

TEN THOUSAND YEARS
IN A
BLOCK OF ICE

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF L. BOUSSENARD

BY

JOHN PARET.



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CHAPTER I.

THE iceberg cracks on all sides with loud detonations, separates, and falls apart. The blocks of bluish tint, with sharp edges and fantastic forms, crash against each other, slide, rebound, and unite themselves to break anew.

At the horizon a vague gleam illumines the dull blue sky, pricked with stars which sparkle with unheard-of brilliancy.

Below this implacable firmament is an

icy hell in its gloomy and hopeless solitude. In the midst of this terrible chaos, the horror of which no words can adequately describe, a man, entirely alone, lies on a block of ice in the last pangs of death.

Yes, entirely alone !

This last survivor of a polar expedition, after successively seeing his vessel ground to atoms and his comrades dead from privation or engulfed in the icy depths, has himself continued to live by some miracle !

No shelter, no provisions, no possible succor, no hope ! Unable to sustain the conflict longer, feeling the approach of death, he calmly stretches himself on the ice, draws his fur cloak around him, and awaits the end.

In spite of his frightful sufferings, augmented yet more by the disasters of which he has been witness, he undauntedly analyzes his last impressions, and experiences a kind of bitter voluptuousness in feeling himself entering into nothingness.

At this moment, the faint light which just before gilded almost imperceptibly the horizon and the icy ridges, suddenly empurples the sky and makes the stars pale their ineffectual fires. Sheafs of luminous rays, whose incomparable brightness his dazzled eyes can hardly bear, irradiate on all sides, float with soft luster through the transparent strata of the implacable ether and make the icebergs blaze with many colored fires, like so many huge gems.

The man smiles ironically and murmurs: "This Aurora Borealis is well come, and my death will be an apotheosis of splendor."

Soon his extremities grow cold. A general numbness quickly supervenes. The sensation of cold grows still more intense, if possible. The body becomes rigid. But the faculty of thought still exists.

The organism, however, is not insensible as would be supposed. There is even a sort of exasperation of suffering produced by this atrocious cold which solidifies mercury and brings alcohol to the consistency of syrup. Disorganization begins, painful even to madness.

Imagine a man plunged in a tub full of

water of a temperature of seventy degrees Centigrade. This increase of heat will quickly disorganize the elements of his body, whose temperature is only thirty-seven and seven-tenths degrees. He will sooner or later perish in horrible torture, because the elements cannot retain their normal conditions in such a temperature.

Subject him, on the other hand, to a cold of seventy degrees. His organism will yield to the medium producing the cold a share of its own heat proportionate to that which it had just received from the liquid carried to seventy degrees, and the effects will be identical.

The disorganization will be the same whether produced by cold or heat.

Take in your hand a morsel of mercury solidified by cold, or a piece of hot iron. The skin will be disorganized, in the first case, by a sudden and considerable *subtraction* of heat; in the second case, by a rapid and considerable *addition* of heat. In both cases the sensation of burning will be the same. The dying man in tones smothered in the death rattle mutters: "Burning—freezing!"

His face, white as marble, shows no more expression. His heart beats still, though more and more feebly, within the thoracic cavity, the walls of which are no longer stirred by the regular movements of respiration.

The eyes, widely opened, fringed with

lashes powdered with frost, remain fixed on the radiant gleams of the Aurora Borealis, and the mouth, with lips slit and cracked by the cruel bite of the polar north wind, remains open and contracted.

The arterial and veinous ducts, grown rigid as tubes of stone, bear slowly between the muscles, also petrified, the blood which is solidifying and becoming motionless in a coralline arborescence within its fine circulatory system.

But the nerves retain to the last moment a vague sensibility which transmits itself to the organ of thought.

The man, at the moment of being walled in forever in the colossal piles of eternal ice, is conscious enough to be able to exclaim :

“It is ended! I cease to suffer! I return to nothingness! At last!”

And the body, become a piece of ice, a lost atom among the monstrous stratifications of the iceberg, welds itself more closely to the block which bears it, and incrusts itself there for eternity.

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Ah! what, is not this dreadful tomb to remain inviolate? By what prodigy beyond human conception is this body, cemented in a measure in the midst of the chaos which has absorbed it little by little, now agitated by an almost imperceptible tremor? Have years, or ages, or only minutes passed since the solitary man of the ice sea felt himself perishing, hypno-

tized by the Aurora Borealis? There is no longer doubt, the man lives. A confused buzzing strikes his ears; his eyes, still haggard, perceive vague forms which flit about with singular liveliness; a faint warmth gently bathes his stiffened limbs, his entire being seems to dissolve in an infinite beatitude.

For a long time yet the muscles retain their stony rigidity. For a long time, too, the heart refuses to beat perceptibly, the eyes to move, the features to resume a life-like expression. Soon the images become more distinct, and the perceptions generally keener. The moribund, or rather the resuscitated, man begins to move and to murmur some words. Then an expression

of wonder, growing into stupefaction, is suddenly reflected on his face.

Disembarrassed of the heavy furs which before enveloped him hermetically from head to feet and scarcely permitted a sight of his visage, he appears under the aspect of a man arrived at the extreme limits of age; but of a robust age, exempt from decrepitude and decay.

His forehead, broad, prominent, hardly wrinkled, is surmounted by a heavy mass of long gray hair, rough and uncared for, which falls down his neck to the shoulders. His black eyes, shaded by brows thick as brushwood, have a profound and magnetic expression. The nose, curved like an eagle's beak, gives the profile an incompara-

ble expression of majesty, still further increased by the Burgravian beard which covers the cheeks and face and falls down to the middle of the breast.

To his voice, its tone yet unnatural, hoarse, and stifled, reply voices, strangely sweet and musical, pronouncing in an unknown tongue syllables which seem impossible to human organs of speech. They seem rather the enervating melody drawn from stems of glass tapped gently by a velveted hammer.

The syllables are nevertheless articulated, but they have no signification to him except a purely phonetic one, and appear to have no connection with any of the languages in use on our planet.

The old man, under the effect of multiplied and reiterated touches which give him the impression of very faint yet appreciable electric discharges, moves at last and prepares to speak.

He feels a portion of his vigor return to him little by little, and, strange to say, it seems to him that these contacts proceeding from a group of men who surround him, as they are produced transmit to him new strength.

But are these really men ?

Is not the unknown the sport of an illusion, of a nightmare ; and may he not reasonably doubt the evidence of his own senses after such an excursion to the borders of the dreary realm of death ?

He succeeds in raising himself slightly upon the object which supports the weight of his body, and perceives with astonishment bordering on madness that among these beings revolving about him are some who do not touch the ground.

Suspended as if by an invisible thread at a height varying from a few centimeters to a meter, he sees them glide like shades, with natural and even harmonious motions; make gestures with their arms or hands, bend or turn their heads, advance, retire, rise, descend as easily as if they did not leave the ground.

“Surely I dream,” exclaims the old man suddenly, as if he hopes that the sound of his words will recall him to reality.

“ Where am I? Who are you ?”

At these words, articulated in a harsh voice, the strange beings hush their tones so enervatingly melodious.

As if their delicate ears, accustomed only to sweet sounds, could not bear such a discord, they draw back instantaneously, gliding as silently as impalpable shades. Some, the braver or less impressionable, come to a stand along the wall which surrounds the tomb where this scene is passing; the others vanish noiselessly, fitting through the abundant passages opened in this wall.

Knowing not what to think of such sensitiveness, allied to a mobility which upsets all the laws of statics, the old man adds:

“I am the last survivor of a polar expedition. My name is so well known to science that some one among you may have heard it mentioned. Besides, the journals of the entire world have described the preparations for this unfortunate expedition, and have told of my departure. I am named Synthèse, and I am a Swede. Tell me where I am, and who you are. Oh, you who have saved me!”

Not a sound in reply !

The lookers-on hold themselves motionless between heaven and earth in their spirit-like postures, or stray noiselessly in the chamber, some passing from within to the outside by the clefts, through which large patches of the sky are visible.

Monsieur Synthèse had spoken in English, hoping that as that language was by far the most widely known, there was a chance of his being understood.

Seeing the failure of his attempt, he renewed it in German with no result but to exasperate the sensitiveness of his hearers by the barbarous sounds.

Yet they appeared full of good will, and manifested every evidence of the best intentions.

Monsieur Synthèse repeated his harangue in French.

No reply!

Then in Italian, Russian, Spanish, Dutch, modern Greek, Arabian, Hindostani, Hebrew.

Yet no reply !

“Either these people belong to another race, or I am on another planet, or I am raving mad ! This last hypothesis, alas, seems to me the most probable, unless I am momentarily delirious before becoming thoroughly awake on the iceberg ! Let me see, I have endeavored in vain to make myself understood in all possible dialects—except one, however—if I should speak to them in Chinese !”

And Monsieur Synthèse, who had just shown himself an unrivaled polyglot, brilliantly continues the series by explaining the situation in the purest Khwan-hwa, which, as is well known, is the mandarin dialect spoken in the central provinces of

the Celestial Empire, notably at Peking, Nankin, etc. In addition, he endeavors to soften his tones to avoid shocking these sensitive beings who in their curiosity are drawing near little by little.

Wonderful to relate, this attempt meets with a success un hoped for ; he is understood ! Not, however, fully and absolutely. But yet he is answered in the same idiom, and they succeed in exchanging some ideas.

Monsieur Synthèse, who with good reason thought that he spoke the central Chinese as purely as the most accomplished of all the literary men of whom the central empire was proud, learns that he is speaking a barbarous idiom, obsolete, no longer existing except as a tradition.

“Well!” said he to an old fellow with spectacles, who whirled nimbly about him notwithstanding his great age: “How is it that this language, immutable from remote ages, has undergone such great alterations?”

“To the point of becoming unrecognizable,” murmured the little old man. “But be at ease, *Mao-Tchin, you will find among us many linguists to whom the idioms of our ancestors are familiar.

“You say, ‘Mao-Tchin,’ is it to me that this title applies?”

“Undoubtedly; and it should not be at

* Literally, “Hairy One.” It is the name which the true Chinese give to the Ainos, the half-savage men of the islands of Eastern Asia.

all offensive to you, considering the really exceptional opulence of your hairy system. Truly, hardly any among our real Aïnos could rival you."

"Let us see," resumed Monsieur Synthèse, still quite torpid, "over what strange misapprehension then are we now misusing terms? I have already had the honor to tell you that I am of Swedish origin. Consequently I am no relation to the Aïnos. This elk skin which envelops me is not my epidermis, deuce take it!"

"Of Swedish origin?" softly questions the old man. "I do not understand."

"You do not understand?"

"No."

"You know nothing of Sweden?"

“To my great regret, stranger.”

“And England? France? Germany?
Russia?”

“Those words barely awaken some vague recollection in my mind. Are they not the names of countries which disappeared long ago?”

“Europe?” stammers the astounded Monsieur Synthèse in a strangled voice.

“There is no more any Europe,” melodiously replies the spectacled old fellow.

“Once more,” resumes Monsieur Synthèse, who believes himself the sport of a nightmare: “Where am I?”

“Why, in ten degrees north latitude.”

“And in what longitude?”

“Eleven and a half west longitude.”

“From what meridian, if you please?”

“From the meridian of Tombouctou,” replied the old man, astonished at such a question.

“From Tombouctou!” cries Monsieur Synthèse. “Has Tombouctou its meridian?”

“Unquestionably, Tombouctou, the capital of Western China.”

However extraordinary appears the miracle of the resurrection of a man who had been so thoroughly frozen, it does not seem more improbable than the facts which the understanding of Monsieur Synthèse encountered in a moment.

So, under the influence of this twofold reaction, physical and intellectual, the old

man quickly recovers all his energy, and musters all the powers of his intellect.

It is quite evident to him that he is alive. Without seeking to learn by what process he has been recalled to life, and postponing until later the solution of that question, though so important, he lets himself slide to the ground, with difficulty raises himself erect on his somewhat anchylosed legs, stands motionless, and regards with all his eyes the beings who encircle him, the structure where this indescribable scene is passing.

At first sight these men do not conform to any well-defined anthropological type. Are they negroes? Are they Chinese? Neither the one nor the other. Or rather,

if you will, both the one and the other. Their epidermis is not as deeply colored as that of the blacks, neither has it the yellowish tinge of the representatives of the Mongolian race. The shade, very delicate, partakes at the same time of both, and blends them into a clear and most harmonious brown. The hair, very black, thick, and curly, is not woolly like the negro's but resembles rather that of the mulatto's. The features also seem to assume the peculiar characteristics of both races. The eyes are boldly spanned. The cheek bones are prominent, the nose a little flat, the lips thick and fleshy, showing dazzling teeth.

On the whole, they are grand specimens of a mixed Chinese-African breed.

But what strikes the observer first of all is the enormous, excessive dimensions presented by the head of every individual, without distinction.

If their stature attains on the average the considerable height of 1.72 meters, the size of the head is certainly double that of Monsieur Synthèse's.

This disproportion, shocking from the point of view of our æsthetics, is still more emphasized by the thoroughly feminine gracefulness of the limbs, the wondrous slenderness of the attachments, the delicacy of the extremities.

Monsieur Synthèse, who examines them with the curiosity which might be expected, can hardly believe that these little hands

and feet, emerging from large white tunics resembling the Algerian gandouras, belong to the same organism as those monstrous heads.

But the proof is there, with the brutal eloquence of actual facts.

The old man murmurs to himself:

“It cannot be doubted, these men move at will above the ground. I am not dreaming—that is certain. All, without exception, show that peculiar power, so rare, of raising themselves; what in my day was called levitation. My old friend, the pundit Krishna, possessed this power—a few adepts also possessed it. But never to the same degree. Among them the levitation appeared at intervals far apart

and generally during a rather short time. Whereas for these men it seems to be the normal state—a *modus vivendi* marvelous, peculiar to their race, permitting them to live a life in some degree aërial, to transport themselves instantaneously from one point to another, to escape from this everlasting and brutalizing mixing with mire! Is there some correspondence between this mysterious power and the monstrous development of their cerebral organ? I must learn!"

Then he adds audibly in the Chinese tongue without addressing himself specially to one more than the others:

"It was in 1886 that I fell asleep among the polar ices. Before explaining to me

how it is that I find myself to-day among you, tell me in what year I awake.”

“In the year eleven thousand eight hundred and eight-six,” replies at once the melodious voice of the old man with spectacles, standing motionless two meters above the ground.

CHAPTER II.

“ELEVEN thousand eight hundred and eighty-six!” Monsieur Synthèse exclaims in a voice of thunder at the announcement of these formidable figures. “We are in the year eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty-six, and I am alive! Have I then actually slept for ten thousand years? Was it my destiny, after having lived nearly a century, unconsciously to survive my epoch, and to awaken thus, a waif from the other world, after a period the duration of which the mind hardly dares consider? But wherefore? And how, and by what

miracle?" And Monsieur Synthèse, astounded yet nevertheless radiant, seeks industriously the solution of this problem.

No sound comes to disturb his meditation. He is in the midst of a perfect solitude. The thunders of his voice have caused to flee, distracted, the mysterious beings whose cares have recalled him to existence. For some time he can remain absorbed in himself, reflecting on this unheard-of adventure, recalling his faculties, arranging his ideas.

And first, the fact of his resurrection is real, indisputable. He is not the plaything of an hallucination. His heart beats normally, his brain thinks methodically, his reason has sustained no attack, his muscles

have regained all their elasticity and strength. He lives.

Such is the essential fact in its astonishing simplicity.

Physiologically, that is from the point of view of pure science, the old man well knows that he cannot be dead, over there, on the iceberg. And that word "resurrection," which implies a return to existence after an absolute cessation of it, is first of all regarded by him as improperly characterizing his condition.

His mind, methodical and on all points imbued with doctrines strictly scientific, does not admit the hypothesis of a miracle.

