

# Through the Invisible

A LOVE STORY

BY PAUL TYNER

With Illustrations

BY ELLA F. PELL



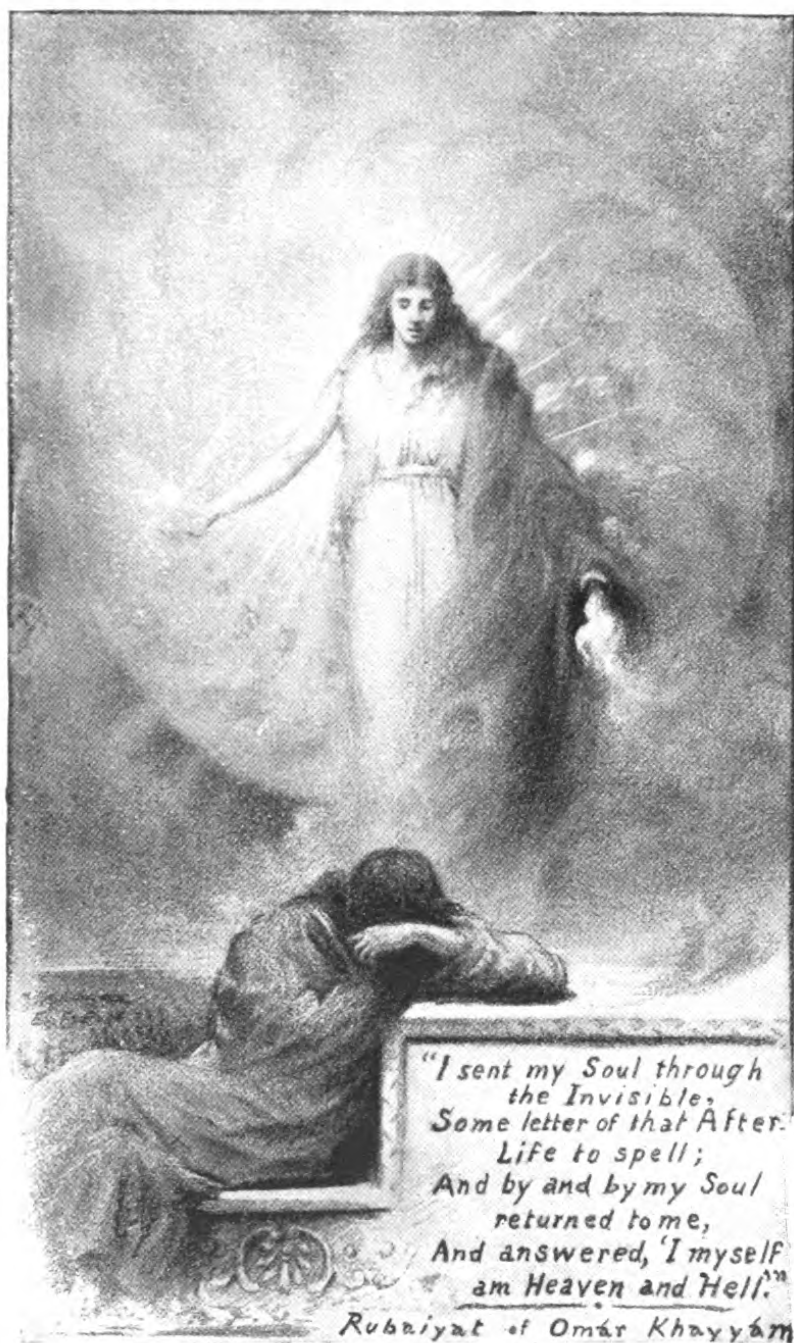
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"I sent my Soul through  
the Invisible,  
Some letter of that After-  
Life to spell;  
And by and by my Soul  
returned to me,  
And answered, 'I myself  
am Heaven and Hell.'"

*Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

TO  
HELEN CAMPBELL,  
*Spiritual Mother Guide Counselor and Friend*  
THIS LITTLE STORY  
IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED IN REMEMBRANCE  
*Of our Happy June Days together*  
ON THE MOUNTAIN  
*When the Tale was written*





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*First Chapter.*

LOOKING back upon  
that strange ex-  
perience, perience,  
seems so which now  
distant, I  
have often tried to fathom its  
depth of meaning. It seems mar-  
velous that so slight a thing  
as the scent of a flower should  
have held for me the power  
of life or death, the key to  
the puzzle of existence—to that  
mystery of life which baffles the  
reasoning and research of the  
universities. To be sure, I had

grown weary of interrogating the sphinx, and for several years had abandoned all striving toward comprehending what seemed to be incomprehensible, all struggle to compass an understanding of that *something* beyond the veil of which infrequent and unsatisfactory flashes had come to my soul at times, vaguely suggesting that for me, as for the myriads of stars that gemmed the sky, the sleeping and waking of a single season was not all of life. Then, too, I was young, rich, well-favored by nature, and endowed with a sensuousness which made me capable of enjoying to the full whatever pleasures the world had to offer. To waste my youth further in vain aspirations or in

dreary study of books would be folly.

“ Before the phantom of false morning died,  
Methought a voice within the tavern cried :  
    ‘ When all the temple is prepared within,  
Why nods the drowsy worshiper outside?’ ”

“ To-morrow ? Why, to-morrow I may be  
Myself with yesterday’s seven thousand  
years.”

How the glad yet despairing philosophy of the Persian poet appealed to me ! My blood tingled with joyous anticipation of the pleasures I should taste. To be sure, we moderns make our “ yesterday ” much older than that of Omar Khayyám ; but our to-morrow is not more certain, and it behooved me to make the most of to-day. If this life were all, I should at least enjoy it to the full.

In this mood I went from Oxford up to London, and soon threw myself with zest into the gayeties of fashionable life in the metropolis. After London, there was a year of lazy travel in the East ; then Paris, where pleasure danced to a faster measure. Surely, now I lived in the present, steeped myself in the enjoyment of the hour, reveled in every fashionable frivolity, feasted amid flowers, and laughed at the world—the knavish, foolish, false, hypocritical world, with its sham sentiment and sham morals, sham art and sham literature. Perhaps I had felt, now and then, that there was a woeful lack of completeness in this life of mine. I had found that pleasure did not

always mean happiness. Then I tried to console myself with the thought that pleasure was the only real thing—happiness but a delusion, with which it were well enough for fools to flatter themselves, like children blowing bubbles.

For me, there was the excitement of the gaming table and the race course, the intoxication of wine, the nervous exhilaration of the opera and the theater, the distractions of dilettanteism, the abandonment to the butterfly fascination of women who had beauty with brains, or beauty without brains; women with hearts and women without hearts. The fascination was all very sweet while it lasted. I even imagined

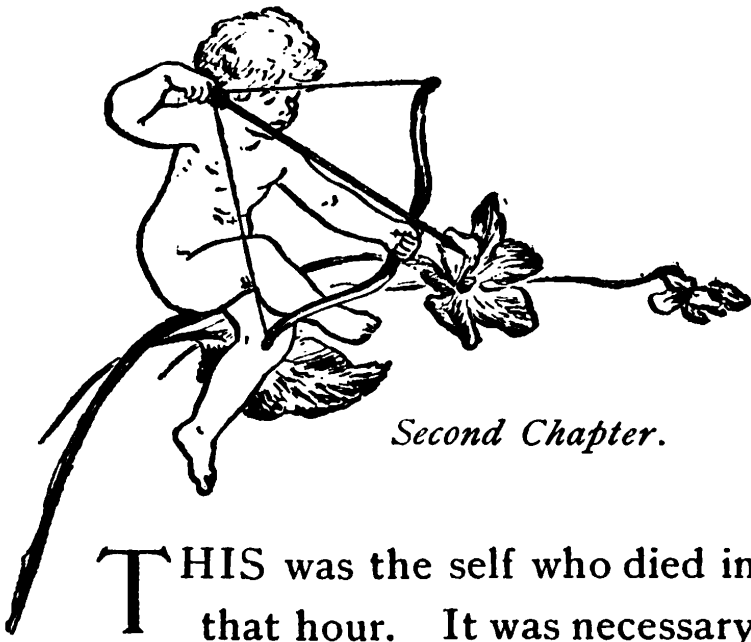


once or twice, if not oftener, that it was love. But if it was, I said to myself, then love was not the eternal, all-absorbing, all-compelling emotion about which the poets rave. Yet, I occasionally fancied that the poets knew something that had not yet come to me, and I did not entirely enjoy the feeling of contemptuous superiority to their "foolishness" that had come to possess me. And always, after the inevitable awakening from what had been a delicious dream, the memory of its sweetness left me more unsatisfied, and more cynical, than before.

From bitterness I had been saved by a fortunate lack of that egotism which turns disappoint-

ment into sorrow and remembrance into "sorrow's crown of sorrow." Yet life was without savor. Nothing interested me particularly, and I lived without hope or ambition for anything better than the amiably tolerated boredom of an aimless existence.





*Second Chapter.*

**T**HIS was the self who died in that hour. It was necessary surely that I should be born again—that I should pass through death to be resurrected to the fuller life in which that old existence seems like a living death, a hastening to decay—heartless, spiritless, soulless.

The first time I saw her I was ashamed of myself. In the light that shone from her great, lustrous brown eyes, I got the first glimpse of myself as I really was,

and, for the first time, wished that I was other than my life and thought proclaimed me. She was driving in the Bois with Lady Warden, an old friend of my mother's and of mine. I had been out for an hour's canter in the effort to shake off the moodiness and ennui that had oppressed me for several days. As I came up to them, a momentary blockade halted the long line of carriages and afforded opportunity for an introduction to my old friend's niece and for an invitation to call. Then someone else came up for a hasty exchange of conventionalities, the vehicles were suddenly once more in motion, and we separated.

An ordinary incident enough, and ordinarily soon forgotten.

As I rode on listlessly, I asked myself why I should be so pre-occupied ; why I had to rouse myself to acknowledge the greetings of the two or three fashionable acquaintances I met ; and why, the impression she had made growing every instant, the impulse should have come upon me to turn out of the procession of Vanity Fair and seek the open country beyond the Bois. When at last I gained the road to St. Cloud and its comparative freedom, I tried to laugh at myself for being so strangely disturbed by the sight of this American girl. It was the freshness of her transatlantic frankness and naturalness, her evidently healthy enjoyment of life, her undisguised interest in



"HER EYES LOOKED INTO MINE."



new scenes and new people, the honesty of her glance and the genuineness of her tones that contrasted so markedly with the affectation and weariness of most of the women I knew. These were the reasons, I argued with myself, that compelled me to continue thinking of her.

No, no! It was something much more than all this. Something in those great dark eyes, in the broad white brow, and in the mass of wavy dark hair above it; something in the delicately molded features and in the marvelous fineness of texture and transparency of tint in her complexion; something in the graceful poise of her well-shaped head, that flashed upon me like the materialization



of an almost forgotten dream—like the realization of an early ideal which had long been consigned, with other youthful illusions, to the realms of unreality.

Now I *knew* that virtue outlasted childhood. I knew that it was the innocence of knowledge, not of ignorance, that looked from the depths of her eyes; that purity of soul born of high and holy thought was written on the pensive forehead; that a heart filled with deepest sympathy for all sorrow and suffering spoke in the soft, clear accents of her voice and in the tremulous relaxation and contraction of her mouth. The touch of her hand was eloquent of readiness to help, to comfort, to cheer. And, recollecting, I im-

pulsively stopped my horse under the sympathetic shade of a great oak and pressed my lips against the fingers that hers had touched. A moment afterward I tried to laugh at myself. The idea of cynical I indulging in sentiment! Why, it was positively amusing. Worse than that, it was annoying. With a sharp touch of the whip, I urged my animal into a gallop. The rapid motion was a relief to me. Faster and faster I rode. Every instant I seemed to realize more vividly what she was—and what I was. And the realization humiliated me. I wanted to get away from the selfish personality she had revealed to me. Discontent, such as I had never before known, raged in my heart. When,

at last, I turned my wearied steed homeward, the battle was still raging. I told myself I should not see her again. I would try to banish the memory of her eyes. I had no right to love her ; no right to hope that she would ever love so worthless a being as I. Some pretext of a sudden summons home would serve to avoid the call on Lady Warden that politeness demanded. I should return to England next day. And in England I should seek some career of usefulness, seek to justify my existence, strive to appease my newly aroused conscience.

I did not go away next day. Instead, I went for a long walk, avoiding the street in which I knew Agnes Burroughs lived. In-



"I RODE SWIFTLY."



voluntarily I found myself nearing a part of the promenade overlooking the place where we had met in the Bois. How stupid of me to stand there idly watching the carriages as if I half expected, and more than half hoped, to meet her again! Returning, I took, without consciously designing to do so, the way that led past Lady Warden's hotel. It was a shorter route, and, as it was growing late, I told myself, there was need that I should hasten to my rooms to dress for dinner. But I could not help stopping a moment on the opposite side of the street and gazing up at the windows, wondering from which she might look out. I would have given very

much for another glimpse of her face. Yet I dared not risk observation by lingering.

All through dinner that evening I was distracted. Agnes Burroughs' voice was constantly in my ears, her face before my eyes. The people about me seemed inane and stupid, and I must have appeared more than stupid to my friends. I made a headache the pretext for an early departure, and was relieved to gain the freedom of the open air.

The night was a glorious one, and I walked several hours till I was soothed and charmed by its beauty. Again and again I passed by the house in which she dwelt. And, ever as I passed, it seemed that the light which

flowed to me from her window was filled with the glory of her presence. Walking on and on, under the midnight sky, my spirit seemed to expand in the illumination and warmth of that light, until it stretched out its arms to the stars and enfolded the universe in its embrace. Creation widened in my view. Never before had my pulses thrilled so with the deep joy of breathing and being. Lost in admiration at the splendor and immensity which night made visible, for the first time I realized that I was actually a part of—one with—all the beauty and grandeur of earth and air, of moon and stars and sky, of countless worlds revolving in illimitable space and pervaded in every



particle by a subtle, living intelligent something—ether, force, matter, spirit, God, no matter what it was called—which made me one with creation and creation one with me.

