un-

happy people. They were continually located and surprised. I could only protect my charge by appearing in my spiritual or real form when they were about to slay them. For some time I drove them away in this manner, but the enthusiasm and fanaticism of the priests still urged their followers on. As a large reward was offered, and the belief was common among the people that they would be doing a righteous act by taking the life of Aronda and his daughter; I began to feel that it would be very difficult for me to protect them any longer, for it appeared that every one in Ponteia was seeking their lives. Knowing that I could in an instant communicate with the hermit, and seeing no other way that I could protect the lives of these innocent people, I determined to do so. As I could travel with the speed of thought, I sought out the hermit, appearing before him in my material form, acquainting him with the situation and the whereabouts of the inventor and his daughter, telling him to inform his chief without delay.

He was much surprised by my appearance, and asked me to explain what it all meant. I told him in detail all that had happened to Aronda and his daughter, the attempt made by the king and his minions to wring from Aronda his secret, and how I had defeated their cruel design and set them free; that I was not an evil spirit, as the priests of Ponteia were trying to impress upon the people, but

as my story was a long one, time would not permit of my telling it. I told him to hasten with all speed to his chief and bring him at once to the rescue of these wronged and unhappy people. I told him he had better withhold from the rebel his source of information, as it might cause commotion among his followers. The hermit, being a man of extraordinary mind, grasped the situation and acted without delay.

Returning to Aronda and his daughter, who were now hidden from the pursuers, I assumed my material form and told them my story, and conversed with them as a human being. What I could not comprehend was that neither he nor his daughter seemed the least disturbed by my presence. Aronda said, "Although much interested in your story and believing it implicitly true, I feel we have no cause for fear. I have so shaped my life and that of my daughter that I know we could appear before the great judge and give a true account of our stewardship while on Mars. I know my daughter's life to be pure, and I cannot call to mind one single instance wherein she has wronged anyone. Of course we prefer to live but if it is the will of the Almighty that we die, neither of us will murmur."

As soon as possible the hermit communicated with the rebel chief. No time was lost in his appearing upon the scene.

The enemies of Aronda and his daughter had again found their hiding place and appeared crazed for their blood. The would-be murderers consisted now of a large army, part military, part civilian, and seemed a howling mob without discipline. When Aronda and his daughter had about despaired of any longer eluding their enemies, as they were pressing them sorely, the nymph, being no longer able to flee, they heard the blast of a bugle.

The nymph, with a cry, said, "Barso," and fell prostrate to the ground. As I gazed in the direction of the sound, I saw a body of probably five hundred mounted warriors bearing down on us at full speed. The rebel chief was at the head. I knew succor had come. They were the most powerful body of men I had ever beheld. Without a moment's parley or a moment's warning, they dashed upon the legions of the king, who outnumbered them two to one. The chief led into the thickest of the fight, and his very presence struck terror to the mob.

The battle lasted but a few moments and the enemy scattered in every direction crying, "The rebels, the rebels." Aronda and his daughter were uninjured. In a moment the hermit, who seemed omnipresent, had the fair nymph restored to consciousness. When the chief saw her, he leaped from his horse, and folded her in his arms. "The gods be praised," he said, "you are yet

alive, but let us away to the ship at once.' Taking her up as though she were a child, he placed her upon his horse, leaping up behind her. His men gathered up the wounded and in a short time they were upon their ship; they cut loose from the mooring and were off. None too soon, however, for within a mile could be seen vast columns of the king's cavalry bearing down upon them as fast as possible; but as the ship traveled with such immense speed, soon all were safe in the stronghold of the rebel chief.

As I have said before, the kingdom of Ponteia like the rest of Mars was laced and interlaced with ship canals, thus enabling the rebel chief to avoid the king's warships and concentrate his force at any point at short notice.

After I had seen my charge safe from their would-be murderers, I visited the capital to see what effect it would have on the prince and his council. The news that Aronda and his daughter had been rescued by the rebel chief caused great commotion. They knew now that the rebels of Zanzee would alone have the arms that all nations had sought for. The prince was much depressed as he had hoped to put to death Aronda and his daughter, thereby forever keeping his secret from opposing nations; but by this time he was sure the rebel chief had obtained all he desired, together with the assistance of Aronda in manufacturing

arms to equip his men. He and the council could see no way out of the difficulty but to concede to the rebel the province of Mosae which bordered the river Loroan near the rebel's domain, for which he had so long contended; knowing further that the people of that province were more loyal to the rebel chief than to the king of Ponteia. Believing that this would appease the wrath of the chief and be satisfactory, he determined to make the concession. The only thing that stood in his way was the possibility of the rebel's demanding of him a large ransom for his father and mother. He did not want it to appear to his people that he refused to ransom them; neither did he want them to return to the throne. What he most desired was some secret way of compassing their death. 'This would be difficult to do, as it would be impossible, or nearly so, to send assassins to Zanzee and murder them in their prison, as it would be strongly guarded, and if any one entered there his loyalty must be well known. On the other hand, if he paid the ransom which he was sure would be demanded he could have assassins take their lives on the way to the capital, yet knowing that the chief would put a high price upon them, he was loth to part with so much treasure. Calling about him his reprobate friends, he asked them what was best to do about relieving the king and queen. The wily rascals knew full well that the

prince most desired that his father and mother might never return to the capital, so they determined to take advantage of the prince's ambition and place him in their power. Paso, one of the boldest of the schemers, said to the prince, "We will try to form some plan and will see you later on."

Leaving the prince and his followers scheming how they could dispose of the lives of the king and queen, I returned to Aronda and his daughter. Immediately after the morning meal Aronda said to the chief, "I would see you, noble chief, together with the hermit and my daughter, alone." They four retired to a private chamber. Aronda continued. "I know my life is sought for by that renegade prince, who would dispose of his father and mother, myself and daughter, and perhaps you, noble chief, by poison or in any other manner that he could compass our deaths. I will ask no gold of you, noble chief, but will convey to you my secret so that you may arm your men and protect the right. Knowing, too, that the hermit and my daughter are absolutely true to you and me, and for fear you, noble chief, or myself may meet with sudden death and that the secret may be lost, I wish my daughter and the strange man of the mountains to know it as well."

"As you will, noble Aronda. I trust them both; and if either proved false to us, no man or woman would I ever trust again."

"I have no desire," the hermit said, "to know thy secret, Aronda, and care not for the gold it would bring, for after I have served thee, the chief and the lovely nymph as far as I may, I go to my mountain cave, ready, of course, to serve at any time those I love; and if I do hear thy secret, noble Aronda, it will be that I might serve our chief the more."

"Then hear me," Aronda said; "I tell you all." To each in turn he gives his secret. "Now," he continues, "let us prepare the arms at once."

There were many gun-makers in the rebel's domain, and it was thought at that time that their spring-gun was superior to that of other countries. Nature had furnished everything necessary for the construction of the new gun, yet many of the old spring-guns were rebored and reconstructed into the new, the great objection to them was that they were too large a calibre.

Within a few months Aronda had equipped a fair-sized army, and the chief had them ready for service. While the gunsmiths were turning out the small arms, Aronda cast and put in working order several cannons for the warships. This was a new departure, as nothing of the kind had ever been known on Mars before.

The chief had offered to return the king and queen for a ransom. So far the young prince had not met the demand. They were still imprisoned.

and were very anxious, of course, to be released at any price. The hermit one day visited the prison, saying to the king that he was fully convinced that his son would not release him by ransom, as he had possession of the throne and did not wish his return. The king was much chagrined at this and stormed about the prison in a great rage. Stopping in front of the hermit, he said, "I could expect little else. My life has been selfish, grasping, and plotting; but I never supposed my son would seek my life that he might reign. But that he may be defeated in his unnatural work, which I am well satisfied he is trying to accomplish, and knowing the power of the rebel chief with his new arms to put upon the throne whomever he may wish, and as I have wronged no man more than Aronda; knowing further that my son will not release me, I would that the inventor was put upon my throne. Go, strange man of the mountains, and tell him as much."

The hermit hastened to the chief, relating the words of the imprisoned king.

"It is a new thought to me," the chieftain said, "but I like it well, and if Aronda will accept, I'll place him there. As he loves none better than you, noble hermit, bear him the news. I will break it to the nymph of the river Loroan."

Hastening away, the hermit laid the plan before Aronda. For some time he remained silent. Then

he said, "I would my unhappy country were better ruled. If you, noble hermit, the chief and my daughter think it best, I will accept."

All agreed, none entering into it more heartily than the imprisoned king. But that it might be bloodless, the chief thought it wise to set the king and queen at liberty, he promising after he had regained his throne to vacate in favor of Aronda. The chief told him plainly that if he failed to make good his promise, he had the means and would not hesitate to make him do so. So it was arranged that the king should be released, and the hermit was sent to the prince to tell him of the rebel's intention, also telling him to send the king's craft or pleasure-ship to convey his father and mother back to the capital. Arriving at the gates, the hermit asked audience with the prince as a messenger from Zanzee, and was readily admitted.

"Great Prince," the hermit said, "thy father and mother are free. Send thou their pleasure-craft to Zanzee, that they may return to thee."

The prince was much confused. He stammered, but finally said, "It was kind in the rebel chief to release them so. I will send the craft as he directs. You can depart."

The hermit knew the prince meant no good to the king and queen, and wished that the chief had taken their lives. The hermit had been gone but a few moments when the prince ordered to his

presence his reprobate friends. They entered, laughing and joking, removing their hoods, at the same time saying, "Hail to you, noble king of Ponteia, hail! We are here at your command."

The prince replied, "I am not king of Ponteia, but heir-apparent to the throne."

"Yes, very apparent," the callers said; "very, indeed; so much so that today you are king of Ponteia. No one will dispute the throne, as you are loved more than all your house. The people will have no other king, as they love you much—yes, very much."

"You speak in jest, noble Paso; how know you that I am preferred before all my kinsmen?"

"Know, noble king, your popularity is the talk of the city. It would not be safe for your father to return, if he fears poison or the assassin's knife."

"You are wrong, Pasq, the king will soon be on his way to the palace."

"You speak in riddles, noble sire. What mean you?"

"I mean that the rebels of Zanzee have released my father and mother, and a messenger but a moment gone brought word to send my father's pleasure-ship to bring him to the capital."

"I do not hear aright, noble sire. You have not paid the ransom the rebel demanded."

"But you have heard aright. He has turned him loose, and the only way that I can see how my

father gained his freedom was by ceding to the rebels of Zanzee the province of Mosae."

"If that be true, noble prince, it may not be well for you and us if he again ascends the throne."

"What would you then?" the prince inquired.

"What would I, noble sire? I would that you remain upon the throne. Your father is no longer fit to rule."

"Be that as it may, Paso, I can only do as the rebel directs, and send the pleasure-craft for him. Then he'll ascend the throne, and woe betide you and me, unless we can devise some other way."

"Are we three alone?"

"Alone," the prince replied.

"Then hear me, sire. You and I alike desire your father's death. It is useless to bandy words, each trying to deceive each."

The prince remained silent for a short time. Finally he said, "Know well, noble friend, if my father dies, the place you so long have sought is yours, and our noble Tanto will not be forgotten. But enough. I leave it with you."

Paso asked, "When does the ship leave to bring your father back?"

"It will abide your time," the prince replied, "but I would know no more of your plans. You know the price if you attain the end. I leave it all to you."

Paso and his friend retired. Seeking out the steward of the pleasure-craft or yacht, they informed him that they were about to go for the king, who had been ransomed, and it was the prince's pleasure that the cooks and private attendants of the king should come aboard and attend the king, and serve him as he might desire.

Now seeking out the king's favorite attendant, Paso poisoned his mind against his sovereign, saying, "You have served him long and faithfully; he has not advanced you, but for your noble service he treats you with disdain. If the prince were king, it would be different; you would be promoted."

"How know you this?" the servant asked.

"I know it so well that I will place within your hand this hundred pieces of gold if you are not advanced to chief steward of the palace when the prince becomes king. You keep it,"

The servant gladly took the gold. "You are very kind to me, noble Paso. Can I serve you in turn?"

"Yes," Paso replied, "you can, and serve yourself as well. While on the ship, attend the king and queen, serving them their wine. Here is a potion; I need say no more; and know you it is the orders of the prince. Then chief steward's place is yours, with another thousand pieces of gold. Can I trust you?"

"Yes," the servant replied, "you can; I'll do the work."

Everything was got ready for the ship as Paso directed. In a short time they were off to secure the king and queen. On their way back meals were served with great splendor, the sovereign and his wife drinking heavily of wine as was their wont. One morning following one of these drunken bouts they did not awake. They would be king and queen no more. As they were much disliked, no one mourned the loss, all saying that the government could be little worse under the rule of the prince than of the poisoned king. I could see but little difference between the denizens of Mars and those of the earth. Position, gold, importance, and self-aggrandizement appeared their aim in life. They did not stop to consider a future existence; neither did they appear to care what would follow if they could acquire distinction and a leadership of their fellows. As their lives there were much longer than ours on the earth, the attainment of position and possession was more desirable than with us. Falsehood, vanity, deception, ingratitude, and all manner of vice and villiany seemed scattered broadcast upon the land. As I compared their condition with that of Surey, I thought how much better it would be for them that they should suffer the torment thereby being freed of all their viciousness, selfishness, ingratitude, and all other

vices, and live in peace, love and harmony together. The news soon reached the chief of Zanzee that the king had been assassinated. The only feeling of regret he had in the matter was that it would impede placing Aronda upon the throne of Ponteia. Yet as he had the means practically to control the country, and to place himself on the throne or whom he liked, he was not as much troubled as if differently situated. I could see a coming war, and to save the people of Ponteia and Zanzee from suffering, bloodshed and rapine, I determined to exercise my power to bring about a peaceful adjustment, at the same time putting Aronda upon the throne, that it might be well with the people, as he was noble, honest, kind, sympathetic, and just, and a man of probably greater mental power than any man on Mars. Knowing well that in the very nature of things the rebel chief would defeat the prince, and that whatever defense he might make would be a useless waste of blood, I visited him with a view of frightening him from making any defense. It was well into the night, yet he could not sleep, and was pacing back and forth in his chamber alone, with a guard on the outside of the door. Passing into his chamber in my invisible form, I said to him in a deep sepulchral voice, "Vile king, you have murdered your father and mother. What have you to say in self-defense? Are you ready to an-

swer for the crime?" At the same moment I appeared before him in my material form. For a few moments he was speechless; recovering he said, "What would you with me, evil spirit? I supposed I was serving you well. Would you have me more of a demon than I am."