He has, then, experienced a prolongation of life, thanks to a phenomenal preserva-

tion of the elements of his organism, a phenomenon of which he cannot yet explain the manifestations and which he cannot attribute entirely to the intense cold which has plunged him into this almost endless trance.

If it were simply a matter of the vegetable kingdom, or even of animals low in the zoologic scale, the fact, extraordinary as it is, would yet be admitted, for numerous experiments performed by men whose evidence is authoritative have long since proved the persistence of life in a latent state in vegetables and inferior organisms.

Thus, in 1853, Rudolphi deposited in the Egyptian museum at Florence a sheaf of wheat grown from grains discovered in the

coffin of a mummy dating back more than three thousand years.

But this is nothing, and this property should hardly be mentioned on the score of simple curiosity, before recalling truly astonishing cases of reviviscence.

It is known that Spallanzani, in 1707, could recall to life eleven times rotifers subject to desiccation by simply moistening them with pure water, and that quite recently Doyère brought to life tardigrades desiccated in a temperature of one hundred and fifty degrees, then kept four weeks in the vacuum.

Still all this proves nothing, when we consider the distance which separates these primitive existences from man.

However, in ascending the zoological scale there are yet found analogous facts produced by various causes.

Flies, apparently drowned in casks of Madeira wine, have arrived in Europe after a long voyage, and have come to life again. Réaumur has preserved chrysalids for several years in this state of apparent death, and Balbiani, after immersing beetles for a week and then desiccating them in the sun, has succeeded in reanimating them. Vulpian, the eminent physiologist, has poisoned with curare or nicotine, spiders, salamanders, and frogs, and has brought them back to life after a week of apparent death.

But the most extraordinary effects, how-

ever, are those obtained by the application of cold.

Spallanzani, who has studied this question, so interesting, with admirable patience and ingenuity, has succeeded in preserving several frogs for two years in a pile of snow. They were become dry, rigid, almost friable, and had no outward appearance of life or sensibility. It only needed to expose them to a gradual and moderate heat in order to put an end to the lethargic state and restore to them the power of motion and the other physiologic functions.

Under the eyes of Maupertius and Constant Duméril, both members of the Academy of Sciences, pikes and salamanders have been reanimated at different

periods after having been congealed until as hard as lumps of ice.

Auguste Duméril, son of the above mentioned, and the one who reported the proceedings of the commission concerning "the toad of Blois" in the following year, 1851, published in the "Archives des Sciences Naturelles," a very curious memoir in which he relates how he has suspended life by the congelation of the liquids and solids of the organism. Frogs whose internal temperature had been reduced to two degrees in an atmosphere of twelve degrees, have come to life in his sight. He has seen the tissues resume their ordinary suppleness, and the heart pass from absolute immobility to its normal action.

Finally, a fact if possible still more characteristic for the reason that it operates to some extent empirically and without the precautions exacted by the experiments of the laboratory, is furnished us by a practice common among some tribes of Asiatic Russia and North America. These tribes are in the habit of freezing fishes, rendering them as hard as stone, transporting them to distances, and causing them to revive at the end of winter by simply immersing them in water of the ordinary temperature.

It was this same custom which suggested to the celebrated English physiologist Hunter, the idea of indefinitely prolonging, the duration of human life by subjecting

the body to successive congelations, equivalent to slumbers more or less prolonged, during which existence would be absolutely suspended. Unfortunately Hunter died at the very moment when results beyond his expectations promised a beginning of realization to his bold hypothesis.

Monsieur Synthèse, after considering for some minutes all the phases of this question, so complex and so little understood, arrived at no definite conclusion.

“Zounds!” soliloquized he, “I knew well that suspension of life, to all appearance at least, can be obtained for a good while, even without recourse to the application of cold. Did not my old friend the pundit Krishna repeatedly have himself

interred, after having induced himself into a lethargic condition showing all the symptoms of death? The last time that he devoted himself to that strange experience—I remember it as if it were to-day, it was at Bénarès—he had himself inclosed in a sack; the sack was sealed and deposited in a coffer matted inside and fastened with bolts. The coffer with its contents was buried ten feet deep. The grave was filled up, and the earth sown with barley which sprouted, grew up, and ripened. English sentinels guarded this strange tomb day and night. At the end of ten months the pundit exhumed in the presence of the British authorities and a delegation of savants, appeared as if asleep.

He awakened gradually, and after two hours of attentions got up and began to walk.

Why has not the experiment been prolonged during several years? Several years—even so! But ten thousand! Nevertheless, the principle is admitted, and it would seem to be no more difficult to remain in that state during ten hundred thousand years!

But I ponder about that!—and the mammoth! who could ever compute the immense succession of years which elapsed between the moment when the giant pachyderm was caught in the polar ice, and that when a Toungouse fisherman, in 1799, found him on the coast of the Polar Sea,

in the center of an enormous block stranded near the mouth of the Lena ?

Thousands, most certainly.

And yet the mammoth was so perfectly preserved that during an entire season the neighboring Yakouts were able to feast on his flesh, and to feed their dogs, although the wolves and the white bears had first carried off a considerable portion. What proves that the mammoth could not have been revived, like the congealed batrachians of Spallanzani, like the fish of the hyperborean tribes of Asia and America ?

If, instead of being devoured on the spot before even being detached from his vein of ice, he had been gradually warmed again, who knows that this contemporary

of the vanished ages would not have come forth from that interminable slumber?

For, after all, I am certainly alive myself!

As for seeking to explain to myself how this phenomenon, perhaps unprecedented, has been produced what is the use?

The fact exists, evident, undeniable.

The special regimen to which I have subjected my body during half a century, the elements of renewal supplied in a state of purity to my organism, have they favored this tremendous slumber, and prevented disassimilation, with the aid of that cold which, in suspending life, has also stopped the wear and tear of my substance?

I will know all that later. Besides it

matters little. For the moment, let us live !

This new existence, should it last but for a few hours, will be interesting enough for me to give myself up to it wholly.

“ Well, stranger,” murmured a voice with the inflections of an *Æolian* harp, “ have you at last recovered from that very natural surprise, whose noisy manifestations have put us all to flight ?”

“ Pardon me, *Ta-Lao-Yé*,”* replied Monsieur Synthèse, using the form of refined politeness usual among the Chinese, “ but I always forget your wonderful sensitiveness. I will make every effort, remember, for to make myself disagreeable, from my

* Grand old man.

first appearance, would indeed be a poor recognition of your kindness.”

“Oh, we understand, and we readily excuse your ignorance of our habits. When one has slumbered ten thousand years and awakes thus in the midst of a world completely transformed——”

‘Say overturned from top to bottom, so that I no longer know if I really inhabit the same planet,” replies Monsieur Synthèse, in a low and gentle voice, to the old fellow with spectacles, who had just seated himself familiarly by his side on the elk skin. “But however upsetting may be the things which I am about to learn, I promise not to be astonished at anything—that we may waste no time.”

“If you permit, I place myself at your disposal, to explain to you all that may prove mysterious and unexpected to you in our epoch. My age, even more than my studies, gives me considerable knowledge and I will be as glad to show you the present as to teach you the past.”

“A thousand thanks, Ta-Lao-Yé, and I am at your orders.”

“It is I who am at your service, most illustrious ancestor, very venerable Kut-chijin.”*

“Will you tell me first how it is that I find myself on the west coast of Africa, to which you give the name, original at least, of Occidental China?”

* Man from antiquity.

“Very willingly. You have come entirely naturally in an enormous block of ice, which, after having been the sport of the currents, has been carried to the shore by the tide.”

“What! A block of ice in such a latitude!”

“It is an occurrence quite frequent in the spring.”

“And these ice formations are not melted in traveling such a distance?”

“That distance is not so great as you seem to think it.”

“Is the limit of eternal ice, as we said in my time, brought below the sixty-eighth degree?”

“Much below. It hardly reaches to-day

beyond the space comprised between forty-eight and fifty degrees.”

“The latitude of Paris !” interrupts Monsieur Synthèse, starting up suddenly.

“You name Paris ? I am not acquainted with that place in geography.”

“What then am I about to learn ?” murmured the old man, overwhelmed. “But then your habitable zone is singularly reduced, if the southern ice ascends to the same height proportionally.”

“Oh, the population of the world is still comfortable in this zone ; and you will be convinced of it, when you have become acquainted with the configuration of our present continents. Understand, besides that the countries situated above forty-

eight degrees are yet uninhabitable. To be able to live it is necessary for the few wretched tribes, attached, I know not why, to that sterile soil, to come down as far as the fortieth degree."

"The latitude of Naples and Madrid! Then," sadly continued Monsieur Synthèse, "England, who styled herself the British colossus; Germany, with her formidable military power; Russia, who spread herself over two hemispheres; France, whose mind irradiated the world; Italy, so great; Spain, so powerful; all have disappeared. Strength, power, immensity, intelligence, all buried under the ice! Of Europe even nothing remains but a souvenir, a legend, a name!"

"It is true, the configuration of our globe has been very remarkably modified for a long time. But let us return, if you will,

to the important event which is the cause of your arrival among us. As I have had the honor of telling you, a very considerable stray block of ice, detached from an iceberg which had advanced to about the fiftieth degree, became stranded on the shore yesterday. A man is found to be incrustated in this block. He has been removed from it with infinite precautions, and restored to life. You are that man. You have told us that the epoch of your apparent death dates back ten thousand years. However extraordinary the fact, it is not less real, since you are here, and since we have seen you in that paleocrystic envelope with which you were embodied. Whether it be one year or ten thousand

years that you have been congealed, the fact of your return to life was no more or less difficult in view of the wonderful state of conservation shown in your organism.”

“I would be extremely glad to know the method employed to restore to this frozen body its vital energy, its intelligence, to transform this torpid substance into a being who sees, hears, and comprehends you.”

“It is very simple. At the moment of your stranding I was presiding at a meeting of the National Academy of Tombouctou.”

“You say National Academy; that appellation implies the idea of a republic.”

“Of the universal republic—for more than four thousand years.”

“And all races of mankind have agreed to that form of government?”

“Undoubtedly. There are, however, but two races left on the earth; our own, and the other with which you will soon be acquainted. On learning an event so interesting, I left the sitting without delay, and arrived here.”

“But the distance from Tombouctou to the coast is considerable, and I estimate it at nearly fifteen hundred kilometers.”

“I am ignorant of what you mean by a kilometer. I can only assure you that the journey lasted but a few moments. Space, from point to point, does not exist for us. You were extracted from your inclosure with circumspect carefulness, disrobed of

your garments, and stretched out upon a large block of crystal."

"And then?"

"Then a dozen of the most vigorous among the young people ranged themselves in a circle around you, extended over your still inert body their hands joined together by simple contact, and in a manner flooded you with streams of fluid, which they emitted without measure, like the brave preservers they were."

"What tell me there, Ta-Lao-Yé, is marvelous. In my time that method was used to make tables turn around. Still often they were unwillingness to move."

"That, permit me to say, Shien-Chung,*

*Ancient-born.

is a singular occupation for serious people. And you appear to be a serious man, though belonging to the Mao-tchin race. However, I admit the idea in the name of that tolerance which is the predominant feature of our character. Of old you used your fluid in the effort to make tables turn, to-day we use ours to revive persons. That is progress, is it not?"

"It is true, and I acknowledge it the more willingly because I am decidedly a living proof," replied Monsieur Synthèse very gravely.

"Under the influence of this fluid in a manner infused into your organism in uncertain quantity, life appeared little by little."

“With no other operation but this application of hands—this simple emission of fluid? I was not subjected to any calorific agent—to friction, artificial respiration, electricity—such as I already know of?”

“For what good? This emission of the vital energy which we possess is more than a substitute for all those operations, the use of which besides would have involved risks without offering great prospects of success. Our fluid, understand, Shien-Chung, is so strong that it is for us circulation, warmth, motion, electricity, life, but with such potency that it replaces all the exterior agents borrowed from the forces of nature, and makes us in reality the kings of the earth!”

“I did experience, in fact, a strange, indefinable sensation, in proportion as I emerged from that lethargy of ages. It seemed to me that all the deepest parts of my being found themselves suddenly agitated by tremblings which gradually animated them. A mysterious force, I know not what, but irresistible and salutary, was transfused through my organism, which was also pervaded by an infinite beatitude. I awoke then, and resumed possession of myself, as if I found myself still yonder on the iceberg at that moment when I believed myself forever released from the burden of life.

“ But in your turn, Ta-Lao-Yé, who then are you, who direct so great a power; you

in whom I recognize none of the characteristics common to the races which existed on our planet in former times; you who appear to me enveloped in a halo of mystery on this earth so strangely modified; you finally, who by I know not what prerogative, in a manner divine, escape earth-bound existence, fly through space like the light, and exhibit to my admiration the sublime monstrosity of a brain which should be, which is, endowed with an infinite power."

"We are the descendants, purified, refined, transformed by a slow and continual adaptation, of two races, which from the most remote ages have established their wonderful vitality; the black race, the

yellow race. You will soon know how, this modification, which has made us what we are, has been effected. You understand, naturally, all the series which, from the humble cellule, has not paused in its evolution even to man, the most perfect of all beings. Now this advance has never paused nor even delayed. Which is pre-eminently the organ which has constantly profited from this progression? The brain! What a way traveled over, in the animal series, from the acranian, the acephalous, up to man! And from man your contemporary to us there is ten thousand years."

"That is true!"

"So with us, as you perceive, the brain has, so to speak, absorbed everything. The

development of its bulk is, as you have said, enormous even to deformity. We are scarcely bodies, so colossal is the cerebral predominance in us. Therefore it can be said with justice—and the entirely justifiable appellation is given to us—that in this year 11,886 the world is inhabited mostly by ‘cerebrals.’ ”

“You say ‘mostly’—is there then another race besides your own?”

“Undoubtedly, and you will soon see its representatives, who have returned almost to a brute existence. They are the Mao-tchin, the hairy creatures who resemble you from some points of view.”

CHAPTER III.

“WELL, Shien-Chung, how do you find yourself?”

“Very well, indeed, Ta-Lao-Yé.”

“Do you not feel any need of food?”

“Not the least.”

“Nevertheless orders have been given to prepare for you such nutritious substances as the Mao-tchin use.”

“Probably vegetables and meat?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“The fact is that I do not nourish myself as do other men. During the second half of my life I have never meddled with any

substances not chemically pure, composing the principle of the aliments which you offer me.”

“You !”

“Certainly. What is there extraordinary to you in that ?” replies Monsieur Synthèse, conscious that his individual worth makes it needless for him to aim at effect.

“It is that this alimentary system is precisely our own. And you have discovered it ten thousand years ago !”

“You state the exact truth, Ta-Lao-Yé. Moreover, I myself manufactured these substances.”

“What you assert is indeed astonishing, Shien-Chung. There is then nothing new under the sun.”

“ We had, too, in my time an aphorism corresponding word for word with the one which you have just uttered.”

“ But then the men who existed on the earth ten thousand years ago were not wretched creatures hardly above the brutes?”

“ What is that you say, Ta-Lao-Yé? On the contrary we had a civilization extremely advanced, and I wonder that you do not meet numerous traces of it scattered over the lands formerly inhabited by my contemporaries.”

“ Undeceive yourself; such vestiges exist in great numbers, but they are mostly articles of coarse metal, the use of which we can hardly guess, and which in any

case would not give us a very elevated conception of the intellectual level of the prehistoric men."

"I will examine your collections, and will gladly give you precise information about these relics of antiquity. Perhaps I shall be able to convert you from your prejudices."

"Who would have said," thought Monsieur Synthèse, "that I would some day become the prehistoric man, and that I would have to explain to our descendants what we were in the nineteenth century? It is as if the man of Néanderthal, of Cro-Magnon, or La Naulette, dropping in times of old into the midst of the anthropological museum, should demonstrate professionally

to our leading scientists the soundness or the errors of their hypotheses concerning our ancestors !”