Ah, it was a beautiful world! I thought. Since she was in it, how could it be otherwise? And a sense of deep happiness stirred me because I breathed the same air she breathed; because the same light, whether of the sun or of the stars, or even of the lamp in her chamber, had touched her eyes and mine. I was happy to be even the smallest and most distant atom in a universe which she glorified. To realize the splendid fact that my thought made me one with all my thought could

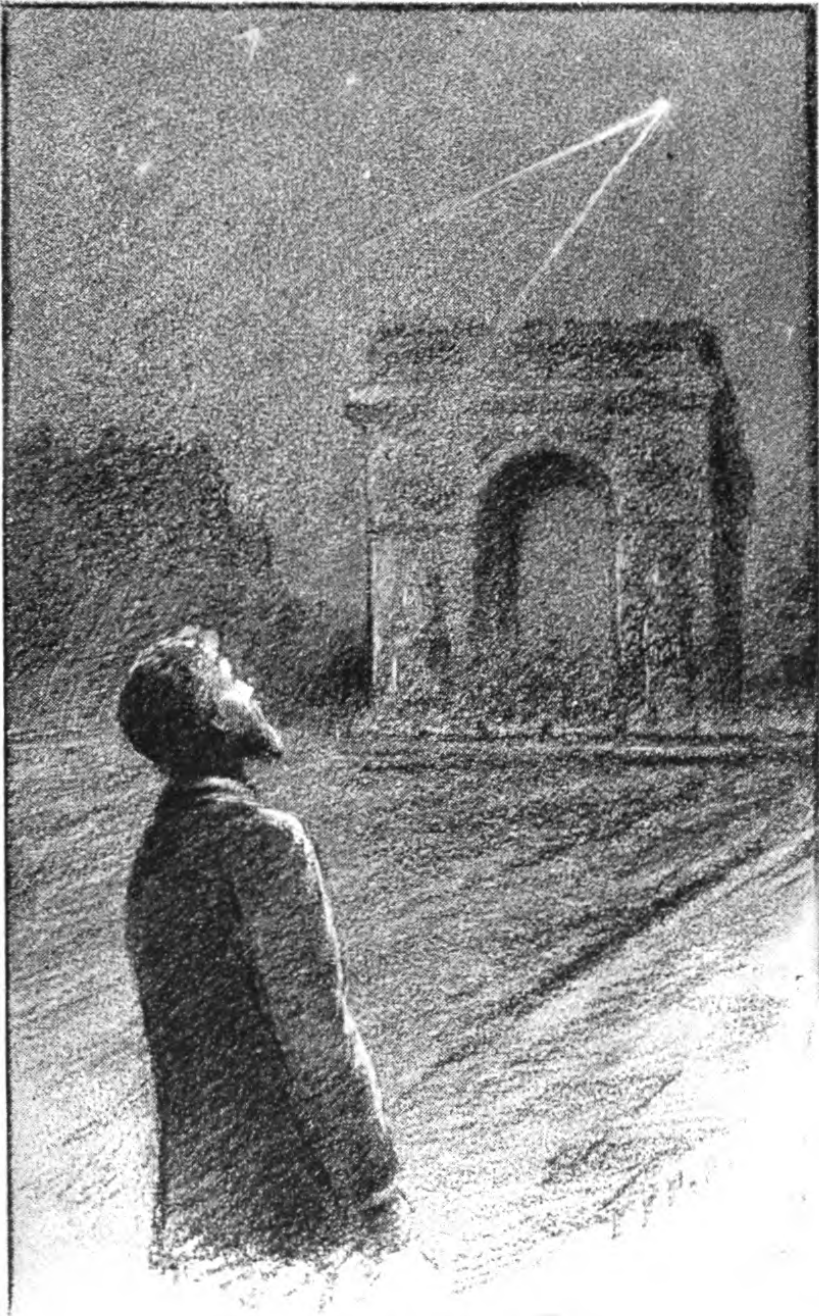
comprehend—one with all that is, or was, or ever will be, and so one with her—this was rapture.

Coming to the open space before the Arc de Triomphe, I stopped and turned my gaze on a star that shone brilliantly above it. As I looked, two long lines of silvery light seemed to dart out from the star, forming a triangle whose lines joined in it. One line seemed to come directly to me, while the other line ran in the direction of the house where dwelt the woman I loved.

Yes, I loved her! There was no further struggle to deceive myself. It was a truth that I recognized as absolutely as that of my own existence—a truth nothing could alter or destroy.

When I saw, or fancied I saw, the silver light lines that seemed directly to unite us, I wondered if at that instant she too had not looked at the same star from her window and given to me a thought which the sympathetic star had materialized for my perception. But this hope I strove resolutely to put from me when I was once more alone in my rooms, surrounded by the familiar reminders of a life of worse than frivolity; of a self of which I had begun to be ashamed at the instant Agnes Burroughs' eyes had looked into mine, and which self I already began to despise.

No! I had no right to love her—no man could be more un-



"TWO LINES OF LIGHT."

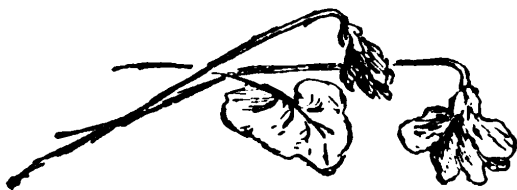


worthy of her than I was. I could not help loving her, and I should find comfort in the hope that my love would inspire me to atone, in some measure, for the dreary, reckless waste I had made of life; the mockery of love and the murder of faith; so that, perhaps, in some other existence, in some new life on some further planet, I could take her by the hand and ask her to accept a heart not wholly unworthy of her and which love for her should have made whole and pure and great. Then the fascinating theory of re-incarnation came into my mind. To be born again! To reap the results of past experience in a re-embodiment; to be granted another op-

portunity for the development of such a man as Agnes could love, by devotion to the highest and best ideals! What effort in behalf of human brotherhood, human progress, and human happiness in the years that remained to me would be too great a price, if it should earn for me the right to such noble re-birth, to such outworking of the old karma of my wasted youth, and such a weaving in new and brighter colors of the new karma that should shape the new life? Much as I desired her love, I desired more to deserve that love.

It was curious how the very thought of re-incarnation was already transforming the impossible into the possible,—even into the

absolutely certain. Before the enlarging realization of these possibilities, the mountains of doubt that had interposed apparently unsurmountable barriers between my love and me, were now fading like cloud-wreaths from my path. I fell asleep that night with a sure and quiet sense that time could not separate us—nor life nor death—that past, present, and future were melting into the Eternal Now.







### *Third Chapter.*

DURING the next few days I debated with myself long and earnestly whether or not it would be best to carry out my first intention of returning to England, and thus avoid a second meeting with Agnes. Finally, I could bear the struggle no longer, and I called at Lady Warden's. To my disappointment, Miss Burroughs was not at home; but Lady Warden received me with affectionate cordiality. After several minutes devoted to friendly commonplaces, my old

friend was easily led to talk about her niece.

“A strange girl in some ways is Agnes,” said Lady Warden. “I confess I do not entirely understand her, but I cannot tell you how much I love her. To let you into a little secret, she came to me about a year ago suffering from a great disappointment. The man to whom she had given her heart unreservedly, and in whose professions of love and eternal devotion she trusted implicitly, had most basely and cruelly deserted her. During a whole winter in Washington—she is a daughter of Senator Burroughs, you know—they were almost inseparable. She simply lived and breathed in an atmos-

phere of love for the man, and they looked forward, at least *she* did, to a happy union. One evening he called on her and said he was suddenly summoned to the West on important business, which would keep him for a week. He seemed almost heart-broken over the necessity of being absent from her side even so short a time, and placed a locket containing their portraits about her neck, begging her to wear it always as a visible reminder of his love and constancy. Before the week had passed, she learned that he had been married the day after his arrival in Chicago to a cousin, to whom he had long been secretly engaged. He had the assurance to add insult to injury

by writing her a letter weakly defending his conduct and declaring that he had been compelled to the marriage, much against his inclination, by force of circumstances. Some financial entanglements with his cousin's family left him no alternative but poverty and disgrace, 'which he could not bear to bring upon the one he loved.'

"Poor Agnes was almost killed by the shock. As it was, she hovered between life and death for months. When she recovered sufficiently to travel, her father brought her across the Atlantic, hoping that change of scene would banish her grief and rouse the dear girl out of the torpor which seemed to have seized

upon her. Mrs. Burroughs, who was my younger sister, died when Agnes was a child, and I prevailed upon Senator Burroughs to let his daughter remain with me when he returned to America. Before very long she won my heart by her sweetness and goodness, and she is good enough to say that my sympathy and love have been a great help to her. Certainly no daughter could be more to a mother than she is to me."

"One would hardly suppose Miss Burroughs was suffering from such a disappointment now," I ventured. "Is it because she has learned to look upon her false lover as a coward, deserving only her contempt?"

Does it not seem to you that she should congratulate herself upon her escape from him ? ”

“ Hush ! No word of criticism or blame is ever heard from her lips. As you may imagine, I could not restrain some expression of my indignation at the man’s conduct when I heard the story. But it was soon evident that any reflection upon him pained her to the heart. ‘ He was always very good to me and very gentle,’ she said. ‘ I could not help being terribly pained. I could not help the suffering which his going out of my life caused me ; but that was my selfishness and my wounded vanity. He is not to blame because I could not make him happy.

Why should I grieve, and, far less, why should I censure him because he has found another woman who may be more to him than I? It seemed all very hard at first; but it is right and just, I know.'

"The poor child was fortunate in having a naturally robust constitution, and a season among the flowers in the south of France soon brought back the roses to her cheeks. To be sure, she seems to have lost all relish for fashionable frivolities, and while most punctilious in her regard for even the smallest of the conventional social duties that belong to her position, she contrives to avoid devoting very much of her time to the gayeties of society;

but this is not because life is less a joy to her; on the contrary, I should say it is because life has become more earnest. She takes the world more seriously, but not less joyfully. Yet it seems to be the seriousness of a child. So far from regarding herself as wronged or injured, she only reproaches herself and insists on her own responsibility for her disappointment."

"To which she has become resigned?" I anxiously inquired.

"Resignation is hardly the word. Her philosophy is unusual. She declares that the cruel blow was not one for either protestation or resignation; but one to be recognized and accepted as part of the working



out of absolute justice in the universe. Being just, she argues that it must be right and good, and for the best. She says that it only lies with herself to see and appreciate the good in it all."

"But surely," I exclaimed, "how can a girl of the sweet and gentle nature you tell me is hers, so wrong herself as to make another's unworthiness her own; to believe that she has, by any fault, rightly incurred such punishment?"

"Ah! you should have heard her when I asked that very question. Shall I tell you what she said? Yes, for I want to know how it impresses you. Looking up into my eyes with such a calm, strong depth of assurance

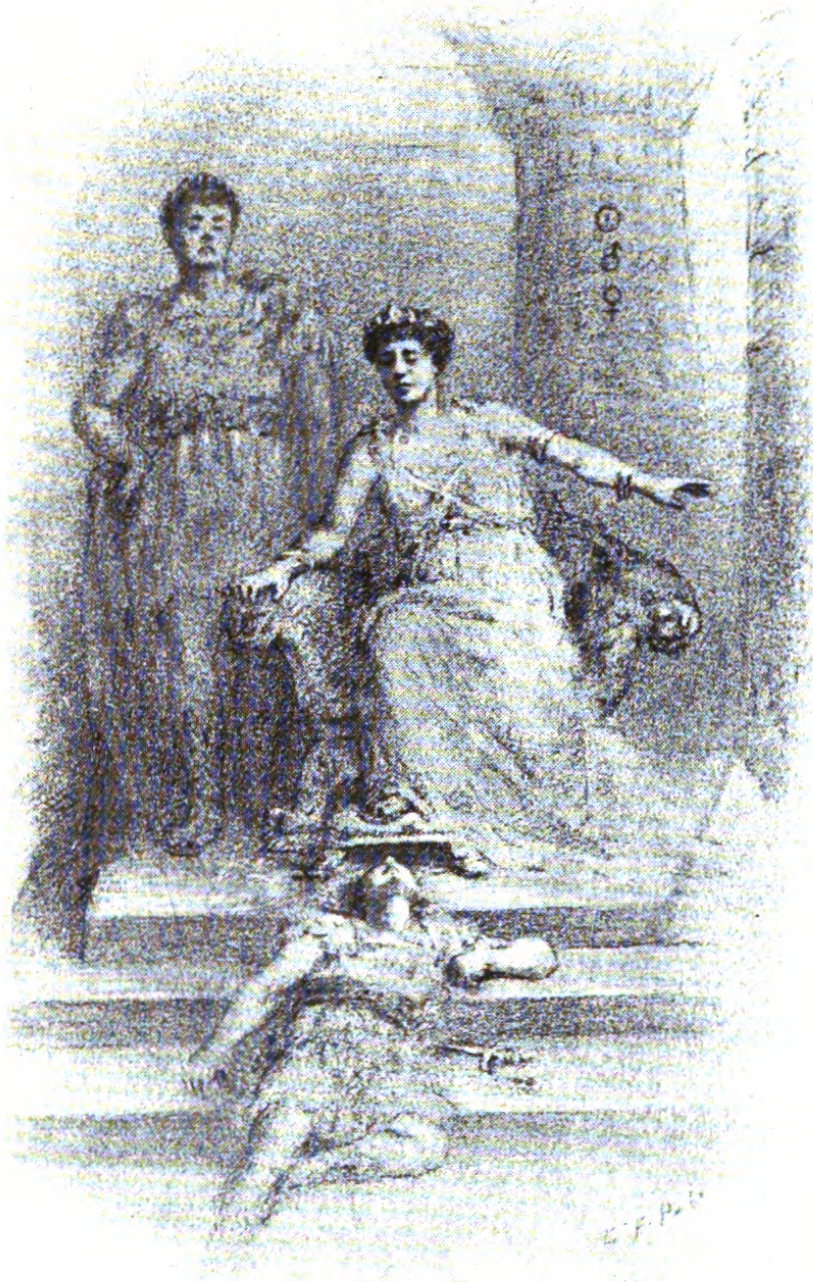
as only such eyes can convey, she said: 'The truth did not come to me all at once, dear aunt. I was very rebellious and bitter at heart in the beginning. It all seemed so cruel, so wrong, to me then. During the long days and nights in which I lay suffering, white, cold, sleepless, and silent, I tried to think of what I had done to merit such chastening, and, recollecting every event in my life, I could not find that I had ever been really cruel or unkind to anyone. I told myself that I had always joyed in loving care and service for those about me; that I had striven at least to make those I loved happy, to relieve the unfortunate, to merit God's

glorious gift of love, that was now denied me. And yet the thought would come that, if all else were lies and illusion, the one certainty of the universe is that God is just. Long hours I puzzled over the problem and prayed for light. At last one night, the answer came: I seemed to see myself in another land and in a long past time, reigning as a queen, blessed with beauty and power for good. But I made playthings of the hearts of men, lured them to madness, despair, and death, and reveled in the cruelty of it all. Insensible to the sufferings of my people, insensible to the demands of justice, I ruthlessly sacrificed all to my own wretched exalta-

tion, to the indulgence of selfish desires, to the pleasure, the passion, or the worldly profit of the passing hour. There was one among my victims devoted absolutely to me, body and soul ; living in my smiles, believing that I loved him as he did me. Yet I delighted in causing him torture worse than a thousand deaths ; I raised him from the depths by reassurance, only to enjoy the cruel pleasure of casting him back into the abyss. At last he returned in triumph from a war in my behalf, where his love-inspired brain and love-nerved arm had won victory for my banners. Proudly he returned to claim fulfillment of the promise of my hand. He came

only to find me faithless, to find me perfidious, as always; to find me celebrating his return by my wedding with another. Forcing his way past the palace guards, he came at once to me, and with a look of such sorrowful reproach, such proud piteousness as will ever haunt me, he drove a dagger into his heart, and fell dying at my feet, saying only: 'I love you! Forgive me if, without your love, I can only die.'