I remained silent and he continued, "I know you are Satan, but I did not expect you would call for me when I was doing your bidding so well. Allow me a short time longer on Mars before you take me to your inferno, and I will barter my soul for the privilege of remaining in possession of my throne a decent season."

"I am not Satan, unnatural son, who has murdered his father and mother, but I am one of the blest. I am here to warn you of coming danger. I am here to say that the rebel chief will force you from the throne, and if you would save your life and that of your people, make peace with him. If you war, you will be defeated and your life with many others will pay the cost. I am done." That moment I vanished, hoping by this to cause him to make terms with the chief, and to place Aronda peaceably upon the throne, thereby rendering him happy and giving to the people of Ponteia a good and honest government. Preparations of war were fast reaching completion among the rebels of Zanzee. The whole industry of the nation or its tribes had been turned to manufacturing the new

arms. The large guns or cannons for use on the ships were successfully made and tested by Aronda and his corps. Many of the guns had been mounted on the ships, and the fleet in the mountain lake was nearly ready to lock down into the river Loroon for service. I knew the intention of the rebel chief to subdue Ponteia and put Aronda upon the throne, and I shuddered at the thought of the bloodshed and misery that must follow this one-sided war. Believing that I could do nothing with the rebel chief, and also that his cause was just, I could see that my only hope lay in inducing the young king of Ponteia to surrender without battle or flee the country, giving it into the possession of Aronda or the chief of Zanzee.

Again visiting the chamber of the prince, whom I found in close counsel with Paso, the murderer of the late king and queen, or at least the instituter of the murder, who was saying to him, "For my part in this dreadful business which has substantially placed you upon the throne, I was to be made governor of the province of Mosae. Now I expect you to make good your promise."

"I expect to make good my promise, noble Paso, but you must give me time. The present governor must have a respectable time to resign. I never believed him particularly loyal to me, and I fear if I should press his dismissal, he might go over to the rebel chief with whom he has always

been on friendly terms, and, further, I learn that the chief of Zanzee together with Aronda are making active preparations for war, and I do not know how I can appease their hatred to my government unless I cede to them the province of Mosae, as no doubt my father did." There was a knock upon the door, a page announced that the commander-in-chief of the army would have counsel with the king immediately as his call was urgent and would admit of no delay.

The king said, "Go to the general, and tell him that I will meet him in the council chamber at once." At the same time he turned to Paso, saying, "Come with me to the chamber, and hear the bad news which I am sure the general has for me."

As they entered the council chamber, the chief of the army was before them. Saluting the king he said, "Noble sire, your generals are much at a loss to know how to meet the coming army of Zanzee. I am correctly informed that they are preparing to invade the province of Mosae, and I doubt much the loyalty of the governor to you and to your house, noble sire."

"I doubt him as much," the king replied, "and when you came I was thinking of deposing him and placing our friend here, the noble Paso, in his office. What think you of it, general?"

"Noble sire, I do not think it wise, owing to

the strained condition of things, to make so hasty a change, as this might inflame the governor, who I believe is on intimate terms with the rebel chief and would possibly precipitate the crisis at once. He could readily do so by communicating with the chief, drawing their army upon us before we are prepared to meet them. I say prepared to meet; we are not prepared to meet and do battle with them with the great advantage they have over us with their new arms; and it seems to me, noble sire, that your army would be sacrificed, and you would be hurled from the throne, and perhaps lose your life as well; and I fear more than that, not alone your head, but those of your council and generals would be demanded by the rebels as well."

"It appears to me, general, that you have little faith in yourself or your army to suppose that they could defeat you so easily and take possession of our government. Surely the great general of Ponteia has not turned coward?"

The general's brow darkened. Pacing up and down the room for a few moments, he again stepped before the king, saying, "Noble sire, your father would have never insulted the general in command of his army as you have done. I resign my commission, sire, and I give you five days to provide some one to take my place." Then bowing low to the king he withdrew from the room. The king seemed stupified. Slowly turning to Paso

he said, "Am I a born fool? Why did I antagonize the general? Probably he was more true to me than any man in my army. What can I do? Advise me, Paso."

Paso appeared confounded for a few moments. Finally he said, "It would take an oracle to direct you aright, and as I am not one let us both secretly consult the witch of the Waste."

This witch of the Waste was a strange crone that lived on a piece of land known as the Waste, about twenty miles distant from the capital, and a mile or perhaps two miles from the canal that led from the city to another section of the country. She was famous all over the kingdom, and was consulted by prince and beggar alike.

It was agreed that Paso should order the pleasure craft and that the king and he would seek her out, arriving there about dusk. Paso left the chamber to order the craft to be made ready. Scarcely had he got beyond earshot before the page hurried in again, saying, "Noble sire, a messenger awaits without and would see you at once."

"Admit him."

In stalked a man who appeared of much importance, saying, "The rebel chief has landed an army in the province of Mosae."

Again the young king appeared confounded. Hastily he asked, "Has the governor of Mosae arrayed the provincial troops against him?"

"No, noble sire, he sends me to learn your will."

"Then, messenger, return and tell your master to send his troops and hold them in check until my army can reach there."

"He would have me tell you further, noble sire, that he fears the loyalty of his troops, and does not believe they will stand against the rebels with their new guns; as they believe that Aronda is with them, and that he is leagued with Satan, and that to meet them would be sure death."

"Return as I told you to your master and further say that the priests have driven Satan from the land, and have him so inform his troops. I will send the priests with the army to keep the demon away. I have no more to say. Hurry back to your master, and say what I direct."

As the messenger left, the king rose to his feet, apparently much agitated, saying to himself, "I am a fool and belong to a house of fools. My father was a fool before me. A fool he lived, a fool he died; I likewise will die a fool. Why did I antagonize the general at the moment when I needed him most? But I can do no more until I see the witch of the Waste. Ho, guard! Learn for me if my yacht is ready."

In a short time the man returned, saying, "Noble sire, the yacht awaits you together with the noble Paso."

Ordering the page to throw his cloak about him, he hurried from the palace. A large canal had been made around the castle in which lay the pleasure-ships. The king's yacht when not in use was moored near by, a marble walk leading from the palace to it. The young king was soon aboard, giving orders to the commander to let loose and proceed to a certain point indicated, which was nearest to the witch of the Waste. The craft moved gracefully, running with such speed that the captain in a short time announced to the king that this was the point he wished to stop and that he would make the boat fast and await his commands. The king and Paso stepped ashore and ordered the captain to hold his vessel there until their return. It was growing late in the day, and in an hour night would set in. The country about was rugged and desolate, rocks, sand, gullies, and hills. It could not be said to be mountainous but rugged. As it was not available for farming, no cultivated fields or houses were to be seen. After Paso and the king had walked some distance away from the craft, Paso said, "Noble sire, as you wish to visit the witch alone, I will remain here waiting your return; and as you have been there before, you need no guide, so you had better away at once while it is yet light; but before you go, allow me to say to you, noble sire, not to allow yourself to be annoyed by her words, for they are as bitter as

adder's gall, and the higher one is in rank, the more she loves to abuse him so, noble sire, do not lose your temper, and if possible remain master of the situation."

The prince moved away murmuring I'll see. In a roundabout way he soon arrived at the cave, or half cave and half cabin, over which the witch of the Waste held control. This strange domicile was in perfect keeping with the character of the woman. In front of a cave in the rocks she had built or caused to be built a manner of cabin. It could not claim the dignity of a house, yet was neat and looked comfortable. By a sudden turn in the rocks he stepped in front of the door, which was open. There lay a panther, which suddenly sprang to its feet and gave a most piercing shriek. The sound seemed an intermixture of the cry of a woman and the hiss of a tiger. It fairly chilled the blood of the frightened prince. As the ferocious animal crouched as if about to spring upon his prey, the crone inside, who was stirring with a large spoon some mixture over which she was mumbling some cant I could not understand, looked up. Seeing the prince standing there and the animal about to spring upon him, she stepped quickly forward, striking the animal with the spoon, saying, "To your hole, Death! To your hole!" With a whine the panther sprang with the ease of a cat into a recess of the rocks about six or seven feet above the floor,

and turned about, gazing upon the prince with eyes that seemed aflame with rage. The witch appeared to pay no more attention to the animal, and, turning to the prince, said, "What wouldst thou, murderer, with the witch of the Waste?"

"I have brought you gold, noble witch;" at the same time passing to her a handful of coin. Reaching out her hand she grasped the gold, throwing it into the recess where the panther was crouched. The animal gave a low whine but did not move. The witch again turned to the prince and said, "Hasten with thy story. I want little of men that have murdered their fathers and mothers. Go on."

The young king was much confused; he turned white and red by turns, seeming both frightened and angered, but, remembering the warning of Paso, he calmed himself and stammered, "I would look into the future, noble witch of the Waste; tell me, will the rebels of Zanzee defeat my army? Shall I be hurled from the throne?"

"Thou hurled from the throne, vain prince, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Why do you laugh, vile hag?"

"Why do I laugh? Thou askest a question which becomes a fool. Twenty years ago today I cursed thy vile father, and told him I would live to see him basely assassinated. Ha, ha, ha! Hear me, thou imp, thou counterpart of thy demon father whose death thou didst cause. Hear me, I say.

'Twas I that mixed the drug that took their lives.
I sold it to your fellow-demon, Paso; thou knowest
how well it did the work. Ha, ha, ha!"

The prince had sunk into a seat near by and buried his face in his hands, as if he'd hide from view the scene the witch portrayed. Then looking up he cried, "Hateful woman, I'd hear no more of your vile slander; your tongue is like the sting of death. Would to the gods I had not seen you, but as I'm here, give me of your subtle knowledge what I seek and for which I have paid the gold."

For a moment she deigned no reply, then, slowly said, "The stars are not yet out; abide an hour and thou shalt know what thou dost ask."

Turning to her kettle she commenced to stir, mumbling as before some strange, wierd chant. She was a woman apparently some seven hundred and twenty months of age, rather tall, dressed in a long, loose-fitting frock of dead black, bespangled with stars and strange devices, of which serpents formed the greater part. Her face was strongly marked and she appeared to be a person of large intelligence, and the vicious look of her face appeared to be taken on at will. When she spoke to or looked in the direction of the prince, viciousness, hatred and revenge seemed to be written in every lineament. Her hair was long and hung loose down her back; her step was springy, and she seemed to move with the grace and ease of a young woman.

As she lit a lamp in the back of the cabin or cave, there appeared two skeletons, so placed that between them, from their fleshless fingers, hung a black banner; a silver band passed round its outer edge; the bottom was fringed with gold. In the center was painted the solar system; the sun in gold, the rest in silver. Above the banner and over the skeletons was a black canopy studded with stars. The place was clean, and upon the floor were many skins of wild animals; some were of leopards and tigers, and very beautiful. Upon one of the leopard skins lay a bundle of something I could not decipher. As I was gazing upon it and wondering what it could be, I saw it move. A child of some three years of age, throwing aside a cover, raised itself to a sitting posture, and in a sweet, musical, child-like voice, cried, "Dannae."

Hearing the sound of its voice the witch dropped her spoon into the kettle and turned towards the child. Her whole being seemed changed. She beamed upon it with love written on every lineament of her face, as hatred had been before. Approaching the child, she lifted it up in her arms, saying, "What wouldst thou with grannie?"

I thought this little girl the most beautiful being I had seen upon Mars. Its flesh was soft and peachy, its chubby hands, arms and legs seemed molded for a cupid, with eyes of a soft hazel, with long, curly, golden hair, cherry lips and cheeks,

with dimples when she smiled that seemed beauty personified. The witch brought from a cupboard near by some choice food, and sitting down took the child upon her lap and fed it with morsels that had been prepared for it alone. The king stared at the child in great amazement. Mustering courage, boldly he said, "Whence comes the child?"

"I did hope, vile prince, that this fair being would never look on one so vile as thou. Know thou further, that this is an angel that belongs to a woman that earns her bread, whom thy demon father robbed of her husband, wringing from him his substance and in time his life, leaving the child and its mother to the mercy of the poor; for the rich have no mercy. But I am revenged and so is she; I prepared the drug that took thy father's life, ha, ha, ha!"

The king was much agitated, and, rising to his feet, he cried, "Why is this hatred of my house? Have I or my ancestors wronged you, vile hag?"

"Wronged me," she answered, "Ay, more than wronged me; wouldst thou hear my tale?"

"Yes," the prince replied. "Go on."

"Then know, vile prince, I am not of Ponteia, but was born and spent my girlhood days on the island of Pozee; but enough of that. I came to your accursed city homeless and friendless. I was educated and had hoped to obtain employment as a scribe. Nothing offered. Wandering up and down

the streets from day to day, my money gone, I was thinking of ending my life by drowning myself in the canal that surrounds thy castle. While standing upon the brink trying to nerve myself for the fatal plunge, some one laid a hand upon my shoulder. Turning, I stood face to face with the noblest being, as I think, that ever trod Mars. She was well advanced in months, yet strong and well preserved; rather tall, grey-haired with large, luminous grey eyes. In a soft and mellow voice she said, "What wouldest thou, daughter? I see sorrow written upon thy face, have the gods frowned upon thee?" I was about to reply, when she raised her finger, as much as to say, 'not now, but come with me.' Without a word I turned and followed her. In a short time she led me into a beautiful home. This woman was the great Madame Melee of whom thou hast often heard. After caring for me and arraying me in a becoming robe, she said, "I will not ask thee for thy history, fair daughter. I know it well. My home is thine. Be my daughter; I will be thy mother."