Monsieur Synthèse would have undoubtedly soliloquized for some time, had not his attention been diverted by the appearance of a man of medium height approaching with an humble and embarrassed air, clad in garments similar to those formerly worn by the peasants of Central France, that is, a kind of blouse of grayish stuff tightened at the waist by a belt, and trousers resembling closely the breeches of the ancient Gauls.

This man, bareheaded and barefooted, carried with both hands a large tray surmounted by a metallic cover, and halted

at the sound of a softly modulated whistle from Ta-Lao-Yé.

“A Mao-tchin!” resumes the old man.

“But,” interrupts Monsieur Synthèse whose surprise increases, “this man to whom you give the name of ‘hairy body,’ corresponding with that of Aïno, by which we designate the natives of the islands of Eastern Asia, exhibits none of the characteristics peculiar to that primitive race. He is white, white as myself, bearded, long haired, and as a type recalls the inhabitants of that Europe which now has disappeared.”

“Nevertheless a race strangely degraded, and fit at best to perform servile duties for us. Look at that head of diminished pro-

portions, that receding forehead, that neck bent toward the earth; those enormous hands and feet, those limbs with the muscles of a brute. He is hardly capable of thinking! In speaking he howls, he eats gluttonously, drinks with animal greediness, fights with his fellow-creatures, whom he does not hesitate to kill when excited by drunkenness or rage. Besides, it is impossible for him to leave the ground, to which he is chained during the period of his wretched existence, powerless to launch himself on high in an audacious flight, powerless to ascend at the pleasure of his will, obliged to move limb after limb in order to change his location. He is a being in a state of transition — the most perfect

of brutes, I admit, but the lowest of creatures worthy to-day of the name of man."

"And to think," murmurs Monsieur Synthèse sadly, that before these cerebrals, evidently refined and perfected by selection through ages, I am but an anthropologic specimen, a little more perfect than the man-monkey which my colleagues in scientific societies formerly sought in order to connect the man of my epoch with the apes themselves! But what beings are these cerebrals then? Pshaw, I shall soon know."

Upon a sign from the old man whom Monsieur Synthèse always addresses by the name of Ta-Lao-Yé, the man, astonished at seeing one of his fellow-creatures seated

familiarly near his master, went off with head down, dragging his heels, and disappeared without a word, carrying with him his platter, which probably contained provisions.

“Understand, Ta-Lao-Yé, that if all your Mao-tchins resemble this individual, you cannot compare them to those who inhabited the world ten thousand years ago.”

“All without the least exception.”

“And that is the idea you have formed of the white race of the epoch which is to you prehistoric!”

“Obviously!”

“Undeceive yourself nevertheless. If there were some degraded beings like this one, there were numbered among us truly

superior men, capable of grandly honoring human nature.”

“All that depends upon the point of view which one takes. Ten thousand years ago the Mao-tchin, the hairy race, were the highest in the animal scale, just as ten thousand years before your time there were men yet inferior to you, but who also were in the first rank.”

“But once more, Ta-Lao-Yé, the majority of the white race were not so degraded as this wretched slave. The present race must necessarily have degenerated while yours was progressing.”

“That is extremely probable. However, if you will give me your attention for a few moments, I am about to outline for

you the historic periods which have elapsed since the most remote times of which our traditions have preserved the memory. Perhaps this recital may throw some light on the question. I shall be able, on the other hand, thanks to the documents which you possess, to fill up certain gaps hitherto insuperable, and to reconstruct a portion of our past history. You will then judge fairly. However, let me first say to you before beginning--I now already regard you as infinitely superior to our hairy race; and you are the living proof that in your time the white man was elevated far above his present wretched condition."

"I listen to you with the liveliest interest, Ta-Lao Yé, and I appreciate highly

your good opinion of me. I shall do everything in my power to justify it."

"Tradition teaches us that our ancestors, the Chinese of pure race, were confined to a very considerable portion of a country to which they gave the name of Asia. At that epoch this land was bounded on its eastern part by a vast sea——"

"How!" interrupted Monsieur Synthèse with animation, yet in a low voice. "You say 'at that epoch?' Does the sea no longer bathe the shores of Asia?"

"Certainly not, nor for a long time past. That sea has been in part filled up by excrescences of coral growth which have formed, as it were, a new continent welded to the old one."

“I had foreseen that hypothesis,” said Monsieur Synthèse, “but I was far from expecting to see it realized. I shall tell you some strange tales on that subject, Ta-Lao-Yé, but continue, I pray you, and excuse this interruption.”

“Our ancestors, of very peaceful habits and devoted almost exclusively to agriculture, soon found themselves crowded on their soil where they had multiplied wonderfully. They finished by spreading themselves little by little over the neighboring lands, where they encountered the white-skinned men of the West. These last, bloodthirsty in temperament, longed only for battles and conquests by arms. Already, on many an occasion, they had

attacked in their own homes and beaten the peaceful Chinese, who still only asked to live in quiet. This proximity of the two races led to new and more bloody struggles, which continued until one day when the Chinese, by far the most numerous, determined to end it. Weary of being incessantly beaten and put upon, these unpretending farmers forced in self-defense to borrow from their turbulent neighbors their methods and customs of battle, revealed themselves one fine day as terrible warriors. Terrible and implacable, as you are about to learn.

“Our tradition preserves the memory of a general massacre of the whites who found themselves on the soil of our ancestors—a

massacre which was likely to bring terrible reprisals.

“The whites, when not attacking the Chinese, were generally slaughtering each other, nation against nation, and consequently lived in a state of permanent hostility. You see how inferior they were to our ancestors, and how closely they approached the brute existence, since they thought only of killing, instead of living in peace, happy in claiming from the earth subsistence for their physical wants, and from study, mental enjoyments

“For the first time, perhaps, they thought of agreeing among themselves and uniting their efforts to repulse the common enemy.

“But it was too late! China in its turn was formidably armed; millions of combatants, resolved as I have said to finish with these disquieting neighbors, left their native soil, decided to return only after the complete annihilation of the whites.

“It was a war of races, a war without truce or mercy, a struggle of extermination.

“Like a torrent which nothing checks, the Chinese poured forth even to the extreme Occident, ravaged the countries, razed the towns, slaughtered the inhabitants, and finding at last an admirable soil so fertile as to tempt their agricultural tastes, they installed themselves there by degrees.”

“That was sure to happen,” interrupted Monsieur Synthèse in a low voice. “One does not with impunity sport with a colossus like the Chinese empire, which at the end of the nineteenth century comprised in itself alone nearly five hundred millions of inhabitants. And tell me, Ta-Lao-Yé, this contest was a long one, without doubt?”

“On the contrary, everything leads us to believe that it was short but cruel, thanks to the exceedingly perfected means of homicide which the combatants possessed. The least numerous succumbed fatally.”

“And the whole were slaughtered, were they not?”

“Not so, Shien-Chung. At that epoch

the Chinese were already much too far advanced in industrial ideas, too economical if you like, thus senselessly to destroy useful forces. Those who escaped the massacre became mere slaves, debarred from all intellectual culture, and compelled to the rudest labors. Special laws in which all the wisdom of these really remarkable men is found, were enacted immediately after the conquest, and perpetuated forever the inferiority of the vanquished. It was forbidden to marry with them, to allow them to study, to permit them to increase beyond a fixed ratio, to leave the place where their abode was fixed.

“From this epoch dates to a certainty the degradation in which you see our Mao-

tchin, the unhappy descendants of those conquered in the year 2000.

“And about this name of ‘hairy ones,’ which is perpetuated among us along with the slaves of our ancestors, you have told me that it formerly belonged to some very inferior races inhabiting certain confines of the ancient China?”

“Truly.”

“Do you not think that this appellation was given by the conquerors to the conquered in the first instance and by analogy? The conquered being heavily bearded, like the Mao-tchin of their time, the Chinese must necessarily have instituted comparisons arising from this superabundance of the hairy system. Both inferior to the

victorious race, these originally, the others through subjection, both hairy, it is not surprising that the whites, your descendants, have inherited this title quite naturally."

"That is reasonable," absently replies Monsieur Synthèse, uninterested in this etymological digression in view of the disaster to his own race.

"To continue, there took place in the Occident an expansion of the Chinese civilization which established itself, complete in every part with its own characteristics, and thrived upon the ruins of that which you attribute to your fellow-citizens, and which also I am pleased to recognize in view of your assurances. Asia, Europe,

and soon northern Africa, all became Chinese, and in a short time the yellow population increased in unheard-of proportions, while the number of Mao-tchin remained strictly stationary. Later, at a still uncertain epoch which our chronology has not yet been able to fix precisely, but which, however, does not go back of the twenty-fourth century——”

“Speaking of chronology, I remark that you have retained ours, that of those whites so cruelly annihilated.”

“Undoubtedly, and that does not in any way embarrass us. However, that is perhaps the only thing of theirs which we have preserved. Be that as it may, about the twenty-fourth century our planet was

the prey of disturbances of which there had been no premonition, disturbances atmospheric, geological, and even astronomical. After fearful earthquakes which dislocated the solid strata, displaced certain seas and continents, and turned upside down from bottom to top the Arctic and Antarctic polar regions, there was a sort of confusion in the seasons and a marked lowering of the general temperature.

“I describe these events to you as a whole, waiting the opportunity to enlarge upon them later if you think it pertinent, and to explain to you the probable causes and certain effects from the scientific point of view.

“The ices invaded the regions of both

North and South, and rested permanently upon the countries formerly occupied by the conquerors. The latter thus found themselves driven back toward the milder latitudes, and there remained in the northern region only scattering Mao-tchin, who vegetated miserably up to our epoch, waging a rough and perpetual contest with the ungrateful soil. Our ancestors fleeing from Europe now become hyperborean, came straight to Africa.”

“And the Mediterranean which separated them from one another?”

“If there was formerly a sea between these two countries that sea no longer exists since the great cataclysm of which I have told you. Our ancestors discovered

at the time of this second migration a primitive race, with skin entirely black; a race gentle, hospitable, peaceful, and particularly industrious. The blacks, far from receiving them as inveterate enemies, as did the whites in former times, greeted them fraternally, shared their soil with them, and showed them the liveliest sympathy. Soon an anthropological phenomenon manifested itself, extremely curious, yet rational. Between the black and yellow races there were very numerous and specially prolific marriages, and during the subsequent periods this fecundity was not hindered in the slightest degree by this mixture of races, as might have been feared. There was a mutual absorption of the two

racés, an absolute fusion, without any predominance of either the black or yellow element. Both benefited, moreover, and largely, from this crossing which produced marvelous results. Thus the black contributed to this human partnership his bodily vigor, his prodigious endurance of fatigue, his adaptation by ages to the inter-tropical climate, his immunity from local maladies, his vigorous and bountiful blood. The yellow man supplied especially the mental faculties, developed by a civilization of ages, the arts, the sciences, the manufactures; a brain thoroughly stocked and ordered through long inheritance, a tenacious will, and a complete social organization.

“In contact with this young blood which coursed impetuously in the veins of the man of nature, the blood of the Chinese, possibly debilitated by a long succession of years, resumed new vigor, regenerated itself.”

“Upon the whole, a human ingraftment,” interrupted Monsieur Synthèse, more and more interested.

“A simple ingraftment, as you have said, Shien-Chung.”

“And the result of which, as I confirm with pleasure, is admirable, at least as concerns Central Africa, where we are at this moment, and to which you give the name of Western China. But I am curious to learn how this cross-breeding has worked,

how this evolution has been accomplished in the other parts of the planet, which you undoubtedly must call Central China and Eastern China, at least to be consistent with yourselves in a geographic point of view. And first, is the race which peoples these remote countries similar to your own?"

"Entirely."

"That is extraordinary."

"Not at all, as you will understand. Be good enough to trace mentally, about thirty degrees above and below the equator, two circular lines embracing the entire circumference of the earth."

"It is done."

"The space of land included between

these two lines composes almost the entire surface of our habitable soil."

"That seems to me a singularly curtailed quantity, and mankind must find itself crowded."

"You forget, Shien-Chung, that starting from ancient China, which was the cradle of our race, and following the direction of the rising sun, one finds land all the time."

"That is true. You have told me that there is encountered an immense continent formed of coral——"

"Which was upheaved at the time of that cataclysm of which I have just told you. Now, at that time, and above all in your epoch, that region studded with islands

must have been inhabited by men of the black race.”

“You are right, Ta-Lao-Yé. I understand now the operation everywhere of that crossing, that fusion of the two races. There was in the same way an exodus from the borders of Eastern China, and those whom we called the Papuans, the Australians, too, and the Polynesians, allied themselves with the Chinese. Then the mass of the yellow men spreading themselves incessantly across this new continent, encountered the American negroes and the handsome black races of the Antilles. However little the upturning may have made new lands spring up between Africa and America, there was on the other hand

a constant supply of the black element to this latter country, so as to combine this element with the Indians, who, in my opinion, are also descended from the ancient Mongols."

"Your supposition is perfectly correct, and the alterations in the earth have been such that to-day it is possible to make the tour of the planet without quitting solid ground."

"That is really marvelous and disconcerts all my old conceptions regarding the future. So I ask myself sincerely what reception he would have met who in former times had dared to formulate these predictions: 'The future is for the Chinese and Negroes!' 'In some thousands of years we shall be

able to make the tour of the world by land at the line of the equator!"

"That is a journey which I shall be happy to aid you in accomplishing, Shien-Chung. A journey both agreeable and speedy."

"Oh, I do not doubt that you have perfected the methods of conveyance in the highest degree, as regards both celerity and comfort."

"They are nearly instantaneous."

"Soon nothing you may say will any longer surprise me, Ta-Lao-Yé. But you puzzle me, nevertheless. We will not go by sea, I presume?"

"That method of traveling has not existed for thousands of years, except in legends."

“People like yourselves cannot with propriety travel by land.”

“You are right, Shien-Chung.”

“It is then through the air that we will take our flight?”

“You have guessed it, Shien-Chung.”

“In a balloon, perhaps?”

“Pshaw! The great-grandfathers of our great-grandfathers never themselves saw those inconvenient machines except in museums, and twenty centuries old.”

“And still I am to go with you by air!”

“Yes, and with a speed almost equal to that of light.”

CHAPTER IV.

“AND you are ready to undertake this original voyage?” asked Monsieur Synthèse of his obliging interlocutor.

“We are always ready to change our location,” replied the old man, “sure as we are of meeting everywhere the elements essential to our life, for we find ourselves everywhere at home.”

“Yet one word, and one moment of delay, I pray you, Ta-Lao-Yé.”

“All that you wish and as much as you wish, Shien-Chung.”

“A thousand thanks for your inexhaust-

ible obligingness. I have understood perfectly the chain of extraordinary facts which you have just related to me, and which I venture to hope, you will later be willing to resume more in detail."

"I shall be very happy, I repeat, to initiate you into the past as well as into the present."

"Thanks again. All these historic facts having for subject both men and things, all these changes which have unexpectedly happened in the configuration of the earth, however extraordinary they may be, present nothing irrational, and I admit them the more readily, since you will give me indisputable proof of them.

"However, I have still to question you

regarding your anatomical conformation, your condition of extreme and almost unhealthy sensitiveness, and above all as to that astonishing power which converts you at will into aerial beings, happy rivals of those whose wings enable them to hover above this earth to which we others are irrevocably attached."

"You have thoroughly understood, have you not, how our brain, being pre-eminently the organ subjected for thousands of years to a constant exercise, has thus been able to develop itself in a manner which appears to you anomalous?"

"That is a constant phenomenon of nature. In fact it is proved that an organ unused during a series of generations grows

feebler, wastes away, and gradually disappears. Conversely, as you have just stated, an organ which labors unceasingly grows and gathers strength, sometimes even to hypertrophy, at the expense of the other organs. We knew that in my time.”

“There is nothing more simple than than this sensitiveness which seems to you unhealthy, and which proceeds from the predominance of the nerves, which is itself the result of our cerebral predominance. Being ‘cerebrals,’ we must necessarily be nervous.”