"The strange thing about this vision, Agnes insists, is that it all came back to her as a memory of her actual past. It was not like a new thing to her mind, she says, but rather the revival of an old memory, which is now as vivid and as definite as the



"HE FELL DYING AT MY FEET."



memory of an event of yesterday. 'If Herbert really has been cruel and faithless to me, how much more cruel and faithless I have been to one who loved me, she said. 'If he has been lost to me, whose fault was it but mine? If, even thousands of years ago, I could have been the creature I remember, how right and just it is that I should now reap the fruit of my actions then? How much a nature which has anywhere in it a particle of such wantonness, needed the lesson which has been taught me! Can any suffering, any effort, any devotion to good, be too much to pay for my redemption? Surely God has been good to me. I can claim no credit for what



comes. It would be impious in me to see only the pain in it. I take it as the harvest of which I have myself sown the seed, and only pray that I may be wise enough to learn the lesson life holds for me, and strong enough to use the knowledge that comes as a means to make the world the better for it.' ”

“What a sublime philosophy!”  
I exclaimed.

“The best of it,” went on Lady Warden, “is that Agnes expresses not only in her words, but in her life also, the force of her thought. Herself strong and happy, she carries the sunshine of her presence with her wherever she goes. She is untiring in her ministrations to the poor and

afflicted. First at Sherbroke, then in London, afterward at Rouen, and now in Paris, the sorrow and suffering of the unfortunate claim her first attention. She gives away by far the greater part of a very liberal allowance, settled upon her by her millionaire father, and, what is more, she gives herself in sympathetic counsel and encouragement, with a mind always ready and active at planning and arranging for the uplifting of the wretched. Many, very many, men and women bless her for her inspiring sympathy and helpfulness. But in all she does, no praise, no gratitude, is sought. It is only just that she should make some reparation for all the wrong she did in

that past incarnation, she says, but even beyond that satisfaction, she makes it a privilege and a joy, and insists that the happiness received in helping others is much greater than that bestowed. There is in her work none of the penitence of 'sacrifice' and 'self-denial.' The only way to overcome evil in one's self, or in the world, she holds, is with good; and it is not good to mope and be miserable; not good to sacrifice health or happiness. To inspire hope, one must one's self be hopeful. She begins making the world happy by being happy herself, and she is, I think, genuinely the happiest woman I know."

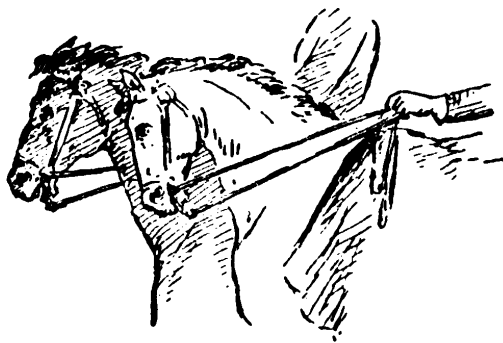
"In spite of the sacrifice of her

life to the memory of an unfaithful lover?" I asked.

"That is hardly an exact way of putting it," replied Lady Warden. "I do not look upon her present avoidance of men's attentions as indicating a resolve to remain a spinster always. It is simply that she regards love as too sacred a thing to play with. Love is part and parcel of her very soul, and must be ever developing and expanding with the growth of her nature. She will never marry unless she meets a man to whom she can give all her heart, and such a man will have no reason to be jealous of her memories. Grief has saddened her a little, but it has not soured her. For Arthur's sake I am glad

that she is not likely to enter a convent."

There was a clatter of hoofs before the door and Lady Warden had risen and walked to the window, where she now beckoned me to join her. In uttering the last sentence, she nodded her head at the equestrians and then looked up in my face, smiling in a significant way that betrayed the match-maker.





#### *Fourth Chapter*

ARTHUR MERLOCK was a cousin of mine, of whom I was very fond, although I had not seen much of him lately—a clear-complexioned, robust, and manly young fellow who had recently come into a considerable estate and, having resigned his commission in the navy, was now going in for yachting. He was aiding Miss Burroughs to dismount, having evidently been riding with her. I watched her as she leaped lightly to the horse-block in the court-yard, just touching his hand

and beaming upon him with so sweetly gracious a smile that it almost made my heart burn with envy.

“Lucky fellow!” I muttered to myself, as he escorted her to the door. Miss Burroughs invited him in, but Arthur declined, and with an *au revoir*, he remounted and rode off—for which I was devoutly thankful. I did not wish to meet him just then, and I should have liked to postpone my meeting with Agnes, who was now coming up the stairs, merrily humming an air from “Madame Angot.” But Lady Warden detained me, and stepping into the hall, called to her niece to come in for a moment and see me before she changed her dress.

What a superb figure and what a queenly carriage! How eloquent of health and vigor her fresh complexion, sparkling eyes, and the easy grace of her every movement! As our eyes met, I was again distinctly conscious of the same sense of that influx of some subtle and powerful magnetism which had stirred me to the heart on our first meeting. A woman worth dying for, I thought—ay, more than that, a woman worth *living* for! Her presence was that of a saint in its inspiration, of a Jeanne d'Arc, in its power of arousing the soul to enthusiasm for every high and holy cause.

Lady Warden prattled on at a great rate, amiably telling Agnes



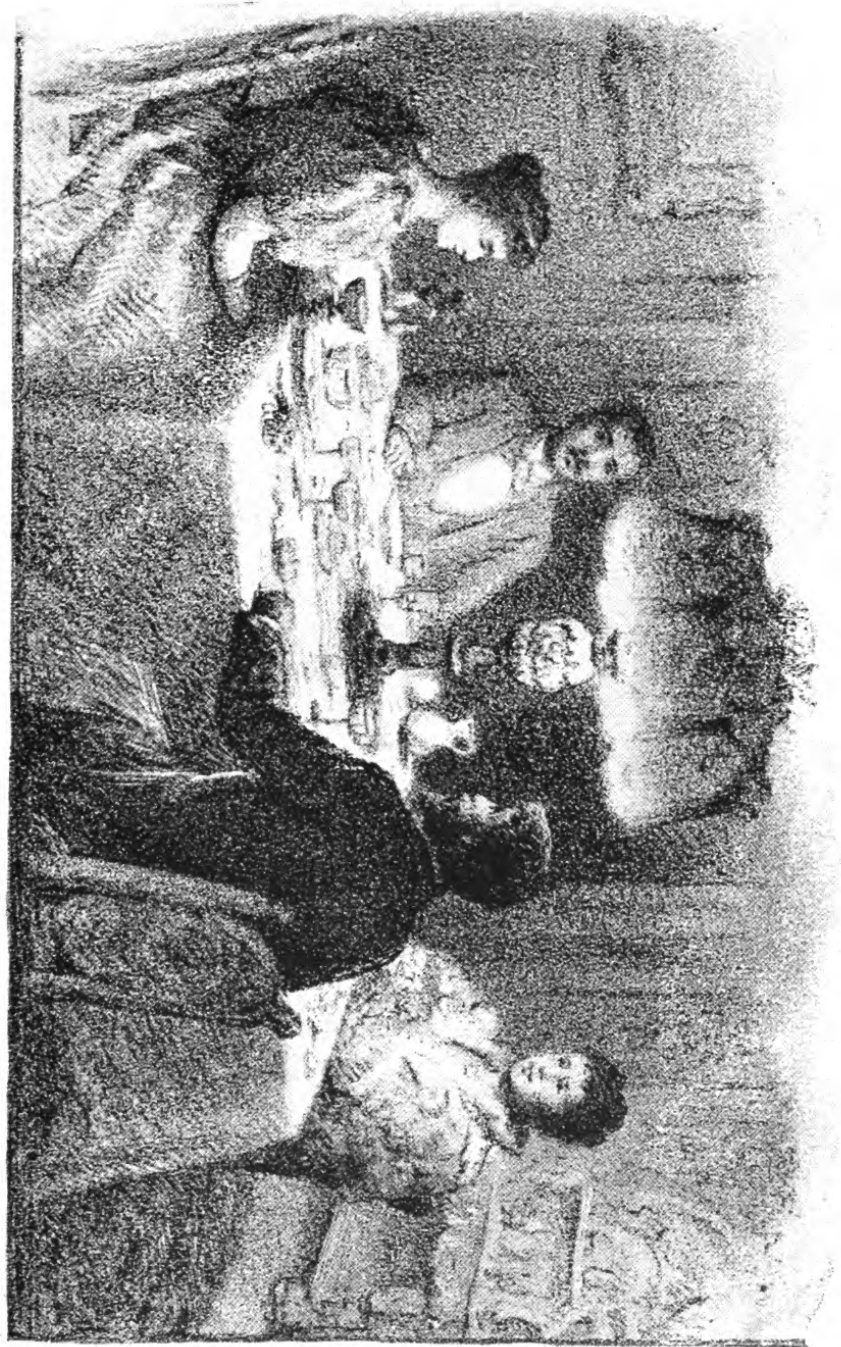
how much she loved my good mother and myself, and how much she wanted Agnes to know us. This desire, of course, we both said we should be charmed to realize. The first little sense of restraint and awkwardness quickly passed away. Agnes talked about her ride and the people they had met; was enthusiastic about the good qualities of her horse, and expressed a fear that the big black animal ridden by her escort was anything but safe. She asked me, indeed, if I would not caution my cousin about his mount. My bluff and rosy sailor cousin, I reflected, was much more at home on a ship's deck than in the saddle. The conversation lasted only a few minutes, but, despite

some misgivings, those minutes were an elysium, and I was glad to accept an invitation to come to dinner next evening.

It was a *partie carrée*—Lady Warden, Agnes, Arthur, and myself. I could not help noticing, despite the boy's efforts to suppress all evidence of his passion, that young Merlock was deeply in love with Miss Burroughs. On her part, there was such a decided softness of sympathy in her tones, and such freedom and frankness in her manner, that I could not make up my mind that she did not reciprocate his feelings. Yet I would have been puzzled to say in what her manner to each of us differed. If, on the one hand, Arthur enjoyed an

advantage in the familiarity with places and things of common interest gained by his longer acquaintance with Miss Burroughs, my woodcraft seemed to arouse in her an inquiring interest. Lady Warden had brought up the subject by some kindly reference to a monograph of my earlier days on "The Fauna and Flora of the Ukraine," and Agnes' intelligent curiosity spurred me on to talk about trees and flowers with something of the youthful ardor that I had deemed long dead. I quickly found, too, that my *vis-à-vis* had more than a girlish, sentimental interest in these things. She listened to my descriptions with flattering attention ; but in her modest questions

"IT WAS A PARTIE CARRÉE."





there was constant hint of a knowledge of forest life and plant growth much deeper than was mine in its suggestions of mysterious revelations as to the inner secrets pertaining to all life, received, perhaps, through observation and study in the woods of America.

That delightful little dinner was followed by several others, and by frequent riding excursions together in the weeks that ensued. Toward the end of our month's stay in Paris, we arranged to take advantage of the last days of the beautiful May weather for an excursion to Fontainebleau. This was settled upon one Saturday evening, and we were to go on the following Monday morning.

Arthur and I walked home together, enjoying our cigars in the crisp night air. On the way, he confided his passion for Miss Burroughs and his hope of winning her. He had several times already been on the verge of a proposal, having, in fact, followed Lady Warden and her niece from England to Paris for that purpose. Lady Warden did not conceal her hopes of a match and favored his suit decidedly. But something in Agnes' very frankness and *bon camaraderie* had thus far held him back. On Monday he was resolved to risk his fate, and he begged me to wish him success and to give him such aid and advice as my "experience with women" might suggest. I could certainly

do him a good turn if I would occupy Miss Burroughs' good chaperone, so that he might have an opportunity to speak with the young lady apart during the journey, or while strolling in the forest after luncheon.

I listened to all this in a stupid half-dazed way, making an effort to appear friendly and sympathetic and saying "yes," "certainly," and "of course," to all his various plans and propositions. More to postpone the matter than anything else, I asked him to breakfast with me next morning and talk it all over. It was a relief when at last he left me, near my own door. On gaining my rooms, I lighted a fresh cigar and, sitting before the fire that burned



brightly in the grate, gave myself up to reflections on the position in which I found myself.

Arthur, I said to myself, is not very brilliant, perhaps, but then he is young and earnest, pure-lived and pure-minded—a thoroughly good youngster, and in every way a thousand times worthier than I of such a wife as Agnes Burroughs. What sort of man was I, to think of winning such a woman? Youth? Mine was already almost flown. Talent? If I had ever had any, it had been squandered uselessly. My life was a record of wasted opportunities, of the reckless throwing away of powers and opportunities. Arthur's future, on the other hand, was all before

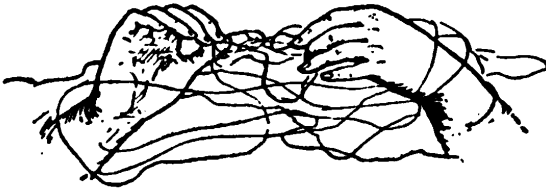
him. He had, it is true, done nothing especially notable or hopeful, so far as the world was aware ; but his past was clear and, especially with such a wife as Agnes, everything in the way of noble achievement in the future was possible to him.

