PAGES FROM
THE LIFE OF A PAGAN

A ROMANCE OF THE REAL

BY

MRS. WALTER TIBBITS

Author of The Voice of the Orient and Cities Seen

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AVE KASHI!

OUR REST
Precincts of the Temple of the Lord of the Universe.
TOUCHING THE TALE

This tale is at once realistic and anachronistic. All the episodes in it dealing with Indian administration are, to the best of my belief, true. But they took place during the reigns of several Viceroy's, and no single one of the administrators, nor any other person in the story, except those called by their own cognomina are meant for any one person.

There was an Italian royal tour in India, and also a Royal duel, which made the victor the idol of Italy, but apart from these bare facts, all the rest re the Spanish royal personage in the story is fictitious, simply and solely the product of my imagination, and the royal character is compounded from the study of several royal persons met in various parts of the globe.

The occult phenomena described will not tax the credulity of those who have impinged on even the fringe of the occult world. They deal with only the A.B.C. of Occultism as known to Orientals. The phenomenon of levitation, which some may think the most remarkable, is known even to the profaners of the West. There are countless instances of it in history as well as in our own time. The Carmelite nun, Theresa, was
levitated so frequently during Mass that special messengers were sent to Rome for instructions how to deal with it. Mrs. Hugh Fraser narrates in "A Diplomatist's Wife in Many Lands" that she saw a "holy priest levitated before the altar."

The famous medium, Mrs. Guppy Volchman, was carried from her house at Highbury over London in trance and deposited in a room at Hackney in presence of many witnesses.

As to the phenomenon of clairvoyance or glimpsing into the finer astral world on which the outer physical scena is moulded, so many persons at our present stage of evolution are familiar with it at first hand, that any apologies on its account are needless.

The main interest of the story, however, to many will lie in the analysis of the psychology of a woman's soul. How far this is realistic each man who reads it will try, and each woman will succeed, in judging for themselves.
PART I
CHAPTER I

There seems to be nothing too small and paltry to which a woman's body and soul may not be sacrificed; a father's honour, a brother's debts, a family seat, food and clothing, even a mere roof; a few words uttered in ignorance before a clergyman, any stupid fetish, any narrow convention of dishonourable honour—for all these things women's splendid pagan passion is hourly betrayed, wasted, poured out upon the ground.—The Love Seeker.

The place was Lucknow, the month was mid-April, and the time a few years ago. All Oudh, and indeed all the United Provinces, was gathered into that garden where the colouring matter of the flowers is literally derived from human corpuscles, where the *bignonia venusta* throws a gorgeous orange velvet pall across Lawrence's grave. It was a memorable, a unique occasion. The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry was one of the regiments incarcerated in the Residency in '57. Forty-two years after it was quartered again in Lucknow, and had erected a memorial in the garden to their comrades who had fallen during the siege. The long arm of coincidence had added the coping stone to the ceremony. Lady Inglis, the venerable widow of the Brigadier-General who commanded the besieged force, and whose diary of the siege forms one of the most heart-stirring annals of those awful days, happened to be visiting friends in Calcutta at the time, and had accepted the invitation of the
Colonel and officers of the regiment to be present at the dedication of the memorial and to make a speech. She was followed by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, whose personality again added a unique touch to the occasion. For Sir Antony McDonnell was not a fussy, frock-coated fool. He had abnormal talent, abnormal niceness to "natives," and therefore abnormal unpopularity among Sahib log. He had risen from a Board School to occupy a position which Lord Curzon has aptly described as the highest an ordinary subject of the Crown can aspire to. It was said that his manners in society were somewhat brusque, and that to dine with him was an ordeal. He was hated by Anglo-Indians. But he was adored by the people, and his speech that afternoon was an inspiration.

"There is no spot of Indian soil which is so much endeared to Englishmen as the ground on which we stand," he cried. "There are other places round which cling memories of greater sadness; there are places which we identify with swifter triumphs. But to no place on Indian soil do we attach the blended memory of suffering, of unfailing endurance, of devoted bravery, and of final triumph which we attach to the Lucknow Residency. It would be difficult to conceive a more striking picture than is at this moment
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presented to our gaze. These war-worn walls; these honoured graves, eloquent of duty done; this famous regiment now marshalled on this hallowed ground for the first time since they left it on that November night over forty years ago; this remnant of the comrades, native and European, who stood by you shoulder to shoulder through the siege; and finally this most pathetic figure, a gracious link between the present and the past, the sharer of your struggles and your triumph, vividly recalling the gallant soldier who led you to victory—all these appeal powerfully to the imagination. It is a scene worthy of a great painter's brush; to find a parallel for it we must abandon the records of prosaic life, and search through the pages of romance. It is a scene never to be forgotten, and we all thank you with full hearts for allowing us to participate in it, and for giving us one more inspiring memory which can only fade with life itself."

Even the callous, cynical crowd of jaded, sallow faces was sobered for a moment. For a few minutes they ceased their senseless jokes, and hackneyed speculations as to whether they would get off to the hills this week or next. Then the speaker descended from the rostrum; the Colonel's lady resumed her worn smile of many seasons to receive their congratulations, and the crowd dispersed.
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The wives of the senior member of the Council and the Judicial Commissioner paired off down the garden together. They had been described by a man in the Education Department, and one singularly able to judge, as the two cleverest women in India, though in widely differing ways. Lady Gabb was known from Peshawur to Cape Comorin as the cleverest Becky in India. She was the daughter of a railway guard. When she left her convent school at the age of sixteen, where she had carried off every possible prize, she realised, and rightly, that her talents fitted her for a higher sphere than that of the ticket collector who would normally have been her mate and fate. She aspired to the Sub-Commissioner, Mr. Gabb. His collar was never clean, his limbs were all askew, as he suffered from chronic arthritis, but he was Heaven-born—a member of the covenanted Civil Service—and she laid her plans accordingly.

In India "first" and "second class" people are divided by a greater gulf than Dives and Lazarus. In the ordinary course of events he would never have heard of her existence. But from that day Gabb Sahib's clothes were exquisitely mended and never a button missing. Surprised and delighted, he questioned the servants. He called at the modest bungalow. He was greeted by a fairy in spotless white with
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dazzling blue eyes and corn-coloured hair. In a few weeks Jessie de Cruza was travelling full speed, via the altar of the Roman Catholic chapel, to be Jessica, Lady Gabb.

She was voted an unqualified success. If her Parisian costumes, troops of admirers, and uncanny cleverness made her unpopular in a society composed of feminine nonentities, they did not dare to show their teeth because, as she once rather plainly expressed it, “I shut their mouths by covers laid for eighty at a time.” She was also a reader, and a student, and if her crowded life made her rather superficial, not everyone found it out like the “toxicologist,” of whom she once inquired with intelligent anticipation: “What are the tenets of your religion?” Many years had elapsed since the convent days and, as she boldly repaired the ravages of the enemy on her aquiline features, she was known in a society which has a horrible aptitude for nicknames, as “the painted snipe.”

Her companion was of a different order. Carmen Carden had been born into an aristocratic Irish family. Her father, General Carden, had gone as a gay young officer to the Crimea. He had been sobered in the trenches of Sebastopol. There he had received two things, both well marked for life. The bursting of a shell had given him a scar; Gordon, later of Khartoum,
who then messed with his regiment, had given him religion. Henceforth "Carden of the Buffs" was known as one of that band of "Christian officers" who were the terror of Army doctors in hospital wards. Their well meant attempts at converting the patients always resulted in higher temperatures. Even the religious tyranny of a man, however, is usually bearable, and Carmen's course might have run smooth had her father not married en secondes noces a woman of like mind to himself. She was of bourgeois birth, the daughter of a rich retired shopkeeper of Lancaster Gate. She belonged to the mid-Victorian era, when hideous furniture, and a hideous religion, were rampant together. Carmen was so small at the time that she had to be carried down the stairs by the butler. But she went to bed in nightly horror of being awakened by the last trump, of seeing the heavens parted as a scroll, and the moon turned into blood. This good resulted, however: when Carmen, later on, found her stepmother's religious régime unbearable at home, she sought and obtained permission to leave the house in order to obtain a B.Sc. degree at London University. She passed with honours but with a breakdown in health. Her father then sent her to Malta to visit friends of his.

The voyage to Malta only takes a week. In
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the last three days of it, between the sea-green lights of Algeciras and the rosy flushes of Melita, the whole course of Carmen Carden’s life was changed. Up to that time she had hardly met a man. Now, two men had asked her to marry them and she had accepted one of them. The first was Ralph Scaife and, brilliant match though he was, he met with an unconditional refusal, for Carmen was at that time, and remained for many years after, untouched by the world’s slow stain. Mr. Scaife was physically unattractive and he had a “game leg” from an accident. All her life Carmen had dreamed, as girls do, of one who would one day come to complete her existence. Every night, after a day’s bullying, she had soothed herself to sleep with the thought of the kisses which would one night leave her no longer alone. Therefore she never thought twice about refusing the stout, heavy, middle-aged man stumping about the deck, though he offered her almost every advantage that the world could give.

On the same ship which was taking Miss Carden to Malta and Mr. Scaife to Bombay, was a young naval lieutenant, aged thirty, who was travelling via Port Said to join Sir Harry Johnston’s expedition to put down the Slave Trade in Nyassaland. He was very good looking, with auburn curly hair, and amber eyes. He had also a superficial cleverness which
appealed to the girl who knew nothing of life outside laboratories.

"Come aft," he said, one afternoon, as the vessel was approaching Malta. Carmen never forgot the last hour of her first voyage. It was the first, and also the last, hour of Eden, untouched by the serpent's hiss of shame, that the voyage of her life was ever to know. Three months later, when boarding a slave dhow on the African lake, he was shot dead by the Arab slave catcher from the side.

At the close of the Malta season Carmen returned to her father's house. One month of her stepmother's nagging and hammering on a delicately poised temperament accomplished what no amount of worldly advantages would ever have tempted her to do. When Ralph Scaife returned to India from his next year's leave he took Carmen with him. If censorious readers, who have themselves enjoyed easy lives, object that a girl so intellectually well endowed as Carmen ought instead to have sought refuge as a governess from her stepmother's religious persecution, one can only reply that she, who was the product of picked men and women of the ruling class for eight generations, was not of the stuff of which governesses are made. For the rest, she was tall, wore her clothes and carried herself with supreme distinction, and had eyes
which had been described as like to the depths of a coal mine.

Carmen never forgot the mingled horror and relief of her wedding day. She had known all the time that she was doing wrong. As she walked from the chancel steps to the altar rail for the final benediction from a Christian clergyman on the impious compact forced upon her by Christian people, she had wondered with a dull defiance what punishment would befall her for her act of sacrilege. Then had followed a train journey, during which the bridegroom had been immersed in his Indian mail, just arrived; a dinner in the hotel at which the unseen guest was a still alarm rising with every course to an ill-concealed terror. Then followed a quiet talk in a corner of the palm lounge.

"My child," her elderly husband had said, "I can see you are frightened to death. I cannot expect you to feel any love of one sort for an old fellow like me. It would be unnatural, monstrous. But I knew you were miserable at home. I am a lonely old man; I wanted the companionship of your youth and beauty to cheer me. We have the same tastes and interests, for you are one of the cleverest women I know. Also, I wanted someone to look after my house and to help me entertain. I will take care of you and protect you, and I know you will do nothing to
disgrace my name. Run off and sleep well and look upon me as your best friend."

The punishment was not to come after all, thought the delighted girl, as her maid unlaced her new evening dress. She forgot that "the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small."

Lady Gabb and Mrs. Scaife thus met as the two leading ladies of Lucknow during the absence of the Lieutenant-Governor's wife, who only occupies Government House for a few weeks during the year, as she has also a palatial residence at Allahabad and a summer residence at Naini Tal. Although so different in disposition, they had been firm friends for many years, for they were both above the pettiness which mars most feminine friendships.

"My dear," Lady Gabb said, "Gabriel had a wire from Simla this afternoon that a 'Man-man' (by which she meant a royal personage) is arriving from Bombay to-morrow. Our special train for the spring tour leaves to-night, so it is impossible for me to do the civil to him. I must turn him over to you."

"Oh, Jessica," replied her friend, "have mercy! Will he be like that Grand Duke who spat cherry stones on your table, said 'Gott in Himmel!' all the time, and got angry because you hadn't any lager beer?"
"No, child," replied the Councillor's wife, "he is a Spanish Man-man, so he will say 'Dio Santol' and be seductive, and if you were not such an icicle, I should advise you to be careful. He will stay with his suite at Government House for the night, and I want you to give them dinner."

"Rather a large order, to spring a Royal Personage and suite on a meek individual! How many are there of them?"

"Not more than half a dozen," replied the Bara Mem, airily. "You'll manage them! Bye, bye—I leave you to your fate!" She peacocked into her carriage and pair with the scarlet and gold liveries—it was before motors had made day hideous—and, blowing a kiss to Carmen, and bowing right and left to the crowd collected at the gate, bowled rapidly off to the station.

Carmen summoned her own victoria, but she did not drive straight home. Spring in Oudh is indeed a gorgeous affair. In India all the big trees burst into flower in the springtide. The most tremendous of all is the "gold mohur tree," so called in popular parlance because each vermilion blossom has a gold heart, and these form against the azure sky flaming masses of indescribable beauty. Carmen had been confined indoors much of the day on account of the great heat. She now ordered her coachman to
drive along a road, hung with the glorious banners of the gold mohur, in order to enjoy their wonderful beauty. The ether vibrates perceptibly with the joy of Oudh in spring, so that the flowers are limned in a shimmering haze unseen in other lands. Other giant trees ring bells of scarlet wax, dropping with a thud upon the ground, for all the forest trees of India flower, but none can rival the monarch, the gold mohur, in its sumptuous array. They alternated with the neem chameli, another big tree whose flowers are creamy tubes forming a pattern as of a bridal veil. Green parrots with scarlet bills nestled in the branches, and the sweet evening air was pregnant with perfumes of which the champa, or Indian jasmine, whose blossoms are sacred to Shri Krishna, the god of earthly love, was the most overpowering.

The carriage turned into the Daulat Khana Gardens, the royal pleasure grounds, made by that hapless dynasty of whom only forty years before children had sung in English nurseries:

“The King of Oudh is very proud.”

The pride and the pomp of Oudh has been trampled under foot by John Bull, but the gardens of the old kings remain, where the water runs in rills beneath the orange trees, where the bright colouring of the golden fruit against the glossy leaves, and the sweet scent of the bridal
flowers, blooming there too, all proclaim the beauty of a springtime in Oudh.

Carmen left her carriage and strolled down an avenue lined with the white clustered syringa blossoms, breathing a still more powerful fragrance, to a deserted palace which rose like a temple from a great syringa thicket—one of her best-loved haunts. She passed in and paused beside a row of portraits of that past proud dynasty of kings. Carmen was a very strong royalist. Her family had served the British Crown with fierce loyalty for three centuries, and had gained from it, incidentally, a fair heritage. Lady Gabb's news had again brought a royal aura about her. She looked at the row of monarchs with a kindling glance.

Carmen herself owned a portrait of Ghazi ud Din, one bought from a man in the bazaar, to whom "the women folk" of the family had sold it on the death of the king's relative. It had been taken in youth. The beautiful glowing eyes and delicate features had not yet been hardened by the fury of the Padshah Begum who, later, tore his hair, his robes and vests.

Ghazi ud Din had been a man of charming manners, the patron of art and literature, and even this portrait was kingly though the features had been hardened by the wear and tear of his worser half's temper.
Wajid Ali Shah was the last of that hapless line. His portrait was carefully curtained lest it should offend Western eyes, because a portion of the royal person is exposed which Europeans are only accustomed to gaze upon when dames of high degree are in *grande tenue*. Laden with jewels, with earrings, and bracelets formed of one single emerald between two priceless pearls; no crown, a tiny cap poised jauntily upon the long-curlèd ringlets, a vase of flowers beside him in place of a sword, yet even he showed the consciousness of power and of royal race seen in every one of the ten assuredly as the heron’s plume of royalty in their head-dress. And beside them, as a fearsome bathos, were the self-conscious, simpering portraits of a viceregal pair.

Carmen pulled aside the veil from the last royal portrait. It was a shameful one of a shameless man. Yet his deposition was the main cause of the Oudh mutiny. Albeit he had goaded his subjects almost to insurrection, yet they rose as one man against the feringhis who had brought law, order, and prosperity.

“The enthusiasm of the people was immense. I believed natives incapable of displaying so much feeling. The air resounded with shouts, ‘Badshah salamat!’ (‘Greeting to thee, O King!’); ‘Badshahat phir bani rahe’ (‘May your
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kingdom again be established!'); 'Landhan se hukum a jawe' ('May the order arrive from London'); 'Badshah salamat, salamat!' was heard everywhere. Then deep curses were imprecated on the heads of the Feringhis. 'I judged it best to disappear,' said an acquaintance, when the King drove away from his palace for the last time.'

Was there then a divine right of kings? Was there something in royal blood which set it a thing apart? Above the rules which bind the crowd?

Pondering these problems, Carmen passed out on to the verandah to look at the view. It was framed in red sandstone pillars, covered with the orange creeper, and the scarlet hibiscus blazed just below. Men talk much of the delicacy of Agra, the golden grandeur of Delhi, the ascetic sanctity of Benares. But because of the horrors which had birth in its midst, they overlook the extreme beauty of Lucknow as an oriental city, with its palaces and forests of minarets for miles along the banks of the Gumti, because of the horrors which had birth in their midst. At her feet, far below, lay an immense tank. On the right of this was a group of nine palms screening the gilt dome of the Hosainabad, the last word in meretriciousness, the seven-storied tower which the Mutiny left uncompleted and the towering
minarets of the Jama Musjid. On the left the immense pile of the Imambara was framed in a foreground of palms. Between the trees forming the background of the tank Carmen counted six small mosques rearing miniature minarets, all built by Mahommed Ali Shah. In all there were ten mosques of varying sizes forming a forest of minarets and palms. As Carmen gazed, entranced, an elephant came slowly lumbering out of the city gate. The royal beast recalled her from her dreams. She passed down the broad steps and drove home. The way lay past the mighty pile of the Imambara, the white spiritual beauty of the Fakirs' Musjid on the hill, its two delicate spires pointing high above. Then came the ruined Residency with the bougainvillea hanging from the Italian pillars of the loggia and, close by, the burning bush of the venusta, a hideous combination, even of flowers, with less ethereal lights and skies. But these vivid, glowing colours formed fit drappings for the flat slab covering Lawrence who "tried to do his duty," for Fulton, of the Bengal Engineers, who had had his head blown off as he watched the enemy's port fire; for Major Banks, and for the tall pillar of General Neilland all his gallant company. Then came the last vision of beauty before the carriage rolled into her own gate, the fairy pile of the Chutter Munzil completing the colour scheme
of Royal Lucknow in spring of cream and gold, purple, crimson and orange.

Her bungalow was one of the finest in Civil Lines. It was situated beneath the gilt umbrella of the Umbrella Palace, and surrounded by all the umbrella domes of the departed dynasty of Oudh, in grounds where once the five thousand ladies of the Royal Harem lived. The cream and gold of the piled up palace was capped by the gold umbrella proudly borne aloft and glinting red in the setting sun. A stone thrown from her garden would easily hit the Chutter Munzil, whose loveliness was doubled into the blue stream beneath. The aquamarine Gumti is bordered by crimson sedges, and on the other side is the Dilarum Kothi, where the Royal Librarian lived whose "Court of an Eastern King" is the best description left to us of the last days of Royal Oudh. The Judicial Commissioner's bungalow is situated exactly between the Residency garden and the Gumti.

When Carmen entered this atmosphere of carefully cultivated beauty she always felt that the outer world with its fret and turmoil was shut away. She and her husband were the greatest friends. Ralph Scaife was adored by Indians because he did not know the meaning of race prejudice, with the result that they had absolute confidence in him, and trusted him in all things. A
Rajah would place a palace at the disposal of "Escaife Sahib" as readily as his subordinate judges in the small courts would trust him with their most private affairs. As one of the two Judicial Commissioners for the Province, terrible responsibilities and tremendous work were required of him, in return for the handsome salary of rupees 4,500 a month which he drew.

Carmen was expecting him home from the Courts every moment for tea, and immediately she heard his step she called to the butler to bring the mango ices, and the custard apples, which were waiting on the ice outside, in addition to the dainty tea table already spread. He looked jaded and worn after the long day spent in the crowded Court, and she knew he had many hours' work still before him, in writing out judgments on the cases.

"You do look tired, Ralph," she said. "Have you had a particularly heavy day?"

"The usual thing—murder for the desecration of a mosque. And whichever way the judgment goes, the Raj. will get the kicks. Religion is the root of all evil, it seems to me."

"Well, never mind that now, Ralph," and she bathed his forehead with eau de cologne. "Here is some really diverting news. I'm going to be a royal hostess! Think of that!"

And to distract him, she told him about the
impending royal guest for the following evening. Ralph Scaife was too much accustomed to big men and big matters to feel the least flattered, but for Carmen’s sake he was glad, for he knew how bored she was with the ordinary type of man in the Indian Government service. When he had first brought her out he had wondered how she would pass through the ordeal of admiration which awaits every young and lovely woman in India. Whether she, who met hundreds of men and of a very fine, though somewhat monotonous type, would ever meet one whose eyes would wake her to a new world. He had watched her narrowly, with the keenness bordering on suspicion of the north of Ireland man, less from jealousy than from duty. In addition to the peril from the great overplus of men in India, there was her peculiar position into which fate had forced her. He knew that it would be nothing short of a miracle if she emerged unscathed from the furnace. And yet, shrewd observer as he was, he knew that, so far, the woman who bore his name was absolutely pure in thought, as untouched, and even as unconscious, of the seething ferment of unholy desires around her as the evening star. In women whose brains have been, perhaps, over cultivated the senses sleep until the one arrives, who in all the world has the power to wake them to heaven or to hell. Or rather he arrives at the
psychological moment, generally between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-eight, and then if things go wrong, God help her!

Carmen Scaife was twenty-nine, though she looked several years younger, perhaps because so far the life of men and women was for her a sealed book.

"I wonder what sort of a fellow he is?" said Ralph, entering into Carmen's natural excitement. "Have you any idea of his age?"

"Not the slightest," she replied, "but as he is going shooting to the Pamirs, he can't be very old, can he?"

"Of course he'll write a book, 'How to govern India,'" said Ralph, sardonically.

"Well, if he does, it will be amusing. All the Spanish Royal Family are clever. I wonder if he will be good-looking."

Her husband looked at her curiously and a little wistfully, as he raised his great bulk from his capacious chair and prepared to hobble across the compound to the Cutchery. "I hope for your sake he will," he said; "but for a clever woman, you carry the beauty cult too far."

"Oh, Ralph, you like beauty, too! You chose me!"

"Yes, it's Beauty and the Beast, isn't it? Ram Ram till dinner. Shan't have done till nine."

When her husband had returned to his work
she passed into the garden. It was beautifully kept. Labour was still cheap in India and six mahlis were always at work over the several acres. There were snowdrifts of gardenias; fiery, flaming poinsettias, and vieux rose velvet oleanders, belching volumes of perfume on the warm air. It was oppressively hot. Though late in the evening, the season was far advanced. When the sun turns into the summer solstice, the holy land of India where the sun always has been worshipped, becomes violently agitated in consequence. Elemental forces which preside over nature send tremendous winds, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and strange fiery blasts, as though the lid had been removed from some gargantuan cauldron underneath and a mammoth inferno let loose.

Carmen loved strong scents. She was an oriental and an extremist by nature. In addition to the perfumes of her garden she stood drinking in the hot breaths of pine wafted by the mangoes, the musk melons rich to faintness which Baber loved, and the madness secreted by the treacherous neams and kikas, whose green flowers lie in ambush. But as she stood revelling in all this sweetness surrounding her home, the toddy palms overhead suddenly began to clatter weirdly, the air became permeated with reeking fumes of sulphuretted hydrogen, as though
millions of rotten eggs had been simultaneously hurled to earth, and a howling dust storm arose like a whirlwind bringing devastation in its path. Carmen fled indoors and shrieked to her butler to hermetically close all doors and windows against the malign forces gathering outside.
CHAPTER II

Give me yourself one hour; I do not crave
For any love or even thought of me.
Come as a sultan may caress a slave,
And then forget for ever utterly.

—Request.

Next night all was in apple-pie order for the expected guest. The bara mems of India are accustomed to the entertainment of Royalty, as every cold weather brings some scion of a European princely house to their hospitable homes.

The Judicial Commissioner’s house was entirely outlined in fire. This effect was produced by thousands of tiny lamps, made of clay for the occasion, filled with oil, and a piece of cotton, set on fire in each. The native is an adept at producing a magnificent effect out of nothing at all. The hostess, however, had required a whole army of workpeople to produce her effect.

She wore a dress, of which the grounding was the richest pearly cream satin. It had formed the court train of her wedding gown, and of her subsequent presentation on her marriage, and she had brought it out to India afterwards and handed it over to the hereditary embroiderers of the old Delhi Court on her first visit to that Field of the
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Cloth of Gold. Not the least fascinating feature of that time in the old Imperial City (the new monstrosity of stucco was then undreamed of) had been to choose the design and the exact reproduction in natural colours of a peacock robe. It was the only one in India at the time, as it was not till three years later that Lady Curzon floated over the gilded marbled courts of the Diwan-i-Am—the loveliest ballroom in all the world—in the molten, golden plumage of a peacock's train.

Carmen's dress was not, of course, of vice-regal splendour, but it was most effective. The peacocks, in their own blues and golds, formed a plastron down the front of the white satin gown. At the small waist they were tiny with folded tails, gradually spreading their glory, till, at the hem, they formed a row of birds with outspread tails the size of a man's hand. At her breast she wore a jewelled peacock, also with spread tail in jewels. A "nine gems collar," also from Delhi, in a Mahommedan design, clasped her throat. She was a colourist in gems, as in other things, and generally eschewed diamonds, but a small tiara of them seemed to catch the fire from her eyes as she and Ralph waited in the stephanotis-lined porch for the guest of the evening.

Carmen had often been asked to assist at Royal entertainments, but this was the first time she had had a real live royalty of her own in her own
house. Her cheeks flushed with girlish excitement as she exclaimed laughingly:

"Oh! Ralph, I do wonder what he's like. Ought I to have ordered 'Spanish beans'?"

At that moment the Lieutenant-Governor's carriage, followed by another, tore down the drive. The first carriage pulled up; a Spanish aide-de-camp jumped out, and stood with bared head, as a tall, slight figure, with a very slim waist, followed.

Carmen made a deep curtsey. When she rose again, two beady black eyes were looking into her soft ones.

Carmen was accustomed to looking into black eyes—many hundreds of pairs met hers every day, but there was a peculiar quality in the blackness of these. She suddenly felt she was up against an iron door. She did not know why. This momentary unpleasant sensation was instantly dispelled by a soft and agreeable voice, and the gleaming of white teeth, in the most gracious of smiles, as she led the way into the drawing-room, where the dozen guests already assembled were presented to His Royal Highness, and then into the dining-room.

Ralph and she were opposite each other, and the Prince was on her right hand. Her servants in their spotless white robes and gold puggreens, served the perfect dinner perfectly. She was,
therefore, at leisure to give her whole attention to her guest.

Being a Royal personage, he, of course, led the conversation, and Carmen now had opportunity for further observation and analysis. He was a young man of about thirty years of age and extraordinarily handsome—of the perfected Spanish type; "Triple essence of Spain," thought Carmen. His jet black hair curled away from a brow of chiselled beauty. His jet black mustachios were curled up on either side of a nose which also might have been sculptured by Greeks. He spoke perfect English with Continental verve.

All the members of the Spanish Royal Family are clever and well informed, as well as charming and amusing men of the world. Prince Alphonso had recently attracted the attention of Europe by a duel he had fought, to avenge the honour of Spain. A French Prince of the hapless Orleans House had "said things" about Spanish soldiers at Cuba. An officer, who was also a fencing master, sent him a challenge. This was ignored by the Prince because the challenger was not of Royal blood.

When Alphonso d'Arragon heard this, he flew to Paris by the first train. He was then a subaltern in a cavalry regiment, but he did not wait to ask his colonel's leave.
Next day two Spanish noblemen called upon the rash French Prince to inform him that a foeman worthy of his Royal steel was waiting for the squaring up of accounts.

Early next morning the Frenchman had received a wound which left him only six months to live.

When Alphonso returned to Spain, he received two things: punishment from his colonel, and an ovation from the populace. Wherever the Spanish flag flies that story is still told. Whenever Spanish soldiers gather round camp fires, it is not forgotten how Alphonso d'Arragon, with his Royal hands, avenged the honour of Spain.

He was now on a pleasure tour and in a holiday mood, and he exerted himself to charm accordingly. He told Carmen details of his voyage, which had been accomplished in a Spanish battleship.

"I saw the wreck of the 'China' stranded high and dry at Aden," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied Carmen, "and since then the officers are not allowed to talk to ladies."

"Ah!" replied His Royal Highness, "too much flirt, I suppose!"

Up to this the black eyes watching her had been narrowed in acute observation, now they became round with amusement, though the rest of the face remained impassive as a mask, and Carmen had
a glimpse of the stony hardness which made them like black diamonds.

"I think the flirt a very nice thing," continued the dulcet tones. "I like it very much myself, but for a sailor I think it better not."

"Your Royal Highness will hardly have time for much flirt out here," replied Carmen, laughing in spite of herself, for the expression "flirt" had even then become antiquated, and it sounded quaint on Continental lips. "There will be so much to see in addition to the shooting trip."

"I shall see many wonderful things, doubtless," he rejoined. "But I am quite sure none will be more beautiful than what I have seen to-night."

Once more the black eyes became round with meaning.

Carmen caught the eye of the Cavalry Colonel's wife, her vis-à-vis, and, rising, the unfair persuasion proceeded to the drawing-room.

"Have you noticed Mrs. Hawthorne's new pearls?" asked the Civil Surgeon's wife, for they are the modern successors of the barber and are the purveyors par excellence of the station scandal. This one was called "Bloody Mary," and there were sleeping snakes in her eyes. "I hear the Nawab gave them to her, and as he is a

* These remarks are reproduced exactly as heard in Anglo-India, except that some of them have been toned down to render them fit for publication.
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great admirer of the female form, she had to stand
in a state of nature in order to get them.”

“I know Haidée Hawthorne very well indeed,”
replied Carmen. “Her pearls were bought with
money left her by her mother’s will. It is true
that the Nawab gave her a necklace on her birth-
day, but it only cost R.800, and Colonel Haw-
thorne allowed her to accept it because the Nawab
is an old friend who had often accepted hospitality
from them.”

“How very extraordinary that Mrs. Rivett
should be staying at the hotel by herself,” the
Padrón’s wife opened fire from the other end of the
semi-circle. In India the Padrón’s log run a neck-
to-neck race with the Civil Surgeons’ ladies as
gossips—the doctors themselves are usually too
busy. The padrés and their wives have plenty of
time for that and other amusements. In fact, it
is commonly reported by Indians that a reverend
gentleman stole the Koh-i-noor diamond which
was subsequently presented to Queen Victoria,
which a child Maharajah innocently handed round
in Durbar, by request, for inspection, and never
succeeded in getting it back again.

“Mrs. Rivett gives out,” continued the clergy-
man’s wife, “that she is here to write a book. But,
of course, that is all nonsense. I hear there is no
such person as Captain Rivett, and therefore she
must be here to get hold of men.” A husband is
just as indispensable for a woman to travel in comfort in India as a tin of Keating's powder. If you don't take Keating, your body will be stung to death by insects. If you don't take your husband your reputation will be bitten to death by women.