“That is true.”

“Our brain having a volume at least triple that of yours, we should be three times as nervous as you.”

“Undoubtedly.”

“But this proportion, exact in appearance or in principle, is not so in its application.”

“Evidently, since it is necessary to take into consideration the constant exercise as well of your nervous as of your cerebral substance.”

“Exercise constant as to the present time, but you should add, of old; for our fathers have bequeathed to us from generation to generation a sensitiveness which we ceaselessly perfect.”

“Up to an incipient immaterialization of your organism.”

“You have found the proper word, Shien-Chung. Immaterialization! It is

that, indeed. In fact such is the condition which we strive after incessantly and which our more fortunate descendants will undoubtedly attain."

"That, then, is the reason why this cerebral hypertrophy and this condition of nervous erethismus resulting from an adaptation already ancient, make insufferable to you a noise more or less intense, a mere outburst of voice, a surprise, a violent gesture."

"To such a point that we are compelled on the one hand to be always on the watch to lessen the effects of these perturbations, and on the other hand in some sort to stifle our existence, to render mute every object, inert or living, capable of producing those

vibrations which trouble our so delicate organism. All that surrounds us, therefore, is arranged in such a manner as to avoid the slightest unusual noise. The Mao-tchin, our slaves, must speak to us in a low voice, must never utter a cry.”

“But when the storm roars, for example?”

“The inconceivable sensitiveness of our nerves warns us of its approach. At once, long before it bursts, we fly to a point where the sky is clear.”

“You have answered everything, Ta-Lao-Yé, and I admire you unreservedly. As to this extraordinary and stupefactive power, to which I should give, not empirically, the name of *psychic force*——”

“You have said it, *psychic force!* Do you know that you, too, Shien-Chung, you are wonderful?”

“How so, Ta-Lao-Yé?”

“Because we ourselves have no other term by which to designate this power, into the mysteries of which I am going to endeavor to initiate you.”

“In my turn, let me tell you that in our times there were some adepts, beings specially endowed, who by a gift of nature possessed this wonderful privilege of being able to elevate themselves at will above the ground.”

“What do you tell me, Shien-Chung?”

“The exact truth, To-Lao-Yé. It is true that this wonderful property was theirs

only occasionally, and then they possessed it in a much less degree than yourselves.”

“Ah! you think that all my contemporaries possess it to the same extent? Not at all, Shien-Chung. Just as all men have not the same stature, the same muscular vigor, the same intelligence, neither is the psychic force equally distributed among them.”

“That appears to me equitable and according to the laws of nature, which never has been nor will be able to produce equivalence in existences of either the animal or vegetable order.”

“You comprehend me admirably, Shien-Chung, and it is great good fortune for me, in my old age, to find among the ruins of

ancient worlds an interlocutor as intelligent as yourself. You have truly outstripped your own times."

"Alas, it is much to have survived them!"

"But you have just used the words psychic force. And you have told me that some ten thousand years ago certain of your contemporaries, Mao-tchins, possessed this privilege which is ours exclusively; and which nature has always denied, even partially, to our Mao-tchins of the present day and generation."

"I have advanced nothing but the truth, Ta-Lao-Yé, and I am going to prove it to you."

"I have never questioned your veracity,

Shien-Chung. I only ask you to tell me in what the cerebrals of your time resembled us, whether nearly or remotely."

"Little, indeed, but very remotely, Ta-Lao-Yé. And first, they were no more cerebrals than the other men of that period; and, as I have told you, possessed only in a very feeble degree that power which I admire and envy in you. Nevertheless the fact is indisputable. I repeat there lived not only in the nineteenth century, but even previously, men endowed with the faculty of raising themselves above the ground without visible cause, of supporting themselves there, and floating in the air without the least support, and that for some time.

“We gave this phenomenon the name of levitation.*

“In India I have with my own eyes seen pundits, that is, illuminati, adepts, raise themselves gently in the air solely by the force of their wills and remain there as I have just told you. These men lived a life essentially contemplative, were absorbed in self, separated themselves as much as possible from the outside world, and exerted themselves constantly by means known only to themselves to exasperate their nervous sensibility.

“I could cite very numerous examples to you; but I prefer to consider only those

* See on this subject the very remarkable article published by Monsieur the Commandant of Rochas in the *Revue Scientifique* of September 12, 1885.

which appear to me the most conclusive, because they have been submitted to a rigorous scientific control, permitting the elimination of every thought of deceit on the part of either witnesses or actors.

“It is thus that after many repetitions an Englishman, Mr. Crookes, a member of the Royal Society of London, and well known also for his fine discoveries in chemistry and his memorable experiments on radiant matter— But I talk to you of London, of the Royal Society, and even of England, as if you were a contemporary, so difficult is it for my mind to conceive the prodigious succession of elapsed ages!”

“You are extremely interesting, Shien-

Chung, and I experience in this conjuring up of the past as much pleasure as you will soon feel in acquaintance with the present. I am happy, moreover, to learn that among the men of your time, in spite of the imperfection or rather the well-known inferiority of their organism, there were beings partially privileged and temporarily endowed as we are. Continue, I beg you."

"Well, Mr. Crookes, by the use of apparatus as simple as ingenious, was able to measure and record the force developed by these beings so happily gifted without their making any appreciable movement or even seeming to suspect that strange and considerable emission of fluid."

"The precise instruments do not lie, and

could not become the object of hallucinations, is not that so?"

"Without any doubt."

"And tell me, Shien-Chung, what was on the whole the development, thus measured, of that force which you regard as considerable?"

"The force sufficient to raise the subjects several centimeters, and even several meters above the ground, gave to the apparatus pressure estimated at one hundred and fifty times the unit of weight in use at that time, that is to say, at one hundred and fifty kilogrammes."

"Very well. What, in your opinion, is the weight of that block on which you were just now awakened?"

“From fifteen hundred to two thousand kilogrammes, perhaps more.”

“Watch, then.”

In pronouncing these words the old man arises slowly, plants his feet firmly on the ground, bends backward slightly, and simply touches the enormous block with his ten fingers separated.

One can hardly imagine the stupefaction of Monsieur Synthèse as he saw this overwhelming mass glide swiftly and with a dull rumbling over the lovely mosaic forming the platform, as if some powerful mechanism had suddenly impelled him.

“I can at will turn it over on either of its faces,” continued the old man quietly.

“Oh, that is quite unnecessary, and I am

satisfied that such a feat is not at all impossible for you."

"As for myself, as well as for all of my race, it is the most natural thing in the world, for our force is, so to speak, infinite. For instance, suppose that I seize your wrist between two of my fingers, I could crush it, cut it off, as if it found itself caught under the angle of that mass which I have just moved by a gesture."

"I do not doubt it."

"One word more before doing you the honors of our world as you deserve. How did you, ten thousand years ago, explain to yourselves this phenomenon, which to-day has become our unique manner of existence?"

“ We supposed that this force, proceeding essentially from the nervous system, formed a sort of nervous atmosphere of varying intensity surrounding the body, and capable, in its sphere of action, of putting solid objects in motion. It is thus, according to our opinion, that levitation, or the elevation of the human body, was brought about by a sort of repulsion, the body being as it were driven from the ground by the influence of that nervous atmosphere environing it on every side.

“ There is no other explanation of this property, and I in my turn am astonished to hear it formulated so clearly by a man who lived in the most remote epochs.

“ And yet, in spite of their proofs, the

greater part of our contemporaries refused to admit the facts."

"Were people already so incredulous?"

"Even more so than you could suppose. Yet there are found in nature beings endowed with properties entirely peculiar to themselves. For instance, the electric eel, which possesses a kind of electric sense, analogous, all proportions being retained, to this psychic force, in so far that with it electricity forms a special atmosphere about its organism."

"You have reasoned soundly, Shien-Chung. But enough on that subject, for the moment at least. Do you feel strong enough to leave this place where I had the happiness to find you, and to undertake the

voyage which I have proposed? Your lucidity proves to me that your awakening from that slumber of centuries is complete, and that is the essential point. As to your bodily vigor, it is sufficient. But were you as weak as a child, you would none the less accomplish without fatigue as without danger this exploration which I am sure will be as easy as interesting."

"I am absolutely at your disposal, Ta-Lao-Yé, and I place myself in your hands."

"In your hands is perfectly exact, and possibly you did not think you were speaking so accurately."

For some moments several Cerebrals, as Monsieur Synthèse had named them to

himself, had gradually approached the group formed by the two interlocutors.

As Monsieur Synthèse, or Shien-Chung as he is henceforth called, has subdued the formidable thunders of his voice, and no longer causes any disturbance to the extremely delicate organism of the sensitive beings, the newcomers press around him and examine him with a friendly curiosity.

Ta-Lao-Yé speaks a few words in his soft voice. They approach nearer to Monsieur Synthèse, whom they touch lightly with their hands, extending arms slightly bent.

They are five in all, including Ta-Lao Yé. At this imperceptible touch Monsieur Synthèse, radiant, feels himself gently raised above the ground, and ascends slowly

among the group of which he forms the center.

“This then,” said he, totally bewildered in spite of his habitual coolness, “is that marvelous procedure of which you told me, venerable Ta-Lao-Yé !”

“Do you find it to your liking, Shien-Chung ?”

“Say rather that I am filled with enthusiasm, that my tongue no longer finds words to express the joy which overflows through me, and to depict the inexpressible beatitude which pervades me !”

At this moment the group which had glided gently through a large opening, mounts in the open air, and pauses at the height of some twenty meters.

“You are not subject to vertigo,” resumed Ta-Lao-Yé. “However, you incur no danger, being thus borne up by us. You are in the midst of the atmosphere created about our organisms by the force which we emanate. You make one body with us, so to speak, and participate in our own existence. Now, what do you prefer? Do you choose to be transported to Tombouctou with the rapidity of thought? Or would you rather glide slowly at a moderate height above the ground, observing the countries over which we are going to pass as a curious as well as experienced traveler?”

“If you do not find it inconvenient, Ta-Lao-Yé, and if your amiable companions

are willing to grant my wish, I would prefer the last method."

"You are free to choose, Shien-Chung, and our hospitality will make it a duty to fulfill all your wishes."

"A thousand thanks! But I hope, however, not to cause you any increase of fatigue."

A laugh, very gentle and kind, and in no wise ironical, was the sole reply of Monsieur Synthèse's new friends, who comprehends from the easy manner of their flight that he has just given utterance to an absurdity.

The group, animated by a very moderate velocity of conveyance, pauses a moment to allow their pre-historic ancestor for the

first time to contemplate in its entirety the place where he was so miraculously stranded.

Contrary to his expectation, this scrutiny does not cause him any surprise. He perceives a town of moderate importance, whose scattered buildings, devoid of symmetry, are surrounded by a varied vegetation, blended in a picturesque confusion.

Side by side with superb products of the tropical flora dwelt fraternally those of the temperate zone, both easily recognizable at first sight by their foliage, and whose union formed a charming contrast. The buildings, of handsome appearance, invariably separated from one another, were tolerably lofty, and remarkable for an archi-

tectural air quite peculiar to themselves. The shining walls and roofs, resplendent, glittered in the sunlight, with varying shades very different in tone and yet rather happily harmonized.

“These, if I am not mistaken,” said Monsieur Synthèse in a low voice, “are Chinese structures, scarcely different from those which in my time were to be seen in the countries of the Celestial Empire. Their form and character have remained almost unchanged.”

“Like our language and our traits, Shien-Chung,” replies Ta-Lao-Yé. “Why modify what is agreeable in appearance and convenient in the using? These dwellings of porcelain are very clean, fresh, and healthy ;

they have for us the advantage of not becoming impregnated by the miasma escaping from the marshes of the coast, of being inaccessible to insects and noxious reptiles, and of defending us from the heat of the sun, at times very great. What more can be asked ?”

“ Still not only to build them but also to make the materials of which they are composed, you must have skilful artisans.”

“ Have we not our usual workmen, our Mao-tchin, who perform all labors imaginable under our direction ?”

“ That is true. In regarding your race so refined, so subtilized, incapable, I suppose, of rough labor at least, I forget that

there is another race, my own, the race of the oppressed and accursed !”

“They are neither accursed nor oppressed, as you seem to think, Shien-Chung. They are simply beings of inferior organization, laboring without initiative, it is true, but also without repulsion, somewhat in the manner of the lower animals. They originate nothing, but, as I have told you, act under our directions, and are excellent operatives in the arts, the manufactures and in agriculture.”

“So that they are prohibited from elevating themselves above their wretched position ?”

“Come, Shien-Chung, was it not nevertheless proportionately so in your time ?

Were there not inferior beings, unfortunates, if you will, condemned by implacable want to the hardest and most unthankful labors, while others, the fortunate ones, these profited by their fatigue and sweat? You yourself, Shien-Chung, who are a cultivated spirit, have you ever tilled the soil, carried materials, woven garments, or reaped the grain? You had these labors performed by your inferiors, your Mao-tchin, whom you did not regard as equals. And had they been so as men in a material point of view, they would not have been so in intelligence. In your time, the difference between the producers and those who controlled production, between those who used, and those who did not use,

existed no less than it does to-day, though in a less degree.”

“ But we gave wages to our laborers.”

“ Do you think that our Mao-tchin work gratuitously ? We give them all they can possibly need ; food, shelter, clothing, care when they are sick, a home and rest when they become old. Did you do as much formerly for those of your own race ?”

“ And yet all that they thus produce is really theirs from the first ; these provisions which you give them, the clothing which they manufacture, these houses which they build, and a multitude of other things. If you were not there they would none the less produce for their own use that which you have the credit of giving them, for

upon the whole, they are able to live without you."

"You seem to forget that they are the subjected race and that we are the masters, that everything here is ours, that they cannot nor ought not to possess anything of their own, and that our will has the might of law, because they are plainly inferior to the lowest among us. You apprehend, do you not?" finished Ta-Lao-Yé, his musical voice not having vibrated more strongly for a single moment.

"Alas!" murmured Monsieur Synthèse to himself sadly, "it was thus that in my youth I heard the owners of slaves reason and saw them act. Thus, too, even still later, thought the Americans of the South-

ern States up to the time when the terrible War of Secession broke the chains of so many unfortunate ones and healed that hideous sore of slavery. But what revenge, too, to-day for the descendants of the grand-nephews of Uncle Tom !”

And the movement of the conveyance of the group through the air was continued with accelerated speed, while the aged scholar, absorbed in his reflections, discerned beneath him brooks, rivers, forests, fields, dwellings, Mao-tchins bent over the soil or toiling painfully on the roads, while near them passed in groups or singly the men with large heads, the Cerebrals, gliding indolently or darting off like the lightning as their fancy dictated.

Ta-Lao-Yé, the leader, broke the silence respectfully observed by his companions, younger and certainly inferior to him in the mysterious hierarchy of the Cerebral Republic. The good old man seemed, beside a little garrulous, and this silence appeared to oppress him.

“Do you wish that we accelerate our progress?” said he to Monsieur Synthèse. “There is nothing very strange to be seen between here and Tombouctou. We might, however, tarry a moment in that city before continuing our voyage around the planet.”

“Willingly, Ta-Lao-Yé. I have, however, some information to ask of you concerning your organization in order to be absolutely

free for the contemplation of the marvels which you are about to show me, without being distracted by any irrelevant preoccupation. I am always methodical, a little meddlesome, perhaps, and I do not like to occupy myself with several matters at the same time."

"Speak, Shien-Chung, and rely always upon an unfailing compliance."

"You say we are going to Tombouctou, the city where you usually reside. Would you tell me how you are organized as regards families, of your relations between yourselves and with the Mao-tchin, your despised but nevertheless indispensable assistants! Are you individually masters of one or more slaves, or does your suprem-

acy extend over the whole race? Finally, what are your usual occupations?"

"I will reply briefly but clearly to these questions, indicating the interest you feel in our organization, and will endeavor to instruct you on this subject in such a manner that you may be able at once to enter into our life as a matter of course. And first, how do you find yourself, for the moment?"