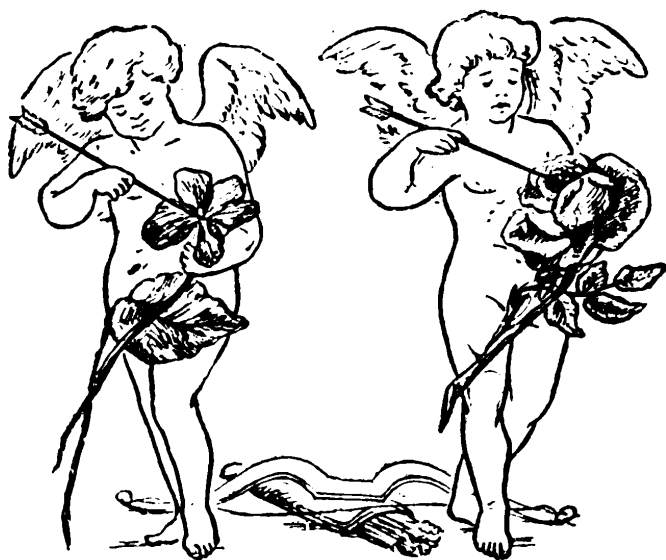
Truly, I had better go away, as I had at first intended, and let matters take their course. She would be happy with him if she loved him. If my love was really unselfish, I should think of nothing but her happiness. But I *would* think of myself. I could not help picturing what my life would be with this woman out of it—this woman, another man's wife, and lost to me forever. It should not, could not, must not

be ! Thirty-five is not as young as twenty-five, but it is not old. I had strength, I had fortune, I had brains, and should use them yet. More than all else, I loved her, and she belonged to me and I to her, utterly, absolutely, eternally.

With this thought came, at last, a strange sense of strength and certainty, calming the conflict of feeling which had raged in my breast. And when I sought my pillow, it was with mind clearly made up to accept my fate, to remain in Paris confident that, if she were to be mine, nobody and nothing on earth could prevent it ; and if it were possible that she should take Arthur Merlock as husband, I would strive to accept the fact as certainly for the best.

For years I had drifted with the tide. Now, I should take the wheel and be master of my course. This awakening of determination came without strenuousness or stress. On the contrary, it seemed to follow upon my old fatalism as a natural growth in the stillness. Strength came, with spiritual poise. Resolution bloomed in my heart in the silence. I had come closer to the Power working passively or actively in all things, and causing all things to work together for good; I and that Power were one!





### *Fifth Chapter*

WHEN Merlock came, next morning, I had reasoned myself into such a state of absolute confidence that I rather pitied the poor boy a little the disappointment I felt was surely in store for him. For the present, however, he was enjoying what seemed to me a fool's paradise of anticipation. He talked at first of people and events in the county in which

we were neighbors at home; of the hunting, of crops and rents, and the changing political complexion of the borough—which at the last election had returned a Radical member, much to my cousin's disgust. Then he went into raptures about his new yacht. He wanted to know if I did not think a three months' cruise in northern waters would be a fine way to spend a honeymoon. This brought the talk to the subject uppermost in our minds. I was hungry to hear all he could tell me about Agnes, and easily drew him out by a few adroit questions.

“One reason I'm sure she'll have me,” he went on, talking with nervous rapidity, “is that

our tastes are so much alike. She loves the sea, as I do, and horses—which I am getting to like. She is active in plans for relieving the poor, and you know I have thought a good deal about improved workmen's dwellings and such things, and always intended to spend a lot of money to help those poor devils in the East End to be happier and live decently. In fact, I would not mind going in seriously for studying political economy and social science, generally, or perhaps taking a seat in the House, should she care to have me do that sort of thing—that is, if I could get a seat, you know.”

Here a remembrance of the decadence of Toryism in his home

borough caused Merlock to look a bit lugubrious.

“Then you sympathize with all Miss Burroughs’ ideas and habits, so far as you have found them out?” I said. “That is certainly very nice.”

“Her ways are simply heavenly,” he replied rapturously. “She has all the dignity and delicacy of our English girls; that down on the peach which is inimitable, and which of itself is so sweet and satisfying—until you expect a woman to do some thinking on her own account. But in Agnes, with all the fineness of texture that comes from high breeding, there is also much of that peculiar breezy brightness of the Americans, and which so



wakes a fellow up. From what you have seen of her, you may perhaps think she is very serious and quiet; but I assure you she is positively jolly when she likes to be—jolly, yet sensible and deep. She is what is called spiritual and, I believe, a Theosophist, in quiet and highly cultivated ways. I don't understand her ideas about such things very much, only I know that, whatever her religion, it must be a good thing and belong to real charity and tenderness of heart and high mindedness. That's all I want to know about it. Curiously enough, this reminds me of the one thing we absolutely disagree about. It must have been suggested to my mind by the mention of Theosophy,

because she says it is part of her religion. She is very fond of flowers, as you know, and especially of violets—which I positively abhor. I don't know why it is, but I cannot bear to see them, or smell them. When I was a child the sudden sight of violets would throw me into convulsions. It's ridiculous, I know; but I have never been able to overcome this strange antipathy. Your psychologists would probably explain it, as they would the aversion to touching velvet, or to the taste of milk, which some people have, by putting it down to hereditary or prenatal influences. My only antidote is the sight and scent of roses, and as Agnes always has violets about her, or the scent of

violets, I make it a point to send her lots of roses, especially *Jacqueminots* and *Maréchale Niels*, whenever I am going to call. Their rich fragrance quite banishes the, to me, sickening odor of violets, and the luxuriant bloom of the roses quite fills my vision, so that I do not see the miserable little blue flowers that she likes. Miss Burroughs seems to understand this idiosyncrasy of mine, and once made me confess that violets are as disagreeable to me as roses are pleasant. Since then she has always been very considerate about it, putting a rose in her dress among the violets, or putting roses enough on the table to hide the wretched things from me. Violets are her

favorites ; but she is also fond of roses, she says. Of course, I wouldn't ask her to do more. By the way, do *you* like violets ? ”

“ Yes ; passionately ! ”

The question came so suddenly that it surprised me into answering instantly and with more feeling than I had cared to betray.

All the while Arthur had been telling me about Miss Burroughs' fondness for violets and his own repugnance to them, I had been experiencing the most delightful little thrills of satisfaction. It seemed like the discovery of something that confirmed my previous assurance that there was a real bond of sympathy between Agnes Burroughs and myself. For I loved violets then, as I love

them now, delighting ever and intensely in their fragrance, in their color, in their delicate form ; inhaling the life of the woods with every reflection of their blueness and every atom of their perfume.

I was a little afraid that Merlock might have guessed something of this satisfaction from my answer, and so something of my secret. To cover my rashness, I chaffed him laughingly about what I called his silly fad. But he only looked bored and pleaded pitifully with me to talk about something else. We discussed the Fontainebleau excursion of the morrow. It was to be a sort of sylvan outing, with a ramble through the old palace and in the

woods, and an *al fresco* luncheon, which a groom, sent on ahead with hampers of good things, would spread under the trees near the old castle. After we had rested and roamed about a little in the beautiful old forest, we should return to town in time for dinner.

“We shall be able to be together most of the time.” Arthur went on. “If you like, it may be arranged that you shall attach yourself to Lady Warden and I to Miss Burroughs. The opportunity for my proposal will come in our little woodland ramble after luncheon, when Miss Burroughs and I, counting on Lady Warden’s comprehensive connivance, will be able to separate ourselves from

the party a little while. Tell me what you think of the plan, most sapient of friends?"

While he rattled away, I began to feel that I should be guilty indeed to receive his boyish confidences and remain silent about my own feelings in the same direction. If it had seemed to me that there could be any possibility that Agnes loved the boy as he loved her, or as he believed he loved her, I should have had pluck enough, I trust, to have quietly resigned my own hopes—for this present incarnation at any rate—wished him god-speed and, keeping my secret, gone to India or Central Africa until the first pain should be over and I might endure to see her as my cousin's wife.

But the conviction was upon me that, with all his admirable qualities, this woman was not for him ; that he was doomed to disappointment, and that sooner or later Agnes Burroughs and I should be united.

I rose from the table, went over to him, and placing my left hand on his shoulder while I grasped his right hand firmly in mine, I looked straight into his big, honest blue eyes. A moment thus without words, then I said :

“ Arthur, my boy, you know I am your friend ; you know that I have your happiness at heart, and would unhesitatingly take my own wishes out of the way if your happiness could be so secured. But let me be entirely fair and frank



with you. Let me trust you as you have trusted me. I, too, love Agnes Burroughs. I loved her before I had any idea that you had fixed your heart upon her. Her happiness is to me above all things in heaven or earth. I do not feel that I am worthy of her, and I think *you* are worthy, if any man is. Just because I love her as I do, I want you to marry her, if in such a marriage she is to find the greater happiness. In that case, I shall bury myself in work and be happy in her happiness and yours. But, speaking from silent conviction, and as impersonally as possible, I feel that you will be disappointed, if you ask for her hand to-morrow. Yet I shall be unhappy if you do not ask her. For

all our sakes, we must know the truth. But I beg of you to be brave about it. Remain with the party whatever happens, and understand, whether you win or lose, you can count on me as your friend always."

There was a suspicious moisture in the boy's eyes as he pressed my hand and answered reassuringly :

"Of course, you have fallen in love with her. Every man who has any sense and discrimination *must* fall in love with such a charming girl. And of course you have just as much right as I to love her. To tell you the real truth, Bertram, there are moments when I am anything but sanguine. She is awfully good and sweet to me ; but only as she is to all her

friends—and that is altogether a different thing from love. No, my heart is full of hope, to be sure, and my love makes me confident—but I quite understand that I shall be taking my chances. I must, however, know my fate. Dear old man! It will be hard on you if she accepts me, won't it? The fact is, she is entirely too good for either of us—for any man alive; although it does lift a man out of himself to love her. According to the approved fashion in romance, two men who love one woman should hate each other with a bitter hatred. But *this* is different. . . I shall love you all the more for loving her, if I marry her, and I shall love you none the less because she loves

you, if you have better luck than I. And if we are both rejected, we can console each other and say heartily, let a better man win."

"Good luck to you, Arthur!"

"Good luck to you, old man.  
*A demain !*"

So we shook hands and parted.

Feeling in no mood for gay company, and wishing to concentrate my forces as much as possible, I begged off a dinner engagement, and passed that evening quietly at home. I was gradually getting a surer hold on myself. Frequently I had to fight with fits of restlessness and uncertainty that came with the thought that, after all, no matter how much I

loved Agnes, I had not the slightest indication that she cared for me. There were, indeed, many things that made me think she might respond to Arthur Merlock's devotion.

I rose early next morning and went to the flower booths in the Halles, where I bought a large bunch of the freshest and sweetest Parma violets and dispatched them to Miss Burroughs with my card. Thinking of her fondness for these flowers renewed my hopes. As my fiacre passed Lady Warden's hotel on the way home, I noticed a boy at the door with a bunch of roses.

"Arthur's good morning!" I ejaculated to myself. "Here is a pretty test. Miss Burroughs may

wear a flower in her dress. If it is a rose, Arthur's star is in the ascendant. If violets peep from breast or belt——”





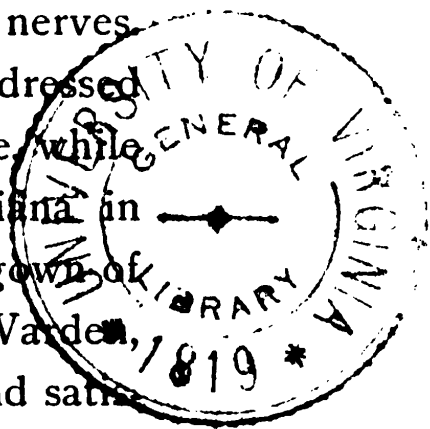
### *Sixth Chapter*

**A**GNES wore my violets. *My* violets I said to myself at first, but afterward the thought occurred to me that they might not have been mine, or at least that she would be very likely to wear her favorite flower without reference to me. The morning was bright and balmy, and we set off in great good humor. Arthur talked and laughed a great deal during the first half hour or so; but it was evidently with effort, and I noted that he frequently looked across the compartment at the roses on Lady

Warden's breast, for which I had heard her thank him. My cousin had evidently remembered both ladies in his matutinal floral compliments, and he now reaped the reward of his thoughtfulness by finding relief in Lady Warden's roses from the effect of Miss Burroughs' violets on his nerves. He was exceedingly well dressed and looked very handsome, while Agnes seemed a very Diana in her close-fitting traveling gown of silver-gray cloth. Lady Warden, with unconcealed pride and satisfaction in her voice, murmured in my ear:

"A really fine-looking couple; don't you think so, Bertram?"

Of course I assented enthusiastically.





It was a delightful trip. Once well beyond the region of brick and mortar, we enjoyed pretty glimpses of wild cherry in blossom and of stately oaks with purple clusters of wistaria festooning them. Every breath of the fresh, sweetly scented air was delicious.

We reached Fontainebleau in good season for a leisurely ramble through the magnificent courts, halls and gardens of the palace which, centuries after his death, still speak the almost unparalleled magnificence of François Premier, and which was destined in after years to be the scene of several of the most tragic episodes in European history. Passing through the remarkably large and richly furnished apart-

ments, and noting the rock-crystal chandeliers and massive carved wainscotings and chimney pieces, the historic tapestries, the paintings and statuary, the Sèvres vases, and the reliquaries of ivory and ebony, it seemed like an excursion into dim avenues of the past, momentarily lighted up by flashes of the human passions and emotions that had left behind them such brilliant and beautiful reminders.