She was deeply read in astrology and knew more of past and coming events than all Mars beside, and her advice was sought by high and low alike. Conversing with her one day as to what led her to her present life, she said, "I am the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, born with an insight into the future, which seemed my natural study, so I embraced it. Thou knowest my fame."

Laughingly I said, "Surely I must be to the manor born; I, too am the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter."

"Ah, true" she said, "I see thou art right, and I will teach thee my cunning. My mantle shall fall upon thee, fair daughter, surely the gods have sent thee."

She taught me the mysteries of her science, and soon I read the stars as well as she. One day your father called to learn what would be the fate of his army that was then in the mountains of Zanzee. She told him that they would be defeated and destroyed; scarce any would return to tell the tale of their defeat. He called her a false witch. She replied, "Too soon thou wilt know what I have told thee to be true." This angered thy cowardly father and he left in a great rage.

Soon a body of armed men came and took us to the square where we were publicly whipped and driven from the city, thy demon father confiscating all we had. When outside of the city we each in turn pronounced a curse upon thy father and all his descendants, and I am glad to know how well the curse has followed him. With my chosen mother, I came to this cave; she died here; the smaller of the skeletons thou seest beyond is her bones.

As she ceased speaking, a woman entered. She appeared much fatigued, she took the child in her

arms, the little cherub threw its arms around her, murmuring, "mamma." Each kissed the witch in turn, and they were about to pass out, when the sorceress reached up where she had thrown the gold, and taking a part of it she pressed it into the hand of the child's mother, who after murmuring a blessing passed out. The witch gazed after her a few moments in silence; then returning, mounted a ladder leading to a hole in the roof of the cabin. Gazing for a few moments at the stars, she said, "Vile prince, I know thy future. Aronda the inventor will ascend the throne. God speed the day; for he is kind and true, and the rebel chief will uphold him there. Wouldst thou know more?"

"No," replied the young king, "I know enough." Hurrying away, he met Paso and told of the strange doings. Paso attempted to laugh, but the prince raised his finger, saying, "Do not make merry, Paso, for I believe her tale, and I know also that could she lend a helping hand to end the life of me or mine, she'd quickly act. Where are the friends, Paso, whom you told me I had? I see them not. They see the coming cloud, and know that it must burst; and, like the general, they would flee me while it is time. My father's government was truly bad, he merited his death. None mourned the loss; but I would that he were upon his throne again. I've had enough. I know

that we must flee, Paso; so I have a plan. We'll load my craft with what treasure we have and can wring from the people, and flee to Canto; with this we can live there in great splendor, safe from the rebel chief."

"I know not that, noble sire, if the rebel chief should demand of the king of Novae that we be given up, I little doubt that he would do it; as he would have no interest in us, and to attain the friendship of the rebel chief would be all-important."

"Then where can we go, noble Paso?"

"I know not, sire; Aronda is a great man, and he and the rebel chief no doubt by this time are kinsmen. He will send his ships all over Mars. You have murdered your father and mother. This together with stealing the treasure will be good cause for him to demand of nations your surrender, and as I have said before, they have little regard for you, and much for the rebel chief. They would say, "take him and welcome; he deserves to die."

"Then you too, Paso, would free yourself from the sinking ship?"

"Not so, noble sire; your fate is mine; but as I've had nothing for the part I played so well in placing you upon the throne, I'd think it well if I got some gold."

"I would to the gods, Paso, the deed had not

been done. I could then escape the rebel chief, as my father would have had all the blame; but as he is gone, I must answer in his place."

"It appears to me, noble sire, that you are brave in peace; but these are trying times; to be great is to be brave in war."

"We will not quarrel, Paso. It is better that we remain friends. Let us to the boat."

Hurrying back to the canal they found the boat ready to leave and going aboard were swiftly taken back to the palace. Arriving there and hastening up the steps, they found the council had gathered. Stepping into the council chamber, the king asked, "Why this meeting without my command?"

The chief of the council answered, "Noble sire, we learn that the general-in-chief of the army has resigned, and there is no one to fill his place. The rebels have taken Mosae, the governor offering no resistance. There must be immediate action, and it is the sense of this council that to save our country and the city from being taken by the rebels you immediately appoint some able man to command the army."

"I understand the situation as well as you, noble council; but as I have three days yet before the general resigns his commission, I see no occasion for this haste; but I can assure you that I am not idle, and am simply seeking for the man I regard

best able to command our forces. If you will convene again to-morrow night at this time, I will inform you of my appointment, which I think will be satisfactory to all. You are dismissed."

The council did not rise to go as he expected, but remained waiting the orders from their chief, whom they had appointed in the absence of the young king. The chief of council rose, saying, "Noble sire, we see no occasion for this delay of twenty-four hours. You are young, and probably your appointment of a commander for the army would not be satisfactory to this council or to the people; and as we would have a voice in regard to this appointment, we most respectfully ask the name of the person you have in view; so that if he does not prove satisfactory to all, the twenty-four hours may not be lost, but improved by casting about for some man that might be more acceptable.

The king's face reddened with indignation, rising to his feet, he was about unceremoniously to dismiss the council and order them from the chamber, but Paso, more wily than his master, gave him a look that warned him to keep cool.

Pacing back and forth for a few moments, the king said, "I must have more time to think about the man I would appoint to so important a position; but that harmony may exist among us in these

troubled times, I will agree to name the person at an early morning council. You will convene at the labor hour, or at the time when the bells announce the beginning of the day. I know and feel as you do that the importance of the occasion requires immediate action. Hoping this may be satisfactory to you, I again pronounce the council closed for tonight."

The chief of the council said, "As you will, noble sire; we will be here by the early bell to meet you in council." Each in turn bowed low to the young king and left the chamber.

After they were gone the king said, "Paso, what think you of the situation?"

"It appears to me, noble sire, that your power is at an end. I can see now that the king is subservient to the council, rather than the council to the king."

"It shall not be so, noble Paso. I shall take the helm in hand and guide the ship of state as I will. The council shall not convene at the hour stated; but I shall place you in command of the army, Paso, and we will force things the way we will."

"Do not act too hastily, noble sire. Although I should be greatly pleased at the appointment of commander-in-chief of the army, yet I doubt your power to place me there."

"Why doubt my power to place you there? Am

I not king of Ponteia? Am I not absolute ruler as my father was? Has not the general tendered his resignation? Can I not order you this very moment to take command of the army? Who shall gainsay my right?"

"I do not know, noble sire, but that you have full power to do it; but from the demeanor of the council, I judged you less in power than they."

"Then hear me, noble Paso; the council shall not convene. I shall so instruct the guard. Ho, guard!"

In filed a small body of soldiers in command of a captain. The captain raised his cap, and bowing low, said, "Noble sire, we are here at your command. What would you?"

"What would I, Captain? I would know why you are here. Where is the old guard? Your men are all strangers to me."

"Noble sire, the old guard has been relieved, as you know that a battalion can serve here but six months according to the laws of Ponteia; their time being up, we relieved them at six o'clock past, and they are now on their way to the barracks."

"Why this change, Captain, without my knowledge?"

"Noble sire, it has never been the custom to notify the king that a change was to be made, and I did not regard it necessary. I am here to serve you as the others did, and I hope we shall

do our duty as well as the battalion that has been relieved."

"That may be, Captain. I thought it a little curious at first; but now I remember that the time has elapsed, and I doubt not that the change will be satisfactory."

The captain, bowing low, said, "Thanks, noble sire; can we serve you now?"

"Yes," the king replied; "there is an appointment for a council meeting at the early bell in the morning. I have since concluded not to hold the council. If they appear, do not admit them. This is my order. You may go."

The guard still remained. The king's face flushed as he asked, "Why do you not obey my command and file out?"

"You place me in an awkward position, noble sire; I have orders from the department general if there is any difference between the king and council to obey first the orders of the council."

"Who gave you those orders, Captain?"

"The department commander, as I have said before."

"May I ask from whom the department commander gets his orders, Sir Captain?"

"From the general-in-chief of the army, noble sire, as you well know."

"And from whom does the general-in-chief of the army get his orders."

"From the king and council, noble sire."

"Then, Sir Captain, my orders are to you direct. Would you ask more?"

"I am pained, noble sire, that you place me in this awkward position. If you think a moment, you certainly will not do it, as you know full well that if I disobey the command of my superior officer, I shall be cashiered."

The young king appeared much annoyed, but finally said to the captain, "You need not act in the matter until I see you again. Go."

The captain, bowing low, said to his men, "Right face, march!" and they filed out of the room.

After they had sat some time in silence, the king said, "Paso, I believe you are right; my power is at an end; even a captain in the army refuses to obey my orders. Advise me, Paso; what shall we do?"

"Flee the country, noble sire, while yet we may. As I see the situation, the commander-in-chief of the army is king of Ponteia. He has his army thoroughly disciplined; they have great respect for his ability, and the council is with him. There will be no new commander placed at the head of the army, noble sire; and I should not wonder to see you a prisoner in the cells below in less than five days unless you flee the country; and as I have been a close friend of yours through all this dirty work, I feel that I shall fare little better than your-

self. So let us away while you have yet control of the treasury. Let us put the treasure aboard of your craft and away with it before the morning light."

Musing a few moments the king replied, "Paso, you are right. The witch of the Waste told me this very night that the rebel chief would put Aronda the inventor on the throne, and no power in Mars could stop him. I believe as much."

Paso remained silent, seemingly in thought. The king continued, "I have not told you, Paso, that the evil spirit was here, black as night, telling me that my day was done as king of Ponteia; that Aronda the inventor would ascend the throne; and he warned me to shed no useless blood. I am with you, Paso. Let us get the treasure on board the craft and bear away for Novae; but as the hour grows late, and what we would do would appear so unusual, it will be well to defer it until tomorrow night. I will receive the council graciously. I will make to them pleasant speech and defer to them in the appointment of a commander. I will cause them to send my humble apology to the commander-in-chief whom I insulted, begging him to withdraw his resignation and continue in command of the army."

Paso jumped to his feet and said, "Noble sire, this is the smartest thing I ever knew you to do, for it is a 'foregone conclusion' that the council

would insist on the commander-in-chief's remaining in command of the army. This will give us ample time to get the treasure aboard the ship without exciting any suspicion. I am so well pleased with your plans that I have nothing to suggest, and as it is growing late, with your permission, noble sire, I will withdraw." Bowing low, he left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

I knew full well now the plan of the prince and his reprobate friend. I knew that they were to take on board ship the treasure as far as they could obtain it; and as the king had full control of the keys of the vault, it was quite evident that he would escape with most of the treasure. Knowing that it had been wrung from the poor by a vile system of taxation, and that in case they escaped with it the treasury would be so depleted that the poor would be again taxed to make good the loss, I determined it should not be, and decided to watch them, and after they had deposited the treasure in the ship to spirit it away, and, when opportunity presented, to divide it among the poor. As several hours would elapse before they could do anything, I transported myself to Aronda and his daughter, who were now with the rebel chief and his army in the province of Mosae. They had captured the state, as you know, without any resistance from the governor, who still remained governor as before.

The army was now very fairly equipped, but yet the people of Zanzee were manufacturing arms

as fast as possible, and soon would have an army that, with their new guns, would be able to conquer all Mars. They had a very respectable navy, armed with cannon ranging in calibre from four to eight inches, rifled, and almost equal in force to the best guns on the earth's surface. This was all brought about in a very short time by this wonderful man, Aronda. Every preparation necessary was now made to capture the rest of Ponteia. I could see nothing that would stand in the way of their navy's pressing right into the capital city; as they could readily sink any of the war-ships sent by Ponteia against them. I had much doubt whether the Ponteian navy or army could offer much resistance, as they must know that in the nature of things they would be defeated; but dreading useless waste of blood, I was anxious to prevent it, yet I did not see any way.

The rebel chief now had his navy and transports in the river Loroön, from which a large ship canal ran to the capital of Ponteia. Of course, this was guarded by the army and navy of the kingdom, but resistance would be of little avail. I heard the chief and Aronda planning for the campaign. The chief's plan was to put a large army aboard the transports, with two or three months' provision in case their retreat was cut off, and to proceed immediately to the capital, regardless of the army of Ponteia in their rear, relying upon the

superiority of their guns to capture the stronghold of the nation. Aronda demurred something from this, thinking it a little risky to leave their rear exposed, and also to draw away so large a portion of their army from Mosae, as the government troops might recapture it. "Yet," he said, "noble chief, you are so much my superior in matters of war, that if you think it wise, I will do my best to help carry out your plans; but first, I would send my daughter back to Zanzee."

Of this the chief approved, thinking it would be safer for her there.

Seeing I could do nothing to prevent this attack by the rebel host, I hurried back to the capital. It was morning; the hour agreed upon for the council to meet. They were there, and the king pursued the tactics he had agreed upon the night before. He received them graciously and asked them to convey his apologies to the general commanding, asking him to withdraw his resignation and continue in command of the army. This pleased the council, as they no doubt intended to do so, regardless of the king. Now that harmony had been restored, the general was requested to visit the capital and consult with the king and council as to the best plan of defense against the rebel hosts. The commander of the navy was also invited to the council. As it would probably be several hours before these two dignitaries could reach the capital, a

meeting was called for early the next morning. All seeming satisfactory and good feeling being restored, the council retired.

They had hardly left the palace when Paso and the king were in consultation as to the best plan of getting the treasure aboard the ship, and the best time to leave for Novae. It was decided that the king and Paso in person should bring the gold from the vaults, and put it in sword and spear-boxes so that the servants might place it on board the craft as munitions of war. The plan was a good one and worked all right. Before night they had the entire treasure of the government, or nearly all, locked in one of the state-rooms of the ship. It was their plan to have their vessel, under pretence of war, held ready to start at a moment's warning. As the king must be there the next morning at the council to avoid suspicion, they determined to delay their flight until the night following and spent the better part of the day in deciding where they would deposit their wealth, and how to live in disguise in Novae; so that if the rebel chief demanded them of the king of Novae, they would not be known.