"Admirably!"

"Are you satisfied with this system of locomotion?"

"It would ill become me not to find it marvelous, and to fail to declare that the sole regret of my old age will be that I am unable, alas, to apply it myself. And you,

Ta-Lao-Yé, does not my presence bring you an increase of fatigue, or at least of discomfort?"

"By no means. We are ignorant of what you call fatigue, for the exertion of our psychic force is, so to speak, infinite. What does it signify then, consequently, but the adjunction of your body, plunged into our nervous atmosphere, in the midst of which it weighs no more than impalpable down. I return to your question regarding the family as it is organized among us. Our ancestors were polygamists. But for five or six thousand years monogamy is the constant habit among us, although there is no law relating to the number of wives which each citizen may have. There

is the same liberty as to the spot where each family locates."

"How! Does not each couple possess a house of their own to which they cling by preference, where their children are brought up, and where are grouped the slaves appropriated to their service?"

"Yes and no. That is to say, the houses are the property of all. Each chooses at his convenience, instals himself, sojourns for a time more or less long according to his needs or whims. Built of heavy porcelain, they are almost indestructible, and serve for many series of generations. If their number prove insufficient, or they begin to deteriorate, the Mao-tchin supply others at once."

“I willingly admit of that way of doing, similar up to a certain point to the system of furnished hotels which the Americans used and abused so much. But what becomes of your Mao-tchin among all these changes?”

“The Mao-tchin are immutably attached to the habitation and to a certain extent of land surrounding it. They must be there at each moment, and during all their life, at the disposition of the master, whoever he may be, all giving themselves individually or by groups to the labors made necessary by our material needs or their own. When one among us moves—and you judge if the movings should be frequent—he always finds a dwelling, slaves, the elements

for his nutrition—identical moreover for all adults, of whichever sex.”

“With such a system, you must have very little family life. Have you even time to attend to the education of your children?”

Monsieur Synthèse’s companions burst out in another laugh as soon as he formulated this reflection, evidently unexpected or peculiar. As soon as this excess of hilarity was over, Ta-Lao-Yé resumed.

“We laugh spontaneously, and without the slightest intention of wounding you. But do you see, ShienChung, it is because we could not suppose that there was in the world a man capable of believing that we, Cerebrals, ourselves bring up our children.”

“Explain yourself, Ta-Lao-Yé,” answered Monsieur Synthèse, astonished at finding that he had uttered an absurdity.

“It is very simple; our children are brought up in common by the wives of the Mao-tchin, who feed them in childhood, lavish on them all necessary cares, provide for all the needs of their physical life up to the moment when they begin to lisp their first words, to try their first steps upon the earth like the Mao-tchin, and endeavor to raise themselves spontaneously above the ground, like their parents.”

“That seems to me on the whole somewhat rational. But after?”

“They are educated in common in special buildings, under the supervision and

responsibility of women during the period of childhood, and of men when they have grown bigger.”

“Ah, I was expecting that, Ta-Lao-Yé! These educators of their childhood and youth are no longer Mao-tchin, are they?”

“No, but Cerebrals clearly.”

“You were speaking but now of the complete equality which exists between you all, the people of the higher caste. You told me that your will alone served as the rule of your life. How do you reconcile this absolute independence with the sedentariness and even servilism consequent to these pedagogic functions?”

“Sedentariness — even so. But understand that its duration is limited. Besides,

no one can screen himself from this obligation, for our laws expressly ordain that every citizen shall dedicate himself in rotation and gratuitously to the education of youth. As to the word servilism, it cannot with reason be used to qualify duties the noblest, the most elevated, to which the fathers of families could possibly consecrate themselves. You may well believe that none seeks to avoid this sacred obligation, and that we are all equals in the presence of duty."

"I admire you sincerely, Ta-Lao-Yé, and I beg you to excuse my error."

"I have nothing to excuse, Shien-Chung, for you are sincere, and have no intention to offend. Only your reflection proves to

me that in your time men held decidedly lower views on this subject."

"But then it must necessarily be the case that you are without exception provided with a thorough education."

"Have you ever doubted it? Learn that every one of us at a certain age is acquainted with all human conceptions."

"I would like very much to be present at one of your meetings, at a course as we used to say."

"Presently. If you desire, we are going to accelerate our progress in such a way as to traverse the distance which separates us from the city instantaneously."

"One last word, I beg. When you thus pass through space with the rapidity of

light, does it not lead to collisions between travelers? The thought of it alone makes me tremble for you."

"Such a thing has never happened. But even if two bodies should encounter in the air on the same line, there would be a repulsion between the nervous atmospheres which environ them, and a gliding off sideways, without any contact of the two organisms."

Monsieur Synthèse was about to reply, and perhaps to raise some new objection, but he did not have time. At the moment when Ta-Lao-Yé pronounced these last words, the aërial voyager felt a sensation as if his body was gently compressed, and pricklings like those which he had noticed

at the time of his resurrection tingled through his entire being. This had scarcely the duration of a flash of lightning. Then he heard the soft voice of Ta-Lao-Yé saying:

“We have arrived.”

CHAPTER V.

THE aërial group alighted in the middle of a city of importance, upon a vast square planted with fine trees, and surrounded by monuments of grand aspect.

Monsieur Synthèse having manifested to his companions his intention of taking a few steps in this square, they willingly complied with this fancy, quite natural in a man whose joints were benumbed by a slumber of a hundred centuries.

While walking with laborious slowness, which indicated at first sight that this exercise for good reasons was no longer

familiar to him, Monsieur Synthèse soliloquized in a low voice:

“So,” said he, “that mysterious little market town, lost over there in a country quite barbarous on the shore of a river more mysterious still, Tombouctou, of which my contemporaries scarcely had a glimpse, yet thrives after all the prodigious alterations in our planet.”

“That civilization of which we were so proud has disappeared, leaving scarcely a trace, the axis of the world is, in a manner, displaced. The seas and the continents have been thrown into confusion, the races have become modified, the very essence even of a part of the human race has been changed to the extent of becoming un-

recognizable, and those three absurd syllables, Tom-bouc-tou, have survived! And not only its name still exists, but on the site of the wretched huts where a savage population sheltered, there springs up to-day a magnificent city, become one of the centers of contemporary civilization.

“Paris, London, New York, Berlin, Rome, St. Petersburg, are no more than were in my own time Babylon, Thebes, or Nineveh, vanished cities, but still living at least as a memory!

“Nought is left of that which made our pride and glory, not even nameless ruins, like those of India, Cambodia, Mexico or Java! Not a thing!

“And Tombouctou, become Chinese, is

resplendent in the sun of Africa! There where was the desert bloom the wonders of an exuberant flora.

“And I behold those of my own race, the whites of pure blood, stultified, degraded, reduced to slavery.”

The gentle voice of Ta-Lao-Yé interrupted these painful reflections.

“You have expressed a desire to be present at an educational session,” said the old man. “Here is one of our schools; a large number of children are assembled at this moment; come hear what the father of a family teaches to the representatives of the future generation.”

Monsieur Synthèse nods assent, and proceeds with his companions toward a vast

monument, silent as a tomb. They penetrated on the same level into an immense hall constructed like an amphitheater, on the benches of which sat hundreds of motionless children whom one would think changed into statues.

“It is strange, indeed, that these little Cerebrals are not a bit talkative,” Monsieur Synthèse could not help saying. “I do not see them make a single motion. I do not hear the slightest murmur. What iron discipline, then, do these fathers of families impose on their offspring?”

“Reassure yourself, Shien-Chung,” whispers Ta-Lao-Yé in the ear of his new friend. “Our children know no constraint, and are ignorant of what you call discipline.”

“Nevertheless, this immobility, this distressing silence, this kind of contraction of all these little bodies seemingly in a trance——”

“Once more reassure yourself. Learn merely that these children are asleep.”

“Asleep in school! Asleep while the teacher is speaking!”

“Undoubtedly. Instructing our children during their sleep is even the sole process used by us for fixing in their brain in an indelible manner, and without the least fatigue, the most difficult sciences. But listen, if you please, to what the teacher is saying.”

The latter speaks very softly, like all of his race, but with excessive volubility,

as if he wished to say the most possible in the shortest time.

He makes a friendly sign to Ta-Lao-Yé as well as to his companions, regards Monsieur Synthèse with a look of astonishment, and seems to be asking himself for a moment what business this Mao-tchin with the long bristling gray beard, gigantic figure, and extraordinary garments can possibly have with these Cerebrals who show him such unusual deference. If only because of the infraction of the secular prohibitions as to the absolute exclusion of the Mao-tchin from every place set apart for instruction, it can readily be imagined that there was reason for natural stupefaction on the part of the schoolteacher.

After a moment's hesitation, however, he continues his lesson at a gesture from Ta-Lao-Yé, addressing himself to his young auditors, not one of whom has even winked.

This lesson is a familiar talk on cosmography, and Monsieur Synthèse, who, with difficulty catches the professor's words, owing to the rapidity of his utterance and the faintness of his voice, comprehends vaguely that it is about the planets belonging to our solar system.

Mars is in question for the moment. The professor speaks of its inhabitants, its productions, its physical configuration, its history, the progress it has made in the arts, sciences, and manufactures. All these are explained, detailed, and commented on

so extensively and precisely that Monsieur Synthèse could easily fancy that the subject of the lesson was some other country of our own globe.

However convinced he was of the wonders brought forth by mankind during the enormous succession of years, he can hardly believe that the Cerebrals can be perfectly instructed not only on the configuration of the other planet, but also on its inner life, as if the insuperable space represented by an average of seventy-seven millions of leagues did not exist for them.

But there is the fact plain and undeniable. Ta-Lao-Yé, who is no hoaxer, pledges himself to furnish the proof to his guest shortly, by having him present at an

exchange of communications between the earth and her neighbor.

“Is it to be soon?” asked Monsieur Synthèse with a sort of feverish precipitancy which he cannot control.

“It seems to me expedient to wait for night, at least,” replies the good man with an arch smile.

“That is so,” says Monsieur Synthèse, slightly confused on account of this haste inconsistent with his age, but nevertheless excusable in view of the impulse which occasioned it.

“Leave all to me,” continues Ta-Lao-Yé. “I have constituted myself your guide through this world so new to you, and I will give you entire satisfaction. I have

just laid out a plan for the whole. I engage you to follow it methodically, so as not to run from one thing to another, and to confuse us by trying to see all at the same time. In that way you will take a cursory view of our world, and later, if you wish, you will study more specially whatever subject may have most attraction for you. For the moment, we skim over all without going deeply into anything."

"Your reasoning, Ta-Lao-Yé, is that of a philosopher, and I subscribe gratefully to your plan. At present we are at the school, and the professor who teaches these children this cosmography so astonishing to me will not often, I imagine, have a

pupil eighty years old, hardly awakened from a sleep of a hundred centuries.”

But the lesson is finished. The length of the session is generally very short, the Cerebrals, well versed in the laws of health, being careful to avoid intellectual overwork. The teacher breaks off his lecture, and pronounces this simple word :

“Awake !”

And at once joyful cries proceed from every part of the amphitheater, which soon presents the appearance of an indescribable scuffle.

It is indeed a change of scene. The scholars, an instant before rigid and immovable as statues, rise up tumultuously from their benches, start off in the air like

captive balloons whose cord has just been cut, go, come, push forward, extricate themselves, caper, spring upon the ground, rebound, pause for a moment abashed at the sight of the stranger who smilingly views their frolics, then make their escape through the door like a flock of sparrows.

The hall is empty in the twinkling of an eye, and then remain in the semicircle only the professor, Ta-Lao-Yé, Monsieur Synthèse, and their four companions.

“Well, Shien-Chung,” smilingly asks Ta-Lao-Yé, “what do you think of our method of instructing children, and of obtaining from them without any fatigue the most thorough attention, and an undying memory of the thing taught?”

“I think. I think that I have discovered your process.”

“That is impossible, Shien-Chung. Whatever may be your learning, whatever your so-called civilization may have been, I cannot concede to your contemporaries the knowledge of the principle on which our system is constructed.”

“It is very simple, nevertheless, and was demonstrated and used in the latter half of the nineteenth century. I will explain myself. When your children, large or small, arrive at the school, they take their places, then the master says to them simply: ‘Sleep?’ As they are all trained probably from the earliest age, they go to sleep at once, or rather fall into a kind of slumber

which is not the sleep of physiology, but a special condition of mind and body during which both continue in absolute dependence on the man who has said 'Sleep!' Is not that quite right?"

"It is quite right," replies Ta-Lao-Yé, much surprised. "Continue, I beg."

"The children thus held in dependence on the master, there is established between them a sort of current, the influence of which they submit to as long as that state lasts. What does the master do? He contents himself with reading or reciting a single time the matter which is the subject of instruction; the hearers, withdrawn from all outer influence, find themselves in the best possible conditions of adaptation,

and do not allow a single word to be lost. Nor could they if they wished. Whatever they may be doing, their brain, without their knowledge, is impregnated by the word and idea which he presents to them. This, moreover, is only the preparatory work. The talk over, the master suggests to all his pupils the idea of remembering when they awake everything which they have heard during the lesson—and they remember it for life. This process, marvelous in its simplicity, offers inestimable advantages in that it saves these young brains from the horribly difficult work which consists in slowly storing up by force, so to speak, the entire sum of human knowledge. Whereas in automatically and

unconsciously impregnating themselves, in a few moments and in an indelible manner, with all these various elements, they quickly become veritable encyclopedias.

“Briefly, it is impossible to them not to learn and not to remember.

“These phenomena which, like levitation, seem to have become an integral part of your life, were known in my time under the names of hypnotism and suggestion.

“I had myself made a profound study of them, to such a degree that during more than thirty years I succeeded in substituting for ordinary sleep a hypnotism induced at will by myself.”

“Yet, Shien-Chung, this discovery is relatively new, since our most ancient

works, dating back more than seven thousand years, make no mention of it. If my recollection is strictly correct, it dates only from four thousand years ago."

"What would there be surprising in that? Is it the first time that a knowledge slowly acquired by men, after having been completely lost in oblivion throughout long years, has been rediscovered by new generations and inscribed in contemporary records as a thing absolutely new?"

"That is true," resumed Ta-Lao-Yé, after a pause in which he was absorbed in thought, and reflecting that among the prehistoric Mao-tchin there were men remarkable to the extent, apart from levitation, of holding the most eminent rank

among the present representatives of the human race.

“However,” continued Monsieur Synthèse, “you have wonderfully simplified the system of instruction by proceeding in such a manner as to abolish the labor of slow assimilation, in replacing it by this kind of impregnation of immediate transfusion, which unites with this instantaneousness a quality of absolute indelibility.

“Your children, knowing all that is taught without having had any occasion to study, have thus only to choose later, according to their tastes or aptitudes, the specialty to which they desire to consecrate themselves for the future.

“But tell me, Ta-Lao-Yé, this instruction, excellent in principle, appears to me, however, to have a weak side. Is it not addressed only to the hearing, to the express exclusion of the sight?”

“What is that you say, Shien-Chung? What you have just witnessed is, on the contrary, but a very insignificant part of our method. Very far from being limited to hearing, our instruction is completed by a series of demonstrations which speak very eloquently to the sight. In this way we possess admirable collections comprising, as far as possible, all objects or representations of objects which have been or are to be taken as subjects of oral instruction. Each pupil, placed in turn

before this object, must repeat the lesson, and if necessary comment on it."

"That is something like, and I expected no less of you. But tell me, would it be possible for me to visit these collections, which should be veritable museums?"

"Veritable museums, as you say. It is a quite easy matter, as they are free to the public. Wait! I have an idea! Would you like to commence by visiting that part of our national museum in Tombouctou, there where are assembled preferably the prehistoric collections, inestimable treasures amassed with difficulty for long years, and of which the capitals of the central and eastern provinces are somewhat jealous?"