Here the gay and voluptuous Francis lavishly indulged his sybaritic tastes, playing the sixteenth-century Lucullus and reveling in the charms of the beauties of his court. Here Pope Pius VII. sojourned as prisoner of state in the royal apartments that had

sheltered Catherine de Medici and Anne of Austria. Here the jealous Queen Christina of Sweden had caused her unfortunate favorite, Count Monaldeschi, to be put to death. Here *le grand monarque* signed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and here died the great Condé. Napoléon, having caused a sentence of divorce against the beautiful Josephine to be pronounced here in 1809, signed here his abdication five years afterward, on the small table still to be seen in the center of the room.

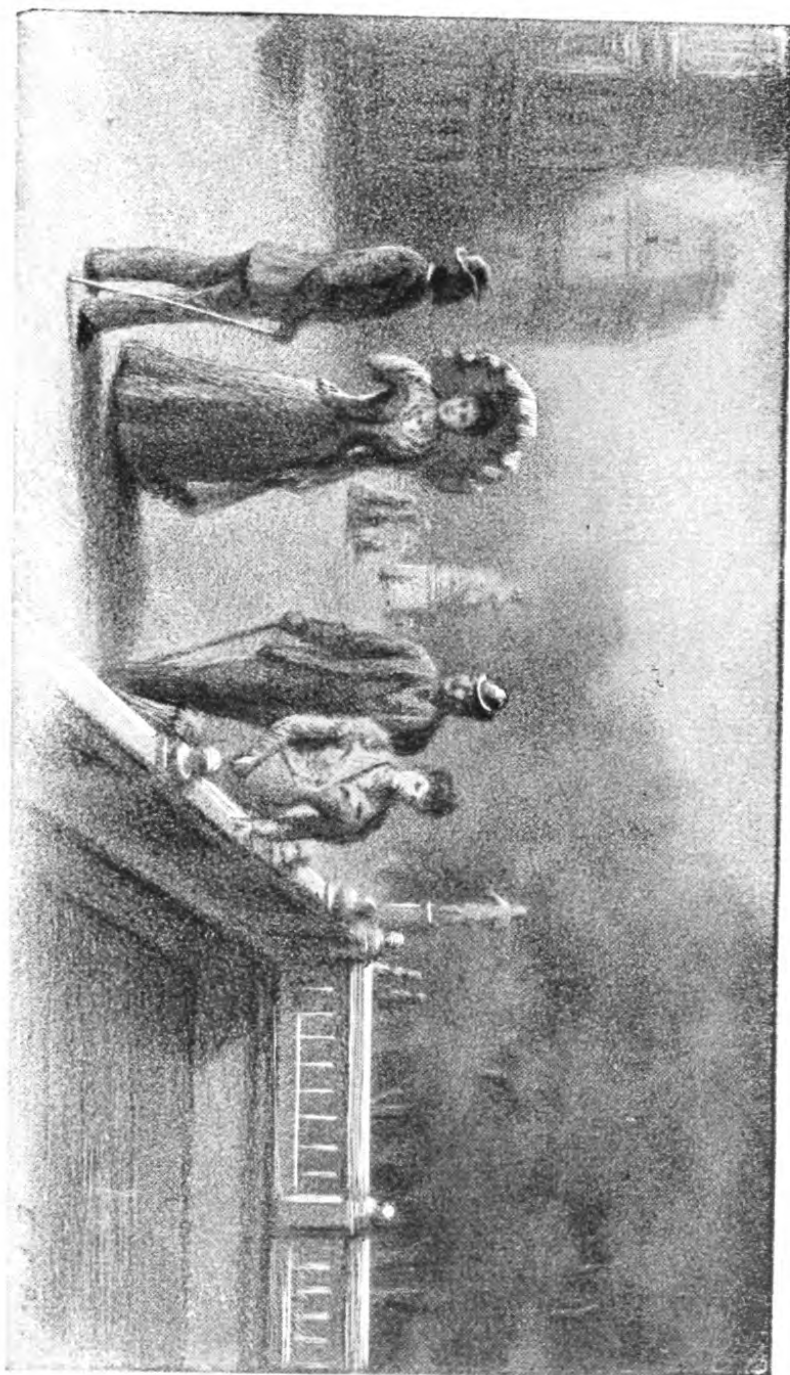
“I am glad to get out into the open air,” said Agnes, as we descended the great horseshoe staircase and emerged into the Cour de la Fontaine. “With all its

grandeur and magnificence, with all its treasures of art, and all its magnificent spaciousness, the atmosphere of this old place oppresses me like that of a charnel-house. It breathes death and decay. Splendid it is, no doubt; but it is the splendor of a mausoleum, of catacombs, of catafalques and sarcophagi — the splendid shell of a long vanished spirit. Let us to the forest, to the glorious living trees, and the vibrant vitality of growing plants and running water.”

“What a musty and grewsome mood!” laughed Lady Warden. “Now, for me, all these beautiful rooms bring the past to life, so that I can almost fancy myself living in the time of the gallant

and gay François Premier, or making a morning call on the dainty and delicate Diane de Poitiers, and sharing in their æsthetic enjoyment of those gorgeous old hangings and marvelous pictures. At any rate, you must admit that it is not all death," she rambled on, pointing to the pond on the right. "Kings may come and kings may go, but fish swim on forever. Think of it! If we can only remember to bring some fragments from our luncheon, on the way back we may feed some of the identical big carp to which Francis and Diana, three centuries and more ago, threw crumbs from the pavilion there."

"Yes, the famous fish have out-



AT FONTAINEBLEAU.



lived the famous people," rejoined Agnes; "their kind of life is not so intense, but it lasts longer. Yet the custodian told us that even these venerable carp are dying out. It's a wonder they have been able so long to resist the deadly influence of the mummied associations entombed so close to them."

"About time they died," remarked Arthur. "It's my belief their bigness and fatness is all due to conceit on account of their age. They are swollen with a sense of their own importance, and doubtless think it a fine thing to have outlasted kingdoms, empires, and republics. For my part, I had rather a month of life in the palace than a century in the pond."



“ *Chacun à son gout,*” said Lady Warden. “The fish undoubtedly preferred the pond, and the people the palace. I think I could have endured a century in the palace very well, even as a prisoner of state.”

“Such resignation may be admirable,” I could not help putting in with a touch of sarcasm, “but is it not a bit fishy? I am glad that even the carp are not content to stay forever confined within the limits of a fish-pond, be it ever so sumptuous. It shows that with all their pampering, they at last begin to feel themselves imprisoned and are not quite able to forget that there is such a thing as a world outside the pond, with rivers flowing to

the sea and freedom for larger swims."

"Good!" cried Agnes merrily. "Why, the dear old carp haven't lived three hundred years in vain, if at last they die for freedom."

"I have a suspicion that Mr. Kingsley isn't thinking about the fish," said Lady Warden, bending her brows in mock seriousness; "and though I do love allegory in pictures and poetry, I am altogether too stupid to comprehend it in ordinary, everyday conversational prose. I don't get the perspective. Come, Arthur, why are you so silent? Pray reveal to me the mystery veiled under Bertram's philosophical fish story."

It was true that Arthur appeared to be unusually abstracted, which,

in view of his state of mind, was perhaps not surprising. Thus rallied by Lady Warden, he looked up and smiled at me comically.

“In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man, or a fish, as modest stillness and humility,” he said. “My mind to me a kingdom is; but I will emerge from its limitations at the call of duty. If I understand Bertram, his parable of the fishes (who have eaten the loaves) is a shot at me. I said I would rather a month of life in the palace than a century in the pond, and he evidently thinks that, if it came to a question of a month in the palace, he would prefer a sufficient number of minutes in the pond, to give his soul to the outer air and his body to

the carp. And, on the whole, I think I agree with him."

"Most eloquently expounded!" said I. "Fortunate is it for me that I have a disciple so clear-sighted and profound that he can find depths in my gabble that I had never suspected, and so give me a reputation for wisdom which will enable me to pose before an admiring world as a sage in disguise."

"Many a true thing is said in jest," remarked Agnes lightly.

By this time we had passed down the Avenue Maintenon and through the Porte Dorée with its flying salamanders, where, entering our carriage, we were soon bowling along the beautiful road to the forest.

Shortly after we had arrived at the leafy glade where we were to picnic, Arthur drew me aside. I noticed a peculiar light as of some new discovery in his eyes, and this was explained by his first words.

“The coast is clear for you, Bertram, old man,” he said with a brave smile. “I cannot bring myself to the point to-day, and, what is more, there is no use in my trying. It’s those wretched violets, I suppose. It has become so bad I cannot separate their scent from her presence, and while I feel that way, and while she does not turn against her flower, it would be madness to think of our marrying. The fates are against me this time, and I’m sure I shall

never be able to come to the point of proposing."

How strange that what was so sweet and attractive to me in this beautiful woman was for another only disagreeable, repellant! The delicacy, the subtle, soul-stirring essence, the witching blue of the humble flower, seemed to my mind the most suggestive symbol of the true and perfect womanhood she embodied. To associate her spirit with the flower, and the flower with her spirit, was to me the most natural thing in the world. So the thought was borne in upon me that, if a man could not love violets, perhaps he could not really love Agnes Burroughs, and my poor cousin must have been mistaken in his feelings.

Nevertheless I rallied him on his despondency, and endeavored to infuse into him some degree of cheerfulness.

“You are very kind,” he said, “but I feel it’s no use. While I am under the influence of those wretched flowers, it is simply impossible.”

Soon we were seated about our repast. At first, Arthur could not help showing his depression. Agnes, quickly noticing this, exclaimed:

“Why, what a martyr you have been all the morning, Mr. Merlock! And how thoughtless of me not to have remembered that violets affect you! Please, dear aunt, give me some of your roses in exchange for my violets.”

As she spoke she detached the flowers from her dress and tossed them over to Lady Warden who sat next to me, and who substituted them for the roses, with a pretty little smile and bow for me, saying :

“ Mr. Kingsley likes violets, I am very sure.”

From this point on, Agnes became unusually gay and her merriment soon banished all suspicion of gloom from Arthur's face. It seemed, in fact, as if the incident and Agnes' marked consideration for his feeling, with her pleasure in his talk, had stimulated a reaction in his spirits, which the champagne probably helped a little. I never saw the boy so bright and so quick. Every

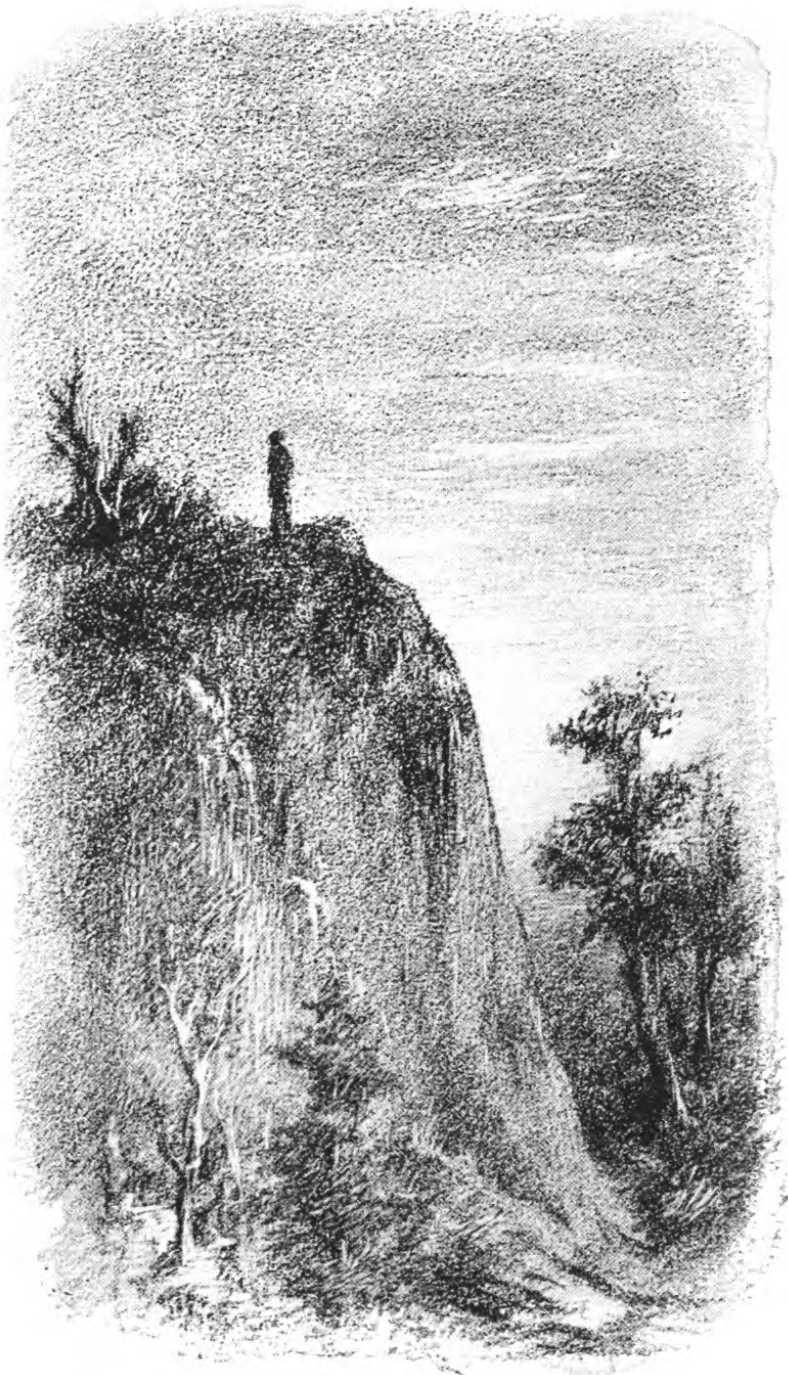


clever *bon mot* of Agnes' or Lady Warden's was at once capped by him in a way that kept us immensely amused.

At last we rose for our woodland ramble before returning. Arthur, with a meaning look at me, came to Lady Warden's side, but she pushed him toward Agnes, saying :

"You young people can go on ahead. We will dawdle along after you."

"Your chance," I whispered to Arthur ; and his eyes brightened as he set off with Agnes down the winding path, soon passing out of sight. Lady Warden and I followed leisurely, until we came to a little elevation near the " Roche qui pleure," and commanding a



THE WEEPING ROCK.



view of the greater part of the immense rocky basin of the "Gorges de Franchards." Here we seated ourselves on the trunk of a fallen tree and chatted a while. Fortunately there seemed to be but few tourists in the forest. Now and then the voices of Agnes and Arthur came to us in indistinct murmurs, or their forms were visible in glimpses through the trees.