Of course, all was confusion. Everyone in the city knew of the coming attack of the rebel chief, and was hiding away everything valuable for fear of the city being looted.

When night came, I knew that now was my

time to act. Passing aboard the ship, I found the treasure, silently removed the covers from the boxes, and in my invisible form carried away the treasure and hid it in a place which I knew no man could find. Then closing the boxes as before. I awaited the meeting of the council.

All were there as agreed upon; the general of the army and the admiral commanding the navy. Both appeared much disheartened, each saying in turn that resistance was impossible, and coolly to march their men out to be shot down and sending their vessels to be sunk by the cannon of the rebel chief was the worst of madness. They advised the council to conciliate the rebel chief if possible, and make such concessions as would be satisfactory to him, for in the end they would be defeated and he could dictate such terms as he chose. The king and council could not agree; one thought one way and others thought another. The whole day was spent in wrangling. It was growing dark, and I knew by the tremendous speed of the rebel chief's men-of-war that they were liable to arrive at the capital at any moment, if not resisted by the navy, which the admiral thought would be the height of folly to do, as he had had spies around their men-of-war and could see that their shots were irresistible.

Time went on. The next day the king and Paso were gone. They had fled, taking with them, as

they supposed, the treasure of the government. Still the council remained in session, more embarrassed than before, yet not surprised at the flight of the king. The general and admiral had returned to their command, not knowing what to do. The council of Ponteia remained in session three days and three nights, having their food brought to them, yet were no nearer reaching a satisfactory solution of the difficulty than when they first convened. The rebel chief was advancing rapidly upon the city, sinking everything that offered resistance. It was now high twelve upon the third night; the council was more perplexed than ever, when of a sudden there was a terrible crash—then another—then another—then another. It seemed as if the building was falling to pieces. Everyone was dismayed. Soon it was discovered that cannon shot was crashing through the building carrying everything before them. Before they could fully comprehend the situation, the rebel chief had landed a large body of troops upon the palace grounds. The batallion that were doing duty around the castle tried to make a feeble resistance, but it was useless. They were shot down without power of replying. The confusion was intense. The witch of the Waste could be seen with a lantern in her hand, walking back and forth upon the ramparts, screaming like a demon. This awed the soldiers of the castle who, together

with everyone about, fled in wild dismay. The chief of Zanzee was in possession of the city, and by early morning light he had it proclaimed from every important place that Aronda the inventor was king of Ponteia.

The commanders of the army and navy lost no time in visiting the capital and swearing allegiance to the new king. It was easy to see that these men were highly pleased, and in their hearts gladly welcomed the change, knowing that it had given to Ponteia a good and honest government, and at the same time harmonized it with Zanzee. After the formality of swearing allegiance to Aronda, the new king, the commander of the army approached, saying, "Noble sire, nothing could give me more pleasure than this. From the moment I learned of the intention of the rebels of Zanzee to put you in possession of the throne, I determined to offer no resistance, believing it was the best for our people and necessary to prevent a revolution. As to the weakness of the past government, you are too well informed to require any information."

The expression of the chief admiral of the navy was so much in keeping with that of the army that it is scarcely necessary for me to repeat it. Nearly all the people of the country felt as the general did, and gladly welcomed the change. As the priests had taught the ignorant class that Aronda

was possessed of the devil, they of course, regarded him with fear; yet they loved him for his justice and honest rule. This is one of the strange make ups of a human being if the priests have taught a people that a man is inspired of the devil, they will believe it, regardless of the man himself or his doings. They will love him for his honesty sympathy and good will for his creatures; but at the same time look upon him as one possessed of an evil spirit. Such is humanity on the earth; so it is on Mars.

Aronda and the chief determined to make many radical changes, shifting burdens more upon the rich, and less upon the poor that had carried them for so many years. When the rebel chief and Aronda learned that the treasure had been carried off by the renegade king whom they knew had fled to Novae, they determined to demand of that king the fugitive's immediate surrender. Feeling that more complications might follow this, I did not see it clear to follow out my first intention of distributing the money among the poor; so I concluded to pass it over to Aronda when opportunity presented itself. Of course he was very busy in arranging matters of state, and consulting with the council, but I at last found him alone. Appearing before him in my material form as before, I did not disturb him in the least. He calmly talked of the affairs of the people, and earnestly desired that I

should aid him in every way possible to right their wrongs. I asked him to say nothing to the chief of the information I had furnished him except simply to tell him that he had discovered where the treasure was hidden.

The rebel chief's first thought, after Aronda had been thoroughly established in office, was of the nymph of the river Loroan. He decided to go for her at once and bring her to the capital. So taking one of the fleetest of his ships he bore away for the mountains of Zanzee. On arriving there he met the nymph, who was well informed as to the success of the enterprise and the doings of her father and the chief, as she had kept messengers continually passing between the army and the mountain stronghold. The chief was happy at the turn things had taken; the nymph was elated.

"Noble chief, I have always regarded you as one of the greatest among men, and have heard of your strange doings since a small girl; of your prowess, magnanimity, and ability to lead and govern men. I love you for your nobleness of character, your grandness of manhood, your love of the right, your devotion to a just cause, and a 'will to do and a soul to dare' what you regard as your duty."

"Your speech is noble and pleasant to hear, lovely nymph. Would you hear why I love you in turn?"

"Tales of love are always sweet, noble chief."

"Then come with me, lovely nymph, and when we have an hour alone I'll tell my tale of love; but you know my tongue was not formed for noble speech, yet I have it in store for you and will tell it as best I may. Now let us prepare for our journey to the capital. It is a long and weary tramp over these rugged hills to the ship. Will you ride a palfrey while I walk by your side, and pick out the smoothest road?"

"Not so; I will go with you on foot, best of men. Think not a king's daughter so weak she cannot climb the mountain side. There is scarce a day since you've been gone that I have not done as much or more. My belongings here are few, I shall soon arrange them with my own hands. Direct as you will how they be brought to the yacht."

"I knew, sweet maid, you would scorn to ride a horse, yet I could not offer more. I know you are well able to climb the mountains and love it too; so prepare your things and we'll away."

In a few moments she reported herself ready for the journey. The chief mean time had given orders as to affairs in Zanzee such as he thought wise, and was ready to walk to the ship with her. Happy and communing together as lovers will, in due time they reached their boat and were away for Pontia. On their arrival there they were re-

ceived with many demonstrations of genuine affection. The wedding day was arranged, and it was the intention of the chief and Aronda that it should be a grand affair and as water crafts were the pride of the people, they concluded to make it a carnival of boat racing. As night drew on, Aronda, the chief, and the nymph sought their private or family rooms. "Everything has worked as we would have it, noble chief," said Aronda, "but where is the wizard of the mountain cave? I have not seen him since I was proclaimed king of Ponteia, what can have happened to him?"

"I know not, noble sire, where he could have gone; probably he returned to his mountain cave, for he never abides with people when fortune comes their way. He loves to help the right, and ever is ready to act in stirring times, no man more wisely than he. I have offered him much to draw him from his mountain cave; but laughingly he would say, "I have enough of the follies of life, but when thou dost need my cunning, chief, call me. I will readily lend a helping hand, for I know thy cause is just; but not before. What think you of his absence, lovely nymph?"

"I can think of no cause," she answered, "but you must know this, the wedding festals can not proceed until our hermit friend is here. Without his blessing we should not be happy. Hasten and send a messenger for him, father, and say to him,

that the nymph of the river Loroön must needs see him. When he knows that, he will come to us."

"As you will, fair daughter, with the early morning I will send to his mountain home, and ask him for your sake to come at once."

By the early light, the swiftest craft was again started for the mountains of Zanzee, bearing the request of the maid to the hermit that he would come without delay.

During the intervening time preparations were going on for the great festival. Every department of industry and commerce was brought into service. High and low alike entered into the preparations with great enthusiasm. Invitations were extended to other nations or principalities to be present on this grand occasion. War was forgotten, peace and contentment seemed visible on every side. All looked forward to this coming event with joy and expectation, each doing his part to make it the greatest gala day in the history of Ponteia.

One night after the busy hours of the day had passed away, and all was quieting down, in stepped the hermit of the mountain cave. The nymph had been watching for him, and she was the first to greet him. "Hail to you, strange man of the mountain side; aye, doubly hail;" at the same time advancing and extending both her hands.

The hermit greeted her with like warmth, saying, "Hail to thee, doubly a queen; hail to thee, again I say, as queen of Ponteia and Zanzee alike. Where there ever a people so blessed as we? Did a people ever have so pure and noble a queen as we? Did a people ever have so great and noble a king as we? Did a people ever have so great and noble a chief as we? All hail, I say; yes, thrice doubly hail to the noble Aronda, king of Ponteia, to the noble chieftain of Zanzee, to the loveliest of maids, the sweetest of girls, the noblest of queens, the greatest of all, nymph of the river Lagoon."

"None has so grand a speech as you, noble hermit; none knows so well the art of framing words; none has a heart more true. Hear me best of friends; I could not marry the chief of Zanzee without your blessing; hence, the reason I sent for you. Why will you live alone? Why not live with us in the palace? My father and the chief would gladly give you whatever you might ask. We all love you much. Stay, noble hermit, stay with us; do not return to your mountain cave. What say you?"

"Lovely nymph, if all were like thee, the chief and thy father Mars would be bright indeed; but alas! how few? I hate the false life and the deception of men. Little truth lingers among them, their ways are wily; few are just. I love

the mountain solitude, but I will ever be thy friend; and when thou hast need of me, thou knowest my abiding place, and that none would serve thee quicker than I. I want little more of life with men. All that I would have that wealth and power can give is thy father's gun, or one as good."

"Ay, noble hermit; you can have one, and a thousand more if you will, and know you besides that if need does ever come your way, remember we owe you a debt that we would gladly pay in gold were it possible. Do not think you are asking favors, noble hermit, for we owe you much, and what you will is yours."

It was agreed that the hermit should remain at the palace until after the festivities, and the nymph said much longer if she could induce him to do so.

All was peace in Ponteia; every one was pleased with the change. A good and honest government was assured together with the knowledge that they would soon have an army so equipped that it would be invincible against all other nations; in fact, all of Mars. With an unshaken belief in the greatness and goodness of Aronda, the people settled down with confidence to a long season of prosperity.

Feeling that my mission had been fulfilled, I was contemplating a return to the earth; but as I

was curious to know what had become of the renegade king and his fellow Paso, I thought I would look into their home and surroundings in Novae. Transporting myself in an instant to them, I found them much dejected; they had learned that the treasure had been spirited away; they were in a foreign land, moneyless, friendless, and unknown. They knew nothing of the honest pursuits of life; they had no means for the dishonest ones. They had no knowledge of any of the useful arts; they were schooled in none of the pursuits of trade, and they were sadly, yes, sadly poor. The prince believed that Paso had spirited away the treasure, hiding it somewhere in Ponteia; Paso believed that the king had done the same. Each accused the other of robbery and believed he knew where it was. Provision in the ship was growing exceedingly scarce, the crew were distrustful; they could not understand why they were in a foreign country, save that the king had fled, carrying with him his worthless companion Paso. Sullenly they called for more provisions; the prince could not furnish them. They called for their pay that they might furnish themselves; the prince had no money to meet their demands.

The captain sternly said to the prince, "Noble sire, I do not understand this situation. My men are hungry, discontented, and rebellious. They

want their pay; they want food. What does this all mean? Why are we in this strange country? It is no part of Ponteia. We lie here idle, inactive and purposeless. Tell me, noble sire, why this lethargy and what is to be done?"

The prince could make no reply.

The captain remained silent for a few moments; then he continued, "Tonight, noble sire, I put this ship about and return to the capital of Ponteia. My men demand it, and promises will serve them no longer. If you have fled from Ponteia as I am led to suppose you have done, why are you holding us here? We could land you on the shore and ourselves return to the government to which we owe allegiance. Do not deceive yourself with the impression that you will dispose of the ship and send us adrift. It shall not be. We will put you in a small boat, and you and the noble Paso can go ashore if you do not wish to return to the capital; for in an hour this ship shall be put about, headed with all possible speed for home. I am master of the ship; and if your intentions here are honest, you must know that I am doing my duty; and if not honest, I'll have no more of you."

"I understand this, sir captain, is rebellion against the king of Ponteia."

"As you will, noble sire; but I doubt it much."

"Then, sir captain, know this, the noble Paso

and myself this very night will visit the capital of Novae to consult with their king. If this ship is moved from its present anchorage, on my return to Ponteia I will have you tried for treason and beheaded."

"You speak with authority, noble prince; but it will not change what I have told you; so if you wish to visit the king of Novae, we shall be glad to give you and the noble Paso a boat to go ashore, but none of my men will accompany you; so prepare yourselves either to return to Ponteia or go ashore."

"Sir captain," the young king replied, "you act like a madman. Do you suppose that I will tamely submit to this insult from one of my inferiors? I will have you tried for treason, sir, as soon as I return to my kingdom."

Noble prince, I know nothing of your mission here, and for fear that I may be tried for treason, I will direct the ship to Zanzee. You know already that no man on Mars knows these seas as well as I; there I shall be under the protection of the rebel chief until I know how things fare in Ponteia. I do not care to have more words with you, noble monarch; so if you would go on shore, go at once; for this moment I will order my crew to weigh anchor."

"Ay, Mr. Brantson; haul in your anchor; put the ship about for Ponteia."

The men received the order with a shout, and soon the creaking of the capstan showed that the anchor was being raised. Now the prince weakened. He was afraid to return to Ponteia, and more so to go to Zanzee. Addressing the captain he said, "Put us on shore with two of your most lusty oarsmen."