"Captain Rivett was very much alive when I knew them in Nagpur last cold weather," replied Carmen with rising indignation. "Mrs. Rivett has a substantial income of her own, and her husband allows her to gratify her taste for travel. If she were really the harpy you suggest, surely she would not leave the wealth of London to come to penniless Lucknow."

"Has she really got money?" exclaimed the wife of a Colonel on half-pay. "Oh, then I must ask her to buy some of my lace."

"But what dreadful girls the General's daughters are!" exclaimed the Cavalry Colonel's wife. "They talk and think of nothing but men!"

Now the General's daughters were young and guileless girls, just out from school, enjoying without any arrière pensée the fun of an Indian station with the zest natural to their years. Carmen knew, on the other hand, that the famous beauty who was trying to defame them had already been cited by her husband to appear in the divorce court, with two co-respondents, and that the Colonel had only withdrawn the suit to save his family name. This was, therefore, really the
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limit she could stand, and she rose with a feeling of nausea to open the piano. She had an exquisite voice, but like all sensitive people, she was very nervous; it was seldom heard outside her own bungalow. Once at a great State function at Simla the Viceroy had sent an aide-de-camp to ask her to sing. The request was courteously declined. Again the Governor-General sent a second aide-de-camp, to meet with a more decisive refusal. Only when the Ruler of India, who could not be denied, came himself to sue, was the voix d'or heard by the waiting crowd.

The song she chose this evening was Mrs. Maddison's newly-published setting of Swinburne's words to which the title of "Rococo" has been given. It was her favourite song. The subdued melody with its peculiar, haunting rhythm, suited her rich mezzo-soprano voice to perfection. But when she came to the end of the first verse she nearly stopped.

Take hands and part with laughter, touch lips and part with tears,
Once more and no more after, whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not re-measure the ways that left us twain;
Nor crush the lees of pleasure from sanguine depths of pain.

It seemed sacrilege to sing such words to such an audience. What pleasure did they know beyond the savage delight of hounding down each other? What pain could they feel, these souls as dried up as their parchment-like faces? What did they know of the wine or the lees of
life, of grapes sanguine or sweet? She sang the second verse:

Time found our tired love sleeping and kissed away his breath,
But what should we do weeping, tho’ light love sleep to death?
We have drained his lips at leisure, till there’s not left to drain
A single sob of pleasure, a single pulse of pain.

But came the relentless, stabbing thought, did she know aught of that she sang, either? Her life was sheltered, cultivated, calm, free from all pulse of pain, but would she not bravely endure the pain if she might know one single sob of pleasure first? There flashed instantaneously across her brain, by one of those obscure processes unfathomed by psychologists, the title of a book she had once read. It was called “Ginette’s Happiness.” The heroine’s marriage had been a failure. But what had most excited the compassion of the author was that she had also failed to become someone’s mistress. “Poor Ginette!” he ended up. Was then an illicit love better than no love at all?

When Carmen had finished her song, before the polite murmur of applause had died away, she passed swiftly to the further end of the drawing-room. Her guests thought that she had done so in order to regulate one of the fifteen lamps which sentinelled the immense room in melting shades of every hue, for the electric light was then unknown in Anglo-Indian drawing-rooms, even of the most palatial. She had gone to conceal the smarting, blinding tears which had suddenly risen
to her eyes. Carmen Scaife had sat down to the piano a girl, and had risen from it a goddess knowing good and evil.

As she had sung, a memory of a picture she had seen long ago had flashed across her brain, made electric by the evening's storm. Was it called there by the sob of her own music, by nature's agony, by the exciting events of the evening? By one or all of them? In after years she often wondered, but she could never analyse exactly what had brought it there, that memory of a picture seen many years ago in school-girl days. It was of Dorè's young monk at the organ who sees the vision of a lovely woman.

It seemed that the chattering, gibbering parrots of women in her drawing-room were synonymous with the shuffling, shambling apes of men in the monastery. The young novice was herself in a different guise. Her bungalow was the monastery. The peacock gown and jewels were the monk's cowl and cord of celibacy, all emblems of the vows she had taken in absolute ignorance of the sacrifice imposed upon her. And the young monk's dream, had it its counterpart for her?

Just then the door opened. The psychological moment for the return of the gentlemen to the drawing-room had arrived. His Royal Highness walked straight to the standard lamp which his hostess, through blinding tears, was pretending to

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manipulate, while a stout matron, who had recently had her first baby, was lustily bellowing out the words of Lawrence Hope's "Request" at the piano.

"I want you to show me the view of the Chutter Munzil from your garden," he said.

Later that night Mrs. Scaife took her guests to a ball. It was the last of the season, given by the Lucknow civilians, not wishing to be left behind by the military, in honour of the celebrations of the afternoon.

Carmen's party walked along the pearly white road for the few hundred yards which lie between the Judicial Commissioner's bungalow and the Chutter Munzil, where the ball was given. The trees made black lace on the radiant whiteness in patterns of Malta and Mechlin, and the subtle essence of mango pervaded partout. When they reached the entrance hall of the Club they were pompously greeted by Mr. Bustard, the Executive Commissioner of Lucknow, who led H.R.H. and Carmen inside. It was a magnificent sight, for the Anglo-Indian excels above all things in giving a ball. He is quite willing to borrow stage properties from the natives who are not admitted to the feast. The entrance hall was hung from the roof with gorgeous elephant hangings in velvet, in various hues, heavily embroidered in gold, lent by the Taluqdars of Oudh, not one of whom was allow inside the hall.
A table, covered with a cloth of red velvet and gold, was heaped high with programmes, but when one of these was offered to His Royal Highness he turned towards a golden howdah, shaded by a gold umbrella, arranged as a seat for the guests, according to that most accommodating custom of Anglo-India.

Nothing is allowed in English libraries which may not be read by the middle-class jeune fille. But in England's greatest dependency the kala jaga is an institution as firmly fixed as supper.

The lawn of the Umbrella Palace was completely encircled with a fringe of white tents for two, and there were several completely closed little tents, cleverly contrived with draperies, inside the ballroom. And then we wonder that natives sneer and Europe laughs!

"Para Bahos!" exclaimed the Prince, as he looked at them. "I am not going to dance. Come and sit here." The howdah, however, to which he led Carmen was only covered with the gold umbrella of royalty, as it had once belonged to the Kings of Oudh, and Carmen thought of the Boppery Bop which these walls had so often reached from the lips of the Refuge of the World. The howdah had a silver bar at each end. His Royal Highness opened one of these, entered, and sat down, and motioned Carmen to follow. She did so, drawing her train after her, replacing
the bar, and, as she felt tired, placed her feet on
the foot-rest on the howdah's floor. There was
a little looking glass fixed in front of the seat in
which she could see the black eyes beside her
glistening. Beside the howdah was a table
covered with exotic blooms. The Prince said
nothing, but apparently waited for the stream of
passing guests to subside.

The pride and pomp of Anglo-India had
assembled in force. The guests were the flower
of many provinces. Generals covered with de-
corations and globe-trotting peeresses jostled
each other. The band rose and fell seductively
over the marble floor tessellated in squares of
black and white and round the lofty halls of the
Royal palace—for the Oudh Court was the most
magnificent after Delhi.

Carmen's party had arrived very late, and she
watched the crowd file past her and her Royal
guest to supper in a silence she did not break.
This life, with its gorgeous mise en scène, had
been hers for ten years, she thought. Had it ever
brought her one hour's happiness? Had it to
anyone? Did not the General's gleaming war
medals only mock the gnawing pain and bitter-
ness beneath them? That they had failed to
bring him the coveted command, the coping stone
of his career? Was not his hard-faced wife a
cantonment woman de haut étage, whose long
career of unbridled dissipation showed in the bags and puffiness beneath her eyes? Had not the peeress's son squandered his all upon a titled courtesan of London and broken his wife's heart? Was not she even then in terror of a bomb for her viceregal son-in-law? Had not that sweet-faced, golden-haired woman, the wife of a high official, and that other high official once braved the righteous indignation of a whole province? In the days when the other high official was not high, but young and ardent, and now they were not apparently on speaking terms.

The guests filed down the long corridor, specially covered in and hung with red for the occasion, to the sumptuous supper at which members of the proudest service in the world had been told off to act as kitmagars, standing behind the chairs of their guests. And still her companion made no sign, except the glitter of the eyes in the glass. It is the A.B.C. of Royal etiquette never to speak until one is spoken to. When the silence became rather hard to bear, Carmen drew a flower from the table on her right. It was a long trumpet of cream, containing gold stamens from which a powerful perfume rose. Carmen never knew whether it was the perfume from the flower or the hypnosis of the eyes watching her in the glass which brought her clairvoyance that night. Suddenly all that brilliant scene disappeared,
dissolved into nothingness, the band ceased to play, everything whirled round, rose up at her, and subsided, all except the eyes in the glass. They were stationary points in a swirling, moving world. For the howdah was no longer still. It was swaying on an elephant's back! And! Yes! these were the shouts of the populace which had drowned the band! Χαίρε καισαρ, χαίρε ο θνήω! they cried. And she had left the howdah's seat of crimson and gold brocade and was lying prone on the footrest. The peacocks on her gown had formed a fan of peacocks' feathers in her hand, and she was flicking flies off his feet, a slave girl, brought from far-off lands to swell the Grecian conqueror's triumph! And still the Indian elephant rumbled through the streets of Athens. Still rose and fell the hoarse acclaims of the Athenian crowd! All, all was floating, nebulous, visionary, except those two black diamond points penetrating into her consciousness of two lives, burning through this rift in the veil of time. How long the vision lasted Carmen never knew. When it ended she was in her own carriage, her husband seated beside her.

"You fainted and fell into the bottom of the howdah," he said, solicitously, "and the Prince sent for me to take you home. All this heat and excitement is too much for you. You must leave for Kashmir to-morrow."
CHAPTER III

Come as wet winds that, passing cool and wet
O'er desert places, leave them fields in flower;
And all my life, for I shall not forget,
Will keep the fragrance of that perfect hour!

—Request.

Next night Ralph Scaife saw his wife off by the Punjab Mail from Lucknow Station. She had her own reserved carriage, detached and put into the middle of the train. Anglo-Indian officials of high rank travel with more state than European Royalties, and a Member of Council has a far larger retinue than a Royal Prince.

There was one in this train, in his own private railway car painted with his arms. The Station Master said he was "too big a man to be shunted," so the whole train was delayed in consequence. He was, of course, far too big to dine in the common restaurant car, had his own private kitchen and any number of servants, scarlet-coated and otherwise. It was a disillusion to see the ugly old man, over whom all this fuss was made, sitting alone in his carriage and staring with prying curiosity at everyone who passed.

On the outside of the car was a large bale with "Hinks' Lamps" painted on it. He had bought them in Bombay and was taking them in triumph
to his palatial residence at Simla, and somehow or other it reminded Carmen of the jar with "Marmalade" on it, in "Alice in Wonderland."

Carmen travelled alone with her maid. She was not of the type of woman who must have a female gossip in attendance, neither did she take a tame subaltern to look after her, after the fashion of other bara mems whose husbands cannot accompany them to England or Kashmir. She was never less alone than when alone. However, she expected Ralph to follow her in two months when the Courts rose. For the first time in her ten years of marriage she was glad to leave him, though at present she had not allowed the reason to penetrate her consciousness. The cruel search-light of the setting sun shone on his massive features, his heavy, ungainly figure enormously stout from want of exercise. She had done her duty before leaving the bungalow. The dinner menus had been well drummed into the khan-samah. With the self-control with which she always fought her battles worthily of her ancestry, she drew him into the carriage, kissed him and gave him her sweetest smiles.

Just then a cry of "Ai bhajao" ran down the queue of horribly smelling coolies waiting for tips round the carriage door. Carmen looked out and saw a tall, slight figure with a swarthy face and blue eyes, pushing its way through them. It was
a man dressed in the uniform of the Spanish Cavalry and wearing a sword. He was the Prince's aide-de-camp. He had had a British mother and spoke English perfectly. He had the somewhat cynical smile of a benevolent Mephistopheles. Perhaps his surroundings had made him so. At any rate, Carmen had taken a liking to him, and his appearance just now was a relief to her overstrained nerves. He carried a huge bouquet of Gloire de Dijon roses, tied with the Spanish colours of red and yellow.

"His Royal Highness begs you will accept these for the journey," he said. "There is not a large assortment of flowers to be had in the country. He sends these faut de mieux. He hopes to meet you in Srinagar. He will be staying at the Residency next month."

Carmen took the roses and held out her hand, which he kissed in Continental fashion.

"Please convey to His Royal Highness my respectful thanks," she said, her eyes on the flowers.

The aide-de-camp drew his heels together, bowed low and departed. His last words were the most grateful of all to Carmen. She would have a month's peace, she thought, as the train moved off. She sank back in her cushions and opened Victoria Cross' latest. It was by one of
the two daughters of an Indian colonel, who, of all others, have known and written of the heights and depths of human passion in excelsis in our day. The books are barred out of Anglo-Indian clubs, whose denizens say they ought to be burnt by the hangman, but as her publisher says, smiling, "They take care to read them to the tune of five hundred thousand copies in one case." Just as even to mention the name of him who has been most pitied as a man, most revered as a master, whose personality has created a posthumous library of his life almost as extensive as that of the Oxford movement, is enough to put one outside the pale of Simla society, the capital par excellence of the barbarian middle class. The name of the book was "To-morrow." The story was of a man and woman who, knowing full well that love is stronger than all things, dared to defer its realisation till too late, and then found that death was stronger still, as the woman died on her wedding night.

Carmen lay revelling in the interest of the story, the sense of freedom and rest for her jaded nerve centres induced by the motion of the train bearing her away from harassments to fresh fields and pastures new. As the light faded, she closed her book and looked out. She saw a wonderful sight. The jungle was on fire for miles with the seminal tree, a big tree which, in the hot weather,
has no leaves, but is covered with large, flame-coloured, waxy flowers. She was also passing through the world's largest and most amazing aviary. The United Provinces of India is the bird country of the Continent. As Carmen looked, her heart gave a bound at the sight of a blue-bronze peacock brushing beneath a vermillion bough into the misty green of the aloe hedge, the soft browns of a camel careering in a dancing gambol against the matted fibres of a cocoanut palm, of the pale grey bodies and cochineal heads of the giant cranes, the real lords of the bird world. Carmen had taken the journey through the mammoth aviary, the size of England, many times, and thought she knew it well, but this evening she noticed a new, bizarre bird, a stork with a black body and bill, back feathers and legs all of scarlet, wading in an inky pool. Peacocks and cranes, and the smaller fry of jade parrots, electric glinting jays, cooing doves and hundreds of other species of poultry were all hustling and crowding together for hundreds of miles in this Aladdin's country, their plumage unruffled by the rushing train.

The day was dying in the arms of the twilight on the Indian plains. The palms were etched on the molten sky. As the train flew northward into the Mahommedans' country, the mosques became more frequent, and the muezzins' cry rang out
across the plain. Carmen had always loved this mysterious hour in India, to

See the Southern Cross
Break through the gathered grey.

To-night it brought her a strange joy. Always truthful with herself, she strove to analyse it. Was not the joy wafted on the breath of

The yellow roses
Drooped in the wind from the South?

Why should her whole life have been bouleversé by a man she had known in this incarnation for just one night? She looked back over the calm, tranquil years of her marriage, perhaps the best she was ever to know. She had had a charming home, plenty of money, the care of a kindly, clever man with whom she had shared the pleasures of her intellect; and how rich and rare the feast for this which India had provided. She thought of the long, fascinating afternoons spent in the fairness of the Chandni Chowk, instead of amongst the futility of the Gymkhana Club. There she had invested the ample funds allowed her by Ralph in beautifying their home with the exquisite curios to be found in the bazaars of any big Indian city. There were ivory boxes from China, fretted in designs of pelicans and Chinese dragons. There were old Lucknow enamels in the design of the fish, of the hapless Royal house, the sign flabby as the signified. There were
miniatures of the old Nawabs themselves, and one day Carmen had lighted on one lifesize portrait of Ghazi-ud-Din, the first monarch to assume the title of King. She had taken a fancy to its finely chiselled features and glowing eyes. How like they were to his, she thought with a throb. She had asked the curio dealer in the little upstairs room on the right of the entrance to the Chowk, leading to the narrow, mysterious byeways of the native city, the why and wherefore of the portrait's sale, as it was evidently an original. He said that a relative of the Royal house had just died and the women-folk of the family had sold the portrait. What was there in the two Royal portraits of the dead king and of the living prince, which had this power to move her tranquil life? Was it their Royal blood? Oh, no! There was the German man-man of last cold weather who, with the slightest encouragement, would have cancelled the return passages of himself and his suite and stayed a hot weather as well. How ridiculous his suffused eyes and sausage figure had looked when he waxed sentimental! Strong Royalist as she was, Carmen knew that a man-man was nothing to a woman, unless he was the man for her. Was it the chiselled beauty of the features, the Greek brow, the waving hair, the upturned moustachios? Ah, no, these were only the mask, the brazier, the beautiful clay which contained the living fire burn-
ing in the coal-black eyes from which the soul of the man looked out. *There* was the magnetic force! Christian people hold up their hands in horror of the Hindu Temple girls who are married to a god. They burst out laughing at the idea of a Japanese maiden being married to a vase. Carmen Carden had been married to a bungalow and to a position, and she was beginning to find it out.

She moved restlessly, lying full length on her cushions. She was one of the profoundest students of Vedanta philosophy of the day. The Hindu doctrine of Purush and Prakiti, of Spirit and Matter, of Positive and Negative, of man and woman, came as naturally to her as the air she breathed. What was Prakiti without the electric, fiery, creative force of Purush? What was matter, inert, lifeless, dead, without the life-giving spirit? And what was the good of being a woman if one was to be all one's life robbed of the galvanising force of a man?

Just then the train stopped at a little wayside station, to allow the passengers, all except Sir Shortland Hustler, to descend for dinner. Carmen's own personal servant, a Goanese boy who always travelled with her, entered the carriage and brought the tiffin basket containing her dinner. Carmen, like the Councillor Sahib, was dining in her own carriage, not because she was a
bara mem, but because she hated tight clothes with a deadly hatred, and, like an Oriental woman, had a natural affinity for loose draperies and divans. She was therefore served with her iced quails and claret in statu quo.

The train stopped again to allow the Goanese boy—they are the best servants in India—to take the remains of the meal away.

Carmen did not, like a certain army doctor, boast that she had imported a special breed of table boys from Goa, of a certain height, any more than she could tell her guests the price of everything that was on the table, and that the paté de foie gras had cost R.15 from Fortnum and Mason, as he did. She was nevertheless particular to have perfect service.

The train was again being delayed by the august Member of Council it had the honour of carrying. His private car would have to be shunted on to another line at Umbala, the junction for Simla, whither he was carrying the lamps, and where a salute of seven guns would announce his arrival at the summer metropolis. Anxious deliberation was going on as to how the change to the Ambala Khalka line could be accompanied with the minimum of shaking to the magnate’s bones, and this again delayed the train. Carmen got out to stretch her limbs. Her reserved carriage was next to the Councillor Sahib’s car. He
had got to the concluding course of the elaborate dinner cooked by one of his cooks, for of course he kept a double staff, one for travelling and one at home, in his own travelling kitchen comprised in his own private car.

As Carmen passed, he leered at her in a way no subaltern would have dared or wished to do, and as he was, at the time, in the act of guzzling down a spoonful of ice-cream, he did not look pretty. In the stillness of the evening she could hear him conferring with a subordinate who had been allowed to enter the holy of holies during the stoppage.

The nominal Viceroy had run well for a time. He had begun by making his influence felt on his Council, but threats had been made on his life. After that he had never again been the same man. For this he was not to blame. The bravest soldiers in the service feel secret cowards once they have been shot. The highly developed system of the Aryan race makes them unable to bear the physical strain which the tougher-fibred Turanian race considers child's play. That is why a Chinese execution lasts an hour, why a Red Indian woman drops out of the line of march and rejoins it next day with her child on her back. However, the nominal ruler being hors de combat, the Great Indian Empire was now run by the Council. The two tigers on the hill had the sense not to
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fight over the spoil. It had been amicably arranged between them that Sir Shortland Hustler should get the next province falling vacant of a Lieutenant-Governor, while he would do nothing to prevent Sir Trevor Shrapnel coming into his own in his turn. They had employed widely different methods to get there.

Sir Shortland Hustler's strength lay in brute force. He was a reactionary, an autocrat of the most pronounced type. He became apoplectic at the least contradiction. He was like the fire eaters of fifty years ago. He was dead against all reform. He breathed again the spirit which looks upon Indians as niggers to be trodden under the taskmaster's heel. This was one of the people on whom the fate of three hundred millions hung, until the feeble Viceroy should be replaced by the Hercules of whose advent as a deliverer all India dreamed. He had started in life with no other equipment or interest than that of the ordinary upper middle class boy, Sir Shortland Hustler had even sprung from the lower middle class, the son of a chemist in a county town. Now a whole continent trembled when they roared. What wonder then, when the game provides such stakes, that India's ablest Viceroy has publicly stated he would have dedicated the son the jealous gods denied for her service.

When later the man had disappeared Carmen
re-entered her carriage. She loosened her hair, bathed her forehead with Champa essence, as Indian lavatories do not admit of a more extended toilet, and settled herself for the night. As she lay waiting for the train to start, suddenly the sweet evening air trembled at the tiger snarling. "I'll not have the Calcutta High Court over again!" bellowed Sir Shortland Hustler from the next car. "Strike 'em all out!"

Carmen literally stopped breathing as she heard. Now the Calcutta High Court is the one great bulwark of righteousness of the British Raj. Over and over again it has given decisions against the Government of India, and is hated by the Government of India accordingly. It has done more to preserve the honour of England than any other Indian institution. The most violent agitators of the Congress party would volunteer absolute faith in the spotless integrity of the Calcutta High Court. In fact, Indians have faith in judicial justice generally in India, but not in the executive departments, which always, they say, favour Europeans. So the old iconoclast was going to demolish the last bulwark of British prestige! For no Government can stand long unsupported by righteousness. For the life of her she could not help listening. He was discussing the appointment of judges of the High Court for a province. He was expressly
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instructing that these should be chosen with the minimum of probationary service that the law allows, the minimum of experience, in order that he might be certain of getting their decisions the way he wanted them.

Carmen's blood curdled in horror as the train rushed on through the cooling air. Her husband enjoyed the confidence of Indians in his private capacity. He was almost the only official without race prejudice in his private life, and Indians adored him for it. They trusted him to such an extent that they would tell him things few persons knew. So that he and Carmen knew that it was only too true that in the political and police departments there was a certain amount of corruption. A Maharajah of a State, wishing to extend his powers, had paid the entourage of a Viceroy seven lakhs to do so. The Viceroy himself probably knew nothing of this, only heard from those nearest and dearest to him most excellent reasons why the Maharajah's leading strings should be unloosed. He then wished to rearrange the succession. It was intimated to him that this also could be managed if another ten lakhs of rupees was forthcoming. But by this time the State was exhausted, so that the rightful heir only got his own because the thieves had fallen out over the amount of the booty. The Indian journalist who had acted
as agent for the passing over of the money had, at a later stage, when the administration had changed hands, spoken of this deal in Scaife's presence.

Then again Carmen and her husband had travelled in a Native State where the Maharajah was a personal friend of Scaife's. He had told him how anxious he was to get rid of his diwan, whom he knew to be a bribe-taker. Next year the Scaifes found the man still in office and with a brand new title. "Ah!" said the Maharajah, "the Resident advised me to keep him," which, needless to say, was a veiled command. Then Scaife heard from the very man who had carried the gifts that Rs.18,000 in either money or jewels had been the Resident's price. Then again, Scaife, as a young officer, had been present at a party given in honour of a Resident who had already refused a favour to his host. The customary gift of fruit was offered to the guests of honour, and it took the form of sweet limes, also according to custom, wrapt in gilt paper. As the Resident left, Scaife noticed that he walked heavily and that his pockets chinked. The limes, which it would have been bad manners not to take away, were made of solid gold, and his pockets were full! Then again, Carmen had often heard her husband discussing with Mr. Bustard, with lowered voices, whether or not proceedings should
be taken against an Inspector-General of Police for bribery. He had not a penny of his own, and he lived at three times the rate of his pay. But red-handed proof is hard to obtain, and the Government was loth to act unless conviction was a dead certainty, because of the mud storm and hornet's nest it would stir up. The main protection of the unfortunate native lay in that the majority of officials thought honesty the best policy, and, unlike the navy, dog was always ready to devour dog and to get his billet. A great Viceroy had said at his great Durbar, that marvel of a century, that he had faith in the conscience of his own country. Public opinion in England fondly hopes that India is conscientiously and courteously governed. But, alas!

The world is a bundle of hay,  
Mankind are the asses that pull,  
Each pulls it a different way,  
The greatest of all is John Bull.

Up to now Scaife and his wife had shared with 300,000,000 of watchful, silent critics an absolute faith in the impeccability of the Law Courts. The most bitter opponents of the British Raj had taken off their shoes before British justice. And now the unmuzzled autocrat was going to devour even that!

Carmen lay back exhausted. This, then, was the mess of red pottage for which she had bartered
her birthright, red with the life blood of seething millions, and the whole lump was leavened by foulness, there was death in the pot! This was the environment into which she had sold herself for a home and a position. To be a bara mem amongst polite burglars, a brigand's bride. Carmen moved restlessly on her pillows edged with soft lace and perfumed with aguru.

And still the train rushed on through the darkening night. She thought of that other railway journey taken many years ago, the start for her honeymoon. Her honeymoon! Ah, God! She remembered how she had stood before the glass in the London hotel, in her bridal attire, ready dressed for the sacrificial ceremony. Her stepmother had come up behind her and kissed her, as Judas had kissed the Christ he was sending to death. And as she had passed up the aisle to be the bride of Scaife had not the orange blossoms and white satin been identical in her case with those which adorn the women who are the brides of Christ? Had not her wedding cake, even, the same significance as that which graces the convent board? A farewell feast to this world's joys. She saw again the silent preoccupied bridegroom in the railway carriage beside her. And then he disappeared, and another had taken his place who was silent also, but not from preoccupation! If those past, barren, wasted years could be a
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wash-out! If this could have been her wedding journey and with that other! Carmen ceased to twist and turn on the broad berth which is the one redeeming feature in the nightmare of Indian train journeys. For the train had disappeared, and she was in an upper chamber full of exotic flowers, such as she had seen in Spain, and not alone. Arums, scarlet lilies, jacinth hyacinths, made the air sweet to blessed faintness. The electric lights were softly shaded. In that moment she was out of the hurly-burly, high above its fret and ferment, alone in the world with that other, in sweet-scented serenity, with only love to guide them. He had thrown down his cigarette, and his mouth, fragrant with its Egyptian spiciness, sought hers, sweet and trembling. She ceased to hear the engine, even the beating of her own heart seemed to have stopped. All her senses were concentrated on his synchronous breathing which seemed to fill the compartment, the only sound in silence. It was the most pregnant of all silences, before the act of creation. The same electrical silence, in miniature, as the silence of a Manvantara, before Spirit galvanises Matter, before the worlds are made.

Tense and expectant, she lay in the arms of another. His embrace was so close that her whole existence was merging in him. She was ceasing to be. There was no longer room for the separ-
ated self. Her lips were an altar for its annihilation, her body crucified that it might become one with the victorious lord. As the black mass in Paris was served, some say still is served, on the naked body of a woman, so the rites of this marriage, unhallowed by Christ, took place in Carmen's brain with such powerful realisation that her whole body quivered in response to it. She believed that her bridegroom was beside her, a bridegroom of choice, not of necessity, and who shall say that he was not? And she murmured in the language they most often spoke: "Oh, mon adoré! Si je pourrais mourir dans tes bras! Ça sera le meilleur chose pour moi, je trouve, car je n'ai pas une vie trop heureuse." In imagination she heard the reply in the soft gentle accents: "Il ne faut pas m'adorer trop. Ça serait de souffrir beaucoup."

In imagination he had made her part of his body. Yet surely there was more than the union of the flesh. Surely there were other elements in the sense of completion and rest, of strength gained, that nothing else now mattered. Her body was the temple of the Holy Ghost. Did not the Mightiest now fill that temple, the mightiest in the form of a mortal man? Had He not galvanised it, permeated it with His essence? He who had said "I am virility in man." Made it live once more? Was it not true of
every woman, "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of a man there is no life in you."

When it was over, when the reaction came, Carmen sobbed herself to sleep, but she slept, like the marble woman of the Vatican, the sleep of the satisfied.
CHAPTER IV

For who that is born of a woman
Has not known the hour
When the spirit within him is daunted,
And this world comes
As an army against him, a terror
Of alien power?

—Auguries.

Five minutes before the Calcutta mail was due at Rawal Pindi a British officer of a native cavalry regiment strolled into the station. The Indian cavalrymen are of a type recognisable anywhere. They are drawn from different spheres. They hail from the hall, the villa, even the cottage. Their life, with its glorious traditions, makes them one. Lithe and strong and stern-featured, not an ounce of superfluous flesh mars the decision of their movements. Their clothes are well cut if shabby. In their virtues and their vices they are plain soldier men. Naked and unashamed in these, they look Nature in the face.

This man, however, would have attracted attention in Buckingham Palace, from his supreme distinction. His carriage was such that though only five foot ten he appeared tall. He disdained the merest suggestion of jewellery, but his jaran suits were made up in Bond Street. He was so bronzed that when dressed in his uniform he was
often taken for a native officer, and to escape boredom at functions would reply "Me no speak English," with complete success. His hair was prematurely whitened, his blue eyes piercing. He was wont to tell his intimates that he had lived every hour of his life. He had commanded the native cavalry troops who went to Australia for Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It was whispered that this journey, the free hospitality of Colonial cousins, and the attentions he excited from them, had been his undoing. Nevertheless, to Carmen he represented her ideal of a chivalrous gentleman, and he was her husband's closest friend. She had last seen him the day of the Residency celebration, when his regiment, stationed in Lucknow, had of course been present. He had looked a radiant figure in the scarlet tunic (in reality a long tunic) and blue puggaree of the Khandana Lancers, a king among men. Carmen had looked with pride at their friend at that function which had now receded into the dim distance—the before. And yet, perhaps because, she had never looked forward to meeting him so much as now. He had proceeded north to Kashmir the same night. Some horse fairs en route had detained him, as he did regimental buying of horse-flesh, and Ralph Scaife, hearing he was still at Rawal Pindi, had wired up to him to meet Carmen.

He had now come to the station to take her to
her specially reserved suite of rooms at Flashman's Hotel, whence, after due rest, she would start for the two days' drive up the Jhelum Valley route for the 180 miles to Srinagar. When her reserved compartment drew up in the centre of the platform he was at the door, his cap removed with an emperor's grace as he handed her out.

"You are not looking fit, little woman," and his keen eye searched her face. "Beano's been too much for you! Heard all about the man-man from Scaife."

"Oh, no," replied Carmen, "it wasn't that. You know I'm not a good traveller," and she began quickly to dilate on the wonders of the world's aviary.

He looked at her curiously again as he helped her into the landau, and as they pulled up at the hotel he said, "Not coming in now. Get into your downy till dinner, and I'll come and take you across to a dance at the Club after."

Carmen smiled at him gratefully, and went inside.

That night at the hotel dinner Carmen saw Anglo-India at its best. The volcanic frontier was in one of its periodical blazes, unrhythmic and unreasonable. The Waziris were on the war-path, and General Shallocks had rushed up to meet them. Of course the leave of all frontier officers was stopped. Several of the ladies in the
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hotel had also been on their way to Kashmir. But their lords had orders to the front to-morrow, and they might never meet them again. Nevertheless, they showed a brave front and faced it with the same heroism they displayed in tents during the rainy season and in "stations" seventy miles from the railway. A small dance had been arranged at the Club, a miniature "Eve of Waterloo" ball, and Major Cameron, who was staying there, came across to fetch Carmen.