Possibly you might find there remains contemporary with your epoch."

"With the greatest pleasure, Ta-Lao-Yé."

"Come, the prehistoric galleries are quite near, on the other side of those buildings which compose our university and which are specially appropriated to oral instruction.

After a few paces Monsieur Synthèse passes out into a square court, measuring hardly twenty-five meters on each side, where are ranged in open air a multitude of incongruous objects, the use of which he does not even suspect, and over which he glances heedlessly.

Then he passes through into an immense

hall, constructed entirely of porcelain, but covered with glass, into which consequently penetrate waves of light. He pauses soon before a mass slightly conical, much rust-eaten, pierced by a circular opening, and provided with two symmetrical tenons at its middle portion.

“ Upon my word ! It is a cannon ! One of those monstrous engines weighing nearly a hundred tons, such as were manufactured at the end of the nineteenth century by the great master builders of weapons of slaughter. I am curious to know whence it came, and what destiny my new friends can possibly have assigned to it. Decidedly, to survive one’s age is highly interesting !”

The Cerebrals kept silent while Monsieur Synthèse cast rapid glances from right to left. He notices some railway rails in a fair state of preservation, for not withstanding their coating of rust and the erosions produced by time, their characteristic shape can be recognized.

Then a plate brought up from the sheathing of an ironclad, the angles of which are corroded, worn, and deteriorated, probably from remaining for a long time in sea water. then some round cannon-balls of the old thirty-six caliber, then some American shells of the Whitworth pattern, ranged symmetrically to the number of a dozen around the cannon-balls.

There is besides a fragment of the

horizontal shaft of a steamer, a bronze propeller screw, an entire iron wheel, probably from a railroad car, and an innumerable series of shapeless as well as nameless wrecks, carefully arranged, ticketed, enrolled, and catalogued, the examination of which Monsieur Synthèse reserves for some later time. For the moment he considers among this indescribable old rubbish only the objects above mentioned.

He is about to speak, to describe to his companions these implements, the use of which they perhaps do not strictly understand, when he stops, stupefied at sight of the explanatory pictures hung above each relic.

These pictures are splendid engravings,

the execution of which honors more the artists who executed them than those who inspired them. They are supposed to represent the engines just as they were when used by the prehistoric ancestors. It is well to say, "supposed," for it is an absolutely unparalleled attempt at restoration, and Monsieur Synthèse, who never laughs, is obliged to make the greatest effort to keep from exploding.

The good Ta-Lao-Yé, misunderstanding Shien-Chung's silence, obligingly comes to his aid and begins to "explain the explanation" to him, as perhaps it lacked perspicuity.

"Here we are, as you may see, in the midst of the iron age, subsequent to yours

by several centuries, I believe. However, I affirm nothing, for our books are silent on this subject, and unfortunately the documents dating from the conquest were destroyed by our ancestors.”

Monsieur Synthèse made a polite gesture of acquiescence, without replying.

Ta-Lao-Yé continued: “Here is a scene from prehistoric times as it is suggested to us by these long and heavy strips of metal,” pointing out two railroad rails still joined together by three iron crossties. “These two parallel strips must certainly have served as sleds to your congeners the Mao-tchin for moving in number and with heavy loads over the hyperborean ice. Notice how this rounding outward which

appears in the whole lower side is well planned for slipping easily over the ground with a moderate traction. On this iron framework, forming indestructible sledge-runners, the Mao-tchin erected real buildings which they could move at will, employing reindeers to draw them, as is done to-day above the fiftieth degree of north latitude. There the sled-runners are similar to these, but are made of wood. The Mao-tchin of the present age, having gradually returned to barbarism, no longer have the knowledge of working in metals like their ancestors. The scene depicted in this picture represents, by analogy, a company of ancient Mao-tchins emigrating on their sled provided with these iron run-

ners. The artist had, as it were, only to copy after the savage Mao-tchin, who up to the present time vegetate obstinately on their eternal ice. What do you think of this reconstruction, Shien-Chung?"

"I find it very ingenious," replies Monsieur Synthèse, who has recovered all his gravity. Then he adds aside: "Let us see a little what this devil of a fellow will make of these Whitworth shells, and of these solid cannon balls, the use of which the Americans resumed in certain circumstances about 1878."

Ta-Lao-Yé, as if he had divined Monsieur Synthèse's thought, resumes in the same solemn tone, indicative of a man sure of his facts:

“You see these bodies, cylindrical and tapering—there are twelve, note well that detail—and these four balls of solid iron. Now please examine the explanatory tablet. What do you perceive?”

“Some men, Mao-tchin, playing ninepins.”

“That is it. From the most remote times our slaves have a veritable passion for a very simple game, entirely suitable to their intellectual feebleness. They use for it twelve pieces of wood coarsely fashioned into cones, and amuse themselves by knocking them down with balls also made of wood. The winner is he who knocks down the greatest number. There are generally four partners—mark this peculiarity well—four !

“ Now in certain excavations, the official report of which is preserved in the archives of our university, there were found in a metallic case the twelve articles of iron which you see arranged before you. You understand distinctly, twelve! Then, some time after, and in the same neighborhood, these four iron spheres, set apart for four partners. Is it not then evident to you as well as to me and to every man of sense, that the men of the iron age, having perhaps no wood for their use, had to avail themselves of these implements for this sport, the tradition of which has been kept up even to our days? The analogy is striking. Such is the scene represented in the picture in such a way as to establish to

the view of our children the wonderful resemblances which bind the past age to the present.

“Is it not true that there is nothing so interesting as the restoration of these remote epochs concerning which even legend is mute, and which thus live again before our eyes by means of hypotheses as ingenious as convincing?”

“Extremely ingenious, extremely convincing,” echoes Monsieur Synthèse impassably.

“As for this enormous block of iron,” resumed Ta-Lao-Yé, pointing to the armor plate, and without suspicion of the slightest trace of irony in Monsieur Synthèse’s reflection, “up to the present time every-

thing seems to demonstrate to us that it was used in sacrifices. It is quadrangular, or at least it was prior to these erosions which have changed its lines. The two faces are perfectly level and parallel, and its thickness removes it decidedly from all idea of an industrial tool. It must in fact have been very hard to move, considering the difficulties which the prehistoric men, who lacked our force, experienced in operating with such heavy bodies."

"And why," asked Monsieur Synthèse, "do you make of it a sacrificial altar?"

"It's weight, its shape, its being composed of metal, everything about it leads us to suppose so. What would there have been surprising in the fact that the men of

the iron age had made use, even preferably to everything else, of this metal characteristic of their period for the offering of victims to their idols?"

"But still have you any data concerning those deities of prehistoric time?"

"This metal monster," said Ta-Lao-Yé, pointing out the cannon standing upright on its deeply corroded breech. "It is very difficult to make out its original form, it has been so changed by the ravages of time.

"But still, with all the willingness imaginable, it is impossible to find in that object any human appearance."

"Who says that the prehistoric men may have given the human form to the god

of iron? I believe rather in a symbol made in conformity to the rites——”

“But why was its interior channeled out?”

“Doubtless that it might be less weighty to erect. Possibly to introduce particular substances in it. We are still reduced to conjecture. One can hardly form an idea of the difficulties presented by this study where the proper documents are constantly lacking, and in which it is necessary to progress with infinite slowness, under penalty of uttering enormities.

“Therefore I conclude apart from error which may be subsequently discovered ;

“This table of iron, this sort of pieced column, also of iron, discovered in the

same place in the north of our province, deeply buried in sands, washed over them, perhaps, in time by the sea, are religious objects of the iron age.

“And in this connection I call your attention to the singular tendency of the men of that epoch to construct on a large scale, in spite of the feebleness and imperfection of their means.

“Place before these heavy masses our Mao-tchin, still obviously like their ancestors, they will never succeed in moving them, despite their most energetic efforts.

“Is not the mind stupefied by the consideration of those men, limited to their own forces, fashioning and setting up such giants?”

“The reconstruction of this sacrificial scene, as your artist has depicted it, seems to me a great success,” interrupts Monsieur Synthèse, more and more imperturbable.

“Upon my word, it is a human sacrifice !”

“The enormous quantity of skeletons heaped in the sands around these objects gives a strong probability to this hypothesis. Why should not these bones be those of victims offered to the metal monster?”

“Precisely. But perhaps I am wrong in being so sure, for the earth has certainly been the subject of numerous and great alterations.”

“I wish no further proof of that than this bronze cross”—showing the screw—

“found among these objects evidently belonging to a different epoch.”

“And why, Ta-Lao-Yé?”

“Because everything seems to disprove the simultaneity of the age of iron and the age of bronze.”

“Nevertheless the bronze cross was found not far from the table and column of iron!”

“There again our uncertainty is great. Why a cross? Why this twisting of the arms from right to left? Had there been five or six arms, it might have been supposed that the Mao-tchin intended to represent a star.”

“What do you make of this immense iron stem which has preserved its cylindrical form in despite of time?” said Monsieur

Synthèse, designating the horizontal shaft. "It has remained here in the gallery of iron, although in my opinion it should have been placed in another gallery where the pottery and earthen objects generally are kept."

"I will be very glad if you will give me the reason of this apparent contradiction."

"Come in that gallery, I beg; you will quickly understand."

The group of visitors, intensely interested in this unconstrained conversation, proceeds at once to the spot indicated, and Monsieur Synthèse, who has determined to be astonished at nothing, perceives a long and slender brick factory chimney extended on the ground. The chimney is

broken in several pieces, but all the fragments are carefully adjusted to each other so as to preserve to the monument its configuration.

“This,” resumes Ta-Lao-Yé, “should certainly represent to you a portion of a subterranean canal, or aqueduct, by which the Mao-tchin conducted their drinking water from point to point. The canal, which has suffered little, seems to date back to a very remote epoch, contemporary with the iron age. It was found in alluvial soil, along with vague remains of habitations, very deeply buried in the ground.”

“But the iron stem,” says Monsieur Synthèse, referring to the horizontal shaft.

“It is of the exact caliber of the opening

arranged in the brick aqueduct. We suppose that it served as a mould for the workmen who have given this strictly circular shape to the interior of the canal.

“What do you think of all this, Shien-Chung? Do our deductions seem conclusive to you, and do you think, frankly, that our attempts at restoration deserve the approbation of true savants?”

“I think that the studies of prehistoric ages are in the highest degree attractive, and that they abound in surprises.”

CHAPTER VI.

It is night. The air is wonderfully clear. Not the smallest cloud, not the slightest trace of mist. Upon the dark blue of the firmament the stars shine with incomparable brilliancy. A night in truth for poets and astronomers!

Monsieur Synthèse, provisioned by a feast as varied as scientific, digests or rather assimilates the substances which he has just absorbed like a man to whom a fast of ten thousand years has served as an appetizer.

His agreeable companions, also thorough-

ly refreshed, prepare for a journey whose goal makes the aged Swedish philosopher stamp his feet in his impatience.

“Patience, Shien-Chung!” repeats Ta-Lao-Yé for the tenth time. “You know the astonishing velocity of our course—what use is there in setting out now to arrive over there too soon? It is not yet time. Let us talk a little while waiting, if you will.”

“I have no objection—let us talk. And first of all permit me to mention to you a particular by which I am much impressed, though I have passed only a single day with you. I have just seen a populous city, Tombouctou, and I do not observe there any sign of commerce or trade

That confounds me, belonging as I did when I fell asleep to an epoch devoted beyond measure to trade and manufactures.”

“To what end should we speculate and traffic? Can we increase the sum of our well-being, since we possess all necessaries, and have no need of superfluity? Our material wants are reduced to a minimum, and greediness is a vice unknown among us. Our temperate climate is subject to no changes, and we have no occasion to pre-occupy ourselves about the seasons. Our garments, simple, ample, convenient, are adapted to our comfort and form. They are invariably made in a fashion of the past, according to sumptuary laws which, I

should tell you, have been in force for many long years."

"But still these garments must be manufactured, and your food produced."

"The Mao-tchin are weavers. As to our food, a few laboratories suffice, where we work in turn, as at the school.

"The alimentary substances may not be found within your reach."

"But they are in the vicinity of the laboratories, which besides are so managed as to produce uninterruptedly. As to the general supply of provisions, you seem to ignore the fact that each man can, in the twinkling of an eye, transport to his residence subsistence for an indefinite period."

“That is true. I always forget that wonderful faculty which confers on you the veritable gift of ubiquity.”

“We have no need consequently to trouble ourselves about methods of communication, which were an essential question to our ancestors. Instead of having the elements brought to us, we go to them, wherever and whenever we please. The instantaneousness of our movements, our psychic force, whose development is almost infinite, permit us to realize what the men of old sought for so long and so laboriously.

“Further, the habitable world being limited to a circular and uninterrupted zone which follows the tropics closely, the productions are nearly identical. It is

therefore useless to transport here or there this or that substance which we are sure of finding everywhere.”

“You labor intellectually, however.”

“Enormously, but unconsciously as it were. We live above all on thought—thought alone, which procures us unutterable delights. Do not be led to believe, however, that we shut ourselves up in our selves, that we are self-absorbed as were formerly the illuminati who were content with this inward contemplation—a sort of permanent hypnotism. We, on the contrary, are continually exchanging ideas. Our mind is always in motion like our body; and just as we put all our mental resources in common, even so we also

exchange our ideas, our discoveries, so that the results of our labors are utilized for the profit of all.

“Thanks to this social organization, which in restricting our wants permits us to live without even the thought of any preoccupation, we are able to consecrate ourselves wholly to that science which we consider under its innumerable aspects, and which we assimilate in all its manifestations.

“See you, Shien-Chung, we are really with regard to you a race apart, who, as I said to you awhile since, have for long years persevered in a work of dematerialization. Where this will conduct us I know not; perhaps in some hundreds of

thousands of years to an absolute spiritualization.

“For the present you notice that a complete calm has succeeded to the fevers of the past. No more struggles—no more competitions—no more rough labors, no more cares—humanity made one, and then rests!”

“You are, indeed, fortunate, Ta-Lao-Yé. The life thus realized should surely be the ideal happiness. But in this connection allow me to make a final reflection concerning your social state. How do you comprehend the family? I have seen your children at school, and have sincerely applauded your methods of instruction. But their mothers, your wives?”

“The position of the wife has been long defined with us. Woman is in all and for all our equal. She enjoys all our rights and prerogatives, and the case occurring, our responsibilities also.

“I must confess, however, that this unification has not been accomplished without struggles. History teaches us that formerly, at the time when our brains commenced to predominate under the manifold causes which have modified our race, woman, more nervous, less balanced, less reasonable—excuse the triteness of the phrase—put humanity in peril. Not content with aspiring to become our equals, they claimed a complete mastery, an absolute domination.

“ Each family became a hell—private life was in general atrocious.

“ Whether because the cerebral elements were wanting in co-ordination, or because the intensified nervous system was out of proportion with the feminine organism, or from any other cause which our ancestors were unable to fathom, the men were obliged to pass through a terrible period.

“It reached such a point that the legislators, having exhausted arguments and penalties, decreed that the trial should be made of hindering the growth of the cerebral mass in all female children from their infancy, by methodical compression of the cranial box.”

“You were going to make all your women microcephalic—idiots.”

“Idiots would be preferable to the monsters who tyrannized over our fathers to the extent of throwing them into furious madness.”

“To compress the the heads in order to annihilate thought, that is truly Chinese!” interrupted Monsieur Synthèse. “But hold! as to that, this practice, to which I cannot refuse a patent for originality, had its counterpart in old times; before the grand exodus of the Mongolian race. Do you know that your ancestors, those eminently practical men, compressed the feet of their daughters to the extent of rendering them completely useless, so

that they necessarily had to stay at home?"

"We know it, and our fathers were not ignorant of the fact. It was even that custom, I believe, which suggested to our legislators the idea of combating the cerebral hypertrophy by a similar method."

"And has this heroic method succeeded at all?"