"I will furnish you no oarsmen," the captain replied, "but I will give you a boat and you can do your own rowing."

The anchor was up and the ship about to move. During this time Paso had remained quiet; he had not spoken. The prince first stepped into the boat, supposing that Paso would follow. As Paso passed down the ladder he gave the small boat a push with his foot, sending it away from the ship and then climbed back on deck, saying to the captain, "The prince's threats are idle; he fled from Ponteia to save his head; no doubt the rebel chief is in possession of the capital. I would like to return with you to Ponteia."

The ship was put under way, and with the strong desire of the men to return home, she traveled with immense speed.

I still lingered with the prince, wondering what disposition he would make of himself. Slowly he pulled his boat to the shore, and when the prow struck in the sand he sat for some moments gazing into the water, and soliloquizing, said, "Surely the

life of the transgressor is hard. The man that led me on to this has pushed me away as a cast off garment. By his instigation I murdered my father and mother, because he held up to me a brilliant reign, great power, aggrandizement and Marsian splendor; but oh, how false, how treacherous was this glitter! I bartered my soul to Satan that I might rule a short season; he even shortened my reign. Friendless, homeless, with but two pieces of gold, I am cast upon this strange shore. Where shall I go? I cannot return to Ponteia; I cannot starve. We stole the treasure together; now he has it all, but I cannot sit here; I will away to the king of Novae and tell him that I had to flee from my throne for my life, and will ask his hospitality; yet I doubt of it. The rebel chief and Aronda are now the greatest on Mars; no doubt Aronda now sits upon my throne; the chief has wedded his fair daughter. They have the power to subdue the world, and if they ask the king of Novae to deliver me up, he will quickly and gladly comply with their demand. I am powerless and penniless; what shall I do? Oh, would that I had allowed my father's return! Why did I plot with that villain, Paso, against his life? But the deed is done, I cannot call him back so must away to the king of Novae and tell him my story. If he gives me hospitality, it is well. If not, I die!" Rising from the boat, he hurried to a village near

by, obtaining coach for the capital. On arriving there, he went immediately to the palace, where he was met by a guard whom he told that he was the king of Ponteia; and would have audience with their sovereign.

The guard looked at him in amazement, but before he would allow him to pass, he called the officer of the day. As the captain arrived, the prince repeated what he had said to the guard. The officer was equally surprised, saying, "Surely you are not Aronda, the wonderful man of Mars, who has but a few days ascended the throne. I know well you are not he, as Aronda is a man well in months. I doubt your story, stranger, and cannot allow every maniac that calls to see the king."

This was the first that the prince had heard of Aronda being upon his throne. It was evident that what had happened in Ponteia was well known in Novae, and he knew that if he would gain audience with the king he must present himself as he really was, a dethroned king that had fled his country. Pondering for a few moments, the prince said, "Tell your master that I am the late king of Ponteia, and that I fled my country to save my life. Noble captain, will you bear this message to the king?"

"I will," the captain replied; "stay here until you know his reply."

In a short time the officer returned, saying,

"Sir Prince, you cannot be admitted. The king would have nothing to do with you, save that he requests you to leave his kingdom at once, as he would have no variance with the great Aronda or the chief of Zanzee, who, no doubt, will demand your surrender as the murderer of your father and mother, and for stealing the treasure of Ponteia."

The prince turned away and wandered along the street, listless and without purpose. Finally I saw him standing upon a bridge that crossed a canal. He hesitated for a moment, then renewed his courage, hesitated again; at last, gathering resolution, he threw himself into the water and was done with Mars. I thought it well. I knew his life on Mars could be of little good to himself or to his fellow men. It was far better that he enter their inferno and be purified by the fires of their hell and then enter their blissful abode and live through endless ages in continual bliss.

Transporting myself back to Ponteia, I arrived there about the same time as the ship that had borne the fugitive king to Novae. The captain immediately reported himself to Aronda, and related what had happened, and how the prince had left the ship. Aronda approved of his course, saying, "You have acted wisely, noble captain; and nothing would give me more pleasure than to have you continue in the service of the government in the same capacity in which you are now. See that

your crew are well provided for, paid liberally, and rendered contented and happy under the new arrangements."

The captain bowed low and was about to depart, when Aronda asked, "Where is the renegade, Paso?"

"I know not, noble sire; he left the ship immediately after we had made her fast."

"What think you of him, noble captain? Did he have a hand in the death of the king and queen? Was he a party in stealing the treasure?"

"Both, I believe, noble sire; both."

"What leads you to suppose this, captain?" asked the king.

"You know, noble sire, that I was in command of the craft at the time of the murder. I got all my instructions from Paso; he provided the attendants for the king, and saw that everything was in order before the ship left. As to stealing the treasure, I know nothing further than that I overheard him and the prince accusing one another of spiriting it away and hiding it before the ship left. Which of them did it I know not; but evidently one of them did, for no one else about the ship could get into the room; and further, if they had not stolen it from the palace, it would not have been on the ship."

"I think you are right, noble captain, and that

he is guilty. If you should hear of his whereabouts please inform the captain of the guard, who has my instructions to arrest him. But as you are tired and sadly needing refreshment, I will excuse you."

Bowing low, the captain left the chamber.

Time wore on. Dignitaries from other countries were arriving daily to attend the grand festival. Aronda's daughter was devoting much of her time, incognito, looking after the condition of the poor women of the city, the hermit usually accompanying her on these tours of inspection. Late one afternoon, as they were returning to the palace, she said to the hermit, "I have arranged with the captain of my father's pleasure-craft to take me, toward nightfall, twenty miles below the city, to visit the witch of the Waste. You no doubt have heard of her, noble hermit."

"In truth I have, lovely queen; and have often felt curious to see her."

"Do not call me queen, noble friend. I like the 'nymph of Loroon' better."

"As thou wilt, lovely nymph; I, too, like it better."

"I am glad to hear you say that you would see the witch of the Waste, as I feel assured you will accompany me there. In an hour I will meet you at the craft, noble hermit. Be prepared, as we go alone."

Bowing low, he said, "I will." She turned and entered the palace.

At the time agreed upon they met. On going aboard the craft, the nymph said to the captain, "Take us to the witch of the Waste. No doubt you know where to land us without instructions."

The captain, bowing low, said, "Indeed I do, fair lady; I have been there many a time before."

On the way the nymph said to the hermit, "This is a strange woman I am about to show you; indeed, an extraordinary woman. She was undoubtedly very handsome in her early youth; in fact, she was so when I first knew her. You know, noble hermit, I spent my early girlhood at the capital, and with the rest of the school girls I often met this strange woman on the street. She always had a kind word for us, and her smiles were delightful to see. At that time she was living with the great Madame Melee, who, you know, was our greatest astrologer; but somehow she offended the late murdered king, who drove the Madame, together with the witch of the Waste, from the city. We girls used often to visit this strange woman and have our fortunes told; but since we moved to Turna, I have met her only two or three times. But as you will soon see for yourself, any further description is unnecessary, save that she retains much of her beauty yet."

In a short time the craft landed, making fast to

a small, much dilapidated wharf. The captain approached the nymph, saying, "Fair lady, this is the nearest point to the witch of the Waste. Shall I send a guard with you?"

"Not so, noble captain; I know the way, and my wizard friend here accompanies me."

They wished to reach there about nightfall, as the witch consulted the stars to give such information as was asked for.

"Lovely nymph," the hermit said, "superstition forms a large part of human existence. I doubt if any being, civilized or savage, is without it. The more intelligent, like thy father, declare they believe nothing in it; yet they are shocked and annoyed at any adverse prophecy of the soothsayers. Does thy father ever consult the witch of the Waste?"

"I think not, noble hermit; I haven't in mind ever hearing of his consulting her; but he is an exception. Very few people in Ponteia, be they high or low, but in secret or otherwise consult this astrologer."

"Dost thou, lovely nymph, believe this witch hath power to give such insight into the future as thou wouldst know? Can she read the stars, and is she so well learned in the mysteries of the solar system that she knows of their doings? Do the stars point out to her the destinies of men? Have these stars no greater purpose to serve in the great

universe than to perplex themselves with the doings of the finite beings on Mars? Have the gods so far endowed this witch of the Waste that they have allowed her to look into the chamber of the future, giving her the stars to guide her aright, shaping as she will the destiny of poor mortals? Dost thou believe this, loveliest of women? Tell me, nymph of Loroön, what brings thee here? Dost thou believe this tale?"

"I scarce can frame words to answer your question, strange man of the mountains. Shall I say I do not believe she has this power? Shall I say it is mere idle fancy that brings me here? Shall I say that when I return home I shall laugh at her prophecy and believe it not? What shall I say, noble wizard? I would speak aright, yet I can form no words that will answer your question. Help me, noble friend; this is an hour of need, and you, the wisest of men, can set me right. Tell me, strange man, why am I here?"

"Hear me, loveliest of women. Thou wouldst believe the tale if it pleased thee well. If she paints thy future bright, she is a lovely witch; but even thou, purest of women, loveliest of thy sex, most just of thy kind, would think her false if her story did not please thee; and say she knew naught of what she spoke; yet thou wouldst sorely fear that her evil prophecy might come true. It is so with man and woman alike; they would shape the

tale the witch would tell, and if it pleased them would think her wise, but if she prophesied evil to them they would denounce her as a fool, yet fear her still and look with mortal dread for the hour at which she predicted the evil would fall. And so it is through human life; we doubt, we fear, we hope, we distrust, we aim to know the future, we claim to know that we shall live again. Yet we doubt it. The wiser we are, the more we doubt; and so it ever has been through human life and ever will be until the end of time if time doth ever end. The mortal would be immortal; he would live again; and he has painted for himself a heaven where the palaces are of gold, the streets of marble; he has created for himself a great governor who governs this great celestial city, and would have it as lovely as man's fancy has wrought; yet he doubts; and he, like you, is ever vacillating, hoping, fearing, and casting about like you for some one to read his future; yet it cannot be read. The tale that thou wouldst hear, time alone can tell."

"I know you are right, noble hermit; you have answered my question as well as I could expect. I feel like you, that time will tell me truly. But here we are; this is the home of the strange, sad woman whom we seek. You remain outside. I will enter alone, and will call you later on."

The wizard remained outside as she directed. As the nymph drew near to the entrance, the same

scene presented itself as when the prince visited there! The panther lay across the doorway as then; the witch was stirring the caldron as then; the child was asleep upon the leopards' skins as then; the two skeletons still held the emblem suspended from their fleshless fingers as then; the witch chanted her weird cant as then. Nothing was changed; yet the reception was vastly different. As the nymph approached the panther fled from the doorway, hiding himself in a hole near by, seeming a literalism of the saying I had often heard upon the earth's surface, that "A lion will turn and flee from a maid in the pride of her purity." As the nymph stepped into the doorway, the witch looked up saying, "Ah!"

"Noble witch, have you forgotten your friend, the daughter of Aronda?"

The witch's whole being changed. All sternness left her face. Love seemed to be written in every lineament. Dropping her spoon into the caldron, she advanced with both arms extended, folding the nymph in her embrace she exclaimed, "I may forget the angels of heaven; I may forget my hope of future life; I may forget the mother that bore me, but forget the daughter of Aronda, never."

Then stepping back a few feet, she gazed at the nymph a moment in love and admiration. "But a few moments gone," she said, "I was offering

prayers of thankfulness that thou and thy father had at last received your just deserts; and tongue cannot tell how happy I am to know that thou art to wed the noblest of men, the rebel chief of Zanzee."

"Your speech was ever kind; your friendship ever true; your sympathy for the right was ever sincere, and, greatest of women, you know I value your friendship more than all other women beside; and when you need a friend, I need not tell you where you will find her. But I have come to learn of you my future, and if it is well that I wed the rebel chief; or, I should rather say, do the stars point for us a happy future?"

"Lovely queen, I can see only happiness in the future for thee; but later on I will read the stars. Sit here until the night moves further on. Then thou shalt know thy destiny; but surely the gods must smile upon the good."

"Thanks, noble witch; I gladly accept your hospitality, but what have you here? By my love for the rebel chief, it is a child. How came you by it, and how lovely! No one could be more beautiful!"

"Thy speech is true, lovely daughter. It is but a counterpart of thyself, and often, when I have taken it upon my knee I have thought of thee, and how like to it thou must have been in thy baby days."

"But tell me, noblest of friends, where did you get it? Surely if it needs a friend the gods have sent it here; for no one would be more kind to it than you."

"As thou art anxious, lovely queen, to know from whence it came, I will tell thee of its parentage. The tale is short and easily told. But if I should frown and my brow grow dark in telling how the poisoned king did wrong its father, and at last did cause his death, and how its mother has suffered to save her offspring; I say, if my brow grows dark and I do frown while telling this sad tale, think not I love thee less. No one knows better than thy father how that villain king did lend a helping hand to the moneyed class to rob the poor; how from year to year the rich grew richer and the poor grew poorer, until now a few men in Mars hold all the wealth, and the rest are poor indeed. All the laws of the council—if council they might be called, but more properly vassals of the king—were to help the rich and oppress the poor, grinding them, robbing them, taking from them their strength, their substance, and their earnings until they were beggared and enslaved. To all this, this villain king gave a helping hand. In turn the rich gave more license to the king, knowing well that he would serve them when they should ask. Thou knowest how this body they call council, or legislators for the people, become subserv-

ient to the king, and whenever they would attempt to make a law that did not meet the wishes of the rich, the king would dissolve this body and make the laws himself. This child's father saw the wrongs of his people, and in trying to right them, formed societies among them for their mutual protection, thus incurring the hatred of the rich, who asked the king to drive him from the land. But he had sown the seed; discontent was on every side. These societies, thou knowest, were formed not alone in Ponteia, but all over Mars; they recognized this child's father as their leader; he, in turn applied to your future husband to protect the poor. This the rebel chief in the kindness of his heart was inclined to do; and he informed the poisoned king that these societies must not be molested. Learning this, the rich got up a great howl of treason, and called for the life of this child's father, and thus gave excuse to the king to murder this noble hero and confiscate all he had. But, thanks to the gods, he had leavened the loaf, and the good work goes on. The villain king is dead, murdered by his own son. The societies still live; they have bettered their condition, and now an honest man sits upon the throne. The mother of this child, robbed of her home and everything she had on Mars, was forced to earn a living for herself and child as best she could. The poor have ever been kind to her and given her such help as they could;

but still she is very poor. She lives in a cabin hard by and leaves the child with me while she walks to the village and is wearing her life away in drudgery and toil."