Alan Cameron was one of the finest dancers in India, and he had once come all the way from Cabul to Lahore to dance at the Christmas Ball with Carmen. As her husband's friend, she was absolutely sacred to him, his dearest woman friend, but held on trust. Carmen had sometimes half unconsciously speculated as to whether it would have been different had she met him first, but he who could rule the wild turbulent spirits of the border and train them into soldiers could control himself—at least where his friend's wife was concerned—and he had never showed the slightest sign of aught but the closeness of a brother.

Their first waltz was the very old one called "In Old Madrid," for the Punjab is old-fashioned in its tastes, like all people who come in contact with the big things of life, the realities of life and death. The very name made Carmen shudder
slightly. He saw she was too tired to dance, so they sat in a quiet corner and looked on. What girls they looked, these wives of frontier officers, dancing with their boy husbands, perhaps for the last time! Their lives of grim, earnest toil in desolate stations made them choose helmeets early, so rarely do they see the grim spectre of the bachelors' club, the solitary old age of the "cotton wool" man. Some of them looked at the wife of the Judicial Commissioner of Oudh enviously. Even in demi-toilette, she had a style and luxury they wotted not of. More than once she intercepted looks of jealous hatred. "If they only knew!" she thought; and, feeling the tears about to start in her unnerved condition, motioned Major Cameron to take her outside.

It was a dazzling night of Indian summer, and they walked up and down in a light which never was on sea or land outside India. The round silver ball of the moon diffused an electric galvanic bath. The viex-rose bouquets of the oleanders in the Club compound assailed poor Carmen with torturing sweetness. Her companion's voice broke prosaically on her dreams.

"I leave to-morrow," he said, "but as I am going to ride into Kashmir, you will probably catch me up at Garhi. Now, just remember this, little woman; I don't want to pry into your secrets, but I can see there is something wrong. I am not
only Ralph's oldest friend, but yours too, in this country. I helped you buy your 'cooking pots' when you first came out. If there is any trouble, Alan Cameron's your man. Au revoir to Garhi."

Just then two owls hidden in the oleanders fell out of love, uttered piercing screeches, and one flew heavily across to the other side of the compound.

After two uneventful days of quiet rest in the hotel Carmen resumed her journey by tonga to Srinagar. They had four days of ascent to the hill station of Murree, the last fortress of Anglo-India. As they left it behind them and began the descent to the Jhelum's gorge, a great calm descended on the spirit of Carmen Scaife. She was entering the mystic region of the Himalayas, of whose mighty secrets no explorer will ever succeed in penetrating even the physical fringe. Did not even Sven Hedin only recently discover a new range of two thousand miles? Does not the gloomy ravine of the Jhelum itself, burrowing into the heart of Asia, once threaded by Alexander, whisper of the secrets it guards in the most fascinating and mysterious of continents? As the eternal snows came into view, they seemed to waft a chill of disdainful breath, cooling and freeing her spirit from the heated forcing house of the Lucknow ball.

Then she was going to be with Alan Cameron,
a man of her own people, of her own life, a rock, a bulwark of safety, who had already helped her to forget that other. She would see him in a few hours, she hoped. He had physical attractions, intellectual charm, all that mattered, she told herself. He would take charge of her into Kashmir. While he was there she would be safe, and she would not let him leave her until that other had crossed the Zoji La Pass into Ladak. At lunch time they crossed out of British territory into that of His Highness the Maharajah of Kashmir, and the Jhelum gorge became more beautiful as the evening approached. The rocks were draped with masses of maidenhair fern in the most delicate greens, and with enormous fronds. They were nourished by the droppings of the snows above, and scarlet begonias peeped amongst them. Spring flowers of all sorts and kinds sprouted on the giant rocks, and wild white roses wafted a clean sweet perfume.

Carmen's tormented heart became calm and hopeful as the wild tonga guard blew his horn to signal their approach to the Garhi dak bungalow. He would be looking out for her, she felt sure, and perhaps come a little way to meet her. She strained her eyes. Yes, there he was, coming out of the bungalow door and down the incline to the tonga road. Even at this distance she recognised the graceful figure, the silvery head which the
setting sun was now turning into gold. But what a curious kit he had on! Was it the sunset which made his suit look pink? And, yes! he was staggering in his walk! lurching against the railings! Could he be ill?

The tonga drew up at the dak bungalow steps. Full of concern, Carmen jumped out. Alan Cameron reeled forward and greeted her with empressement.

"G-good evening, C-Carmen," he said, and peered stupidly into her face.

The immaculate officer and gentleman was dressed in his night pyjamas of pink flannelette! His breath reeked of whiskey. He was blind drunk!

Carmen called for the bungalow khansamah and, between her sobs, desired him to take her to a room as far as possible from Cameron Sahib’s.

That night the dak bungalow dinner party was, as usual, a motley assemblage. Carmen was placed next a peer, who had declined the Vice-regal throne. He had not wished to leave his immense estates and collieries to look after themselves for five years. His wife had never forgiven him for having deprived her of the curtsies, and it had left a lasting bitterness between them. She was now sulking in bed. He sat at the head of the table in a Savile Row dinner jacket. At the other end sat Alan Cameron, still resplendent in the rose-coloured pyjamas. Between
them sat on either side three or four specimens of that splendid and ubiquitous type in India, the British subaltern. They had wisely elected to spend their hard-earned leave and scanty pay on the bears of Kashmiri mulberry groves, rather than upon the harpies of the Simla Hills. What can be more pitiful than to see the wife of a high official waltzing, with careful unconcern, to the accompaniment of surly growls of "My dress!" from a jealous, raw-boned youth lounging sulking in the doorway!

When Mrs. Scaife entered the rough little room they looked indignantly at the drunken man, and one got up and attempted to lead him away.

"Come along, Major," he said, "you're not dressed. Ladies here."

"What d'you mean? I'sh commanding regiment. Going to a record shoot. Damned cheek!" he hiccupped, spluttering explosively, and throwing his food about the table.

Lord Halsdale tactfully drew Carmen's attention away by a new topic. It happened to be the one topic which could distract her whirling brain from the awful scene at the end of the table.

"I have just come from Benares," he said.

"Dufferin told me to be sure not to miss it. He has original theories as to the hold of Hinduism on the people."

Finding an appreciative listener, he proceeded
to propound what these theories were. When
the scanty meal was done, he drew her outside
and away from the bungalow and its hideous
disillusionment.

They strolled along the cliffs overhanging the
torrent of the Jhelum.

The gorge is very narrow at Garhi and confined
by mighty mountains, rising in immense beetling
crags on either side. The river rushes roaring,
seething, surging, seawards below, carrying timber
on its swollen breast, the same as when Alexander
passed this way. At Garhi one feels locked in
the heart of Asia. The looming mountains
breathe portentously of impending mysteries
about to be revealed to the courageous traveller.
The air is heavy with fate. Carmen’s spirit sensed
it as she said “Good-night and good-bye” to the
courtly English gentleman who had risen Vere-
de-Verely to a difficult occasion.

He was returning westwards by the next boat
to resume his duties as Lord Chamberlain.

She was up and away as early as possible next
morning, and long before her husband’s friend
had shaken off his drunken sleep. For his sake
and hers, it was the only thing to do. The next
evening she had embarked on board her own
houseboat, which had been sent down to meet her
at Baramula, and ordered the boatmen to weigh
off as soon as possible.
CHAPTER V

"All day there is the watchful world to face,
The sound of tears and laughter fill the air,
For memory there is but scanty space,
Nor time for any transport of despair.
But love, the pulse beats slow, the lips turn white
Sometimes at night."

Perhaps there is no solitude in this world so complete as that which may be obtained on board a Kashmiri houseboat. If there is such a thing as independence, the nearest approach to it may be found there, when one is away on the waste of waters in the wilds and solitudes of this mysterious valley, formed by a splitting apart of the mighty Himalayan range. At first Carmen felt only the supreme relief and rest from her long and weary journey, the soothing undulations of the Jhelum waters after the tonga joltings, the soporific effect of the maji log's cries, who answer each other in responses from side to side,

"Jo Pir!"
"Dast Gir!"

As they towed the boat up the Jhelum, its advancing prow scrunching out billows of wild thyme essence, she slept soundly that first night. The next day the wondrous scenery of the Woolar Lake diverted her mind from the horror and shock of Garhi Dak. The Woolar Lake is Kashmir's
inland sea. It is surrounded by Himalayan giants guarding the mystic Thibetan country. She was soon well away from the land on the broad inland sea. The air was still and sultry, and there came a stormy sunset with magnificent colouring. The uninterrupted wall of mountains which surrounded her, many of whose peaks out-topped Mont Blanc by thousands of feet, presented a very fine appearance in the distance, the vast snowy wastes being lit here with a pale yellow light, here glowing like molten gold, and here gleaming purest white; while the deep, shadowed defiles that clove the hills were purple black. But on the lake itself night was already falling, and by the dim light all that she could distinguish around her was the dark water and the high summits of those Himalayan deserts of rock, ice, and snow, which the sun's rays had not yet left. There was something unearthly in the colouring and in the desolation of the scene, as well as in the immensity of the distances. It might have been some landscape of the ruined moon, so lifeless and strange it seemed.

"There day gives way to day, as dreams to dreams,  
And men are intimate with death as sleep;  
White-robed they pray dead gods beside dead streams,  
By stagnant streams that wander to the deep;  
And still by plain and hill half-shadows creep—"

Carmen's houseboat was shaped exactly like a Noah's Ark with a pointed roof. It floated alone on the waste of waters. No other vessel
was in sight upon that silent sea. The only sound
to be heard was the lapping of the water and the
cries of the giant pelicans disturbed by the boat's
progress. They took the entire day to cross the
lake. Carmen ordered the boat to be moored on
the Srinagar side, while her tea was served by
her servants. From the ark's fore deck she
watched an epicurean bear steal down from the
heights above to munch mulberries from the shore.
It seemed to intensify her isolation from mankind.
She was far from the madding crowd, but her
friend had failed her also, failed her in her hour
of greatest need of him—her life's crisis. Her
ark seemed indeed the symbol of the desolation
of her life, afloat on the world's weary waste, and
without the olive branch of hope. Just then the
servants brought her tea service of silver, chased
in Lucknow jungle pattern, into the tiny drawing-
room. At the same moment, Carmen heard out-
side the tinkle of little bells which in India heralds
the approach of a dak runner, as they are sup-
pposed to scare wild animals from his path. She
opened the window of the ark and took from the
messenger a large square parcel, registered and
sealed. The seal bore the device of a large cross,
of the most Catholic house of Arragon, whose
ancestors led Crusades. The olive branch had
come after all. Carmen put the package aside
to be opened after tea.
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Evening is always exquisite in India. It is nowhere more so than in the misty shadows of the Asiatic Venice. Nowhere is the twilight more mysterious than in the shaded depths of Kashmiri water-alleys piercing the silent, gloomy depths of what once were floating forests.

Evening in the West is the time for excitement, for forbidden pleasures—to "buck up." In the East it is the time for prayer and rest. So the Mussulman kneels on the steps of mosques where the last rays of sunlight gild quaint domes showing Buddhistic influences. The maji log lie wrapped in sleep in shikaras, moored beneath balconies with carved lattices propped high on stakes above the water. The women, their hard day of punting and paddling over, pass peacefully to rest. The children, in blue and claret and rose nightgowns, wash samovars of strange chasings.

This is the most subtly psychic time of day in India—the fall of twilight, before the bearer brings in the lamps. The servants were busy in the cookboat outside preparing dinner. Inside the doll's-house drawing-room, the woman on the divan lay motionless as death, but her brain moved quick as life. Beside her, on the octagonal Kashmiri table, carved with dragons in heavy relief, rose clouds of fragrant dhoop, wreathing to the low roof. One might have thought her stupefied by the fumes, save for the restless
glancing of her eyes round the little room. It was a dream of Eastern colouring. One wall was covered entirely by a scarlet Bokhara cloth on which a daring Arabesque design blazed in brightest colours. Opposite was another cloth, also from Bokhara, into which a woman's lifetime of needlework had been put in a wonderful design of dull pinks and palest blues. Against this dim background blazed a giant jug of Benares brasswork, and a mirror framed in Kashmiri copper in chenar leaf design hung below a shelf, on which were ranged beautiful repoussé trays from the crowded bazaars of Poona City, and others covered with the curious reptiles of the Deccan designers, and strangely chased vessels with long necks in copper and steel, which had found their way from Russian Asia, and were bought from floating pedlars on the Jhelum. Then there were many other bronzes and brasses from a quiet old shop in the Aitwar Peth in Poona, where Europeans hardly ever went, and whose owner, Govind, bought literally the household gods from all the country round about. The copper goddess, holding a tray outstretched before her, invited the worshipper to offer fire, the lotus flower's dull brass leaves opened to disclose a lamp. There was a quaint box for pan, a brass cobra coiled to spring. The remainder of the walls were covered with embroideries in strange blues and maroons,
unknown elsewhere, which formed the silk backgrounds for wonderful stitchery wrought by patient yellow fingers in far Chinese bazaars, making a curious contrast with the bizarre red cloths from the desert city of Bikanir. These strange specimens of needlework from many lands formed a curious background in this room of contrasts for a series of reproductions of Western frescoes, Christian scenes amongst pagan surroundings, and among the dull ecclesiastical tints of these was the portrait of the room’s occupant in Venetian red velvet and cream Spanish lace, above which hung a lamp taken from a Leh altar.

There was something in it, after all, she was thinking—this attraction men called love, whether of God or devil, for which, in her own generation, the heir to a great empire had shot himself, and, in her own country, the uncrowned king had tossed away his kingdom. She took from the table beside her, the portrait which the dak runner had brought that afternoon and gazed again at the perfect features: the sculptured brow, with the waves of coal black hair rising electrically from it; the upturned moustache, revealing the firmly compressed lips, which expressed desire to give, not self-containment. Then there were the compact chin, the small pointed ears, the exquisitely chiselled nose—but all these were only the
setting, the beautiful brazier for the living fire blazing in the eyes. It was the old, old tor-
menting problem of the duality of nature. Was she to remain incomplete all her life? Half of a
whole, and the inferior half, which, according to Hindu philosophy, represents matter dead, inert, lifeless, without the vivifying force of man. Was she never to know that for which kings, crowned and uncrowned, had deemed their kingdoms well lost? Her mind roved back over her joyless childhood. Its earliest recollections, as clear memories, were of a little girl standing at the top of a flight of stairs in a London mansion, with a fear of heights and flights of all sorts which had never since left her, and being carried down by the butler. There were remoter and dimmer memories still of a room containing many soft forms in clinging draperies, passing to and fro on noiseless feet and reclining on couches, of sari-shrouded heads and soft bosoms, of clinging embraces and echoes of strange tongues. But these shreds from the shroud of death and rebirth were tattered and nebulous and ever receding from the clearly-defined crudities of Calvin Square. These crystallised presently into cruelties: of a child praying, in her nightdress, that the Pope might not come over and burn all Protestants, that she might not wake up in Hell, that the last trump might not sound that night,
that the heavens should not part as a scroll, that
the moon might not become blood. And then the
horror of Egyptian darkness, of ranting prayer
meetings, of a little girl stripped, held down,
flogged, threatened death by prayer, caned, con-
fined, and finally cast out. And all this in the
name and for the sake of Jesus Christ! And
then she saw the girl crowned with orange-
blossoms. Should she not instead have worn
widow's weeds of the deepest and blackest?
Swathed in funeral crapes, instead of satins of
festival; have passed to the crucifixion of all her
tenderest and brightest and most cherished hopes,
since she could look back from the limbo of
oblivion? Should not, above the chancel arch,
have been suspended in letters of fire, "Abandon
hope ye who enter here"? The wicked, wanton
waste of English girlhood had no equivalent in
the world, she thought; the trampling down of the
lilies of the field under the hob-nailed boots of
the crowd, the vile inconsistency of sneering at
girls for "trying to get married," and contemptu-
ously pitying the old maid as everybody's drudge
and nobody's joy.

She remembered the General's daughter who
lived on a lovely Scottish property amongst the
untrodden ways, rarely visited by mankind.
Knowing no law but that of her own undisciplined
nature, she had married a miner on the estate who,
afterwards, sat down to her cottage table with blackened hands. When a girl’s eggs were all in one basket, why did her parents and guardians not see that it was made of something stronger than straw?

Just then she heard a plashing of oars outside and cries of

“Jo Pir!”
“Dast Gir!”

Any sound except a lake bird’s cry is an event in a Kashmiri solitude. Jumping up, she saw, to her surprise, looming through the misty shadows, a shikara. It was approaching her houseboat with synchronous strokes of lacquered paddles and dainty zephyr-stirred awnings. Beneath them reclined, full length, on cushions of tawny plush, as Cleopatra lay upon her galley of old Nile, an Indian woman, a princess, the daughter of a mighty race. Her dusky colouring was enhanced by a gold-embroidered sari; round her neck were priceless emeralds and pearls. Carmen flew down the narrow plank to meet her.

"Why, Amber, when did you come here?" she said, "and how could you possibly know that I was here?"

"You left your tracks in the Dak bungalow books," replied the princess. "I followed hard on your heels through the gorge. As I posted from Barumula, I arrived at Srinagar before your
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house-boat gained the Dahl. The Post Office gave me your mooring place."

"Well, Amber, I really am flattered that you should have come so soon to see me."

"Could I fly too quickly to one who loves my country and us as you do?" asked the princess.

Tears rose to Carmen's eyes, for Amber, by right of birth, should have been ruling from Lahore to Ladak. She should have been mistress of the Jhelum country, even as Cleopatra of the Nile.

"Come into my doll's-house," she said, tenderly taking her by the arm, "and tell me all the news of our friends."

"Prakash Sundar Singh is going to be married," said the Princess Amber.

"Her father was looking for a match for her when I was last in Lahore," replied Carmen. "Whom is she going to marry?"

"A young man whom Sundar had known and watched for many years, from childhood in fact, and considers him suitable for her."

"He must indeed be a paragon, that youth. Prakash is a lucky girl."

"Why do you say that? Sundar has only done what all fathers do among us."

"Among you, yes. But in England, girls curse their parents for not doing as Sundar has done. What is your next item?"
“Sita has joined the suffragettes in London.” Sita was her sister.

“You don’t say so! Princess Sita fighting in Parliament Square! And last time I met her was at a Purdah party!”

What a contrast! The soft sweet satisfied atmosphere of the Purdah ladies, and the riotous pandemonium of the suffragette bear garden!

“Sita has been disappointed lately,” she said. “That is why she is so bitter against men. She was going to be married to a Russian prince; he jilted her when all the trousseau things were ready, because he thought our stipend from the British Government was larger.”

“Amber,” said Carmen, “if you could not marry the man you wished, would you live with the man you loved?”

“Become a mistress? Oh, Carmen!”

“Oh, Christ! You had better go, dear. I am not myself to-night.”

She escorted her down the plank, and returning, threw herself again upon the divan.

It has been well said that women marry because they are curious. Carmen had, in addition to the natural curiosity of woman, the acquired curiosity of the scientist. Was she to be deprived of the most interesting experiments in the natural history of a life? And yet to get it she would have to batter down the inherited
tradi
tions of three hundred years of "good
women." To become a mistress! Oh, Christ!

But was it always a term of reproach? She
thought of a woman she had seen at a Court ball
in far away London. How, during the lifetime
of her royal lover, all that was best and bravest
and most distinguished had been at this woman's
feet, simply and solely and only because she
had broken the law which obtains for the rest of
mankind, whose breach means social death for
most of us. In the whole of England, only one
brave old man had dared to close his doors to
her, doors which had been flung wide open by
his son, not recking that the old man might turn
in his grave. Even after the royal lover's
decease, this virtual maîtresse en titre without
the name, had made, after a decent interval of
mourning spent in touring other lands, a
triumphant entry into the British capital at which
the most rigid, most censorious, had assisted in
doing her honour for the sake of their dead
master. Nay, she had acquired European
influence as the guerdon of her so-called
"shame." Carmen had been staying in a Con-
tinental capital. The British Ambassador and
his wife had been courteous and even more
cordial to her than was their wont to their own
countrymen and women who were regarded rather
as incubi at the Embassy. But when this other
had appeared, the whole Embassy had fallen down as one man, and worshipped. She had been accorded the chief rôle at a fête which was the talk of Europe. The proudest nobility of the Eternal City had vied in doing her honour. Women with pedigrees of a thousand years, themselves unsmirched as Cæsar's wife, had given entertainments on her behalf. It was clear, then, that circumstances altered cases. For how could one call that "wrong," which the whole of Europe called right?

But then she remembered an experience in Lucknow. She was sitting in her carriage one day outside an Indian military hospital, waiting for someone to come out. In the meantime, a file of women emerged and greeted her with mock empressessement. "Salaam, mem sahib," they cried. It was not till after she knew who they were—poor victims of the cross who, but for the conquering arms of Calvary, would not have needed the services of a Christian hospital. As the gladiators of ancient Rome saluted those for whom their blood made a holiday, so these hailed a woman who was able to walk clean and safe over the muddied Raleigh's cloak of their poor defiled bodies. "Ave Cæsar. Salaam, mem sahib."

One a penny, two for tuppence,
Hot Cross buns.

For the licensed houses of the conquering armies of the Cross, and the State regulation of such,
were unknown before the advent of the English in India. What was the difference between the royal mistress and these? Was it not only one of degree, and two extremes of the scales? Was it not impossible to say of the great majority of women that they were either "good" or "bad?" Potentially, yes; in actuality, no. Many, but not all, were largely creatures of circumstances. Some of the "bad women" would have been most passionately faithful to the right man; many of the "good women" were so because they had never been tempted to be otherwise. Was it not better to be the royal mistress, with her courage of conviction and her pride of power, than a namby-pamby "good woman" who was so simply and solely because she had never had the temptation or the opportunity to be otherwise? Was not this recognised in the world of men? Had not a courtesan a chance of queen-ship, not only in beauty and in letters, but in actual fact, to sit upon a European throne? Was not the most vicious woman in London, a creature credited with pagan vices, an alma mater of the tenderest? Carmen had seen her with her arm round her youngest daughter, murmuring anxiously: "Why doesn't the little girl look quite happy?" while she who was accredited as a model of religion and Christian virtue in her own country, had beaten her step-daughter black and blue, and eventually
turned her out of doors for worshipping God in a manner outside her limited conception of Him. It had taken years of soothing influences to dull the memories of these acts, which were the more wicked as they were magnified to a child's mind, exactly as physical things seem larger, so that in revisiting places in later life, we are at once struck by their apparent shrinking into littleness.

If she had had a girlie she would have called her Carmen Oriole, she ruminated, as representing the two most joyous things in nature—the music of a song, and the dazzling bird whose golden plumage flashes like streaks of lightning across Kashmiri waterways. Her husband had remarked jocularly on the wedding night: "We don't want any brats of children worrying us to death." To Carmen, the possession of a child seemed the most miraculous gift in creation. Was she to be childless because her own parents had not deemed it so?

Ten years of "marriage!" That meant ten years of money, of security, of position—all that most women would consider paradise. Carmen now knew that she would toss it all away for just one hour with that other. She had reached that bitterest of all experiences to a "good woman." She envied the woman who was the kept mistress of the man she loved.

Carmen's limbs moved restlessly beneath their
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draping of jade brocade. How she hated anything tight. She slipped into her lizard skin shoes, and passed into the bathroom. It was entirely filled with an enormous bath. She slipped beneath the delicious cool waves of liquid and lay looking at what they covered. Her auburn hair floated like translucent golden seaweed on the bath water. Below this, the breasts and limbs showed the lovely curves of the perfect female form. She clasped her hands below her slender waist, amusing herself by watching the elongation and foreshortening of the fingers, due to the refraction of the water in various positions. The lower limbs tapered away to the delicate feet. All was warm, mellow, living, tempting. "Oh, the wicked, wanton waste!" she thought, and jumped impatiently from the bath.

As Carmen lay awake that night in her doll's bedroom, she felt her ark rocking and swaying as the waters rose and fell. The houseboat was moored to Sona Lac, an artificial island built by the Moghuls in the Dahl lake for pleasure purposes and under the shadow of Mahadev's peak, the guardian mountain of the lake. The Dahl is, of course, connected with the Woolar by water-ways, as is the whole Happy Valley, which, from any of the heights round about, appears a vast floating garden. Carmen had selected this loveliest of the world's lakes, beloved of the
Emperor Jehangir and the Light of the World, as the goal of her long journey. Ever upon it shikharas glide, silent and splashless as serpents, into the misty, mysterious shadows drifting down from Shiv's snow-crowned peak on the further side, which separates it from mystic Thibet. The movements of the boat seemed to synchronise with the cries of aquatic birds. She could hear the giant pelicans, guardians of this lotus isle, flapping noisily about. The weeds beneath the houseboat floor rustled from unfathomable depths like a submarine forest in which Undine maidens might wander helpless and forlorn. "Am I no longer an Undine?" she thought. "Has he given me a woman's soul?"
CHAPTER VI

Justly I worship thee! Thou art divine
Creating thus thy life anew in mine.
Istar Sahar! Give me a child of thine
This night of nights!

_Suns of the Desert._

Srinagar, the City of the Sun, is said to present a greater combination of beauties than any other city of the planet. If you can imagine an Asiatic Venice set in an amethyst valley, carpeted with tawny plush of English buttercups dashed with red blood spatterings of poppies, with poplar colonnades of Holland leading to Alpine lakes on which Venetian gondolas glide, and with groves of purple velvet iris from which rise ochre-stained ruins of Sun Temples, the whole guarded by ranges of Himalayan giants sparkling with eternal snows, one of which is the fourth highest mountain in the whole world, if, I say, you are equal to this intellectual gymnastic, then you may perhaps conceive Srinagar. The burnt-umber roofs of old Srinagar City are seen through a tumultuous cloud of lotus blossoms, the blossoms on which Bramah was born. The gorgeous chalices of these cups for gods rise many feet from sacred tanks religiously preserved by that most orthodox of Hindus, the Maharajah of Kashmir.
At the time of which I write the nominal lord of this domain, the poor little Maharajah, the little mouse who acts as a buffer between the Lion and the Bear, had still succeeded in asserting his nominal authority in keeping the British afloat in his domain. They were not allowed to affect permanent landings at this time. Needless to say, this feeble dyke did not stem for long the high tide of invasion and now Srinagar has the horror of a villa suburb.

The Assistant Secretary of the Srinagar Club at this time was one of the best-known characters in India. Originally a sergeant in a British cavalry regiment, he ended up by being one of the two men whom Lord Curzon said India could not do without, the other being the electric lighting man at Viceregal Lodge. He was the cleverest organiser of amateur theatricals in India. He was an elderly, bullet-headed man and wore spectacles. His wife kept a boarding-house for clerks in the Government employ, and he used to tell their clientele that all the officers' wives and other ladies who acted in his theatricals were in love with him, that he held all their reputations in the hollow of his hand. The foundation for this statement lay in the fact that all would-be actresses grovelled to him to get parts, for while Secretaries came and went, here to-day and gone to-morrow, Mr. Victor Vokes went on for ever,
and he might tell the Secretary for the time they could not act! He prided himself on being a complete man of the world, and would tell ladies at the Amateur Dramatic how he allowed his own wife, who was about his own age, to flirt as much as she liked in their own boarding-house so long as the general circles of Srinagar Society were not affected thereby. "My dear girl, do what you like, but don't make people talk!" Eternal, immovable, immutable, he knew the private histories of every European in Northern India.

When Carmen visited the Club he received her with empressement, and told her that Srinagar society was convulsed, rent in twain, divided into opposing armies, fighting at specially convened meetings at the Club, presided over by the Resident. All this tremendous battle, in which High Court judges on holiday and gallant officers on duty, egged on by their worser halves, fought on either side, was over the body of one wretched woman, whether or not she should be admitted to the Club? It appeared that the whole crux lay in a dispute as to whether the lady in question, before attaining the status of a lady, had been the maid or adopted sister of an officer's wife living in the place. That the officer's wife herself was her friend's sponsor did not make the slightest difference. It needed all the talent, and
determination to avert an ugly scandal, of that distinguished soldier and eminent explorer, the Resident, to pull her through.

Srinagar could talk of nothing else. It was the topic of the hour, the inner secrets of this *ménage à trois*. The fight over the body of Achilles was tame in comparison to the bitter conflict of British officials over one poor little woman of their own race in the heart of Asia.

"Colonel McNaught has offered to resign the Secretaryship of the Club," he said. "But he was unanimously requested to retain office."

"Why did he offer to resign?" asked Carmen.

"Because it was he who headed the opposition of the election of Miss Heape. When the Resident pulled her through, he tendered his resignation. But they all voted for him to stay."

"But why was he so bitter against Miss Heape? What harm had she done to him?"

"None at all, but when Mrs. de Montmorency went to England last summer Miss Heape stayed to look after the Colonel."

"At Mrs. de Montmorency's request, I suppose?"

"Certainly; Mrs. de Montmorency begged her to look after the house and the Colonel's meals, but that won't stop them from talking!"

"Nor from tearing, apparently. But who was the originator of all this bother?"
"Captain Cormorant of the Colonel's own regiment!"

"Oh!" A light broke upon Carmen. Captain Cormorant had been an intimate friend of a general officer who had shot himself in Ceylon, rather than face an official investigation into an unmentionable scandal. That sort of man was always down upon women.

Sick at heart, Carmen selected her books from the Club library as quickly as possible, and was preparing to leave the Club when she was accosted by a little fair-haired woman with light blue eyes, a type she usually avoided, as experience had taught her they were generally Becky Sharps. "I believe you are Mrs. Scaife," she said, and producing a letter of introduction, invited Carmen into her houseboat, moored opposite the Club. Carmen found she was one of that type of unappropriated blessings who range the earth because their own relatives pay them to stay away from home. All travellers are familiar with them. You meet them in the uttermost parts. You cannot shake them off, you cannot keep them out. Miss Evans had even penetrated into the private hospitality of the Amir of Bokhara! "Are you going to the Embassy?" was her watchword in life. In Srinagar she had, of course, called immediately all round on her entry into the Kashmiri capital, rather too hurriedly in fact.
When she went to call on "Mrs. Shagram," Major Shagram came rushing out of his house crying furiously, "There isn't one, and there won't be one!" She had worried the Club Secretary to introduce partners to her at a dance, saying, "I've paid my subscription! Can't you get me someone?"

Carmen felt so sorry for her isolated condition that, although she had a long return journey before her, she remained half-an-hour in the houseboat and appointed a day for Miss Evans to come out and spend with her on the Dhal Lake, inwardly writhing at the thought.

As she lay back among the pale amber cushions of her shikara, as Cleopatra might have done on the Nile, as her maji log made synchronous strokes of lacquered paddles and the evening zephyrs stirred the awnings, she thought of Miss Evans. Her life was spent in rushing round the world and running after people who did not want her. Could any fate be more ghastly? Why had she come to such a pass? Miss Evans, even in middle life, was not ugly. In youth she must have been pretty. What had she to show for her money? What had she done with the wasted years? All she wanted now, all she could hope for, was social courtesy, the small change of life, while she, Carmen, could still command its gold, and hesitated to take it. Miss Evans was spurned from
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people's doors as a nuisance. Carmen was desired, she knew, passionately if transiently, and feared to take life's great inheritance lest the title deeds should be flawed!