"Admirably! The enlargement of the brain was entirely arrested in the female sex for a sufficiently long time. The men profited by this respite; they saw their own brains increase just the same, lived in tranquillity, and established their domination beyond contest.

"When they had thus gained a con-

siderable advance, after several generations the legislators raised the interdict. The feminine brains again began to grow ; but the men, more advanced, retained their advantage, wholly directing the minds of their companions gently yet firmly. The latter gave way without resistance, they were subdued as it were, and when later they attained the same degree of cerebral progression, they no longer differed morally from the men who had educated them.

“Thus ended that social revolution which might have brought about not only the predominance of woman over man, but also the reduction to slavery and the degeneration of the latter.

“But it is time to start and to direct our

course to the spot where the communications between Mars and the earth are to operated. I have waited till the last moment because it is night, so as to conduct our voyage instantaneously without leaving you the least regret, since the darkness prevents our seeing anything during our passage.

“As for you, my friends, kindly group yourselves as before around Shien-Chung, so as to envelop him in the union of our conjoined forces.”

“We start, Shien-Chung! and we arrive!” he says after a few instants.

“Where are we?” asks Monsieur Synthèse, slightly giddy, his temples compressed a little, his chest panting.

“At a nice height, to enable you to comprehend as a whole the series of operations, in the main very simple, by means of which this conversation between the planets is conducted.”

“That is the reason then that I feel this inconvenience in breathing which I attribute to the rarefaction of the air.”

“Do you wish to descend a little? As for us, we are so accustomed to these excursions to the extreme limits of the atmosphere that we suffer infinitely less from the diminution of the elements of respiration.”

“Thanks! we will soon perceive whether this shortness of breath becomes too intolerable.”

“What do you see beneath you?”

“Thanks to the light of the moon which has just appeared above the horizon, I see a vast white plain—white as if it was covered with snow. The illusion is complete in fact.”

“And yet it is not snow, but in reality a white texture.”

“You say texture!” interrupts Monsieur Synthèse, nonplussed. “Texture covering such a space!”

“Positively.”

“I am confounded!”

“Pshaw! you will see other things very different. Again, what do you notice?”

“A light, rather intense, yet quite insufficient to constitute an interastral signal.”

“And then?”

“That is singular!” commences Monsieur Synthèse again. “The white plain has suddenly disappeared to give place to an immense spot of opaque black! The light also goes out! And the black spot disappears in its turn, allowing the white plain to be visible again! And the light reappears!”

“Well, that is all. The communications with Mars have just commenced, and there will probably be a reply from our neighbors, who from their side should be directing their best optical instruments upon our planet.

“We are in the neighborhood of an astronomical observatory, are we not?”

“The best and best organized in the entire world.”

“I should like very much to visit it.”

“Presently, when you have well considered the operation, very elementary, nevertheless permitting us to exchange our thoughts in spite of the formidable distance separating us. The occultations continue over the ground, according to a certain rhythm which, by intermissions more or less irregular, passes from white to black, and reciprocally, but in such a manner that these occultations are strictly in concurrence with those of the light.”

Monsieur Synthèse resumes : “Upon the whole, it is simply an experiment of optical telegraphy.”

“Simple if you wish as to the working, but singularly complicated as to the elements.”

“Explain, I beg you, Ta-Lao-Yé.”

“We will now descend and approach the ground as quickly as possible, that you may look at the detail of the experiment. You will then understand at a single glance without having recourse to unnecessary explanations.”

The group at once lets itself glide down perpendicularly. The spot enlarges rapidly, attaining enormous dimensions, and stretches itself on all sides as far as the eye can reach, in proportion as the descent is effected.

Monsieur Synthèse and his companions touch the ground.

“There is there,” continues Ta-Lao-Yé, “a colossal army, numbering four hundred and fifty to five hundred thousand men.”

“Mao-tchins?” asks Monsieur Synthèse sharply.

“Not at all, if you please, Shien-Chung. The Mao-tchins!” are but journeymen, unworthy to be our colaborers, near or far off in that which constitutes for us a portion of the great work of our scientific life, of our cerebral existence. All those who move before your eyes with the quickness of thought are of our own race.

“But draw near, Shien-Chung. You need not be afraid of hindering the operation. We are quite at the extremity of the field of the experiments, and the ele-

ments are so innumerable that the working of a fixed quantity is of no importance."

Encouraged by this cordial invitation, Monsieur Synthèse approaches slowly and contemplates from close by a spectacle truly stupefying. Before him is spread flat upon the ground a fabric of considerable dimensions, which at first sight he estimates as at least one hundred meters square.

At one side the fabric is fastened by stakes planted in the earth, and at the other side it is held by two men who are motionless for the moment. In other words, to make the explanation as to this arrangement clear, the piece of stuff being square, the two stakes placed opposite each

other hold the two corners immovable, while the other corners are held by the two men. Next to this piece is another, then still another, and so one after another indefinitely as far as sight can reach, as numerous as thought conceives.

On Monsieur Synthèse's right, and dominating the entire plain from above, shines an intense light on the summit of a tower.

All at once the two men in front of the old Swedish philosopher perform a swift and instantaneous volt. Without letting go of the fabric which each held by a corner, they glide just above the ground with the velocity of impalpable shadows.

The cloth naturally yields to this impetus,

turning about in proportion as the movement is operated.

The course of the two men is limited to the dimensions of the fabric, that is, to about one hundred meters, according to Monsieur Synthèse's calculation.

The stakes opposing a slender obstacle, hold against a moderate strain.

The cloth is turned over entirely and spread anew on the ground, but on its reverse side, and upon a space adjoining that which it had just occupied.

On one side it is white as snow, on the other side black as coal.

At the precise moment when the black side is spread over the ground, the light goes out. Very soon it gleams again. At

once the Cerebrals, attentive to the signal which directs their maneuver, launch themselves in the direction opposite to that which they had just pursued and return on their steps in the twinkling of an eye. The black side of the cloth, which a moment before faced the sky, is again turned to the ground, and the white side appears.

And on all sides, farther than the eye can reach, thousands, hundreds of thousands of men, alike attentive to the luminous signals, repeat this maneuver with the precision and instantaneousness of an automaton furnished with a million arms, and more easily than two of us could turn over a mere bedsheet spread out on a meadow.

This strange operation lasts nearly an hour without other interruptions than those produced by the occultations which evidently have a meaning for those holding the key of these mysterious signals. Then all stops suddenly.

“It is finished for the moment,” says Ta-Lao-Yé. “The Martians have recognized our signals; it is now for our astronomers to watch attentively the maneuver of their planetary correspondents and not to miss a single one of the occultations of light which their telescopes render visible in Mars.

“Ah! the inhabitants have not then adopted your system?”

“For a very simple reason. It is because

it is infinitely easier to maneuver luminous numbers, however numerous and intense they may be, than to accustom hundreds of thousands of men to that precision of which they have just given you proof.

“But our position in relation to the sun prevents our using the method employed by our neighbors. In fact, the earth being between Mars and the sun, remains immersed as it were in the light projected by the latter, so that an artificial light, even if extremely intense, would risk not being perceived by the Martians in spite of the power and precision of their instruments.

“Our ancestors tried this method at first, when after hundreds of years of watchfulness successive generations had discovered

that beyond doubt luminous signals proceeded from Mars.

“During these ages lights were seen to appear and disappear, following very simple periodic laws, but showing a persistent character.

“Replies were made from the earth, increasing more and more the intensity of the luminous sources, but in vain.”

“The signals could not possibly be seen from Mars for the reason which you have just pointed out to me very correctly, a reason applicable to the earth only because in relation to Mars we in a manner turn our back to the sun.”

“This is quite obvious.”

“Let us suppose the production of lumi-

nous phenomena on Mars, on the earth, and on Venus. From the earth the light of Mars will be visible, from Venus that of the earth, but that of the earth cannot be seen from Mars, nor that of Venus from the earth."

"Very true. In view of attempts as vain as protracted, an astronomer of antiquity bethought himself of a method which was suggested by the very aspect of Mars. Noticing that the white spots formed at the two poles of our neighbor by the ice caps were modified by the influence of the seasons, he said to himself that it might be possible to attract the notice of its inhabitants by making changes in a quick, rhythmic manner in any white sur-

face on the earth. That was the germ of the idea so successfully employed in our day.

“Would you believe that it required several centuries for the Cerebrals of the epoch, already organized as we are, to put it in practice, notwithstanding the permanent failure of luminous signals!

“The idea advanced gradually, however, meeting with adepts more or less numerous who dedicated their lives to it.

“For do not think that the system of interastral communication was established at the outset as you see it to-day.”

“I do not imagine it, if only because of the enormous amount of groping in the dark necessary for the discovery and

mutual comprehension of the rhythms forming the key to your correspondence.”

“But first it was necessary to experiment for a long time, to exhaust many lives, before succeeding even in making our signals seen and being sure that they were seen.”

“That was in reality the essential point.”

“Choice was made of a site quite horizontal, destitute of vegetation, without undulations, and covered with very white sand. It is the same that we still occupy to-day.

“Men were assembled in numerous bands and placed at proper distances on this peaceful field of maneuvers, after having

been provided with large pieces of black cloth. They were to count up to a certain number, in order to operate as nearly simultaneously as possible and then roll up and unroll their cloth, so as to make the ground appear white and black in succession.

“Notwithstanding the insufficiency of the method, the inhabitants of Mars, always on the watch, saw the signal and replied to it.

“You can hardly imagine the overwhelming impression of joy and pride when the fact was indeed duly established.”

“It is obvious,” interrupts Monsieur Synthèse “that the inhabitants of the

planet Mars, much older than the earth, and more advanced than her in sidereal evolution, must have been for a long time previous, endeavoring to correspond with us.

“This idea was accredited even in my time. I readily believe that they have made signals to us which we have not known how to see or interpret because of the imperfection of our apparatus.”

“Their attempts date back hundreds of centuries, as they have informed us since regular communication has been established, and as you may see in the reports published by our observatories.”

“I have no doubt of it. However little better than ours their instruments may

have been, I have no doubt that in the nineteenth century they must have known the earth better than we knew the moon.

“They have probably known the modifications undergone by our planet, and certain phenomena of the material order undoubtedly have not escaped them; who knows if they have not even established certain facts of our existence?”

“The denuding of certain countries of their forests, the growth of large cities, the tides of Mont Saint-Michel, the modern works necessitating great agglomerations of men, like the canals of Suez and Panama—the great wars; that of secession, and the Franco-Prussian contest. How many delights lost to the savants of my time!”

Ta-Lao-Yé resumes: "As soon as it was fully proved that the Martians had perceived our signals, we busied ourselves in perfecting our very deficient materials for the work before even thinking of establishing any system of numeration.

"The ground was rigorously leveled and made as flat as the surface of still waters. Next, enormous quantities of cloth, light but very durable, were caused to be manufactured by all the Mao-tchin who could be disposed of. Next the number of the human transmitters was greatly increased, and their training was commenced.

"It was not a small matter, you may be sure, to discipline three, four or five hundred thousand men, so as to make them perform

their evolutions at a single signal seen by all at the same time, and to make them maneuver like automatons.

“Very fortunately the conformation of the Cerebrals is wonderfully favorable to these sorts of exercises. Their psychic force enables them to change their location with the rapidity of thought, and to move the heaviest loads with even the same instantaneousness.

“Men organized as you are could never have succeeded in covering and uncovering such spaces with the quickness and precision of thought, as we do.

“All that was very well, we corresponded, but we did not understand each other. We confined ourselves to repeating

distinctly the signals perceived, to show that we distinguished them.

“It was then that the wisest among us taxed their ingenuity to find a system of numeration composed of very elementary signs, and to make use of every arrangement of them possible in the order of generation of these arrangements.

“In the beginning this numeration comprised single occultation, double occultation, triple, etc.

“We limited ourselves to three elementary signs, which I can produce for you on the sand by dots, the intervals between which are proportionate to the durations of the disappearances of the white surface:

.
 etc., etc.

“The most summary study of this series reveals its law. It is a succession of different groupings composed of one, of two, or of three elementary terms and so on; and these elementary terms are of three kinds only: single occultation, double occultation, and triple occultation. They are substituted for each other in like term of consecutive groups, following their order of size.

“This system, you see, can extend itself indefinitely and in this manner serve to represent the series of ordinary numbers. The Martians understood wonderfully well and replied to the rhythmic occultation of

our white surface by flashes produced successively in an order identical.

“This mode of numeration being soon adopted on both sides, it was endeavored to establish a correspondence really explicit.

“Only numbers can be transmitted, as you know. It is then with numbers that we have succeeded in coming to an understanding. The question was by a simple geometrical process to translate plane figures properly chosen into numerical series, and to transmit the terms of these series successively.

“The mathematicians are acquainted with several graphic processes by means of which a plane figure, or even a solid one,

is fragmentarily represented by a series of numbers. Conversely, they know how to translate a series of numbers into a figure found by dots.

“The different graphic methods should be classed in such a manner that the simplest should be selected first.

“There, too, the Martians, evidently more advanced intellectually than we are, apprehended marvelously. They tried the various processes and finished by finding the one we had adopted, and succeeded in conducting our rhythmic occultations to a transmission of designs, of plane projections.”

Monsieur Synthèse had listened patiently to this long and somewhat confused de-

scription without giving the slightest indication of impatience.

“You have understood, have you not, Shien-Chung,” continued Ta-Lao-Yé in his soft voice.

“I have understood, Ta-Lao-Yé, and I confess to you frankly that this procedure, undoubtedly very ingenious, does not seem to me in keeping with your civilization.”

“I will not say it is the best, but it is at any rate the least bad of all those we have tried up to this time. We content ourselves with it for want of a better.”

“But it must be horribly slow.”

“Undoubtedly, although a long time since we succeeded in instituting agreements for abbreviation. However, to the

slowness resulting from the imperfection of the system must be added the material time required for the transmittal of the signal to Mars, perhaps three minutes when Mars is nearest to us. You know that, Shien-Chung, do you not?"

"Do you take me for a child, or for a Mao-tchin of the year 11,880, Ta-Lao-Ye? Yes, I know that the orbits described around the sun by Mars and the earth are slightly elliptic instead of being circular, so that the interval separating them varies sensibly from one point to another.

"This interval, which on the average is nineteen millions of leagues, or sixty-six millions of kilometers, as we said before, can diminish at certain points to four-

teen millions of leagues, or fifty-six millions of kilometers.

Now, as light travels sixty-five thousand leagues, or three hundred thousand kilometers, in a second, the signal in this latter case will take three minutes and five seconds to reach Mars.

“But a few minutes or a few millions of kilometers more or less are of little consequence!

“I have dreamed better than that in the old time, I who speak to you.

“Had I had the disposal of a thousand millions of Cerebrals like those who now inhabit the world, our planet would be mistress of the infinite!

“But pshaw! what avails it to evoke the

memory of that gigantic dream, the realization of which is henceforth impossible for me.”

Then, after a long pause, he added abruptly :

“Tell me, Ta-Lao-Yé, will I be allowed to inform myself about all your labors in connection with Mars?”

“Whenever you will. You may even, should it be agreeable to you, examine for yourself all the planets nearest to us with our instruments, which possess magnifying powers of which you could not form the slightest idea. I promise you an interesting night, however little you may be versed in astronomic science.”

CHAPTER VII.

It is only twenty-four hours since the resurrection of Monsieur Synthèse was accomplished, and already the old man feels a dull weariness succeed to the fever of the first moment.

Returning to existence with his intellect entirely unimpaired, he has been able, thanks to his prodigious faculty of assimilation and also to the help of his hosts, to take a tolerably thorough view of the world of the hundred and nineteenth century, and that world yields him only disillusion and bitterness.

In the former time, his old conceptions of the future human race were diametrically opposite to that revealed to him in reality, when he awakened in the porcelain dwelling permeated by the fluid given off by the Cerebrals.