"Noble witch, I would hear no more; allow me to take the child to the palace; tell the mother to follow, as something good is in store for her."

"Not so, lovely daughter; she will be here before thou art away; arrange with her as thou thinkest best. As the stars are out, I'll read thy future."

Passing up the ladder to the hole in the roof, she remained for some time communing, as it were, with the starry vaults. Then descending, she said to the nymph, "What wouldst thou know?"

"I would know, noblest of women, is it well unto my future that I wed the chief?"

"I am happy, lovely queen, more happy than I have been for months; for I can tell thee it is well unto thy future that thou dost wed the chief. The very gods did smile when I did ask of the stars to point unto me thy coming life. All did say in turn, 'Hasten on the wedding day,' for it is well from today henceforth unto the end of thy life on Mars. Wouldst thou know more?"

"No more, noble witch, no more. I am happy. I would not change it. I could not hope to pass the ills of life without my share; but if I live happily with the chief, I will ask no more. My visit

with you is done, but before I go I'd have you see my friend that waits without; we have kept him waiting long, but he is ever patient as well as wise."

"It is well, lovely nymph, but tell me first from whence he comes."

"Wise woman, no doubt you have heard of the wizard of the mountain cave; it is he. No better man or one more wise did the gods ever give being."

"I have often heard of him, lovely daughter; call him at once."

Stepping outside the nymph asked the wizard to follow her in the cave. As they entered the witch was putting things to rights. Showing each a chair she said, "Pray be seated." At the same time she extended her hand in greeting, saying, "I need no introduction to thee, strange man of the mountains. I have often heard of thee before."

As they clasped hands, their eyes met. Each stood immovable; a painful silence followed. The witch grew deathly pale, reeling for a moment; then said, "Danzo," and fell to the ground. The wizard lifting her up cried, "Nymph, bring water."

Soon they had her restored to consciousness. The strange man of the mountains seldom showed emotion, now he was unmanned; sinking into a chair, with his eyes bent upon the floor, he mur-

mured, aloud, "I thought her dead." Then looking to the nymph, he said, "Let us away; this is more than I can bear."

The witch had so far recovered that rising to her feet she said, "Do not leave me, Danzo, until first thou hearest my story."

The wizard quickly took her hand, seating her in a chair beside him, he said, "Tell me, tell me all."

"Danzo, my tale is soon told. When thou didst leave me as dead upon the floor, I had only swooned. After they had restored me, I was for weeks crazed. On recovering my mind, my only wish was to flee the king. Although he was a good man I loathed him. Nothing could induce me to see him. When opportunity presented, I fled to Ponteia. I had but one hope, that I might see thee, ask thy forgiveness, then die. But many and many a year has passed; we both still live. The king soon was divorced from me and married again. I changed my name; none but thou knows who I am. My tale is done; say thou wilt forgive me; then let me die."

The nymph was lost in astonishment. Mechanically she wandered to where the child was playing upon the leopard skin, she took it in her arms, walking back and forth through the cave. Then approaching the pair, she said, "Noble witch, allow me to take the child and walk for a time outside."

I feel that your communion with my noble friend is too sacred to allow of intrusion." Turning she passed out of the cave.

When they were alone, the hermit said, "Let us forget the past; join hands as well as hearts, and spend the rest of our lives together."

"Noblest of men," the witch replied, "It is well, my prayers have been answered; I would ask no more."

The nymph wandered up and down in front of the cave, wondering much at this strange meeting, and murmuring, "They must have been lovers before."

"Yes, lovers before," said a deep-toned voice.

Looking up she saw standing over her the powerful figure of the rebel chief.

"Yes, lovers before," he continued, "We were always lovers, and I hope will be as long as life is with us."

"Surely this is a happy surprise, noblest of men. I did not expect you here, yet you are welcome, more than welcome. I am always happy when you are near. But what brought you here, and how did you know where I was?"

"Know where you were, loveliest of women? I always know where you are. My mind follows you as the needle does the pole. You cannot hide yourself from me. I read your very thoughts.

It is a gift from the noble wizard; he taught me the art. Shall I in turn teach it to you?"

"I have it, dearest of men; I as well know where you are."

"I did not know my future wife had me so well in hand, yet I would not break away. It is a flowery chain. None in Mars are blessed as much. But whence comes the child?"

"Here, noble chief, in the cave it tarries with the witch. Did eyes ever behold a being more lovely? Surely the gods have done their noblest work. Yet it has no home; at least, as good as none. Its mother is poor and its father was murdered by the poisoned king. What say you, chief, if I take it with me to the palace?"

"Your wish is law, loveliest of women; surely if you care for it, you could not ask for anything more beautiful. Has its mother fled, or given it to the witch."

"In truth neither, noble chief, but she is poor; yes, sadly poor. I am waiting her return from her day's labor; she will soon be here, and if she proves a fitting mother for so lovely a child, I will take them both with me to the palace. But something strange has happened inside the cave. I hardly know what to think, or how to act."

"What is it lovely nymph, and where is the wizard? I heard he came with you."

"Indeed, he did; and he is now inside the cave

conversing with the witch. I think he has found his early love, but soon he'll tell us all."

She was right, for at that moment out stepped the witch and wizard. The wizard said, "Welcome, thrice welcome, noble chief of the mountains; we did not expect thee here."

"You greet me as a host, noble wizard, have you changed your abiding place? Are you spokesman here? Then turning to the witch, he said, "Have you no greeting for me, wise woman of the cave, or have you forgotten your rebel friend?"

"Greeting for thee, rebel chief! I cannot frame words to greet thee as I would, greatest of men, but know thee I do greet thee, not alone for thy goodness and noble qualities, but as the coming husband of the loveliest woman on Mars."

"Thanks, noble witch; we have often met before. But never have you greeted me so kindly. But I am ever welcome when the lovely nymph is by my side. But, Danzo, noble friend, tell me why you gave me such warm greeting here? Are you the host?"

I am, noble chief; allow me to present to thee the hostess." At the same time he took the hand of the witch, saying, "See my future wife."

"You are ever wise, noble hermit; why did you not teach me the art of wooing at such rapid speed. It took me many months to win the nymph."

"I have not won my bride so quickly as thou dost think, but later on thou shalt know it all."

"I will abide your time, noble wizard; but let us all away to my ship near by; they are waiting for us at the palace."

"Not so, noble chief," the witch replied, "I am not yet ready to leave the cave. I have the child in charge."

While they were talking, in stepped the mother of the little girl. She looked weary and sad. She appeared to be a woman of large intelligence, refinement, and human sympathy. Nature had not fitted her for the hard, laborious life she was leading. Her very looks won the heart and sympathy of the nymph, who walked up to her with extended hands, saying, "I know who you are; I have learned your history; I will not wait for the noble witch to tell me more. We need a matron at the palace; come with us to the pleasure-craft that is waiting in the canal. The present king will make in part amends for what you have suffered at the hands of the dead tyrant. Will you accept my offer?"

The widow gazed at her for a few moments in silence, but soon she said, "I am confused, I hardly know whereof you speak. Allow me to consult with my noble friend, the witch. Later on you shall have my answer."

"It is well, unfortunate woman. Tomorrow I will send a craft to bring you to the palace. Chief, let us away."

Kissing the child, she was about to lead the way from the cave, when the wizard said, "Wait for me at the ship, I will soon follow."

After they had gone, the witch and the wizard had a few words in regard to their future, and when they should meet again. Feeling that the widow would like to consult the witch in regard to the offer she had been made to be matron of the palace, he hurried on after the chief and the nymph. I lingered behind with the witch, hearing what advice she would give the widow as to her accepting the position.

The witch of the Waste said, "I know dear friend, what thou woudst ask. Without hesitating a moment, I should say by all means accept it, allowing them to pay thee for thy service what they will. And rest assured thou wilt not be underpaid."

This witch was a marvelous woman, probably one of the strongest characters of her sex on Mars. Her likes and dislikes, her love and hatred, I think were never equalled by any human being. She was ready to murder those whom she hated, and she would go to any length to compass their ruin. She loved with equal vehemence and she would divide her last farthing with the down-

trodden and the poor. I wondered much that such a positive character, and one who was so much devoted to those she loved would have ever allowed herself to be won by the king of Novae, when she was affianced to Danzo. But from her character I should judge this to be the only exhibition of weakness known in her life. Her love and sympathy for the poor was only equalled by her hate for the rich and powerful. Her whole life, and all the money she could gather, which was not a little, was devoted to relieve the sufferings of others. She was almost worshiped by the poor and unfortunate, who regarded her as a guardian angel. She held greater influence and power over that class than anyone in Ponteia. The rich and powerful hated her in the same proportion as the poor loved her. The late king would have had her strangled long before his death if he had not been afraid that he in turn might be assassinated.

People of the earth's surface can form little idea of the inflammable nature of those of Mars. Revolution there is almost periodical. I learned that in Ponteia only one king had died a natural death; all the rest had been killed in revolutions or assassinated. When the poor widow's husband was put away, it nearly caused a revolution. Hence the reason of the king's not trying to crush these labor societies. No one knew better the con-

ditions of things in Ponteia than the rebel chief; he knew if the king of Ponteia made any attempt to crush these unions he had only to send a small army across the river Loroön, and they would all flock to his standard. The rich and the king knowing this, did not regard lightly the chief's warning. not to molest the societies. I learned that all would seem quiet in Ponteia. when without a moment's warning a howling mob would appear in the streets. Law and order were thrown to the dogs, license knew no bounds, anarchy reigned supreme. The oppressed became the oppressors. The rich fled for their lives, their houses were always looted and often burned. The rank and file of the army were with the mob; discipline seemed impossible. Intrigue had usually placed the king in the hands of the revolutionists, who without trial or pretext of any kind would behead him and drag his body through the streets. All that did not join the mob fled as best they could. This condition of things would often continue for months. Finally the mob, after having exhausted their fury, would call a halt, and would cast about them for some one to fill the throne, and often chose the son or brother of the king they had assassinated. Then they would settle down to quiet and industry. The rich would return and try to mend their wrecked fortunes. Law and order would prevail; the king would take upon himself more and more license.

The rich would gradually begin to oppress the poor, it would go on growing worse and worse; the poor and down-trodden would become more and more enslaved, until again would come a day of reckoning when selfishness had again grown the tree that furnished the club to break their own heads, then the same scene would be re-enacted that I have described.

Such is humanity on Mars; it always has been so and probably will be until the end of time. The priests work among the poor under the pretext of helping their condition, and continually advise them to submit without murmur to oppression and wrongs; but when I was there, their influence was gradually dying out, as the poor were beginning to believe that the priests were acting in the interest of the rich and powerful. At the time Aronda was put upon the throne, it was thought by the wise that the country was ripe for a revolution, and they regarded this change of government as very fortunate indeed, as it would save a terrible waste of blood and treasure. Aronda was a man so well acquainted with the condition of humanity in lower life that it appeared to me his reign would be long and peaceful, as his purpose was not to cater to the rich, but to win the love and support of the poor; thereby avoiding revolution. I had no doubt that if the rich who controlled the priests and the newspapers could not use him, they would

conspire against him; but he was particularly well fortified from the fact that the rebel chief would sustain him. This together with his justice, magnanimity and good will for his fellow man would insure him a long and peacefiul reign.

CHAPTER XV.

The next day the nymph as she had promised sent for the widow and child. It was a wise selection on the part of the nymph, as the widow made an excellent matron and manager for the palace. The lovely child became the pet of every one; it was ever welcome with Aronda, and he was never more happy than when the little beauty was climbing over him.

The day was drawing near for the grand festival. Nothing else was talked of. Every department of the government was making a special effort to make the occasion a grand success. Under the reign of one of the past kings, there had been built a race-canal. This is something unknown on the earth's surface; but it occurs to me as furnishing the best amusement possible. It is about five miles long and four hundred feet wide; made in a circle something like a race track, leaving an island in the center. On the outer side of this canal and extending entirely around it are seats one above another, arranged somewhat as they are with us. Inside the track or upon the island, on this occasion, was prepared a great feast. Nothing so stu-

pendous, I think, was ever before attempted by man. The main table extended the entire circuit of the island, which at the least calculation must have been four miles. Inside this circular table and probably a hundred feet from it, was another table extending the entire round of the island. The third table was probably a hundred feet from the second, extending all around as the others. In the centre of the island and below the surface of the ground was a great kitchen where the food was prepared. The object of having the kitchen below was to prevent cutting off the view of the race.

All Mars had been invited to this great feast and carnival; people from every part of that globe came pouring in by thousands, as every nation was trying to remain on the best possible footing with Ponteia, on account of its well known power.

Large prizes were offered for the best speed made by their wonderful vessels. A canal running from the track or race-canal to the main canal gave opportunity to vessels of any draught to enter it.

The guests had nearly all arrived. Among them were the king and queen of Novae, together with their suite; the king and queen of Moso, with their suite; the bachelor king of Donda with his suite, and many other dignitaries and people of great consequence, such as artists, authors, statesmen,

poets, architects and church luminaries. Newspaper men were everywhere; hardly a paper of any importance on the whole globe but had its representative there to write up the scene. I was curious to know what the effect would be on the king of Novae and the witch of the Waste; as the nymph of Loroan was specially anxious that the witch and wizard be publicly married on the same crafts in the race-canal that she and the chief were to be. It was thought by Aronda that this could be brought about without the king's recognizing the witch.