She returned along mysterious by-waterways of the city, beneath bridges as beautiful if less famous than the Bridge of Sighs. Could even Seville be more lovely, she wondered, for everything now reminded her of Spain. The shikara, or Kashmiri gondola, wound its way through the water lanes leading to the Dhal Lake. The hedges were formed of reeds six feet high and pollard willows. The reflections were extra-ordinarily clear. The fluffy, feathery willows and austere poplars appeared mirrored to interminable depths. She imagined that Undines and Loreleis must be concealed in the soft whirls of the watery willows. They could not resist so ideal a home, for the reflections were more beautiful than the reality, as Carmen's dreams were more lovely than the hard facts they foreshadowed. When she had passed the water forest the clear currents took a shade of brightest jade, on which floated the golden mesh of the singara. There were innumerable varieties of aquatic birds, from water-hens to giant pelicans. It was the prettiest sight to see the little hens duck their ruby heads and submerge in toto at the boat's approach. There was no false modesty about the spotted black
and white kingfishers nor the golden orioles flashing like sheet lightning across her path.

She passed a fleet of floating gardens and, down a long lane’s turning, caught a vista of lotus-land, at present a tumult of translucent green, for the time of flowers was not yet. The leaves lay flat like plates on the cool waters and nearly always contained a silver drop of water, reminding her irresistibly of the cold charity of an alms-plate. Would the world’s charity ever be denied to her, she wondered?

The shikara rustled swishing among the giant leaves interspersed with a minute green scum. One or two early flowers, pink-tipped like delicate egg-shell porcelain, rose from the purple shadows cast by the hills above. The maji log chopped off the flower stems which contained filaments of softest wool spun to any extent. With a tug a leaf was severed from its connection in the Dahl depths below. Its petals vary from deepest roseate hues to faintest blushes palpitating on the vibrating ether with its powder-blue hazes descending from the guardian heights around the Dahl. The blue-green discs of the leaves often lay edgeways on the water like fans, and were reversed in royal purple. The wan pallor of the water-lily, in its modest green calyx, was as miserably insignificant before the lotus as a school ma’am before a mondaine. Involuntarily Carmen
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thought of Miss Evans and herself. Yet what good was her beauty to her? Had it ever brought her one hour of life? She passed out of the water-lanes on to the Dahl Lake. Presently she passed beneath the Moghul Bridge down a water-road crossing another sea of lotus. Here and there the delicate buds pointed upwards, mute echoes of that exquisite voice, those tender eyes, who saw them and sang them as

Pale hands, pink-tipped as lotus buds that float
On those cool waters, where we used to dwell.

She had heard the Happy Valley spoken of as over-rated. Surely the fault must lie at home, she thought, since all scenery, all beauty, life itself, lived and moved and had its being in the brain. It was there that the shikara ruffled the lotus, that its bloom blushed pink, that it sighed troubling scents. In Kashmir, as in all lands, we found what we brought to them. Would her life’s road lead to Spain, she wondered?

The Dahl Lake lay like a molten silver sea, as though poured from a giant melting pot. The lotus buds appear bubbles, on the impassive, immovable metal. Behind the Moghul Bridge the Fort lay like a lion couchant, flanked as always by poplar avenues. Behind, the Pir Panjal range was snow-tipped. The evening rays were streaming on it in every shade of grey and silver. In sharp relief to the left is the dome
called by Anglo-Indians the Takht-i-Suleiman, called by Hindus Sankara's Temple, and sacred to Shiv, the guardian deity of the Vale.

When she arrived at her houseboat, moored beneath the shadow of Chenar trees, planted by the slave girl of Agra who became through love the "Light of the World," she passed up the narrow plank inside. A letter was lying on the little octagonal table beside her divan. It bore the Residency postmark. When Carmen saw it something made her heart pound violently. Without touching the letter she threw back the folding door into the little bedroom, got out of her outdoor things and into the jade brocade tea gown, and returning to the drawing-room, threw herself on the divan to read. It was from Lady Gabb who had arrived in Srinagar and was the guest of Lady Olliffe, the Resident's wife.

"Dearest Carmen,—Why have you not come here? We hear your boat arrived days ago. We came yesterday and so did His Royal Highness, who drove in in our landau. He is raging to his aides-de-camp because he was sent into dinner last night with Lady Phillipson. He talks of leaving in a huff, that means unpleasantness from Simla. Lady Olliffe wants you to be sure and come to the garden party to-morrow. She has heard of your bôn succès in Lucknow.—Yours, Jessica."
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With this was a card of invitation from Lady Olliffe. A smile broke over Carmen's brooding face at the thought of the sporting Italian prince chained to the rock of old Lady Phillipson's tub figure and gossip, of "how can women make such sights of themselves as Lady Gabb, with her yellow hair and blackened eyes and giving dinner parties when her husband is half dying with arthritis. That Mrs. Sheepy Smith's expenses were being paid by Mr. Douglas Gordon, and that Mrs. Wraxall's tiara, at the Maharajah's State dinner, was hired for the occasion."

How far away all that life was now receding from her, that life which until the last few days had been her world. Only last season she had danced with the Viceroy at that most exclusive function, the Black Hearts Ball at Simla. It had seemed a big thing at the time, because the Viceroy was an exclusive man, and only waltzed with one or two women in addition to his wife. Now it had all faded into nothingness. For the tidal wave which overflows every normal woman's life once had come upon her unawares, unexpected, like a thief in the night, sweeping all before it. No man in reality embodies the ideal of a woman. But there is always one who arrives at the psychological moment, carefully prepared and led up to by Nature, who introduces him at the right instant to effect the purpose she has in
view. By restraining, very often, his true self he presents a kind of dummy into which the woman breathes her ideal, as the woman seen by Faust on the Bracken presented to each man looking at her the likeness of the woman he loved. His image during life floats unbidden before all things beautiful. At death he stands symbolical of the highest earthly bliss. Through the rain drops glittering on the Taj dome after showers; with the vibrations on stringed instruments at the Grand Opera; on the wind through the reeds by the Jhelum; with the perfume of Parma violets in the springtime; with the blazing of the gold mohur blossom in the monsoon—he is always there, that radiant image who represents for her the place where two worlds once met; who, if only for one hour, opened the gates between real life and the dream life. No matter when or how that image was first set up. No matter if it has since displayed feet of clay. Unbidden he comes till death, heralded by all sights and sounds and perfume of loveliness, by all perfect things on a perfect earth with a hideous humanity. Nay, even his memory solaces the weariness of the world. No matter if he has failed to provide her a refuge from it, if he has left her to bear the wear and tear and boredom alone. When the dawn shows gray and ghastly after the ball; when the flowers are withered and the programmes torn;
as she strips off the faded finery and lets fall her corsets,

When the feast is finished, and the lamps expire
Then falls his shadow—the night is his,
She is healed by an old passion.

Carmen knew that the man and the moment had arrived for her. She could no more decline to go to the Residency to-morrow than Niagara could refuse its leap. At the same time, a curious numbness had come over her. It was caused by the sensation of the struggle in her sub-conscious self. It caused her at once relief and disappointment. Surely the “emotions of a good woman on falling” should be more poignant, she thought!

Then she arranged the lotus flowers and leaves in the emerald jade pot which had been an incense burner on the altar of the Temple of Heaven, and as she did so, the thought of Heine’s lines which Elizabeth of Austria had blotted with her tears.

Die Lotus Blume angstigt
Sich vor der Sonne Fracht
Und mit gesenstem Haupte
Erwartet sie traumend die Nacht.

A perfect sphere of soup-plate size, its stem is fixed in the centre of the reverse side from which veinings in a rather brighter shade of green velvet radiated like the spokes of a wheel through the soft grey-greens of the circumference. The flowers were paler than the buds, just faintly tinged with pink at the tips, and the outer petals
of the white calyx shaded into exquisite mauves. The pistil was like an immense solid yellow bell hung from a cloud of orange stamens. The buds were infused with deep roseate hues, yet the veinings of the petals were so delicate that the pink of lotus buds is one of the most delicate hues in the flower world, and egg shell china coloured by the finest artists is coarse in comparison. In the calyx the pink is shaded with green and greys with indescribable softness.

The perfume of the lotus is subtle as its colouring. Why did both remind Carmen of a baby's flesh?
CHAPTER VII

If there be a paradise on earth, it is this! It is this!
It is this! — Sadi.

And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall be as
gods, knowing good and evil. — Moses.

The post of Resident at Srinagar is one of the
picked billets of India. The Residency is
exquisitely situated, overhanging the Jhelum. It
is overshadowed by the hill of the Takht-i-
Suleiman. This is surmounted by a small fluted
temple in grey stone, of simple, solemn dignity
and austerity. Nestling beneath the hill with
the temple's shadow on it is a flowery garden,
now belonging to one of the Residency staff,
where the vines twine round the pyre of the last
Kashmiri sati, for the Kashmiri women have never
failed in devotion in life or death, and both
Martand and the Pathan temples have side
chapels added by the queens of their kingly
builders. Inside the Residency, all was tremend-
ously gay for the Royal garden-party. Eastern
and Western birds and flowers vied in welcoming
the Royal guest. Golden orioles flitted amongst
bunches of purple grapes, whose vines swayed
from the poplars and plane trees for which
Srinagar is celebrated. Doves cooed softly, but
persistently. Warm waves of petunia essence lashed the air unmercifully from their blotches of crimson splashing the garden. Lilies and gladioli flaunted royal red.

At this time this coveted billet was bestowed upon the distinguished soldier and explorer who had ridden from Peking, via Tibet, to Kashmir, and who had been the first and last European to negotiate a certain hazardous pass since closed by eternal snows. His wife, unlike most of the bara mems of India, was a "grande dame" by birth. She had made her début in London society at that most fascinating period of the eighties, before the horror of a great smartness had fallen over England, when men reared altars to Venus, incarnated as Lily Langtry, and worshipped art exemplified by Oscar Wilde; when the grand tour had not been voted vieux jeu for Ranelagh, whose "jeunesse dorée" loved the glinting of the wings around the dome of Venice, nor lusted for the dazed and bleeding whirls of feathers of Hurlingham; whose florescence was depicted in pencil by Edward Clifford and in pen by William Mallock. Surely no métier could be more alluring than was that of English aristocratic culture, in its dignity, its pensiveness, its susceptibility to beauty, its pride of possession and its sense of "noblesse oblige." When society gave gladly of its superfluity out of love for the lower orders,
nor had its entrails torn out to keep a brutal populace at bay.

Lady Olliffe showed a royal memory and graciousness at her garden parties. When Carmen arrived rather late, she found all in full swing. The band played seductively beneath the chenars. Lady Olliffe came to meet her at once.

"Dear Mrs. Scaife," she said, "I have so long wished to meet you. Jessica Gabb has so often spoken of you, but something has always prevented us from attending the Lucknow Races. However, I hear you've had a Royal week, this time."

"Nothing new to you, Lady Olliffe," replied Carmen. "All the Royal visitors pass through Kashmir. How do you like this one?"

"He is divinely handsome," said her ladyship, laughing, "but he doesn't like the table of precedence."

"I am not surprised, since it gave him 'Lady Dreariness' for dinner. Where is 'Lord Beeriness,' by the way?"

"Sir Edward Philipson is still in the plains. Just fancy, the Prince actually wanted to take in Miss Shanks, the missionary girl, because he said she was pretty! He has sulked ever since. Do try and smooth him down."

"You had better send for Miss Shanks!" said Carmen. "There is the Maharajah; I am going to him."
The Maharajah had just arrived in his State barge, swiftly paddled by a vermilion-clothed crew. It lay moored amongst a grove of purple iris. Carmen made swiftly for him after greeting Lady Olliffe, without even looking to see who else was present. In vain, Lady Gabb made frantic efforts to attract her attention from the other side of the lawn. The erstwhile convent girl had heard of Carmen’s success as a hostess of royalty, and wished for her share of the spoil. Her head was as well screwed on as ever, her toilet surpassed herself in magnificence. She pitied Carmen, as Becky Sharp might have compassionated Hypatia, as she saw her make a bee line for the far end of the lawn, to a little man whose mild features were nearly buried beneath an enormous turban. He was the Maharajah, and his place was by the Resident’s side, as a bear beside his leader. Carmen curtsied, though it was not the custom amongst English ladies to do so. Still, as the Maharajah ruled a country larger than many Western kingdoms, she never could see why he should be deprived of, at any rate, the nominal dignities of his position.

"Your Highness is a member of a society for promoting Hindu knowledge to which I also belong," she ventured.

The poor little man looked apprehensively sideways at the Resident. "I—support—all—
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societies—which—are—loyal—to—Government,” he stammered, like a child repeating a lesson, with the hesitating utterance of the confirmed opium-eater.

Carmen felt squashed and wondered what to say next. She turned to the pompous-looking man who walked on the other side of the Resident and held out her hand.

Sir Trevor Shrapnel was, only a few years previously, a mere Deputy Commissioner. The Viceroy of the time had come to India primed with a policy of liberality to Indians. Mr. Shrapnel, fully alive to the spirit of the hour, had written a pamphlet called “The Infusion of Sympathy.” He was the son of a famous master of a college and had inherited literary skill. He took for his text a famous sentence of the Heir to the Indian Empire at a Guildhall speech. He described how a vision had come to him, as he stood on the bridge at midnight musing over the Goomti on the separation of the East and West, how he dreamed of a United India in which race prejudice should disappear and the lion and the lamb should lie down together. How he meant to work in his own little corner to effect this, so that the Talukdars should fall on the necks of the Indian civilians of Oudh. The pamphlet was shown by his relative at Court to the Viceroy. “That is the man we need,” exclaimed His Excellency.
“Friend, come up higher.” Soon the seven guns were booming because a new Councillor had taken his seat. It was as though a captain in a line regiment had suddenly to command a division at the front. Now he was Governor of a Province, with powers of life and death, and her fifty millions.

Just then the band struck up the Spanish National Anthem, and she became aware that her heart was beating violently and her limbs shaking, as she saw a tall, slight figure come out of the Residency on to the lawn, walking with arrogant grace and preceded by another in uniform. Lady Olliffe was standing alone in the middle of the lawn, her guests having receded into a semi-circle behind her. She was a beautiful woman, dressed in rich black moiré, as there was an English Court mourning. She made a striking centre figure in this scene representing English dignity of Empire. When the aide-de-camp had moved aside, she curtsied low to her Royal guest advancing behind him, and led him into the shamiana for tea. Carmen, far away at the other end of the lawn, behind the Maharajah and Resident, did not think that he had seen her, but on leaving the tea tent, the aide-de-camp came straight towards her.

“His Royal Highness would like to speak to you,” he said, and they walked across the lawn
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together. Carmen held, with a famous leader of fashion in England, that to dress well is to dress suitably, and to dress suitably is to dress well. Here in this sylvan valley she wore white muslin of Rue de la Paix simplicity, and no jewels, but round her neck was a charm of white jade which had formerly belonged to the Emperor Shah Jehan. His name was engraved on the lower edge:

Shah Jehan Badshan
ibu Jehangir Badshan
ibu Akbar Badshan.

On the front was the verse of the throne from the Koran. It bore the date 1631 A.D.

Alphonso d'Arragon was standing, bored and arrogant, beside Lady Olliffe, at the Residency end of the lawn. His Royal cousin, when on his travels, had desired an American girl to be presented to him. She had indignantly refused to be led up by an aide-de-camp, saying that an American woman was never taken up to any man, but expected him to come to her. Whereupon Mahommed had gone to the mountain. Carmen, however, had inherited the ingrained respect for Royalty of eight generations of fierce loyalists. As she undulated across the lawn by the aide-de-camp's side, a gleam came into the Prince's dark eyes, which had the Mephistophelian glitter of Spanish blood, set in the sallow face. He
advanced three steps and held out his hand with
gracious warmth. Lady Olliffe melted away,
leaving the two striking figures alone. Needless
to say, the whole vast lawn, crowded with guests,
was all agog with the ill-concealed curiosity which
is the stamp of the ill-bred, whether in a soap-
boiling peeress or a "chota mem."

Alphonso d'Arragon was one of the most
magnetic of the "jeunesse dorée" of Europe.
He was the most romantic figure amongst the
Royal men, as Carmen Sylva was amongst the
Royal women. He had crossed the Dark Con-
tinent from the Cape to Cairo, to shoot lions. He
was now on his way to Central Asia after markhor,
a giant Thibetan goat. He looked what he was—
the son of a hundred kings. His slender figure
was carried with the arrogance of royalty. In his
eyes flashed the pride of power of rulers of men.
His beautiful features had royal repose, but when
amused at his own or others’ wit, his eyes, which
at other times were narrowed in acute observation,
would suddenly expand into roundness, while the
rest of the face remained impassive. He was
also the prince of good fellows. No one was so
popular as he in the military clubs of Madrid
and Barcelona. The famous affair of the duel,
which, at the time, attracted world-wide atten-
tion, had made him the idol of Spain, in
both military and civilian life. Prince Alphonso
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was extremely clever, with the keen wits of the well-informed man of the world. He was devoted to sport and was the first European Royal prince of any nationality who made a *shikar* expedition to the Pamirs. He loved the exciting pursuit of big game, and, for the same reason, he was also a mighty hunter of women. Needless to say, he was accustomed to see the fairest of Europe, and did not find feminine Anglo-India especially attractive. Though the prettiest girls get selected to come out to India, still, the life of constant struggle with the elements for that first essential, a roof, in a wandering life, and in petty social conflicts, makes them early hard-faced and worn. Carmen had, so far, led a life immune from big emotion of all sorts. Her softness, her supreme distinction amongst mediocrities, her look of race, the bizarre Oriental setting in which he had discovered her, supplied a zest not hitherto experienced on his Indian trip. To a man so experienced with women as His Royal Highness, a fresh attraction was as the trumpet call to a war horse. He determined to see it through.

Carmen had the keen intuition of a woman who spends in thought and analysis what other women expend in chatter. "Triple essence of Spain," she had once mentally labelled him. He was that, with the Spanish qualities intensified, so to speak, by his Portuguese mother. Racial qualities
become more pronounced as one proceeds further North or further Southwards.

Now the Spanish character is made up of contrasts, more strongly marked and vividly opposed than that of any other nation; and these contrasts are welded, not seldom, into as perfect a harmony as is possible to human nature, for a Spaniard is melodious even in his discord and is symmetrical even in his contrariety.

To reproach a Spaniard with his love of his own interests is to speak to him in an unintelligible language. "Who should love me, if not myself?" he will say, with perfect good faith. "We are entirely sure of no one except ourselves; therefore, in the name of all justice and prudence, let us first of all consider that best of all friends, our own advantage and advancement!" But in times of flood, of pestilence, of fire—he is heroic, and the woe of one is the woe of all, with a unanimity of action and a strength of emotion that can alone arise out of a national character at once tender and full of force. Northern nations have nothing, for example, comparable for self-sacrifice to the Misericordia. For consolidation, for devotion to duty, for all the deepest and purest forms of charity, the Order has no equal in Europe.

Where else will you see, as in Spain, the nobleman leaving his masked ball, the lover his mistress, the craftsman his labour, the foeman his
vengeance, to go at the sound of the call and aid the poor, the sick and the dying? Superficial people wonder that the disciple of St. Teresa and Don Juan could come from the same nation, but the wonder is vain.

A passionate sadness underlies in silence the gay and amorous temperament of the Spaniard; and not only in metaphor, but in fact, will the hair shirt of a silent sorrow be worn by him under the beribboned domino that he carries so airily in his life of intrigue. That sadness is caused by the presence of an empty silent shrine in his heart where he would fain enthrone his ideal. No one will ever see it except one woman out of his many loves, who is near enough to him to touch his heart as well as stir his passions; no one else will ever see it, but there it is—and his sword is there too.

The reticence of Carmen had piqued the curiosity of Alphonso d’Arragon as to whether his own shrine was, at least, temporarily to be occupied.

“I hope your health is better, Mrs. Scaife,” he said, solicitously, in his soft voice with a slight foreign accent. “You were ill the night of our previous meeting,” and his eyes stabbed her face. Carmen felt helpless. Once more she realised the inevitableness of this man’s power over her, of the automatic working of the machinery set in
motion in the past. As a man in a motor car, dashing down a cliff; as a woman in a runaway rickshaw down a khud, sees it is useless to struggle, so Carmen, her eyes glued to his, waited for the course of events.

"Suppose we go into the drawing-room, Mrs. Scaife; it is very warm," he said, and led the way up the steps and along the verandah. The heat was indeed stifling. Even Srinagar is considered unbearable by its pampered officials for three months of the year, and there is a general migration to its own hill station of Gulmarg, at the end of June. As the Maharajah resides at Jammu in winter, this involves three moves of the Residential staff each year, at the taxpayers' expense.

They entered the cool recesses of Lady Olliffe's drawing-room, exquisitely furnished with choicest productions of Kashmiri art and filled with the lovely flora of the country. Many of the best-known English garden flowers are indigenous to Kashmir, such as columbines, dahlias, and asters. His Royal Highness motioned Carmen to sit on a sofa and sat down beside her. Behind them a Kashmiri silver bowl, lined with gold, held an immense bouquet of columbines in duskiest royal purple.

The Prince took Carmen's hand in his. Her hands were one of her most beautiful features. They were so small that her gloves had to be made
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to order, and exquisitely moulded. A Queen who, during Carmen's European travels, had received her in private audience, as the wife of a distinguished British official, had once exclaimed: "I have never seen such small hands, and in such a big woman, too!"

As Carmen respectfully replied, "Small as they are, they are at your Majesty's service," she had inwardly wondered if the Queen thought her qualified for Barnum's Show.

The Prince's hands were brown and muscular. As his grip tightened on hers, Carmen involuntarily tried to draw her hand away, but he held it fast, and as that warm clasp closed over hers, Carmen felt again that helpless, inevitable feeling, almost of hypnosis. In his hand she felt his own excitement. It both frightened and fascinated her.

Holding her hand with that firm grip in which she felt his arteries pulsating against her flesh, Alphonso d'Arragon began to speak. He did not make love to her. He began to tell her the story of his life. Perhaps he had never told it so completely before as to this woman of an alien race, met in the wilds of Asia. Perhaps the distance from home, freedom from the travails of Court life, his natural boyish excitement over his travels, the romantic situation, unsealed his lips.

They were as completely segregated from the
maddening crowd of mediocrities outside as though they had been in Carmen's ark. No one would dare to intrude on a Royal solitude à deux. Nevertheless, as he spoke, the vibrations of "Venetia," which had moved an older generation to madness, sent the air sobbing from the far end of the lawn into the quiet room.

He described the misery of royal marriages. He said that his parents, the old Duke and Duchess of Arragon, had ordered him to marry at twenty. But the boy had started back in horror of a long lifetime of probable wretchedness involved, and had flatly refused. He decided, if he married at all, to do so from affinity, and only after thorough and long study of his royal partner-to-be.

"You should know a wife's character thoroughly, under all circumstances, first," he cried excitedly; "should travel with her, and know her well both at home and abroad."

Carmen privately thought very few marriages would then take place at all—whether royal or otherwise.

"Now I shall never marry," he said, resolutely, "for there is no one of my rank who fulfils my ideal."

He did not ask for her pity plainly in words, but subtly all that he said was really said to establish a claim on the softness, the tenderness
of the woman beside him, whose intensely feminine nature he had divined in their short acquaintance. For he had, in addition to the natural cleverness of the Spaniard and trained observation of royalty, the discernment of the experienced man of the world, and of one whose long and varied explorations into women's nature, had made her as easy to read as an open book.

Carmen felt a child in knowledge beside him and it added to her feeling of powerlessness to cope with his force, of the unequal odds in the struggle. At the same time it gave her a feeling of pride. This man of royal birth was confiding in her. And he did not ask her never to betray his confidences. She felt he knew it was not necessary to do so. That in one sense she belonged to the same set as himself, e.g., to men and women who counted death preferable to any act of dishonour. There was complete trust in the pressure of his hand. And there was something more in that close clasp. The pressure of his flesh and bones, the pulsing of his arteries against her own told Carmen that Alphonso d'Arragon knew perfectly well that she was not indifferent to him—that there was a certain bond between them; that, at least, they were simpatico, as he would have called it, though he did not know the reason for this as Carmen did. Out-
wardly he was a devoted son of the Catholic Church. He had the keen sense of the responsibilities and duties of his position, characteristic of the ruling family of Spain. But inwardly he was a materialist. He was a clever, forceful man of the world, first class in intellect and judgment, and his duties duly accomplished, devoted all to the pursuit of pleasure.

He could no more have understood Carmen's mystical experiences than have voyaged to the planet Venus. Had she told him she believed herself to have belonged to him in previous lives, he would have smiled graciously, as to anything a pretty woman said, and inwardly have burst out laughing. But though he knew nothing of their past, he knew that he wanted her very badly in the present. Also he knew that an Englishwoman, as he imagined her to be, would require more delicate handling than a Spaniard, and he acted accordingly. His volubility, fervour, command of language and eloquence were Spanish. The delicacy of detail had something of English restraint. He chose his words carefully for this woman whom he instinctively felt to be pure, as he unfolded what was in his mind, what he wanted her to do.

Yet, in spite of his instinctive carefulness, Carmen was led by him into a new and terrible world. She felt like Lord Rosebery, who had
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looked over the edge of the world and staggered back. What he said blotted out from her eyes and mind, the stillness, the peace, the mystic beauty of the Happy Valley, even the exquisite elegance of Lady Olliffe's drawing-room. It seemed now filled with fripperies as the realities of life confronted her. He described the misery of a man deprived by circumstances over which he has no control, of his lawful mate. The life of the body was, it seemed, an independent thing, a force altogether detached from the soul, following its own courses, driven by its own demons, living in its own hell. It was, he said, one of the greatest violations of nature for a man to live alone, and nature avenged herself summarily, especially during the silent watches of the night, when the body lay prone and helpless, and the soul inside its casing cried out:

"O Goddess! I am sick at heart, o'erworn
With weariness,
For the weight of life is bitter to be borne
Companionless."

And then he spoke of the solitude of his soul. He did not attempt to conceal the many and varied excursions he had made into the world of women to assuage this. But he told Carmen how extremely difficult it was to find consolation for that of which fate, by the fluke of royal birth, had denied him. He desired a woman of lineage, of his own world, interests, tastes, and pursuits,
and also of purity, and yet who would not think it wrong to cross the gulf which separates the sheep from the goats in order to relieve his torture of body and soul. Who would be the Lazarus to cool his tongue, tormented by the flames of unappeased desires?

And then the narrative came to herself, and his soul seemed to be released and to rise as though Dives were comforted by Lazarus in hell.

The Prince described how it was meeting her at her dinner for him in Lucknow, and afterwards at the Umbrella Palace Ball, which had given him hope that a bright future might dawn for them both. He did not become sentimental, as the German prince had done, nor even pay compliments to her appearance, or rave about her beauty. But he spoke with deep feeling of the thoughts and desires he had experienced during and after their meeting. Since then he had dreamed of a completed life in which he, deprived of one kind of marriage, might yet find another in the mating of his soul. And as he described his longings, Carmen's own, though she remained outwardly a patient and passive listener, became more and more insistent. He showed her her own softness, her needs, her rights, the romance she was entitled to, but which a fate of peculiar and extraordinary cruelty had denied her.
How masculine he was! How different in fibre from Scaife! This man with his imperious needs! He presented himself to her as a man desiring a woman, not as a bachelor desiring a housekeeper, not as a savant desiring a secretary. He was hungry for her, body and soul. And yet Carmen knew that his need for her was nothing to hers for him. If she denied him, he would satisfy it elsewhere and forget her, but she would remain for ever the uncompleted half of a potential whole. Carmen knew that hitherto his soul had been starved. She had been starved in both body and soul, and also she knew that profoundest dictum of the greatest philosopher of our times, Greek in mentality, in beauty, in decay: "The only cure for the soul is through the sense, just as the only cure for the senses is the soul."

Finally he told her what he wanted her to do. Could she not come back to Spain with him on board the Spanish battleship "Alphonso d'Arragon"? And there would be no scandal, nothing to impair her position in the "grande monde," for the wife of the Spanish Consul in Bombay would be a member of the royal party. It seemed, for the moment, wonderful to Carmen that he should have taken so much thought and trouble on her account. Her husband had wanted a housekeeper and had paid merely the ordinary price
demanded by Society, of marriage, to get one. This man wanted a woman and would use the leverage of his royal rank and puissance to crush convention to get her.

For the first time she raised her eyes, dark and soft as a June midnight, to his, this man who was asking for her body and soul, and instantly she recoiled from the hardness of the black diamond facets gleaming in his.

"You look cruel," she whispered, after a long silence. "All men are so when they don't love a woman any more. You would soon cease to want me and throw me away," and she withdrew her hand from his.

"I don't know," he said, impatiently. "All I know is I want you very much now, and you know you want me too."

Then suddenly she knew, for the first time in her life, what the desire of a man meant. The light touch of his arm round her neck, and his warm breathing on her averted ear, taught her more than all his words, even than his long hand-clasp. His first love touch threw her into the kingdom of hate—hatred of him, hatred of herself, but most of all against her husband and the circumstances which had brought her to this. She thought of her girl relatives and friends, all brought up in the same strictly puritanical, conservative atmosphere as herself. They had
married, leading quiet and happy lives, mostly as the wives of clergymen. Why should her own life have been cast in these troubled courses? True, it had been her own doing. She had kicked against the pricks of Calvinism and kicked them down, and her own way out, but at what a cost! How had she come to this? For the bitterest drop in all her cup lay in this: that in her heart of hearts she knew that she did not love this man as she had conceived of love. He was not the ideal of which every girl dreams from the time she becomes a woman, sometimes earlier, for a woman's soul may live in the body of a girl-child. He was not her prince. He was handsome and clever, and charming on the surface. But the unfailing intuition of a good woman told Carmen that he was cold, cruel and calculating beneath. If she went with him there would be a terrible price to pay for life's great experience. Was she to grow old and grey without it? It was quite certain she would never have a chance to drink the cup of life again. Would not the wine outpour the lees? This man had sufficient physical and mental attractions to blot out her "ideal," and he was of royal birth, and that meant much to a woman whose ancestors had fiercely fought for their king for eight generations.

But most of all she rejoiced in his desire of
her. At least, for the time, she was passionately needed, and by one of the first men in Europe, and he was willing to take—had already taken—complicated thought and pains to get her.

He saw her hesitation and, still with his arm on her shoulder, began to depict in eloquent language, enhanced by the slight foreign accent, the charm of the life she would lead with him. They would visit Italy en route to Spain.

She would see the hornèd moon hang like a red lamp above the lagunas of Venice, wrapped in an electric pall; the pastel-painted sails in every tawny shade, glide on a blue glass sea; the glistening asters frame the pastels of the canals' jade water and the grey wheels of masonry. She would watch Principessa Leonardi, a friend of his to whom he would introduce her, with her scarlet lips, Venetian hair, and green lights in her leopard eyes with blackened lashes, wrapped in white furs, step down the water-lapped portico of her palazzo into her waiting gondola of ebony, surmounted by a coat of arms, and propelled by two gondoliers, and slip away silently into the shrouded mystery of a Venetian night, her cameo profile bent above a lily in her hand, as was the Maid of Astolat's. She would hear the perfect band swell through the white Gothic cloisters of the old Doge's palace by moonlight, and glimpse the golden glamour of St. Mark's mosaics, the
four horses of the Apocalypse gleam against a
sky of softest, warmest floating crêpes of livid
blue.

About the time they would arrive, in early
autumn, the Virginia creeper takes on Venetian
red in compliment to the old palaces it clothes,
and the lagunas lie swathed in mother of pearl
tints, as though cradled in some gigantic oyster
shell. On them float painted terra-cotta and
tawny sails, and over them a great rosy sun sinks
swiftly to rest. And even after he had dropped,
the evening lights would be rosy, for in Venice
would come the dawning of a great joy.