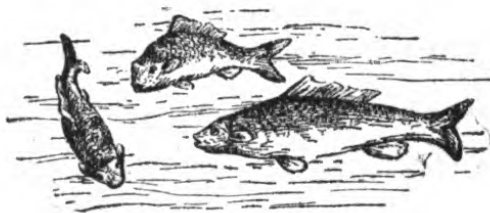
Lady Warden had brought a bit of embroidery with her, and as the noonday heat, even here, became somewhat oppressive, we soon yielded to the influence of the stillness about us, and relapsed into silence. I became lost in a strange reverie for I do not know how long—it might have been five minutes, or it might have been

an hour, so little sense of time had I. While thus musing, oddly enough, the past history of Fontainebleau, and particularly the court of King Francis, seemed strangely familiar to me. Scenes and incidents at that court having about them a striking reality came to my mind, though many of them had no place, that I knew of, in any written history. Through it all, I experienced a curious sense of dual personality in which actor and spectator were vaguely mingled. From this reverie I was aroused by Lady Warden's voice.

“I am afraid we must be going; but first, perhaps, you will like to take a parting view of the gorge from the weeping rock.”

Still somewhat under the influence of my strange absorption, I mechanically obeyed Lady Warden's suggestion, and clambered to the top of the rock. For a moment I stood on the verge of the jutting platform, looking out on the weirdly picturesque circular depression in the sandstone formation of this part of the forest, now almost filled and overgrown by trees and bushes. From the ruins of an ancient monastery on the left, a thin line of smoke ascended, betokening its prosaic habitation by a forester. As I turned to resume the path, I leaned over a little to see the trickling stream from which the rock takes its name. My foot slipped on the wet moss, and I plunged head foremost into

the rocky gorge below. The next moment I felt a dull, crushing pain in the head; then all was darkness and quiet and nothingness unutterable.





### *Seventh Chapter*

OUT of this stupor, after a time that seemed years to me, I was aroused by the consciousness of a Presence, whose light, even at a great distance, seemed to disperse the shadows that enfolded me. By some strange magnetic potency, this Presence seemed to draw me up out of the depth into which I had fallen, and into a region filled with sunset glow and color. In obedience to this attraction, I rose and moved through the atmosphere with a delicious



sense of lightness and power. Although at first the distance that divided us appeared so immense that a lifetime would be required to traverse it, on feeling the impulse of her thought, my whole being made such instant response that I was beside her in a moment, standing on a silver strand to which she welcomed me by holding out both her hands and taking both of mine as I stepped, as it were, out of a sea of ether to the shore it bathed.

How can I describe the radiant beauty of that face? We are told that no great artist, even in his masterpieces, ever did more than suggest the pictures which his mind had conceived. Raphael in his most inspired moments

may have dreamed of a Madonna in the depths of whose lustrous eyes shone such infinite and loving tenderness; of lineaments whose delicate beauty spoke such a glory of rare womanhood,—new-born into the divine comprehension, compassion and faith,—as seemed revealed in the face upon which I now looked. To paint a face even suggestive of such beauty, only genius such as his could suffice. For a moment I stood as one entranced before her. Her touch thrilled me with purest ecstasy, her presence exhaled the sweet fragrance of a soothing and strengthening balm most grateful to my weary spirit. Mingled with the warmth and sweetness of a love born of deep-

est and closest human relations, I felt a sense of reverence mounting almost to awe. With a glad exclamation of "Mother!" I fell upon my knees before her, and pressed first my brow and then my lips to her hands.

Gently she lifted me to my feet, then taking my head between her palms, she drew me close, kissed me on the forehead, and encircling my neck with loving arms, pressed my face close to her breast for a moment.

"Yes, my son," she said in a voice musical and tender, "I am indeed your mother, and more than your mother, although the dear, fond, and loving creature who, in your latest earthly incarnation, bore and reared you, still



“MOTHER!”



lives in the flesh, and I have not known experience in the earth-form for more than a thousand years, as people there count time. Thrice in the life of that far-off planet did I bear thee; thrice in the Golden Age did I have that foretaste of heaven which comes when a mother holds to her breast her first-born; and thrice did I nurture you with high hopes and loving care through childhood to manhood. To-day I bear your spirit in my arms as in that past I held your infant form. Yet you would be no less my son had I never been your earthly mother, for the spiritual relationship is stronger and more enduring far than any ties of flesh alone can be."

Communion with this radiant spirit had so filled me with the strong sense of her motherhood, with its depth and vivid reality, that I had not thought of my dear, sweet, indulgent, and sympathetic mother in England. While my companion was talking, the realization of this forgetfulness came over me with a little sense of shame, and I marveled as the conviction grew upon me that I loved my earthly mother not less but more than before, in the light of this revelation. The emotions I felt toward my mother on earth, and those I felt toward my mother in this upper sphere, were distinctly different—not in degree so much as in kind. Yet there was a similarity in the fact

that no other words than mother and son expressed the relation of which my varying feelings were the recognition. I can best describe this remarkable sensation, perhaps, by saying that I seemed to combine in one individuality the love which two sons would have for a mother ; alike in the sense of sonship, yet differing as the personalities of the sons would differ. But instead of the love of two sons going out from me to one mother, the love of one son went out to one mother and of the other son to another mother.

As though perceiving the questioning of my thought, my companion said to me gently :

“ Perhaps the truth of it all will



become clearer to you if you will call to mind the promise of the Nazarene whom men called the Christ—the promise that ‘he who should forsake wife and children, father and mother, sisters and brothers for His sake, should have fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers and children a hundred-fold,’ reading the promise in the light of that saying of the most illuminated of His apostles: ‘There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.’ ”

“ I must confess, dear mother,” I replied, “ that my mind has always rejected that passage inculcating the abandonment of one’s own, as really un-Christian and cruel—an extreme altruism which would slay the best natural in-

instincts of man on the altar of a fanatical negative. The verse from Paul I conceive to be simply the necessary assumption, much as is Swedenborg's theory, that if man's existence continues after the death of the body, his spirit must be differentiated from the universal ocean of spirit by form, and if the individual spirit have form that form must be fashioned from some substance, subtle and perhaps impalpable to the physical senses, but not the less real and tangible on its own plane."

"As the master poet of your time has it," she said, smiling :

" 'Eternal form shall still divide  
Eternal soul from all beside.' "

"Well, you can no longer be skeptical as to the existence of

the spiritual body. It must be equally plain to you that there are natural relations and spiritual relations. Does it not follow that a man whose conception of father, mother, brother, sister, and wife, is simply of a carnal nature, and so blinding, deluding, limiting, and debasing, must forsake that conception of the nature of his relations to his fellow beings, before he can arrive at a perception of the truth with the clear, certain, unbounded, and uplifting vision of the spirit? The Nazarene did not require His followers to tear themselves away from their families merely to make of themselves ascetics, and so bring them more completely under His influence. He simply stated an eternal and

immutable law of the universe. Every man who truly seeks righteousness and follows Christ—the Spirit of Truth—in the regeneration, and who truly desires spiritual growth and development, will sooner or later find himself separated from the world and all selfish relationships in proportion to the strength of his desire and the measure of his spiritual attainment. Without any outward leave-takings, without any thought of change, departure, or desertion, he will one day find himself dwelling in a region apart from father and mother, sister and brother, children and wife. Then he will begin to reap fulfillment of the hundred-fold promise by the recognition of his spiritual kindred, who

will not only outnumber his worldly kin a hundred to one, but each of whom will hold for him love and affection a hundred-fold more precious to him."

"Surely, *mother*," I said, looking up into her eyes and smiling, "it must be possible to reach the Golden Gates without immuring one's self in a monastic cell or retreating to the remoteness of some hermitage in the Himalays. It seems to me, too, that family relationships may be very true and beautiful; else why is it that I am lifted from the very depths of hell by the glory and strength of a *mother's* love, and in that love find higher, holier joy than I have found in any other gift the world affords?"

“It has been the bane of Christianity,” she replied, “as of every other religion, that men have lost sight of the spirit which quickeneth in following the letter which kills. Human love, even in the slightest degree, is a manifestation of the divine love. The family, in its perfection, is a holy institution. Through it, all the highest and best emotions in man’s nature are developed, when the family relation is sanctified and spiritualized. When the relation, on the other hand, is carnalized by the dominance of worldly, selfish considerations of wealth, rank, power, social importance, or mere sensual gratification, the most demoniac passions, leading to the commission in thought or act of the most

horrible crimes that curse humanity, come from it. So it is that men and women, bent on their personal salvation, with the idea of giving up the world, as they call it, and saving their own souls, directly disobey the spirit of the law of Christ, while trying to obey the letter of the Scriptures. They are, in fact, guilty of the worst kind of selfishness—‘other world’ selfishness. Sometimes a man’s spiritual kin are also his natural kin. In that case, he wrongs his higher self and bars his spiritual progress if he does not cleave to them ; just as he does wrong in absorbing himself in the purely carnal and worldly side of any relation or walk in life. A really spiritual man finds oneness with

good and separateness from evil wherever he may be, whether he be lost in pious contemplation on the mountain-top, or wrestling with sin in the slums. Service is the highest spiritual, as it is the highest moral law. And so, although he who seeks the cloister is to be condemned only in so far as he is forgetful of his duty to his kind, and concentrated on his own future happiness, the man who lives among his fellows, and is partner in their joys and sorrows, their victories and defeats—while struggling for advancement—lives the holiest and most spiritual life. He has really obeyed the command to forsake all and follow Christ, although his every energy may be engaged in the



business of life, whether it be cobbling shoes or founding empires, fighting for his country, or a leader or follower in the great battles of political, professional, commercial, or industrial strife. His opportunities for service are greatest when among his fellows—if his conscience be not deadened by selfishness.”

“There is the hundred-fold promise of wives and husbands,” I said musingly. “That seems to me a stumbling block.”

“In the true marriage, husband and wife are one flesh and one spirit, and the relation of husband and wife is spiritualized by completest union, not by multiplication. But it must be many in one—inclusive, not exclusive. Until that union—

a union of minds, and hearts primarily—is accomplished, it is impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven; that kingdom which is not a place, but a state of feeling, and within every man.

“Let me ask if there is not some rule,” I said, “by which men may be guided in seeking God. What is a man to do if, when the call comes to him, he is involved in family relations and professional work, with all their various duties and obligations?”

“Man cannot get away from God, howsoever he may try,” Helena replied quickly. “He follows good through a thousand varying paths; but man may be sure of reaching the goal at last, since all roads lead to God. God

is all in all ; Life, Love, Law, Substance. Through faith we can know God ; through love we embrace and absorb God and are absorbed by Him. Some paths, however, are long and crooked and hard ; while others are direct and short and strewn with roses. To the man whose spiritual self-consciousness is awakened, the godlike power to *choose* the right path is given. Be sure a man cannot serve God and Mammon. In gaining the world, or any considerable part of it, he is very apt to lose his own soul. But the man is very certain to discover his mistake some time, even if it takes a million years and a thousand incarnations. When he loses the whole world, or gives it

to the poor, he is exceedingly likely to *find* the soul that he had lost. In such a case as you mention, a man has only to remember the truth so beautifully embalmed in the words of the old Oriental wisdom, in regard to *being*, 'Know thyself! To thine own self be true!' In regard to *doing*, let him work without ceasing. Work is prayer—and prayer is work.

“ ‘The sense of Duty cometh first ;  
Then followeth Steadfastness,  
And zealous Work the jewel is  
That crowneth all ! ’ ”





### *Eighth Chapter*

WHILE conversing, we had wandered some distance inland from the shore through a wood whose cool shadows were all the more delightful to me that my eyes had been somewhat dazzled by the flood of sunlight on the sea. We were both silent for a little while. I had found much food for reflection in Helena's talk. Still I hardly dared or cared to think. With something of my old indolent habit, I wanted to give myself up to the happiness of the present

hour. Had I lived in another planet, another life; one man in many bodies, through dim ages and long past and forgotten personalities? Was there, after all, some truth, even a half truth, in the old Pythagorean conceit of metempsychosis? Was reincarnation a reality? Surely one life on earth was bad enough, and I had always said I would not like to come back to it again. If life there was beyond the grave, I had asked, why should there not be in the spirit-spheres much greater possibilities of progress than earth afforded, when the conditions there must be so much better than they are on earth. Well, what mattered it all? Whether through one earth-life or

many, whatever the paths I had traversed—here I was, home at last ! For it seemed to me that I had never known any other condition and that I should be happy to walk forever through this beautiful land by the side of this angelic being whose hand held mine. As this last thought passed through my mind, I felt a quick, sharp pull at my very heart-strings. Helena at the same moment had stooped and plucked from the ground a flower which she now held up before me. It was a violet !

“ Agnes ! ” I exclaimed, and an agony of loneliness filled all my being. All joy of existence seemed to die out, the sun to darken, all heavenly airs were

stilled, and all beauties of tree and flower faded and withered.

“ Oh, Agnes, my love ! my life ! my soul ! ” I moaned. “ For one glimpse of your face, to hear your voice once more, I would gladly give heaven ; for heaven were not heaven without you ; hell were heaven with you ! ”

“ Be comforted ! You shall have your wish, dear child,” murmured a soothing and sympathetic voice in my ear. “ It is because your spiritual consciousness is now awake, and with it power to choose is placed in your grasp ; because the time is come for which I, who have grown from your earthly mother into your spirit guardian, have waited and watched by your side through



many centuries and many incarnations—that you are now privileged to *know* what most men but dimly guess at. Look !”

Following the direction of her outstretched hand I saw directly before us great masses of luminous, moving clouds that reminded me of a western horizon in the sunset over our beautiful English lake country. These clouds assumed strange and fascinating shapes. Gigantic human forms rose out of the vapors, seeming to do battle with the powers of air—monstrous birds with great gray wings and breasts of burnished bronze. Now it was the sunlit desert with massive sphinxes and pyramids piled one upon another ; then the snow-capped summits of

Alpine heights ; anon a vista of peaceful plain stretching far away into immeasurable distance, with shining rivers of light flowing through it. Colossal Gothic piles, cathedrals, castles, and turreted city walls seemingly solid enough to endure for ages, loomed forth grandly a moment, then crumbled and melted into a city of white palaces and bridges, of Moorish mosques and minarets, gilded and glistening in the sun, while in the distance gayly decorated sails of lugger and sloop floated over a still blue, as of the Bosphorus.