For the last two days there had been a small army in the mammoth kitchen, preparing food for this vast concourse of people; for it was the express wish and order of Aronda that all caste, distinction and social importance be laid aside. Every one was invited to share in the feast alike. Communication between the inside and outside had been arranged by tunnels underneath the canal made at the time the race-course was built, enabling them to pass to and from the island at will. It was the intention of Aronda to make his reign as merry and happy for his people as he could. He provided for many holidays and diversions of every kind. Hence the stupendous expense and effort to make this occasion the grandest of all festivals that had ever been witnessed in Ponteia. Bands of reputation from all over Mars had been engaged, placed upon racing-crafts and sent all over the country, dis-

pensing their music as a prelude of the coming race.

Time wore on. The looked-for day had come. No day was ever more beautiful. The sun rose in all its splendor. All nature smiled and seemed anxious to lend its charm to make the grand conclave the greatest ever known on Mars. By early light all were astir, slowly bending their way to secure seats around the race-course. They were in holiday dress; merry, laughing, singing, joking, each apparently vying with his neighbor how best he might agree and say pleasant things to those about.

It was known only among a few what vessels would enter the contest, yet there was no restriction as to class of vessels, but as those of heavy draught could not compete with those of light draught, of course only those of light draught would enter.

Eight o'clock was the time arranged for the vessels to enter the contest. The clear sound of a bugle announced the entrance of the ships. The first two vessels that entered were about the same size, something alike in build, of small tonnage, apparently built for racing. Six vessels in all had registered to enter the contest. It was arranged that the vessels should race in twos. The first two of which I have spoken were now quietly running side by side towards the judges' stand from which they were to start. One flew the colors of Ponteia;

the other the colors of Novae. The one of Novae carried their favorite band, who played their national air. They were lustily cheered, each spectator making a choice of the one he expected to win. Soon they were before the judges' stand, ready at the signal to leap forward. The distance to run was fifteen miles, or three times around the circuit. After each had got in line with the judges' stand, a blindfolded boy upon the stand was to throw the die which gave place to the contending crafts, whether they should have the inside or the outside of the run. The vessel of Novae won the toss, taking her place in the inside. The signal was given. Each moved away with great swiftness. Every mile their speed increased. The vessel of Ponteia for the first mile was somewhat in the lead. The speed attained was astonishing, and the excitement knew no bounds. In the second round, when they passed the judges' stand, their prows were abreast, each straining its engine to its greatest capacity. Both had doubled their explosives, and it was thought that they were making greater speed than had ever been known upon the circuit. The third round brought them in nearly abreast, the vessel of Novae winning a pennant and a pot of gold by scarce twelve inches. There was no contest over it, and the prize was frankly awarded to the winner.

As they passed out of the racing waters, two

more vessels entered. One carried the flag of Ponteia, the other carried the flag of Zanzee. The nymph rode on the vessel of Ponteia, the chief on that of Zanzee. The nymph stood by the colors on the hurricane deck of her vessel, which was named the "Nymph of Loroan."

The vessel on which the chief rode and which floated the colors of Zanzee, was named the "Rebel Chief," and was supposed to be the fastest vessel on Mars.

When they neared the stand, the nymph ordered her vessel to be put under way with all possible speed, paying no attention to the judges.

As the rebel chief came abreast the judges' stand, he came nearly to a stop. During this time the "Nymph of Loroan" was running with great speed. The chief, appearing confused, addressed the judges, saying, "I cannot understand this. What are the orders?"

"Your orders, noble chief, are that you capture the fleeing vessel, 'Nymph of Loroan,' and bring her to this port."

Bowing, the chief said, "It shall be done," and immediately put his vessel under way. By this time the "Nymph" must have had a mile start, and was running with tremendous speed. The "Rebel Chief" was after her with still greater speed. When they had made the first circuit, probably the "Rebel Chief" had gained upon the "Nymph of

Loroon'' a quarter of a mile. Both forced their vessels to their greatest possible tension. The excitement now rose to the highest degree. The vessels were traveling at an unparalleled rapidity. On the second round the Chief had gained on her probably half a mile; still the "Nymph" pushed bravely on. For a while the "Rebel Chief" appeared not to gain upon her; then again he did.

The third round he had further lessened the distance between them, yet the plucky little craft "Nymph of Loroon" sped on. The fourth, the fifth, the sixth rounds were passed, yet he was not within grappling distance. On the seventh round he threw his grappling hook, making it fast in some of the light timbers on her hurricane deck. The nymph, seeing the situation, seized a light axe that lay near by, and deftly freed herself from the grasp of the "Rebel Chief." Now a deafening shout went up from the people. Cheer upon cheer followed. "Hail, all hail, to the "Nymph of Loroon!"

For the next round she nearly held her own. Again he threw his hook, grappling a timber she could not cut away. Seeing his advantage he threw a second hook, making the two vessels fast to each other. Pulling her back and forcing his vessel forward, they were soon abreast. Standing side by side, but on their own vessels, they made another round. Now Aronda's daughter

made a loop in a silken cord and deftly threw it over the head of the rebel chief, capturing him, showing she had accomplished by love what the government had failed to do by arms. Again a loud shout went up from the people. Holding the cord aloft in her left hand and the colors of Ponteia in her right hand, they again made the circuit of the course.

Then a priest appeared on the hurricane deck of the "Rebel Chief." The nymph, standing upon the deck of her own vessel, the chief standing upon the deck of his, held the flags so they touched. With great parade and much formality the priest pronounced them man and wife, and united the flags of Zanzee and Ponteia together. The service was grand. Every one was happy, knowing that the strife that had so long existed between Ponteia and Zanzee was over.

The great feast was prepared; criers all along the line invited every one to join in the banquet. Soon an immense concourse of people were upon the island, arranging themselves as best they could along these endless tables. The king, the nymph, the chief and the nobility from other nations mixed promiscuously with the artisan, the laborer, the shop-girl and all others who had lent their presence to this great occasion. Distinction and rank were laid aside; there were no seats of honor; there was no parade; all helped themselves to what food

they would, of which there was a great abundance. They talked; they laughed; they made merry; they praised the wisdom of Aronda; they prophesied a good government, peaceful reign and a happy uniting of classes.

Bands of all nations played their national airs; speeches were made; songs were sung; poems were read, and everything was done that would add enjoyment to the occasion. When they had had their fill they wandered about; the old enjoying themselves in conversation, the young dancing, rowing boats, or seeking whatever diversion they might care to engage in, as it had been given out that the final race would not be given until after dark. Aronda had secretly arranged with the king of Novae to surprise the people with the grandest display of fireworks ever known on Mars. The two vessels that the people supposed were to make the final race were loaded heavily with fireworks.

As night came on, they came abreast the judges' stand. When the judges gave orders to start, every one expected the vessels to bear away with the greatest speed. All were surprised, for out shot from the top of the crafts the most magnificent display that the people had ever beheld. As the boats moved slowly around their course, one display followed another for hours.

The trumpet sounded another wedding. The people were again taken by surprise. Out stepped

upon the deck of one of these vessels the wizard of Zanzee, upon the deck of the other appeared the witch of the Waste. The people recognized her in a moment; a deafening shout went up, saying, "All hail! Long live the witch of the Waste!" She was dressed in black velvet bespangled with stars of silver and gold. Upon her head she wore a sort of crown, her long black hair hanging loose down her back. She had a queenly figure, and in this peculiar but elegant robe she appeared a great beauty. The wizard was also arrayed in great splendor, he, too, wearing a black robe fringed with gold.

During this time the fireworks were shooting forth matchless displays. Again the bugle sounded; a priest appeared on deck announcing that he would marry the witch of the Waste to the wizard of Zanzee. As he raised his hand the fireworks again shot forth a flame of fire. Fire seemed to rain on every side. While the wedding pair were in this blaze, he pronounced them man and wife.

Shout upon shout followed; the climax had been reached; the carnival had been a success. All were pleased; all were happy; all were contented.

Again another magnificent display went up, in which was read, "Long live Aronda!" Another followed, "Long live the noble chief!" Another followed, "Long live the nymph of Loroon!" Then, apparently the grandest display of all went

up, reading, "Long live the witch of the Waste!" Again, a still grander display, if possible, went up, saying, "Happiness, plenty, and contentment to the working people of Ponteia!" The exhibition was over. All sought their homes, feeling that they had been well repaid. Nothing could have been grander.

My work was done on Mars. I longed again to be in our beautiful Surey I had seen consummated, and felt that I lent a hand in bringing about, a good and happy union. I believed that I had seen placed upon the throne of Ponteia a true and honest man. I had seen the nymph of Loroon, who was purity itself, married to one of the greatest and best of men. I had seen the witch of the Waste and the wizard of the mountains united in holy wedlock; each had been a blessing to mankind.

CHAPTER XVI.

I cannot say that I was homesick for Surey or to see Surene; for I am happy wherever I am or whatever my surroundings may be; yet I did have a longing to see Surene and again mix with the blessed of Surey. I was now much further from the earth than when I first came here; the angel had left me and I must return alone; yet as I traveled with the speed of thought and without interruption through eternal space, I knew that distance was of little consideration. Feeling that any further communication with those whom I had tried to protect would serve little purpose, I started on my homeward flight, happy in the assurance that I had done my duty and would soon see Surene. As nothing occurred to me in my journey that would interest you, my dear hunter, I will make no mention of it.

I concluded to return to Surey, and if I did not find Surene there, would seek her on the earth's surface. When leaving my home on the inside of the earth and passing out at the north pole to the surface, I had noticed a country or valley of large

extent, probably about the area of Virginia, around and near the north pole. The way to the inside of the earth was through a rocky peak that rose above this valley about fifty thousand feet, which opened at the top, leaving an unobstructed passage to the earth's center, or land of the blessed. Around this valley, apparently in a circle, was a range of mountains in altitude about forty thousand feet, covered with snow and ice. In returning as I descended into the plains below I found it warm, tropical and fertile. It was inhabited much as other parts of the earth's surface—the people, animals, much of the vegetation, manner of life, form of government, modes of commerce, forms of worship, and all other conditions were much the same as I had known them in old Virginia.

They seemed to have heard nothing of any other part of the earth's surface, as no one had ever ascended to the top of the mountains surrounding them, notwithstanding many attempts had been made to do so, but in all cases these daring adventurers had either frozen or died from privation. Probably there was more human and animal life in this favored spot than on any other part of the earth of the same area. At the time I was there it was becoming a matter of large moment among the thoughtful how it would be possible for them to subsist many years longer at the rate of

human propagation. During the sunlit season, or the six months of day, large amounts of grain, vegetables and all other products of the soil were raised and stored away pending the dark or winter season. I do not know that I speak correctly of the dark season, for I learned that the reflection of light from some unknown source to the people of this valley, upon the ice and snow along the mountains, produced a light almost equal to the sun. Yet it needed the warmth and light of the sun to mature vegetation; hence all their subsistence, or at least the greater part of it, was produced during their light or summer season.

The polar bear and some of the birds of arctic plumage had been seen and killed by the hardy hunters upon the mountain side; the people did not think that they inhabited any other country, but thought them denizens of the snow peaks and defiles of the mountains.

As I could understand it, it was not the intention of the Almighty that these people should have any communication with the outside world; so He had placed a barrier between them and the other parts of the earth that no man could pass. He had placed in the center of this valley a mountain peak or elevation through which was a passage from heaven to hell, or from the outside to the inside of the earth. If the recording angel has kept record of these people in his book of fate it will show.

The length of human life, the troubles and perplexities there are as on other parts of the earth.

These people have their traditions, their records of the past, their prophecies of the future, their wise men, their teachers, their priests, their philosophers, their wizards and those that deal in knowledge of the future the same as other mortals of the earth's surface.

After remaining with them for some time, and feeling that to stay longer would be of little purpose to them to my mission in the universe, or to myself, I betook again to flight and descended into the beautiful Surey.

I was welcomed with every demonstration of joy. They gathered about me to learn of my doings; they would have me relate in detail what had happened on Mars; where I had left Surene, and her work on earth. They were pleased to know that virtue had been rewarded and wickedness punished; but like me, they knew full well that human life could not be happy, it mattered not what were the surroundings. To please them I related in detail everything that had occurred. Many others had been away doing duty on earth while I was gone; and they in turn had their stories to tell.

Surene was not there; and as I gazed after her in my mind's eye, I could see her with Dell, in Virginia. I had a longing to see her, but knowing that she was happy and I the same, I concluded to

remain for a time in Surey. All was as beautiful as when I left. Assuming my material form, I took possession of our lovely home. I threw myself down upon Surene's silken couch, and reviewed what I passed through.

As I compared the condition of the people on Mars, on the earth and in the isolated valley of which I have spoken, I could see little difference among them. Reviewing the life of the poor, the down-trodden and the oppressed, with the rich, powerful and influential, the governing classes and the governed classes, the master and the slave, the weak and the strong, the old and the young, the wise and the foolish, I could see little difference their condition as to happiness.

What one appeared to gain in one direction, he lost in another. If one had much wealth, he had much care, he knew that the others hated him for his success; he knew that they bowed to him for his wealth and would wring it from him if they could; he knew that they gloried in his misfortunes and earnestly prayed for his downfall, and would gladly hail the day that he should be wrecked upon the shore of ruin.

The poor man in turn suffered from want; but he fully appreciated what he had. Though his table was not covered with the choicest viands and his food was simple; yet it was better for his physical being, and his enjoyment of it was in-

tense. He knew that no man hated him for his wealth; he knew that none were seeking his downfall; he knew that his children would not see him die that they might possess his fortune; he knew that he was safe from the robber; he knew that he had no station in society to maintain and was not annoyed by the false glitter of fashion. When his day's work was done, he laid aside the cares of life, if his larder was temporally provided. He had less sickness, less pain, and less of the ills of life, there were fewer obstructions to bar him from his heavenly home; he had fewer sins upon his soul, fewer moral deformities, and fewer responsibilities to his Maker.