Hence the disillusion, not only because a man of his worth dislikes to find himself deceived, but also because not a single one of the grand problems which he had proposed to himself of old had been even approached. Problems the solution of which, in his opinion, ought not to require so great a succession of years, but henceforth impossible to solve, in view of the direction taken by the ideas of his actual contemporaries.

Again he found singularly aged this humanity which at first sight had appeared to him, perhaps not without reason, smitten with stagnation.

“Men who lull themselves into security on a planet which is growing cold, who make no more innovations, but content themselves with cultivating the intellectual domain bequeathed to them by their ancestors,” he thought to himself.

The earth, diminished as to the habitable zone, grown uniform as to race and products, become Chinese, appeared to him as if shut in by the ancient brick wall, insuperable of old to all ideas, customs, aspirations, sounds from without.

Is not this unification of the race more-

over the unique cause of that stagnation, in the sense that it has put an end to the fierce struggle for life, that struggle which creates wants, affords scope for all instincts, triumphs over the elements, gives birth to genius? And he adds as a variation, "A humanity retired from business!"

On the other hand, it must be added, his early admiration had received a rude blow at the time of his short visit to the prehistoric museum.

The insane hoards of that place, displayed with the superb assurance of ignorance, those crazy comments, those uncouth restorations, had inspired him with a discreet reserve regarding the other wonders they pretended to show him.

The system of intersidereal correspondence appeared to him undoubtedly ingenious, but singularly behind the time, in a word, Chinese—in the sense that the labor of men supplied the place of machines or of the elements.

How gladly would he, the audacious, who recoiled before nothing, have substituted for this operation more original than sublime, astral magnetism, electricity, or the so-called attraction!

For several hours he had looked over the archives of the observatory, riveted his eye to the eyepiece of a monumental telescope, recognized beyond question that signals were being made from the planet Mars—and what then! If the congeners

of Ta-Lao-Yé had used as little ingenuity in interpreting them as they had in defining the use of prehistoric engines, the "History of Mars by the earth-dwellers" must be the most unutterable compendium of interastral errors.

And yet these beings cast in the same mold, these old fellows with big heads—these gentle encyclopedists, possessed a matchless privilege which made them beings apart, truly superior to humanity as represented in Monsieur Synthèse.

Thence arose a bitterness from which he could not free himself, for his corporeal inferiority was more and more painful to him in proportion as he had occasion to make the least movement.

And to think that beings so marvelously gifted, possessing such an intensity of the peculiar fluid, have only attained to the utilization of human powers almost exclusively!

What wonders would they not accomplish should they employ the powers of nature, should they make machines corresponding with their own organization, if they worked things on a grand scale, instead of thus wasting themselves idly!

To mobilize stupidly several hundreds of thousands of men, to turn over white and black cloths, when a thousand would suffice, with a few kilometers of wire and a certain number of apparatuses similar to those which were used in the nineteenth cen-

tury for folding newspapers! Were these people then ignorant of the principle of the transference of forces?

And Monsieur Synthèse, who feels himself becoming more and more the old man of times of yore, comes to establishing between the present and the past comparisons which are not favorable to the former.

Ah! if it was not for that wonderful levitation! In what condition would they be, these wondrous Cerebrals, if like their prehistoric ancestors they were riveted to the ground and deprived of their incomparable psychic element!

However, in spite of these recriminations which Monsieur Synthèse would not wish his hosts to suspect, he must again recur to

them in order to be able to continue his voyage of discovery around the world. And it is not the least cause of his discontent to think that he cannot isolate himself for a moment, cannot observe, study, admire or criticise at his ease, without being perpetually in the hands of this group, who raise and bear him away with attitudes of apotheosis.

Were it not for giving a legitimate satisfaction to his equally legitimate curiosity, in faith Monsieur Synthèse, already surfeited with this novel life, and impressed besides with his inferiority, would wish to find again in his block of ice the oblivion of the ages on the iceberg!

The voice of Ta-Lao-Yé, whose enervat-

ing gentleness begins to exasperate him, warns him that it is nearly time to start.

And the group which, like the choruses of ancient tragedy, was always ready at the nick of time to furnish the response, receive a confidence, exalt a hero, or abuse a culprit, the group declared itself ready to renew its collective effort, and to transport Shien-Chung to the most distant lands. And Shien-Chung commits himself to the hands of his group, and Ta-Lao-Yé gives the signal for departure, advising the said Shien-Chung that the tour of the world from west to east will be conducted slowly or rapidly as the voyager shall decide.

“Very well, be kind enough to convey me to the extreme Orient, where is found

the continent surmised or rather foretold by me, and whose foundations were formed by the incessant work of the coral insects. I have studied that region specially. I have even been a colaborer in the formation of that continent, and I shall not be sorry to take a glimpse at its actual configuration."

At these words Monsieur Synthèse feels himself suddenly lifted from the ground and transported in a single dash to the extreme limits of the respirable atmosphere. Then the group of which he is the center moves off sideways with incredible celerity, notwithstanding which, however, he beholds an interminable panorama unfolding itself as far as eye can reach.

One might expect this lightning speed to prevent the view of objects and places, or at least to render it so indistinct as to be entirely confused.

It is not so at all. Whether because the psychic force emitted by the Cerebrals, and by which Monsieur Synthèse finds himself thoroughly permeated, incalculably augments his faculties or creates new ones in him, or whether the height at which the removal effected facilitates his view of a vast region as a whole, he is astonished at the incomparable clearness of his vision.

There was the Soudan with its sandy deserts now thickly covered with grass and furrowed by a multitude of water-courses which branched out to infinity

through that transformed soil to which they gave life.

There should be Upper Egypt, with the Nile, whose upper branches form an immense fresh-water lake, as Ta-Lao-Yé affirms. On the other hand the Red Sea has disappeared, with the Gulf of Aden. Vanished also the Indian Ocean, from which have emerged new countries which have consolidated with Somal, the Laquedive and Maldive islands, joined themselves to Ceylon and the southern extremity of Hindostan, and filled up all the space comprised between the Gulf of Aman and the equator, above which extends a vast Mediterranean.

Filled up also are the Gulf of Bengal

and the Gulf of Siam, between which formerly stretched out the narrow and crooked peninsula of Malacca like the backbone of a submerged continent.

Sumatra, Borneo, Java, the Celebes, the Philippines, form only one country, which joins the realm of Siam, Cochin-China, and China.

There is now but a Southern Asia joined to Central Africa, and extending beyond view to the extreme Orient, where formerly were the great Pacific and Oceanica.

And everywhere Monsieur Synthèse observes that wonderful system of arterial irrigation by which all countries, old or new, are watered to profusion.

Everywhere the same exuberant vegeta-

tion, everywhere the same tropical products modified by the presence of the products of the temperate zone, everywhere, too, an extremely dense population, with its uniform dwellings, its silent cities, its slaves bound to the soil.

“Well, it is finished!” said he with some bitterness of tone. “There is left nothing at all of the configuration of the ancient world—absolutely nothing! The wild animals, even the birds, have almost entirely disappeared.”

“But the useful species have long been domesticated,” replied Ta-Lao-Yé. “Have I forgotten to mention that particular to you? The Mao-tchin have herds for their subsistence, beasts of burden or draught to

aid them in their labors—they raise birds for their use, even for their pleasure.

“Unfortunately we have not been able to rid ourselves of insects and reptiles which swarm at certain points.

“However, we can say that nearly the whole of the disposable earth has been utilized.”

“And you live always in peace, as to the inhabitants of different countries or even hemispheres? Are there never contests among you, plans of subjection or domination?”

“No, since there is but a single country, without states, without frontiers, and that country is the world!”

“The world inhabited by a single race!

Whatever you have previously told me, I cannot accustom myself to the thought of this absolute union in one of so many different races, living the same life, liking the same things, pursuing the same end. You have not even civil wars to dread, happy representatives of the nineteenth century!"

"What good in killing men? Do they not die fast enough as it is?" simply asked Ta-Lao-Yé with an ingenuousness which would have made a conqueror howl with indignation. "Far from seeking to abridge the life of our fellow-creatures, we use every means possible to prolong it."

"It cannot always have been so, however. Humanity in principle being more bad than good, it must have required either

terrible lessons of adversity or a rule of iron to produce this regard for existence."

"Oh, agreed! This fellowship which nothing can alter was not established without a struggle.

"It was some thousands of years ago—put it at five thousand—I have not the exact date in mind.

"The world, almost united as to race, was yet divided into several portions, called states, arbitrarily separated by limits of some kind, rivers, seas, or mountains.

"These states also had chiefs, who sometimes pushed their insanity to such an extent as to seek to aggrandize themselves at the expense of their neighbors. As if the soil were not for every one, or for any one,

which is the same thing! So our ancestors had armies.”

“What,” interrupts Monsieur Synthèse, “this universal peace has existed only for five thousand years? Until then were men foolish and criminal enough to destroy their productions, ravage their lands, and slaughter each other?”

“Not at all. They destroyed nothing, nor did they commit ravages any more, because only a single man was killed, the chief! and that was justice.”

“I do not understand.”

“It is very simple. Each state had its army, composed, according to its importance, of two hundred, five hundred, or a thousand men.”

“No more? In my time the armies comprised the entire nation.”

“That gives me a deplorable idea of your time.”

“What was the organization of these little armies?”

“As elementary as possible. Each soldier received from the state an enormous sum——”

“At that epoch then business was still carried on with money?”

“Yes. I resume; each volunteersoldier—there was a superabundance, and only the strongest, bravest, and most honest were accepted—took a solemn oath to kill that chief who would not live in good understanding with his neighbors.”

“That is perfect.”

“All methods were sanctioned—sword, fire, treachery, ambuscade—to erase from the number of the living the man who periled the existence of so many of his fellow-creatures.

“A soldier set forth alone and disguised, introduced himself by stratagem into the presence of the tyrant, killed him or was killed. In the latter case another succeeded him—then another—then ten—then a hundred if necessary.

“And the tyrant’s fate was death! For believe me, Shien-Chung, there is no countersign so rigorous that it will not yield, no barrier so high that it will not fall, before the immovable will of a man

absolutely resolved to sacrifice his life to preserve the independence of his country and protect the existence of his own.

“These patriotic leagues composed among our ancestors what you called the standing army, and surely this little army, unexpensive, but firmly resolved to strike only the author of the wrong, was well worth any other.

“All these men were loaded with honors and riches, they occupied everywhere the first place, and they had to intervene only very rarely, for the chiefs of provinces, knowing the danger they ran in troubling the public peace, considered themselves warned.

“This condition of affairs lasted hardly

for four or five generations, till the day when unification was complete, thanks to the absorption of the human races by the Chinese race.

“Men recognized no other masters but themselves, acted according to their fancy.”

“You must have begun by a frightful anarchy?”

“Not at all. Given, that you must not do to others what you would not they should do to you, and that the liberty of each one begins where that of the whole ends, it was very easy to come to an understanding.

“So our legislation was very simple from the beginning, thanks to a legal penalty

rigorously applied by the assembled people."

"And that legal penalty was?—"

"Death! What do you think of that legislation?"

"I have no right to complain of the cause, in seeing the effect. But——"

"Oriental China!" interrupted Ta-Lao-Yé, pointing out to Monsieur Synthèse the continent formed by the rising above the Pacific of the ancient coral reefs and their close union with each other.

In this continent of comparatively recent formation nothing recalls its quite peculiar origin. No sign of coral is visible. A uniform soil composed of blackish earth covers uninterruptedly the hard cal-

careous foundations. The thoroughly modified flora shows the same aspect as in the other regions; the same flat-roofed houses emerge from the forests, the rivers wind in every direction and lose themselves in the inland seas, whose blue waves sparkle in the sun. At a distance from each other smoke several volcanoes, whose presence gives evidence of a continual labor going on in the deep strata.

“Slower, Ta-Lao-Yé, slower, I beg you!” exclaims Monsieur Synthèse.

Obediently the group pauses, hovering.

“I would like to descend in order to examine the territory more closely,” continues Monsieur Synthèse.

Hardly has he time to express his wish

when he feels himself dropping like an aëro-lite. The group halts, fifteen meters above the ground.

“And now, Shien-Chung, what do you wish?” asks Ta-Lao-Yé.

“To make some investigations in the vicinity of that volcano.”

“That is easy,” replies Ta-Lao-Yé, murmuring a few words to his companions in a low voice.

And at once the group commences to zigzag slowly, making irregular tracks around a large space covered with lava long ago grown cold.

Monsieur Synthèse recognizes beyond doubt the volcano which of old was in eruption at the moment when he was about

to realize his memorable experiment, his great work demonstrating the complete evolution of the animal series from the protoplasm up to man!

There the soil no more retains its monotonous uniformity. Everywhere are signs of violent convulsions, of successive upheavings, of terrible dissolutions, of the struggle for centuries between the elements.

The conquest of the ocean by the earth has not been a peaceable one, judging from this chaos incessantly repeated by the giant who growls and fiercely shakes his locks of flame and smoke.

Monsieur Synthèse, without fear of imposing on the unalterable complaisance of

his companions, continued his investigations among the lava. Porous stones, vitrified rocks, coral remains cropping out from the edges of the crevasses, especially the latter, superabound in places.

Suddenly Monsieur Synthèse utters such a cry that the Cerebrals are unable to repress a woeful groan, so painfully is the delicacy of their organism affected. Without even appearing to notice their agitation, he points with his shriveled finger to a block of coral of cylindric shape, almost regular, placed with its base upon a bank of lava, but slightly inclined like the defunct tower of Pisa.

“There! it is there!” he said with so bewildered an air that his companions

thought him suddenly attacked by some mental alienation. They approach the block, take footing on its surface, and gaze abashed at Monsieur Synthèse, who walks at a great pace like one in a fever.

The old man paces the narrow surface, scarcely twenty-five meters in diameter, stops, starts off again, gesticulates, stoops down, breaks some fragments of the coral whose dimensions seem enormous, examines them, soon throws them away, and commences to soliloquize in a piercing voice.

“And I, also, I have survived my epoch! This wreck, this inert mass which the ignorant—yourselves the foremost—yes, you yourselves would attribute it to the work of nature—this block formed by the

intertwining for ages of dead coral insects, this branch like stone, is my work.

“There was the ocean, the immense Pacific, with its green waters which dashed themselves into atoms against the rocks. There have I touched with my finger the most sublime conception to which human brain ever gave birth.

“I was just triumphing when this cursed volcano caused the frightful overturning which shattered my work and clouded my reason——

“But what am I saying? Is my intellect really wandering? Is my great work really dead? Is it true that I have slept ten thousand years? Have I really survived all those dear to me? Am I not

about to awake and to escape from this frightful nightmare which crushes me! Anna, my daughter, will I not see thy sweet face bent over me, watching my return to life—hear thy gentle voice whisper in my ear that word which quickens my heart-beats,—Father!

“But no! I see only those flames which blind me—I hear only those rumblings which deafen me!

“I am alone, and accursed!

“Well, be it so! I will go no farther!

“Since after the ages which have passed, the improbable accidents of a destiny which I have not sought conduct me hither—since the volcano which engulfed the work of my life has since brought back

this block of coral from the bottom of the dried-up ocean, this waif shall be my tomb.

“A tomb worthy of me!

“There should have been born the first representative of a race whose destinies none could have foreseen, for my grand work would have changed the face of the world.

“There shall perish the last man of my race, his illusion shattered by a caprice of nature.

“Sleep! I would sleep forever, never to awaken.”

As he spoke these words his regards were attracted by a vitrified block from which the rays of the setting sun were reflected in a blinding glare.

His eye fastens upon this incandescence with the fierce joy of a desperate man contemplating the weapon or the poison which is about to free him from an odious life.

Scarcely a few seconds pass before hypnotism is produced, instantaneous, overwhelming.

Then, Monsieur Synthèse inclines gently backward, sinks slowly upon the slope of the block, and remains stretched out upon his back, his eye always fixed on the luminous pile, his body rigid, motionless, without a gesture, without a spasm.

THE END.

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