In Granada he had an old palace to which,
leaving the ship and the royal entourage, and the
Consul's wife behind, he would take her, and they
would forget the outer world in that fairy palace
of delights in which the golden hours would be
gilded with the gleaming fabrics woven of their
mutual attraction.
CHAPTER VIII

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with false love and true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

W. B. Yeats.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life.
St. John the Divine.

The Jyeshtheshvara, popularly called the Takht-i-Suleiman, is the oldest temple in Kashmir. The hill which the temple crowns is a thousand feet high. It is very steep and very difficult to climb. In fact, the temple of the Jyeshtheshvara crowning it seems to stand symbolic of the cult of Shiv. Its site is the finest of any temple in Kashmir, all of which are Shivite. The winding path up the hill is rough and jagged as the Path of Joga. It is strewn in the upper levels by immense boulders forming rocky defiles, hurled by volcanic eruption from the summit down the slopes of the hill. The elements have actually stained these titanic masses of stone in every shade of yellow and orange, the colours sacred to the Lord of the Mountain. On either side of the narrow path, the only one of ascent or descent, are awful precipices. Even by daylight these make the path most hazardous as a single false
step, or an instant of giddiness, would mean a fall down a yawning gulf on one or other side to certain death. In fact, once having started on the path, it is fatal to glance behind or to either side. The writer of this once lay for half-an-hour suspended between life and death half-way up the mountain, clinging to a small boulder whose shallow lip alone lay between her and instant death.

Owing to the steepness of the ascent, the path itself winds in a serpentine manner up to the Temple of Him who is crowned with cobras. Even in the lower levels, before the rocky defiles are reached, sharp stones break the path, as the trials of the Way cut and wound the feet of the aspirant of knowledge.

On the evening of the Royal party at the Residency, in the gloaming a woman in white passed swiftly along the poplar avenue to the foot of the hill which the Temple crowns. There was a little village at its base in which stood a temple dedicated to Durga, the female aspect of Shiv, for in Hinduism women rise to the Godhead. In the temple garden beneath the chenar trees sat a group of Sadhus, whose matted locks, yellow draperies, and bodies besmeared with white ashes proclaimed them devotees of the Lord of Ascetics. They had come to Kashmir for the yearly celebrated pilgrimage of Sannyassis to Amarnath.
The Sadhus were startled by the apparition of a white figure suddenly flitting through their midst. But before they had time to recover from their amazement it had rushed past and up the serpentine path coiling and slithering up the hill to the Temple. They saw its gossamer draperies gleaming on the lower slopes among the iris groves which form a scanty covering for the Kashmiri dead. "Bhuta hai," they murmured with bated breath and began chanting an invocation to Bhuteshvara*.

When she had passed the iris groves she began the hard part of the journey. Her delicate shoes became torn and her feet bruised at a very early stage. It was too dark for her to see anything but the glimmer of the winding way up. She was mercifully spared the view of the awful yawning precipices on either side. In after years she often thought darkness had been her salvation that night. She could never have accomplished the journey by daylight owing to a constitutional giddiness which at the bare contemplation of any sort of depth below her made her fling herself reeling to the ground.

She pressed on, urged by an impulse she knew not whence. She only knew that she must gain the summit, and then . . . . As she rose higher the air became less sultry, nevertheless she paused

*The Lord of Ghosts, one of Shiv's titles.
again to regain her breath. During one of these pauses the murky light was suddenly rent by a ribbon of fire, a streak of forked lightning which lit up the whole valley. She saw the imposing pile of the Maharajah’s palace. She saw the three cones described by the Jhelum beneath the Temple, each larger than the other. Thence it wound serpentine to Baramula accompanied by the white zigzags of the poplar avenues. Then there was the imposing pile of the Maharajah’s palace. To the right were the floating gardens of the Dahl, and the two fixed garden islands made by the Moghuls, Ropa Lac and Sona Lac, the islands of silver and gold. Guarding the Dahl was Mahadev’s Peak and in its shadow lay her own tiny houseboat.

This was succeeded by a terrific roar of thunder. An Himalayan storm in the world’s greatest range of mountains is an awful and inspiring sight. The incessant darting of fiery serpents of flame over the firmament, the constant cannonading of celestial artillery, give a powering humanity some faint inkling of the titanic force of the elemental powers working on the globe.

Carmen knew that rain would soon fall to relieve the tension in the air. She pressed up the rocky defiles. In after years she often wondered how she found her way amongst the gigantic boulders in the thick darkness, lit only occasion-
ally by the slashing streaks of forked lightning, followed by crashes that made her heart leap into her mouth. A false step would have meant certain death down one of the awful precipices yawning on either side. No European to her knowledge had ever scaled the Takht on a moonless night. She thought that unseen deva hands had guided her, had helped her through that crisis in which earthly friends had failed and left her. She felt the more sure of this because she reached the apex of the hill and the Temple portico just as the torrents of rain and hail commenced. In the Himalayas, where everything is on the biggest scale in the world, hailstones are the size of hen's eggs.

She felt her way inside the small fluted fane. Its dome is round, surmounted by a trident. Inside is one thing only, an immense upright black stone.

Deep in the Temple's innermost shrine is set, Where the bats and the shadows dwell, The worn and ancient symbol of Shiv at rest In its oval shell.

The Lingam is the oldest religious symbol in the world. It is also the simplest. But to the Shivite no gorgeous imagery of the Mass, no elaborate ceremonial of Mecca, can compare with the solemnity of that black stone.

Carmen entered the shrine and, still impelled by an irresistible impulse, knelt down before the
lingam. She did not know why she did so, only that she had done so many times before. She did not know when she had done so, only that it was long, long ago, and now she must do so again.

Two roads lay before her. Whichever she took meant an eternal farewell to the other. She was twenty-nine. She had to live till she was seventy. That night's decision would decide how and where.

She pressed her burning forehead on the cool surface of the only denizen of the Temple. It was crowned with flowers. On its shining black surface was smeared the tilak, for the lingam stands for the Great Ascetic Himself, who is also the Great Example and Himself bears all the signs of the yogi. Beyond, however, the awful weight of the onus of decision all thought was dulled and numbed. In fact, since the moment she had entered the Shrine and shivered with the vibrations current there, which all worshippers of Shiv know, she had felt the thoughts fall dead. They had dropped away like grave clothes. The mind sank away into tranquility as an angry sea sinks back sullenly after storm, leaving her spirit calm, triumphant and free. She rested her forehead on the cool black stone and felt it soothe her with ultimate rest, ultimate peace, sense of Home, as a child tired with school lessons drowses in its mother's arms. . . . She felt the slipping of the
body of desire for the outer world, for the man into whom that world had resolved itself.

She was passing she felt into the trance state; it was the state between sleeping and waking she knew so well when visions of the curtained world came to her. They had come in the past at times of crisis. The last had been in Lucknow when the true reason of the attraction of Alphonso d'Arragon had been revealed to her. She had been his in a previous life, the slave of his passions. The relentless wheel of life had brought them together again, welded by the links forged in past ages. Should she rivet them again or buy back her freedom with her heart's blood? For her woman's weakness cried out for the fetters he called love. But as her forehead pressed against the stone the curtain veiling the astral world suddenly rolled up as a scroll.

Film after film of astral matter, finer than the most gossamer gauze, parted, and, oh! wondrous miracle! there was the face of him who had become her life! Clearer and clearer he came, creeping through the astral curtain, peering through the mysterious interspace of the unknown world, gradually limning himself with greater distinctness in obedience to her imperious summons. The arrogant ruler of men by day was now in the bouleversement of the night world the servant of a woman. The impetus of her thought had burnt
through the finer films of matter of the thought world to the bedside of him whose soul now hovered above his body, liberated from its fleshy casing by sleep. Taken prisoner by the strength of her desire he was now beside her in the shrine brought there by her prayer, and she saw the face of his soul.

Stripped of his beautiful shell, his royal rank, his heritage of kings, his trained and courtly mien, there he stood, naked and unashamed, the man whose god had been himself, clothed only in the aura he had woven with his own desires.

An exclamation of horror broke from Carmen's lips. As she saw looming in the murky gloom of the Temple the unveiled face of that soul whose outer presentment was so fair, its expression filled her with fear. Yet it was the Prince's own face. In response to her imperious summons his soul had come to the shrine while his body lay wrapped in sleep in the best guest chamber in the Residency. It had still the lineaments of his wonderful bodily beauty. There was the wavy coal-black hair, sculptured brow, the delicately chiselled nose. It was only the expression that had altered. That was horrible in its cruelty. The soul was calling to Carmen for judgment. The glittering magnetic eyes looked into hers first with recognition. Then they smiled with
sarcastic satire. "You wished for the secrets of my soul," they seemed to say. "Well, you shall have them." The lips which smiled so graciously by day were now parted in a sneer of satire. Lines of remorseless determination were traced round them.

And Carmen became aware that a miasma was stealing into the shrine. The spiritual essences distilled in his past were making themselves evident. It was the canker of a soul eaten away by the leprosies of sin, rotten from the foulness of his own desires.

She knew how from a boy he had let nothing stand in the way of them. How his lawless passions had streamed like lava on its course sweeping all before them, allowing naught to stand in their tempestuous course. She saw the signs of the relentless cruelty, the wounds he had inflicted on the women who had loved him. He had left them without hesitation, without remorse. He had flung them aside the moment they had ceased to please. And he had done so with a callousness, a cold-blooded, businesslike avoidance of potential scenes which had formed a fearful contrast with the heat of his wooing. Indeed, where he had been most tender he had afterwards deemed it necessary to be most cruel in order to be free himself from fetters he was tired of, forged in the fiery furnace he had lighted
in a woman's heart and fanned into flame, riveted by her tears.

She saw the girls he had robbed of their innocence, the flowers whose sweetness he had greedily snuffed up, plucked, then flung aside to fade with petals torn, never to rear their heads in delicate pride again. His life had been a spiritual cyclone, a tornado tearing and demolishing all before it, in his iron determination for self-fulfilment.

Gasping, shuddering, Carmen slipped down the cool black lingam and fell cowering, grovelling on the damp muddy floor of the shrine.

Just then there was a slight movement beside her and a hand, thin and bony but with gentle touch of delicate tapering fingers, lay on her shoulder. She jumped in terror, but a soft, sweet voice whispered in her ear in Urdu to be still.

It was the second time that day that a man's hand had touched her shoulder. She had never before permitted the slightest touch of a man, except that of her husband, and to-day two men had touched her, but with what a difference! The one had excited the lower, violent, transient portion of her nature. The touch of the other, though she knew him not, brought calm, quietness, reassurance to her spirit.

At the same moment she shivered anew as she
felt fresh waves of the Shiv influence permeate the shrine, that unearthly atmosphere charged with spiritual electricity which it is useless as well as sacrilege to attempt to describe, which only the worshippers of the Mightiest know. Carmen herself did not recognise Its source, only that it meant the cessation of all struggle, the harbour won, that she and It were one.

She raised her head to where the touch came from. The Temple was dark and murky as ever, but a pale wan radiance seemed now to light up the black polished shining surface of the Lingam she was kneeling before. She did not wonder whence it came, when all before was blackest gloom. It was a night of miracles, of marvels, natural and supernatural, when immense forces were at play, holding humanity as straws on the stream. And Carmen waited for what was to come.

By the silvery light of Shiv proceeding from His emblem, now magnetised anew by the presence of His priest, she descried the features of a bowed decrepit old man standing behind the Lingam in the shrine. His features were withered and worn. Not an ounce of flesh lay on his bones. His skin was stretched like parchment across the bony framework of his face. It had the pallor of a pure Aryan, of the Brahman caste. But it was seamed and scarred by the austerities
practised by the devotee of Mahadev, by the battles fought and won against himself. His eyes were piercing and at the same time abstracted. As the mariner to the ice fields round the Poles returns with a far away expression in his eyes from gazing into illimitable distances, so the Shivite, whose inner eye is turned always on Things Unseen, appears abstracted when he, in the course of daily duties, turns his attention to mundane affairs. He was tottering and bent with age. His head was shaved and bare. He wore on his body only and solely a shawl dyed the orange hues of the Shivite Sannyassis, scantily draping him and leaving his lower limbs bare.

No greater contrast could be afforded by the planet's humanity than these two, the delicate pampered woman of the world, the brilliant butterfly of the ruling race, and the ragged, penniless priest of the pagan shrine. Yet instinctively she put her hand in his and how differently she gave it from to that other! Then she felt misgiving, danger, guilt. Now she felt as a little child in her father's arms. He raised her to her feet and led her to the rocky platform outside the Temple.

As they passed out of the narrow slit-like entrance to the fane a mighty crash of thunder rolled round the Temple of Maheshvara. It
echoed and re-echoed from the mountains round the Valley. They reverberated with its roar, even to snow-crowned Haramouk beyond the Dahl. A moment later flashes of lurid lightning lit up Takht. The whole of the Valley and the great ranges of mighty mountains beyond were illuminated as by a titanic electric plant. These impassable mountain ranges lie between it and Thibet and guard the mysteries cradled in that land of secrets. The Temple priest who belonged there was going to reveal one of them to Carmen that night.

The flashes of red fire upon the Jyeshtheshvara, the streams of forked lightning pouring down the Lingam, seemed to betoken that the Lord of the Burning Ground was in His Temple. The Mightiest God Himself was riding on the storm. All nature was rent in paroxysms, convulsed in agony by His electric power. Carmen sank on her knees beside the Brahman. She did not feel afraid and that seemed to her the most miraculous thing in a night of miracles.

She was in perhaps the strangest situation ever experienced by an Englishwoman, even in Asia, the most curious of continents. She was alone on a mountain top at dead of night, in a heathen temple with a pagan priest, dressed in rags, whom she had never to her knowledge seen before, who did not, so far as she knew, speak a word of her
own tongue. She was entirely at his mercy. She could not possibly attempt the descent of the Takht till daylight. To do so before meant certain death. No one had seen her come up, except the Sadhus far below, and they had believed her to be a ghost flitting its phantom flight to the Temple of the Lord of Spirits. The Brahman could murder her and hide her body beneath the giant boulders if he wished. They were far, far away from all human habitation, far, far beyond all cry for human help. She was alone in Asia with him.

And she had never in her life before experienced a sensation of such peace, such healing, such calm, such indifference to all else.

His voice rose still and small upon the whirlwind. To Carmen's amazement it was now in her own tongue. Not till long after did she know the reason for this. Not for many years did she learn that her Saviour that night was one of the Mystic Thibetan Brotherhood who speak whatsoever language they will. Some in royal robes sit upon thrones. Others in rags haunt Temple shrines. Wherever the need of man or woman there is the Master's guiding hand. Did not Arthur Hamilton, the melancholy London youth of the eighties, meet one, born an English noble, in Teheran? He had died a "premature death" at Palermo in 1853 and, after building his own
tomb, went to join that "Society that no man suspects till he is close upon it, nor hopes to enter until he finds himself in a moment in the sacred pale."

"Why have you come to the Temple to-night, my daughter?"

"I know not, my father. I was impelled hither by a force that is stronger than I. It brought me. I could never have got here alone."

"Whence come these clairvoyant visions, my daughter? You have had one to-night beside the Lingam." It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should know.

"I know not, my father. I have had them all my life. In trouble they help me."

"Why are you darker than the Mlenchchas, my child? Whence come your level brows and almond eyes?"

The words fell slowly, one by one, from his lips, dropped rather than uttered on the bowed head of the woman prostrate at his feet.

She listened motionless, tongue-tied, scarcely breathing, her brain stupefied, her body paralysed with the wonder of it as his meaning dawned on her keen intuition.

"When you looked into your glass," he con-
tinued slowly, in low, distinct tones, each syllable given its separate value, "have you never thought of the meaning of these things? And
why you love all Hindus? In your last life," continued the low, sweet tones, "not so very many years ago, you were one of us! No matter now the reason you were reborn in the West. You have been a Brahman in many past lives. You were also a worshipper of Mahadev. For countless aeons you have knelt before the Lingam. That is why you have come to the temple to-night. His ministers brought you here. He whom you worshipped in many lives will not forsake you in this severe trial."

Still speechless, bowed at his bare brown feet, Carmen rested her face upon them. All the earth was reeling, rocking around and beneath her. Only he and she were still, unshaken by the mighty upheavals of death and rebirth, immovable in the swirls of life as the mountain top in a world of storms.

"Remember this, my daughter. You who are half way up the hill of Yoga. You have been a Brahman many times. You will be one again. You will come back to caste when this short life is over if you do nothing to degrade it now—our caste which was born before history. Remember this, for a woman it requires only one thing needful. For the twice born woman there is but one way of salvation."

"And that, my father?"

He pointed silently to where the sheet light-
ning, which had succeeded the electric streams of the storm's height, played round the pyre of the sati outside the Residency walls. "It lies in fidelity to the man to whom you plighted your word, my child."

"But he has never been my husband!" she cried.

"He became so in the Christian Church, even by the sacraments of an alien faith."

"But he has failed to carry out his vows," she stammered.

"That is nothing to you, my daughter. A widow often never sees her husband in the earth life." And he unfolded the ancient Hindu ideal, older than history, given by Manu in the dawn of the Aryan Race, binding on all women, Eastern and Western, whose infringement means certain punishment, though they know it not.

"There was nothing personal in this," he continued. In the case of a Hindu widow it was equally binding though she might never have seen her husband. Rather had it its foundation in the fundamental laws of the universe, of the two sexes being of positive and negative poles of electricity respectively. That was why all over the world a mortal sin in a woman was a venial offence in a man.

"Marriage is the one and only religion of a woman. If this sacrament is kept sacred in your
thoughts, and this ideal carried out in your life it is enough for your salvation. So shall you come at last to the Lord of the Burning Ground. So shall Shiv receive you into Himself.

There was a long silence broken only by the strains of unearthly music. They seemed to issue from the mountain’s womb, welling up around the Lingam and rising up to the Temple’s roof. A whole orchestra of mystic Hindu instruments was being played by Devas’ hands to signalise a soul’s triumph, that a Brahmani of many births through severest trials had kept the faith, had been true to the whole Hindu duty of woman. Carmen could distinguish the flute, the drum, the mantram intoned by magicians in the mystic Temple hidden from mortal eyes. For all the most sacred places in the mysterious continent of Asia are hidden from the profane by maya, and the outer temples are only the outer shell of mysteries concealed.

When it ceased the voice of the Brahman dripped again on her ears.

“You will leave Kashmir to-morrow, my daughter,” he said, “and go to Kashi. There shall be given you what to do.”

“Who are you?” cried the girl. “What have you to do with me? What is the tie between us?”

“Your father of many past lives,” he replied.
"Your guardian spirit in this one. It would be easier for the earth to leave the sun than for you to depart from me. Peace be with you, my child."

She clung to the withered limbs. She poured kisses on the slender olive feet. She wetted them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. "Ah, do not send me away when I have found you! Just when we have met again! In the whole world I have only you!" She fell senseless across his feet.

He laid her gently down. He returned inside the Temple. He touched a secret spring. A rock rushed back revealing a recess. From that he brought out a vessel of ancient form. It contained the mystic soma essence. Whole hymns of the Veda were chanted to its magic powers. To-day in the Kali Yog only one tree remains. Its leaves are used in the higher mystic initiations. One Adept of the Brotherhood is employed solely to guard that tree.

He bent over the prostrate form lying on the rocky platform outside the Temple. A careless touch and it would have fallen, crushed to atoms, into the immeasurable abysses below. Tenderly he bent over it and poured down the flaccid throat the draught from the Tree of Life of which all the wealth of all the emperors of the earth could not have bought one single drop. Then he
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began intoning from the Veda the most powerful invocations of the Brahman caste. In ancient days to profane the sacred word meant loss of tongue. Lately, doing so nearly cost a Christian missionary his life in a Benares temple.

As the holy syllables rolled sonorously round the Temple walls the mystic music swelled louder and louder around the Shrine. Flames issued from the tilak on the Lingam, for the mighty mantram intoned by the Adept Priest had indeed brought the Great God into His Temple. His image, the black shiny stone, polished by a million prayer breaths, became incandescent with the Living Fire. Lights streamed from the Shrine, and surrounded the prostrate figure of the girl lying outside with a ring of fire. Her body became transparent, haloed with starry, unearthly lights, and gave forth sweet scents. Finally, as the invocation ceased, It rose, supported by unseen Deva hands, and floated over the dark depths of the Valley below.

When Carmen awoke from her trance she found herself in her own houseboat and lying, fully dressed, in her own bed.
PART II
CHAPTER I

Ah, Time, who brought this treasure to my breast,
Knowing so well that cruelty of thine,
I would die now, and leave thee at thy best,
Ere thou hast torn Ma Gunga's lips from mine.

*The Purple Dusk.*

In the world we have tribulation, but in Kashi rest, for she teaches us to forget the world. Carmen, lying in bed in Clark's Hotel the morning after her arrival, saw the chick screening the open doors soften the bougainvillea festooning the loggia into tapestry magentas and greens. She heard the note of the well, wound out by a pair of bails in soft greys tended by a tawny Tanagra maiden draped only in a wisp of madder pink, who might have stepped from a classic vase. She knew that the note of the well was the same as for millions of years, that the bails would wind it for millions more, and that knowledge brought peace to her soul. Already she felt the closing round of the Mystic World. Her trouble, the aching emptiness was there still. But as chloral lulls agony after the extraction of a carious tooth, so its power to torment her soul had gone. She was fully conscious of the wound. By and bye when she resumed her ordinary life—how many years away it seemed—the pain would return, no doubt. The old emptiness and void would even
be intensified a thousand times, because her life had been temporarily so full, the greyness all the deeper because there had been a false dawn.

But there is something in Benares which makes all personal matters of small account. Nay, the personality becomes small to vanishing point. Even the worldly man feels quieted. Even the globe-trotter becomes hushed and tramps about less aggressively there in the presence of a something he feels but cannot define.

That comfort would come in a Kashi, Carmen knew. When, where, or through whom she had not the slightest idea. She waited, soothed and quieted by the mystic charm of Kashi, for the course of events. Her life's hurricane had hurtled by leaving her bent but not broken. Even now the tears were not far from the surface. But she rose resolutely and dressed, and went into the dining-room for breakfast.

She marvelled to see how even an Anglo-Indian hotel could succumb to the magic of Benares. It was like a well-managed private house. The breakfast was served in a room of Turkish red, on tables decorated with silver vessels in Lucknow jungle pattern, with pink roses, and Benares brass bowls heaped high with magnolia blooms. The room was empty at the time, and utterly unlike the rough and noisy scramble of the ordinary Anglo-Indian hotel.
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We all know the sensation of events having passed beyond our control, when the high tide of life has got beyond our guiding hands and rather bears us away on its current, all resistance useless, towards the ocean of impending events. Carmen had once been boating with her husband off the coast of Shoeburyness when a swift rise of the tide had suddenly swept them out towards the river's mouth. All Ralph's efforts with the oars to counteract the mighty swell were useless. He had turned a blanched face to Carmen, who sat perfectly calm and controlled in the cockleshell, and merely said: "We shall be picked up by a liner." However, a steam launch from the School of Gunnery happened to come along then, and towed them to safety. She felt exactly the same sensation now. All effort on her part was superfluous and useless. Succour would come, she knew, from an outside source, and without effort or conscious volition on her part.

Having satisfied her physical needs of the moment, she next proceeded, according to her invariable custom in a fresh place, to the Club Library, and overawed the baboo into giving her the local guide books without the Secretary's permission. This brought an indignant chit later in the day from Major Pullman, demanding return of the books.

"The Secretary Sahib, Madam," explained the
apologetic baboo later, "asked Captain Gracchi at your hotel about you, but he said he knew nothing of you."

Now Captain Gracchi was a poor little Maltese doctor who lived in the hotel because his native Infantry Mess did not like him, and to be inquired after from such a source made Carmen indignant.

"Tell Major Pullman," she replied, "that when I lived in Malta, Captain Gracchi and his sisters were running about the island barefooted."

"Really, Madam," replied the baboo in pained surprise, "I had cherished the idea that only gentlemen of family entered the Army as British officers. Here is the catalogue, Madam. Do you want fiction?"

The baboo was a Bengali, like all the population of Benares and the country round about. Like all his nation, he gave an impression of extreme softness and harmlessness. He had luxuriant black hair, well saturated with cocoanut oil. His eyes were large, dark and pathetic, as a dog's that has been beaten. His voice was like satin. In fact, the Bengali is the last person on earth you would suspect of conspiracies which have made Nihilism vieux jeu. You would imagine him terrified to be within a mile of the bombs he hatches as happily as a hen her eggs.

Seeing that Carmen had chosen her books on
Benares sanctities, he told her of a holy Brahman who lived in Kashi. He had, he said, gained such complete mastery over his body that he dispensed with all sleep. Formerly he had slept a few hours each night; now he never slept at all. He was always consulted by people in trouble, and he never took money from anyone.

This latter appealed to Carmen at once, for in a long and extensive acquaintance with Indians of all classes she had never yet met a single one who had not an eye to the main chance, even those of the very highest position. She had taken a great fancy to the old lady in the Nawab's family, of whom she had bought the portrait of Ghazi-ud-Din. She had instantly noticed the striking resemblance in features to her own dead mother. These replicas of Western relatives and friends repeated in amber or chocolate are often very amusing in India. She had asked the old lady to tea with her. She was a very strict purdah nashin, but agreed to come when Carmen assured her no gentlemen would be present. She had arrived in a hermetically closed carriage preceded by an outrider and followed by a mounted bodyguard. When safely established in the seclusion of the drawing-room she had pressed warmly interested inquiries of "The Empress of India." Queen Victoria had, apart from all humbug, a real hold on the affections of the nation from her
aversion to widow re-marriage, her large family, her partiality to Indians, and her Munshi. Carmen had therefore shown the old lady illustrated papers containing the account of the Jubilee of 1897. She had appeared immersed and absorbed in these. Then suddenly she had looked up in the middle of them and said: "Do you know Fforde Sahib, the Revenue Sahib? Can you get him to assess my villages at a lower rate?"

Carmen therefore resolved to visit the Brahman on her way back to the hotel. The road was hung with flowery banners of the three most gorgeous colours in nature, crimson, magenta, and orange, a combination unimaginable in anything but flowers, and these three flowering trees were practically leafless, as though every effort had gone into the gorgeous blooms, for they are all three scentless. The crimson was supplied by the most tremendous flowering tree, the Senwar tree. As the ticca gharry rumbled along, thuds from above heralded the fall of the crimson wax in its heavy green cup. From the church porch, which she was leaving behind for the sanctuaries of an older faith, dripped the molten mass of magenta of the bougainvilles whose delicate translucent petals redeem it from vulgarity. The venusta threw an orange velvet pall over the lichenized tombs, carefully designed without crosses, of the evangelical heroes of the Mutiny. At last the carriage
rumbled up to the gate of Sudhasadan or the Garden House, where the Sadhu lived. Here there was plenty of the sweetest scent from the mango grove and it overlooked the large sacred tank, the Pisach Mochan, practically a small lake lying far beneath. It was framed in broad flights of steps for pilgrim feet on all four sides, and by the palms and temple spires which are everywhere in Benares. The Brahman was seated on a divan beneath the mangoes. Carmen sat down beside him. There was a silence for several minutes which Carmen waited for him to break. At last:

"Do you know what day this is?" he asked, impressively.

"No."

"It is the eve of the Shivaratri. To-morrow is the great annual night of Shiv, which falls on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month, Phalgan."

"Then that is why all these pilgrims in the ascetics' dress were in the train."

She had noticed pilgrims in ascetics' dress in the train. There are always thousands of pilgrims in Benares, but on Shivaratri many Lakhs of pilgrims pour into the holy city and the temples are thronged with dense crowds. Those devotees of Mahadev who are sufficiently advanced to discard the physical body like a shell, and this is one of the earliest steps on the
Path of Yoga, attend the Hidden Temples in the ghostly body, and all receive some step of advancement on Shiv’s day. It is, in fact, a Birthday Honours List in the spiritual world.

“IT is a blessed thing, my daughter, that you should arrive, even without intention, on the eve of this Day of Days. It is of the happiest omen.”

“Nothing could be more auspicious. What, then, ought I to do?”

“Keep a fast to-morrow, only eating fruit and drinking milk. I will seek light from the High Priests of Shiv on your behalf.” He dismissed her with an invocation to the Lord of Mysteries.

When she returned to the hotel, she saw a crowd in the grounds outside and she heard “Benarrys” and “Delhi” going strong in nasal twang. A “Round the World” party was passing through and paused a few hours to take tea in a huge shamiana in the hotel grounds, kindly lent by the Maharajah of Benares. They slept in the train, and the conductor explained that he now only gave one day at Benares, because formerly when he allotted two, the trippers became restless on the second day. When Carmen remarked that she had been coming to Benares for ten years and had hardly begun to see it, they did not seem to like it and talked about their train de luxe.
Gladly she escaped to the quiet and silence of her own room, specially reserved for her whenever she visited Benares. The bails still wound at the well; the Tanagra maiden still tended them in tableaux—only the pink wisp had been replaced by a lemon one. The Georgian church in God's Acre was opposite to her window, and rose just one fluted column which might have been transplanted from the Borghese Gardens. Its urn hid the church clock. Its flutings were blackened, its inscription defaced by age, so she knew not what British heroes it commemorated, but the poinsettia flew vermilion flags round the column's vase to their memory.

Watching them she thought over the events of the day and wondered if the Brahman of the Pisach Mochan was the promised guide. She had yet to learn that in those Circles on whose fringe she hovered, the Helper always appears when and where he or she is not expected.

When she entered the dining-room for dinner she was extremely surprised to find a lady from Lucknow seated in the far corner of the room. It was Mrs. Rivett, whose reputation had been so savagely attacked and defended by Carmen in her own drawing-room during the ladies' after-math of the royal dinner.

Mrs. Rivett was a mysterious personality, of whom Anglo-India talked very much and knew
very little. Carmen herself only knew her slightly though they had much in common. But she knew her to soar as far above and as untouched by the women who sought to stab her in the back as the hoary Himalayas raised themselves above the hissing snake who reared its hooded head at them. Mrs. Rivett was also of Irish birth. There is a very close connection between Ireland and India. Many words in Erse and Sanskrit are almost identical. Many souls from the Aryan Motherland take re-birth in Ireland. She was also a member of an ancient historic house. Like Carmen she had a special horror of that community which Oscar Wilde has described as "jaded and second rate," but whilst Carmen's position as the wife of an Administrator compelled her to conceal this aversion, Mrs. Rivett, as the wife of a military man, could and did afford to ignore this most powerful body. So that Carmen knew very little of her life, but the occasional glimpses she caught of it were like the pages of Alf Laylah wa Laylah, or a pageant picture by Carpaccio.

She had first met her before either of them had set foot in India, the land which had proved so full of fate for both. It was on the eve of the appointed coronation of Edward VII. It was the month of roses and the English summer shewed its usual severities. The brougham had
splashed through seas of mud and torrents of rain. On arriving at Buckingham Palace they had been greeted by a gorgeous functionary in knee breeches and silk stockings. He was the heir to a peerage and held an office at Court. But he was also an Oriental by nature and they had last met him presiding in sober black over the British section of the Society for the Promotion of Hindu Knowledge.

One man in his time plays many parts. Their friend's duty there was to usher the waiting dames into the Presence. His task was at that time a sinecure. In Queen Victoria's time it was otherwise. The scrambling and kicking and fighting at the barriers was worthy of an Eastern brawl. King Edward's tact was a match even for Court ladies. They were marshalled in orderly procession round an ante-room till an open door descried the Majesty of England.