The governing classes were continually chafing over the possibilities of their being deposed; they watched the masses eagerly, trying to gleam from them their feelings; they suffered continually with the dread that they might lose their fortunes, their position and possibly their heads. They strained every nerve to maintain their social caste, they suffered with intense jealousy, while ruling they were continually bowing; at the same time trying to maintain their dignity, yet suing and lording by turns. The master had his cares; he drove the slave who appeared to follow yet really led. The wise knew much, and in proportion were their responsibilities. The simple knew little, so their cares were less.

After I had reviewed the situation and seen men in all the different phases of life, I found there was little to choose. I could see the race for wealth was an idle dream; the reward did not pay for the effort, which soon, yes, very soon, must be followed by death. I realized that all earthly hope, expectation and coming happiness is a delusion, and that the man that died first was the first to gain real happiness.

Everything was now arranged in Surey for another excursion to the falls of light. Of course I expected to join with the rest in this flight through the air.

All that cared to go had announced their intentions, so that plenty of transportation had been provided. Many angels from the celestial abode were now in Surey who expected to join us in the excursion; among those especially blessed were the Toltec, Luzel, Jack, Lenore, and her mother. When everything was ready, we rose gracefully from the ground, and sped away, passing over the sea of Turmoil and over the great plain or the Valley of Resurrection. As we landed near the falls, I gazed up the great archway from out of which flowed the grand old river that had brought Surene and me from a land of bondage into a life of continual joy and happiness. Kneeling upon the open plain, I lifted my heart in prayer and gratitude to the Great Hand that had guided our craft down this lonely but glorious old river.

The scenes enacted before these wonderful falls were so much like those I have before described that it would be idle for me to repeat them. Many of us wandered down the river, straying here and there, communing together as only the purified can; when by chance we came upon the strange wanderer who had told Surene and me of his past history, and how all knowledge might be obtained by bathing in the river of Light. Jack and Lenore were with us. On seeing her father she sprang quickly forward to meet him.

"Father," she cried, "May God in his wisdom be merciful to you. Let me beseech you to enter the great abyss of torment, be purified and enter the blessed abode of Surey and be happy forever."

There was no attempt to embrace; there was no affection shown such as would be expected between father and daughter; because she was pure and could not be contaminated by the touch of impurity. The wanderer recognized this, and stood gazing at her with love and admiration.

While they were conversing together, his wife approached, "Jasper, she said, "My love for you has never changed, and had you taken my advice when last we met, you would now be among the blessed; you would be purified from your sins; the torment would have been over and you would long ago have been living in contentment, peace and

purity among these happy people. Let me advise you again to accept the will of God, enter the torments of hell; be purified; then enter Surey and be forever happy."

The wanderer could not speak, for a long time he gazed at Lenore and his wife in silence. Finally he said, "I am not happy here yet I glory in the thought that you and Lenore are among the chosen and the blessed of the blessed. I will try to fortify myself to accept your advice, and will plunge into the gulf of Turmoil, so let me away that I may act before my courage fails me."

Turning away with a prayer upon his lips, he strode towards the sea of the damned. Lenore and her mother breathed a petition for his redemption, then joined with the others in roaming over the plains and admiring the grandeur of the falls. Many bathed in the river of Light that they might look into the future of earth and know the doings of men and their final estate. Again we took to our air-ships, speeding away to visit the various parts of Surey and hold intercourse with the people.

After a flight of probably two thousand miles, we settled down in a valley equal in beauty to our own. They were holding services in the temples, plays in the theaters, there were songs in the glee halls, and dances in the pavilions. Passing to and fro among these places were these

blessed and pure people. We eagerly joined them, and all were happy alike. They were pleased at our coming, and we felt as much at home there as in our own beautiful village. After remaining with them for a season, we again took to our airships and visited various villages, re-enacting again the same scene, the same round of enjoyments and pleasures and in time returning to our villages to be met by smiling and happy faces free from sin and earthly contamination.

My desire to see Surene grew upon me more and more, until I finally determined to seek her out. Bidding all a temporary good-bye, I again took to flight, passing out onto the earth's surface, intending to visit the seat of the American Rebellion, knowing that I would find Surene there. As I soared away over the seas, my ears caught the sound of music. Gazing in the direction from which it came, I saw a small island. There were no inhabitants upon the island, but sitting upon rocks near the water's edge were a bevy of beautiful beings, twelve in number; and as I viewed them from where I was, I thought I had never seen upon the outside of the earth a group so lovely. They were only partially clad, and their flesh was of a soft pinkish white, enlivened and rendered more brilliant by reflections of bluish grey, making it pearly and exceedingly transparent.

The first three had long flowing hair of golden

yellow, eyes of greyish blue and of limpid sweetness, teeth pearly white, with lips red and cherry like. All their features were perfectly formed, and all were equally beautiful, though they were of different types. Three had black raven hair, dark-brown eyes and dark eyelashes, but their lips and the soft tints of their flesh were like those of the blondes. The other six were of no distinct type, but appeared rather a compromise between the blondes and brunettes.

As I drew near, they were all singing in concert and their music was enchanting. I can not say, that it was as sweet and pure as that of Surrey, yet it carried with it something bewitching and enticing. I settled down near them, as I was curious to know of their doings.

When they had ceased singing, one of the blondes rose, saying, "Sisters, you know why we have convened here. Three of us are from the North Sea, three from the South Sea, three from the Mediterranean Sea, and three from the wild waters of the western seas. The charges preferred by Orpheus against Sister Circe are that she allowed sailors to pass her domain without charming them into the sea, that she might embellish her coral palace with their bones after they had died from joy, at hearing her songs. I appoint ten of you to sit upon these rocks, which were once sirens like ourselves; and if she does

not prove her songs to be enchanting, you are to doom her, like many of her sisters before, to be turned into stone. I will act for Orpheus; she can defend herself! do thou, Cicia, lead the council."

They took their seats as directed, and the one said to be wanting in charms stood before them. She that had preferred the charges in the name of Orpheus rose, saying, "Know thou, Sister Circe that Orpheus has found thy charms wanting and thy songs without purpose, what sayest thou in self-defense?"

Up to this time the erring sister, or the one to be tried, had not spoken, now she said, "Sister sirens, hear me. - If I do not prove to each in thy wisdom that my charms are equal to the best, then condemn me to sit upon this lone island for countless ages, an immovable rock, without hope or charm. The charges that Orpheus make against me are false. My charms have not been wanting, and he knows it well. Why should he leave his home on the sunny shores of Italy and visit me in my wild western waters, if I had less charms than my sisters who sit in council?" And hear me further; he did come wooing and told me that each of you was hideous to behold. He said that your songs were naught and had no charm, and he would not tune his lyre in unison with you; that you had each besought him for his favor, but he

laughed that you should think to charm one so great as he. He says the sirens of the North Sea are wide of face, too light of hair, and too coarse in song. He said that you of the South Sea had hair without luster, teeth that were black, and none but a mortal could love you. He said you of Mediterranean had been jilted by all the gods of the sea, and were now looking for mortals to woo you. I knew his speech was false; I knew he had wooed you all in turn; I knew that every sister of the North Sea, every sister of the South Sea, every sister of the Mediterranean Sea, and my two companions of the wild western seas had each in turn jilted him. He came to me with falsehood on his lips, malice in his heart, and hatred for you all, because you had refused him; and he asked me to be his love. My speech is done."

All in the council rose to their feet, their eyes flashing with indignation; all cried as with one voice, "Sister Circe, you are free; and woe be to Orpheus if he again visits our domains."

Then Circe turns to the one who had preferred the charges for Orpheus, saying, "I invite thee and my other sister sirens here to visit my palace home; we'll count the bones of sailors I have charmed, and if they do not prove as many as the best can show, I will ask no mercy at thy hands."

Each pressed forward and embraced Sister

Circe in turn, saying, "Thy charms are great; thy speech is noble; visit our homes and we will make it merry for thee while thou stayest. Let us away. duty awaits us." Each sprang into the sea and disappeared.

Gazing after them, I wondered much at these strange beings, who in the watery deep appeared to have a world unto themselves. The works of Nature are greater than human mind can conceive. The sirens were alike denizens of the sea and land; They spoke of their palace home, their wooing, their want of charms, their love, their hatred, their jealousy, their beauty, and all other attributes which their sisters of the land held in common with them. Knowing that I could see no more of these strange beings, I rose and soared away in search of Serene.

As I scanned the surface of the earth, I saw Surene near Richmond, Virginia. A great battle had been fought, and the confederates, or the people who rebelled against the United States Government, had been defeated. There had been great carnage, and the hospitals were full of the wounded, the sick, the dead and the dying. The dejected, the worn, the defenders of the hopeless cause, the victor, the freed slave, the master, and all and everything attendant upon a great battle and the defeat of an army were there in wild confusion. Lee had surrendered his hosts to a su

perior force, although his warriors were brave and had been great in battle, yet their cause was unjust, and their desire to hold men in bondage had been frowned upon by the powers that govern the "affairs of men."

Seeking out Surene, I found her hovering about Dell as a protector and guide in her noble work of relieving sufferers. Dell and her mother were ministering to victor and vanquished alike. After they had moved to Ohio they joined the army and devoted their lives to the service of the government. Dell's life during the war had been adventurous and the scenes in which she had played a part had been daring and thrilling. Later on I will tell you of the part she played in this great tragedy and the good she had rendered to the cause of right. Her mother was matron of an army corps hospital. Both had rendered good service to their country and endeared themselves to thousands of sick and wounded to whom they had ministered.

But now the war was over; the South was impoverished, robbed of her substance, and was suffering all manner of misfortunes attendant upon being the seat of war. Lee had issued an order disbanding his followers, saying, "Return to your home, as best you can, and try to mend your wasted fortunes. As our cause is lost, it would be murder to continue further with the great odds there are against us.

General Grant, commanding the United States forces, had ordered that the sick and wounded that could be moved, be sent to the general hospitals, and transportation home as far as possible be furnished each army alike.

As Dell and her mother's work was done, they determined to go back to Ohio, gather together their belongings and return to Virginia.

The Union and Confederate soldiers were alike anxious to return to their homes. The people of country, villages and cities were gladly receiving them back. Those of the Union returned amid pomp, show, waving of banners and beating of drums. Bands played, speeches were made, songs were sung, banquets were given, churches had especial services, and everything was done to welcome them home with joy and gladness. But alas! how different the return of the defeated! They had failed to accomplish their purpose; they had lost their all; poverty, distress and misery were on every side. The country was disjointed and out of order. The slaves were freed, and there was no one to till the soil. Their horses, their cattle, their sheep, their hogs, their corn, their cotton, their sugar and everything else that goes to enrich and make a people comfortable and happy were gone. The ravage of war, that "grim-faced monster," had swallowed up or destroyed everything that would give substance and nourishment to a people.

Along the roadside, in the fields, on the trains, in the cities and everywhere were the empty sleeves, the crutch supplying the place of a missing leg, the ugly scars, the rheumatic, the broken in health, and the dependent. All were poor; all needy; yet none were able to help

Despair was written upon every face, and yet "hope the charmer" whispered in their ears, "The cloud is passing; the sun in all its splendor will again burst forth upon you. Do not despair; be up and doing.

Dell and her mother were again in their Virginian home. Their slaves had not left, but remained upon the plantation to welcome them back, and were willing to give a helping hand to their old mistresses to put the place in order, and if possible bring back peace and plenty as before.

Hope began to revive; industry was slowly taking the place of idleness, and the lover was seeking out his betrothed who had long waited his return; but many, yes, many a poor girl was mourning for one who would never come back.

It was Sunday morning. Surene and I were again at the home of the widow as John dejectedly entered the gate, not knowing how he, with his one arm, would be received. Dell was there to meet him with a smile and a cordial welcome. She took him by the hand and led him into the house, where he was met by her mother, who approached with

extended hands, saying, "John, you are welcome. I know why you are here; you would ask for the hand of Dell. Although you and she have differed much in regard to the war, yet she has ever been true to you, and her love has never changed. Take her with the blessings of her mother, and, I may say, of her father, who is now among the blessed, and may God in His wisdom guide you each aright. As it is near the hour of church, I will walk on; you and she can follow as you will."

Passing out into the road the widow fell in with the neighbors who were on their way to the country church. Nearly every one was on foot, as horses were too scarce to use for anything but the field.

A more beautiful day had never been known, even in the lovely valley of Virginia. Nature was in her happiest mood, radiant with sunshine and alternate shade; the birds were in their brightest plumage and were singing their cheeriest songs; the breezes were playing their softest melodies and whispering to the passer-by. "Why be sad? Now is the time to be happy." The flowers were fresh in color and yielding their sweetest perfumes; the bees were humming their low accompaniment to the dreamy morning as they gathered the honey from the holiday robes of the meadows, sparkling in the sunlight were the shifting leaves of graceful trees swaying in unison to the babbling brook

which flowed beneath the bridge over which we passed to the church.

In advance of the others the good old minister silently and thoughtfully led the way; then followed the widow with some of her old and well-tried friends; then came two young men with some laughing girls who could not be sad; next were an old pair leaning upon their staffs whose only son had fallen in the conflict, leaving them sadly alone; and well in the rear followed Dell, leaning upon the one arm of John, who had left his other upon the battlefield of the Wilderness.

Gathering together in the church the old minister offered up a fervent pray of thankfulness that the war was over, and for the preservation of the lives of those who had escaped the terrible slaughter. All joined in the hymn that followed. Never before had Dell sang so sweetly. Louder and louder they sang, till at last I whispered to Surene, "How fervent these people are!" Yet louder and louder still the song went up.

I awoke.

Now I know with Byron that "Life is twofold; sleep hath its own world," which is a boundary between this life and the life to come.

My dream is done. Let me away to my hunter's home and tell my frightened wife I slept upon the mountain-side, and when I awoke the angel of light was unfolding her whitened robes and laughing day lighting his torches upon the mountain peaks.

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