So might some mighty master of music—a deified Beethoven, or Wagner—translate, not into sound, but into form and color, some majestic opera, a “Niebe-

lungenlied," or a "Valküre," in which should be reflected the passions of a human soul, with stature risen to the skies and having the firmament of heaven for a playground. For bursts of melody, flowing rivers of sound and dulcet cadences, there were the thrilling tones of exhaustless Niagaras of light, at whose magic touch slumbering, shapeless, colorless chaos awakened into life and into plastic form and color—form which, as if in joyful consciousness of being, manifested the composer's varying thought in ever increasing revelations of beauty.

Gradually the movement of the scene subsided behind a bronze-flecked veil of diaphanous smoke, which was presently tinted

through and through by a wave of delicious pale pink illumination. In another moment this ruddy curtain rolled away, and we found ourselves standing on a high balcony, overlooking a city the proportions and architecture of whose streets and buildings, its squares and fountains and public gardens, exceeded in magnificence those of any city, ancient or modern, that I had ever seen or read of. Domes, spires, and obelisks, lavishly covered with gold and silver, burnished here, deadened or oxidized there, reflected the splendor of the mid-day sun, as did the broad streets, cut out of solid white limestone, and flanked by walks paved with flags of rose syenite. White and

colored marbles, onyx, jasper, agate, porphyry and alabaster, ivory and ebony and bronze, and marvelously colored precious stones, formed the walls of the buildings, public and private, that lined the streets on either hand, separated from the walks and from each other by spacious grounds harmoniously laid out in flower-beds, lawns, and shrubbery.

To my modern mind, such profusion of color and the use of such masses of rich materials produced the effect of barbaric splendor, suggesting something of the savage's mania for spectacular display, gaudy, theatrical, and unmeaning. Yet I could not help admiring the exquisite skill with which all this richness of

color had been modulated in the architect's handling of terraced approaches with sculptured balustrades, and of noble porticoes whose lordly columns—square, cylindrical, fluted, convoluted or involuted, and surmounted by commanding capitals—afforded opportunity for weird, almost fantastic, effects in light and shade. Was it the Chaldean capital? or the center of a still earlier civilization?

The sounds of martial music, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the tramp of armed men, the shouts and cheers of the populace, rose to our ears.

“The king returned victorious from war yesterday; to-day he takes to himself a wife in celebra-

tion of his triumph," said Helena. "He returns from the temple to the palace for the marriage feast. Look upon his face and tell me what thou seest there."

First came three heralds, blowing bugles; then, a flock of rose-garlanded dancing girls in diaphanous draperies. Some of them scattered flowers thickly on the white roadway; others were singing; while still others played an accompaniment on various musical instruments, cymbals, reeds, and timbrels; all the company executing many graceful maneuvers as they moved along. Behind them, at a little distance, marched in a solid square a hundred mighty men-at-arms, robust and sturdy of limb, grim

and scarred of visage, armed with spears and wearing breastplates of gold and bronze.

Ah, here comes the king! He is clad from head to foot in armor of blue steel, cleverly fashioned and fitted to his figure, but totally devoid of ornamentation, except that his head-dress of the same metal, with points and trefoil encircling the lower part of the conical crown, was surmounted by an eagle in bronze. On his left arm he carried a shield of the same hard blue metal that composed his armor, which evidently combined the maximum of strength with the minimum of weight. It was also perfectly plain, except that in the center of it a great ruby, set in a white steel rim, shone



like an angry eye. In his right hand gleamed a tremendous naked sword, straight, double-edged, and pointed. A giant in stature and splendidly formed, bestriding a great black steed, who evidenced consciousness, in proudly lifted head and stately movement, of his rider's distinction, Mikalos, for such was his name, seemed every inch a War Lord. His severely plain accouterment made his personality stand out the more strongly in the midst of all the gorgeousness of the procession, surrounded as he was by officers in splendid apparel with flashing jewels in helmet and corselet.

With a fascination I could not fathom, I gazed upon his face.

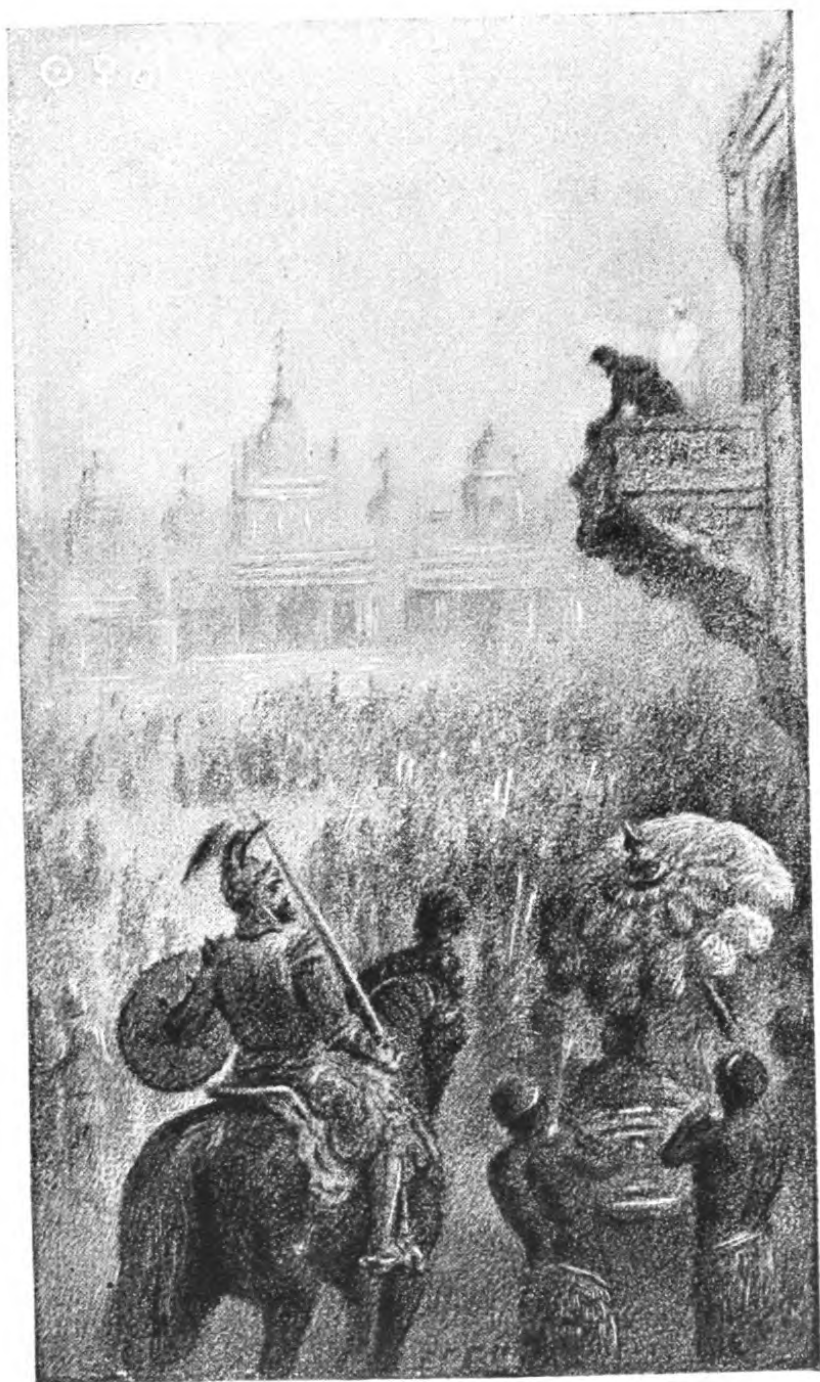
Bronzed of skin, dark-eyed, and black-bearded, it was a face that spoke ambition, determination, power, and cruelty. "A royal animal indeed! A magnificent leader in fight, a lordly, forceful, and generous monarch," said I to myself half aloud; "but I am glad I am not that man's wife."

Just then he came opposite to us, turned his gaze for a moment full upon me, and passed on. As our eyes met, I was startled beyond description. "What fearful thing is this?" I almost shrieked, clutching at my companion's arm. "Looking into, looking *through* the eyes of that man, I see—see—God help me! what is it I see? Beneath the awful armor, within the massive outer man, under this

bronzed and bearded barbarian, I see myself, Bertram Kingsley—as I might see my reflection in a mirror!”

“Thyself and not thyself,” Helena answered quietly. “Thou wert present in Mikalos Magnus, but only as this summer’s ripening fruit was present as seed in the fruit of summers past. Tell me what else thou seest.”

By an effort, I had in some sense recovered from the shock that followed this discovery of my former self. Again my eyes were fixed on the figure of the king. I was heedless of the hosts that followed, heedless of the city’s splendor and of the grandeur of the palace, which filled the vista at the end of the avenue. My



MIKAŁOS.



gaze hardly rested on the voluptuous beauty of the new-made queen reclining on a sumptuous palanquin that was borne beside the king's horse on the shoulders of four swarthy slaves, nude, save for the tiger-skins about their loins and their heavy gold armlets and anklets. As I leaned out, far over the balustrade, it seemed to me as if something went out from my very heart—as if father, brother, son, were passing from my presence forever. This was succeeded by a strange, wistful yearning, as if I sought to draw him back, to embrace him. Then, with a flourish of trumpets, the procession halted before the palace gates. As the king, dismounting, helped the

queen to alight, holding her hand and leading her within, a storm of half-stifled sobs swelled from my breast. I turned to Helena, and, laying my head on her shoulder, I wept like a child.

“This anguish is almost more than I can bear,” I sobbed. “But a moment ago I said I should not like to be the king’s wife. Now I love him as though I were a woman; love him as though heaven, as if life itself, were in his smile—death in his frown. To be held close in his arms, to feel his kisses on my face, I would barter all my hopes of future bliss. But my love seems hopeless; he has turned from me. He is lost to me forever. For has he not taken to wife another?”

“So God created man in His own image ; in the image of God created He him ; *male and female* created He them.”

The words of Holy Writ, uttered in slow, soft, distinct tones by Helena, struck upon my senses with a flood of meaning undreamed before.

“Thy father speaks to thee now, even as he did then.”

I raised my head and looked in the direction she pointed. A cloud obscured the view for a moment, and when it vanished I found myself looking upon the courtyard of a palace at night. The figures of a man and a woman came into view at a turn in the path. They were walking together and conversing in low,



earnest voices. The moonlight illuminated the face of the man, while leaving that of the woman in shadow. It was a noble face and form, this man's—that of the inspired priest and prophet. His flowing white hair and beard, deep blue and expressive eyes, and lofty forehead, betokened the venerable sage, while his erect figure and firm steps showed that the dignity of age was unmarred by physical weakness.

This time I did not start at the revelation that was conveyed to me. While it was in some respects more remarkable than any that had preceded it, I seemed to have been in a measure prepared, and saw in the priest's face only what I had half expected to see.

I saw—my mother! *my mother, and my father*; my mother, as she stood beside me enfolded in and enfolding my father in the perfect blending of two equal and essential principles of the human soul, the expression of whose individual completeness is made possible only by the completeness of their union. Oh, most perfect and most beautiful of all manifestations of the Divine in the Human! How more than blessed are eyes that have looked upon such glory! Thrilled, transfigured, aglow with holiest emotion, I turned to my companion, and my opened eyes beheld again the marvel and the mystery of the twain in one, developed from the one in twain. Again I

fell upon my knees reverently, saying :

“Oh, most glorious man-woman! father-mother! *Now* do I know that God hath made man in His own image ; that God liveth and is all in all ! I bow my head in happy, holy worship of the Divine Father-Mother, whose unity is in thee, so grandly figured and shown forth to my poor mortal sense ; whose perfection is worthy of all praise, all worship, all seeking and striving after.”

“Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect !”

Again the old Bible words, whispered low, flowed in upon my spirit and mingled their meaning with all my consciousness.

“Rise, my son,” continued

Helena ; “ rise, and worship with me the Father-Mother, Maker, Lord of All. Not prone, as a miserable worm of the dust ; not as a prodigal, ‘ forgetting the glories he hath known and that imperial palace whence he came,’ but as a child of God, conscious of sonship and claiming his rightful heritage. Worship not on bended knee, but standing firm and erect on your feet, with eyes uplifted and hands stretched forth to heaven, in praise, in thanksgiving, in love ! ”

Thus did we stand a moment in silent prayer. The sound of the priest’s voice in the garden suddenly recalled me to the scene before us.

“ Bravely indeed, Lucilia, hast

thou borne thy pain this night,  
and masked the misery eating  
out thine heart," he said in a  
comforting voice. "Thou hast  
forced the smile to thy lips;  
sweetly hast thou sung as a  
blinded bird, and upon the harp  
hast thou played airs ravishing  
to the ears—thou, poor sufferer,  
helping to make merry the mar-  
riage feast! Yet the sound of thy  
voice, the music of thy harp, ever  
and anon touched the king's face  
with a shade of melancholy amid  
all the wild intoxication of pas-  
sion, fed by the fumes of strong  
wines, of rich viands, and of  
air laden with the fragrance of  
roses and poppies. Be brave still,  
my daughter! If thou wilt not  
remain second in the palace,

where since dawn of womanhood thou hast been first; if thou canst not be content to share with another the love of Mikalos, thou must choose between death and banishment. And banishment means a convent prison situated in the remote fastnesses of a dark and distant forest, within whose walls no man is ever permitted, and whence thou canst never hope to emerge—never in this life. Thy life, thy happiness, thy presence, are dearer to me than all else on earth; but thy soul is dearer, and thy choice must be free and thine own.”

The maiden,—for such she appeared,—turned, and with a quick motion took the old man’s hands in hers and looked him

full in the face. As she did so, her own features came out in bold relief in the moonlight. Ah, *now* I knew why the sight of the king and his bride had so moved me ; now the strange, mysterious womanly passion of longing and despair that had passed through me was made plain. For in this girl's white face I saw myself even more distinctly than I had seen myself in the king's face ; and my higher, better, truer, purer self, my Agnes !