Just as Carmen's train was about to be taken from her she had noticed the glorious crimson velvet of the train in front. It was the colour of a cactus and it depended from a white gown of the costliest simplicity of the world, as it was of the finest point à l'aiguille de Bruxelles. Carmen could not see the face of the lady who wore the most striking costume of all on that Night of Nights. She had passed on in front of her into the Presence and she only saw the back of a tall,
girlish, slender figure and hair with golden lights in it under the small tiara of diamond shamrocks. Carmen's own turn had then come to pass before their Majesties. Edward had looked hot and red that night, buttoned up tightly in his scarlet uniform. He appeared the living incarnation of his ancestor Henry VIII. He was suffering pain but he concealed it well. His bow was courtly to every lady, to his friends full of jovial recognition. But Alexandra's face was stern and set, her inclination stiff. She alone of all that brilliant company shared the ghastly secret which in a few hours would convulse the whole civilised earth.

Twice the royal procession had passed round the Throne Room after the presentations were done. Walking backwards with bowed heads were the Chamberlains. Then Edward, still smiling at the ladies on the benches, and Alexandra, her mauve Indian embroideries held up by two pages, treading the earth as though it were clouds, the small crown poised on her perfect head, the face that of a woman of thirty, but sad and pensive with forebodings. Directly behind were the Indian Maharajahs. First came the Rajput prince, a rope of uncut rubies like hen's eggs round his neck. With enormous trouble and expense he had chartered his own ship, kept his caste rigidly, and generally adhered to the ways of his fathers.
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Behind him marched his antithesis, a Maharajah equally au fait with the Gaiety chorus and the catchword of the hour, whom fair impoverished peeresses delighted to honour. Then had followed the yellow, impassive faces of the Imperial princes of China and Korea.

When the procession had passed twice round the Throne Room the Royalties filed off to supper. The general company was served in a separate hall. At the buffet Carmen had again met the woman who, of all the birds of paradise that night, had attracted her attention. She had dropped her train in its crimson glory to eat peaches and strawberries from Windsor, off gold plate. Ralph, in his eagerness to get Carmen served, had trodden upon it. The lady had turned round and Carmen had seen her face. It was beautiful, but very much more, it had the greatest of all gifts, personal magnetism. All successful men and women, the masters and mistresses of the world, from Lord Curzon to Gaby Deslys, have two qualities in common, concentration and magnetism, and these combined to form a third product ever present in such, personal attraction.

These people generally suffer from the jealousy of the gods. Mrs. Rivett's life had not been a happy one. People turned to look when she passed down a Throne Room and asked who she was when she entered an assembly. But
there was a world of sorrow as well as a world of 
mystery in the eyes which she turned upon 
Carmen in the casual glance of a stranger. They 
had met again in Lucknow but Carmen knew 
very little of her from her aversion of Anglo-
Indian society where the wildest, most extrava-
gant rumours circulated about one so apart from 
the herd.

"She is enormously rich."
"Her jewels are given her by men."
"She never looks at anyone but her husband."
"He is going to divorce her."
"She is an atheist."
"No, a Hindu Buddhist."
"She is hated by Anglo-India."
"And loved by the Viceroy."
"She is extraordinarily clever."
"She is insane."
"She was painted with grapes on."
"No, with nothing on."

Carmen discounted the above at its true value, 
but from the newspaper accounts of Mrs. Rivett, 
who was an artist of fame, she gathered that she 
was or had been at various periods of her career, 
student, mondaine, artist, lecturer, agnostic, theo-
sophist, pupil of Kropotkin, protégée of royalty, 
slummer, frequenter of Courts; that she had 
made about twenty long voyages and innumer-
able short ones; that she had travelled up and
down Europe and Asia as others run up and down Bond Street; that she would read the many and effusive notices of the Press kneeling one day before the altar of St. Mark's golden fane at Venice; the next would pick up a paper in a Parisian hotel containing further, and see her own portrait displayed in the kiosks on the boulevards and on the book-stall of the Gard du Nord; and on the third start for one of her periodic absences, the world forgetting and by the world forgot, to the heart of Thibet. All this made Carmen long to know her. But Mrs. Rivett, though as gentle, was also as unapproachable as the Grand Lama, when she chose. Now she bowed distantly from the little table where she was seated alone, reading at her meal. Carmen seated herself beside a Mr. Jarl, a Danish artist. His varied experiences included sojourns in Madrasi Temples, so immense that they were patrolled by sacred elephants. He had painted in those Temples from morn till eve, and therefore seen a great deal, he said.

When they crossed the road after dinner, the moonlight was clear enough to read by it. It made the Borghese pillar a column of black velvet. Beside it there was a tall, towering toddy palm moulded by vines into a Colossus of Rhodes. It rattled so mysteriously that Carmen made Mr. Jarl hurl up stones to dislodge its un-
canny denizens. Two big white owls swooped, and a cloud of black bats whirled round the lawn. Two jackals scurried silently across the gleaming path into the shade on a honeymoon trip. The mangoes uncorked a myriad attars of merciless sweetness. The yellow roses shone phosphorescent white. On their approach what they had taken for a buttress suddenly became a flying bronze. It was the mali, squatting immovable on the churchyard wall to watch the juggler on the brilliantly-lighted hotel verandah across the road. They rebuilt the flying buttress and Carmen passed across to her room. As she crossed the road a Hymn to Mahadev rose from the well for it was the eve of the festival of the Holies, the Hindu New Year, and all Hinduism was glad. Carmen decided that on the morrow she would visit the Maharajah of Benares.

The pain was beginning to come back with the advent of the evening, that time when the soul cries out for companionship. The stress and strain of the day is over, even the restraining garments of the hours of tension are laid aside. The body lies lax and flaccid, but the soul is alert and awake. It clamours for its mate, for another to be beside it through the silent watches of the night, to go down with it into the shadowy intermediate world of sleep, to share its experiences, to awaken with it to the songs and sunlight of another day.
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She looked round the charming bedroom. Amber roses and scarlet lances of poinsettia filled the old silver bowl from Burmah with the figures of gods in heavy relief, flanked on either side by a mandarin yellow teapot of Chinese puzzle, hump-back design with green dragons, the blue and gold Buddha in contemplation, the Chinese ivory box fretted with pelicans and the ivory file of elephants. On chairs were her evening gown and frothy petticoats. Her dressing table was covered with silver, collected in many provinces, and of many designs, the repoussé work of Cutch, the chenar leaf design of Kashmir, as well as the dragons of Ladakh. The room was full of the soft colourings, scents and subtleties which form the intimate privacy of a woman of fastidious tastes. She wondered what Alphonso d'Arragon was doing that night. Was he at that moment thinking of her? Half the continent of Asia now lay between them. If he were there, in the scented silence of that room replete with the mysterious equipment of woman's kingdom!

She had fled from Kashmir, away from her home of floating luxury, away from one of the loveliest countries of the world, away from the man who loved her, as he understood love, who at any rate supremely desired her and whose desire of her was the most exquisite joy as well as pain her life had known.
She had not dared to see him again. On the night following her visit to the Temple on the Takht she had left post haste by special landau for Baramula. She had feared the slower passage of her houseboat. She realised that it was now or never. Her one way of escape lay in instant flight. She fled accordingly.

Now the orthodox time for the Jhelum’s gorge is the spring for the arrival, the autumn for the return. At either of these times the gorge is calm and smiling and full of happy travellers escaping from the burning cities of the plain. Now a stormy passenger was filling it with tumult. The Monsoon was rushing through the narrow pass between the beetling height.

Carmen felt that for the first time in ten years’ residence in Asia, she understood the Monsoon. Hitherto she had considered it a nuisance, a thing which spoilt her gowns and moulded her gloves. Now its cataclysms, its tempests, its whirlwinds, its waterspouts of rain appealed to her. It tore down the big trees in its path as her soul would toss aside obstacles in the desire for joy. The roar of the rain was the cry of her own heart. The lightning streaming from the dun clouds was the electric spark of passion struck for the first time by a living man amongst phantom men, and who had the power to make her own soul live. She had rushed through the rocky tunnels, her Jehu
straining his eyes beneath the dripping turban not to crash against the boulders of the entrance. The storm of the previous night had brought down heavy falls from the cliffs above on to their path. She had had to dismount and sit on the road for hours while the great obstructing rocks were hurled down into the torrents below by the gangs of coolies kept all along the route for the purpose. For the Jhelum gorge is one of the greatest triumphs of man over Nature.

And then she had reached Garhi, the half-way house of the Jhelum route. It was here her friend had betrayed her and left her to face the enemy alone. Fate had fearfully punished him, she had since heard. One of the other sojourners at Garhi dak that night, a military man, had reported him to his Colonel for being drunk and incapable at a public table. He had been forced to send in his papers and to leave the Service, probably to sink into the obscurity of a drunkard's grave. Whisky would be his wife and child till delirium tremens ended a life's failure. Under happier circumstances he might have aspired to a Viceroy's daughter.

She had travelled straight through from Kashmir to Kashi, only staying one night to rest at Maiden's Hotel, Delhi. It was many years before the Great Transformation Scene, so she was spared the pain of seeing the defacement of
the Dream City and of hearing the jargon now current of: "Lady ——— (the Vicereine) sends down lilac to her special friends. I got a large bunch yesterday."

She had sat at a table beside a pimply boy whom she had at first taken to be a commercial traveller travelling at the wrong time of the year. Even dogs and cats stay at home during the Indian Monsoon. He was a young nobleman who had just come down from Viceregal Lodge, Simla, and entertained Carmen with accounts of how the Cæsaric Viceroy had asked him whether the Governors of Bombay and Madras had dared to have the National Anthem played when they entered assemblies which should be reserved only for him. Of the righteous indignation of the Bureaucracy because the Vicereine's sisters had dared to drive in a carriage, a privilege hitherto reserved in the narrow mountain roads for Cæsar and Cæsar's wife. Of the terror of "poor little Chester," a titled aide-de-camp, that one of the Amazons would wed him by force.

"I have just come down from Simla," he said. "Really?" replied Carmen. "What hotel did you stay in?"

"I stayed at Government House," he said. "Before that I was at Madras and Bombay. Curzon asked me if the Governors had the National Anthem played for them."
"Why should they not?" asked Carmen.
"Oh, Curzon said it was his perk! Funny place, Simla. Lady Curzon wants her sisters to curtsiey to her, even in their bedrooms. They say they would rather go back to Chicago."

"I suppose they are having the time of their lives. It must be a change from Chicago. Please go on—what other items?"

"The Councillors' wives are raging, because they use the vice-regal carriages instead of rickshaws," he continued.

"That is indeed an innovation," replied the bara mem. "The carriage is only for Cæsar and Cæsar's wife. What next!"

"Poor little Chester is afraid that Molly will wed him by force. He's going to resign."

"I heard he was going home, but on another account."

"Because of the 'Imperial Bounder' business you mean!"

Cæsar had come round the corner at the wrong moment and had heard a witticism not intended for his august ears. How nauseating it all was!

And he had crossed the Zoji la Pass by this time and was entering the mystic Buddhist country, seeing the great shortens with Om Mani Padme Hum engraved upon them and hearing the prayer wheels turned. She wondered how he liked his
camp life, the rough food and attendance, and the
dodging of the avalanches in the passes.
Resolutely she turned her eyes away from where
the soft pillows and billowy laces of the white
bed glimmered mysteriously in the far shadowy
corner, veiled by the mosquito curtains falling
from above.

In all Carmen's long and wearied journey by
tonga and train, taken in breathless haste and at
express speed half across Asia, the impelling
force had been the promise of one ragged old
man, seen only once, known only for an hour,
that in Kashi she would find peace. "Surely,"
she thought, "if anywhere, salvation will come in
the halls of the Maharajah of Benares."

Next morning she 'phoned to Ramnagar Fort
and heard in reply from the Private Secretary to
the Maharajah that His Highness would be
delighted to receive her at noon. A State
carriage with three men in scarlet and gold was
sent to convey her.

Ramnagar Fort held a proud and isolated
position on the opposite side of the Ganges, far
from all the other palaces and much higher up the
stream. It was a long and hot drive. The air
was charged with damp heat, and the sweating
horses had to be changed en route. Hot blasts
of pine from the mango trees kept her alive till
she reached the typical blend of splendour and
squalor of a native Court. The gateway was
guarded by soldiers, but a clerk in shabby flannel
met the carriage and took her inside.

In the ante-room upstairs she was joined by a
young man in a frock coat, turban, and spectacles.
He introduced himself:

"I am a cousin of His Highness," he said.
He appeared to represent the "reformed Hindu"
section of the family. He was the typical hybrid
horror of pseudo European dress and manners.
He said how much he had enjoyed life at Brixton
and how much he liked "chicken tarts and
champagne."

Carmen sat speechless. Then he said he was
a member of the Brahmo Samaj. "We do not
keep caste. Our ladies are educated and do not
have purdah," he said, ingratiatingly.

Carmen found her tongue.

"I believe in caste and the purdah and the
non-education of women," she said, frigidly.
Fortunately at this moment the Prime Minister
entered, walking backwards and bowing. Behind
him came the lineal collateral descendant of the
goddess Sita, who with her Avatar husband Rama,
is worshipped by the whole Hindu nation from
Peshawar to Cape Comorin. He was a little
man with a protruding figure clothed in yellow
brocade. He had goggle eyes, a dropped under-
lip, and a cracked laugh. He motioned Carmen
into the magnificent Durbar hall hung with monstrous daubs of his predecessors.

She followed with a sinking, sickening heart. The Maharajah seated himself and folded his hands on the most prominent bulge of the yellow brocade. There was an awkward pause.

"What do you want to see me for?" he asked. Here the Prime Minister came to the rescue.

"Mrs. Scaife is much interested in Hinduism and wished to meet your Highness as an orthodox Hindu," he said.

The Maharajah stared blankly. He did not know what to say. Carmen tried a diversion.

"What a magnificent elephant your Highness lent Lord Curzon for his Durbar," she said.

The Maharajah brightened up. He seemed more at home. "That elephant died the same day as Lady Curzon," he said, in his high pitched tones. Then he told the inner truth of the Benares furniture episode which had always been the one tiny speck on an administration of genius which time only makes to shine more brightly. "It was a piece of spite."

"I like my two guns much better than the furniture," said the Maharajah, chuckling delightedly.

Carmen told him the meaning of "Cherchez la femme." He laughed in ecstasy. "I will give you anything you desire," he beamed. She asked
for the loan of a State carriage to take her to the Bisheshwar Temple on the morrow. Her own landau was in Lucknow and the Benares ticca gharry is unfit for human locomotion. "It shall come at dawn," he said.

As she bowed herself out of Prabu Narain's presence he threw round her neck a cord of the same silver tissue in which Herod had long ago arrayed himself as a god, and sprinkled her handkerchief with attar. Then he appeared on his balcony as Herod had done, but there was only the flannelled fool to acclaim him. He called down to him to show Mrs. Scaife the Ramayana of Tulsi Das. This Hindu poet was contemporary with Shakespeare. Though a Vishnavite Bhakta, he lived in Benares. The Ramnagar illustrated missal on his Ramayana is one of the most valuable books in all India. It was kept in a shabby almirah in a filthy outhouse, wrapped in unbleached calico with Ralli writ large. There were sepoys lounging about and the work had been safe for 300 years. This appeared to Carmen the climax of the Alice in Wonderland aspects of the day. But there was more to come.

On the way to the hotel she drove to see the Maharajah's pleasure which contained the usual pergolas in marble lace work, beloved of the Oriental. He designs and builds divinely beautiful palaces and pleasures, but has abso-
lately no taste whatever in fitting them up and furnishing. The garden led to a sacred tank of paramount importance to the Hindus, and visited every day by the Maharajah, for was it not blest by the founder of the Ved Himself, on whom the whole Hindu religion rests in order that persons living on that side of the river might participate in the spiritual feasts of the other side. The Maharajah’s temple there had taken a hundred years to build. In the grateful shade it cast was a hutch containing his white rabbits.
CHAPTER II

It is, perhaps, because Benares is not forbidden, that such a mine of human interest, and one of the most extraordinary cities of the East, is now probably less known to Europeans than Lhassa.—B. Havell, Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

This secret is in its own nature invulnerable, for the person to whom it has become known certainly cannot have received it from anyone. When he arrives at the discovery, he unquestionably keeps it to himself, for he who could not define it could not use it if he received it verbally. For this reason it will for ever remain a secret.—Casanova.

Next morning, at seven, Carmen heard the sound of wheels, and was surprised to see that the Maharajah had sent not one carriage, but two. As she crossed the verandah to enter her own, she met Mrs. Rivett also ready dressed for going out.

She was a very beautiful woman, straight as a dart, supple as a snake, proud as a tiger lily. Her spun gold hair, derived from a strain of Dutch ancestry, was of so uncommon a colour, and formed such a striking contrast to her dark eyes, that men looked alert and women askance. Then they felt ashamed and compared her to the lily she so much resembled in its golden tinging and dark spots. She was an aristocrat of Anglo-India. Her people had served John Company
for many generations and Thackeray had signed
the register of a marriage in the family. They
had followed each other across the seas like
dolphins, served with distinction, and retired in
due course with honours, but always in their own
line, which it is necessary above all things for an
Anglo-Indian to keep. Mrs. Rivett had dared to
defy that most potent and homogenous of bodies
and to strike out a line of her own. Even her
clothes, though of the first chic, struck an original
note. This morning she was wrapped in a long
cloak of shot white and gold silk which enveloped
her from head to feet. With this she wore a
Dover Street hat wreathed with tiger lilies. She
got into the other State carriage. It drove off
first and disappeared.

Carmen ordered her carriage to drive as near as
possible to the Heart of Hearts of the mysteries
of the Holy City of the Hindus, the Bisheshwar
Temple.

It would be impossible for an outsider even to
find the Temple of the Lord of the Universe. It
is in the heart of the labyrinth of Benares com-
posed of narrow streets with high houses on either
side. It is of course impossible to drive to it,
and, though Carmen had been there many times,
she could never have found it alone. The car-
riage drove for several miles through roads lined
with hoary buildings, shaded with palms, and all
pervaded with the soft, mild atmosphere of Benares. Then it stopped outside the palm-filled courtyard of the Carmichael Library in the heart of the town. Skirting this is a narrow passage leading into the labyrinth at the back of the library. Carmen knew by the indications of the pilgrims in the yellow robes of Shiv hurrying through the narrowing passage that it led to the Temple which is the Sacred Heart of Hinduism.

As she prepared to descend from her carriage, she saw that the other state carriage containing Mrs. Rivett, which had driven off ahead of her, had stopped here also. She saw Mrs. Rivett’s golden head getting out. To her amazement she noticed that it was bare. As Mrs. Rivett sprang hastily down the step and on to the pavement, Carmen had just time to see that her cloak had been discarded and that she was actually in the dress of a Sannyasini! She saw the back of a loose robe in the orthodox colours of “Sunset” pink and orange draperies before Mrs. Rivett, leaving her carriage and three men in scarlet behind her, hurried off by herself into the maze and disappeared in the direction taken by the stream of pilgrims. Carmen was attended by one of the Maharajah’s footmen. He led her by a more circuitous route to the Temple through the labyrinth of Benares, so like and unlike an Italian city.
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Carmen had driven in a rough country cart through a golden evening in the Ghaunts when the Deccan and the Concan were veiled in a shimmering garment and Bombay Harbour lay like a streak below, to where the square cut mountains formed natural forts and battlements to defend the dim, silent aisles of cathedrals belonging to a bygone faith in their womb, whose Daghoba shrines revealed the history of the Buddha in the fading hues of frescoes, the cunning carving of capitalled pillars; and she had sensed the still living mysteries concealed in the hearts of the Viharas attached to them, had known that, though the great paved churches were now apparently empty and Buddhist monks no longer smiled kindly in the refectory halls and slept in the cell niches, still hidden springs moved secret doors to men who lived in the Mountains' heart. And she had felt the fiery spirits pulsating on the ether shimmering on the gold of the Hari Mandir at Amritsar, whose domes were burnished on the fires of their martyrdom. For the golden temple of the Sikhs gleams through the burning mists of the blood of warrior hermits who have poured out their lives like water to preserve it undefiled, and had not died in vain. Did not the Fourth Guru return after death to the Temple? Is not the Tenth Guru once more in the flesh? And she had floated through the misty shadows of
the Shalimar twilight, when the purple veil descended from Mahadev’s peak upon the Dahl and the evening star burned above the terrible passes only traversed when night quiets the avalanches. One night had brought a witchwoman who led the Light of Asia to the outer world.

But in all these she recognised there was no mystery which could touch the fringe of that which rustled in the hurrying footsteps through the mazy aisles of Kashi, reverberated with the clang of the Bisheshwar bell upon the sobbing air, and pulsated with the electric throbs which galvanised the devotee upon the Temple steps.

No one but a Shivite knows the galvanic pulsations of that clang. There are other living Temples in Kashi, frequented by magicians, both black and white, who by their invocations, holy and unholy, bring the influence of the gods upon their shrines. But none other has the power of Bisheshwar. None other is so full of the Might of Mahadev, of the Great God Himself.

That is why every Shivite shivers at the Temple door.

Not till she was in the precincts by the Well of Knowledge, did she descry the spire of the Bisheshwar. It is comparatively insignificant except that, like the Hari Mandir, it is covered with pure gold, also at the cost of Runjit Singh.
The shrine was thronged with worshippers and many Brahmans were seated round at the various subsidiary shrines reading from the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedanta, and the Ramayana, to the listening crowds seated round them on the ground. They were all painted with the white tilak of Shiv, which signifies the clairvoyant vision, many were also smeared with the ashes of the Lord of the Burning Ground, for all the lower nature has to be burnt up, before the higher gifts of Shiv can be gained, and they were all so absorbed in their devotions that the unusual apparition of a mem sahib failed to attract any attention. There is a narrow passage at the side of the Temple where a tiny peephole affords a glimpse of the interior. This leads to the Temple portals where vast crowds were hurrying in and out, units of that mighty faith untouched by Oxford intellects and English millions, but which, without effort or outlay, has missionised the West.

Opposite the Temple porch is a flower shop. The brass trays were heaped high with marigolds and narcissus in the yellow and white which Shiv loves. The emerald parrots perched on the massive spire and the pigeons fluttered on the gleaming gold of the flag, the bell inside the Temple, where a mlenchcha cannot go, pealed sonorously, and the ether throbbed with the might of Mahadev, for it was the day after Shivaratri
and the Third Person of the Trinity had regalvanised this globe again on this Night of Nights when His devotees called upon Him.

Having finished their devotions inside the Temple, the crowd had leisure to observe Carmen humbly waiting in the outer porch.

"Do you live in the Hindu College?" asked an old fakir in Hindustani, while whispers of "Ennie Besant" ran through the crowd.

Two Brahmins hurried out of the Temple. The Brahman caste has not, in the Kali Yog, the collective and individual power that all Brahmins once possessed, but Carmen observed that if, perhaps, not high thinking, at any rate plain living had given the Brahman boys of the Bisheshwar immeasurably superior faces to the repulsive countenances she had seen in Catholic churches at home. Perhaps the keen influence of Shiv, which all His devotees know and instantly sense anywhere where he is worshipped, made them so. Anyway, all were refined and intellectual, if not spiritual. Even the crowd had the expression peculiar to the worshippers of Shiv, the look of abstraction, of piercing beyond the outer veil, the features sharpened by ascetic penances. The Brahman boys told Carmen to buy a chaplet of flowers from the flower seller which she was not allowed to touch. They took it inside the Temple to hang round the Lingam
on her behalf, returning with a chaplet of jonquils from the Holy Shrine for her take away.

Just as she was leaving, she felt a light touch on her arm, and, turning, saw Mrs. Rivett, still in the ascetic's dress of Shiv, standing beside her. Her face was pale and wrapt. Her dark eyes were piercing. Round her neck was a mala of the prickly beads used by the Shivites. Carmen could hardly believe it was the same person she had seen in her velvets and pearls, eating off the gold plate of a palace. She stood paralysed with amazement, flabbergasted, unable to ejaculate a word.

A slight smile of understanding passed across the earnest face of the woman beside her, and her voice was sweet as she said,

"He whom you met in the Jyeshteshvara told me to meet you here."

Carmen had vaguely heard of that mysterious organisation which has its headquarters in the Himalayas. In her many years' residence in India, stray rumours had reached her of a most exclusive of secret societies, which yet includes kings and cow keepers, maharajahs and beggars, ambassadresses and ascetics. She had heard that the Mikado of Japan and the Grand Lama of Thibet were members of it, as well as ragged devotees of Temple shrines hidden in morass and jungle, and tender flowers of the zenana whose
purdah was never lifted to the outer world. There existed men and women, she had been told, who had earned the right to know more than those about them and who used that knowledge for their service, but she had never met one of them before that night on the Takht.

A lonely Temple on a mountain top had seemed a fitting home for a member of this mysterious Brotherhood. It was startling to meet another in the person of a woman in her own world.

"Come!" said Mrs. Rivett.

She took Carmen's arm and led her unresisting through the labyrinth of narrow, tortuous streets with the high, impenetrable mansions on either side, to the portal of the Temple of Durga, the wife of Shiv.

There are several Temples in Benares which are frequented by occultists of the right and left hand paths, where the magicians of Shiv, both black and white, have the power to call down his influence into those Temples, and which yet are accessible to the crowd. These Temples are outwardly the same as others, and very few people have the exclusive information as to which of the thousands of shrines in Kashi are living Temples. The magicians who frequent these Temples do so at unusual hours, e.g., when ordinary people are absent. The black occultists frequent their
temples at dead of night. The White Brotherhood worship at earliest dawn before the incursions of the crowd.

The Durga Temple is a powerful Temple of white magic. Nevertheless, unlike the Bisheshwar, which is closed in from the profane, the Durga Temple is built open so that anyone can look inside, only the inner shrine being hidden from view. Its pillars are exquisitely carved, its outer court is of tesselated marble, and it is much frequented by monkeys. The Hindus hold that all are One, and animals as well as humans have access to the Holy Places.

The mazy labyrinth of Benares is as impenetrable to a stranger as the subterranean recesses of Lhassa the Blessed.

Mrs. Rivett threaded the tortuous high walled turnings without a moment’s hesitation.

When she and Carmen arrived at Durga’s portals, volumes of the sweetest and subtlest perfume were belching from inside. Still unable to speak, Carmen looked at her companion enquiringly.

"The Holy Mother hears women’s prayers," she whispered. Her voice was like wind among reeds, so that men, once hearing, heard it always until death dulled their ears of remembrance. Nevertheless she spoke with the quiet, measured utterance of the Shivites.
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“I have offered a sacrifice for you. Look!”
She led Carmen inside the Temple.
It is against all rules for mlenchchas to enter the Benares Temple. A very heavy fine can be exacted should one be discovered there, even in disguise. But when the Brahmans inside saw Mrs. Rivett they salaamed to the ground with reverent mien and made no movement to obstruct their entrance. Still unresisting, she drew Carmen across the tesselated floor, between the carved colonnades, to the inner shrine of Durga, where the Mother’s influence is especially prevalent. The shrine’s floor was of a parterre pink with lotus blooms.

“Here are a thousand buds which Durga loves,” she said. “I have offered them for you. Kneel and She will help you.”

They knelt side by side beneath the huge copper bell which a Brahman of the Temple clanged to call the attention of the goddess. As they knelt upon the carpet of thick, luscious buds, they crushed them beneath their knees. The perfume of the bruised blooms became overpowering. Carmen had taken no food that day. Once more she felt the sensation she knew and loved so well, of the abandonment of the body, the slipping of the soul, released from its prison, into a magic world. She reeled against Mrs. Rivett, kneeling beside her, who passed an arm round
her waist in support. Once again, for the third time in two months, Carmen felt the trance state impending, that clairvoyance would come.

Slowly but surely, through the films of the astral world, dawned on her consciousness, thrown on to her closed eyelids, a face, the most beautiful she had ever seen. It was surmounted by a pale yellow turban resting on the masses of dark hair, which flowed down on to the broad shoulders, giving an impression of stupendous stature. The beard was parted in the middle, curled up round the ears in the Rajput manner. The features were regular though somewhat rugged, but all was merged in the magnetic power of the eyes, different from any she had ever met. Other eyes had drawn hers to get, these wanted only to give. They filled her with a sense of comprehension, encouragement, healing.

In answer to her unspoken question, the unuttered cry of her heart, his reply flashed wordless back into her consciousness:

"Your husband of the past. We were separated by your sin. You left me for him. Now you have atoned. We shall meet again."

He was gone.
CHAPTER III

This I saw when the rites were done,
And the lamps were dead and the Gods alone,
And the grey snake coiled on the altar stone
Ere I fled from a Fear that I could not see,
And the Gods of the East made mouths at me.
The Naulahka.

The Judicial Commissioner sat in his Court at Lucknow. By rights he should have been enjoying his hard-earned holiday. But the indefatigable Indian police had tracked down a whole gang of the miscreants who had attempted the Viceroy's life. A trial of such vital importance could not be postponed. Ralph Scaife shared the devotion to duty which makes the administration of India the wonder of the world. He did not even feel aggrieved though the heat sweltered in the stifling court and his liver pricked ominously. He bent over the notes he was taking with the earnestness and gravity befitting an occasion in which eleven lives hung in the balance. From his verdict there was only the final appeal to the Lieutenant-Governor of the province. The prisoners were daily driven up to the Court from the jail three miles distant. They came in four
ticca gharris. These were carefully closed round by a mounted guard who ran the gamut of a sympathetic continent. Each gharri contained three prisoners and one native constable, to whom they were chained like dogs. It was a painful, terrible sight to see them emerge from the gharris and enter the dock, old men and mere boys, princes' companions and peasants, learned and illiterate, all bound together in one brotherhood of bloodshed.

The leader of the gang was one Ram Khan. He was the eldest prisoner, a little decrepit old man with a face like a monkey. His figure was bowed with the weight of judgment to come. His halting gait cringed from the horror of impending doom. He had been for many years Sanskrit master in an Oxford Mission school. He had been the intimate friend of Canon Nutting, the head of the mission, a devoted Anglican clergyman with High Church leanings, who had given his entire life to Lucknow. Although Ram Khan was a frequent attendant at political meetings, his friend, the Canon, had always refused to believe the persistent rumours of his disloyalty. Ram Khan had complained to him that police surveillance was injuring him professionally. Whereupon Canon Nutting had written to the police and begged them to relax their vigilance of Ram Khan and to let him alone. But that argus-eyed
body knew their own business. A sudden search in Ram Khan’s house had resulted in the discovery of a bomb and the whole ramification of the terrorist organisation of the United Provinces.

Ram Khan had indeed lived more lives than one. The British Mission master advocated wholesale murder of the British. He had attended an indignation meeting on the Vice-regal outrage instigated and abetted by himself. His ablest lieutenant had been tutor in the family of an Indian prince of passionate loyalty. The Maharajah’s supreme moment was the entertainment of Royalty, or failing that, the Viceroy. The tutor had asked to be present at the last entertainment of His Excellency. This, for some unknown reason, had providentially been refused.

The saddest cases were the two boys Bhagavan Das and Chotey Lal. Chotey Lal only looked about sixteen. He had all the soft, unformed contours of childhood. He had been well brought up; but he had run away from home to “friends” who had led him to the felon’s cell.

Bhagavan Das had the face of an angel. His beautiful features were fixed in the ecstasy of a saint. He had been taught that bombs were the best form of Bhakti-Yoga. His incriminating letters were full of “unselfish devotion.” He had sinned for the salvation of his country and
of his own soul. He sat side by side with Baranta, a lewd Bengali of the baser sort, a chemist's assistant, who had made the bombs.

With this one exception all the prisoners were Hindus of high caste. All were bound under terrible oaths to destroy the British population of India. They had succeeded in destroying one Hindu of their own caste, killed when the bomb had gone wrong.

It was a heartbreaking sight. Millions of English money, miles of English mission houses, much pow-wow at mixed clubs, all the talk and palaver and well-meant efforts to unite East and West had resulted in this! The mountain had travailed in Herculean labour since the Mutiny and had brought forth a more monstrous thing!

The Government prosecutor was a little wizened, dried-up man with a sarcastic tongue. The scene afforded him fine scope, the chance of a lifetime. A Member of Council had opposed the passing of the Conspiracy Act under which the prosecution took place. It was Sir Trevor Shrapnell, fresh from his "Infusion of Sympathy."

"Conspirators are a class apart," he had cried, with lungs resonant from the Simla zephyrs his "Sympathy" had blown about his head. "They are pariahs associating with no one, holding communion with no one, outcasts from society, Cains."
THE LIFE OF A PAGAN

"What must have been the secret sneers of Balrath, son of the head of the Brahmo Samaj, tutor to the Princes of Delhi, when he read those words!" croaked Mr. Moss Austin in a voice husky from many hot weathers down below. "How must Ram Khan have smiled when he saw them—teaching in St. Augustine's School, on intimate terms with an English Churchman!"

Canon Nutting was placed in the witness-box. He was shown an exhortation to wholesale poisoning of the British in the handwriting of his own headmaster who had advised Indian youths to disguise themselves and work as punkah wallahs in order that they might poison their sahibs. It was probably the hardest moment of a life of heavy sacrifices when he had to identify the writing. His silver head was bowed brokenly. He burst into tears.

Carmen got up and left the court. She could stand no more. Once again she and Lady Gabb walked through the adjacent Residency grounds to her bungalow. Even the gabble of the chatter-pie was hushed by the horror of the scene they had just witnessed. They parted in silence at Carmen's gate. As she entered her bungalow she was greeted with grins by her Mahommedan butler who was gloating over the trial at the Court House.

"Good thing find out who threw bomb, Mem
Sahib," he said. "All Hindu mans done it and killed own caste brother!"

Carmen answered him kindly as she passed slowly into the cool shadowy recesses of her immense drawing-room, and flung herself wearily on a divan.

She was leaving India shortly, leaving it for ever. Ralph had been horrified to see the havoc the past two months had wrought on her. The insouciant girl he had seen off at the station had returned to him a broken and listless woman. The scars of the fight, the cost of the victory had left lesions which would last till death came. He had decided to send her to England. The first violence of the monsoon had now abated. The voyage which is so delightful to the globe-trotter and griffin, so weary to the Anglo-Indian, was now practicable if not pleasant. Ralph's own time of service would expire the ensuing cold weather. He would retire on a handsome pension and probably a K.C.I.E. Carmen would therefore never, humanly speaking, set foot on the coral strand again.

So it had all ended in this, the Durbars, elephant processions, pageants of Empire, royal progresses, concessions, conciliations, infusions of sympathy, and interchange of mutual gush. They had masked a mutiny more deadly than that of '57, had concealed a campaign more cold-
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blooded than the Sepoy war. All the talk of brotherhood had only bred bombs. Only a Divine Providence had prevented the slaughter of the Viceroy and a wholesale massacre of men and women at a Christmas dance. "The Chance" of an elephant's step had saved the one, the "accidental" presence of a policeman the others.

Que faire? Mr. Shaddock, the Superintendent of the Lucknow police, advocated a wholesale bombing in return.

"Let 'em all be couped up to their fiftieth cousins," he said, "and throw bombs into the lot of them."

But moderation is the keynote of the English character, perhaps of the English success. Long and dreary and expensive trials brought the offenders to a tardy "justice."

How weary it all was! Ten of her best years of endeavour had passed in the country. What good had it all done? Were ideals always bound to fail? And she thought of the "Wild Duck" with which Henrik Ibsen had chilled the enthusiasms of her youth. He had been the Pied Piper who had moved the young to madness with the music of a new gospel, and then had rounded on them with ghastly mocking laughter.

As she lay on her couch, immobile after her manner when her mind was in ferment, there
passed before her, one by one in procession, the men and women she had known personally who had made the history of India during her own decade.

Womanlike, she thought first of the one who had most influenced her own life, strange to say a woman, known to the world as “Lawrence Hope.” The flush of her youth had dawned with her own. She stood before her sofa with the childish figure, the baby frocks, the fluffy fair hair worn long, belied by the intensity of her blue eyes and the full passionate mouth. Violet Nicholson had first drained the cup of life to the dregs and then had drunk laudanum. Rumour, well attested, ascribed her death rather to remorse than to unmixed devotion. Had she also failed?

Then there came Violet Clarke in the grande tenue of a State Ball. She had been described by an Indian as the best Ambassador England had ever sent to India. A girl in her early twenties, she had had the courage to defy the concentrated disgust of Anglo-India and “to drive about with Rajahs.” She had acted as peacemaker in a particularly bad crisis. She, too, had died in the heyday of her eager youth. She had only been allowed eighteen months in India of high endeavour before the fell enteric had laid her low for ever.

And then there was George Curzon, in whom
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the patrician and the student had combined together to produce the pregnant reserve of the Harley Street consultant. She had been one of the very few women he had honoured with more than cursory notice. He was the last of the four great Viceroyys, the Samson who was not afraid to bring down the whole mighty house of Philistine Anglo-India upon him. He had dared to provoke a "White Mutiny" and sat his horse unflinching through a hurricane of hurrahs hurled at his back even by his own guests when the regiment he had punished for several murders of "only natives" marched past. The one flaw pick-holey people could find in his coping stone, his Durbar, was that the arrangements were "too perfect," the one fault in his administration that he "attempted too much," that three hundred million people "needed rest" when he had gone! He had left the Press unmuzzled. He had allowed Indians and Anglo-Indians to say what they liked so long as he could say what he thought of them. The gay amiability of Lord Minto, the timorous ineptitude of Lord Hardinge, had only made the grander that colossal figure of the past, with his leonine strength, his majestic intellect, his passionate love of India and jealousy of her rights. But he had confessed in a soft moment that sometimes "the Viceroy needed comforting like a child." For she had betrayed even him at
the last! His extended zeal in her service had brought him expended strength, the doom of his endeavour, the death of his dearest.

Equal to him in courage she bracketed Haidée Hawthorne, with her Egyptian contours, her scarab eyes. Strong in her sense of right, enthroned on the adoration of her husband, she had dared single-handed, with a valour a Roman would have envied, to brave that most powerful, most homogeneous and most devilishly malignant of all Trades Unions, the women of Anglo-India. She was considered the most successful woman of her time, and she had kept her flag flying to the end, but she had sailed away with a sinking heart.

And then she thought of her own decade in the country, the best and fullest, probably, she was ever to know. What had it brought her? She had landed as a girl full of enthusiasm for the service of India. She was leaving as a woman who had plucked the leaf of the Tree of Knowledge. What had India brought to her? She had given the flowers of her youth. The violets and lilies had been cool and wet with the morning's dew when she offered them. But the hot desert wind of passion had passed over them and away again, leaving them scorched and shrivelled on their stems, bowed by the weight of their own sorrow. What had she left? But her private
sorrows paled before those of India, for the omens were terrible.

The omens portended there was worse disaster to come. When the Hardinge procession left Government House, Calcutta, for new Delhi, a flash of lightning struck the Viceregal flag from the roof. This was smothered in the newspapers into a gust of wind. Already the new scheme was to cost millions more than the original estimate. It was believed the Government wished it had never been hatched.

It was from Indrasprastha, the Purana Kila of Delhi, that the five heroic brothers, the Pandavas, had set forth for the battlefield of Kurukshetra, which heralded the doom of the Hindu Empire.
PART III
CHAPTER I

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled.
Omar Khayyam.

The Grand Hotel at Rome, so much beloved of our novelist of the rich, is all that fancy can paint and man can pay for; money run riot, in fact. The salon is a grove of giant palms and rose azaleas. Twice a year the diplomats of Rome dine there together. Lady Scaife arrived on the biennial day. She was on her way from Ireland to meet Sir Ralph at Brindisi. He was coming home a time-expired man, his pension and K.C.I.E. all complete.

The diplomats’ table was smothered in white lilac. They ranged from blond Goths to yellow Japs. Next to them Mr. Pierpont Morgan’s sister entertained a party of American belles whose shoulders suspended Court trains and who asked their men friends if Rome were a good place to buy silk stockings. The Latin women present were all in black, as it was Lent, but such black: coarseating blacks, shimmering blacks, reptilian blacks, blacks with snaky breastplates in steel,
and slithering serpents on panniers. Bronzed hair was bound by velvet bands above the sculptured face of a Duchessa. Eyes of night melted over scarlet parted lips.

But not till next morning did Carmen hear the keynote of the Eternal City. The genius of any country can be expressed in one word. The Riviera is set in turquoise and diamonds. Rome is wrapped in olive velvet. Even her statuary is swathed in softest, chastest greens. Her fountains are clothed in the velvet pall of centuries. On emerging from the Grand Hotel the note of Rome was struck by the first object that met the eye, the magnificent fountain of the Naids. To the initiate it is trumpery modern work of the last few years, but to the stranger in the gates, glorious green bronzes after the manner of antiques and the flushing water at once strike the keynote of the music of the Eternal City. She is the City of Fountains as well as the City of Flowers. Instead of the kiosks with Parisian saletés, the street corners have flower pyramids. The apices are of arums above Lenten-hued ranunculus, crimson anenomes like cardinals in crimson robes, violets in court mourning, classic narcissus, tawny wallflowers. These flowers are shaded from the sun by rush umbrellas, the same sort of umbrellas which shade the pilgrims bathing at Benares!

The Fontana di Trevi is the Fountain in Chief,
the monarch of a fountain world. While Carmen was contemplating its flowing splendours, an awful "sharrybang" tore up behind her, scattering dust, petrol, tobacco, and sputum in all directions. A man in a loud check suit on the front bench turned round and harangued the back seats over his shoulder. He was the personal conductor. Five minutes was allowed for lewd gaping and the "sharrybang" thundered off again.

Carmen took refuge in a carozza, and went for her first Roman drive in the grounds of the Villa Borghese. She heard the mysterious music from the low, classic fountains, their pure ovals stained with age, set in olive velvet of ilex, cypress and pine, and greensward starred with gargantuan daisies. The soft air lent to the illusion of the old-world myths. She looked to see a naiad standing by the fountain, a faun sitting upon an altar, a hermaphrodite dreaming amongst the daisies, a satyr sleeping between the ruined pillars, a sylvan lurking among the cypresses. All was dignified, calm, soft, leisurely, reposeful with the sleep of centuries.

She ordered her carriage to drive to the British Embassy. There is something sumptuous in the very name. It suggests all that is most brilliant, most scintillating, most du beau monde, just as the word "cantonment" suggests all that is
bourgeois, most sordid, most horrible. It conjures up gay crowds, mondaines, artists, viveurs and Ouida, as cantonment suggests hard-featured Amazons cutting khansamah's bills, cat gossip and Kipling.

When she rang at the Embassy door in the Porta Pia, it flew open instantaneously, revealing a powdered janitor. The spacious hall appeared garrisoned with a troop of footmen. Some of them conducted Carmen to a lift. In this she was shot up to the first floor, where two or three more footmen ushered her out of the lift and into a suite of drawing-rooms. They were full of red camelias, and a piano was being played at the far end. As Carmen followed the strains of the music, she thought how an embassy stood symbolical of all that is best in our social life. There one met the cream of all nations. If she had a daughter she thought she would say "Remember this always, you cannot serve God and Mammon. You cannot touch bourgeois without being defiled. Middle class has not necessarily anything to do with birth. No one would ask as to the parentage of Cecil Rhodes. But you cannot bring the Bayswater outlook into the great world. Therefore avoid it. Winston Churchill commanded a boating party at the age of ten. Modesty is the most pernicious of vices. You can be whatever you wish. If you wish to associate with the kings
of the earth you will do so. Choose whom you
will consort with, kings or cabbages."

Whatever you seek you shall find;
If you seek for the wind, then the wind
Will blow all your dreams away
And leave you breathless and grey.
If you ask for the night, then the night
Will swathe and swaddle your sight;
Whatever in heaven or earth
You wish you can bring to birth.

Lady Dorian was all that an Ambassadress
should be, divinely tall, divinely dark, and
divinely rich. Her dark beauty and her ducats
were both of Spanish extraction. She received
Carmen with empresement, and an animated
conversation ensued between these two women,
worthy representatives of the dignity of British
womanhood in the outposts of the Empire.

"When did you come and where are you stay-
ing?" asked Lady Dorian.

"I came last night to the Grand Hotel," replied
Carmen.

"You have just come at the right time," re-
marked Her Excellency, "to see Rome at its best.
The Princess di Palermo is giving a flower ball in
the Hotel next week at which the whole of Society
will be present. You are also staying at the right
place. The Grand Hotel is the centre of society
in which you will meet everyone. Rome is very
different to London in this respect."

"As I am in the Hotel, it will be amusing to
take what is going," replied Carmen. "But, really, I have not come to Rome for society."

"What a refreshing person you are!" exclaimed Lady Dorian. "We sometimes have ten 'soup tickets' a day from people wanting us to lance them on poor Society. Needless to say we don't attempt it."

"I don't want anything at all," replied Carmen, smiling; "still, it has been a pleasure to meet you, Lady Dorian," and she took leave of the Ambassadress.

That afternoon she made her first acquaintance with the beau monde of Rome. Lady Gabb had already visited the Eternal City during her biennial visit to Europe. As a Catholic and a woman of impetus she had succeeded in "butting her way," as she put it, into the old Catholic set of the City. Her kind heart had prompted her to write to Prince and Princess Arano Zulica, the leaders of the set, to call upon Carmen, to whose artistic ear the exquisite Italian names immediately appealed. She never forgot her first perusal of the list of visitors in the Grand Hotel. It conveyed a whole orchestra of beautiful sounds. There is a great deal in a name, and the Roman aristocracy have the loveliest cognomina in the world. There were Count Brandolini Brandolin, Countess Arrivabene, Marchese Theodoli, Donna Franca Floria, Countess Leonardi, the Ruspoli
and the Oriani. Seeing Lady Scaife's name in the list of new arrivals in the "Italie," published the previous evening, the Prince and Princess, with the cordiality the Catholic Communion always displays to the Fold and their friends, came immediately to call. They were Neapolitans who had settled in Rome, for the Eternal City is once more the Italian Capital, and all that is best and representative of Italy foregathers there.

The Prince was a distinguished-looking man with a marked personal likeness to the late King of the Belgians. The Princess was fat, fair and motherly. She at once invited Carmen to her reception. At the same time she cautioned her against being drawn into the vortex of the Grand Hotel.

"You will never meet real Roman society there," she said, "only one set, and that not worth knowing," and she detailed how "the set" had cut off even the scanty skirt of one of its fair members for a frolic and how she had walked about the whole evening without it.

Carmen felt amused at the contradictory accounts she was already receiving of Roman society, also to see that even amidst the grand harmonies of Rome social bitterness and rancour raged. She asked the Princess where the vrai monde could be seen?
"At Count Ripoli's reception. He is of French royal blood. All Rome goes there. I will get you a card. Are you a Catholic?"

"No," replied Carmen.

"Ah," said the Princess, scenting spoil, "you will, I am sure, like to meet Father Newland. He is a very clever man and comes to my Thursdays."

"Do you attend Court functions?" asked Carmen.

"Oh, no," replied the Princess, "we could not go to those who have robbed our dear friend, the Holy Father. Then we shall meet to-morrow evening."

Carmen went to the Princess' reception, at which all the "Catholic set" of Rome was present. Father Newland was immediately presented to her. He talked, and Carmen listened, their best. But evidently the good father's prognosis of her Catholic possibilities was unfavourable, for a card did not come for Count Ripoli's reception.

Carmen took refuge in pagan grace.

The fascination of visiting the Roman palaces is similar to that of opening the surprise packets of childhood. The palaces, all glorious in painting, gilding, and frescoing, are as the rich mother oyster shell, the nacre which contains the pearls of price. Until one penetrates that shell one has no ideas what glories will be contained therein. One passes into the quiet and cool; the trams'
shriek and hustle are far away, and suddenly one faces the original of a painting or statue one has known the features of from childhood and met all over the world.

Carmen visited the Forum. She saw the water glinting the clear, pale green of an unflawed emerald in the marble well before the Temple of Jupiter. The well contained a tiny altar, its white chastity bore the figure of a nymph. She saw the Atrium Vestae, small and jewel-like. She wandered into the court of the Holy of Holies, where the grass and violets grow, and saw the statues standing upon pedestals, of the flower of Rome’s patrician maidenhood who gave their virginity to the service of the gods. It is jealously guarded by two stone colonnades of thick walls, for it is right in the centre of the Forum, in the core of Rome. Caligula could peer down from the portals of Castor and Pollux upon them. Only a few feet away the bays clothe the funeral pier of Cæsar where Anthony harangued. She knew why their heads were draped with Indian Saris, for they guarded the Eastern mysteries. On the clairvoyant gifts of the six maidens depended the destinies of the world. That is why the violation of a Vestal meant death.

She sat on the lowest of the four steps leading to the chancel. On either side were three cells shut away from the noise and tumult of the outer
world, so near and yet so far. Their bedrooms were paved with red tesselated marbles. The niche for the bed was draped with maidenhair fern. Who shall say what world destinies were decided by the dreams of these virginal couches? She heard the rustle of the vestal’s garments stirred by the southern zephyr; felt her dark locks brush by as she passed with the stately tread of Patrician Rome, saw her brown eyes gleam with ecstasy as she ascended into her cell, now filled with laurustinus, whence came the visions of the unseen world which Carmen knew so well.

She passed outside and saw the pale mauve masses of wisteria wind round the purple porphyry columns of orange masonry profiled against the bright blue sky.

And because she was an extremist, from that temple of austerest virtue, she went next to Hadrian’s Villa, the most astounding memorial of vice triumphant the world has known. She saw the mysterious youth, Antinous, whose beauty had been his doom, of whom no less than thirty busts and statues were found in Hadrian’s home, crowned with wine-coloured leaves and berries of richer dyes, passing through the Corinthian-pillared halls and up the cypress walk beneath the castellated bastions to the Summer Bathing Hall, swimming in the circular tank between the marble columns, dreaming in the Greek theatre,
crushing the wild cyclamen in his path to greet Hadrian, burly, broad and jocund in strength, returning from the savage Picts and Scots, from fogs and snows to the soft, caressing zephyrs of love. The lips of Antinous express a melancholy the more bitter that they are so incomparably sweet. It is a helpless agony, as if all the beauty of the world was made useless owing to the loss of the keynote to its meaning. There is nothing anywhere else like the sadness of that youth's promised but unborn smile, just about to break upon the exquisite curved lips, but for ever unbroken. Antinous had sought and found lethe in the Nile. Hadrian had sighed for a death delayed.
CHAPTER II

"I think I have lived long enough
To have seen that love has an end."

It was the night of the Bal des Fleurs, the pièce de résistance of the Roman Season. It was organised by Princess di Palermo, and the patronesses were the choicest flower of the oldest aristocracy of Europe.

This aristocracy has peculiar characteristics of its own, or rather it is peculiar in having no characteristics except its aristocracy. One cannot even say that it is exclusive, since one of its bright particular stars is the daughter of a Chicago haberdasher, and not so very long ago was snipping tapes and ribbons in the shop.

Left a widow with £6,000 a year, the draper's relict sailed for London with her two orphaned daughters. Coldly received by the Thames, they were welcomed with open arms by the Tiber. A scion of an old princely house was delighted to bestow his name and title in return for a third of the haberdashery proceeds.

The young people, being both personable, the marriage turned out exceptionally happy for this type of alliance.

The Roman-American ménages in society
at the present time number about twenty-five couples, *e.g.*, those whose names are inscribed in that amusing chronicle: "The High Life."

In London, aristocracy spells talent, power, and sense of responsibility. In Paris, it spells elegance. But in Rome, in the set that haunts the Grand Hotel, it spells mustiness, senility, a futile heap of dead leaves battening on the ferment of its own decay. There is no passport to its portals, save birth and wealth. Any idiot possessing either the one or the other rides on in majesty.

Prince and Princess di Palermo dined at the Grand Hotel the night of her ball, also given there after the dinner. No matter that their hostess was shaky about her aspirates. Haberdashery provided them with an elegant repast. No matter that the Princess' dinner partner was an Egyptian "nigger," whom the humblest British subaltern would have kicked outside his doors. He was comparatively harmless as he had no parlour tricks, excepting to constantly protrude his very prominent and glistening teeth. He gave costly balls, and the whole Roman aristocracy fell at his feet accordingly. The Princess was known as a leader of fashion, far beyond the borders of Italy. She had British blood in her veins.

In the last generation, the ties between England
and Italy were closer than the exigencies of modern politics have of late permitted. Every English miss was taught Italian, before the barbaric Teuton tongue, and frequent marriages took place between the great English Catholic families and the patrician houses of Rome.

Both the Princess and her husband had British connections, and both were well-known in the beau monde of London. She came of a race of robbers, and represented all that was proudest, most exclusive in Rome. Her ancestors had swooped down like eagles from the hill fortresses, had become great from plunder, had allied themselves with royalty, and for a thousand years had headed the aristocracy of Rome. She had married a man of princely house and of worthy lineage to her own, whose family spawned Popes as mushrooms.

Carmen, coming from her ancient home of soldiers far away in the Irish bogs, looked with some curiosity at this woman, said to be the choicest flower on Europe's bough. The Princess was the product of men and women picked from the crème de la crème of a thousand years. She had been called the most beautiful woman in the world. What hit you in the face the moment you looked at her, was her absolute self-possession. Almost uncanny was the impasive assurance of this leader of Patrician Rome. It was impossible
to imagine her either moved by laughter or melted by tears. It seemed almost that the red blood stream had exhausted itself in the flow of ten centuries, and that she and her brother—a stunted, shrivelled up and mummy-like old-young man—suffered from the anæmia which tends to beset a house outworn, which refuses to refresh itself with new life from lesser streams.

She moved forward with characteristic calm and quiet to take her place as leader in the opening quadrille. As she passed close, Carmen saw her face. Still young, it had been called the most beautiful in the world. From an artist’s point of view of precise proportion of feature, this might be so. But the eyes were small, though bright and piercing, and the back was slightly bent, again suggesting anæmia of an ancient race. There was, however, all the dignity of an unquestioned pre-eminence in her bearing, notwithstanding the short skirt of corded silk classically draped, suggesting a toga. It was as though a thousand years of pedigress and “mondanité” had produced a great lady of exquisite breeding at the expense of the woman. Nature had been refined away to such an extent, that nothing but a non-entity was left.

The lady vis-à-vis to her in the quadrille was her closest friend, and of a very different type. She was the daughter of an English politician.
Her mother had been an actress. She had been brought up in Italy, and was continental in mode. She had the assurance of wealth, but was nevertheless a thorough good sort. Live and let live was her motto. She and her husband had agreed to enjoy life apart. He sought consolation in the political arena, while his wife led the mode in London, Paris, and San Moritz. It was, nevertheless, sad to see a woman who had been married for years, finding her extreme ecstasy in a bunny-hug. Romping, turkey trotting, and grimacing, the Contessa Aurore formed a marked contrast to the glacial demeanour of her bosom friend, the Princess di Palermo.

Her partner in the dance was the Duca di Sandragone, a Neapolitan—triple essence of the South. Although forty years of age, he succeeded in fulfilling his dream of eternal youth. Lithe, slight, volatile, and boyish, with a marked resemblance to Alphonso of Spain, he could easily have passed for twenty-five, the age at which he had vowed to remain. He led the cotillon with an entrain worthy of a better cause. It was the supreme moment of his life. He led the mazy windings of the cotillon, and rained and hailed the flowers with a skill that a general might have envied. His métier in life was to command a tea-party, to lead a cotillon, to be a squire of dames, and he fulfilled it well. At each new arrival at
the door, he rushed to meet her, kissed her hand, and with his arm round her waist, led her to her place.

When the ball was at its height, the playing of the Spanish National Anthem announced that a member of that Royal Family had arrived. Carmen was sitting with Lady Dorian at the far end of the wisteria-lined hall, so that at first she did not know for whom the band was playing. A lane opened through the crowd. Carmen’s heart jumped in a way she thought it had forgotten even before she saw slowly advancing the one man in all the world who had first made it do so. She drew behind Lady Dorian, where she could see well without being seen. There were rows of people in front of them eager to attract the Royal attention.

It was three years since she had seen him, since she had fled from his presence in Srinagar, to take refuge in Kashi. He was visiting Italy.

He advanced slowly up the avenue formed by the waiting crowd, accompanied by Princess di Palermo, who had met him at the door, graciously smiling right and left, leaving a ripple of curtseys behind him. Sitting well behind, Carmen first saw the dark head, the exquisite brow, whose chiselling she remembered so well. They were unaltered. So were the flashing eyes. But the rest of the face was terribly changed. Alphonso
d’Arragon had been little more than a boy in years and appearance when he had wooed Carmen. His brains, his strength of character, and the responsibilities of his royal rank had given to him, even then, the maturity of a man in the mould of an exquisite boy. He had combined the figure of a Mercury with the bearing of an Apollo, and the features of a god. Now he was middle-aged, and the years had told upon his face and form. The searing of the soul had burnt into the body. The slight figure had no longer the proud poise of conscious royalty. It hung limply, as though held together by the military uniform he had remodelled for the whole army, to suit himself. The fire of the eyes blazed from deep caverns hollowed by the wear and tear of unholy passions upon the flesh.

As he walked slowly up the room—preceded by two aides-de-camp—he stopped to speak to those of the flower of the aristocracy who were honoured with his acquaintance. He was especially gracious to a fair Neapolitan princess, a lovely girl who had recently married a very rising diplomat. Like many Italians, even of the South, she was very fair. Only for her extreme Parisian chic, she might have been an Englishwoman. Her husband was ugly, oleaginous and toad-like, with a croaking laugh and voice. But he was safe to get the next Embassy, so the
bargain had been signed and sealed two years previously. For the present each of the parties seemed fairly satisfied. Prince Castellani was paternal and kindly to his wife; she endured his presence patiently.

Her face was sad and wistful in repose, but brightened sometimes in the society of a frolicsome young Florentine. He was a member of the racing set, a soldier and a sportsman. He formed a vital contrast to the anæmic youths about him. He loved the rosebud, and would have plucked it from the maw of the toad. I would I could record that she threw up all to follow him. But she did not. She had no intention of foregoing Her Excellencyship. Very seldom does a member of the first flight of the chase drop a carcase for the ravening of the great middle-class pack who follow their track as relentlessly as wolves pursue the sleigh on the snowy Siberian steppes. Once indeed did an English girl—the most intimate friend of royal princesses—deem the world well lost for a week of love. With the passing of the week her executive life ended. Henceforth she was "taken up again." But she had had her week. Till death she lived on it. Society women are well trained. Very seldom do they dare to die socially. Rather do they exist on, caged by conventionality, waiting with folded arms for age and death, as those unfortunates,
fast cabined in a craft engulfed by Gunga sands, waited for the creeping, crawling tide to slink along the Summerbunds and drown them. A terrible penalty is exacted as the price of being smart.

The Prince motioned the Neapolitan to accompany him to an alcove of flowers. The crowd respectfully moved aside to make a way for them when suddenly their path was obstructed by some obstacle which Carmen could not see, and a hum of astonishment and consternation arose from the assembly. Lady Dorian and Carmen stood up to see what had happened.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Lady Dorian. "There is Mrs. Aaron! Fancy her daring to come here!"

Mrs. Aaron was the wife of the cavalry colonel who had been Carmen's guest long ago, on the night of the Lucknow ball. She had never seen her since, but she had heard much. She did not expect, however, to meet her in Rome.

Before coming to India, Colonel Aaron had been ordered to the Boer War. Mrs. Aaron had accompanied her husband as far as the Mount Nelson Hotel, Capetown. She was a very beautiful brunette. Her delicate cameo features, brown eyes, and wealth of brown hair surmounted a figure of vase-like symmetry. Her waist could almost be spanned by the hands. She had an
ample income of her own and dressed magnificently. Old-fashioned people considered her style a little loud and flashy. But she had always run straight until the Boer war. South Africa was called the grave of reputations of British generals. It buried at least as many of British women.

Mrs. Aaron's head, never too tightly screwed, was turned by the joint admiration of a duke and an earl. The earl was married to a charming, clever wife, who held colonial courts on her own account, and thought as much of Mrs. Aaron—if indeed she ever heard of her existence—as of the buzzing of a house fly. But the Duke was a bachelor, the greatest parti of the day. He seemed deeply épris. Mrs. Aaron dreamed of divorce and duchessdom. But, alas! the Duke was a marked man. He had been marked down from his earliest childhood by a mother, backed by royal influence.

When the ship containing Mrs. Aaron and the Duke arrived at Madeira she was boarded by an irate lady bearing a Royal despatch. The Duke was only twenty-one. How could a mere boy withstand the majestic wrath of the greatest monarch of the earth?

A few weeks later the smartest wedding of the season took place in Westminster Abbey, but the bride was not Mrs. Aaron. After the ceremony, he, who had recently been crowned in the chair
of Scone, escorted the bride's mother to her carriage. Mrs. Aaron retreated to her river home. Colonel Aaron had, in the meantime, consulted his solicitors. But when his wife had seen that the strawberry leaves were to be wrested from her clutch, she went down in all the power of her beauty to their country home. She threw herself at his feet. Sobbingly she assured him "there had been nothing wrong." If he persisted she would kill herself, as she could not face the witness-box. The Colonel, who had always admired her fair form, and had tried not to see the soul it clothed, accepted her assurances and desired the disappointed lawyers to stay their hands. Mrs. Aaron, saved from her narrow squeak, in the reaction of delight walked him up and down Piccadilly all day long. But there are limits to human endurance. He applied to be sent to the South African veldt once more. There death was granted to him and of the most glorious. He was killed while gallantly leading his men in a magnificent charge. A flash of sunlight had provided a mark for a Boer bullet which closed his keen piercing eyes, only blinded by a woman's wiles, for ever. Carmen had heard that his widow had hung up her harp by the waters of Homburg. Beyond that she knew nothing, and was astonished to see her in Rome.

"What is she doing here?" she asked of Lady Dorian.
"Why, don't you know?" replied the Ambassadress; "she met Prince Alphonso in Homburg. She told him that she was a friend of yours, and had met him in your house at Lucknow. Her beauty and daring amused him at first, but he soon became bored to tears and shook her off."

"What is she doing now?"

The Prince and the Neapolitan were advancing slowly down a lane which opened before them in the crowd. They were preceded by two aides-de-camp, and followed by a ripple of curtseying gowns. From the other end of the lane advanced alone—Mrs. Aaron! She was dressed in half-mourning clouds of violet tulle. Sappho-like violets crowned her bright hair. Two love locks descended on either side of her neck. Waves of perfume of violettes de Parme lashed the air behind her long trailing skirts. She came straight at the Prince. He was laughing with the Neapolitan, his white teeth flashing, his arms waving, his black eyes sparkling with animation, for his companion was one of the loveliest girls in Europe, and H.R.H. was nothing if not a connoisseur.

Suddenly he became aware of the advancing avalanche. He first stared incredulously. Then the black diamond facets in their almond settings flashed furiously. He half turned to his
A.D.C.'s. But the clouds of violet tulle had condensed into a crumpled heap at his feet. She seized his hands and watered them with torrents of tears.

"Alphonso," she sobbed, "have you forgotten all our past. Aren't you going to speak to me again?"

He snatched his hands angrily away. His lips, which a moment before had smiled so graciously, curled back from the white teeth in cruel contempt. He spoke a few words under his breath in Spanish. An A.D.C. sprang forward, raised Mrs. Aaron from the floor, and hurried her, unresisting, out of sight.