Brushing the tears from her eyes, she spoke with calm determination. "I have already chosen, dearest and best of fathers," she said. "Believe me, it is not because of the wound to my vanity, cruel as that is ; not because I

spurn the woman my husband has put in my place ; not from pride or jealousy, that I refuse to live longer in the royal household. I am young, and so filled with the joy and sweetness of living that death is indeed a bitter, bitter thought to me. But death would be sweet, would be welcomed gladly, were it my only escape from the selfish life in the palace with slaves at my call, with rich raiment and jewels, flowers and music, and every ease and luxury that wealth and power may command. My father, thou knowest well I have been, I am, the *wife* of Mikalos. He has been, and must ever be, my husband. I cannot become less than his wife, even in appearance. Love has



been ever the bond of our union, the inspiration of our every embrace. I cannot be false to love. I will not shame my father; I will not wrong my husband, wrong my own soul, wrong the God within me, by prostituting to passion embraces consecrated to love. Yet father—dear father—it is agony intense and ever increasing to live without him, so that I long for death. Ever since the king wedded this stranger princess who holds him in thrall by her black and wicked magic, it has been difficult for me to restrain myself from seeking release by plunging this dagger into my heart.”

And she touched the jeweled hilt of a weapon that gleamed in her belt.

“Poor child!” the father sighed. “Thy lot is hard, but dost thou remember what I have taught thee, of the larger life in which the body is but as a garment to the real self, put on and off, over and over again in one’s progress through the ages, as need arises? Surely, in all thy anguish, thou hast not forgotten that God, who is all-wise, ordereth all things well; thou canst not forget that to the wise there is no evil, that all is good.”

“Yea,” replied Lucilia. “It is because of the wisdom thou hast taught me that I am strong in mine adversity. It is because of the faith that is in me that I can now be calm and true. I am thankful that the king does not

force me to the sin of self-slaughter. I have been very happy in his love. Among the company of saintly and consecrated women with whom the little of life that remains to me must be passed, I shall strive to prove my thankfulness by devotion to God and my sisters, in sincere and loving service."

"It is well!" said the old priest, as if much relieved. "Bearers are in waiting to convey you at once to the convent. We must say farewell."

She buried her head a moment on his breast, then lifted it and spoke in a voice vibrant with restrained emotion:

"Not 'farewell,' father; but, *until to-morrow*—a happy to-morrow. We shall surely meet again,

and I know, whether it be a year or ten thousand years hence, that I shall come again to my own and mine own shall come to me with rejoicing. But one thing more; pray take to the king these flowers, which we both love so well, and say to him that when we do meet in another life, I shall give him such flowers for a sign."

And she plucked from her dress and held toward him—a bunch of violets.

Again came that tug at my heart-strings. I put out my hands, seeking to touch her, to make her aware of my presence, and again the cry broke from me, "Agnes, my love, I come to thee!"

Even as I spoke the scene that

had appeared so real—the speaking, moving humans who seemed so vividly alive—faded before my eyes, or rather seemed to melt into the rosy cloud.

“The time has come for thy return to earth-life and to love and labor among thy fellows until thou shalt, by overcoming earthly karma, have earned exemption from earthly re-birth and the power to rise to higher spheres. Thou hast been granted a glimpse of life on one of those advanced planets, wherein is enjoyed in full development, the supreme gift of *memory*. Thou hast looked upon a living picture in the astral light—which holds the perpetual record of every thought and deed of man—on one episode of



"IT SHALL BE A SIGN."



many in thy earthly existence ten thousand years ago. Thou hast looked, recognized, and remembered. The memory thus revived will bring to your mind other scenes of other times in which the seed there sown was reaped. Now in the male, then in the female form, have upper and nether selves lived on earth in the body of flesh, or in earth's atmosphere in the body of spirit. In this flower, the masculine and feminine principles, on one stem, almost in one body, with scarcely differing form, one in color and fragrance, as one in underlying and invisible substance, unite to express themselves in a perfect whole. So shalt thou, male and female, in a union of the two



equal and complementary principles of the human made divine, express God's image in its completeness."

Helena had passed from my view and her voice seemed to come from within the cloud. As she ended, the cloud again rolled away, and I beheld in the air above my head the violet she had plucked. It was now luminous like a star; diffusing a deep, soft, glowing and all-pervading violet light, which illuminated the inmost recesses and the outmost reaches of my being. First, as in exquisite intaglios cut in sapphires, I saw the portraits of Agnes and myself—our flower faces. Then the portraits of Lucilia and Mikalos loomed out of the violet rays, in a

succession of scenes depicting their love-life. Cleopatra and Charmion flashed forth in the one brief, intense, passionate picture Agnes had recalled and described to Lady Warden. This was followed in quick succession by many other vivid passages, among which I recognized the old palace of Fontainebleau, the Field of the Cloth of Gold, Francis and Diane, Napoleon and Josephine.

In every scene, the one in twain were united in love for the flower from which they had sprung; were divided as by light and darkness, a greater and a lesser good. But the real man ever shone in the depths of the better woman's soul, as the real woman lived in the better man. All experiences,

joys and sorrows, were but as the lights and shadows in which the one soul sought constantly increasing development toward the perfection of the ego. Apparent failure and separation in the past seemed but to furnish new forces for the impulsion toward greater union in the present. As in Aldrich's beautiful poem, the lower self seemed ever at my heels, ever ready to claim me and to drag me down into the darkness, should I step aside from the path or stand still a moment in it ; while the higher self as constantly beckoned me forward to the realms of light.

. . . . .  
All this review of the centuries  
occupied a space of time much

less than it has taken to tell it—so brief a period indeed, that when I opened my eyes in the best bedroom of the Hôtel de l'Aigle Noir, the sound of my own voice was still in my ears and the words, "Agnes, my love, I come to thee," had but just passed my lips.

Looking up I saw the dear face of my beloved bending over me, her eyes looking anxiously into mine, a bunch of wood violets in her hand.

"The doctor has just gone," said Agnes. "He told us you had been dead for an hour; I felt that your life was somehow bound up in these flowers, they so strangely affected your breathing. I bring them to you for a sign."

We were alone, and as she

spoke, bending over me, her eyes looking full into mine, a fuller and clearer meaning seemed to be given to the wonderful experiences that I had just passed through. Once more, the almost indescribable sense of oneness with my beloved possessed me. I drew her head down to me close, close, until all my being seemed merged in the deep, dark eyes, and our spirits mingled in a long rapturous kiss.

. . . . .  
Six weeks afterward we were on the deck of an ocean steamer in mid-Atlantic. The wedding had been a quiet and happy one, in the pretty church of the old Kentish village belonging to the ancestral demesne of the Kings-



“FOR A SIGN.”



leys. Now, after a few weeks in the old English home, we were speeding across the Atlantic for a long visit to my wife's well-loved country. Arthur was not in England for the wedding, having departed for America soon after the announcement of our betrothal, declaring, in a little note of congratulation to me, that business of importance connected with his ranch in Montana called him across the Atlantic. It appeared, however, from a letter Agnes received from old friends in New York, just before our departure, that the dear boy had not yet arrived any nearer to Montana than New York. The delay was accounted for by something more than a polite interest in Agnes'



pretty cousin who was, it appeared, exceedingly fond of *Jacque* roses.

We were leaning together over the rail near the stern and somewhat apart from the other passengers. The sea was still and the sun was just setting on the horizon. The serenity of soul, the full, deep peace, which had filled us since our marriage, now seemed to grow, in this stillness, into a calm that was holy. We had been talking of our visions and dwelling upon the uplift and expansion of consciousness which revived memory of many incarnations had brought to both. For me, many questions had been answered, much of the mystery of life made plain; still my spirit questioned, I was feeling as if all

the illumination that had come to me was but preparation for a new and crowning unfoldment, now near at hand. The realization of "the thee in me and the me in thee," which almost obliterated sense of thee or me in my union with Agnes, was surely but the key to a greater mystery.

"Up from Earth's Center through the  
Seventh Gate

I rose and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
And many a Knot unraveled by the Road ;  
But not the Master-Knot of Human Fate.

"There was the Door to which I found no  
Key ;

There was the Veil through which I could  
not see ;

Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee

There was—and then no more of Thee  
and Me."

I repeated the lines softly,  
breaking the silence which had

lasted several minutes. There was something in the face of my wife, her eyes fixed on the descending sun, which told me that her spirit was filled with the vision splendid, and that light had come bringing to her wisdom which should answer the question in my words.

“Tell me what you see,” said I.

She turned to me quickly, placing a hand in mine. Then in quick, glad accents she said :

“You shall see it, too. Look with me into this great glory of blending sun and sea.”

A few minutes we stood thus, and it seemed to me that I became consciously at one with all the beauty of the sea. I seemed to float out on the burnished

waters and was made part of all the splendor of the sun. Feeling this, my being seemed to expand until it filled sea and air ; until it seemed to contain the universe, as it was contained in it. New, strange exaltation possessed me ; the love in my heart for Agnes seemed to well up strong and wonderful in a love for all humanity.

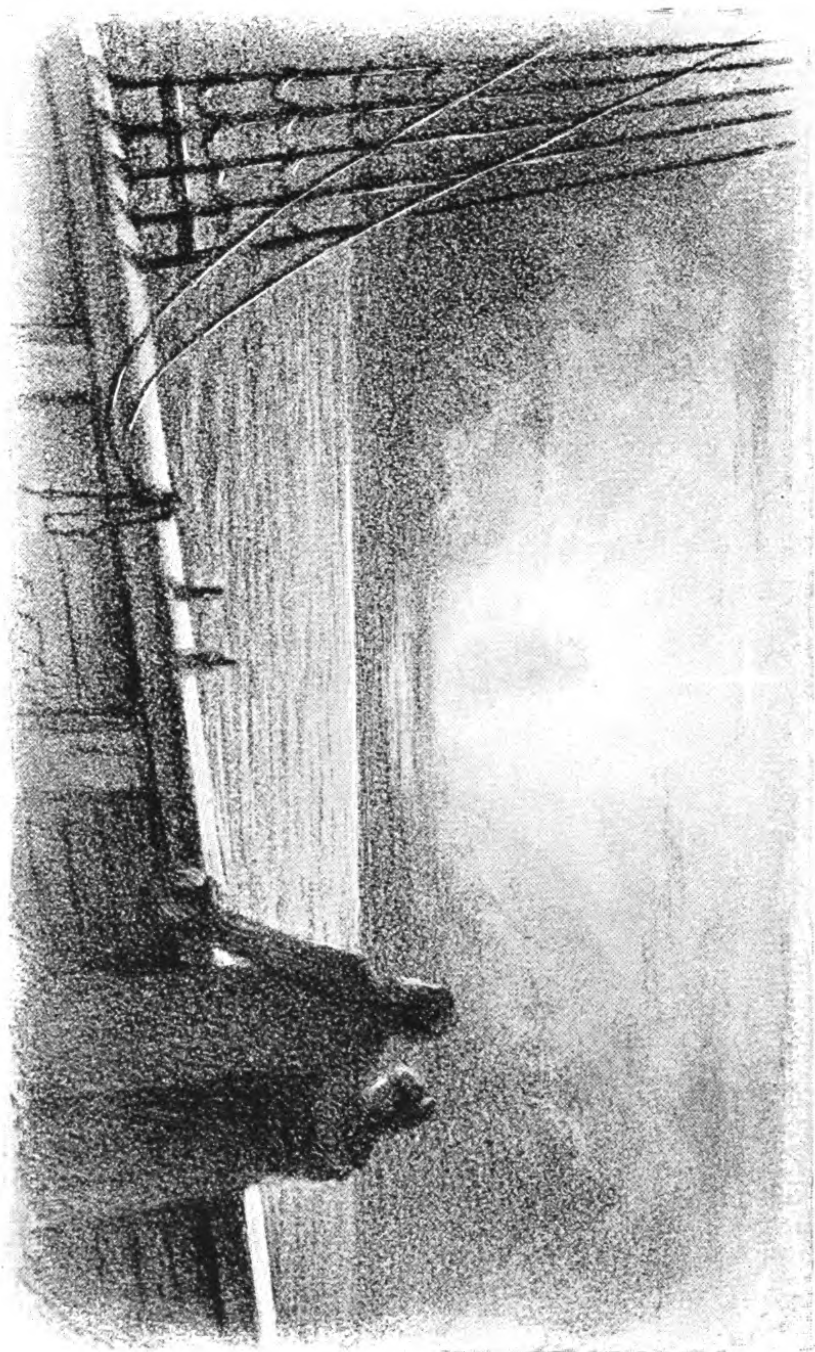
And yet, my spirit called out to see and know " The One " ; to see and know Him in more than this all-filling, all-pervading love ; to see and know Him humanly ; to see and know Him personally ; to see and know Him in the Supreme Incarnation of God in Man.

Agnes spoke, answering my unuttered thought and drawing my

eyes again to the horizon where the sun was now sinking fast.

“Behold!” she said, “He appeareth. He, whose glory filleth the Heavens; He, whose humanity brings Him close to the least of us—one with the least of us—in tenderest, deepest love. That we know the joy of oneness in each other, dearest Bertram, is a glory made possible only through oneness with Him. In Him alone is made fully manifest the incarnation of God in leaf and flower, in star and planet, in all the wonderful harmony of the universe. Sun of God and Sun of Man, standing at the summit of humanity, as Man stands at the summit of Creation, He is in himself the crowning incarnation of

"BEING BLENDED WITH SEA AND SKY."





the Father of All Spirits; of the Source and Center of Life; the manifest incarnation of God who is Love."

As she ceased speaking, my eyes were blessed by a vision of unutterable beauty. The Son of Man seemed to emerge from the sun, as it sank beneath His feet, leaving Him standing upon the waters robed in light. His hands were outstretched, His face illumined, His eyes speaking sweetest, tenderest love. Far off, yet near, He seemed—the splendid Flower of all the Universe; the Sun that lighteth the World, King Omnipotent, Prince of Peace—yet closer than the closest, dearer than the dearest. One vivid moment He stood thus;



the next He faded into the golden glory of the western heavens.

“Now, I am satisfied,” I exclaimed softly. “No veil longer separates Him from me ; I know God lives ! ”

We moved swiftly closer to each other. It seemed as if earth, sky, and sun had been called as witnesses to a most solemn renewal of our nuptial vows. The thought of both was expressed in the single word that Agnes breathed softly as she lifted her eyes to mine :

“ *One !* ”