Tears rose to Carmen's eyes. A view floated to her mind of a Srinagar drawing-room, a sofa on which were seated two. She saw again the bowl of columbines, whose dusky bloom was rich as the luscious glintings of Mrs. Aaron's gown. She heard the low impassioned accents vibrating through the room's perfumed stillness, the same voice that had snarled so angrily a moment before. She felt again the pulsing of the arteries in a hand pressed against hers, that same hand which had just been torn away from Mrs. Aaron's.

"But for the grace of God, there goes Carmen Scaife!" she murmured.
CHAPTER III

"No easy hope or lies
Shall bring us to our goal.
But iron sacrifice
Of body, will and soul.
There is but one task for all,
For each one life to give.
Who stands if freedom fall,
Who dies if England live?"

"I am off to meet Ralph to-morrow," said Lady Scaife, two days later in the Embassy drawing-room. "Good-bye, Lady Dorian, thanks so much for your kindness."

"Good-bye," said Lady Dorian, not seeing the irony of this last—for the Diplomatic Corps is girded in a triple armour of selfishness, which no barb can pierce.

"But," said Lady Dorian, "are you not afraid to travel across France now?"

For the Armageddon had burst over Europe. All leave of all British officials—even to the uttermost parts of the Empire—had been stopped. But Ralph was very ill, and coming on a medical certificate.

"Not in the least," replied Carmen. "I have my passport from Sir Edward Grey, visé by the French Consul here."

"But," said the Ambassadress, "there will be no restaurant cars. You will get nothing to eat."
"Even so," replied Carmen, "it won't hurt me to go without food for a day to meet my husband."

"But," persisted Lady Dorian, "there are no porters for the luggage, all have gone to the front."

"Surely," said Carmen, "there will be plenty of old men left, the demand will create the supply."

"They won't let them into the station. You will have to drag your own boxes about."

Carmen turned to conceal rising anger, for this was a sample of the silly scares which, in the early days of the war, made life as miserable for those left behind as for those at the front.

The great conspiracy trial had lasted five months. The strain had nearly killed Scaife, who had been the presiding judge. He had been carried on board prostrated from heart-failure. The healthful influence of the voyage revived him a little, but when they reached Aden porters brought the awful news of the bursting of the cyclone of the greatest conflict known in history. This could not fail to affect a man who had taken part in the making of the history of his own time. Sir Ralph Scaife collapsed again in a comatose condition in his cabin.

Three of the gang of eleven in the Great Conspiracy Case had been sentenced to death, including the Canon's most intimate friend, and
the tutor of the family of the passionately loyal Maharajah who, at seventy years of age, insisted on rushing to the forefront of the Great War, accompanied by his grandson, aged sixteen, and who had poured all his State resources, besides his personal jewels, at the feet of his Emperor.

British moderation was evinced in the commutation to transportation for life of three others, equally eager to kill the British. The boy with the beautiful face, who had dreamed of Bhaktijoga and prayed to Shri Krishna and Radhika to bless the conspiracy, was acquitted, so were two others of the chained children, while two had turned informers.

The knowledge of Ralph’s condition had been kept from Carmen as she made her preparations for departure from Rome.

Italy has two flies in her amber. There are two jarring notes in travel in this land of magnificent harmonies and sumptuous delights. These are the touts and the train journeys. As a corpse on the desert sands attracts the vulture beyond the furthest horizon, so the traveller attracts the tout apparently from out of the ground. Nor can he be scared off like his milder Oriental confrère. If you say “Go away,” he will reply, “You go away. I stay here all day, you go back to America!”
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The train journeys are an even greater tax on the patience of the traveller. The smartest of baggage must be corded with unsightly cords and sealed to prevent robbery. It is necessary to arrive at the station an hour before departure, to reserve a seat in the trains, insufficient for the traffic.

The train hurried through the swamps of the Maremma, past the leaning marbles of Pisa, and along the smiling Italian coast to Genoa. Here she would leave Italian territory for Marseilles. The Great Cyclone had diverted even the sailings of the P. and O. line, hitherto as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The mail would travel via Marseilles this week, instead of Brindisi. Next week it would go round the Bay, and hereafter recipients would be lucky if they got any mail at all.

As the rosy flush—characteristic of the Mediterranean—dipped into the shades of night, involuntarily Carmen's thoughts winged away into the past to another railway journey, when, from the carriage windows, she had witnessed the twilight fall over the plains of Hindustan. Then the Armageddon of her own life was before her. Now it was over, the victory won, the guerdon gained in the strength of her own nature.

At Genoa she stayed the night. After dinner she passed out and across the Plage to the adjoin-
ing Via Balbi. This is a street of princely palaces famed for their lovely marble stairs.

She passed the halls of the Pallavicini, where the marble flights rear themselves up in lovely curves, unsupported as sea waves, and entered the halls of the University of Genoa. Two immense mellow marble lions guarded the flights of stairs soaring above the marble galleries, gleaming in the moonlight.

At the summit is a garden of horticultural fame, in which lives a botanist whose name is renowned throughout Europe. Carmen had met him before, and hesitated whether to visit him again. But, with one foot on the stair, she turned back.

Professor Earwalker had grown old and grey peering down microscopes. All his life had been concerned with the lore and loves of flowers. The greatest excitement it had known had been the wedding of wallflowers with a bug as the matrimonial agent. What bond could there be between such a life and hers?

Impatiently she turned away from the security of the marble sanctuary, where the buggist, guarded by the lions couchant, dozed over his specimens, murmuring as she hurried down the Via Balbi back to the hotel:

"Not ghastly smooth life
With the contempt of God!"
When Carmen returned to the hotel she met a war widow friend whom she had last seen in Rome.

"Why Pamela, dear," said Carmen, "why have you come here?"

"I'm coming with you as far as the frontier," replied the girl. And for the first time since the light of her life had died, a faint flush rose to her wan cheeks, and her eyes shone with a spark of their old fire.

"I am going to risk my life, as he did."

She opened her close-cut black jacket, and showed the Red Cross on her breast.

"Perhaps then God will reward me, and send me to him."

She spoke without bitterness, but with a tearless weariness that went to Carmen's heart.

A year before she had known Pamela Pennant in London, as the most thoughtless and arrogant of the young girls of her set. It was a season remarkable for the pre-eminence of the girls versus the young married women who revenged themselves by excluding them, neck and crop, from a "hag's dance," given by a King's mistress, at which all the fairest of the matrons attended. She had seen her again with the scent of orange blossom about her, and the refrain of the old song, "She wore a wreath of roses," rose to her mind. The "widow's cap" had only been
removed for the Red Cross. It had seemed meet for Hadrian, old and worn by vices, to long for death. But for Pamela Chesham in the earliest days of sweetest womanhood at twenty!

"I've got three motors in the trucks—and, Lady Scaife, let me introduce Mr. Bulman who is coming to the front with me."

Then Carmen saw for the first time that Pamela was not unaccompanied. Her companion stepped forward from behind her, and respectfully raised his tweed travelling cap to Lady Scaife. He was of middle age, middle height, stoutly built, fresh complexioned, with clear grey eyes and quietly modulated voice. He was a typical man of the middle classes who form the backbone of the British nation.

"I am a tallow chandler in a large way. The war has ruined my business, as we cannot get the fat from Archangel via the North Sea route. But I can carry a stretcher, so I am going with Mrs. Chesham."

Carmen instinctively thought of the Duchess of Wexborough's cotillon, which Pamela had led with an exiled King. But was not the tallow chandler a far safer rock in danger than the scrofulous monarch?

Late that night she knocked at the door of Pamela's room. Getting no reply, she entered. It was one of those typically French,
Third Empire bedrooms, which always remind one of the bedroom scene of "La Dame aux Camellias." In the red velvet armchair was Pamela, passionately weeping. It was the first time Carmen had seen her give way.

"Pamela," she said, "you have lost, but you have lived; the cup of life has been dashed from your lips, but you drained it brimming first. People worship many gods, but there is one God all men worship. And, because of His seeming injustice, men have deemed Him blind. Thousands of men and women have sought Love all their lives, have never seen His face. When they run after Him He flies from their outstretched arms. He eludes them as the ignus fatui. Even should they touch His garments, He passes them by. He stayed with you for a year. Others have never held Him even for a day. Go down on your knees and thank Him for your year of Heaven."

The tone was stern, and the sobbing girl instantly stopped and looked up at her friend.

"Lady Seaife," she said. "Have you not known Him? Surely He must have stayed with you who are so beautiful, so gifted?"

The lashes quivered upon the dark eyes gleaming above her in exquisite pain.

"Pamela, dear, He showed Himself a jealous God to me. Because of the gifts He gave me to attract Him, He fled from me, after giving me a
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A glimpse of His beauty. I have known His pain, but not His peace. To you He was lavish. Thank Him for that. Sleep well."

Next morning they were borne along the lovely Italian Riviera, past the palms of Bordighera and the aloes of Alassio, to the frontier station of Ventimiglia. Here, a Commissionaire of Passports came to Lady Scaife's carriage and carefully inspected the passport she pulled out of her travelling bag, for his benefit. It duly set forth that she was a British subject, but he seemed very sniffany and dissatisfied. Perhaps her dark hair and coalpit eyes did not accord with his ideas of Saxon fairness and blue eyes. In addition to which of ordinary travellers there were none. No one but officials and persons absolutely bound to travel left their respective countries at such a time. The travelling public in Europe is composed of English and Americans. The English considered themselves safer in their island home, and the Americans were scared back to New York by clever consuls glad to have the responsibility of them off their hands.

With knitted brows, and tightly pursed lips, the Commissionaire of Passports glanced sharply at Carmen and back to her passport, not once, but many times. Inwardly laughing, she wondered what was coming next. Eventually, after prolonged scrutiny of the visé of the French Consul
in Rome, he left her carriage. Carmen called a railway porter and inquired why he had spent so long over her passport.

"Parce qu’il y a tant d’espions, et chaque soir, il arrête quelqu’un," was the reply.

Carmen’s reserved carriage was sandwiched between two others, in each of which was a solitary man. That of the right contained an Englishman of so repulsive an aspect that she instinctively looked away into that of the left to seek protection in case of emergency. It contained a French Army doctor, the Red Cross bound upon his arm. Entering his carriage Carmen at once engaged in conversation with this ally in a double sense. He was delighted to converse with the wife of a British official. At that moment a crowd of Turcos passed the carriage window to enter the train. They were black troops from Algeria, of semi-negro type, and dressed in linen bags of trousers, and with Mussulman black caps on the head. All over the world the followers of the Prophet are known for their reckless counting of the death which will usher them into his Paradise. All the world had thrilled at the reports of the incredible fury with which they had charged the German hell-fire batteries and bayonetted the gunners.

"Les journaux Anglais parlent beaucoup de leur féroce," said Carmen to her new friend.
"Contre ces cochons d'Allemands," he replied.
"Est-ce que le peuple Anglais est content de la guerre?" he asked.
"Pas content, parce qu'on fait si peu de progrès."
"Parce qu'ils sont si forts!"

Into that one sentence was condensed the horror of the whole civilised world at the nation always bourgeois, now savage, which was ruthlessly destroying its precious heritages.

The Hotel de l'Europe at Marseilles was crowded with British officers who were proceeding, with the Indian contingent, to the front. One body of 40,000 picked soldiers of the Indian Empire had, indeed, already arrived and departed. They were mainly composed of Sikhs, tall bearded followers of the Tenth Guru, who had bidden them all take the name of Singh (Lion), men of austere life to whom war was a religion; and of little grinning Gurkhas, with squat bodies, Chinese faces, and of amorous propensities, to whom war was a delicious joke, and to slice a man in half a moment's diversion. They had brought down the house by playing "The Marseillaise" through the streets of Marseilles.

The too susceptible ladies of the town surrounded their camp with the mules and cannon they had brought with them, six deep, and were so overcome by admiration of the dusky warriors
themselves that they even went so far as to entwine roses in the unshorn tresses of the Sikhs and to kiss the cavernous lips of the Gurkhas.

A second detachment of 30,000 was expected that day. As Ralph's ship was not due till the morrow, Carmen determined to witness the historic event, if possible. The hall of the hotel was crowded with her countrymen lounging about in all their accustomed nonchalance—immaculate gentlemen in carefully rolled khaki gaiters, who gravely returned the salutes of the French soldiers who constantly passed through, as a French general was lodging there also. To any other nationality, it would have seemed the most natural thing to have asked them for information at such a time. They were face to face with a crisis convulsing the earth; a globe storm. They were going to a certain death for some. But the British officer is so full of phlegm, even when the earth is tumbling about his head that, wife of a Government official, known throughout the Empire as she was, she hardly dared to speak to them without the prescribed "introduction."

Just then she heard Hindustani being spoken behind her. It was General Shallocks, commanding the whole Indian force of 70,000, talking to his Indian orderly officer. The General hurried off, leaving his Indian aide-de-camp behind. He was a man of magnificent stature; his khaki-clad
breast was covered with decorations. A huge khaki turban surmounted his black blazing eyes and upturned moustachios. Carmen went up and addressed him in Hindu. Radiantly he replied that the General Sahib was uncertain whether the troops would arrive that day at all. Even so, it took long to disembark them, and so they would not, in any case, parade till the following day.
CHAPTER IV

Fortune has her favourites in death as well as life. To him that overcometh in life is often permitted a mode and time of death that he himself might have chosen. Mary Curzon's death-knell sounded simultaneously as her masseuse descried the first faint marrings of her perfect beauty. Nor could her special trains of oxygen tanks muffle its warning, but for a few futile months. Henry Irving passed into his death-coma clad in the cardinal red robes of Beckett. William Stead's coffin was the Titanic, his grave the Atlantic. "Bobs" took the last salute in the khaki of war in sound of cannon's roar in titanic conflict. Ralph Scaife laid aside his life with the Black Cap of the great conspiracy case.

In a room in the first floor of the Hotel de l'Europe, the late Judicial Commissioner for Oudh and the United Provinces lay dying. Marseilles was not an unsuitable place for the death of one who had lived so full a life. The town is one of the psychic galvanic batteries of Europe, due to the boat-loads of human electricity constantly discharged there. It is full of human
atoms young, keen, alert, and hurrying to given ends. No one is elderly, no one is stagnant, everyone is off somewhere, no one is going to stay. Every man, woman, and child is rushing somewhere and against time. And the wings of the enemy lash the air into madness.

The massive head and form of the last of the Blavatskians of Anglo-Indian officialdom lay raised high on a pillow beneath the silk canopy surmounting the crimson curtains of the French bed. His bulky, unwieldy form sank deep into the downy bed. He was dying of heart failure, and he breathed with difficulty. But his mind was clear, and as the waves of death beat about him before they closed above his head, it rushed back as in one drowning, over the crowded hours of a brilliant career. As a young civilian, he had chanced, as the operations of this world are called, to travel with Helena Blavatsky on an Indian boat. The brilliant young graduate was attracted by her boundless stores of knowledge. The chivalrous young Irishman was on fire to befriend a woman to whom the world denied fair play. He became the leader of that brilliant band of Simla mighty ones who welcomed the strange old Russian who provided a new sensation for their jaded palates. He was the only one of those wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind, who never forsook her or fled. The unwieldy, dropsical old woman, with
her hand upon the pulse of the unseen, had been
the moving influence of his bachelor career. Then
had come his marriage. His glazing eyes rested
upon his wife in name, and devoted friend indeed,
who was bravely struggling to stifle her sobs,
kneeling by the bed. His heavy hand fell upon
the copper coils of hair, burning their way into the
bed coverlet.

"Carmen, my child," he said, "are you sorry
we met?"

"Oh, no, Ralph," she sobbed, raising her face.
"You've been the one friend of my life."

"I've sometimes wondered, child, whether you
ever met anyone who made you wish for more."
The eyes reading her face became keen and
searching as before. "Don't be afraid to tell me,
dear, for it's our last hour together."

Her eyes met his bravely. "Yes, Ralph, once."

"Was it Alphonso?"

"Yes; how did you know?"

"I knew how it would be from the first moment
he entered our bungalow that night. But I also
knew that you would come through on top. Was
I right, child?" And the swollen hand passed
lightly over the curls again, buried in the quilt.

"Oh, Ralph! Thank God, yes!"

"Well now, you'll be able to have happiness
and honour, too. You must marry again, for love,
and I hope it will be very soon, darling."
"Oh, don't kill me. I shall never be so happy as I've been with you," she cried.

"We've had some good times, little woman, and we've done some work together. But, Carmen, when one is dying one sees clearer. I don't think East and West will ever meet as we dreamed they might and tried to make them do."

"No, Ralph, no. Look at Mrs. Rivetts."

A letter had come to Carmen from her friend, residing in Rome, narrating her experiences in the Kshattrya family, in which she had been for many years both pupil and guest at frequent intervals. After having fleeced her of all they could and taken her jewels to pay their debts, they had turned her out of the house.

"It is strange," mused the dying man, "that my last work should have been the Conspiracy Case. All my life I worked and hoped for Race Union. It was in vain, Carmen. The gulf is more than skin deep. I was bound to fail, though I loved them."

"No, Ralph, no! Don't think that for a moment. Love is never in vain, and not such love as yours was. They love you through the length and breadth of Oudh. The one Sahib who never thinks of skins!"

A faint smile fluttered across the weary face on the pillow, at this flash of her esprit.

"Come here, child; let me die in your arms.
They never embraced me in life. Do you know what it cost me to keep the compact of our wedding night? I was a man. You were a lovely woman. Did you never guess my struggle to play the game by you?"

"No, Ralph, no," she murmured. "You never showed a sign. You have indeed been Bayard to me." And her tears fell like summer rain.

"Well, it is over now, sweetheart. Put your arms around me."

His clammy lips closed on the warm white neck they had never kissed in life. His head fell back on the soft bosom, pillowing it for the first and last time. The kisses he had never known before rained on his face. Like Bhishma, he had never failed in duty, and his dying words, clear and reasoned from the failing brain, reminded Carmen of the immortal swan song of the Pandava hero of the Mahabharata. Bhishma had lain on his bed of arrows waiting for the sun to turn into the Southern Course to die; Ralph Scaife waited for the setting sun to gild the Mediterranean with mottled gold before his weary spirit soared from Carmen's arms.
CHAPTER V

Ariadne stood silent and irresolute, the purple passion flower lifted to her bosom, and at her feet, the strong and bitter laurel and the poppies that give death. Her hand hovered now on one, now above the other, like a poised bird that doubts between the East and West.

Love chose for her and lifted up the red flower of death.

'Be wise. When I shall leave you, eat of this and sleep.'

Ariadne.

It was once more the height of the Roman season. Women, like water, find their own level. Lady Scaife's motor stopped at the door of Count Ripoli, whose receptions at this period represented the height of Roman fashion.

Count Ripoli was a Buonaparte, a rich man and a traveller, whose mansion was decorated in about equal parts with Napoleonic relics, trophies of the Orient, and royal photographs.

As Lady Scaife ascended the staircase of his princely abode between the rows of curled, powdered and pretty footmen in Buonapartist liveries, she saw through the window the characteristic shell-pink glow of a Roman sunset between the pagoda-like pines of the Count's garden. Waves of the cloying sickly-sweet perfume with which the whole house was pervaded, moved down the stairs to greet her.

Why was the world so fair and man so vile in
Rome? she wondered. Always had this been so: the lewd Cæsars of the past had their exact counterpart in the modern Roman world. The obese form of the Marchese Oriani was as much an offence to decency as that of Nero, as he rolled about the Excelsior Hotel at the fashionable "five o'clock"—Nero, without his charm. The raucous voice of the hooligan Duc di Ragia disturbed the pompous solemnity of the Grand Hotel, as he bellowed down the corridor and flung things at his dog with the irritable outbursts of Caligula. The Baron Campanula, at forty, was a society clown, without the cleverness of Nero, carrying a poodle in his arms and shaking his long fingers which had never done an honest day's work. And these were all young exquisites, representing the highest pinnacle of fashion, gaped at with open-mouthed envy by the bourgeois, whose days were full of useful work.

Her host came down the stairs to greet her. "Enchanté de vous voir, Miladi," he said, bowing low. A typical Buonaparte in feature, he was now an elderly man. He had a bowed figure, bulging eyes and hectic cheeks. The rooms were crowded and many military uniforms were conspicuous in their gay colourings, as bespitted a host, a member of the greatest militant family of Europe. Among the group at the buffet was a man of massive form and porcine features.
"That is the Duc du Tagus," said Count Ripoli. "Permit me to present you to him."

Just then "Son Altesse" made such horrible noises in guzzling down his food that Carmen laughingly begged to be excused.

"Fetch me someone younger, dear Count Ripoli," she said. "I am triste to-day and want cheering up."

"I will bring you a fellow-countryman from Ireland," said the kindly-natured old man, bustling away. "For the meantime, here is Count Cenci."

A cavalry officer, in the uniform of the Piedmontreale, a heavy dragoon regiment, detached himself from the animated crowd round the buffet and came forward to kiss Carmen's hand. She thrilled all over when she heard not only the name, but saw the actual eyes of Beatrice.

"Come into the corner," she said to the boy, "and tell me who some of these people are."

Just then their host came shambling up, bringing an old young man in tow.

"Let me present to you, Mr. Leonard Riordan, Madame," he said, "a fellow-countryman."

The old young man came forward. He was a mere boy in years, in the early twenties, but he had a bowed back and walked with an ambling gait. His mouth was large and hung open, with
loose protruding lips. His cheeks were puffy. His jaw was heavy, dropping into a jowl. His complexion was clear and rosy. His eyes, of blue-grey, were large and soft, lustrous and perceptive, with dilated pupils. His hair was sleek and thinning on the crown.

"So you come from Ireland, too," she said, inwardly remarking his manicured nails, polished to the utmost pitch, and his diamond and sapphire studs.

The Irish landlord is generally redolent of the bog.

"Yes," he said, "both my parents were Irish."

"They are both dead?" she asked, compassionately.

"My mother died at my birth. She died of disappointment because I was not a girl. She wanted one desperately, so I have partly the qualities of a woman."

"But you have a father?" she pursued, for the boy began to exert a horrible fascination.

"Yes, and no," he replied. "My mother hated my father and bequeathed to me, with her money, her hatred also. If my father enters the room, I get up and go out."

"Then why did she marry him?"

"My parents married against all the advice and wishes of their elders on both sides. They were very young. My mother died at twenty. I am
only twenty-four, but I have lived a lifetime since I was seventeen."

Carmen listened breathlessly. Even in her life of many experiences, she had seldom met anyone so extraordinary as this unhappy product of unholy passion, lawless love and inferno of hatred.

"Can you spare time to tell me about it? I am so interested," she said.

He took out a tiny watch made of three sovereigns.

"I have my Turkish bath in half-an-hour," he said, "but my horses are the best in Rome. I can spare you a quarter."

"Thank you," she said, inwardly smiling, for queens addressed her with less condescension. "Do begin your history, but first I will take off my wrap."

He deftly removed it and deposited it on a chair, without disturbing by a hair's breadth its filmy laces.

"At twenty I joined the Catholic Church, in China," he said, "because the lights and smells are nice. The Jesuit Fathers received me. My father, who is an Ulsterman, disowned me. 'Be Buddhist, Mormon,—what you like,' he said, 'but as Roman Catholic you are no son of mine.' After that I made a 'Via Dolorosa'."

"What of? The Virgin Mary?"

"No. Of Ludwig of Bavaria. I visited all
the scenes of his life. The Queen of Bavaria entertained me for a month and gave me tea every day."

This seemed rather an ante-climax, and as Carmen wanted to laugh, she tried a diversion.

"What beautiful sapphires you have."

"Yes. I have a complete set of sapphires and diamonds. But I prefer green stones and my emeralds are the finest. Do let me design a parure for you; I should love that."

Just then relief was afforded by the Marchesa Malaga, who sang a song.

"Don't English people, when listening to music, look like people who have just received the Communion?" he asked.

This really was witty, and to a pretty wit much may be forgiven.

"How is it that you are not at the front?" she asked.

"My relations urged me to the war, but I refused, as the only happy days of my life were spent in Germany. My best friend is in the 'Death's Head Hussars'; I am in anguish because all communication has been cut off from him."

"Do you see that very pretty girl?" she asked. "She is rich, and always exquisitely dressed. She has been taken all over Europe, but in vain. No one wishes to marry a mannequin."
"That is just the wife I should like," he said.
"To look pretty and sit at the head of my table.
And I shall be a dummy husband. Any philandering would make me ill and prevent me from working."

"But what work do you do?"

"I write the fashion articles for the 'Outständer'."

"But your wife might wish for children."

"Oh, no. Her corsetière would veto that."

Just then a familiar face, bronzed and keen, with alert, piercing eyes, came towards her. It was the Spanish officer who had been aide-de-camp to Alphonso d'Arragon in India. Carmen had never met him since, and he stirred mixed emotions, the more so that through the veil of Spanish reserve she had always felt he liked her.

"There is an old friend of mine," she said to the boy, "and of the type I most admire—the 'plain soldier man.' You, I suppose, have a horror of such?"

"Yes," he replied. "I met a lot of them in India, and I think that Anna Lombard made the better choice!"

She turned to her friend of "auld lang syne," as the survivors of the Black Hole inhaled the fresh air.

"My motor is waiting; will you come for a drive?"
There is healing in the Borghese Gardens, in the soft languid air, the classic urns and fountains, remnants of a time when Europe was young, in the amazing colouring of a procession of scarlet-clothed acolytes piercing the sombre shadowy greens of the pine groves.

There is a magic on the Pincio Hill. Nero knew it. Even after death, he returned there, so that domes were raised to rest the unquiet soul. The motor rolled on to the edge of the hill. Below, the marvellous panorama of the whole city of Rome, pagan and Christian, lies at one's feet, framed in the foreground by the palms. A vast expanse of roofs and spires, cupolas and towers, obelisks and gardens, ruins and palaces, colossal temples and marshes, stretches away wide and vague and solemn as the desert. The domes of the churches are countless, but all are dominated by the Monarch of Domes—St. Peter's—raised where Nero ran races in his circus, lighted by living Christian torches.

The sun was setting behind it in roseleaf warmth and soft transparency of colour. It reddened the obelisk at whose base St. Peter died, head downwards. It gilded the fountains with giant jets of gold. It lighted the colossi of St. Peter and St. Paul at either end of Bernini's Colonnades, which it dyed orange, and glistened on the window above the loggia where the Holy
Father gave his annual blessing to prostrate crowds, his servants fanning him with peacocks' plumes. It shone on the bronze figure surmounting Hadrian's monster mausoleum, whose arms are outstretched across the Tiber towards the bridge Horatius saved, that impartial sun which gilds alike the Crescent and the Cross.

"Of what does the scene remind you?" asked Lady Scaife of her companion, who sat silent beside her.

"Of Bijapur," he replied, promptly, "and the sun setting above the desert behind the Gol Gombaz."

"Yes," she said, "the view is very similar of the two domed cities of East and West. And the dome of Mahommed Shah's tomb is even larger than St. Peter's. The only difference is in the setting of the scene. There one was in the desert—here, in the world. But when did you visit Bijapur? It is rather out of the tourist track."

"I went there with His Royal Highness, on his way up from Hyderabad, where he had been the guest of the Nizam. We stayed two nights in the Dak bungalow beneath the great Dome, en route to Lucknow."

"How long ago all that seems," murmured Carmen, dreamily. A military band was playing a melting waltz in the bandstand hidden by the poinsettias and oleanders of the garden.
"To me it seems only yesterday. I have never forgotten Lucknow," he said. "Lady Scaife, did you never guess my secret?"

Carmen looked at him in amazement. The bronzed features were working, the blue eyes flashing.

"Why, no," she said, trying to laugh. "I never thought you a sentimental person. To me you always seemed a sort of benevolent cynic, taking a keen amusement in the weaknesses of others, but with none of your own."

"My God! If you only knew," he said. "But how should you? You could think then only of him. But I know that is gone and past, and now, too, you are free to make new ties. Is there no hope for me? No, don't tell me now. I will call to-morrow," and he left the motor abruptly and plunged into the crowd around the bandstand. Carmen sat paralyzed with thought, as the sun disappeared behind the cross on the great dome. Gorgeous equipages, emblazoned carriages, thoroughbred horses, flashed past her. They contained lovely women and bore smart men. Some of them tried to attract Lady Scaife's attention, but she did not even see them.

So it was at her feet: all that she would once have given her life to have. Hers in honour, too, did she choose to take it. The devotion of a splendid man—one of the rising officers of the
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Spanish Army, and who had loved her faithfully for years. One who was, moreover, half of her own nationality, who would understand her and give his life to make her happy. What was left to her beside? She had a world-wide fame as an artist. The Antipodes re-echoed her name as the Impressionist of India. Ah, Daphne, the laurel hurts in the soft flesh of a woman, the breast that she had hoped would have given suck. Did she choose, a little blue-eyed, swarthy child might still stand at her knee, that spirit child she had sometimes fancied near her in her dreams, seeking incarnation in her womb.

"Too late! Too late! Ye cannot enter now!"

As the gardener prunes and prunes the dwarf Japanese tree till no growth is left in it, so life had pruned and thwarted Carmen Scaife of her fairest flowers. She would not offer her friend the dregs. He was not yet at the zenith of a glorious career. He was still young, ardent, human. In time he would forget her and find and love a woman with an easier, happier lot.

And she? She had long held a theory that when women were no longer attractive and able to fulfil their natural functions, they should be put to a painless death. Why should the barren fig tree cumber the ground? If a man will not work, neither shall he eat. If a woman cannot love, neither should she live.
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To-morrow he would come for his answer. Well, he would find her gone. She dared not see him again. Too well, she, of all women, knew the terrible power of sex. To lie in his arms, close to him, to be lost in his embraces, to be strained to his breast, to feel his kisses——.

With a violent wrench she sat upright in the motor and ordered the chauffeur to drive her to her hotel.

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In a cell of a Gompa, nestling into the hillside of Lhassa the Blessed, lives a woman of the Irish race. She was the first white woman of the West to penetrate even the fringe of the mysterious Forbidden City. For the Younghusband Mission, having, as they thought, "unveiled the last mystery of Asia," left the city as blissfully ignorant of its realities as is a Cook's tour of Benares.

A long and perilous journey brought her hither. No mere money nor influence, nor even determination alone, could have brought a "barbarian" woman across the mountain passes of Tibet. The long arm of the World Brotherhood had been outstretched to welcome Carmen Scaife to her rest. Her Adept Guide of the Shiv Temple had intervened to bring her hither to peace. Her former life is as remote from this of
the placid "Yellow Cap" nuns, as the length of the chain of human existence.

Every evening she looks from the door of her cell to where the Sun God blazes upon the golden roof of the Great Lamasery of Lhassa, supported, as ever with the Buddhists, by the richly carved rails depicting scenes in the life of Gautama.

She has gone there because even the sanctity of Kashi is near the vortices of the whirlwind which once swayed her life as a leaf in the storm. Does not Benares have a Ghazipur Light Horse Week? Does not the Kumar Sahib, the heir to the inheritance of one of the "Three Wise Men of the East," entertain the British subaltern with champagne, at the races? Is it not his supreme moment when Lieutenant Snooks from Streatham slaps him on the back, to reply: "How ar-re you, old fel-low?" Do not the Maharajah's carriages flit through the gloaming, conveying husband-hunting girls to the Club?

Among the strange Calmuck faces, the weird prayer wheels, the gigantic shortens of the Fourth or Tibetan Race, she kneels daily before the image of the Perfect, who bends towards her in divine compassion. She has missed the best, the coping stone, the crown of human life in her present incarnation. But she looks forward to other births and wider, happier lives. For her
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it is truer in another sense than he who wrote it dreamed—

"There is no death!
What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb to the life Elysian
Whose portal we call death!"